

ORDINANCE OF COVENANTING.

Renovation of Covenants.

“That public, social covenanting, is an ordinance of God, obligatory on churches and nations under the New Testament; that the National Covenant and the Solemn League are an exemplification of this divine institution; and that these Deeds are of continued obligation upon the moral person; and in consistency with this—that the Renovation of these Covenants at Auchensaugh, 1712, was agreeable to the word of God.”—Fourth Term of Communion.

Question 1.—*Is covenanting with God, especially national covenanting, a necessary and expedient duty, approved in the Scriptures?*

Answer.—Yes. Deut. 29:1. In the Old Testament it is here evident the Lord commanded to enter into this covenant and oath, Deut. 29:1, 12. And it is never abrogated in the New Testament except in ordinary communications, Matt. 5:37; Jas. 5:12, wherein it was condemned in the Old, as well as the New, Ex. 20:7. It is so far from being abrogated, that it is confirmed by the apostle, Gal. 3:15. And concerning even promissory oaths, he confirms them, Heb. 6:16. The Scriptural precedent for national covenanting is clearly taught in the Old Testament, and never abrogated in the New. There are, in fact, promises relating to the New Testament times, not only of personal, but of national covenanting, as churches, and Christian societies, Isa. 19:18, 21, 23-25; Jer. 50:4, 5; Zech. 2:11.

Question 2.—*Are there also Scriptural precedents for renewal of these covenants?*

Answer.—Yes. Deut. 29:1. These covenants were renewed again and again, for preservation and reformation of religion, extirpation of false worship, maintaining their laws, liberties, and government, punishing and restraining the wicked, keeping the common peace and mutual defense, against common enemies. Thus were they renewed by Joshua, Jos. 24:25; by Asa, 2 Chron. 15:13, 14; by Jehoiadah, 2 Kings 11:17; etc.

Question 3.—*May the covenant be tendered without the magistrate?*

Answer.—Yes. 2 Kings 11:17. Justice and order requires, that whoever has the greatest influence upon, or authority over the community, should tender the oath, and it belongs to magistrates to enjoin it, but not so as to exclude themselves from coming under the bond of it. And in that case, they must have some tender it to them. In Scripture, we find the officers of the church imposing it, as Jehoiadah, both to king Joash and to the people, 2 Chron. 23:16; and Ezra made the priests, the Levites and all Israel to swear it, Ezra 10:4, 5, even without the consent of the magistrate, who was the heathen king of Persia.

Question 4.—*In what form ought covenants to be renewed—unalterably; or with alterations?*

Answer.—Deut. 29:1. It is plain here is some way another covenant than that sworn in Horeb, Deut. 4:10-14, 23; 5:2, 3. However, it is also clear that it is rather a renovation of the former, than a substitution of another. It is a translation of the form, not the matter, with accommodation to the circumstances, sins and duties of that time, when they were in the land of Moab, Deut. 29:1, some way altered from the case they were in at Horeb, Deut. 5:2. That in Horeb was more full and particular, suiting all times, Ex. 19:5-8; 24:3, 7. The renewal contains the same, but more generally proposed, with a particular acknowledgment of the sins against, and breaches of that covenant, Deut. 29:2-9; and with a new engagement to the duties thereof, and more express explication and application of the universality and extent of its obligation, Deut. 29:10-29.

Question 5.—*What are the motives to renew the covenant?*

Answer.—The motives are many: 1.) A consideration of the wisdom, faithfulness, power, justice and goodness of the Lord, in granting them delivery from Egypt, Deut. 29:2. 2.) A consideration of the great temptations wherewith He proved their faith, patience, humility and love; the signs of His presence, protection and power continued; and the miracles wrought on their behalf, Deut. 29:3. 3.) A consideration of their own hardness and stupidity which did not answer to the miracles and mercies aforementioned, Deut. 29:4. 4.) The consideration of the Lord's gracious conduct of them in the wilderness for forty years, providing for their necessities, Deut. 29:5, 6. 5.) The consideration of the glorious victory obtained in Moab against the heathen kings, Deut. 29:7, 8. 6.) The promise of prosperity to ensue upon the keeping and doing of the covenant, Deut. 29:9.