

ORDINANCE OF COVENANTING.

Renovation of Covenants.

(Part 2.)

“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.—*What is it to keep the words of the covenant, and do them?*

Answer.—We understand that no man is able, by nature, to keep the covenant any more than he can keep the commands of God, Rom. 3:10. Yet, we understand that the covenant is kept and done: 1.) By a constant and suitable profession of the duties thereof, keeping the way of the Lord, Judg. 2:20-22. 2.) By a tenacious confession of the testimonies thereof, against all opposition, never denying or forbearing the asserting the obligation thereof, nor turning aside therefrom, to the right hand or to the left, Jos. 23:6; keeping it without spot, unrebukeable, 1 Tim. 6:14; especially when it becomes the word of His patience, Rev. 3:10. 3.) By a mindful and careful entertainment of it in the mind and memory, never forgetting what we are bound to thereby, Jer. 50:4, 5. 4.) By a strict observance thereof in practice, in all manner of conversation. Which is to be understood in the Gospel sense, not absolutely but respectively, with respect to our nature, now corrupt, weak and perverse. For though we are bound by the Law of God to be perfectly holy, yet our covenants do not tie us to this perfection; and this obligation is not from our covenant, but from the Law; for our covenants do not oblige victory over all sin, but to wrestle for it. They oblige not the end, but to the means within our power. For this reason, the people of God plead they had not broken covenant, though they had sins, Ps. 44:17. The obligation is not to all the things covenanted for, but to the aim, desire, design, and endeavor, to live in no sin covenanted against, never to approve ourselves in it, to omit no known duty engaged thereunto, and to leave no means unused for the attaining of the whole of it.

Question 2.—*May the covenant be renewed without the captains, elders or magistrates, officers, both of church and state, when they will not concur?*

Answer.—Yes. Ezra 10:4, 5. That the obligation to renew the covenant is of universal extent, binding and obliging all the members of the church and commonwealth regardless of qualities, ranks, vocations, ages, sexes, is clear, 2 Kings 23:2. Certainly this extensive obligation reaching all persons is to be understood *positively*, that all these are obliged into covenant, but not *negatively*, that without any of these, the covenant should not be entered into. The motives to covenant are common to all, small as well as great. The relation the small people have to God is the same that the nobles and great ones have,

Deut. 29:12; and the privileges of it, to be established as a people unto Himself, and to have Him for their God, belongs to both alike, Deut. 29:13. The only difference is this, though the small may renew as well as the great, they may not do so nationally, to bind the whole nation formally, to which indeed the concurrence of its representatives is necessary.

Question 3.—*May children be admitted to the covenant?*

Answer.—Yes. Heb. 9:19, 20. It cannot be doubted but they are under the bond of it materially, being children of the covenant, Acts 3:25; to whom belong the promises of the covenant of Grace, Acts 2:39; and that they are obliged to take it if they are capable; otherwise, their parents are to engage for them, Gen. 17:7-10.

Question 4.—*Are strangers obliged to be admitted to the covenant?*

Answer.—We distinguish. As in Israel, strangers being admitted to the covenant, together with their circumcision was one badge of their being proselytes; so now, though the case differ somewhat, such strangers as are naturalized and reside in the country (or have become members of the church), may be admitted to the national covenant of that nation whereof they are subjects, and wherein they are church members, Ex. 12:48. Others, who are not received into citizenship or church membership, are only to be restrained from doing or saying anything against it, Lev. 16:29; 18:26.

Question 5.—*Are those members of a community that personally never took the covenant absolved from its obligation?*

Answer.—No. Deut. 29:13, 14. Absence will not absolve from the obligation of all real covenants that are not merely personal. All members of the community covenanting are under the bond of the common covenant.