

## ORDINANCE OF COVENANTING.

(The Solemn League and Covenant, Pt. 4.)

“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.”—Fourth Term of Communion.

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### The Third Article.

“III. We shall, with the same sincerity, reality, and constancy, in our several vocations, endeavour, with our estates and lives, mutually to preserve the rights and privileges of the Parliaments, and the liberties of the kingdoms; and to preserve and defend the king’s majesty’s person and authority, in the preservation and defence of the true religion and liberties of the kingdoms; that the world may bear witness with our consciences of our loyalty, and that we have no other thoughts or intentions to diminish his majesty’s just power and greatness.

Question 1.—*Should we undertake mutually to preserve and defend, with our estates and lives, the course of reformation in the civil government?*

*Answer.*—Yes. Ps. 2:10-12. Nations must render homage to the Lord Jesus Christ, Ps. 72:8-11. In fact, the Psalmist threatens the nations that will not with destruction, Ps. 9:17; 76:12. Thus it is that we find the good and godly kings commended for following a course of civil reformation, according to the law of God, 2 Chron. 35:26; and those who failed in this matter are condemned, 2 Chron. 12:1.

Question 2.—*Is it proper to preserve and defend the rights and privileges of lawful governing bodies?*

*Answer.*—Yes. Ps. 68:27. We are to be careful that we seek to preserve and defend the rights and privileges of all lawful governors, Tit. 3:1; 1 Pet. 2:13-17.

Question 3.—*Ought we to seek the liberties of those nations joined in covenant?*

*Answer.*—Yes. Isa. 19:21-25. Nations are not bound together by the ties that unite the church, *cf.* 2 Kings 17:29. National oneness is neither promised nor enjoined, *cf.* Job 12:23. God has not given to them, as he has to the church, “one unalterable form of government,” 1 Pet. 2:13. Their rise and their fall are settled in the purpose and effected in the providence of God, Ps. 75:7. When, in the administrations of providence, the way is opened for any portion of the human family to promote the legitimate ends of civil government—their own good—the interests of the church—and the glory of God, they should embrace the opportunity, and unite themselves in civil compact, *cf.* Eccl. 8:2; 1 Chron. 16:31. Those thus joined ought to seek that which will yield the truest Christian liberty throughout the kingdoms, Jer. 50:4, 5.

Question 4.—*Should we not endeavor to preserve and defend the person and authority of the supreme magistrate in the preservation and defense of the true religion?*

*Answer.*—Yes. Isa. 60:3, 10. Paul commands us to pray for the conversion of the civil rulers, 1 Tim. 2:1, 2. Job declares that idolatry is punishable by the judicial tribunals, and thereby insinuates that civil rulers ought to have a care about the true religion, Job 31:26-28. So, too, Isaiah teaches the duty of civil governments to acknowledge and support the Christian religion, Isa. 49:22, 23. Just as we are taught to pray for the conversion of the civil authorities to Christianity, so, too, ought we to endeavor to preserve and defend them once converted, Isa. 60:11; Prov. 25:5; Acts 9:15.

Question 5.—*Should we not endeavor to preserve and defend the person and authority of the supreme magistrate in the preservation and defense of the liberties of the nation?*

*Answer.*—Yes. Rom. 13:7. We ought to support their just administrations with our blood and treasure, Matt. 8:9, 10; Luke 20:25. If a magistrate may lawfully go to war in defense of the just rights and privileges of the commonwealth, Josh. 11:18; whatever justifies him so to do, lays his subjects under an obligation to support him in every just and necessary measure, with their estates and lives, Rev. 17:14, 16. To repel force by force is an early dictate of the law of self-preservation, Ex. 21:23-25; Num. 10:9. To this we are also bound by the social compact, in which mutual protection is solemnly stipulated, Josh. 22:12. The danger of losing the invaluable privileges of religion and liberty, may lawfully summon us to arms, 1 Sam. 19:8. In these cases, the civil magistrate is the public organ of the nation's will, and is entitled to obedience, 1 Kings 22:45. This is simply a just application of that principle of rendering due honor to the supreme magistrate, in his just and lawful exercise of power for the benefit of the commonwealth, 1 Pet. 2:17.

Question 6.—*Is it a proper end aimed at herein, that the world and our consciences may bear witness to our loyalty?*

*Answer.*—Yes. 1 Pet. 2:13-15. It is our duty to silence the caviling and railing of wicked men who would seek to undermine the covenanted work of reformation by casting aspersions upon the character of those engaged in it, 2 Pet. 2:10. It is the character of true covenanted uniformity to manifest righteousness, judgment and faithfulness, or loyalty, *cf.* Hos. 2:19, 20. Thus, when God brings again favor to Zion, Ps. 102:13; and the true church is established by law, Isa. 2:2-4; then the civil society shall be called both righteous and faithful, or loyal, Isa. 1:26.

Question 7.—*Is it also a proper end aimed at herein, that the world and our consciences may bear witness that we have no intentions to diminish the supreme magistrate's just power and greatness?*

*Answer.*—Yes. Rom. 13:5. The duties of the people towards their rulers regarding their just power and greatness are as follows: 1.) To yield subjection and obedience to them, with reverence and fear, Rom. 13:1, 4. 2.) To pay them tribute, Rom. 13:6, 7. 3.) To pray and give thanks for them, 1 Tim. 2:1, 2. 4.) Not to curse, revile, or speak evil of the ruler, Ex. 22:28; Eccl. 10:20. 5.) Not to be stubborn, disobedient, or presumptuous towards them, Deut. 17:11-13; Ezra 7:26. 6.) Not seditious or rebellious against them, Rom. 13:2.

Thus, they ought not to withhold loyalty, or faithfulness, from the lawful supreme magistrate in the preservation and defense of the true religion and just liberties of the nation, Ex. 22:28. Yet, they must not yield a subjection to unlawful and usurped powers that are exercised under the pretense of magistratical power, whether exercised by a legitimate or illegitimate magistrate, *cf.* Acts 23:3-5; the conscience can only bear witness to a loyalty, or faithfulness, that is formed in the bond of the rule of Scripture, *cf.* Rev. 13:12, 16, 17. The powers which God has ordained and the liberty Christ has purchased are intended to uphold and preserve one another, *cf.* Matt. 12:25.