

ORDINANCE OF COVENANTING.

“[P]ublic, social covenanting, is an ordinance of God, obligatory on churches and nations under the New Testament.” — Fourth Term of Communion.

Question 1.—*What is public social covenanting?*

Answer.—It is a solemn religious transaction in which men, with joint concurrence, avouch the Lord to be their God, and engage, in all the relations of life, to serve him by obedience to his law, in the performance of all civil and religious duties, in the confidence of his favour and blessing in the fulfillment to them of all his gracious promises, Deut. 29:10-13; Josh. 24:1, 25; 2 Chron. 15:9, 12, 15; Isa. 19:18; Jer. 11:10.

Question 2.—*By what arguments can it be proved that public social covenanting is of divine authority, and so of moral obligation?*

Answer.—The divine authority and moral obligation appears from these considerations: 1.) It is taught by the light of nature, Jon. 1:16. 2.) Numerous Scripture precepts teach it, Ps. 76:11; Jer. 4:6; 44:26; 2 Chron. 30:8 (“Yield”—literally, “*give the hand*—yourselves unto the Lord”); Rom. 6:13; Matt. 5:33; Rom. 12:1. 3.) Numerous Scripture examples, Deut. 26:15-19; Josh. 24:1, 25; 2 Kings 11:17; 23:1-3; Neh. 10:29.

Question 3.—*By what arguments can the moral obligation of covenanting in New Testament times, be solidly proved?*

Answer.—The moral obligation in New Testament times can be proved: 1.) Because it was obviously a duty under the Old Testament dispensation, and being nowhere repealed, and being moral as opposed to typical, it is of present obligation, Ps. 76:11; moral duties do not diminish in their obligation by lapse of time, Matt. 5:17-19. 2.) From the Scripture prophecies, evidently referring to the New Testament times, and even yet to be fulfilled, Isa. 19:18, 21, 23-25; Jer. 50:4, 5. 3.) Because the New Testament recognizes the obligation, Rom. 6:13 *with* 2 Chron. 30:8; 2 Cor. 8:5. Additionally, covenant breakers have a place in the catalog of sinners, Rom. 1:31; 2 Tim. 3:3. 4.) It was one of the distinguishing privileges of the Jews to be in covenant with God, Ezek. 16:8; Jer. 3:14. The privileges of the New Testament dispensation are increased not diminished, Heb. 12:18, 22. 5.) This duty is involved in the church’s relation to God, as a married relation, Hos. 2:19, 20; Eph. 5:30; 4:25. Covenanting is only a solemn recognition of this relation, and engagement to evidence this by a life and conversation becoming the Gospel. Isaiah alludes to New Testament times, and celebrates not only an ecclesiastical, but national marriage, Isa. 62:4. National marriage implies a national deed whereby the inhabitants, in their national capacity, solemnly covenant with God. 6.) The duty, when performed in its true spirit, is a source of unspeakable benefit to a people; and, as nations seek the blessing, they should perform the duty, Ps. 144:15.

Question 4.—*Have covenants a distinct intrinsic obligation peculiar to themselves?*

Answer.—Yes. Ps. 105:8-10; Heb. 6:16-18. Covenants possess an obligation distinct from God's law. The covenanter is brought under an additional obligation to do the will of God. He is bound not merely by the naked authority of the divine word, but by his own voluntary act. The covenant does not bind to *anything additional* to what the law of God contains, but it *additionally* binds. The obligation to tell the truth is universal and perpetual; but an oath brings the person who swears, under an additional obligation. Before he took the oath, if he deviated from the truth, he was guilty simply of lying; now he is guilty of perjury.

Question 5.—*What constitutes the formal reason of covenant obligation?*

Answer.—It is the personal act of the covenanter which constitutes the formal reason why a duty, when sworn to, is binding as a covenant duty, and not the obligation of the divine law, or morality of the act, Num. 30:2.

Question 6.—*Are public social covenants of continuous obligation?*

Answer.—Yes. They are binding upon the posterity of the original covenanters, as long as the corporate body exists; or until such time as the object for which they have been framed has been accomplished. This is proved by the following: 1.) We find posterity recognized in the transaction between God and Jacob, at Bethel, Gen. 28:13 *with* Hos. 12:4. 2.) We have another remarkable instance of the transmission of covenant obligation to posterity, Deut. 5:2, 3. 3.) Another example occurs in Deut. 29:10-15; the covenant here is made with three descriptions of persons—those addressed as adults, those addressed as minors, and posterity. 4.) Another instance of posterity being recognized in covenant obligation is found in Joshua 9:15 *with* 2 Sam. 21:1, 2. 5.) Posterity is charged with the sin of violating the covenant of their ancestors, Jer. 11:10. 6.) The principle of federal representation confirms this doctrine. Thus, when Joseph made a covenant with his brethren, that they should carry his bones out of Egypt, he assumed those addressed were the representatives of their successors, for he knew that the whole of that generation would die before the deliverance of Israel by Moses. *Posterity* recognized that obligation, Ex. 13:19.