

ORDINANCE OF COVENANTING.

The Solemn League and Covenant.

(The Solemn League and Covenant, Pt. 5.)

“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.

The Fourth Article.

“IV. We shall also, with all faithfulness, endeavour the discovery of all such as have been or shall be incendiaries, malignants, or evil instruments, by hindering the reformation of religion, dividing the king from his people, or one of the kingdoms from another, or making any faction or parties among the people, contrary to this League and Covenant; that they may be brought to public trial, and receive condign punishment, as the degree of their offences shall require or deserve, or the supreme judicatories of both kingdoms respectively, or others having power from them for that effect, shall judge convenient.

Question 1.—*Should we undertake against the enemies of the true religion, in church and state, and endeavor to discover all of them?*

Answer.—Yes. Ezra 4:1-5. Oftentimes it falls out that those who are enemies of the true religion present themselves as followers of the true religion, Rev. 3:9, and friends of the civil government, Est. 3:10. As such, they must be discovered that they might be dealt with according to their designs, Est. 7:1-6, 9, 10.

Question 2.—*Should we number among those that are to be considered enemies those that hinder the reformation of religion?*

Answer.—Yes. Neh. 4:7, 8. Those that seek to hinder the work of reforming religion oppose themselves to the command of God and show themselves to be adversaries indeed of God and His people, Neh. 4:11, 15. Moreover, those of our same nationality, or ethnicity, if they oppose the command of God and the reformation of church or state, they are enemies to be exposed and resisted, Acts 23:12, 21. Even those of one’s own house ought to be counted as enemies of the true religion when they rebel against the truth and seek the shifts of unfaithful public men to cover their ungodliness, 2 Sam. 15:31. Those who hinder the reformation of religion shall not stand for God is with the reform not the deform, Isa. 8:10; for there is no power, or authority, in the church to deform only reform, 2 Cor. 10:8.

Question 3.—*Should we number among those that are to be considered enemies those that seek to divide the lawful magistrate from his subjects?*

Answer.—Yes. 2 Sam. 15:2-6. It is the way of turbulent, factious, aspiring men, to reproach the government they are under, 2 Pet. 2:10. Even David himself, the best of kings, and his administration, could not escape the worst of censures, or abusive attacks, against his person, Ps. 41:9. Thus, those that seek to alienate the hearts of the people from their lawful magistrates are engaged on a course of rebellion and ought to be considered enemies, even as Absalom showed himself to be, 2 Sam. 15:10-14. Yet, we can take comfort knowing their triumphing is relatively short and their joy is only for a moment, Job 20:5.

Question 4.—*Should we number among those that are to be considered enemies those that would seek to divide nations and kingdoms that are joined together?*

Answer.—Yes. Ezek. 37:21-28. The joining of various nations in covenant is prophesied to occur in the era of the Gospel, Isa. 19:18-25. The joining of nation with nation in the path of reformation is conducive to strengthening those in such a league, Eccl. 4:12. Those that would seek to divide such joined are sowers of discord and strife, Prov. 16:28.

Question 5.—*Should we number among those that are to be considered enemies those that make factions or parties among the people, contrary to the Solemn League and Covenant?*

Answer.—Yes. 1 Cor. 1:10. Nothing is more inconsistent on the part of Christians than to be at variance among themselves, 1 Cor. 11:18, 19, for it is the main article of our religion that we be in harmony among ourselves; and farther, on such agreement the safety of the Church rests and is dependent, 1 Cor. 12:25; Ps. 133:1. Luke bears witness to believers in the primitive Church, that they had “one heart and one soul,” Acts 2:46. This singleness of heart and soul formed the basis of their communitarian activities, Acts 4:32. And without doubt this will be found wherever the Spirit of Christ reigns, Eph. 4:5. When Paul exhorts the Corinthians to speak the same thing, he intimates still more fully from the effect, how complete the agreement ought to be—so that no diversity may appear even in words, *cf.* Zeph. 3:9. It is difficult, indeed, of attainment, but still it is necessary among Christians, from whom there is required not merely one faith, but also one confession, Rom. 15:6. Those who make factions and parties among the people are enemies of Christ and act contrary to that course of reformation laid down in the Solemn League and Covenant, Rom. 16:17, 18.

Question 6.—*Is it a proper thing to seek that such receive the condign punishment as their degree of offences shall require or deserve, or as the judges shall find convenient?*

Answer.—Yes. Deut. 1:16, 17; Ex. 21:22. For this very reason, God has appointed judges, 2 Sam. 23:3. Judgment must be given according to the merits of the cause, without regard to the quality of the parties, Ex. 23:2, 3, 7, 8. It is the wisdom of judgment to seek equity without respect of persons, Prov. 24:23. The natives must not be suffered to abuse the strangers any more than the strangers to insult the natives or to encroach upon them, Lev. 18:26; 19:33; the great must not be suffered to oppress the small, nor to crush them, any more than the small, to rob the great, or to affront them, Lev. 19:15. Instead, the rule of law is to be imposed impartially upon those who come within the compass of the nation and, therefore, subject to its government, Lev. 24:22. No faces must be known in judgment, but unbribed unbiased equity must always pass sentence, Deut. 16:19. When discovery has been made of such as seek to undermine the covenanted work of Reformation, the supreme judicatories (or those having power from them, *cf.* Ex. 18:21-26) are to meet out deserved punishments as required, or as found to be convenient for the interests of the commonwealth, Ezra 7:25, 26.