

ORDINANCE OF COVENANTING.

The Solemn League and Covenant.

(The Solemn League and Covenant, Pt. 8.)

“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 Conclusion.

“And, because these kingdoms are guilty of many sins and provocations against GOD, and his Son JESUS CHRIST, as is too manifest by our present distresses and dangers, the fruits thereof; we profess and declare, before GOD and the world, our unfeigned desire to be humbled for our own sins, and for the sins of these kingdoms; especially that we have not, as we ought, valued the inestimable benefit of the Gospel; that we have not laboured for the purity and power thereof; and that we have not endeavoured to receive CHRIST in our hearts, nor to walk worthy of him in our lives; which are the causes of other sins and transgressions so much abounding amongst us: and our true and unfeigned purpose, desire, and endeavour, for ourselves, and all others under our power and charge, both in public and private, in all duties we owe to GOD and man, to amend our lives, and each one to go before another in the example of a real reformation; that the LORD may turn away his wrath and heavy indignation, and establish these Churches and kingdoms in truth and peace. And this Covenant we make in the presence of ALMIGHTY GOD, the Searcher of all hearts, with a true intention to perform the same, as we shall answer at that great day, when the secrets of all hearts shall be disclosed; most humbly beseeching the LORD to strengthen us by his HOLY SPIRIT for this end, and to bless our desires and proceedings with such success, as may be deliverance and safety to his people, and encouragement to other Christian Churches, groaning under, or in danger of the yoke of antichristian tyranny, to join in the same or like association and covenant, to the glory of GOD, the enlargement of the kingdom of JESUS CHRIST, and the peace and tranquility of Christian kingdoms and commonwealths.”

Question 1.—*Should we make confession of our many sins against God, and His Son Christ Jesus?*

Answer.—Yes. Ezra 10:11. We must make a penitent confession of sin, and this with an eye to Christ, whom we have pierced, and mourning because of him, Zech. 12:10; and with a hand of faith upon the atonement, assuring ourselves of God’s mercies, 1 John 1:9.

Question 2.—*Are the sins of a people against God made manifest by their fruit (i.e., present distresses and dangers)?*

Answer.—Yes. Neh. 9:32, 33. It becomes us, when we are under the rebukes of divine Providence, though ever so sharp and ever so long, to justify God and to judge ourselves; for He will be *clear when He judgeth*, Ps. 51:4.

Question 3.—*Should we desire to be humbled for our sins?*

Answer.—Yes. Joel 2:12, 13; Ps. 35:13. We must be truly humbled for our sins, must be sorry we have by sin offended God, and ashamed we have by sin wronged ourselves, both wronged our judgments and wronged our interests, Ps. 34:18. First, we should be humbled for our own sins, Ps. 38:3. Then, for the sins of our nation, Ezek. 6:11. The sins of sinners are the sorrows of God’s faithful servants, especially the *evil abominations of the house of Israel*, whose sins are more abominable and have more evil in them than the sins of others, Ezek. 9:4.

Particularly, we should be humbled because of the following national sins: 1.) When a nation favored with the Gospel has not valued the Gospel, Heb. 10:29. 2.) When such a

nation has not labored for the power and purity of the Gospel, Matt. 11:16-24. 3.) When those who, in such a nation, have been blessed with the hearing of the Gospel have not endeavored to receive Christ in their hearts, Jer. 6:19; Heb. 3:15. 4.) When they have not walked worthy of Him in their lives, as they ought to have done (which is the cause of all other sins amongst them), Eph. 4:1, 2. We do not *walk worthy of the vocation wherewith we are called* if we be not faithful friends to all Christians, and sworn enemies to all sin, Prov. 1:10.

Question 4.—*Should our purpose, desire and endeavor, avowed and promised, for ourselves, and all others under our power and charge, both in public and private, in all duties to God and man, be to amend our lives, and each one go before another, in the example of a real reformation?*

Answer.—Yes. Hos. 14:1-9. Believers are to promise, not only verbal acknowledgements, but a real reformation, 2 Sam. 24:10. In this place, Scripture teaches: 1.) In our returns to God to covenant against sin, Job 31:1. We cannot expect that God should take it away by forgiving it if we do not put it away by forsaking it, Prov. 28:13. 2.) To be particular in our covenants and resolutions against sin, as we ought to be in our confession, because deceit lies in generals, 1 John 1:9. 3.) To covenant especially and expressly against those sins which we have been most subject to, which have most easily beset us, and which we have been most frequently overcome by, Heb. 12:1. We must keep ourselves from, and therefore must thus fortify ourselves against, *our own iniquity*, Ps. 18:23.

Question 5.—*What are the ends aimed at by making confession of sin, profession of desire to be humbled and purposing and endeavoring real reformation?*

Answer.—The ends are two: 1.) That the Lord's wrath might be turned away, 2 Chron 7:14; 12:5-7. 2.) That He might establish His Covenanted churches in truth and peace, Ps. 90:7, 8, 13-17; Isa. 62:7.

Question 6.—*How should covenants be taken?*

Answer.—The solemn taking of covenants should be: 1.) As in the presence of Almighty God, 2 Chron. 34:31. 2.) With express remembrance that He is the searcher of all hearts, Rom. 8:27. 3.) With profession of a true intention to perform the same, Jos. 1:16. 4.) With the knowledge that we shall give an account to God, when the secrets of the heart are laid open, Rom. 14:12.

Question 7.—*Should all be concluded with prayer to God, without Whose help we can do nothing?*

Answer.—Yes. Phil. 4:6. This is necessary because: 1.) We need to be strengthened by His Spirit for this end (*i.e.*, the profession and humbling for sin and endeavoring real reformation), Eph. 3:16. 2.) We depend upon His blessing our desires and proceedings with success, Prov. 10:22.

Question 8.—*What should be the ends looked to, and desired in the work of covenanting?*

Answer.—The proper ends are: 1.) The glory of God, 1 Cor. 10:31. 2.) The enlargement of the kingdom of Christ, Isa. 54:1-3. 3.) The peace and tranquility of Christian kingdoms and commonwealths, Isa. 9:6, 7; Rev. 11:15.