

ORDINANCE OF COVENANTING.

(Covenanting Provided for in the Everlasting Covenant, Part 2)

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

Question 1.—*Wherein does it appear that covenanting is provided for under every dispensation of Divine grace?*

Answer.—The erection and continuance of the church in the world, directly flow from the arrangements of the Covenant of Redemption, Tit. 1:2; 1 Pet. 1:19, 20. Faith in God in every age, interests in Christ the Surety, and through Him in all the blessings of the covenant, 2 Cor. 1:20; Rev. 13:8. Even before some of its signs were given, those to whom it was given to believe upon Him, were taken into covenant, Rom. 4:9, 10. Thus, in every age, they who believe are the children of the covenant, having their faith counted to them for righteousness, Rom. 4:11. In the first ages of the world, therefore, we find a righteous Abel, Heb. 11:4; an Enoch who walked with God, Heb. 11:5; men who had the name of God called upon them, sons of God, Gen. 4:26; 6:2; and Noah, a preacher of righteousness, 2 Pet. 2:5. It was in his acceptance of God’s promise to him of a seed of whom Christ should come, that Abraham believed God, Rom. 4:19-22. It was, therefore, in the exercise of covenanting, Gen. 17:2. It was as the representative of a covenant seed that Abraham was the father of all them that believe, Gal. 3:29. The covenant made with Abraham, as the father of the faithful, endures, Gal. 3:14, 15. The covenant which God made with Noah, even as that which He made with Abraham, He designates “My covenant,” Gen. 6:18. All therefore, who believe, in whatever time, are interested in one covenant with God, which is that which is confirmed of God in Christ, Gal. 3:17. Its ratification by the death of Christ, the Testator, was the ratification of the Covenant of Redemption, *cf.* Heb. 13:20 *and* Isa. 53:10-12. The blessings of it are the blessings of the Covenant of Redemption because the Covenant of Grace is simply the Covenant of Redemption revealed and dispensed to man, John 17:24. The Covenant of Grace flows from and was provided by the Covenant of Redemption, as appears from the fact that the true church in the world is characterized by her adherence to God’s covenant, Gen. 17:7. True religion, and all its institutions, are represented in Scripture as a covenant with God, Heb. 8:6-10. The different dispensations of Divine grace are each denominated a covenant—the first dispensation, the “old covenant”—the last dispensation, the “new covenant,” Heb. 8:13. Indeed, by tracing all the dispensations of grace to one great source, it prevents all the spiritual poverty that arises from refusing to accept of the flood of light which the Old Testament record casts forth towards the illustration of that of the New, 2 Cor. 3:14-16. The revelation of the will of God is in Scripture represented as a covenant—the Hebrew word, *hāzūt* (הַזוּת), meaning a *vision*, and consequently a *revelation*, Isa. 21:2; 29:11 (the latter may mean both a *revelation* and a *covenant*); but it also denotes a *covenant*, or *agreement*, Isa. 28:18. From various representations of Scripture, made in different terms, the act of covenanting would seem to be compared to a seeing of God, Isa. 33:17; and, also, to what corresponds with that—a seeking of His face, Ps. 27:8. Recognizing the LORD as their God, and acting faith in a Saviour then yet to come, they acknowledged that the covenant into which they were taken, was that revealed

and dispensed by Him, and which was a manifestation of that to which He had acceded, Who said and undertook as the Representative of the covenant, Ps. 40:7, 8. And after the work of Him Who came to make reconciliation for iniquity and bring in everlasting righteousness was accomplished, Dan. 9:24; the people of God, by observing the ordinances of baptism and the Lord's supper, by vowing and swearing to Him, and by attending to the other institutions of His grace, continue to acknowledge their faith in Him, as the Mediator of the New Testament, and the one Mediator, in Whom the covenant was confirmed with Abraham, and Who was present with His people in Sinai, *cf.* Ps. 68:17, 18 *with* Eph. 4:8; and to manifest their decided conviction, that the appointment of all the means of grace, flowed from that glorious transaction concerning which they are redeemed, Zech. 9:11.

Question 2.—Under what dispensations did the everlasting covenant, the Covenant of Redemption, first make provisions?

Answer.—First, under the Patriarchal and Levitical dispensations, as appears: Where the engagements into which Noah and his family were brought are spoken of, no hint is dropped that the nature or design of the duty was new to them, Gen. 9:9, 11. The terms in which the covenant of God was made known to him, would appear to be quite familiar to him; and the alacrity with which he engaged in performing the rite of sacrifice, would seem to indicate that neither he nor his family were strangers to that, as an accompaniment of covenanting, Gen. 8:20. The manner in which certain distinguished individuals, who lived anterior to the Mosaic economy, employed and desired the oath, showed that the information concerning it, which must have been communicated by Noah and his family, had been, by some at least, carefully preserved, Gen. 21:27, 32. Not merely Abraham, who may have received special information from above concerning the exercise, but some of his contemporaries in the region of Canaan would appear to have known well the character and tendency of covenant obligation, Gen. 26:28. At the death of Joseph, his brethren manifested a complete acquaintance with the subject, Gen. 50:25; nor were their descendants, two hundred years after, when emerging from bondage, unwilling to acknowledge the debt of duty which, by the oath of their fathers, was imposed upon them, Ex. 13:19. At the solemnities of Sinai, Israel would appear to have recognized the obligation of vowing and swearing to God, as well as that of any other requirement of His law, Ex. 19:5. Though the Hebrews were a rebellious people, none ever thought of calling into question the duty of covenanting, or swearing, to God; moreover, though many were in a state of unbelief, and would not obey, yet, when addressed by Moses, or another servant of the LORD, they would testify their duty to yield obedience when God commands, Ex. 24:7. Such is the intimate acquaintance with the claims of this service that it must have been taught to man from the beginning, as is implied in the law which was written on his heart in innocence, Rom. 2:15. The duty incumbent on him as a sinner must have been revealed to him immediately after the fall, for there is no reason to suppose that sacrifice and covenanting, which were for a vast length of time observed together, were not coeval, Gen. 4:26. These duties co-ordinate in their bearings—the one pointing to the great propitiation, Heb. 7:27; the other recognizing the claims of the Author of that salvation which the “One Sacrifice” was to secure, Rom. 6:13; both having their origin in that one glorious covenant, the Covenant of Redemption, Heb. 6:13-20.

Question 3.—*What is the first way in which provision was made during the Patriarchal and Levitical dispensations?*

Answer.—The first way provision was made was through the promises which were given: some promises were that the duty would be engaged in, Ezek. 16:60, 62; others of them, that the keeping of engagements made would be followed with good, Ps. 19:11; others, that all the blessings of the covenant would be bestowed, Gal. 3:18.

The passages belonging to each of these are numerous, Neh. 1:5-11. Containing a proposal of conditions on God's part, they lead directly to the duty, Lev. 26:42, 45. What is wanting, is the acceptance of them on the part of man, Prov. 7:1, 2. So often as they are read or mediated on, or pressed on sinners in the preaching of the Gospel, the sinner is invited to take hold in God's covenant, Isa. 56:4; Phil. 3:12. The invitations addressed through them are made by the Redeemer as the Prophet of His church, and as Lord of all, Matt. 11:28, 29. The promises exhibit the will of the Father, that His people should acknowledge Him as the God of grace, 1 Pet. 5:10. They testify to the love of the Spirit, whose work it is to lead to accept of them, Eph. 3:16-19. These promises unfold the purposes which were of old, Rom. 16:25, 26. They are the echo of the promises of the everlasting covenant, made to the great Mediator between God and man, John 5:20.