

ORDINANCE OF COVENANTING.

(Covenanting Provided for in the Everlasting Covenant, Part 4)

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

Question 1.—*Under what dispensation did the everlasting covenant, the Covenant of Redemption, next make provisions?*

Answer.—The everlasting covenant, the Covenant of Redemption, made provision for covenanting under the Gospel dispensation, *cf.* Jer. 31:31-34 *with* Heb. 10:16, 17.

This was practically acknowledged by believers in the apostolic age, Rom. 10:10. The common fund that was raised from the contributions of the church assembled and addressed by Peter on the day of Pentecost, was devoted by solemn vows, Acts 5:3, 4, 9. If a promise or vow to God to give up their substance had not been made, the language of reproof addressed to them would have been inapplicable, *cf.* Acts 2:44, 45. The language used of Ananias and Sapphira, that they lied unto God, intimates that they had vowed to God, Deut. 23:21. Indeed, the language of Peter, agrees with the words found in the Old Testament, *cf.* Acts 5:4 *with* Deut. 23:22. Again, the practices of making *confession*, and of *professing*, which we have found to be in reality the making of covenant engagements, would appear from the references made to them by the inspired visitors, to have been ordinary occurrences of their times, 2 Cor. 9:13. And, lastly, the conduct of the Macedonian churches, in giving themselves to the Lord, is worthy of being remembered as an authenticated source of covenanting in those times, 2 Cor. 8:5.

This practice was provided for through the direct injunctions of the last inspired writers; so, for example, in the dissuasion from idolatry, they taught the necessity of the practice, the reverse of that, of recognizing God and acknowledging Him by vowing and swearing to Him as a covenant God, 1 Cor. 10:14; 1 John 5:21. Teaching the necessity of faith and other graces, they showed that it is dutiful to engage in that and those other exercises in which these are requisite, explicitly enjoining the exercise of covenanting, Rom. 12:1; 6:13. By inculcating holding fast of the Christian *profession*, an apostle teaches that such a profession should not merely be adhered to, but also made, Heb. 4:14; 10:23. Moreover, the last of the apostles delivers the express words of the Redeemer, teaching the duty of entering into covenant engagements, and keeping them until Christ should come, Rev. 2:25.

Question 2.—*How is the practice of covenanting provided for through the whole of the New Testament writings?*

Answer.—The New Testament contains the same kinds of expression in reference to the covenant of God as the Old, and employs them for the same purpose as that for which those statements of that Testament are used, Rom. 11:27; Jer. 32:38-40.

Thus, by an apostle, there is strikingly brought into view the truth taught in the prophets,—that the Lord created, or formed, or foreordained, a people, to enter into covenant with Him, and by obedience also, otherwise to keep it, *cf.* Eph. 2:10 *with* Isa. 44:2.

The imagery of the *foundation*, employed in prophecy to point out Christ, and the sureness and continuance of the covenant, Isa. 28:16; is also used by two apostles for the same purpose, Eph. 2:20, 21; 1 Pet. 2:5-10. Their references to it illustrate the doctrine, that, in the New Testament, types, though realized in Christ, and also partly illustrated in the blessings at any time bestowed by Him, are not to be disregarded but studied, that the good things prefigured by them, but as yet unattained, may be enjoyed, 1 Cor. 10:11.

The designation of the Holy Spirit, as the “*Spirit of promise*,” teaches that He was given in consequence of the arrangements of the covenant of God, Eph. 1:13; and consequently, that all the benefits bestowed on believers, not merely in the Old but also in the New Testament times, were to come to them in connection with the acceptance of the gift of the Spirit, as included in the promise of the covenant, Joel 2:28; Acts 2:16-22, 33.

The idea of *reconciliation*, dwelt on by the apostles, necessarily implies the notion of a covenant agreement, as being not merely made but maintained, between God and men, 2 Cor. 5:18, 19—once exposed to His curse, but afterwards put in possession of an interest in the atonement of Christ, 2 Chron. 29:24.

References made by the apostles to *purification* cannot be explained independently of the principle of, a covenant ratified by the blood of Christ being the channel of the communication of faith and the other graces, and of sanctification—that results from the implantation, support, and direction of these by the Holy Ghost, Tit. 2:14.

The *sprinkling*, whether of blood or of water, referring to the operation of the Spirit, is introduced by an apostle as enjoyed by those who take hold on God’s covenant, Heb. 10:22.

Even as circumcision was, *baptism* is, a sign and seal of the covenant of grace, *cf.* Rom. 4:11 *with* Col. 2:11, 12.

In the *Lord’s Supper*, the bread is a symbol of the body of Christ—broken in the sufferings endured by Him on behalf of His people, John 6:32-35; and the wine is a symbol of His blood—shed for the remission of their sins, John 6:53-56. Commemorating the Redeemer’s dying love, and receiving a seal of all the benefits of His death, by partaking of these elements according to His command, they signify the actings of their faith on Him in an act of covenanting, 1 Cor. 11:24, 25.

Preaching peace, Christ, and after Him His apostles and other servants in the ministry of the Gospel, proclaimed the covenant of peace, and urged the duty of acceding to it, Eph. 2:17; Rom. 10:15; and speaking peace to His disciples, He declared it to be His prerogative to bestow on all His people the blessings of that covenant, John 14:27.

The Redeemer, foretelling His address to be delivered at the day of judgment to His enemies of all ages of the world,—intimates that He would not recognize them as covenant children, Matt. 7:23; and He declares of His people that there is a mutual covenant recognition between Himself and them, John 10:14; so, He taught that they know Him, as they alone do who take hold of God’s covenant, Isa. 19:21.

Allusions to the seal imply the doctrine of covenanting, Eph. 4:30; thus, the declaration of the Gospel of John refers to a solemn covenant attestation to the truth, John 3:33.

The people of God designating the Redeemer, as the “*High Priest of our profession*,” recognize Him as bestowing grace upon them, to take hold on God’s covenant, and to continue to cleave to it, Heb. 3:1.

In the Epistles, there is distinctly brought into view an *inheritance* which is not else than the blessings provided in God’s covenant, and appropriated in adhering to it, Col. 3:24; 1 Pet. 1:4, 5.

There are several designations all calculated to point out the covenant relation and privileges, and duties, of the people of God, “children of the kingdom,” “followers of God as dear children,” “friends,” “heirs of God,” “God’s heritage,” “the bride, the Lamb’s wife,” “perfect,” or possessed of integrity, healthful, safe, willing, complete, “sanctified,” Matt. 13:38; Eph. 5:1; John 15:14; Rom. 8:17; 1 Pet. 5:3; Rev. 21:9; Phil. 3:15; and, accordingly, to show that by special explicit engagements they should devote themselves to Him, Joel 2:32; Acts 2:21; Rom. 10:13; and the representation of the church as the “pillar and ground of the truth,” teaches that her duty is to make an unequivocal and steadfast public profession of Divine truth, 1 Tim. 3:15.

The covenant of God, from the last dispensation being introduced as the “new covenant,” and as one of the covenants of promise, Heb. 8:13; Eph. 2:12; is represented by the inspired writer as extended, both in regard to its blessings and its duties, to the latest times, Heb. 9:15.

By some of the evangelists and apostles, the covenant of God is exhibited as a testament, Matt. 26:28; 2 Cor. 3:6, 14. By them the dispensations of Divine mercy to men, are represented as being each both a covenant and a testament, Heb. 8:6-8; 9:15-17. By them are applied such representations to each of the dispensations—both to the former dispensations, and to the last of them, Heb. 8:9, 10; 9:20. The conclusion, therefore, to which we are brought by them is, that each, as a testament, is essentially an exhibition of a corresponding covenant, or a given dispensation of one covenant, Heb. 7:22. The truth is, that the covenant of God, under each dispensation, includes in it a testament, or that every dispensation of grace, whether in former times, or in the last times, viewed as a testament, is a covenant, Heb. 12:24.

Take first the present dispensation; a testament, like every covenant, has a stipulation, or promise and demand, Mark 14:24; in both, good is offered, and duty is required, Heb. 10:29. In this dispensation, the blessings of God’s favor are offered, and obedience to the law of Christ is required, 1 Cor. 9:21; it has, therefore, *one* character, both of a covenant and of a testament, Heb. 8:9, 10. A testament, like every covenant, when acceded to, has a re-stipulation, or engagement corresponding to the stipulation, 1 Cor. 11:25. In the present dispensation, when the overtures of Divine grace are acceded to, there is tendered an acceptance of Christ and all his benefits, and the promise of obedience in dependence on His strength, 1 Cor. 11:27, 28. It has, therefore, *another* mark common to both a testament and a covenant, because a testament and a covenant have alike a seal or ratification, Rom. 4:11. The present dispensation has, therefore, the *third* and last mark both of a testament and a covenant because the seal of the testament is not valid till the death of the testator, Heb. 9:16; the overtures of Divine mercy were ratified or sealed by the death of Christ, Heb. 9:24-28.