

The two Sons of Oil ;
OR,
THE FAITHFUL WITNESS
FOR
the MAGISTRACY & MINISTRY
UPON A
SCRIPTURAL BASIS.

ALSO,
A Sermon on Covenanting.
BEING THE SUBSTANCE OF TWO DISCOURSES.

BY SAMUEL B. WYLIE, A. M.
PASTOR OF THE REFORMED PRESBYTERIAN CONGREGA-
TION IN THE CITY OF PHILADELPHIA.

*" And I will give power to my two witnesses, and they shall
" prophesy a thousand two hundred and threescore days
" clothed in sackcloth.
" These are the two olive-trees, and the two candlesticks
" standing before the God of the earth."*

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P R E F A C E.

THE principles of reformation are not fashionable. They were once, however, considered as the glory of Presbyterians. The time has been, when the whole body of Presbyterians in Scotland, England and Ireland, unanimously subscribed them. For civil and ecclesiastical reformation; for a glorious covenanted cause, thousands have bled and died.

In the following discourses, I have endeavoured to advocate that cause. Not because it is an ancient cause; not because many have sealed it with their blood; but, because I thought it the doctrine of the Bible, and the cause of Christ.

I make no apology—I court no one's favour. A conviction of truth, was the cause of publication. There may, no doubt, be unguarded expressions. Any thing that is so, if demonstrated, will be candidly acknowledged.

SAMUEL B. WYLLIE.

A
S E R M O N
ON
C O V E N A N T I N G.

By SAMUEL B. WYLIE, A. M.
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OF PHILADELPHIA.

"Vow, and pay unto the LORD your God."

Ps. lxxvi. 11.

A Sermon on Covenanting.

EXODUS XX. 2.

I am the LORD your God.

MOUNT Sinai was a barren, rugged rock, surrounded with an howling wilderness. It was, naturally, of little consequence. It derived all its celebrity from the circumstance, that it was selected by God, as the theatre upon which he was pleased to exhibit the most tremendous displays of divine majesty, ever witnessed by mortal men. From the craggy summit of this Arabian mount, as the Supreme Legislator, he proclaimed his law to the astonished Israelites, accompanied with scenes of the most awful sublimity. Not long before this memorable occasion, veiled in a cloudy pillar, he had brought Israel out of Egyptian bondage, making the briny deep fly hither and thither, that the ransomed of the LORD might pass through with safety. The better to organize them into a separate community, from Sinai's flaming top, with voice of deep-toned thunder, he announced the precepts of the decalogue, a transcript of his moral perfections.

It has been a subject of considerable controversy, whether the divine oracles, published from Sinai, exhibited the covenant of grace, or the covenant of works, or a national covenant between God and Israel. This dispute, may, however, be compromised without much difficulty. When we consider the ten commandments, as ushered in with such dreadful and tremendous thunders, and sanctioned with such heavy and awful penalties, they appear evidently to be a re-exhibition of the covenant of works, that the Israelites might be alarmed to flee from it, to him, who had magnified this law, and made it honourable. So august and terrible was the manifestation of the divine majesty, that Moses himself

said, "*I exceedingly fear and quake.*" Heb. xii. 21. When we consider the ten commandments, as founded on the preface, viz. "*I am the LORD your GOD, who brought you out of the land of Egypt,*" &c. and laid up in the ark, which was typical of the blessed Jesus, and accompanied with the sacrifices, and other ceremonies, considered in their evangelical signification; there appears, evidently, a declaration of the covenant of grace, and the divine law embodied therein as a rule of life, in the hand of the Mediator. The terms of this covenant are, doubtless, evangelical. Privilege is made the foundation of duty, and moral obligation. I am the LORD your GOD, therefore, ye are bound to obey my commandments. But the tenor of the old covenant required duty, as the foundation of privilege; keep my covenant, that I may be your GOD. When we consider, that a conscientious observance of those laws was necessary to secure a happy entrance into Canaan, and a peaceful residence therein, we may denominate them a national covenant between GOD and Israel.

When GOD announces himself to be our GOD and LORD, it necessarily imposes the firmest obligation to lay hold upon his covenant, and solemnly engage to be his people. Hence, say the penmen of the Shorter Catechism, when speaking of the preface to the decalogue, "because GOD is the Lord, and our GOD, therefore, we are bound to keep all his commandments." That a national covenant was here entered into, by Israel, to serve the LORD, is plainly evident, not only from the consideration, that the covenant of grace is here enunciated, and obligation established upon the footing of privileges; but also, from the solemn act of the Jewish society, in binding themselves to the performance of duty. "*All that the LORD hath spoken, we will do.*" All unto whom this revelation is made, are bound, by their relationship to GOD, as his moral subjects, to avouch him as their LORD, and solemnly engage to the performance of the duties which he requires in his law. In the illustration of this subject, I shall

I. premise a few observations, preparatory to a farther elucidation. And,

1. GOD, the Father, Son, and Spirit, is the Supreme Governor of the universe.

2. All authority, to bind the consciences of rational beings, is, naturally, necessarily, and independently, in him. He, alone, is Supreme Lord of the conscience, and hath left it free from the doctrines and commandments of men, which are, in any thing, contrary to the divine law.

3. GOD delegates a subordinate authority to rational beings, in the various departments of life, to perform acts of self-government, corresponding to their respective relations. Prov. xvi. 32. Better is "*he that ruleth his spirit, than he that taketh a city.*" To every adult, in the possession of reason, he deposes a power to engage, bind, or oblige himself, by promises, vows, oaths or covenants, to act as becometh his relation and character in life.

4. The subjects of this delegated authority, are either individuals or corporations. The latter is considered as a *moral person*; can make contracts, is capable of similar obligations, and can plead and be impleaded in law, as well as the former. As physical persons are subject to increase and diminution, by eating and drinking, and the necessary evacuations of the animal economy, without affecting their individual personality; so, corporations, or moral persons, are losing old, and receiving new members; and yet, their moral personality remains unimpaired. That these two kinds of persons are *both* subjects of moral obligation, is abundantly evident from scripture. For the *first*, see Ps. cxix. 106. "*I have sworn, and I will perform it.*" For the *second*, see Hai. xix. 18. "*Five cities shall swear to the LORD of Hosts.*"

5. This delegated authority, cannot interfere with the requisitions of the divine law. GOD cannot depute any such authority to his creatures. Their rights and liberties, are limited by the unerring standard of rectitude, which he has prescribed. If any obligation be entered

into, or any command given, contrary to this sacred rule, it is, in its nature, null and void. To allow that any man might impose an obligation, either upon himself, or others, repugnant to the divine law, would be exalting mortal man above the Sovereign of the universe.

6. As no deputed authority, derived from God, can increase the supreme and infinite authority, which he hath in himself; so, no self-engagement of ours, can increase the obligation of his moral law, or make a commanded duty, in its nature, more obligatory. Nevertheless, all lawful engagements have a voluntary, self-binding obligation, superadded, whereby the person, who neglects the duty, or transgresses the law, to which he thus engages, is more criminal, than he would otherwise have been.

7. The divine law, is the foundation of the duty of covenanting. It is in it, that we are authorised to bind ourselves. It demands certain duties of us, and requires the adoption and use of all lawful means to promote their performance. Among these means, it suggests and commands that of covenanting, as an ordinance well calculated to hedge us in from immorality, and stimulate to the performance of commanded duty. But, the requisition of the divine law, or the morality of the duty, is not the formal reason of covenant obligation. The personal, or representative act, of the jurant, is the only formal reason, why the thing sworn to is binding, *as a covenant duty*. The things required by the divine law, are binding upon all men, in their respective stations, as *moral duties*. Whatever, therefore, the *morality of the duty* is, the reason of, must be common to all. But covenanting is not common to all, but confined to a few: therefore, the *morality of the duty* is not the formal reason of covenant obligation.

8. There is, therefore, an intrinsic obligation in covenants, *distinct*, though not *separable*, from the divine law. That these obligations are not *separable* from the divine law, is evident. (1.) Because it is by the moral law, that we are *authorised* to make covenants. (2.) It is in the moral law, that we are *required* to make them. (3.) It is in the moral law, that we are *commanded* to per-

form them, when made. They are distinct. Things may be so, though not separable. Gravity and extension are distinct, though, in all material substances, they are inseparable. Justification and sanctification are distinct, though not separable. In like manner, the obligation of a covenant, and the obligation of the moral law, are distinct, though inseparable. Were there no intrinsic binding obligation in a vow or covenant, the divine law could no more bind or oblige us to perform them, than the laws of the United States could oblige us to pay a bond, which contained nothing but cyphers. But this will lead, in the

II. head, to state the difference between this self-obligation, which arises from covenanting, and the previous obligation of the moral law. And,

1. GOD, in his law, binds us by his own authoritative command. Deut. xii. 32. "*What thing soever I command you, observe to do it: thou shalt not add to it, nor diminish from it.*" In our vows, we bind ourselves, by our own voluntary act. Numb. xxx. we are informed, the jurant *binds himself*. His act is denominated his *own bond*, &c. Hence, they are called *our vows*, *our bonds*, *our oaths*, &c. because *we* make them, in the exercise of that obligated authority, which we hold from GOD, the Moral Governor, to be employed in subserviency to his glory.

2. Both the matter, and manner, of our engagements, or covenants, should be scrupulously examined. 1st Thess. v. 21. "*Prove all things.*" This examination ought to be conducted, by the unerring standard of rectitude. Isai. viii. 20. "*To the law and to the testimony; if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them.*" But, to examine, whether what we know to be the law of GOD, be right or wrong, is blasphemous presumption. To question its rectitude, would be arraigning the Omnipotent at the tribunal of carnal reason. What is his law must be right, being a picture of his moral nature, the ultimate standard of all holiness and perfection.

3. Another obvious difference is, GOD's law binds

us to perfection, in thought, word, and deed, be we never so incapable of maintaining it. Our inability cannot nullify God's just claim, nor make void the supreme authority of his law. That man should, by sinning, procure an indulgence to sin with impunity, would set sin above God, and empower it to nullify his inalienable claims. The law of God still binds as much to perfection, as it did before the fall. The command of our Saviour, Mat. v. 48. is, "*Be ye also perfect.*" But vows and covenants bind *only* to a conscientious performance of that, which is in our power. Neither may any man bind himself to perfection; for this would be binding himself to perform that, to which he knew himself perfectly inadequate, and which the word of God informs us, no mere man on earth ever attained. Rom. iii. 10. "*There is none righteous, no, not one.*" Would not this be perjury? No vow or covenant ought to be made, which, by the grace of God enabling us, we cannot fully keep. In Ps. xliv. 17. the church declares, "*All this is come upon us, yet have we not forsaken thee, nor dealt falsely in thy covenant.*" But, had covenants bound the jurants to perfection, no church, or member of a church, while on earth, could ever have said so.

4. GOD's law binds to perfection *for ever*. It will be the eternal rule of rectitude, regulating our relation to God, the Moral Governor. Ps. cxi. 7. 8. "*All his commandments are sure, they stand fast for ever and ever.*" The substance of them shall exist, even in the mansions of immortality; binding angels and men in love to God, and to one another. But vows and covenants are obligatory only *in this present life*. They are intended as auxiliaries, well calculated to promote holiness and sanctification of character. But, at death, these attain perfection in the realms of bliss; therefore, these auxiliaries are unnecessary. In hell they can be of no service, for from thence there is no redemption.

5. They differ in this, that the divine law is a *rule* of action, in every department of life. To this rule all

every action be brought, and by this, shall its quality be tried and judged. Rom. ii. 12. "*As many as have sinned in the law, shall be judged by the law.*" But a covenant is not properly any new rule of action, (unless in matters previously indifferent) but is rather a new obligation, or bond, superadded by our own voluntary act and deed, in which we solemnly declare, that we will conscientiously perform that duty, which the divine law previously required.

6. The law of God binds all men, be they who they may, and whether they will or not. We cannot conceive of a rational creature, under no obligation to love God and his neighbour. This is the essence of the moral law. All men are the subjects of Heaven's Almighty Ruler, and can no more be exempted from the obligation of his law, than they can elope from his dominions. But covenants bind only those who have entered into them, either *personally*, or by *representation*. With respect to those, who enter *personally* into covenant, I presume their obligation will be questioned by but few. With respect to those, who enter into covenant, *representatively*, it is not so generally admitted. I shall, therefore, endeavour, in the

III. head, to shew, that vows and covenants may be binding, also, on those, who enter into them by representation.

We shall not, in this investigation, avail ourselves of the covenant made between God and Adam, in which all the human race were represented; though this proves, to a demonstration, that there is nothing improper in the nature of the thing. But as it may be objected to, as being a singular and extraordinary case, we shall endeavour to select such instances, as are not liable to this objection. And,

1. We have an instance of a covenant made by God with Noah, which recognizes posterity. Gen. ix. 9. "*Behold, (saith the High and Lofty One) I establish my covenant with you, and with your seed after you.*"

2. Another instance, is that of the Abrahamic covenant. Gen. xvii. 7. "*And I will establish my covenant*

(saith GOD) *between me and thee, and thy seed after thee, in their generations, for an everlasting covenant; to be a GOD unto thee, and thy seed after thee.*" This was not only an exhibition of the covenant of grace, but also a covenant of property grafted thereupon, importing, that his seed should be very numerous, and have Canaan for their inheritance. Ps. cv. 11. The relationship of Abraham's seed to this covenant, was remembered and recognized by GOD, to thousands of generations. Ps. cv. 8. And the promissary part of it, both in a spiritual and temporal point of view, is, by the apostle, asserted, as belonging to them. Acts ii. 39.

3. The covenant made with Jacob, Gen. xxviii. 14. also proves this position. When travelling to Padan Aram, in the vision of the night, GOD covenanted to give unto him, and his seed, all the land of Canaan. This may be considered, as a renovation of the covenant made with his grandfather Abraham. This covenant is pleaded, by his posterity, more than a thousand years after that period. See Hos. xii. 4. where they recognize their obligation, by that transaction, in Bethel.

4. We have another instance of this kind, Gen. 1. 24. in a covenant made between Joseph and the rest of the children of Israel, respecting his bones. This they found themselves obliged to fulfil, two hundred years after, as we are informed, Exod. xiii. 19. "*And Moses took the bones of Joseph with him; for he had straitly sworn the children of Israel, saying, GOD shall surely visit you, and ye shall carry my bones up hence.*" This obligation was not imposed upon them, capriciously, by Joseph, as might, perhaps, be alledged, seeing it was a matter of indifference where his bones lay. It was an evidence of Joseph's own faith in GOD's promise. "GOD (says he) *shall surely visit you.*" It was also calculated to strengthen the faith of the oppressed brick-makers, that GOD would one day bring them to the land, concerning which he had sworn to their fathers. Hence, we read, Heb. xi. 22. "*By faith, Joseph, when he died, made mention of the departing of the children of Israel, and gave commandment concerning his bones.*"

5. We have another striking example, in which the obligation of a covenant recognizes posterity, in Deut. v. 2, 3. Moses thus addresses the Israelites: "*The LORD our GOD made a covenant with us in Horeb: the LORD made not this covenant with our fathers, (only) but with us, even us, who are all of us here alive this day.*" There are several things here, particularly worthy of notice.

First. That this Sinaiic covenant was made but a few weeks after their departure from Egypt. See Exod. xix. 1. where we are informed, that it was in the third month, viz. *Sivan*, they having left Egypt in the first, viz. the month *Abib*. *Second.* That of those, whom Moses now addressed, none had personally covenanted at Sinai, save Caleb, the son of Jephunneh, and Joshua, the son of Nun; see Numb. xxvi. 64, 66. The rest of the adults had all died in the wilderness. *Third.* That it is now the eleventh month, of the fortieth year of their peregrinations in the wilderness. Deut. i. 3. *Fourth.* That those, whom Moses now addresses, must be of the three following descriptions, namely: (1.) Those who were minors at the transaction on Sinai, and so incapable of covenanting personally for themselves; and (2.) Those who were born after that transaction. (3.) Caleb and Joshua. *A fifth thing, worthy of notice, is,* that, notwithstanding all those were dead, with whom the covenant was personally made, save two; yet Moses expressly declares, that this covenant was not made with their fathers only, but with *us*, (says he) *even with us, who are all of us here alive this day.* Does not this prove, to a demonstration, that they were bound in the obligation of their ancestors?

6. We have another example full in point, in the renovation of this same Sinaiic covenant, Deut. xxix. 10, 15. where Moses addresses the whole congregation, who were all assembled, from the hewer of wood, and the drawer of water, to the highest captain and officer in the camp: even the little ones are specified. He calls upon them to renew the covenant with the LORD, that so they might be established in the land, whither they

went, to possess it. “ *Neither with you only, (says he) do I make this covenant, and this oath : but with him also that standeth here with us this day ; before the LORD our GOD, and also with him that is not here with us this day.*” This covenant is evidently made between God and three different descriptions of people. Two of these are present, and the other absent. The *first* description of these covenanters, are *adults*, unto whom Moses addresses himself : “ *Neither with you only,*” &c. The *second*, are *minors*, who, though present, are spoken of, as being incapable of engaging, *personally*, in that transaction ; and are represented as only “ *standing with them.*” The *third*, must respect *children yet unborn*, who are spoken of as being absent. These could not refer to any of the congregation then in being, for they were every one present : yet with all these characters, respectively, was this covenant solemnly made.

7. Another instance occurs, in the covenant made between Joshua and the princes of the congregation, on the one side, and the Gibeonites on the other. See Jos. ix. in chapter throughout. This league, made by Joshua, and recognized and ratified by the princes, was obligatory, not only upon the congregation then existing, but also upon their posterity. Between four and five hundred years after this transaction, the children of Israel were visited with a severe famine, in the days of David. 2d Sam. xxi. i. when they enquire at the LORD, they are pointedly told, “ *That it was for Saul, and for his bloody house, because he slew the Gibeonites.*” Moreover, in the second verse, there is a recognition of that very covenant, and their breach of it is stated as the formal ground of the divine displeasure. Had it not been for the covenant engagement, their conduct would not have been imputed to them as a transgression ; for these Gibeonites belonged to the seven nations of Canaan, the cup of whose iniquity was full, and whom God had otherwise devoted to destruction.

8. Another striking instance of covenant obligation being transmitted to posterity, is to be found in Jos. xi. 10. “ *The house of Israel, and the house of Judah,*

have broken my covenant, which I made with their fathers." Now, it is plain, had this covenant been in no sense made with them, by representation in their fathers, they could never have been charged with the breach of it. God charges none with breach of covenant, made at their fathers, but those who have *really* covenanted in their fathers: but he charges the children of Israel with breach of covenant made with their fathers, in the text alluded to; therefore, the children of Israel had *really* covenanted in their fathers.

9. This position is also evident from the doctrine of infant baptism. Between the parent and child there is a representative identity, so, that whatever is done by the parent, in this representative character, is virtually done by the child, and then the deed of the one becomes obligatory upon the other. If this be denied, infant baptism is altogether useless. Either the child, when come to maturity, is bound by the obligations laid upon the father, or he is not. If he is bound, that is the thing contended for. If he is not, the baptism is useless, as it wants what is essential to a sacrament, viz. obligation, or "engagement to be the Lord's." He ought, of course, to have the ordinance administered to him, as an adult. If, therefore, the doctrine of covenant obligation being transmitted to posterity, by representation, be denied, infant baptism falls to the ground.

10. This doctrine is also recognized by the civil practice of mankind, in bonds and indentures. These are allowed to bind the heirs of the persons indenting. The objection usually made to this, viz. "That the obligation arises from the persons coming in to possess the inheritance of the deceased; but, should they disclaim all interest in the estate, the obligation could not extend to them," is easily set aside. Admitting it for a moment, then the children, or posterity, who choose to inherit the religious estate of their ancestors, are, consequently, bound. But is it merely optional, whether they receive the inheritance or not? Either their religious estate qualifies with the divine law, or it does not. If it does not, neither ought they to have occupied it, nor are we

bound to receive it. But, if it be agreeable to the divine law, we are bound, at our peril, to accept the inheritance, and endeavour to transmit it, with improvements, to succeeding generations. When God established his testimony in Israel, he charged the fathers to shew it to their posterity. Ps. lxxviii. 5.

II. This is further evident, from the general, I had almost said universal, practice of civil communities. National deeds are considered as obligatory, not only on the generation existing, when the thing is transacted, but also on their posterity. Suppose, for example, that the United States had borrowed one million of dollars from the court of Versailles, during the late struggle with Britain, which debt, through certain national embarrassments, should remain unliquidated for fifty years to come. The generation, for whose immediate exigencies the money was borrowed, would be then nearly all extinct. Would the generation, then existing, be under any moral obligation to make payment? If they would, who bound them? If they would not, where is national faith? In these matters, nations and individuals come under the same consideration. Moral engagements are obligatory on individuals, either while they live, or until the articles unto which they engage, are fulfilled. The same is the case with societies or nations. They continue bound, till every article of the bond is fulfilled. If the bond contemplates *accidental* debts, such as the one above mentioned, the obligation may be temporary, and terminates with its liquidation. If it contemplates those debts which are *necessary*, and inseparable from our existence, its obligation is perpetual. Of this kind are religious bonds and covenants, which contemplate the duties required by the divine law, and which necessarily bind us, from our relation to the Moral Governor. In the case of an individual, these bonds are obligatory through life: in the case of a community, while it continues to exist. But, as all bonds and covenants are not perpetually binding, it will be proper, in the

IV. head, to shew some of the things which are ne-

cessary to constitute perpetual obligation. And,

1. The parties contracting, must be permanent. It will scarce be necessary to suggest, here, that this permanency is to be understood in a relative and limited sense. National societies and corporations can, in no other sense, be called permanent. It must, therefore, upon the largest calculation, be limited by the duration of this world. In the world to come, they shall have no national or corporate existence. Permanency is attributed to them, because their existence is continued from generation to generation; and in this sense, they are said not to die. Beyond these limits, the duration of national contracts cannot extend; for, this would be lengthening out obligation beyond the existence of its subjects. Such societies and corporations, are fit subjects of perpetual obligation, in the sense already explained. And when the bond contemplates duties of a moral, and, consequently, of a permanent nature, they will be bound as long as they continue to exist under these characters. In bonds and covenants of this nature, while societies are bound in their social capacity, during their social existence, individuals are bound in their individual capacity, during their individual existence in this world, whether as members of that community, or any other. As long, therefore, as the national societies of Britain and Ireland continue to exist, and GOD remains unchangeable, they will be under covenant obligation to perform the duties required by the moral law.

2. The matter must be moral. The matter of human conduct, as it respects the divine law, is considered, by moralists, as being either *right*, *wrong*, or *indifferent*. What is *wrong*, though sworn to, can neither bind the jurant himself, nor any whom he represents. To that which is *indifferent*, a person may bind himself, and, when bound, ought to perform, though it should be productive of natural evil to him. Ps. xv. 4. But, obligations to things merely indifferent, cannot be transmitted to posterity. Whenever we find examples in scripture, of things, in themselves indifferent, being bound upon posterity, there are connected with them,

certain circumstances calculated to promote holiness and sanctification of character, which divest them, for a time, of this indifferent nature. This, we presume, was the case, in the instance of Joseph's binding the children of Israel to carry his bones to the land of promise, as mentioned above. But such things are not perpetually binding; and being, in their nature, changeable; vary with the change of those circumstances which suggested them. Those things, therefore, in themselves *right*, and those alone, can properly constitute the matter of perpetual obligation. The duties required by the moral law, are permanent, and, as moral duties, are obligatory, antecedently to all covenanting; and will be eternally binding on all rational subjects, when the duty of covenanting shall cease to exist. Such we consider the duties, contained in the Covenants National and Solemn League of Britain and Ireland. If there is any thing in these instruments, of a circumstantial nature, we admit it may vary with the circumstances which produced it: but whatever is moral, will remain as permanent as these nations, and as unchangeable as the great Legislator.

2. The end must be good, and that perpetually. The ultimate end of all our actions, ought to be the glory of GOD; and, subordinate thereto, our enjoyment of him here, and hereafter. Without this ingredient, no action can be formally good, in the sight of GOD, because, it wants one of these essentials, which his law requires. Thus, though Jehu's removing of the worshippers of Baal was *materially* good, being, in the matter of it, what GOD commanded; yet, as his end was self-aggrandizement, and not the glory of GOD, his conduct will not stand in the balances of the sanctuary. Thus, Hos. i. 4. GOD threatens, that he "*will avenge the blood of Jezreel upon the house of Jehu.*" The end, therefore, must be, supremely the glory of GOD, and subordinate thereto, the good of society, and the means such as he himself has prescribed. That these are the ostensible ends which our ancestors in Britain and Ireland had in view, will be ascertained from the instruments them-

selves. See the National Covenant, where the *ends* proposed, are, "For defence of the true religion, as it was then reformed, and is expressed in the Confession of Faith, which had been for many years, with a blessing from Heaven, preached and professed in this kirk and kingdom, as GOD's undoubted truth, grounded only upon his written word. And for maintaining the king's majesty, his person, and estate." And in the Solemn League and Covenant, the Covenanters thus express themselves: "Having before our eyes the glory of GOD, and the advancement of the kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ, the honour and happiness of the king's majesty, and the true public liberty, safety, and peace of the kingdoms, wherein every one's private condition is included." These are the ends proposed by our reforming ancestors, when entering into solemn national engagements to GOD. That many of them were sincere, we have no right to question. Though others dealt deceitfully with GOD, this no more invalidates their national deed, required by the divine law, than a member of congress voting for a bill, with sinister and malignant views, nullifies its national obligation, when passed into a law.

4. The debt, the payment of which the bond or covenant contemplates, must be perpetual. It can never be diminished by continual payments, or come to final termination. It contemplates our duty to GOD and to man. The time will never come when this debt shall cease to be due. Love to GOD and our neighbours ought to be constantly a paying, yet shall never be finally paid. This is the debt, substantially considered, which these bonds of perpetual obligation chiefly contemplate. This is the sum and substance of the moral law. From the intercourse of men in society, obligations of a particular and adventitious nature, will frequently arise. The payment of these is enjoined by the obligation of the bond or covenant, now under consideration, as well as by the moral law. But, when all these are paid, the obligation still remains, to perform every duty, which may arise out of every new contract and relation in life.

If the debt were not permanent, neither could the obligation. An obligation to pay, when there is no particular debt to be paid, is unintelligible.

5. The bond must, either explicitly, or by necessary implication, contemplate posterity. When the national deed respects the conscientious performance of moral duties, both to GOD and man, all are nationally bound. When will this obligation cease? Is not the moral law unchangeable? Will it not continue to be the rule regulating our relation to GOD, our Creator and LORD? Whether, therefore, the obligation of posterity be explicitly asserted, or not; the nature of the duties engaged to, the express command of GOD, enjoining the stipulation, and his charging future generations with the breach thereof, necessarily suppose, that they are contemplated, by representation, in their ancestors. Jer. xi. 10. But, in the covenants of our ancestors, in Britain and Ireland, there are clauses expressive of perpetuity. In that article of the National Covenant, subscribed in the year 1638, they thus express themselves: "Being convinced in our minds, and confessing with our mouths, that the present and succeeding generations, in this land, are bound to keep the foresaid oath and subscription inviolable." In the first article of the Solemn League, they express themselves thus: "That we, and our posterity after us, may, as brethren, live in faith and love. And the LORD may delight to dwell in the midst of us." And in article fifth, "We shall endeavour that they may remain conjoined in a firm peace and union, to all posterity." Thus we find these covenants possess every thing, which may be calculated to extend their obligation to succeeding ages. The contracting parties, viz. GOD and the nation, are permanent; the matter is just, being the very things required by the divine law; the ends are good, the glory of GOD and good of society; the debt stipulated to be paid, though always a paying, can never be brought to a final termination; and our ancestors contemplated us, in making these engagements. But, that it may appear that this mean of promoting holiness and sanctification, is

not peculiar to the Jewish dispensation, I shall endeavour, in the

V. head, to prove the morality of this duty, in New Testament times. And,

1. Covenanting is a duty expressly commanded in scripture. Ps. lxxvi. 11. "*Vow to the LORD your GOD, and pay.*" It will be incumbent, therefore, on those who deny its propriety, in New Testament times, to shew, that it is somewhere abrogated. I know no other way it can be abrogated, but either by express precept, approved example, or necessary consequence. Once ever it is demonstrated to be repealed, by any of these modes, we shall consider ourselves bound to relinquish it. Till then, its opposers will, at least, excuse us.

2. Scripture prophecies, respecting New Testament times, speak of it as a blessing, and privilege. Isai. xix. 18. "*In that day (namely, in the Gospel dispensation, when the Gentile world shall be called) five cities in the land of Egypt shall speak the language of Canaan, and swear to the LORD of Hosts,*" &c. And, in the twenty-first verse, when speaking of the progress of light and information, among the Gentile converts, we read: "*And the LORD shall be known to Egypt, and the Egyptians shall know the LORD in that day, and shall do sacrifice and oblation, yea, they shall vow a vow unto the LORD, and perform it.*" Here we find, engaging in this duty spoken of, as a considerable attainment in religious reformation.

3. The New Testament, itself, recognizes it, 2d Cor. viii. 5. when the apostle is commending the liberality of the church of Macedonia, and their willingness in contributing to the exigencies of the poor saints at Jerusalem, he says, "*This they did, not as we hoped, but first, gave their own selves to the Lord, and unto us, by the will of God.*" Here, we have not only the duty of covenanting necessarily implied, but we have also a phraseology, of the same import with that used in Old Testament times. They gave themselves unto the Lord, and unto one another. Does covenanting involve any thing

more, than laying hold of God's covenant, and solemnly engaging, conscientiously to perform all personal and relative duties? This transaction of the Macedonians, cannot allude to their entering into church communion, for they were in an organized capacity, previously to this solemn act. Neither can it respect sacramental communion, which, though it involves covenanting unto God, could not be reasonably supposed to have exceeded the apostle's hopes and expectations concerning them, as many of them believed, and cheerfully embraced the Gospel. Acts xvii. 14. It must, therefore, in all probability, respect solemn social covenanting, in their organized church capacity. The language of this transaction, to all who would wish to follow the footsteps of the flock is, of course, "*Go ye and do likewise.*"

4. It was a special privilege of the Jewish church, and it would be unreasonable to suppose these privileges abridged, under the New Testament dispensation. If we have not this privilege itself, is there any thing come in the room of it? If there is, what is it? If there is not, then the present dispensation, in this particular, is more limited than the Jewish economy, though the latter, in comparison of the former, is denominated a system of "*beggarly elements*"—a dispensation of "*darkness, bondage, and terror.*"

5. Its morality, in New Testament times, seems evident, from the very nature of it. It involves an oath of allegiance to God, as our God in Christ Jesus. There is, surely, nothing typical in the words of the preface to the ten commandments. When God declares himself, in these words, to be the LORD *our* God; does not this imply an obligation on us, to avouch him, as our God, and solemnly engage to be his people? Moreover, to this purpose, we read, in Hos. ii. 23. when times of refreshing are sent from the presence of the LORD, and the people are disposed to return to their allegiance to the Almighty, he declares, "*I will say to them that were not my people, thou art my people; and they shall say, thou art my God.*" If it be lawful to

swear allegiance to an earthly ruler, can it be unlawful to swear to the Ruler of the universe? If one may do this, may not two? If two, why may not a thousand? If nations may bind themselves to perform civil duties, to individuals or communities, may they not bind themselves, also, to perform those duties, which they owe to the GOD of heaven and earth.

6. The duty of covenanting is involved in the very nature of the church's relation to GOD, as a new covenant GOD in Christ Jesus. GOD stands related to her, in the character of a husband. *Isai. liv. 5. "Thy Maker is thy Husband."* She stands related to Christ, and to GOD in Christ, in the character of a bride, or spouse. Hence, in John's vision, she is called "*the bride, the Lamb's wife.*" This relationship is not confined to the internal mystical union, which takes place in the hour of conversion, but extends to, and clothes itself with, external significant acts. Nor are these peculiar to individuals, but common to societies, both great and small. To this purpose, we read, *Isai. lxii. 4. "Thou shalt no more be termed, Forsakers; neither shall thy land any more be termed, Desolate: but thou shalt be called Hephzi-bah, and thy land Beulah, for the LORD delighteth in thee, and thy land shall be married."* Now, how a land can be married to GOD, if national covenanting be denied, I confess, I cannot understand.

7. The utility of covenanting, allowing it not to be forbidden, would justify the practising of it. It is an excellent mean of promoting holiness, and sanctification of character. The common, nay the almost universal practice, of mankind, in requiring oaths, as the highest security they can possibly obtain, that witnesses will be candid and ingenuous in attesting the facts which are disputed, testifies, that they consider them calculated to promote truth. This is, also, the doctrine of the sacred oracles. "*An oath for confirmation is the end of all strife.*" And, as it is more likely men will tell the truth, when they are solemnly sworn, so it is more likely, that those, who thus solemnly engage to conscientiousness in duty, will be careful in performance. We are as prone

to sin now-a-days, as the Jews were of old ; and, consequently, stand in as much need of being hedged in to duty, and stimulated to holiness in life and conversation.

8. God has signally countenanced the performance of this duty, by the outpourings of his Spirit, preparing those, who had thus devoted themselves to his service, to stand the fiery trial. He has called out a great cloud of witnesses, engaged to him by covenant, to seal their testimony with their blood, and has acknowledged them, with testimonials of approbation, even amidst the most excruciating torments. May we not say, then, respecting the manifestations of divine favour to his honoured martyrs, as Manoah's wife said, upon the departure of the angel, Judg. xiii. 23. "*If the LORD were pleased to kill us, he would not have received a burnt-offering and a meat-offering at our hands.*" In like manner, had these covenants been displeasing to God, would he have so singularly countenanced the Covenanters, when dragged to the stake or scaffold, by their barbarous persecutors. Having endeavoured to shew some reasons of the morality of covenanting, in New Testament times, it may be proper, in the

VI. head, to mention some of the times and seasons, when Providence more particularly calls a nation, or church, *actually and publicly*, to essay this duty.

Public social covenanting, is not a *stated and ordinary* duty, but, *occasional and extraordinary*. In order duly to ascertain the times and seasons when this duty should be essayed, it will be necessary to pay attention to the occurrences of Divine Providence, which the approved examples of the saints may have, as it were, consecrated to these particular exercises. A few of these seasons we shall now endeavour to enumerate. And,

1. A time of public humiliation, for our apostacy from God, is a suitable season for engaging in this duty. Thus, we are informed, in Jer. l. 4, 5. "*In those days, and at that time, saith the LORD, the children of Israel, and the children of Judah, shall come together, going and weeping, they shall seek the LORD their GOD. They shall ask the way to Zion, with their faces thither-*

ward; saying, come and let us join ourselves to the LORD, in a perpetual covenant, that shall not be forgotten." Deep sensibility, on account of sin, and confession of guilt and iniquity before GOD, are suitable to, and ought to be concomitants of, these solemn exercises. Such a season, and similar exercises, accompanied the renovation of the Sinaitic covenant, as recorded Deut. xxix. near the close. After their example, our ancestors connected, with a similar transaction, a public acknowledgment of their transgressions.

2. We are authorized to essay this duty, when the LORD is pleased to announce times of public revival, and give evidences of national reformation. Thus, we find, 2d Kings xxiii. 3. under the favourable auspices of the pious Josiah, a reforming king of Judah, the nation is called to public covenanting, as a noted mean of promoting national reformation. And Josiah, himself, is among the most forward, in this very laudable exercise. "*And the king stood by a pillar, and made a covenant before the LORD, to walk after the LORD, and keep his commandments and his testimonies, and his statutes, with all their hearts, and with all their souls, to perform the words of this covenant, which were written in this book: and all the people stood to the covenant.*" This, also, was the practice of our renowned ancestors in Britain. They considered those solemn engagements to GOD, and one another, as calculated to strengthen their hands, in the work of the LORD, promote mutual confidence, and give energy to their operations. They, of consequence, frequently essayed this duty, during the reforming period.

3. Times of thanksgiving, for public deliverance from national calamities, are also legitimated, by the example of the people of GOD, as suitable seasons for essaying this duty. Thus, 2d Kings xi. 12, and 17, and 20. when the reins of government were wrenched out of the hands of the wicked Atholiah, after six years usurpation, and Jehoash, the young prince, restored to the people, "*Jehoiada made a covenant between the LORD and the king, and the people, that they should be the Lord's people: between the king also, and the people—and all*

the people of the land rejoiced, and the city was quiet." Here, they considered this public deliverance, as being a proper occasion for entering into national obligations to GOD, to obey and serve him. This practice, on such occasions, is also expressly enjoined upon Israel, by the Psalmist, in the lxxvi. Psalm, and 11th verse. This psalm was penned on that very memorable occasion of the destruction of Sennacherib's army, before the walls of Jerusalem. "*Vow, and pay to the LORD your GOD.*" Such, also, was the practice of the reformers in Britain, when emancipated from the galling yoke of antichristian domination.

4. Times of public defections and apostacy from GOD, when, as Solomon says, "*the hearts of men seem set in them to do evil,*" call loudly for engaging in this important duty. Thus, we find the children of Israel, notwithstanding the marvellous things which GOD did for them in Egypt, at the Red Sea, and in the wilderness, prone to backslide and apostatize from him, who had been their Saviour. In the xxix. chap. of Deut. 14th and 15th verses, Moses, before his death, calls upon them to renew their covenant with GOD; that so, as far as means could go, he might tie up their hands from rebellion against GOD. In like manner, Joshua, before his death, finding the people froward and stiff-necked, convenes them together, and calls upon them to renew their engagement to the LORD GOD of their fathers. Jos. xxiv. 1, 25. "*So Joshua made a covenant with the people that day, and set them a statute and an ordinance in Shechem.*" After these laudable examples, the British reformers, amidst great national defections, especially at the revolution settlement, renewed their covenant with GOD, as a mean of acquiring new invigoration in promoting his glory, and stability in contending against the enemies of reformation.

5. Times of singular and eminent out-pourings of the Spirit of GOD, are also fit and proper seasons for publicly recognizing our obligation to GOD, and entering into covenant with him. When a new and divine energy fills the soul, and warms and animates the affec-

tions, nothing short of a marriage relation to GOD, publicly solemnized, will satisfy. Thus, we read, in *Isai.* xliv. 3, 5. "*For I will pour out water on him that is thirsty, and floods on the dry ground; I will pour out my Spirit upon thy seed, and my blessing upon thine offspring.*" And what do we find to be the consequence of this effusion of the Spirit? The first effect, produced by these former and latter rains of heaven, is spiritual vegetation. "*They shall spring up as among the grass, and as willows by the water courses.*" This growth being begun, they engage in the business of covenanting. "*One shall say, I am the LORD's; and another shall call himself by the name of Jacob: and another shall subscribe with his hand unto the LORD, and surname himself by the name of Israel.*" This worthy example the British reformers followed, in their valiant struggle to propagate the religion of Jesus. GOD countenanced them with singular out-pourings of his Spirit, and times of eminent refreshing from his blessed presence, as their works, to this day, clearly evince. What do we find them then engaging to? They give themselves away unto GOD, in our everlasting covenant, not to be forgotten:

6 When a church, or nation, is subjected to the immediate pressure of calamitous circumstances, it may be a very suitable time for solemn public covenanting to GOD. For this practice, we have the example of the church, in the days of Nehemiah, when subjected to the wanton dominion of the Persian monarch, and his insidious court parasites. *Neh.* ix. 36, 38 they thus complain: "*Behold, we are servants this day, and for the land that thou gavest unto our fathers, to eat the fruit thereof, and the good thereof, behold we are servants in it. And it yieldeth much increase unto the kings whom thou hast set over us, because of our sins: also, they have dominion over our bodies, and over our cattle, at their pleasure, and we are in great distress.*" Under these distressing circumstances, they engage in the duty of public covenanting, as an excellent mean of obtaining deliverance from these distresses. Hence, in the

next verse, they say, "*And, because of all this, we make a sure covenant, and write it; and our princes, Levites, and priests, seal unto it.*" In determining the proper season for engaging in this important duty, great attention is necessary to the peculiar completion of Divine Providence, comparing our circumstances and situation with the approved examples of the flocks that have gone before us. Those who are attentive, may expect direction Ps. cvii. 43. "*Whoso is wise, and will observe those things, even they shall understand the loving kindness of the LORD.*" But, as the doctrine advanced on this subject of covenanting, is much controverted, it will be proper, in the

VII. head, to obviate some of the objections made thereto.

Objection 1. "Covenanting is altogether unnecessary, because, what is *right*, ought to be done, independently of any other obligation; and if *wrong*, all obligations to perform it, are invalid."

Answer. This objection proves too much, and, consequently, proves nothing at all. Were the objection valid, then all promises would be useless and insignificant, except in mere matters of indifference. All oaths, testifying the truth between man and man, would be unnecessary appeals to Heaven. When a person is called before a court of justice, to give evidence in any litigated matter, he is indispensably bound, by the ninth precept of the decalogue, to tell the truth without reserve. Then, according to this objection, it would be wrong to call upon him to swear, because he is bound already. But, this is contrary both to the sacred oracles, which inform us, Heb. vi. 16. that "*an oath for confirmation, is an end of all strife,*" and to the common sense of mankind, as is evident in all judicatories, as well civil as ecclesiastical. The witness recognizes the obligation of the moral law, and solemnly binds himself, by his own act and deed, conscientiously to perform what it requires. In like manner, in covenanting to God, we consider ourselves bound, by the moral law, to obey and serve him. This obligation we solemn-

ly recognize, and bind ourselves, by our own act and deed, to a conscientious performance. And, as the witness, when sworn, if he tells what is not true, is guilty, not only of a *lie*, but also of *perjury*; so, apostate covenanters are guilty of a breach, not only of moral duty, but also, of solemn engagements. And as, by the general consent of mankind, it is admitted, that there is more probability a person will tell the truth, when duly sworn; so, it is probable, that those, who solemnly covenant to God, will be more conscientious in the performance of duty.

Obj. 2. "But these covenants, for which you contend, were only oaths of allegiance, and, consequently, can have no obligation, when you remove to a foreign land."

Ans. It will be admitted, that they were oaths of allegiance; but, it was primarily to the Governor of the universe, and secondarily to the government, while continuing to prosecute the spirit of these covenants, and the interests of Heaven's Almighty Ruler. With respect to the *first*, let us examine whether any of those circumstances, which can dissolve allegiance, has actually taken place. Allegiance may cease, by any of the *three* following means: *First*, by the dissolution of the dynasty, or government, when things revert to an original state of nature. *Second*, by emigration. Allegiance and protection being reciprocal, when the latter is no longer necessary, the former, of consequence, ceases. *Third*, by breach of the mutual compact, on the part of the government. This compact, being necessarily involved in the relation between the governed and the governor, ceases to bind the former, when violated and broken through by the latter. Has any of these things taken place, to dissolve our allegiance to the Supreme Ruler? The *first* has not; for, GOD is yet Governor of all the earth, and we are warranted to say, as in Rev. xix. 6. "*The LORD GOD omnipotent reigneth.*" Neither can the *second* take place, for we cannot elope from his dominions. 1st. xxiv. 1. "*The earth is the LORD's, and the fulness thereof.*" Nor, can the *third* ever come

to pass. God has never violated his covenant with his people. Sooner will he forget the ordinances of Heaven, that the grateful vicissitudes of the seasons, and the cheerful light of day, should cease, than he will forget his covenant with the seed of Israel. No! The mountains may depart, and the hills be removed—but, the covenant of his peace shall never be removed. *Isai. liv. 10.*

The oath of allegiance to the government of Britain, even were it morally constituted, however, ceases. The conditions, on which it was entered into, no longer exist. Seeing we have emigrated from that country, the obligation, of course, is null and void. But, our relation to God still remains the same. And even by that part of the covenant, which respects allegiance to government, we hold ourselves still so far bound, that, whenever we find legitimate rulers, in the land where we live, we will consider the duty of subjection, for conscience sake, not only as a moral duty, required by the divine law, but also, as a duty unto which we are bound by covenant.

Obj. 3. “But these covenants were *local*, and required the performance only of *local* duties, and, consequently, are not obligatory in other lands.”

Ans. This objection is virtually answered, in removing the one immediately preceding. It is admitted, there are local peculiarities connected with the substance of these covenants. For these local peculiarities, we do not contend. In our terms of communion, adapted to our existing circumstances, in the United States, when recognizing the obligation of these covenants, we declare, that “This obligation is not to be considered as extending to those things which are peculiar to, and practicable only in, the British isles; but only to such moral duties, as are substantially the same in all lands.” Whatever things in these bonds were of a circumstantial nature, as we have hinted above, may vary with a change of circumstances. But our relation to God, is not a circumstantial or local thing. Love to God, and our neighbour, will still continue obligatory, though some

circumstances, connected with the expression and exercise of it, may, and often do, vary.

Obj. 4. "But, seeing you admit any part of them to be local, their obligation ceases. For the *local* part being removed, destroys the form of the covenant; and, as matter and form are necessary to their existence, they now want something which is essential to their existence, as covenants, and, consequently, are null and void."

Ans. This objection is more specious than solid. It might be enquired, how much of the present form of any subject is essential to its existence, in its present predicament? We find that *fingers, toes, legs, and arms*, all belong to the present form of men and women; but, suppose a finger, toe, leg, or arm, or even all of these, should be cut off, would this destroy the essentials of their humanity? If it would, to what class of *accountable* beings would they then belong, for the law would still account them as moral subjects? We hear of no other classes of accountable beings, but angels and men. If, therefore, they still remain accountable, and belong not to the latter, they must belong to the former. *Query.* Can angels be manufactured out of men, by an act of amputation?

Should a man have a wife and family, previously to his entering into the holy ministry, the form of his ordination vow would contain a clause, binding him to the conscientious performance of those duties, which arise out of the conjugal and family relation. Should his wife die, and his family become extinct, part of the vow has no present obligation, for the relation on which it was grafted, is dissolved; the form, of course, is, in part, destroyed: does his ordination vow, therefore, become invalid? Must he either cease to be a minister of the Gospel, or be re-ordained?

Obj. 5. "These covenants were national, and so have no obligation on individuals, when they cease to be members of the national community who entered into them."

Ans. Had the duties, contained in these covenants, been only of a temporary, local, or circumstantial nature, this objection would be relevant. But we have

endeavoured, above, to show, that these bonds contemplated the duties of the moral law, which is obligatory upon all men. Abstract principles do not vary, though the modifications with which they are clothed, in their reduction to practice, may, and often do, vary. Their circumstances, we have publicly declared, we contend not for.

But here we might enquire, of what is a nation composed? Is it not of individuals? Can a nation be *nationally* bound, and the individuals not be *individually* bound? To what is the nation *nationally* bound? Is it not, to yield a cheerful and willing obedience to all God's holy and divine commandments, in their *national character*? Is not the individual *individually* bound to do the same, in his *individual character*? If he is thus bound in Britain, does the foil of Columbia loose him of all obligation to, and make him independent of, the Moral Governor? In as far as this moral obligation is concerned, between *national* and *personal* covenanting, there is only a *numerical* difference. In the latter, *one* individual is *personally* bound; in the former, *three, four, or five millions* of individuals, are *personally* bound. If individuals are not *personally* bound, they are not bound at all. To talk of an *individual* being *nationally* bound, would be a solecism worthy of the greatest blunderer.

Obj. 6. "But these covenants are embarrassments to those who would wish to join your church communion, yet never came under these obligations, either personally, or by representation."

Ans. To the judicious, this can be no objection. It is plain, that these covenants were binding, not only on the nation, *as a nation*, but also on the church, *as a church*. It would not be very hard to prove, that every man, by the very act of accession to the Christian church, becomes a *Covenanter*. This is not merely by having a visible relationship established between him and Jesus, the church's Head, but also, by joining a covenanted corporation. The Christian church is the same immortal society, which received its charter first in the garden of Eden, in the memorable words, "*It shall bruise thy head, and*

thou shalt bruise his heel." Though, for a period, its privileges were confined to the Jewish nation; yet, the middle wall of partition being broken down, she lengthened her cords, and strengthened her stakes, by the accession of the Gentile world. This branch, though wild by nature, GOD was pleased to graft upon the good Olive-Tree, when the natural branches were broken off, Rom. xi. 24. By this accession, they became bound, by all the moral obligations of the corporation, with which they were thus united. But this corporation was covenanted to GOD, in Horeb. This covenant was, moreover, renewed, in accommodation to existing circumstances, under the direction of Moses, Joshua, Aza, Jehoiada, Hezekiah, Josiah, and Nehemiah. The obligation of this covenant, thus solemnly sworn, the Jewish church lay constantly under. All who accede to this corporation, by the very act of junction recognize its obligation. All the Christian church is, consequently, bound, by covenant, to GOD. To our communion, therefore, covenanting can be no just objection.

This same covenant was renewed by our ancestors, and is binding on us, as a church, in this country. But, to meet the objection more closely. All, who would propose junction with our community, must belong to one or other of the three following grades, in the scale of reformation. Either they are before us, or behind us, or equal to us. If before us, let them shew us in what, and we will quickly follow them. If behind us, they ought to do the same with us. If equal to us, the objection does not apply.

Obj. 7. "We covenant to GOD, in the Sacraments of Baptism and the Supper, and any thing more would be unnecessary."

Ans. This objection would come with a better grace from an Anabaptist, than from a Presbyterian. Time would not allow us to follow the former, through the various topics of argument, which a refutation of his distinguishing principles necessarily embraces. With the Presbyterian, who admits Infant Baptism as substi-

tuted in the room of Circumcision, in the Abrahamic covenant, and who also grants, that the Sacrament of the Supper comes in the room of the Passover, the way is short and easy. To those, who are of this denomination, therefore, I would propose the following questions, viz. Had not the church, under the Old Testament, these two seals of the covenant substantially considered, in the institutions of Circumcision and the Passover? Did not these ordinances involve their engagement unto God, as much as Baptism and the Supper do, under the New Testament dispensation? Did the use of these supercede the practice of public covenanting, under the Old Testament? If it did not, why should it do so under the New?

Obj 8. "But in these covenants, for which you contend, *civil* and *religious* things are blended together. Preach up the Gospel; let civil things alone."

Ans. Our covenants, indeed, bind to the performance of civil, as well as of religious duties. It may be enquired here, does the moral law require any civil duties of us, or does it not? If it does, why may we not engage to the performance of them? If it does not, then they are matters of mere indifference. But this is so flatly contrary to Scripture, that it can have few advocates among professed Christians.

But, provided the circumstance of the covenants, requiring civil as well as religious duties, were any reason why they should be rejected, then the Bible itself should be cast aside. In this sacred volume, we find civil and religious duties required and enjoined, not only in the same book, not only in the same chapter, but also in the very same verse. "*Fear GOD and the king.*" This has not yet been expunged as apocryphal. Neither has it been supposed to destroy the obligation and validity of the divine oracles. Let us, for a moment, attend to the manner of Scripture covenants. See, for example, that one mentioned, Neh. ix. 38. "*And because of all this, we make a sure covenant, and write it; and our princes, Levites, and priests, seal unto it.*" Did these civil and ecclesiastical persons, swear this co-

venant, in their respective stations? And should we not, in covenanting to GOD, solemnly engage to yield a conscientious obedience to the divine law, in performing all the duties of our respective stations? Let us not, then, at the expence of Scripture example—at the expence of the requisitions of the Moral Law—and at the expence of reason and common sense—"for a morsel of pottage," quit with our birth-right.

The other part of the allegation, respecting preaching the Gospel, and giving ourselves no concern with political affairs, is equally unfounded. What is the commission of the minister of the Gospel? Does it not embrace the whole volume of divine revelation? It is as extensive as the sacred record. "*All things, whatsoever, I have commanded you.*" Has he given any commands respecting the constitution and administration of civil government? If he has, are not his ambassadors bound to teach them? If he has not, what is the meaning of Rom. xiii. 1—7. 1st Pet. ii. 13—17. with innumerable other passages of Scripture? Are not these ambassadors commanded to "*declare the whole counsel of GOD, keeping nothing back?*" Query. Do the portions, alluded to above, belong to the counsel of GOD, or form any part of divine truth?

Obj. 9. "Why do you talk so much about covenanting, yet have not, for many years, essayed the duty?"

To this, I reply. There is no command in Scripture, enjoining, precisely, how often it ought to be essayed. It is an extraordinary duty. It may be more frequently, or more rarely, engaged in, according to the circumstances in which a church or nation, may, in providence, be situated. Whether we have, or have not, duly attended to these circumstances, and providences, is no real objection to the duty itself. No doubt, in many things, we have come short. This is no reason why duty should be opposed, or the principle denied. We have uniformly contended for the binding obligation of the covenants of our ancestors. We consider ourselves bound thereby. We, as a church, have renewed these covenants, since the revolution settlement in Britain.

We hope, as a church, soon to essay the duty again.

I shall now close this discourse with a few inferences.

1. Public covenanting, is an incumbent duty on a nation or church. When GOD commands, we are bound to obey. When he says, "*Vow and pay to the Lord,*" we, as his moral subjects, are under indispensable obligations, to do as he requires. The example of the saints, calls also upon us to embark in this duty. We ought to follow the footsteps of the flock, in all their laudable undertakings, when existing circumstances will permit. "*Go ye forth by the footsteps of the flock,*" binds us to imitate their worthy example. "*Be ye followers of me* (saith the apostle) *even as I also am of Christ.*"

2. That having vowed unto GOD, we are solemnly bound to pay. "*Pay that which thou vowest.*" We ought to remember, that "*GOD will surely require it of us.*" The neglect of duty, in those who have thus engaged to the faithful performance of it, will be more criminal, than in those who have made no such engagements. Neither should we, from this consideration, omit the duty of engaging unto GOD, flattering ourselves, that we may have the more liberty of sinning. Though GOD says, 2d Pet. ii. 21. "*It had been better not to have known the way of righteousness, than, after it is known, to turn from it ;*" we are not, therefore, to conclude, that it is lawful for us to remain wilfully ignorant thereof, that so we may be the less criminal in our iniquity. Ignorance is a sin, as well as the abuse of knowledge. So, the omission of the duty of covenanting is criminal, as well as a violation of the covenant, when made.

To keeping of covenant with GOD, we will be induced, by attending,

1. To the advantages resulting therefrom. You will thus honour all the divine perfections. You have sworn by GOD ; attention to your oath will honour his attributes. You will glorify all the divine persons in the Trinity. The Father in his love, the Son in his grace, the Spirit in his application. You will disappoint the grand adversary, who is going about, like a roaring

lion, seeking whom he may devour. He waits for your halting ; he rejoices in tempting you to perfidy, in covenant engagements. You will testify the goodness of your cause, to the generation among whom you dwell. You are commanded to "*let your light so shine before men, that they, seeing your good works, may glorify your Father who is in Heaven.*" You will much promote your own satisfaction and holiness. This will be a noted mean to promote your fitness for the enjoyment of God, in the mansions of bliss and immortality above.

2. The disadvantages arising from unfaithfulness in covenant engagements. You show contempt to the divine law—You rebel against the divine authority, manifested in the law—You profane the ordinances of God's appointment, intended as a special mean of promoting a contrary course of conduct—You represent God as a willing witness of your perfidy in your engagements—You pour contempt upon him, as the guarantee of his own law, and avenger in case of perjury—Contrary to truth, you plunge into deceit—Contrary to equity, you rob God of his due—Contrary to good neighbourhood, you render yourself a plague and curse to society—Contrary to the end of your creation and preservation, you reject the glory of God. And, in one word, persevering in this course of conduct, nothing but a fearful looking-for of judgment awaits you. Resolve, then, my brethren, in the strength of grace, to say with the Psalmist, "*I have sworn, and I will perform it, that I will keep thy righteous judgments.*" Amen.

ERRATA.

Page 5, line 12, from the foot, for *verses 1, 10.* read
verse 1—10.

Page 9, line 12, from the foot, for *agrecably* read *agreeable*

Page 12, line 4, from the foot, for *accessory* read *accessory*

Page 13, line 9, for *accessory* read *accessory*

line 7, from the foot, for *accessory* read *accessory*

Page 15, line 19, for *gives* read *give*

Page 26, line 14, for *to* read *do*

Page 39, line 13, from the foot, for *this* read *their*

Page 58, line 9, for *adore* read *adorn*

Page 63, line 17, for *then* read *there*

Page 66, line 10, for *know of* read *know*

Page 74, line 19, insert the word *it* between *yet* and
morally

Page 75, line 20, for *among* read *respecting*

Page 89, line 17, from the foot, for *obligated* read *delegated*

Page 92, line 10, for *promissary* read *promissory*

Page 94, line 2, from the foot, for *Jos. xi. 10.* read
Jer., xi. 10.

Page 95, line 6, for *at* read *with*

Page 103, line 21, for *Forsakers* read *Forsaken*

Page 105, line 8, place a comma after *ancestors*

line 5, from the foot, for *Atholiah* read *Athaliah*

Page 107, line 22, for *our* read *an*

Page 108, line 8, for *flocks* read *flock*