

Debate: How the Solemn League & Covenant Binds the Usa, Canada, Australia, etc., Today (2/3)

by Greg Barrow

The Solemn League & Covenant is a binding agreement between nations and territories, recognizing God as a party and obligating signers to reformation and the preservation of the true religion.

Duration: 1:22:29

Topics: "Covenant Theology", "Repentance"

Description

In this sermon transcript, John Guthrie emphasizes the importance of recognizing that God is a party in the Psalm-Legend Covenant. He argues that both England and Scotland are bound to this covenant, and even if one or both forsake it, the obligation remains for the sake of future generations. Guthrie urges the reader to study and understand their duty in order to avoid God's wrath. The transcript also mentions Mr. Bacon, who tries to avoid the obligation of the covenant by considering it merely a historical document, but Guthrie argues that making a personal covenant with God is a lawful remedy for repenting of sins like misrepresentation.

Transcript

This is tape 2 of Covenanted Uniformity, the Protestant Remedy for Disunity, being chapter 3 of Greg Barrow's book, *The Covenanted Reformation Defended Against Contemporary Schismatics*, narrated by Larry Berger. Please note that this entire book is free on Stillwaters Revival Books website, www.swrb.com. It is also available in hardcover from Stillwaters, along with a treasure trove of the finest Protestant, Reformed, and Puritan literature available anywhere in the world today. Stillwaters can be reached at 780-450-3730 or by email at swrb@swrb.com. These tapes are not copyrighted and we therefore encourage you to copy and distribute them to any and all you believe would be benefited.

We continue our reading. John Guthrie, faithful minister of Christ, one of the four hundred ministers banished by the king in 1660, explains the importance of recognizing that God is a party in the solemnly in covenant. Quote, but these lands are one party and the God of heaven is the other party.

Therefore, though England should break, should Scotland also break the covenant? It is not after this tenor, we will endeavor reformation in these lands, but if you break, we will break also. No, it is each man

swearing for himself that he shall, in his place and station, endeavor reformation, so that if it were left all to one man, he must endeavor reformation. For consider the last words of the article.

Each of them for himself did lift up his hands to the Most High, and so these three lands are one party and the other party is the God of heaven. Consider seriously upon it, for it is the thing that you must either suffer for or sin, ere it be long, without remedy. Whatever England and Ireland have done in breaking the covenants, we say they justly must smart for it, according to the word of God, if God in mercy prevent it not.

Nevertheless, as long as there are in these lands any who keep the covenant, we are bound to keep it, and suppose there are many who had rather suffer for it than sin, as witnessed the many scattered flocks and shepherds in these lands, and supposing this were not, though both England and Ireland should quit it, yet Scotland is bound to it. And that's from John Howey, Sermons Delivered in Times of Persecution in Scotland, page 668. Further on in the same sermon, Guthrie continues, quote, Now a word to that which I mentioned before.

What shall we do, since these lands have broken covenant with God? I tell you that Scotland is bound to keep it, although England and Ireland have broken it, and although Scotland break it, yet Ireland and England are bound to stand to it. Though thou, Israel, play the harlot, yet let not Judah offend, that is to say, as for you at this present time, though England and Ireland have broken, yet let not Scotland do so too. Suppose there were but one family in these lands that would stand to it, and if all that family should turn their back upon it except one person, truly that person is bound to stand to it.

Choose you whom you will serve, but as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord. Here is but a family, so that if all the kingdom should forswear the covenant, yet so long as I am master of a family, I must serve the Lord. I must not serve other gods, that is to say, we should not serve popes nor prelates and so forth.

But what if it comes to this, that there be no man to bide by it at all but one man? That man is bound to keep it, according to the Scripture. I have been very jealous for the Lord God of hosts, because the children of Israel have forsaken my covenant, thrown down mine altars, and slain my prophets with the sword, and I, even I only, am left. From these words I conclude, though England has forsaken, yet Scotland is bound, and though Scotland should forsake, yet England is bound, and though both forsake, yet one family is bound to stand to it.

Therefore study to know your duty, lest the wrath of God come upon you and your posterity. Believe these things, for our king and princes, nobles and ministers, and all the people, and our posterity are bound to it. So I leave it to you with this.

Happy is that man that shall be steadfast in the covenant, though all the rest should forsake it. But as to the persons who shall continue steadfast, God has reserved that to himself as a piece of his sovereignty. Again, we hear not tell of a public covenant ever sworn and broken, but God visibly plagued the breakers thereof.

What could extend and transmit an obligation to posterity if swearing an everlasting covenant with God on behalf of posterity fails to accomplish the task? The evidence already presented must forcibly lead the reader to understand that the obligations of the covenants are extended far beyond the original covenanters. Mr. Bacon disputes with Thomas McCree. On December 18, 1996, Mr. Bacon wrote to

Pastor Price, Are you seriously suggesting that not aligning ourselves with a 17th century document is sinful? That seems to be what I've read thus far in both your overture and your posts.

If so, then you have made that 17th century document the rule of faith and practice. Necessity is not laid upon me to hold the traditions of men, else God shares the throne of my conscience with mortals. Thomas McCree replies, If there is any truth in the statements that have now been made, the question respecting the obligation of the British covenants is deeply interesting to the present generation.

The identity of a nation as existing through different ages is, in all moral respects, as real as the identity of an individual through the whole period of his life. The individuals that compose it, like the particles of matter in the human body, pass away and are succeeded by others, but the body politic continues essentially the same. If Britain contracted a moral obligation in virtue of a solemn national covenant for religion and reformation, that obligation must attach to her until it has been discharged.

Have the pledges given by the nation been yet redeemed? Do not the principal stipulations in the covenant remain unfulfilled to this day? Are we not as a people still bound by that engagement to see these things done? Has the lapse of time canceled the bond, or will a change of sentiments and views set us free from its tie? Is it not the duty of all friends of reformation to endeavor to keep alive a sense of this obligation on the public mind? But although all ranks and classes in the nation should lose impressions of it, and although there should not be a single religious denomination, nor even a single individual in the land, to remind them of it, will it not be held in remembrance by one with whom a thousand years are as one day, and one day as a thousand years?" That's from Thomas McCree's Unity of the Church, page 200. Yes, Mr. Bacon, I am seriously suggesting that you align yourself with these 17th century covenants, and you do not have to bind your conscience to the rules of men to do it. You only have to keep a promise and own an obligation intended for your good, made by those who represented you in an everlasting covenant with God.

This promise is one that God will require of you, even if 354 years have passed since it was sworn. Have you forgotten Saul and the Gibeonite oath? And Joshua made peace with them, that is, the Gibeonites, and made a league, or covenant, with them to let them live. And the princes of the congregation swear unto them, Joshua 9.15. Then there was a famine in the days of David three years, year after year.

And David inquired of the Lord. And the Lord answered, It is for Saul and for his bloody house, because he slew the Gibeonites. And the king called the Gibeonites and said unto them, Now the Gibeonites were not of the children of Israel, but of the remnant of the Amorites.

And the children of Israel had sworn unto them, and Saul sought to slay them in his zeal to the children of Israel and Judah. 2 Samuel 21, verses 1 and 2. Scripture says that Saul, in his zeal and with the best of intentions, broke an approximately 400-year-old covenant made between Joshua and the Gibeonites. God was far more than seriously suggesting.

Rather, he was definitely requiring that Saul keep a 400-year-old promise made by his forefather Joshua. God sorely punished Israel, and the whole nation had to endure a three years famine for Saul's covenant-breaking zeal. Is the PRCE seriously suggesting that God will hold us to a 350-year-old covenant made by our forefathers? Yes.

What will Mr. Bacon and his children have to suffer before he admits his sin and repents? Will his whole house have to suffer before he realizes his error? What will this covenant-breaking nation have to suffer

before they mend their perfidious ways? God is not changed, and he will require us to pay our vows, whether they were made in the seventeenth century or in 1997. Brethren, I speak after the manner of men. Though it be but a man's covenant, yet if it be confirmed, no man disannulleth or addeth thereto.

Galatians 3.15. Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain, for the Lord will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain. Exodus 20, verse 7. When thou shalt vow a vow unto the Lord thy God, thou shalt not slack to pay it, for the Lord thy God will surely require it of thee, and it would be sin in thee. But if thou shalt forbear to vow, it shall be no sin in thee.

Deuteronomy 23, verses 21 and 22. D. Who are the posterity referred to in the covenants? Since Mr. Bacon claims that he is not intrinsically bound by these everlasting covenants, it is very important to answer this question. Who were the posterity to whom the covenanters intended this everlasting covenant to apply? Are we in Canada and the United States included in these everlasting covenants with God? This is settled beyond all doubt when the General Assembly says that they originally intended to swear an everlasting covenant for settling and preserving peace in all His Majesty's dominions.

Obviously this raises yet another question. Who were included among the dominions of Charles I or Charles II at the time this covenant was sworn? Canada and the United States were part of His Majesty's dominions when the covenant was sworn, and consequently we are morally and formally bound to own, renew, and adopt these everlasting covenants. I would like to thank Pastor Greg Price for allowing me to use the following draft from his forthcoming book entitled *A Peaceable Plea for Worldwide Protestant Unity* in response to this particular question.

And Mr. Price's quotation begins here, and it extends for several pages. Since we acknowledge that we are the individual, ecclesiastical, and national posterity of the covenanted kingdoms of Scotland, England, and Ireland, we confess it to be our solemn duty not only to own the obligation of the national covenant and the solemn legion covenant, but also to renew as a public testimony our sworn duty to these covenants as God's people. For the sake of any who would question that those individuals and families of British descent or those churches that have descended from the Presbyterian churches of the Second Reformation in Great Britain, or those nations, colonies, or territories that have directly descended from Great Britain are morally and formally bound by these solemn covenants, we offer the following brief testimony.

1. The Westminster Assembly, the Church of Scotland, and the kingdoms of Scotland, England, and Ireland swore the solemn legion covenant on behalf of not only their living posterity, but also on behalf of all their individual, ecclesiastical, and national posterity for all ages to come. We noblemen, barons, knights, gentlemen, citizens, burgesses, ministers of the gospel, and commons of all sorts in the kingdoms of Scotland, England, and Ireland, by the providence of God, living under one king, and being of one reformed religion, after mature deliberation, resolved and determined to enter into a mutual and solemn legion covenant, whereby we all subscribe, and each one of us for himself, with our hands lifted up to the Most High God, do swear, we shall each one of us, according to our place and interest, endeavor that they may remain conjoined in a firm peace of union to all posterity. Notice who the all posterity, as mentioned in the solemn legion covenant, includes in a letter written by the Westminster Assembly and sent to the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland in 1644.

Those winds which for a while do trouble the air, do withal purge and refine it, and our trust is that through the most wise providence and blessing of God, the truth by our so long continued agitations will be better

cleared among us, and so our service will prove more acceptable to all the churches of Christ, but more especially to you, while we have an intentive eye to our peculiar protestation and to that public sacred covenant, that is the solemn legion covenant, entered into by both the kingdoms, and Mr. Price notes Ireland is not formally omitted here, but is omitted only because this English Assembly is addressing the Scottish General Assembly, that is entered into both the kingdoms for uniformity in all His Majesty's dominions, that's taken from the Acts of the General Assemblies of the Church of Scotland, pages 231 and 232. B. Not only did the Westminster Assembly understand the all posterity bound by the solemn legion covenant to be all His Majesty's dominions, but the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland also officially declared the same to be true in their letter, 1648, to Charles the First. As we do not oppose the restitution of your majesty to the exercise of your royal power, so we must needs desire that that which is God's be given unto him in the first place, and that religion may be secured before the settling of any human interest, being confident that this way is not only most for the honor of God, but also for your majesty's honor and safety, and therefore as it was one of our desires to the High and Honorable Court of Parliament that they would solicit your majesty for securing of religion and establishing the solemn legion covenant in all your dominions, and Mr. Price notes, the solemn legion covenant having been sworn and made law by the parliaments of England and Scotland, it was required that Charles the First swear to establish it and to enforce it in all his dominions before he would be allowed to exercise his royal authority, and again that's from the Acts of the General Assemblies of the Church of Scotland, page 439.

C. Fondly, observe that not only did these ecclesiastical bodies, namely the Westminster Assembly and the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland, interpret the all posterity bound by the solemn legion covenant to be those who lived within the bounds of all his majesty's dominions, but it was likewise interpreted to be the case by the Parliament of Scotland, February 17, 1649. Furthermore, this Parliament identifies the national covenant and the solemn legion covenant to be laws that constitute the fundamental constitution of this kingdom, which cannot be made null and void. Quote, as likewise the manifold Acts of Parliament, the fundamental constitution of this kingdom, anent or concerning the king's oath at his coronation, which, judging it necessary that the prince and people be of one perfect religion, appointeth that all kings and princes, at the receipt of their princely authority, solemnly swear to observe in their own persons, and to preserve the religion as it is presently established and professed, and rule the people committed to their charge according to the will of God revealed in his word, and the lovable constitutions received within this kingdom, and do sundry other things which are more fully expressed therein, and withal pondering their manifold solemn obligations to endeavor the securing of religion and the covenant before and above all worldly interests.

Therefore they do enact, ordain, and declare, that before the king's majesty, who now is, that is, Charles II, or any of his successors, shall be admitted to the exercise of his royal power, he shall buy and attour the foresaid oath, that is, the coronation oath, assure and declare by his solemn oath, under his hand and seal, his allowance of the national covenant, and of the solemn legion covenant, and obligations to prosecute the ends thereof, in his station and calling, and that he shall consent and agree to acts of parliament establishing Presbyterian church government, the directory for worship, confession of faith, and catechisms, as they are approved by the general assembly of this kirk, and parliament of this kingdom, in all his majesty's dominions, and that he shall observe these in his own practice and family, and that he shall never make opposition to any of these, or endeavor any change thereof. And that's from John Thorburn's *Vindiciae Magistratis*, or *The Divine Institution and Rite of the Civil Magistrate Vindicated*, page 67. Naturally, since both of the kingdoms of England and Ireland, in their national and ecclesiastical capacity, also swore the solemn legion covenant in 1643, the solemn legion covenant legally became a

necessary element of the fundamental constitution of those kingdoms, in all his majesty's dominions as well.

2. Is it possible to know which nations were solemnly bound as the all posterity by the solemn league covenant, and thus included in all his majesty's dominions? Clearly it was all the subjects and the dominions under the crown of Great Britain, including the United States and Canada, both of which were then designated as the dominions in America. A. The first colonial charter issued by the English crown, 1606, was for the settlement of Jamestown in Virginia. Here it is noted that the colony of Virginia is declared to be one of the king's dominions as much as any other royal dominion, and its members are considered by James I, I believe that should be James VI, to have the same rights as those living in the realm of England.

It provided that all persons, being our subjects, i.e., subjects of the crown of England, which shall dwell and inhabit within any of the said colonies and plantations, and every one of their children which shall happen to be born within any of the limits and precincts of the said several colonies and plantations, shall have and enjoy all liberties, franchises, and immunities within any of our other dominions, to all intents and purposes, as if they had been abiding and born within this our realm of England, or any other of our said dominions. That is cited by Clarence Carson in Basic American Government, page 126. B. In 1663 Charles II granted a charter to eight English gentlemen who had helped him regain the throne of England.

The charter document contains the following description of the territory, then designated Carolina, which the eight lords' proprietors were granted title to, QUOTE, ALL THAT TERRITORY OR TRACT OF GROUND SITUATE LYING AND BEING WITHIN OUR DOMINIONS IN AMERICA, and that was cited on the World Wide Web page entitled State Library of North Carolina. C. On November 11, 1743, at Middle Octorara, Pennsylvania, Reformed Presbyterians under the leadership of Reverend Alexander Craighead renewed the National Covenant and the Solemn League and Covenant. They did so because they realized the colonies in America were His Majesty's dominions, as referred to by the Westminster Assembly, the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland, and the Parliament of Scotland, see above, and they also realized that they were a constituent part of the all-posterity included in the Solemn League and Covenant.

Therefore they were bound to own and to renew these covenants as God provided the occasion to do so in His wonderful providence. Quote, There never was any nation but the nation of the Jews and this realm, note that these Reformed Presbyterians understood the colonies to be within the realm of Great Britain and therefore bound by the national covenants of Great Britain, that's from Mr. Price, that were so highly honored as for the whole nation to enter into covenant with the Lord, and yet, alas, how little does the generality of this nation think of this unspeakable dignity? How many slight it? Yea, how many look upon our national covenants as a yoke of bondage, as if it were a bondage to come under the most solemn vows imaginable, to appear for God and His cause and against His enemies? That which our renowned forefathers gloried in as their greatest honor and happiness, we in this corrupt age do grievously despise, which discovers what base spirits we are of that delight more to be in league with the avowed enemies of God's glory than with Himself. And thus our holy covenants, national and solemn league, discover themselves to be perpetual and of constant obligation upon this realm, including the colonies of America.

Number one, by their being national in their nature, as is plain from themselves, and so had the power of the nation to confirm them. Two, by the terms of them, as appears from several sentences in the covenants, first, the national covenant towards the latter end of it, which is as follows, and finally being

convinced in our minds and confessing with our mouths that the present and succeeding generations in this land are bound to keep the aforesaid national oath and subscription inviolable, again, we therefore faithfully promise for ourselves, our followers, and all under us, both in public and in our particular families and personal carriage, to endeavor to keep ourselves, and so forth. Second, from the first paragraph in the solemn league and covenant, which is as follows, that we, in our posterity after us, may, as brethren, live in faith and love, and that the Lord may delight to dwell in the midst of us.

Third, that these covenants are perpetual and of a constant binding power over this realm is further evident by their agreeableness to the holy word of God, that they are so, few who call themselves Presbyterians deny, yea, we know of none that ever did or can prove them to be otherwise, and that's from Reverend Alexander Craighead's renewal of the covenants, pages 12 and 13. D, it is certainly worthy of note that the faithful body of reformed Presbyterians designated as the reformed Presbytery of Scotland issued a public testimony entitled the act declaration and testimony for the whole of our covenanted reformation, which testimony was originally admitted in 1761 of the fact that in one of the dominions of his majesty, namely Canada, Great Britain had violated its covenant obligations by permitting potpourri to be established as a religion within Quebec. This reformed Presbyterian body, the Scottish heirs to the covenanted reformation, as articulated by the Westminster assembly, clearly understood Canada, a dominion of Great Britain to be bound by the same covenant obligations as was Great Britain herself.

Quote, there has of late been a very singular instance of the same kind occurred, that is an instance of the exercise of tyrannical civil power in the course of administration, which the Presbytery cannot forbear to take notice of, but must embrace the present opportunity to declare their sense of and testify against, and especially as it is one that carries a more striking evidence than any of the former of our public national infidelity and licentiousness and of our being judicially infatuated in our national councils and given up of heaven to proceed from evil to worse in the course of apostasy from the cause and principle of the reformation. We particularly mean the instance of a late bill or act, which has been agreed upon by both houses of parliament, and which also, June 1774, was sanctioned with the royal assent entitled, An Act for Making More Effectual Provision for the Government of the Province of Quebec in North America, by which act not only is French despotism or arbitrary power settled as the form of civil government, but, which is still worse, potpourri, the religion of Antichrist, with all its idolatries and blasphemies, has such security and establishment granted it, as to be taken immediately under the legal protection of the supreme civil authority of these nations in that vast and extensive region of Canada, lately added to the British dominions of North America. How disgraceful and dishonorable is this public act in favor of potpourri, even to the nation itself and its representatives who are the authors of it! How palpably inconsistent is it with our national character and profession as Protestant, and with our national establishments, civil and ecclesiastical, both which are professedly built upon reformation from potpourri, to come and to take that idolatrous religion under our national protection, and become defenders of the Antichristian faith! Nay, were it competent for the presbytery, as a spiritual court and spiritual watchman, to view this act in a civil light, they might show at large that it is a violation of the fundamental national constitutions of the kingdom, and reaches a blow to the credit of the legal security granted to the Protestant religion at home.

We need not here mention how contrary this act is to the fundamental laws and constitutions of the kingdom of Scotland, which are now set aside, but it is contrary to, and a manifest violation of, the revolution and British constitution itself, contrary to the claim of right, yea, to the oath solemnly sworn by every English and British sovereign upon their accession to the throne, as settled by an act of the English

Parliament in the first year of William III, by which they are obliged to profess and to the utmost of their power maintain in all their dominions, the laws of God, the true profession of the gospel, and the true reformed religion established by law. But these things the presbytery leave to such whom it may more properly concern. Let it, however, be observed that the presbytery are not here to be interpreted as approving of the aforesaid oath, as it designably obliges to the maintenance of the abjured English hierarchy and Popish ceremonies, which might better be called a true reformed lie than the true reformed religion.

Nevertheless, this being the British coronation oath, it clearly determines that all legal establishments behoove to be Protestant, and that without a violation of said oath, no other religion can be under protection of law but what is called the Protestant religion only. As from the Act Declaration and Testimony, pages 82 and 84. E. In a document written by Thomas Jefferson entitled A Summary of the Rights of British America, the following brief reference to an act from King George III demonstrates that even those living in America understood they were a dominion of His Majesty.

Quote, One other act passed in the sixth year of his reign, that is George III's, entitled An Act for the Better Securing Dependency of His Majesty's Dominions in America upon the Crown and Parliament of Great Britain. And that is from a worldwide web page. F. The following excerpts occur in the newspaper that Benjamin Franklin published in Philadelphia.

That was the Gazetteer and New Daily Advertiser, wherein reference is made to colonies in what is now Canada and the United States as being dominions of the Crown. Quote, In considering of these questions, perhaps it may be of use to recollect that the colonies were planted in times when the powers of Parliament were not supposed so extensive as to be able to as they are become since the Revolution. That they were planted in lands and countries where the Parliament had not then the least jurisdiction.

That, excepting the yet infant colonies of Georgia and Nova Scotia, none of them were settled at the expense of any money granted by Parliament, that the people went from hence by permission from the Crown, purchased or conquered the territory at the expense of their own private treasure and blood. That these territories thus became new dominions of the Crown, settled under royal charters that formed their several governments and constitutions on which the Parliament was never consulted or had the least participation. That's January 6, 1766, and again cited from the web page.

Again, quoting Franklin, the colonies had, from their first settlement, been governed with more ease than perhaps can be equaled by any instance in history of dominions so distant. February 1773. We would further affirm that just as the lawful covenant of a father binds all his children presently living, as well as those yet to be born, why do we deal treacherously every man against his brother by profaning the covenant of our fathers, Malachi 2.10? Likewise, the lawful civil covenants of national parents bind their national progeny.

For if one is willing to grant that the lawful covenant of a father can bind any of his descendants, he must be willing to grant that the same lawful covenant binds all of his descendants for the same moral obligation that rests upon any one descendant rests upon all descendants. Thus it follows that the United States and Canada, as nations and all other national descendants of Great Britain, are children of Great Britain and are bound by the lawful covenant, that is the solemn legion covenant, of their national father solemnly sworn with uplifted hands to the living God in 1643 and renewed on various occasions in Scotland and the United States by reformed Christians. Samuel B. Wiley, 1773 to 1852, pastor of the Reformed

Presbyterian Church of Philadelphia, noted the personal ecclesiastical and national obligations binding those living in America.

He cogently responds to several objections raised concerning the formal obligations of covenants made by the fathers on behalf of their posterity. Objection two, but these covenants, that is the national covenant and the solemn league covenant for which you contend were only oaths of allegiance to Scotland and Britain and consequently can have no obligation when you're removed to a foreign land. Answer, 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.

With respect to the first, let us examine whether any of those circumstances which can dissolve allegiance to God 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 governor governed and the governor ceases to bind the former when violated and broken through the latter. Has any of these things taken place to dissolve our allegiance to the supreme ruler? The oath of allegiance to the government of Britain, even if it even were it morally constituted, however, ceases and Pastor Price notes, because we have met the second condition mentioned of above, namely that of emigration from Great Britain to another nation.

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. Objection three, but these covenants were local and required the performance only of local duties and consequently are not obligatory in other lands. Answer.

The objection is virtually answered in removing the one immediately proceeding that is objection to just stated. 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 existing circumstances in the United States.

When recognizing the obligations of these covenants, we declare that quote, 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. Close quote. Whatever things in these bonds were of a circumstantial nature, as we have hinted above may vary with the change of circumstances, but our relation to God is not a circumstantial or local thing.

Love to God and our neighbor will still continue obligatory. Those some circumstances connected with the expression and exercise of it may, and often do vary. Objection five, 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.

Answer had the duties contained in these covenants been only of a temporary local or circumstantial nature, this objection would be relevant, but we have endeavored above to show that these bonds contemplated the duties of the moral law, which is obligatory upon all men. But here we might inquire 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 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 soil of Columbia loose him of all obligation to and make him independent of the moral governor? And 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 only nationally bound would be a solicism. That is an error worthy of the greatest blunderer.

And that's from Samuel B. Wiley's Sermon on Covenanting, pages 109 to 112. Reverend John Cunningham, a reformed Presbyterian minister from Scotland, also drew attention to the perpetual obligation of the solemn league and covenant upon the nations and churches descending from Scotland, England, and Ireland. Quote, being scriptural in its matter and not yet implemented.

And besides having been acquiesced in by the civil power, it, the solemn league and covenant is to this day binding on the nations. To this day, it binds the churches in the three kingdoms, the church of Scotland and all those who have seceded from it as an establishment, as well as those Presbyterians who never were connected with that church since the revolution. And that's referring to the revolution of 1689, in which William and Mary came to the throne of Britain.

That's from Cunningham's Ordinance of Covenanting, pages 374 and 375. The Synod of the Reformed Presbyterian Church of North America, at its meeting in 1855, clearly elaborated the binding obligation of the national covenant and the solemn league and covenant upon the posterity in the United States. Although the Reformed Presbyterian Church had by this time defected from some of the testimony of its forefathers, the Arkansas renovation and the act declaration and testimony as terms of communion.

Nevertheless, it yet maintained at this point in time, a faithful testimony to the binding obligation of these covenants. These federal deeds that is the national covenant of Scotland and the solemn league and covenant of the three kingdoms, we hold to be moral in their nature and scriptural in their character, and that they descend with unabated obligation from the original covenanters to their posterity who were represented in the taking of them. And whilst we abjure any fealty or subjection to the government of that nation with which they were originally connected, that is Great Britain, we now joyfully own and take for ourselves the God honoring and God honored place, which such obligations impose as the priceless legacy of our pious ancestors, whose faith we would follow and whose noble example we would imitate.

We approve, moreover, the devotion and faithfulness of our pious predecessors who, amidst weakness and reproach from time to time, renewed these sacred bonds and so contributed to perpetuate and transmit them to us, their posterity. Deploying, therefore, the sin of the profane rejection of these covenants and their subsequent widespread neglect, desiring to be free from any participation in its guilt, seeking to confirm our own souls and a godly purpose of devotion to the service of our God Most High, and to encourage all who shall follow us in our testimony to hold fast in His ways, we resolve to renew the

national covenant and solemnly in covenant in all their obligations, not peculiar to the church in the British Isles, but applicable in all lands and essentially interwoven in the immutable law and word of our God. And that's from the Reformed Presbyterian Church of North America's Form of Covenant Renovation, pages 8 and 9. Pastor Thomas Houston, pastor of the Reformed Presbyterian Church in Knockbracken, also confirms the perpetual obligation of these solemn covenants upon posterity when he writes, On the ground of the moral character of our Father's federal deeds, that is, the national covenant and the solemnly in covenant, they may be regarded as, in some sort, obligatory upon other churches and nations besides those that can trace their descent directly from the original covenanters, and certainly those who have sprung from the same stalk, and who in America, or in the distant colonial dependencies of Britain, owe much of the scriptural light and freedom which they enjoy to the principles developed in the sacred vows of Britain, and to the blessing that is remarkably rested upon a nation which was married to the Lord, have peculiar reasons to view these covenants as worthy of all admiration and devoted regard, and that's from Houston's Memorial of Covenanting, page 68.

And finally, we would draw the attention of our readers to the following words which demonstrate the attitude of faithful Reformed Presbyterians in the United States as it relates to their moral obligation to own formally the national covenant and the solemnly in covenant. To some it may appear strange that a church located in the United States of America should give such prominence as it did to the British covenants. Living in another continent and having no political connection with Britain, on what grounds was this matter embodied in the testimony and acknowledgement of the covenants made obligatory on the members, that is, the members of the Reformed Presbyterian Church, which was established as its own church court in 1798? In answer to this, it will be sufficient to quote the fourth term of communion as adopted by the American Church.

It is to this effect, an acknowledgement that public covenanting is an ordinance of God to be observed by churches and nations under the New Testament dispensation, and that those vows, namely that which was entered into by the Church and Kingdom of Scotland, called the national covenant, and that which was afterwards entered into by the three kingdoms, England, Scotland, and Ireland, and by the Reformed churches in those kingdoms, usually called the solemn league covenant, were entered into the true spirit of that institution, and that the obligation of these covenants extends to those who were represented in the taking of them, although removed to this or any other part of the world, insofar as they bind to duties not peculiar to the Church in the British Isles, but applicable to all lands. This amounts, we presume, simply to this, that the essential principles of the covenants concerning liberty and religion, the reciprocal duties of nations and rulers, and the obligation which both owe to Christ as governor among the nations, were binding on American churches and on American citizens who were of British origin. And that's cited in Matthew Hutchison, The Reformed Presbyterian Church in Scotland, pages 406 and 407.

This ends Pastor Price's faithful contribution to this particular question. This writer would like to publicly thank him for his assistance in this regard. Next, Mr. Bacon claims he is only morally bound to the covenants, and that these covenants have no formal obligation in and of themselves, while the PRCE affirms that we are morally and formally bound to the covenants.

In his defense departed, Mr. Bacon says, So then, we account the solemn league covenant an edifying historical document, which contains in it several moral duties, but we deny that the existence of moral duties within a document binds subsequent generations of the church to the historical and accidental aspects of the document. As Calvin said, these things should be accommodated to the varying circumstances of each age and nation. It should further be noted that whatever in a document is a moral

duty is a moral duty so far and only so far as it is a direct application of God's moral law.

My people have been lost sheep, their shepherds have caused them to go astray, they have turned them away on their mountains, they have gone from mountain to hill, they have forgotten their resting place. Thomas McCree replies, Some of the principles on which it has been attempted to loose this sacred tie are so opposite to the common sentiments of mankind that it is not necessary to refute them, such as that covenants, vows, and oaths cannot superadd any obligation to that which we previously are under by the law of God, and that their obligation on posterity consists merely in the influence of example. Regarding the necessity of formally taking the solemn league covenant, Mr. Bacon shows how he judges this covenant to be little more than a godly example and an edifying historical document, materially applicable only to the seventeenth century, but not formally binding upon us today.

So the Steelite turns that which was good and useful and lawful for the Church of Scotland to use in a time of national and ecclesiastical distress to that which is nothing more than the imposition of traditions upon the conscience. Here Mr. Bacon alleges that the covenants were sworn simply to provide a remedy for a temporary and national emergency. Thomas McCree replies to this common objection, saying, The permanent obligation of the solemn league results from the permanency of its nature and design, and of the parties entering into it, taken in connection with the public capacity in which it was established.

The emergency which led to the formation of the covenant is one thing, and the obligation of the covenant is quite another. The former might quickly pass away, while the latter may be permanent and perpetual. Nor is the obligation of the covenant to be determined by the temporary or changeable nature of its subordinate and accessory articles.

Whatever may be said of some of the things engaged to in this solemn league, there cannot be a doubt that in its great design and leading articles it was not temporary, but permanent. Though the objects immediately contemplated by it, religious reformation and uniformity, had been accomplished, it would still have continued to oblige those who were under its bond to adhere to and maintain these attainments. But unhappily there is no need of having recourse to this line of argument.

Its grand stipulations remain to this day unfulfilled. e. The Essence of Covenants, Intrinsic Obligation Mr. Bacon asserts, Whether we speak of the moral duties, the moral and perpetual obligations, or the moral substance, we refer only and always to that which is binding on the conscience because it is from God's moral law. Defense Departed Pastor Greg Price responds, We affirm that we are not only morally bound to own and renew the national covenant and the solemn league and covenant because they are agreeable to the word of God, but we acknowledge that we are formally bound to own and renew these biblical covenants as well because they were made on our behalf.

In other words, we are not only bound by these covenants because what is contained within them is agreeable to God's moral law, but we are further bound to these covenants because they were sworn on our behalf as their posterity. For if only the fathers who originally made the covenant were formally bound by the terms of the covenant, then the posterity could never be accused of having broken the covenant of their fathers. They could only be accused of breaking God's moral commandments.

But time and time again the posterity are accused of breaking not only the moral commandments of God, but also of breaking the covenant of the fathers. That is simply to say that if the covenant of our fathers only morally binds us, then we are only guilty of transgression of the law of God contained therein. However, if the covenant of our fathers both morally and formally binds us, then in addition to our

transgression of God's law we are guilty of perjury as well.

Thus we have seriously aggravated our guilt by formally breaking the covenant of our fathers. That it is true that national covenants made with God formally bind the posterity is evidenced from scripture. And that's taken from Greg Price's draft from a forthcoming Stillwaters publication entitled A Peaceable Plea for Worldwide Protestant Unity.

Archibald Mason adds, quote, The lax and prevailing sentiment by which this truth of solemn covenant obligations is opposed is the following. Religious covenants are not formally, but only materially or morally binding. They have no real obligation in themselves, but we are bound to the duties therein because these duties are required in the moral law.

And Barrow adds, is this not Mr. Bacon's exact argument? This dangerous opinion appears to be imbibed by many professed witnesses for the covenanted reformation, by the influence of which they seem to be precipitated into the gulf of public apostasy from these principles which they formally espoused. It is impossible for a person to believe it without entertaining a secret contempt of religious vows, oaths, and covenants. And it is impossible for him to act upon it without being involved in a practical opposition to them.

If this opinion were true, the house of Israel and the house of Judah could not be charged with breaking the covenant. They might be charged with breaking the Lord's law, but he could not have said, they have broken my covenant. If Israel's covenant with God did not bind them by an intrinsic obligation, their iniquity could not be a breach of the covenant, but only a transgression of the law.

Nor could it be any way criminal from the relation it had to the covenant, but only from the reference it had to the law. We may easily know what to think of an opinion which necessarily renders the charges the Lord brings against his backsliding people absurd and unjust. Were this opinion true, there could be no such thing among the children of men as the sins of perfidy, that is, breach of promise, covenant breaking, or perjury.

Though we may pledge our veracity by religious promises and vows unto God, if there is no formal obligation in them, there can be no perfidy or breach of faith in our disregarding them. Though we may join ourselves to the Lord in a solemn covenant, if that deed brings us under no obligation to fulfill it, the sin of covenant breaking can have no existence. Though we should enter into an oath to walk in the Lord's law, if this oath is not binding in itself, how can the sin of perjury or despising the oath of God be charged upon us? We are certain that these sins are mentioned in the word of God and that they are committed by men, but this opinion destroys them forever.

Were this sentiment right, then all the solemn acts of believers as individuals and of the church as a body are rendered void and useless to all intents and purposes. Of what use are promises, vows, oaths, and covenants if there is no obligation in them? If obligation to performance is refused to them, their very essence is destroyed. The mind cannot think on any of those transactions without considering an obligation to do as we have said, vowed, or sworn as essential to their being.

Promises without an obligation to fulfill them, vows without an obligation to pay them, oaths without an obligation to perform them, and covenants without an obligation to keep them are monsters both in divinity and in morals which are created by this more monstrous opinion. It is also the native import of this doctrine that Christians are under no other obligation to duty after they have promised, vowed, and sworn unto the

Lord, or covenanted with Him, than they were before they engaged in these solemn and holy transactions. The man who, like Mr. Bacon, can believe this, there is great reason to fear, is actuated by a desire to break the bands of the Lord and his anointed, and to cast away their cords from him.

These things both show the gross error of this sentiment, and serve to confirm the truth of the contrary doctrine. And they rejected his statutes and his covenant that he made with their fathers, and his testimonies which he testified against them, and they followed vanity and became vain, and went after the heathen that were round about them, concerning whom the Lord had charged them that they should not do like them. They are turned back to the iniquities of their forefathers, which refused to hear my words, and they went after other gods to serve them.

The house of Israel and the house of Judah have broken my covenant which I made with their fathers, Jeremiah 11.10. Moral obligation without formal obligation is precisely what Mr. Bacon pleads for. This, in essence, destroys the whole concept of covenanting. In a December 18, 1996, email correspondence with Pastor Price, Mr. Bacon tells us exactly what he considers to be the moral and perpetual obligation of the solemn league and covenant.

As far as the moral and perpetual obligations of the solemn league and covenant, I find them fully spelled out in the documents produced by the assembly, including the confession, catechisms, form of presbyterial church government, and directory for the public worship of God, and so forth, and I adhere completely to those moral and perpetual obligations, attainments if you prefer. It is notable that Mr. Bacon failed to include the acts of general assembly in his list, but I will deal with that distinctly in the forthcoming misrepresentations. For now, we must observe that Mr. Bacon has failed to acknowledge that swearing of the solemn league and covenant in and of itself created an intrinsic obligation, real and distinct, though not separated nor separable from the law of God.

Samuel Rutherford observes that swearing such a covenant is a moral duty and that the omission of it is sinful. To lay bands of promises and oaths upon a backsliding heart is commanded in the third command and is not Judaical, Genesis 14.22, Genesis 28.20, Psalm 132.2, Psalm 76.22, and this is sinful omission of a morally obliging duty and morally obliging one man, so it obligeth a nation, as affirmative precepts do, and this smells of anabaptism to cry down all gospel vows. That's from Rutherford's survey of the survey of that sum of church discipline, page 482.

Though a man may live and die a Christian without ever swearing or owning a particular national covenant, Rutherford explains that failing to do so in a covenanted land is a sin of omission against the third commandment. The sin is committed when one fails to do all that can be done to restrain a backsliding heart, be it individual or national. To illustrate the error Mr. Bacon is promoting, I ask the reader to consider the following hypothetical situation.

A certain man finds himself backsliding and given over to misrepresenting the beliefs of others. He knows that this is a violation of the ninth commandment, and he desires to repent of these foul deeds. He has learned that a lawful remedy to such sin can be found in making a personal covenant with God.

Consequently, he swears an oath to God, promising to endeavor to carefully read and listen to his opponent's arguments before publicly assaulting and misrepresenting them. Having done this, he recognizes that he has laid a new obligation upon himself that is real and distinct, though not separated or separable from God's law. God, by means of the third commandment, has instructed him that he would be negligent in not doing everything possible to keep himself from this sin.

Understanding this, he views his personal covenant as a way of restraining himself from sin by using the means God has prescribed in his law. Thus, his personal covenant is neither separated nor separable from God's third commandment. Next, this man knows that he was already bound by the ninth commandment before he took his personal covenant.

What, then, did he accomplish by personally swearing to bind himself to something he was already entirely bound to keep? He voluntarily engaged himself to a specific duty required in God's law and called upon God himself to witness his self-engagement. By this act, he formed a new and distinct moral and perpetual obligation which did not exist before his swearing of the covenant. He super-added an obligation that is subordinate to God's law because it depended upon following the third and ninth commandments.

It is for this reason that we can say that this covenant is real and distinct from God's law. A new perpetual and moral obligation was formed that could either distinctly be kept or broken. Prior to making his personal covenant, this man would be guilty of breaking the ninth commandment every time he misrepresented someone.

However, after making this self-engagement, he would be guilty of adding covenant-breaking and perjury to the crime of bearing false witness. A greater band has now been laid upon him to restrain him from wantonly committing this crime. A greater chastisement will follow the violation of his promise, and conversely a greater reward will attend his faithful keeping of it.

Thomas Houston explains, The grand and fundamental ground of a religious covenant is the moral law. The law of God alone can bind the conscience. No oath or bond is of any force that is opposed to it.

The obligation of the law of God is primary and cannot be increased. That of a voluntary oath or engagement is only secondary and subordinate. By the divine law, we are obliged to the performance of duty whether we choose it or not.

By covenants, we voluntarily bind ourselves. Where the vows made respect duties enjoined by the law of God, they have an intrinsic obligation of the highest and most constraining kind. Returning to the previously noted hypothetical situation, we see in light of Thomas Houston's concise explanation that the vow taken by the man given over to misrepresenting others is no new rule of duty, but a new bond to make the law of God his rule.

This intrinsic obligation of covenanting applies to all lawful covenants made by man, and it is the very essence of all covenants. Once a new bond is sworn, an additional obligation is formed that can either be kept or broken. This is what happened when the solemn legion covenant was sworn.

This intrinsic obligation is what Mr. Bacon is attempting to avoid when he says it is not necessary to take the covenant of the three kingdoms. He says he is willing to be bound by the law of God, but he sees no reason to actually own a seventeenth-century covenant any further than that. He believes this covenant to be an edifying historical document that lawfully served its purpose for that particular situation and time.

He believes it to be a faithful example, but sadly to him it serves only as a mere acknowledgment and reminder that God's law requires obedience, and perhaps that extreme circumstances call for more drastic remedies. I think it is safe to say that Mr. Bacon does not think the swearing of the solemn legion covenant has added any new obligation to himself personally or to the Reformation Presbyterian Church corporately. The same moral and perpetual obligations that existed before the solemn legion covenant

was sworn are precisely the same moral and perpetual obligations to which he is bound after it was sworn, no less, no more.

By his reckoning, the swearing of the solemn legion covenant was simply a restatement of already existing moral obligations sworn in an agreement only applicable to the then existing generation. To Mr. Bacon, no new, real, and distinct, superadded perpetual obligation was formed when the solemn legion covenant was sworn. By his reckoning, there is no way for Mr. Bacon or anyone else in 1997 to break the actual solemn legion covenant itself.

This is what he is saying when he says that it is not necessary to take the covenant of the three kingdoms. Commenting upon the distinct nature of superadded covenant obligations, Thomas Houston explains the error of Mr. Bacon's position. But moreover, religious covenants have an obligation distinct and peculiar.

Although the authority of God expressed in his law and speaking through his word is supreme and cannot possibly be increased, there may be a superadded obligation on a man's conscience to respect and obey his authority arising from his own voluntary oath or engagement. This is easily illustrated. We are bound at all times to speak the truth and to fulfill our promises in federal engagements.

If an oath is taken to declare the truth, this adds nothing that is true to the authority of the law, but it brings the person swearing under an additional obligation to speak the truth. This does not increase the original obligation, and yet it may be properly regarded as a new and different obligation. An oath is enjoined by divine authority and cannot therefore be useless.

When properly taken, it is important and valuable. Before the oath was taken, if a person deviated from the truth, he was simply guilty of lying. But afterward, if he speaks falsely, he is added to his sin, the crime of perjury.

In the former case, he rebelled against the authority of God. In the latter, he violates both the authority of God and repunes the obligation of his oath. The usages of all civil society confirms the doctrine of superadded obligation arising from oaths and voluntary engagements, and regards perjured persons and covenant breakers as aggravated criminals.

It has been justly observed that a covenant does not bind to anything additional to what the law of God contains, but it additionally binds. Taken from William Symington's Nature and Obligation of Public Vowing, page 22. This superadded obligation of vows, oaths, and covenants is plainly recognized in Scripture.

See Numbers 30, verse 2, Deuteronomy 23, 21, Ecclesiastes 5, 4 and 5. Divine threatenings distinctly specify as a separate ground of punishment, breach of covenant, in addition to the transgression of God's law. Again, from the Memorial of Covenanting, pages 29 and 30. The PRCE believes that a superadded obligation was formed when the solemn legion covenant was taken.

As a result, this obligation, superadded and subordinate to God's law, could now be either broken or kept. By entering into this everlasting covenant, our covenanted ancestors voluntarily engage themselves in their posterity to God, and thus we now must formally own, adopt, and renew both the national covenant and the solemn legion covenant. The obligations intrinsic to both covenants cannot be ignored without violating our forefathers' agreement with God.

This is the reason we say, contrary to Mr. Bacon, that it is necessary to take, own, and renew the covenants of the three kingdoms. Please understand that swearing a covenant is not making a new law, neither is it more directly placing ourselves under the law of God, which is impossible, nor is it establishing ourselves in some new relation to God's law. God has strictly commanded us to keep His entire law, and it would be foolish to infer that a mere man, by swearing a covenant, could add some new relation to the law of God which he has not already required.

To imply such a thing is to strike at the perfection of the law of God, at the perfection of God Himself, and consequently at the perfectly finished work of Jesus Christ. We, like our representative forefathers, are not inventing a new rule of law. Rather, we voluntarily engage ourselves to make God's law our rule.

Understanding the nature of our voluntary engagement and the intrinsic moral perpetual obligation of covenants is critical to understanding why we, and all moral persons represented in the covenants, must uphold both covenants in 1997. Mr. Bacon errs when he teaches that it is not necessary to take the covenants of the three kingdoms because he has not properly considered their intrinsic obligation. His understanding of the fundamental concept involved in all covenanting lies at the heart of his error and is one of the prime causes of his gross misrepresentation of our position.

As long as Mr. Bacon continues in his present misapprehension of this truth, he will fall under the faithful censure of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland, and we will faithfully honor their ruling and remain withdrawn from him. On July 27, Session 27, 1649, the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland declared, Albeit the legion covenant be despised by the prevailing party in England, and the work of uniformity through retardments and obstructions that have come in the way be almost forgotten in these kingdoms, yet the obligation of that covenant is perpetual, and all the duties contained therein are constantly to be minded and prosecuted by every one of us in our posterity. Similarly, on August 6, 1649, they say, It is no small grief to us that the gospel and government of Jesus Christ are so despised in the land, that faithful preachers are persecuted and cried down, that toleration is established by law and maintained by military power, and that the covenant is abolished and buried in oblivion.

All which proceedings cannot but be looked upon as directly contrary to the oath of God lying upon us, and therefore we cannot eschew his wrath when he shall come in judgment to be a swift witness against those who falsely swear against his name. In 1643, the solemn legion covenant was sworn, and a superadded obligation was formed. This obligation bound the moral persons of church and nation for the duration of their existence.

Consider the following argument framed by John Brown of Haddington as he explains how the intrinsic obligation of the covenants constitute their very essence, and how these obligations are real and distinct, though not separated or separable from God's law. When our nation's ministers understand the implications of this point, they will be much closer to mending their covenant-breaking ways. And note that this citation is quite lengthy.

The intrinsic obligation of promises, oaths, vows, and covenants which constitutes their very essence or essential form is totally and manifestly distinct from the obligation of the law of God in many respects. One, in his law, God, by the declaration of his will as our supreme ruler, binds us, Deuteronomy 12.32. In promises, vows, covenants, and promissory oaths, we, as his deputy governors over ourselves, by a declaration of our will, bind ourselves with a bond, bind our souls with our own bond, our own vow, Numbers 30, Psalm 66, 13 and 15, and 119, 106, and so forth. Two, the obligation of our promises, oaths,

and covenants is always subject to examination by the standard of God's law, as both to its matter and manner, 1 Thessalonians 5.12, but it would be presumption, blasphemous presumption, to examine whether what we know to be the law of God be right and obligatory or not, James 4, verses 11 and 12, Isaiah 8.20, Deuteronomy 5.32. Three, the law of God necessarily binds all men to the most absolute perfection in holiness, be they as incapable of it as they will, Matthew 5.48, 1 Peter 1.15 and 16.

No man can, without mocking and tempting of God, bind himself by vow or oath to anything but what he is able to perform. No man may vow to do anything which is not in his own power, and for the performance of which he hath no promise of ability from God. But no mere man since the fall is able, in this life either in himself or by any grace received from God, perfectly to keep the commandments of God, Ecclesiastes 7.23, James 3.2. While God remains God, His law can demand no less than absolute perfection in holiness.

While His word remains true, no mere man since the fall in this life can possibly attain to it, and therefore ought never to promise or vow it. The least imperfection in holiness, however involuntary, breaks the law of God, and is even contrary to the duty of our relative stations of husbands, parents, masters, magistrates, ministers, wives, children, servants, or people, 1 John 3.4, Romans 7.14, 23, 24. But it is only by that which is, in some respect, voluntary sinfulness that we break our lawful vows.

Nothing can more clearly mark the distinction of the two obligations than this particular. There is no evading the force of it, but either by adopting the Arminian new law of sincere obedience, or by adopting the popish perfection of saints in this life. 4. The law of God binds all men forever, whether in heaven or hell.

No human law or self-engagement binds men, but only in this life, in which they remain imperfect and are encompassed with temptations to seduce them from their duty. In heaven they have no need of such helps to duty, and in hell they cannot be profited by them. The obligation of lawful promises, oaths, vows, and covenants, as well as of human laws respecting moral duties, however distinct, is no more separable from the obligation of God's law than Christ's two distinct natures are separable the one from the other, but closely connected in manifold respects.

In binding ourselves to necessary duties and to other things so long and so far as is conducive thereto, God's law is the only rule to direct us how to glorify and enjoy Him is made the rule of our engagement. Our vow is no new rule of duty, but a new bond to make the law of God our rule. Even Adam's engagement to perfect obedience in the covenant of works was nothing else.

His fallibility in his state of innocence made it proper that he should be bound by his own consent or engagement, as well by the authority of God. Our imperfection in this life and the temptations which surround us make it needful that we, in like manner, should be bound to the same rule both by the authority of God and our own engagements. It is in the law of God that all our deputed authority to command others or to bind ourselves is allotted to us.

The requirement of moral duties by the law of God obligeth us to use all lawful means to promote the performance of them, and hence requires human laws and self-engagements and the observance of them as conducive to it. Nay, they are also expressly required in His law, as His ordinances for helping and hedging us in to our duty. In making lawful vows, as well as in making human laws, we exert the deputed authority of God, the supreme lawgiver, granted to us in His law, in the manner which His law prescribes, and in obedience to its prescription.

In forming our vows as an instituted ordinance of God's worship, which He hath required us to receive, observe, and keep pure and entire. Psalm 76, verse 11, and 119, verse 106, and 66, verse 12, and 56, verse 12, Isaiah 19, verses 18 and 21, and 45, verses 23 and 24, and 44, verse 5, and Jeremiah 50, verse 5, and 2 Corinthians 8, verse 5, we act precisely according to the direction of His law and in obedience to His authority in it. Binding ourselves with a bond, binding our soul with a bond, Numbers 30, verses 2 through 11, binding ourselves by that which we utter with our lips, verses 2, 6, and 12, binding ourselves with a binding oath, binding ourselves, binding our soul by our own vow, our own bond, verses 4, 7, and 14.

In forming our own vow, we, according to the prescription of His own law, solemnly constitute God, who is the supreme lawgiver and Lord of the conscience, the witness of our self-engagement, and the guarantee graciously to reward our evangelical fulfillment of it and justly to punish our perfidious violation of it. The more punctual and faithful observation of God's law, notwithstanding our manifold infirmities and temptations, and the more effectual promotion of His glory therein, is the end of our self-engagements as well as of human laws of authority. And by a due regard to their binding force, as above stated, is this end promoted, as hereby the obligation of God's law is the more deeply impressed on our minds, and we are shut up to obedience to it, and deterred from transgressing it.

In consequence of our formation of our vow, with respect to its matter, manner, and end as prescribed by God, He doth and necessarily must ratify it in all its awful solemnities, requiring us by His law to pay it as a bond of debt, to perform and fulfill it as an engagement to duties and an obligation which stands upon or against us. Numbers 30, verses 5, 7, 9, and 11, with Deuteronomy 23, verses 21 through 23, Psalm 76, 11, 50, 14, Ecclesiastes 5, 4, and 5, Matthew 5, 33. In obedience to this divine requirement, and considering our vow in that precise form in which God in His law adopts and ratifies it and requires it to be fulfilled, we pay, perform, and fulfill it as a bond wherewith we, in obedience to Him, have bound ourselves to endeavor universal obedience to His law as our only rule of faith and manners.

Whoever doth not, in his attempts to obey human laws or to fulfill self-engagements, consider them as having that binding force which the law of God allows them, he pours contempt on them as ordinances of God and on the law of God for allowing them a binding force. Thus, through maintaining the superadded but subordinate obligation of human laws and of self-engagements to moral duties, we do not make void but establish the obligation of God's law. The obligation of a vow by which we engage ourselves to necessary duties commanded by the law of God must therefore be inexpressibly solemn.

Not only are we required by the law of God before our vow was made, but we are bound in that performance to fulfill our vow as an engagement or obligation founded in the supreme authority of His law warranting us to make it. We are bound to fulfill it as a mean of further impressing His authority manifested in His law upon our own consciences, as a bond securing and promoting a faithful obedience to all His commandments. We are bound to fulfill it in obedience to that divine authority by derived power from which we as governors of ourselves made it to promote His honor.

In those or like respects, our fulfillment of our vows is a direct obedience to His whole law. We are moreover bound to fulfill it as a solemn ordinance of God's worship, the essential form of which lies in self-obligation and must be received, observed, kept pure and entire, and wholly and reverently used, and so in obedience to the first three commands. We are bound to fulfill it as an ordinance of God in which we have pledged our own truth, sincerity, and faithfulness, and so in obedience to commands 9, 1, 2, and 3. We are bound to fulfill it as a solemn deed or grant in which we have made over our persons, property,

and service to the Lord and His church, and so in obedience to commands 1, 2, and 8, nay, in obedience to the whole law of love and equity, Matthew 22, 37, 39, and 7, 12.

We are bound to fulfill it from regard to the declarative glory of God as the witness of our making of it, that He may appear to have been called to attest nothing but sincerity and truth, and so in obedience to commands 1, 3, and 9. We are bound to fulfill it from a regard to truth, honesty, and reverence of God as things not only commanded by His law, but good in themselves, agreeable to His very nature, and therefore necessarily commanded by Him, and from a detestation of falsehood, injustice, and contempt of God as things intrinsically evil, contrary to His nature, and therefore necessarily forbidden in His law, and thus in authority in His whole law as necessarily holy, just, and good. We are bound to fulfill it from a regard to the holiness, justice, faithfulness, majesty, and other perfections of God as the guarantee of it, into whose hand we have committed the determination and execution of its awful sanction, as the gracious rewarder of our fidelity, or the just revenger of our perfidy, and hence in regard to our own happiness as concerned in that sanction. In fine, we are bound to fulfill it in obedience to that command of God which adopts and ratifies it, requiring us to pay, fulfill, or perform our vow, oath, or covenant.

Psalms 50, 14, 76, 11, Ecclesiastes 5, 4, Deuteronomy 23, 21, and 23, and Matthew 5, 33. In violating such a vow, we do not merely transgress the law of God as requiring the duties engaged before the vow was made, but we also rebel against and profane that divine warrant which we had to make our vow. We profane that authority over ourselves in the exercise of which we made the vow, and consequentially that supreme authority in God from which ours was derived, and so strike against the foundation of the whole law.

We manifest a contempt of that law which regulated the matter and manner of our vow. We profane the vow as an ordinance of God's worship appointed in His law. By trampling on a noted mean of promoting obedience to all the commands of God, we mark our hatred of them and prepare ourselves to transgress them, and endeavor to remove the awe of God's authority and terror of His judgments from our consciences.

We blasphemously represent the Most High as a willing witness to our treachery and fraud. We pour contempt on Him as the guarantee of our engagements, as if He inclined not or durst not avenge our villainy. Contrary to the truth and faithfulness required in His law and pledged in our vow, we plunge ourselves into the most criminal deceit and falsehood.

Contrary to equity, we rob God and His church of that which we had solemnly devoted to their service. Contrary to devotion, we banish the serious impression of God's adorable perfections. Contrary to good neighborhood, we render ourselves a plague and curse and encourage others to the most enormous wickedness.

Contrary to the design of our creation and preservation, we reject the glory of God and obedience to His law from being our end. Meanwhile, we trample on the ratification of our vow by the divine law in all its awful solemnities and manifold connections with itself and requirement to pay it. It is manifest that our covenanting ancestors understood their vows in the manner above represented.

They never represent them as mere acknowledgments of the obligation of God's law or as placing themselves in some new relation to God's law or more directly under any command of it, but declare that a man binds himself by a promissory oath to what is good and just. It cannot oblige to sin, but in anything not sinful being taken, it binds to performance. By a vow we more strictly bind ourselves to necessary duties.

And in expressions almost innumerable, they represent the obligation of their vows as distinct and different, though not separable, from the law of God. They no less plainly declare that no man may bind himself by oath to anything but what he is able and resolved to perform. No man may vow anything which is not in his own power and for the performance of which he hath no promise or of ability from God.

And in their several forms of covenant, they never once pretend to engage performing of duties in that absolute perfection which is required by the law of God, but sincerely, really, and constantly to endeavor the performance of them. That's taken from John Brown of Haddington's Absurdity and Perfidy of All Authoritative Toleration, pages 120 through 127. This concludes Take 2 of Covenanted Uniformity, the Protestant Remedy for Disunity, being Chapter 3 of Greg Barrow's book, The Covenanted Reformation Defended Against Contemporary Schismatics.

Again, please note that this entire book is free on Stillwaters Revival Books' website, www.swrb.com. It is also available in hardcover from Stillwaters, along with a treasure trove of the finest Protestant, Reformed, and Puritan literature available anywhere in the world today. Stillwaters can be reached at 780-450-3730 or by email at swrb@swrb.com. And again, these tapes are not copyrighted, and we therefore encourage you to copy and distribute them to any and all you believe would be benefited.

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