

**Keach Conference  
Of God's Covenant**

**I. The Doctrine of the Covenant of Works in the Confession of Faith**

**I. Introduction**

A. Reason for this lecture:

B. Working definition of the Covenant of Works: That covenant (or that divinely sanctioned commitment or relationship) imposed upon Adam, who was a representative of mankind, conditioned upon his obedience, with a penalty for disobedience, for the bettering of man's state. Here we have 1) sovereign, divine imposition by God, 2) representation by Adam, 3) the condition of obedience, 4) a penalty for disobedience, and finally 5) a reward. This is the doctrine of the Covenant of Works.

**II. The common confusion concerning the Covenant of Works and the Confession of Faith**

A. Personal pilgrimage:

B. Personal observation:

**III. The reasons why I think the Confession of Faith contains the doctrine of the Covenant of Works.**

A. Because the explicit language "Covenant of Works" occurs in the Confession (19:6 [2x] and 20:1).

B. Because the doctrine of the Covenant of Works is contained or implied without the phrase Covenant of Works in at least four places.

1. 2<sup>nd</sup> LCF 6:1

2. 2<sup>nd</sup> LCF 7:1

3. 2<sup>nd</sup> LCF 7:2a

4. 2<sup>nd</sup> LCF 7:3b

5. 2<sup>nd</sup> LCF 19:1

C. Because of the title and emphasis of Chapter 7.

D. Because of the order of the chapters and the shift that takes place in Chapter 7.

E. Because Nehemiah Coxe clearly taught the doctrine of the Covenant of Works in his work *A Discourse of the Covenants that God made with men before the law*.

F. Because, as far as I know, no Particular Baptist of the seventeenth century connected to the Confession denied the Covenant of Works or thought it needed to be recast.

#### **IV. Conclusion**

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**II. Getting the Garden Right: Hermeneutics and the Covenant of Works**

**I. Introduction**

A. Importance of getting the Garden and the Covenant of Works right

1. Vern Poythress:
2. C. H. Spurgeon:
3. The Dutch Reformed theologian, Brakel:
4. Nehemiah Coxe, seventeenth-century Particular Baptist

B. Working definition of the Covenant of Works

1. Brief definition of covenant when it relates to God and man:

2. The subsequent definition of the phrase Covenant of Works: That covenant (or that divinely sanctioned commitment or relationship) imposed upon Adam, who was a representative of mankind (or a public person), conditioned upon his obedience, a penalty for disobedience, for the bettering of man's state. Here we have: 1) sovereign, divine imposition by God, 2) representation by Adam, 3) a conditional element (i.e., obedience), 4) a penalty for disobedience, and 5) a promise of reward.

C. How the doctrine of the Covenant of Works was formulated

1. Negatively or how it was not formulated.

2. Positively or how it was formulated. We are asking this question: How did the covenant theologians go from the Garden to the Covenant of Works?

## II. Some Hermeneutical Principles of Seventeenth-Century Federal Theology

### A. The Holy Spirit is the only infallible interpreter of the Bible.

1. John Owen:
2. Nehemiah Coxe:
3. Conclusion:

### B. The analogy of Scripture (*analogia Scripturae*):

### C. The analogy of faith (*analogia fidei*):

### D. The scope of Scripture (*scopus Scripturae*):

1. William Ames:
2. John Owen:
3. Nehemiah Coxe:
4. Conclusion: Their Christocentric interpretation of the Bible was a principle derived from the Bible itself and an application of *sola Scripturae* to the issue of hermeneutics. The Bible's authority extends to how we interpret the Bible. In other words, they saw the authority of Scripture applicable to the interpretation of Scripture.

### III. A Typical Objection to the Covenant of Works

#### A. Introduction:

B. Objection stated and answered: The word "covenant" is nowhere to be found in the first two chapters of Genesis. Put in the form of a question, this objection can be stated as follows: How can there be a covenant in Genesis 2 if Moses does not say so?

I will answer under three points:

1. First, this assumes that if a word is not in a text its concept cannot be there either.

2. Second, there are words used outside of the Garden narrative to describe Adam and his Edenic vocation which are not contained in the narrative of Genesis 1-2. For example...

a. Luke 3:38

b. Romans 5:14

c. 1 Corinthians 15:22

3. Third, the Bible itself, looking back upon Adam in the Garden, uses the explicit language of covenant. We will explore this in our next major heading. But for now, let me draw this conclusion to this typical objection.

C. Conclusion: I think the objection is cleared, though I could give more counter-arguments. The account of Genesis 1-2 contains more than meets the eye. It is a narrative, not an exhaustive theological essay drawing out all the implications embedded or assumed in its terms. It is one of those texts that ends-up being referenced many times in subsequent revelation. Other texts assume it and draw out of it what is implied in it. What is implicit in it becomes explicit by the subsequent Word of God. The biblical writers were theologians after all. Subsequent revelation often makes explicit what is implicit in antecedent revelation. In other words, the Bible often comments upon and explains itself. And, in the case of Adam in the Garden, this is exactly what happens.

#### IV. From Hermeneutics to the Covenant of Works

**Introduction:** In this final section of the lecture, I will not offer all the arguments that could be marshaled in formulating a biblical doctrine of the Covenant of Works. I simply want to illustrate the hermeneutical principles discussed above and how these led and, I think, lead to the Covenant of Works. Remember my definition of the Covenant of Works: That covenant imposed upon Adam, who was a representative of mankind (or a public person), conditioned upon his obedience, with a penalty for disobedience, for the bettering of man's state.

A. Consider Moses' subsequent and inspired reflection upon the acts of God at creation as recorded for us in Genesis 2:4ff.

B. Consider Isaiah 24:5-6.

C. Consider Hosea 6:7.

D. Consider why it is called the *Covenant of Works*.

- E. Consider the fact that Adam was “a type of Him who was to come” (Rom. 5:14).
1. Brief thoughts on types
    - a. A type is a historical person, place, institution, or event that was designed by God to point to a future historical person, place, institution, or event.
    - b. That to which types point is always greater than the type itself.
    - c. Types are both like and unlike their anti-types.
    - d. Anti-types tell us more about how their types function as types.
  2. Specific considerations in light of Adam as a type of Christ

- F. Consider the fact that Adam sinned and fell short of something he did not possess via creation.