

Lecture 5: The Consequences of 2LCF 7.1

I. The Textual History of 2LCF 7.1

WCF: “any fruition of him as their blessedness and reward”

SD & 2LCF: “the reward of life”

II. The Theology of 2LCF 7.1

1. *Creatures owe God absolute obedience.*

2LCF 2.3 “...to him is due from Angels and men, whatsoever worship, service or obedience as creatures they owe unto the Creator, and whatever he is further pleased to require of them.”

2. *God owes creatures no reward for their obedience.*

Job 35:5-8; 41:11; Romans 11:35-36; Acts 17:24-25; Luke 17:9-10

3. *Through covenant, God gives blessings to man which would otherwise be unobtainable by man.*

Nehemiah Coxe,

“[A covenant] implies a free and sovereign act of the divine will, exerted in condescending love and goodness; it is not from any necessity of nature, that God enters into covenant with men, but of his own good pleasure. Such a privilege and nearness to God, as is included in covenant-interest, cannot immediately result from the relation which they have to God as creatures, no not as reasonable creatures, though upright, and in a perfect state; for the Lord owes not unto man the good promised in any covenant he makes with him, antecedently; but his first right therein, is freely given him by the promise of the covenant.¹

Benedict Pictet,

“It is true that, speaking strictly, there cannot be any covenant between God and man, because there is no proportion between God and man, and between the goodness of the one, and the duty of the other; because also man is bound without any covenant to pay obedience to God, and is not able of himself to contribute anything towards it; nor does God owe any thing to his creature, or in any way has need of

¹ Nehemiah Coxe, *A Discourse of the Covenants* (London: John Darby, 1681), 7.

his creature. But God, under the influence of pure kindness, was pleased by means of a covenant, to invite [his creature] into communion with himself.”²

Thomas Manton,

“Some divines say, that in innocency we could not merit; when the covenant did seem to hang upon works, we could, in their sense, *impetrare*, but not *mereri*; [that is,] *obtain* by virtue of doing, but not *deserve*. *Merit* and *desert* are improper notions to express the relation between the *work of a creature*, and the *reward of a Creator*.”³

John Owen,

“The *Nature of God* who makes these covenants requires that so it should be. It becomes his greatness and goodness in all his voluntary transactions with his creatures, to propose that unto them, wherein their advantage, their happiness and blessedness consists. We inquire not how God may deal with his creatures as such; what he may absolutely require of them, on account of his own being...but upon supposition that he will condescend to *enter into covenant* with his creatures, and to come to agreement with them according unto the terms of it, it becomes his greatness and goodness to give them promises as the foundation of it, wherein he proposes unto them the things wherein their blessedness and reward consists.”⁴

III. Six Theological Consequences

1. *2LCF confesses the Covenant of Works.*

2LCF 6.1 “Although God created man upright, and perfect, and gave him ***a righteous law, which had been unto life*** had he kept it...”

2LCF 7.1 “reward of life...by way of covenant”

2LCF 20.1 “The covenant of works being broken by sin, and made ***unprofitable unto life...***”

2. *2LCF 7.1 and WCF 7.1 are not at odds.*

3. *Covenants are voluntary, not necessary.*

4. *Covenants elevate man, they do not bring God down.*

5. *Covenantal commands test man’s loyalty.*

6. *Covenantal blessings demonstrate God’s goodness.*

² Benedict Pictet, *Christian Theology* (trans. Frederick Reyroux; London: R.B. Seeley and W. Burnside, 1834), 152-153.

³ Thomas Manton, *A Practical Commentary, or an Exposition with Notes on the Epistle of James* (London: J. Macock, 1651), 129.

⁴ John Owen, *A Continuation of the Exposition of the Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Hebrews* (London: Printed for Nathaniel Ponder, 1680), 221-222. Spelling updated.