

## CONFESSION OF FAITH.

### CHAPTER 7.-Of God's Covenant with Man.

II. The first Covenant made with Man, was a Covenant of Works<sup>1</sup>, wherein Life was promised to Adam, and in him to his posterity<sup>2</sup>, upon condition of perfect and personall obedience.<sup>3</sup>

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Question 1.—*Was the first Covenant God made with man a Covenant of Works?*

*Answer.*—Yes. In that first Covenant God said, in effect, “Do this and live;” *cf.* Gen. 2:17, thus making it a Covenant of Works, Gal. 3:12. That it was a proper Covenant is implied in the following considerations: 1.) From Gen. 2:16, 17, in which were parties, a condition, a penalty, and a promise implied. 2.) From Hos. 6:7, “Like man (in the Hebrew “Like Adam”) have transgressed the covenant,” *cf.* Job 31:33 w/ Gen. 3:12. 3.) From the various references in Scripture to the covenant under which man naturally remains, as descended from Adam, Rom. 5:12, 14; 10:5; Gal. 4:24; 5:4. 4.) From the comparison of Adam’s representation of mankind under Christ’s representation of his people, which latter representation is under a covenant. 5.) From the fact that Adam and his posterity fell, under the penalty threatened, Rom. 5:12.

Question 2.—*Was there a promise of life made in that Covenant of Works, and wherein did it consist?*

*Answer.*—Yes. In the Covenant of Works, the Orthodox confess that Adam (and through him his posterity) was promised not only the life in paradise, but the eternal and heavenly life. This question was first moved by those who sought to establish the natural mortality of man and prove that death is not the consequence of sin. The reasons for the affirmation are as follows: 1.) The law of works had the promise of heavenly and eternal life; therefore also the law prescribed to Adam. In each instance, it is the same law as to substance. The former is evident from these Scriptures, Lev. 18:5; Matt. 19:16, 17; Rom. 7:10. These promises have not reference to earthly life but to heavenly. Since, however, after the fall, the law can justify no one, Rom. 3:28, this promise must necessarily have had place in upright Adam. 2.) It is confirmed by this—Christ acquired the eternal and celestial life which he bestows upon us in no other way than that (being made under the law) he fulfilled the righteousness of the law for us, Rom. 8:4; Gal. 4:5. 3.) The threatened death embraces both temporal and eternal death to be suffered in hell, for that death is understood, the empire of which the devil obtained on account of sin, Heb. 2:14. 4.) The promises of the new covenant are said to be better than those of the old, Heb. 8:6, not as to substance but as to mode.

Question 3.—*Was this Covenant made with Adam made also with his posterity in him?*

*Answer.*—Yes. It appears in that: 1.) The expression of the covenant, Gen. 2:16, 17, is an address to the man alone, and in the singular. 2.) In the history, the covenant is represented as made when man was introduced into the garden, and Eve is represented

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<sup>1</sup> Gal. 3:12.

<sup>2</sup> Rom. 10:5; 5:12-20.

<sup>3</sup> Gen. 2:17; Gal. 3:10.

as created afterwards, Gen. 2:15-21. 3.) The Scriptures compare Christ and Adam as representing heads, 1 Cor. 15:22, 47. 4.) The Scriptures represent the breach of the covenant as one offence, and the offence of one man, Rom. 5:12-20.

Question 4.—*What was the condition of this Covenant of “Works”?*

*Answer.*—The condition of this Covenant of Works was made upon condition of perfect and personal obedience, Gen. 2:17; Gal. 3:10.

First, Adam doubtlessly had the most perfect law. The most perfect law is the law of love, however, and that is the law of the ten commandments (*cf.* Matt. 22:37-39). Adam therefore was in possession of the law of the ten commandments.

Secondly, all agree that the law which is embedded in the nature of the heathen and is a remnant of that law which Adam had embedded in his nature, is identical to the law of the ten commandments. Thus, Adam’s law is the law of the ten commandments.

Thirdly, this is confirmed in Romans 8:3. Paul speaks there of a law, referring to it as “the law” without any further description. Without a doubt “the law” is the law of the ten commandments. This law Adam possessed in full strength, which after the fall had become weak, as has been demonstrated. Adam was thus in possession of the law of the ten commandments.

Fourthly, there is but one holiness, for holiness is the image of God, which is singular in nature. The law is thus also singular in nature, for man’s perfect conformity to the law of the ten commandments is holiness. Therefore, as far as content was concerned, Adam in his perfection had the ten commandments as his law.

In addition to the law of nature, God gave Adam a command which in His sovereignty He could or could not have given: the command *not to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil*. This is called a “positive law” because it did not bind man from the nature of the thing (which was in itself indifferent), but from the mere will of God. This may readily suggest the question, *Why did God give this commandment to Adam?* Had God not given this commandment to him, he would not have sinned. The response is:

(1.) That it does not necessarily follow that he then would not have sinned. Adam was holy, but mutable, and thus he could also have sinned in a different situation.

(2.) God does not always give an account of His deeds. If anyone wishes to meditate somewhat upon this commandment, it will become evident that much is comprehended in this commandment. It declared that God alone was the Lord and thus entitled to command Adam as He pleased, and that Adam was thus required to obey blindly without asking why.

(3.) In it was also comprehended that man should desire nothing else but the will of God, and that everything should be defined as desirable or undesirable in relationship to God only.

(4.) This commandment comprehends man’s felicity consisting in the enjoyment of God Himself—an enjoyment not to be found in anything outside of Him. Therefore, Adam had no need of what would seem to be most desirable, but could do without it.

(5.) It also implies that man was to be satisfied with the present degree of perfection which God was pleased to confer at that moment. The question, *Why did God give such a commandment?* cannot be answered by man other than by saying, “It was God’s sovereign good pleasure.” We have thus observed that Adam had a law.