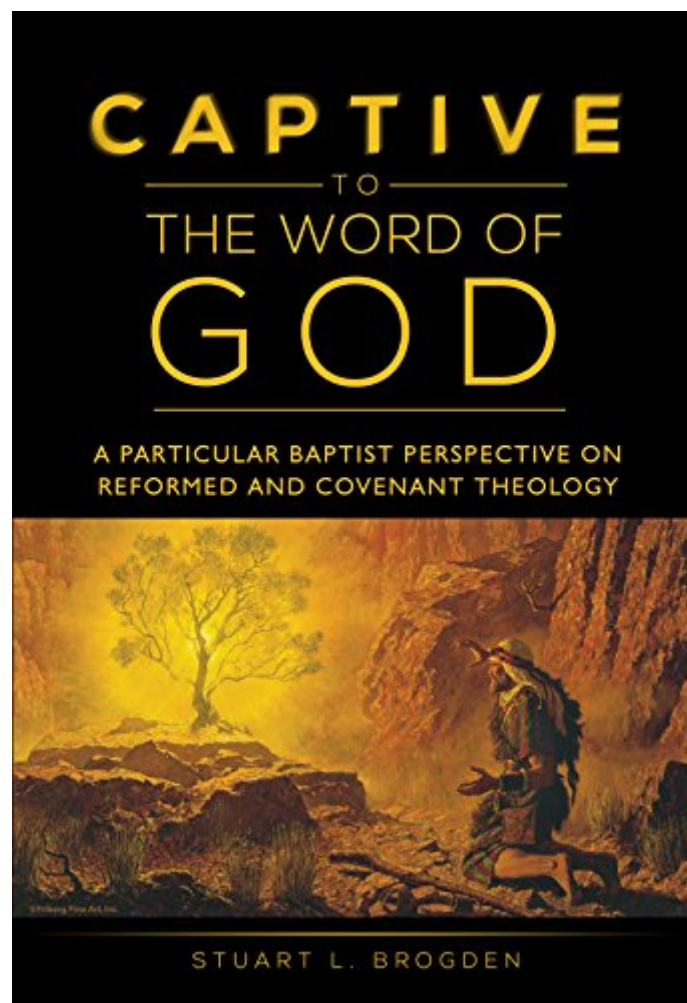




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Captive To The Word Of God: A Particular Baptist Perspective On Reformed And Covenant Theology



Synopsis

April 18th, 1521. Martin Luther was on trial for believing the Scriptures were the ultimate authority for the Christian, rather than dogma developed by men. He is quoted as having said, "My conscience is captive to the Word of God" when asked to recant his writings. I've taken part of Luther's statement as my title because while I am thankful to God for myriad men in the Reformed Baptist world that have taught me much, I cannot claim full allegiance to a document written in the 17th century; it being mostly right. The Word of God alone! demands and warrants our full allegiance. While we have disagreements, let Holy Writ be our foundation and wisdom as we test all things and hold to that which is good. In four parts, this book examines the history of Baptists and the distinctives that mark them; how Baptists fit into and should view reformed theology; a Baptist view of the covenants in Scripture; and what these theological and doctrinal concepts look like when practiced in a local church.

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Customer Reviews

This book is a must read for anyone who desires to be a person of the Book (the Bible). I was especially impressed with Stuart's depth in which he presented the covenants. Whether one is a scholar, or someone who wants to understand the Baptist view (and in my opinion, the biblical view) of covenant theology, as well as the scriptural practices of particular Baptists, you must read and study this excellent work!

5 Stars --- Must read for every believer - especially those who have questions about Baptism, Lord's Supper, Sabbath Day, and what Baptists believe.

I have, now, read three books on covenant theology, all from a Particular Baptist perspective (that being my perspective, though I am in fact not a Baptist). Reading three books doesn't, of course, make me an expert on the subject, but it has given me a great deal of information. One book was dryly informative, but more academic than a high school graduate likes. The second was excellent, but too brief. This was the third one, and the measure of how good it is, is the typographical errors. They're present in great number, a thing which usually irritates me; in this quantity, the irritation usually causes me to set the book aside. But the content here, and Stuart Brogden's writing, are so good that I plowed ahead, noticing the typos but not stumbling over them. A good portion of the quality is the fact that Brogden doesn't merely set forth his covenant theology, but begins by establishing the Particular Baptist foundation for what he's saying. He provides some Baptist history, and lays the foundation of sola scriptura, the principle that led to others calling Baptists "the people of the Book." Only then, with the foundation in place, does he proceed to deal with covenant theology, and even then it's not a mere academic treatise. Brogden's approach is pastoral, inculcating doctrine and bringing forth application, as of course all good teaching does. I especially appreciate Brogden's honesty regarding the 1689 London Confession of Faith. It is, among calvinistic Baptists, very nearly a holy grail, the document which - in some cases at least, as I know by experience - is the final authority on matters of doctrine and practice, even though the Confession itself ascribes that role to the Scripture only. Brogden points out that because the Particular Baptists who prepared and published the 1689 Confession were trying to end persecution by showing their unity with other Christian denominations, and to that end adapted the Westminster Confession of Faith, in places taking over the language verbatim, the Baptist Confession sometimes partakes of a Presbyterian point of view - and thus isn't necessarily the best source of distinctively Baptist thinking. Now I love the 1689 Confession, but I have myself come to have some reservations about it, and it's refreshing to find a Particular Baptist who is equally willing to set aside those

portions of it which don't fully accord with the Bible, rather than trying to conform the Bible to the Confession. Now I don't agree with everything Brogden says (which I'm sure wouldn't surprise him, since he himself points out that no one is infallible, and therefore everyone winds up in error somewhere - whether the areas where I disagree are because he's in error, or I am, or whether we're both in error, is another question). I think he's wrong in summarily dismissing references to Israel as "the Israelite church" or "the Jewish church," since there is only one people of God, the general assembly and church of the firstborn (Heb. 12:23), and the saved of Israel are as much a part of that assembly (the meaning of the Greek word we translate "church") as are those who are saved today. I believe he goes too far in rejecting the division of the Mosaic Law into the divisions of moral, civil, and ceremonial - it's true that it is one Law, but it does clearly have those aspects (e.g. the specific procedures for the sacrifices are ceremonial, while the provisions regarding murder have a political application), even though, as Brogden points out, the whole thing is a reflection of God's moral nature. And there are, as I've mentioned, the typos. To be blunt, the services of an editor would be well worth the cost just to clear them up. I didn't keep count, but it was as common to find at least one typo on a page as to find none. Perhaps most people, in our day when the proper use of English is a dying art, wouldn't notice, but I did, and though the content and writing enabled me to proceed in spite of the types, I did notice them, and they did jar. But disagreements and typographical errors notwithstanding, this is the best book I've read yet on covenant theology. The insistence that we are - in the words of the title - to be captive to the Word of God rather than to human traditions is essential and excellent. And if Brogden carefully proofreads the text to extirpate the errors, or has someone else do the job, it will move this book into, I think, the front rank of books on the subject.

[This is an abbreviated version of a review originally posted on my Wordpress blog "Contrast". See there for the full review and working links/references throughout review] Stuart Brogden has written an overview of baptist theology that is directed, as far as I can tell, towards baptists who are unaware of, or are perhaps just dipping their toes into Calvinistic baptist beliefs. For that audience, the book provides a helpful overview of certain aspects of baptist beliefs. Though my review will focus on areas of concern/disagreement, there is much in the book that I agree with as well.

I'd love to sit down and talk with Brogden some day. I sympathize with his journey deeper into historic baptist beliefs, even if we don't end up agreeing on everything. I do have to note that potential readers may be misled by the title of this book for two reasons. First, it's not primarily a book on covenant theology. It is more broadly a

book on baptist theology, with a discussion of covenants filling one section. Second, the label “particular baptist” tends to be associated with 17th century baptists. The author, Stuart Brogden, is a proponent of New Covenant Theology (NCT), not the theology of the 17th century men typically associated with the label “particular baptist.” I won’t quibble over the title only to note that some people may misunderstand what the book is about (as evidenced by the numerous times people have asked if it is a book on 1689 Federalism). The book is divided into 4 sections: Part 1: The Baptists, Part 2: A Baptist View of Reformed Theology, Part 3: A Baptist View of Covenant Theology, Part 4: How it Works Together in a Local Church. My review will focus on Part 3 and two issues related to it (confessionalism and the law).

__2nd London Baptist Confession__

As a proponent of NCT, Brogden voices his problems with the 2nd LBCF and those who hold to it. First, he argues that modern churches or associations that hold to the 2nd LBCF as a confessional standard are not using the confession the way it was originally designed. Its purpose was primarily political and was never used as any kind of doctrinal standard for a church or association. He quotes ARBCA’s Constitution explaining its use of the confession and then asks “Is this the intended purpose of these aged confessions?”

Early Baptists who held to the battle cry of the Reformation were known as particular Baptists, to differentiate them from Baptists who held to general atonement. Baptists were not seeking commonality with the Presbyterians until late in the 17th century when they sought a way to make peace with the state church and government in England, weary of being persecuted. (vii)

“The Confessions published by the Baptists in the Seventeenth Century were neither creeds written to secure uniformity of belief, nor articles to which subscription was demanded.” (Goadby)

James Renihan [agrees] with Goadby’s observation that the main reason confessions were written in this era was to tell others what the confessors thought, not to bind the confessors to an in-house creed [W]e know that no man has pure motives and must admit that we would likely have taken some pragmatic steps to lessen the pain of constant harassment and persecution. (93-94, 98)

The quote Brogden provides from Renihan does state that the particular baptists were interested in distancing themselves from anabaptists, but it does not say that churches did not subscribe to it or use it as a doctrinal standard amongst themselves. It is not clear that Brogden properly used Goadby’s quote either. Goadby appears to be referring to the idea of an established church demanding conformity by the use of the sword. Baptists certainly didn’t use their confession that way. But they did require those who confessed it to

actually believe it and they did use it as the standard of association between each other. Brogden suggests that the very idea of "subscription" is Presbyterian, not Baptist. He quotes ARBCA's Constitution, stating: "Confessional subscription employs three main terms in its nomenclature: absolute, strict/full, and loose. ARBCA has adopted the middle position. According to Dr. Morton H. Smith, 'strict or full subscription takes at face value the terminology used in adopting a confession of faith.' And then notes: 'Of interest to Baptists, I hope: Dr. Morton H. Smith, whose definition of full subscription ARBCA embraces, is a life-long Presbyterian. Their view of confessions has influenced Baptists as much as their view of covenants has. (92) I find this comment and line of reasoning troubling. First, since Smith's paper outlines all the various ways of subscribing to a confession, if any Baptist subscribes to a confession in any way, they must be unduly influenced by Presbyterianism. Second, the vast majority of Presbyterian churches do not hold to full subscription. Largely because of their view of ecclesiastical authority, they hold to various versions of loose subscription, including system (OPC) and good faith (PCA). Various Presbyterians, including Smith, have argued that these forms of loose subscription are incoherent and defeat the whole purpose of a confession, which is to state what you believe. ARBCA is unique in this instance and, rather than simply following Presbyterians, is actually leading them in demonstrating a more appropriate way to subscribe to a confession. And the Baptist distinctive of local church autonomy means that any particular church is free to agree or disagree with the 2nd LBCF and ARBCA without their pastors' ordination being in jeopardy. For more on this point, see [here](#) and [here](#) and [here](#). These brief statements [from ARBCA] reveal deliberate use of a confession as the primary document (no matter their written protests to the contrary) that defines the doctrine and identity of the association and the churches that belong to it. The confession is 'excellent' and becomes the 'sum of sound doctrine' for them (as one elder in a 1689 LBC church put it to me), 'founded on the Word of God', and, in some cases, displacing it as the first line of defense and doctrine. This sad condition is well known among churches that hold to the Westminster Confession and some that hold to the 1689 LBC; and it shows up in their ecclesiology, how they function as a church, such as requiring 'strict or full subscription' for serving as an elder while failing to take into account what is laid out in 1 Timothy 3 or Titus 3. (92-93) Again, I find this kind of reasoning troubling, and perhaps not well thought out. The alternative is to not require any confession at all from an elder or church. I can certainly understand why Brogden does not think the 2nd LBCF should be the standard for a

church, since he thinks it is unbiblical, but his comments here are directed at the concept of using any confession at all as a church's standard. Brogden also quotes from Bob Gonzales arguing in favor of "something close to biblicism" rather than "confessionally colored glasses." A final note on this point, Brogden makes many statements throughout the book that reveal a superficial understanding of the topics he is dealing with. Here is one example://// While some within the 1689 camp insist on putting the Savoy between the Westminster Confession of Faith and the 1689 LBC, this is an argument without substance; as the Savoy was a clone of the Westminster, differing only on church government. The 1689 LBC is largely a clone of the Westminster. (104) ////There are numerous important differences between Savoy and Westminster if one studies carefully. One pertinent example is the difference between the two in 19.1-2. ____ Chapter 19 on the Law of God ____ All of this is preparatory for Brogden's criticism of the 2nd LBCF's doctrine of the law. He argues the editors of the confession changed the obvious stuff, but were oblivious to various aspects of the Presbyterian system that were incompatible with Baptist beliefs and therefore they did not adequately revise their confession.//// These issues (baptism, ecclesiology, church/civil relationships) are those which are easy to detect, above the water line one might say. What our Baptist forefathers did was to knock these matters out of the way and replace them with Baptist alternatives. What the early Baptists apparently did not do is carefully examine the foundation that was below the water line | One, perhaps the major area in which it appears the Baptists erred in cloning the Westminster regards the treatment of the Decalogue | This paedobaptist influence is found predominately in chapter 19 of the 1689 LBC, but also in one paragraph of chapter 22, addressing the "Christian Sabbath". (104-105) ////Brogden marches through Chapter 19 and its misused Scripture references (in the span of 4 1/2 pages) and quickly declares that the confession obviously contradicts itself.//// Herein is a conflict within the confession | How can the law given to Adam be the law of the Gentiles, who are without the law of Moses, then be described as the Ten Words which were given to Moses as law that the Jews had possession of? And how does using Romans 2:12a & 14-15 as the proof text prove that? Other versions of the 1689 LBC refer to Deuteronomy 10, which describes the tablets but that passage does not indicate that they are the same law as given to Adam. This is conjecture, not exegesis. And it conflicts with itself regardless of which footnotes are used in a given version of the confession | This is a sign of trouble in any document, when the Scripture passages used as references do not support the point being made. (106, 110, emphasis original) ////In my opinion, his analysis is rather rash and would have been more meaningful if he

had interacted with expositions or elaborations of the doctrine found in modern or historic writings, rather than just commenting on the choice of Scripture references. The meaning of the confession on this point is fairly simple: What God wrote on the hearts of all men had some level of identity with what God revealed externally and supernaturally to Israel. Gentiles do not have the law in the sense that they do not have a written copy of it revealed by God. But they do know the law because it is revealed innately within them, by which they will be judged just as Jews are judged by the written law.//// Further, how could Adam know the Decalogue or any version of the "moral law" prior to having knowledge of good and evil? Only after he and Eve ate the forbidden fruit did Adam know he was naked (Genesis 3:11). Only then God said the man has become like one of us in knowing good and evil (Genesis 3:22). It is clear that Adam did not know evil before he sinned, though he clearly knew the goodness of God. Since knowledge of the Law incites sin (Romans 3:20; 5:20; 7:7), one can only conclude that Adam was given the "moral law" in conjunction with The Fall; not when he was created nor when he walked in innocence. There is no warrant in Scripture to take the Decalogue as an eternally binding "moral law" for all people: it was given to Moses and the infant nation of Israel (Nehemiah 9:13 & 14) and the tablets sit in an ark that is to be forgotten (Jeremiah 3:15-16). (106, emphasis original) ////Just to make sure I was not misunderstanding him, I emailed the author to confirm that he does not believe man was created with knowledge of the law of God. He said that is correct. Since Adam and Eve had no knowledge of the law, they must not have been obligated to obey it. Again, Brogden confirmed via email that that is correct. No one knew or was obligated to obey the moral or universal law of God until after the Fall. The only command Adam and Eve had to obey was not to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. With regards to Brogden's argument: after the Fall, with a corrupt nature, knowledge of the law incites sin. That was not the case prior to the Fall with an uncorrupted nature. The "knowledge of good and evil" did not mean "knowledge of what God requires of man." The tree of knowledge of good and evil was symbolic. It represented man's effort to discern good from evil apart from the help of God's wisdom. Adam's duty was to apply the law of God to every situation he encountered in life. If he faced a difficult situation, he was to seek wisdom from God and not rely on his own understanding, thereby growing in maturity (Prov 2:6; James 1:5; Deut 1:39; 1 Kings 3:9; Is. 7:15; Heb 5:14; Rom 12:2; Ps. 119:66; Eph 5:10). This was, in fact, Adam's test (probation). When he had grown in wisdom and maturity, when he had grown wise enough to be judge (1 Cor 6:2-3), then he would enter

God's rest, be confirmed in righteousness, granted to eat from the tree of life and live forever with an immutable nature. But when he faced a difficult situation (the serpent's twisted teaching about what God said), he did not ask God for wisdom, but rather relied on his own understanding of what is good and evil (Gen 3:5-6) and therefore ate of the tree. That's what the tree symbolized. Brogden favorably quotes John Reisinger's simplistic linguistic objection to the term "moral law." He offers an alternative.//// Since the Hebrews under the Mosaic covenant rightly saw all the commands of YHWH as moral (why else would picking up sticks on the Sabbath be a capital offense? Numbers 15:32-36), it dawned on me that the right nomenclature would be universal law (do not murder, marriage, etc.) and covenantal law (do not eat pork, stay in your home on the Sabbath, etc.). Many people refer to a "natural law" that applies to all people, but since such a law is instituted and communicated by Creator God, it's a supernatural law which applies universally. Hence my preference for that label. The covenant one is in determines which laws apply, apart from the universal laws which apply to all men. (107) ////This is conceptually the same as 1689 Federalism's distinction between moral and positive law. In fact, Brogden actually quotes part of a 1689 Federalism essay to defend his view.//// There is no argument that the Decalogue contains universal law, but it contains more; specific instructions and commands that are part of the Mosaic covenant with national Israel and no other nation or people. Rather than being the universal law of God, it would seem that the Decalogue is a particular application of law given in the Mosaic Covenant to the Jews. In a critique of New Covenant Theology [in the Appendix to the Coxe/Owen volume and also found online here], Richard Barcellos quotes John Owen from his Works, 22:215 In this quote, both Owen invalidates the common assertion that what we see in Exodus 20 is nothing but the "moral law," although he did specify the "prescriptive parts" as "absolutely moral;" which is the universal law shining through the tablets. ////However, rather than recognizing that perhaps he has misunderstood the confession's position, since both Barcellos and Owen agree with the confession's position, Brogden declares Owen to be in support of his rejection of the confession.//// Terrence O'Hare tell us that Thomas Aquinas appears to be the first to develop this line of thought, "asserting that the old law contains moral (emanating from natural law), judicial (laws regarding justice among men), and ceremonial (laws touching on worship, holiness, and sanctification) precepts; and that these three can be distinguished in the Decalogue as

well. Accepting such a novel teaching from anyone is treading on thin ice; that the originator was a Roman Catholic makes it all the more important that we examine it closely before declaring it truth that binds everyone. (108-109) // As someone who holds to the Confession's teaching on the law, I have examined it closely (more closely than Brogden if his analysis in this book is any indication) and I find it to be biblical. Aquinas was not the first one to teach the concept of distinguishing between natural law and positive law in the Mosaic Covenant. // In summary, I believe the 1689 LBC suffers from paedobaptist influence in its perception of The Law, resulting in unavoidable conflicts within itself. Baptists ought not to embrace this unless we embrace their view of the covenants as well, for therein lies the basis for the view espoused in chapter 19 and chapter 22.8 of the 1689 LBC. An astute observation from a news story wherein Paul McHugh, a respected psychiatrist at Johns Hopkins, refuted self-identification of sex is most appropriate here: "gird your loins if you would confront this matter. Hell hath no fury like a vested interest masquerading as a moral principle." So it is in discussing the "Christian Sabbath" with those who hold to it. (120-121)

// ___Covenant Theology___ Brogden expresses appreciation for 1689 Federalism. He quotes from Denault, Coxe, Owen, Keach, and Pink. He does generally hold to a similar construct regarding the Noahic, Abrahamic, Mosaic, Davidic, and New Covenants. In this regard I am thankful that an NCT proponent is studying and recognizing the value of historic baptist views. I wish more of them would do so. However, he also quotes extensively from NCT authors. He does recognize that aspects of his view are not shared by proponents of NCT, who reject both the Covenant of Works and the Covenant of Grace, though he maintains "the differences one may have with New Covenant Theology brothers are small and deal in large part with defining our terms." In the end, he makes it clear that the book represents his own unique perspective. // I've taken part of Luther's statement as my title because while I am thankful to God for myriad men in the Reformed Baptist world that have taught me much, I cannot claim full allegiance to a document written in the 17th century; it being mostly right. It is not my intention to present the 17th century Baptist view on the covenants, as if theirs was the ultimate expression of Baptist thought. Pascal Denault's book, *The Distinctiveness of Baptist Covenant Theology*, is an excellent review of that position and the folks at <http://www.1689federalism.com/> have been doing a very good job explaining some of the historic Baptist distinctives and how they differ from the Westminster Confession of Faith. My intention is to present what I, a particular Baptist, see as the

biblical view of the covenants. Conforming to what particular Baptists have historically believed is not my main concern. I desire to conform the Scriptures, not to 16th and 17th century brothers who no more had perfect theology than you or I. We are not to be disciples of mere men (1 Corinthians 3:1-9), but disciples of the Lord Jesus; thankful for those who have been faithful and gone before us but not trapped in their teachings. Hence the title of this part of the book: A Baptist View of Covenant Theology; not The Baptist View of Covenant Theology. There are, today, many variants of how Baptists view the covenants in Scripture; far be it from me to speak on behalf of those with whom I disagree on topics relevant to this (such as reviewed in Part 2: A Baptist View of Reformed Theology). My desire is to be captive to the Word of God; not captive to a 17th century confession nor a system of theology developed by men. (vii, 131-132, emphasis original)

____The Adamic Covenant____ Brogden affirms that God did make a covenant with Adam, even though the early chapters of Genesis do not explicitly call it a covenant. He also affirms that the covenant was a covenant of works (in disagreement with NCT/Progressive Covenantalism proponents like Gentry and Wellum).

The covenant made with Adam was a covenant of works which did not comprehend sin and the need for redemption (Hosea 6:7; Jeremiah 33:19-22; Isaiah 24:5-6) Adam was commanded by God to “do this and live” (You may surely eat of every tree in the garden, Genesis 2:16) and “do that and die” (but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die. Genesis 2:17). Though very narrow in scope, this relationship required obedience by Adam for him to remain in fellowship with Creator God. And by his disobedience, death came to every man (Romans 5:12-19; 1 Corinthians 15:21 & 22), Jew and Gentile without distinction. (151, 149)

Brogden appears to be in agreement with the 2nd London Baptist Confession’s teaching on the Adamic Covenant of Works (see The Covenant of Works: Its Confessional and Scriptural Basis), but upon closer inspection we find that is not the case. As we saw above, Brogden rejects the idea that the law was written on the heart of man at creation, but the law is the basis of the Adamic Covenant of Works. He rejects the historic meaning of the concept while retaining the label and some aspects of it. This is very confusing and is not made clear to the reader. He approvingly quotes Owen and Keach defending the doctrine. However, both quotes do not reflect Brogden’s view since they are specifically focused on showing how the law was the basis of the Covenant of Works.

John Owen, a paedobaptist who shared much in common theologically with Baptists, agreed with Pink on this point in his commentary on Hebrews 8:6 (emphasis mine): “There was an original covenant made with Adam, and all mankind in him. The rule of obedience and reward

that was between God and him, was not expressly called a covenant, but it contained the express nature of a covenant. For it was the agreement of God and man concerning obedience and disobedience, rewards and punishments. Where there is a law concerning these things, and an agreement upon it, by all parties concerned, there is a formal covenant. Wherefore it may be considered two ways. 1st. As it was a law only; so it proceeded from, and was a consequent of, the nature of God and man, with their mutual relation unto one another. God being considered as the Creator, Governor, and Benefactor of man: and man as an intellectual creature, capable of moral obedience; this law was necessary, and is eternally indispensable. 2dly. As it was a covenant; and this depended on the will and pleasure of God. I will not dispute whether God might have given a law unto men, that should have had nothing in it of a covenant properly so called as is the law of creation unto all other creatures, which hath no rewards nor punishments annexed unto it. Yet this God calls a covenant also, inasmuch as it is an effect of his purpose, his unalterable will and pleasure, Jer. 33:20, 21.

Benjamin Keach addressed the question of whether Adam was party to a covenant with God: “Proposition: That the Breach betwixt God and Man, was occasioned by the violation of the First Covenant which God entered into with Adam, as the Common or Public Head and Representative of all Mankind; which Covenant was a Covenant of Works; I say, God gave a Law, or entered into a Covenant of Works with the First Adam and his Seed, and in that Covenant he gave himself to be our God, even upon the strict and severe condition of perfect Obedience, personally to be performed by Man himself, with that Divine Threatening of Death and Wrath if he broke the Covenant, In the Day thou eats thereof thou shalt surely die. Yet some may doubt (as one observes) whether this was a Covenant of Works, because here is only a threatening of Death upon his Disobedience to this one positive Law.

In the style of 17th century apologetics (often called diatribes), Keach stated the propositions and provided the answers. This is his answer to the above proposition: “Man in his First Creation was under a Natural Obligation to universal compliance to the Will of God, and such was the Rectitude of his Nature, it imports an exact Conformity to the Divine Will, there being an inscription of the Divine Law upon Adam’s heart, which partly still remains, or is written in the hearts of the very Gentiles (though much blurred) which is that light which is in all, or that which we call The light of Nature. //The fact that Brogden included these quotes in support of his view suggests to me that perhaps he did not adequately understand the quotes. He could have found other quotes dealing more narrowly with the existence of a Covenant of Works, or simply used the beginning of these ones without including the explanations of how the moral law was the basis of the Covenant of Works. Owen says

“As it was a law only; so it proceeded from, and was a consequent of, the nature of God and man| this law was necessary, and is eternally indispensable. Brogden rejects that idea. All that existed prior to the Fall was the one positive law not to eat from the tree. The subsequent “universal law that Brogden says was written on man’s heart after the Fall was not natural, stemming from God and man’s nature as imago dei, or necessary (since it didn’t exist prior to the Fall). It must therefore have been positive law that depended only on the will and pleasure of God (note well that this means there is no law derived from God’s nature, a problem with many/most versions of NCT that reformed baptists have pointed out, leading to rejections of the imputation of the active obedience of Christ, see also here). Since that is Brogden’s view, it makes little sense for him to quote Owen making the opposite point. Owen’s point was simply to explain LBCF 7.1, which says that man, by nature, owes obedience to God without expecting any reward, but that God voluntarily condescended (by His will and pleasure) to establish a covenant with Adam to offer him a reward for his obedience. His quotation of Keach is even more out of place. Keach says “[S]ome may doubt (as one observes) whether this was a Covenant of Works, because here is only a threatening of Death upon his Disobedience to this one positive Law. That describes Brogden’s view: there is only a threatening of punishment for disobedience to one positive law. Keach says that is wrong because “Man in his First Creation was under a Natural Obligation to universal compliance to the Will of God, and such was the Rectitude of his Nature. Keach is referring to Ecc. 7:29, which Brogden says has nothing to do with the law being written on man’s heart. These quotations are out of place and they reveal, in my opinion, that perhaps Brogden has not wrestled deeply with the doctrine. Brogden also rejects the idea that the reward of the Covenant of Works was glorification œ being made immutable.//// There is nothing in the Scripture to support the notion widely held by some in the paedobaptist world of Covenant Theology that Adam had a “time of probation that hypothetically held out access to the Tree of Life. This notion implies a “plan in God’s mind, which Scripture flat-out proscribes (Acts 2:23 for example) yet open theology embraces. Our God is in His heavens and does what He pleases. //// This is simply a confusion of God’s revealed/preceptive will and His secret/decretive will. (see The Covenant of Works: Its Confessional and Scriptural Basis as well as Better Than the Beginning for helpful discussion of this point.)[... deleted section of review on

Abrahamic and Mosaic Covenants ...]Brogden makes some confused comments about the 2nd LBCF with regards to covenant theology.//// I read, studied and taught the 1689 London Baptist Confession and saw it had much the same view of the Mosaic Covenant as taught by the WCF; and I wondered how this could be. Then I found a book that shook me with some simple explanations from Scripture on the covenants. Jeff Johnson's *The Fatal Flaw of the Theology of Infant Baptism* exposed the flawed foundation of paedobaptism, but more importantly, it explained the dichotomist nature of the covenant given unto Abraham as clearly presented by the Apostle Paul in Galatians 4. (iv) ////If Brogden had been reading the confession as teaching the same thing as the WCF on the Mosaic Covenant, then he was misreading it. Johnson's book and his subsequent reading of Denault would have made that clear. Why then does he still imply the confession teaches the same thing as the WCF on the Mosaic Covenant, rather than what is found in Denault's 17th century survey?//// As Baptists learn more about the covenants of Scripture (explored in more detail in Part 3: A Baptist View of Covenant Theology), apart from the Presbyterian hermeneutic so prevalent in Reformed publications, will we be willing to examine what our confessions say about the secondary doctrines that flow out from one's view of the covenants? We will if we are to be true to our calls of Sola Scriptura and Semper Reformanda. And we will also not be willing to defend our confession by mere argument, but with a clear conscience led by the teaching from the Word of God. (103) ////Brogden seems to suggest we have two options: the Presbyterian covenant theology, or his own personal covenant theology. There is no category for 1689 Federalism, which rejects Presbyterian covenant theology, but also rejects Brogden's covenant theology.____Conclusion____The critical nature of this review should not overshadow many good things this brother has to say in the book. In the end, however, I would not recommend the book because its pluses do not outweigh its minuses. The helpful things in book can easily be found in other, more reliable sources. In an endorsement at the beginning of the book, Jeffery Johnson says "In my opinion, this helpful work needs to be required reading for all Baptist seminary students. I am surprised by such a strong endorsement and do not share his assessment.

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