

PEER REVIEWED ARTICLES

Shall We Speak of the "Covenant of Works?": A Study of Hosea 6:7 in the Masoretic Tradition and its Pastoral Implications

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The main question that this paper seeks to answer is whether the language of "covenant" in the "covenant of works" is biblically warranted. One text that has been used within some Reformed circles to support a covenant made between Adam and God is Hosea 6:7, "But like Adam they transgressed the covenant, there they dealt faithlessly with me" (ESV). This passage, however, has been thwart with various readings within biblical scholarship. This paper argues that the only viable reading of Hosea 6:7 is that Adam transgressed a covenant. If this language of covenant is warranted, then ministers, elders, and the whole church have very good reason to teach and preach the covenant of works and use the language of covenant which the Westminster Confession of Faith uses (7.2).

INTRODUCTION

A major task of the church is to properly teach Scripture and theology to its members. Theological giants of the past left the church with confessions and catechisms for this purpose.¹ Leaders in the Presbyterian Church of Australia, especially ministers and elders, are meant to teach according to the Westminster Confession of Faith (WCF).² Yet some leaders find that parts of the Confession are difficult to teach. This difficulty is not always created by a lack of comprehension, but a lack of commitment to some parts of the WCF. This is not a prejorative indictment upon those who do not hold wholly to the WCF.³ Rather, it is an issue many in the Reformed tradition have disputed: describing God's promise with Adam as a "covenant." That is, the language of the covenant of works. The purpose of this paper is to provide a close reading of Hosea 6:7 as a proof text for the language of the covenant of works.

The Westminster Confession of Faith clearly states, "the first covenant made with man was a covenant of works in which life was promised to Adam and, in him, to his posterity, upon condition of perfect and personal obedience" (7.2).

1 One can think of the various confessions and catechisms that were used widely in history. For example, The Belgic Confession, the First Helvetic Confession, The Second Helvetic Confession, The Heidelberg catechism.

2 Ministers and Elders of the Presbyterian Church of Australia take a vow to accept the Westminster Confession of Faith in light of the Declaratory Statement contained in the Basis of Union. Church members, however, are not. The full question to elders and licentiates is as follows: "Do you own and accept the Westminster Confession of Faith, as amended by the General Assembly, and read in light of the Declaratory Statement contained in the Basis of Union adopted by his Church of the 24th day of July, 1901, as an exhibition of the sense in which you understand the Holy Scriptures, and as a confession of your faith; and do you engage firmly and constantly to adhere thereto, and to the utmost of your power to assert maintain and defend the same?" (*The Code*, Appendix 2:2; 3:2). For further insight into the Declaratory Statement see, Paul F. Cooper and David A. Burke, eds., *Read in the Light: The 1901 Declaratory Statement of the Presbyterian Church of Australia* (Stanhope Gardens, NSW: Eider Books, 2019).

3 For example, some reasonably do not condone Sabbatarianism (cf., WCF 21); others find issue with the description of the Pope as "that Antichrist" (25.6).

Can a minister or elder of the Presbyterian Church of Australia justifiably teach their congregation that God created a “covenant” with Adam? Some in the Reformed tradition have argued in the negative. John Murray (1918–1975), erstwhile professor of systematic theology at Westminster Theological Seminary, Philadelphia, argued that there is little warrant to use the language of “covenant” when speaking about God’s requirement of Adam. He preferred the term “Adamic Administration.”⁴ Murray did not object to the substance of the doctrine, but his issue was with the terminology. Others such as James B. Torrance and Andrew McGowan also argued against the language of “covenant” in reference to Adam.⁵ With detractors even within the Reformed tradition, the minister or elder who wants to faithfully teach from the WCF may find themselves in a strange flux. To appropriate Shakespeare, “to teach, or not to teach?” is really the question. The minister or elder may be studious and even look at the scripture proof afforded to them in the Confession: Galatians 3:12. Although this may be a helpful note, Galatians 3:12 as a proof text will not untangle this issue and help pastors with their questions and their convictions. Is the language used in the confession—“covenant of works”—scholastic mythology built on sand? If it has warrant, where can we find it?

There have been a vast array of works addressing this very topic. J. V. Fesko, for example, is one scholar who has published on the covenant of works.⁶ This ‘wheel’ does not need to be reinvented. The church, however, will benefit from a reassessment of a biblical text that is perhaps the best proof text for the existence of a covenant with Adam. That biblical text is Hosea 6:7, “But like Adam they transgressed the covenant; there they dealt faithlessly with me” (וְהָמָּה כְּאָדָם עָבְרוּ בְרִית לִשְׁם בְּגָדוּ בִי).⁷ Although this English translation favours the language of a covenant made with Adam, the Hebrew of the Masoretic Text (MT) is not as straightforward. Thus, various interpretations of Hosea 6:7 have been proposed. While it would be beneficial to study the LXX and other versions, this paper will limit its scope to the Hebrew text and will ultimately argue that Hosea. 6:7 refers to a covenant that was made with Adam.

REFORMED DEBATE OF HOSEA 6:7

Before the rise of Wellhausen’s influential interpretational of Hosea 6:7 in the late nineteenth century, this text was understood in one of two ways:

1. In reference to “man” or “mankind”—“But like *mankind* they transgressed the covenant; there they dealt faithlessly with me;

⁴ John Murray, “Adamic Administration,” in *Collected Writings*, 4 vols. (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1977), 2:50–51.

⁵ See, James B. Torrance, “Covenant or Contract? A Study of the Theological Background of Worship in Seventeenth-Century Scotland,” *SJT* 23 (1970): 51–76; A.T.B. McGowan, *Adam, Christ and Covenant: Exploring Headship Theology* (London: Apollos, 2016), 2.

⁶ J. V. Fesko, *The Covenant of Works: The Origins, Development, and Reception of the Doctrine* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020); *idem*, *Adam and the Covenant of Works* (Glasgow: Mentor, 2021).

⁷ ESV translation.

2. In reference to the first man, Adam—“But like Adam they transgressed the covenant; there they dealt faithlessly with me.”

This section assesses both options in light of Reformed commentators on Hosea 6:7.

In his commentary on Hosea, John Calvin argues that Hosea 6:7 refers to humanity. He writes, “‘They as men have transgressed the covenant,’ [that is,] they showed themselves to be [mere] men in violating the covenant.”⁸ Against an Adamic interpretation, he notes that the word “Adam” is taken “indefinitely for men” and thus, “[t]his exposition is frigid and diluted.”⁹ It is unfortunate that Calvin does not entertain the possibility of an Adamic interpretation at length. But there is something to be said regarding the Hebrew. For Calvin, the anarthrous nature of אָדָם (lit: “like an *adam*”) is good reason to reject an Adamic reading. However, there seems to be a disjunct between Calvin and the MT. The MT often uses the preposition כִּי without the definite article when attached to the name of a person: כִּי־מֹשֶׁה (“like Moses” [Deut 34:10]) and כִּי־דָוִד (“like David” [2 Kgs 14:3; Amos 6:5; Zech 12:8]). The LXX affirms Calvin’s interpretation, but the MT does not warrant his position. The LXX translates אָדָם as ἄνθρωπος rather than with the personal name “Adam.” When it comes to the MT, the preference to read אָדָם as “like mankind” lacks exegetical justification.

Others have dismissed Hosea 6:7 as a text indicating a covenant made with Adam without much discussion. Lambert Daneau (ca. 1530–1595) accepted the human referent in his commentary but does not defend it.¹⁰ John Eagleson (1785–1832) rejected the idea of the covenant of works but accepted the translation of Hosea 6:7 as “like Adam.”¹¹ Hoeksama and Murray dismiss the Adamic reading altogether.¹² This, however, does not suggest that an Adamic interpretation must be correct, but that a substantial argument is necessary for rendering אָדָם as “like Adam.”

Those within the Reformed tradition who have offered exegetical reasons for an Adamic interpretation are sparse, but they do exist. One trend that can be seen in many exegetes is the attempt to link Hosea 6:7 to two particular passages: Job 31:33 and Psalm 82:7. Both texts contain אָדָם: “if I have concealed my transgressions *like Adam* [אָדָם]...” (Job 31:33); “nevertheless,

8 John Calvin, *Commentary on Hosea*, CTS (rep.; Grand Rapids: Baker, 1993), 235.

9 Calvin, *Commentary on Hosea*, 235.

10 Lambert Daneau, *A Fruitfull Commentarie on the Twelve Small Prophets* (Cambridge: University of Cambridge, 1594), 431.

11 Eagleson argues that even if Hos 6:7 says “like Adam they have transgressed the covenant,” it does not say Adam fell by transgressing the covenant of works which promised eternal life to his obedience, and threatened his disobedience with eternal death (John Eagleson, *Thoughts on the Covenant of Works: Epistolary Address, to the Junior Ministers of the Gospel of All Denominations* [London: R. Baynes, 1829], 20). Fesko sees this as a strict “positivist reading” (J. V. Fesko, *Adam and the Covenant of Works* [Fern, Ross-shire: Mentor, 2021], 247), but it is also a biblicist reading.

12 Herman Hoeksama, *Reformed Dogmatics* (Grand Rapids: Reformed Free Publishing Association, 1966), 220–21; John Murray, “Adamic Administration,” in *Collected Writings* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1977), 49.

like Adam [אָדָם] you shall die...” (Psa 82:7).¹³ Wilhemus à Brakel, John Colquhoun, and Thomas Boston all make the case that because Job 31:33 and Psalm 82:7 render אָדָם as “like Adam,” we should also translate Hosea 6:7 in the same way.¹⁴ It is understandable how this conclusion was reached. à Brakel does not defend his interpretation of Job 31:33 most likely because the Statenvertaling (an early Dutch translation) renders Job 31:33 as “like Adam” (gelijk Adam), so what was proposed was not controversial. Both Colquhoun and Boston make the insight that the Hebrew is only used between these three texts, yet they seem to be at the mercy of the translations because they do not offer a defence for an Adamic reading of Job 31:33 and Psalm 82:7.

While the above attempt to defend an Adamic interpretation lacks robustness, à Brakel does offer a coherent reason to not accept “like mankind.” He argues that if one were to translate אָדָם as “man” then the emphasis of the text would be lost. In his words, “What force of emphasis, yes, what purpose would there be to state that they had broken the covenant like other men who also are but members of the covenant.”¹⁵ à Brakel notices a legitimate redundancy within the verse when אָדָם is rendered “man.” The whole reason why the LORD is rebuking Israel is because they disobeyed him. They had broken a covenant. When the text thus decides to use the preposition כִּי, à Brakel assumes that the author is denoting a sense of agreement in quantity or measure.¹⁶ How is one to make sense of the passage if Israel, which is a community made up of humans, is said to have broken a covenant like humans? To this à Brakel writes, “This certainly makes no sense, and therefore Adam here refers to the first man.”¹⁷

Among the early exegetes, à Brakel is perhaps the most thorough when it comes to Hosea 6:7. In addition to his argument that “like man” would be a redundant translation in Hosea 6:7, he points to the Hebrew text. à Brakel notices that when אָדָם is employed to refer to humanity, then the definite article is usually used.¹⁸ For example, in Exodus 8:17 and 18, with reference to humans the Hebrew has אֶת־הָאָדָם (“on [the] humans”). While the preposition כִּי (“like”) and אָדָם (“human”) do not appear frequently, כִּי and אֶת־אָדָם do. In almost every case when כִּי and אֶת־אָדָם do appear, it refers to a human or humanity.¹⁹ And in almost every instance when it refers to a human or humanity, it employs the

¹³ Translations mine.

¹⁴ Wilhemus à Brakel, *Christian’s Reasonable Service: God, Man, and Christ* (Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage Book, 2012), 1:365; John Colquhoun, *A Treatise on the Covenant of Works* (Edinburgh: Thomsons Brothers, 1821), 6; Thomas Boston, *The Complete Works of Thomas Boston* (Lafayette, IN: Sovereign Grace Publishers, 2001), 11:221–22.

¹⁵ à Brakel, *Christian’s Reasonable Service*, 1:366.

¹⁶ Cf., Bill T. Arnold and John H. Choi, *A Guide to Biblical Hebrew Syntax*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), 109.

¹⁷ à Brakel, *Christian’s Reasonable Service*, 1:366.

¹⁸ à Brakel, *Christian’s Reasonable Service*, 1:366.

¹⁹ The first instance is found in Joshua 3:15. Here אֶת־אָדָם refers not to humanity but to a city called “Adam.” Nonetheless, Joshua 3:16 uses the preposition with a definite article: אֶת־אָדָם (“in Adam”).

definite article.²⁰ There are only three cases where we find the use of אָדָם without the definite article (Prov 23:28; 28:2; Eccl 2:24) lending credibility to à Brakel’s case. In most circumstances, when referring to a human or humanity, we should expect the use of the definite article, but in Hosea 6:7 we do not. This case is not fool proof, but it is a reasonable one. The standard seems to be that when referring to humanity, one should expect the appearance of the definite article. Yet in Hosea 6:7 there is no definite article, and thus has a lesser likelihood of it being a reference to humanity.

à Brakel also advocates that an Adamic interpretation fits well within the overall context. The purpose in the text and the wider chapter is to display the grievous nature of the sins of Judah and Ephraim. A comparison to Adam is an identification of “the origin as well as the example for this sin.”²¹ à Brakel concludes, “the words ‘as Adam’ cause us to focus upon the first covenant breach of Adam, which is referred to here in order to amplify the sin of Judah and Ephraim.”²² Although this argument does not necessarily make the case for an Adamic interpretation, it does show à Brakel’s genuine attempt to make an exegetical argument to read “like Adam” in Hosea 6:7 as opposed to “like man/humanity.”

As far as a thorough exegetical warrant for taking אָדָם as “like humanity/man”, there is only Calvin. As noted above, many dissenters of the terminology of covenant of works have given little to no evidence for their interpretation. On the other hand, those who accepted an Adamic reading attempted to mount up evidence in favour of their position. à Brakel, in particular, has made a strong case through an analysis of the Hebrew text. At this point, there is good reason to accept that Hosea 6:7 suggests that there was a covenant made between God and Adam.

A NEW ERA OF INTERPRETATION OF HOSEA 6:7

In 1970, B. B. Warfield wrote that he found one anonymous Dutch work called *Een Bundel van godgeleerde Oeffeningen* from the later seventeenth century that took the word אָדָם as a place in Joshua 3:16, yet it “bore no fruit at the time.”²³ Wellhausen, however, popularized this “new” reading: “in Adam.” In an influential book *Die Kleinen Propheten*, Wellhausen notes that the Hebrew should be read as אָדָם (“in Adam”).²⁴ His justifications are brief: “...because of the following שָׁם [“there”], and because of the localization of the sin also of the

²⁰ Gen 9:6; Exod 8:13, 14; 9:10; 13:2; Lev 13:9; 22:5; 24:20; Num 8:17; 18:15; 31:11, 26; Jer 32:20; 49:15; Mic 7:2; Psa 68:19; 78:60; 118:8; Eccl 2:24.

²¹ à Brakel, *Christian’s Reasonable Service*, 1:366.

²² à Brakel, *Christian’s Reasonable Service*, 1:366–67.

²³ Benjamin B. Warfield, “Hosea VI. 7: Adam or Man?” in *Selected Shorter Writings of Benjamin B. Warfield*, ed. John E. Meeter (Nutley, NJ: P&R, 1970), 122.

²⁴ Julius Wellhausen, *Die Kleinen Propheten* (Berlin: Georg Reimer, 1892), 114.

following verses.”²⁵ There are at least two things to notice from Wellhausen’s proposal. The first is that instead of the preposition כְּ (“as/like”) Wellhausen opted for בְּ (“in/at”), an emendation that had not yet been offered. The second, a focus on the particle שָׁם (“there”) as an important factor for interpretation. This Hebrew word, indeed, is used often to indicate location. Thus, for Wellhausen, a covenant was broken “in” a place called “Adam.”

Text-critics have long known the *beth-kaf* confusion that could take place in scribal practice.²⁶ This, however, was not the end of proposals surrounding emendations. The New English Bible (NEB) translators not only emended the preposition but added a final *he*, projecting that the “original” would look something like באדמה (“in Admah”). “Admah” appears in Hosea 11:8,

How can I give you up, Ephraim? How can I hand you over,
O Israel? How can I make you *like Admah* (כְּאֲדָמָה)? How can
I tread you like Zeboiim? My heart recoils within me; my
compassion grows warm and tender.

This seems to be, at least partly, the reason why such an emendation was made. Yet this verse does not contribute to the understanding of Hosea 6:7. In the words of Curtis, “[h]ere Admah and its partner-in-crime, Zeboyim, are reprobate, rejected, precisely not covenant partners with Israel’s God.”²⁷ It is not surprising that no other translations or commentators have supported this emendation. The emendations proposed by the NEB, however, are not the last. The New American Bible translators not only saw Wellhausen’s emendation to be reasonable, but they believed two extra consonants were missing: a *taw* and a *mem*. Thus their rendering: באדמתם (“in their land”). Hosea 6:7 would then read, “But they, *in their land*, violated the covenant; there they were unfaithful to me.” Curtis argues that this emendation is unlikely because the context surrounding Hos 6:7 speaks of local geography: “Gilead” (6:8); “Shechem” (6:9); “Ephraim” (6:10).²⁸ This, however, is not a conclusive reason to reject the NEB translation. A weak point in the NEB translation is the fact that אֲדָמָה is never used with the preposition בְּ. In the 17 times the word appears in the Hebrew Bible (HB), 13 of them use the preposition עַל (“over/upon”).²⁹ We have no instance in the HB where אֲדָמָה is found with the preposition בְּ. This would make the words באדמתם unique to Hosea 6:7. With all these reasons put together, the NEB translators’ proposal seem rather unlikely.

25 My translation of “...wegen des folgenden שָׁם und wegen der Lokalisierung der Sünde auch in den sich anschliessenden Versen” (Wellhausen, *Die Kleinen Propheten*, 114).

26 E.g., Emanuel Tov, *Textual Criticism of the Hebrew Bible*, 3rd ed. (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2012), 218–19.

27 Byron G. Curtis, “Hosea 6:7 and Covenant-Breaking like/at Adam,” in *The Law Is Not of Faith: Essays on Works and Grace in the Mosaic Covenant*, ed. Bryan D. Estelle, J. V. Fesko, and David VanDrunen (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R Pub, 2009), 185.

28 Curtis, “Hosea 6:7 and Covenant-Breaking like/at Adam,” 185.

29 Deut 29:27; Isa 13:1; Jer 12:14; 16:15; 23:8; Ezek 28:25; 34:27; 36:17; 39:26, 28; Amos 9:15 (2x). Only in Gen 47:22, Lev 20:24, Psa 105:35, Ezek 34:13, and 37:21 does אֲדָמָה appear without the preposition עַל.

Arguing for an emendation without a textual variant is always tenuous business. A. A. Macintosh notes that the de Rossi Codex 554, dated around the 14th Century, contains the textual variant באדם. However, no textual apparatus lists this variant. The *Biblica Hebraica Quinta* only offers this comment with regards to reading Hos 6:7 as באדם, “There is no evidence for the conjectural reading באדם ... This is an exegetical rather than textual case.”³⁰ Thus, despite the apparent textual witness to this variant, there is no clear evidence of a textual witness to the reading באדם. This proposal is a conjecture made through exegesis.

Wellhausen in his early work did not specify where “Adam” was, but there is only one possible allusion that is found in the MT, Joshua 3:16,

The waters flowing from above stood still, rising up in a sing heap far off *at Adam* [בְּאֶדָם], the city that is beside Zarethan, while those flowing towards the sea of the Arabah, the Dead Sea, were wholly cut off...

This connection to Joshua 3:16, and the emendation, has been accepted by commentators.³¹ Emending אֵשׁ for אֶשׁ solved the riddle why אֵשׁ (“there”) is included in the verse. Various English translations also adopted Wellhausen’s translation.³² Fetz notes that Adam is likely to be *Tell ed-Damiyeh*; a place about twenty-six miles north of biblical Jericho.³³ However, even if this is the location, where in the HB do we find Israel breaking a covenant in Adam? Anderson and Freedman have argued a plausible solution from 2 Kings 15.³⁴ The narrative centres around Pekah’s revolt. In verse 7 it is possible (albeit not necessary) for the revolting men to have passed through Adam. It is postulated that a group of rebel priests passed through Adam and committed a series of murders.³⁵ This crime, apparently, is then construed by Hosea as the paradigmatic event whereby a covenant was broken. The difficulty with this position is that there is no evidence that renegade priests committed murders while passing through Adam. Moreover, it is also a stretch to think that Hosea has made this odd event to be the paradigm of covenant breaking.³⁶

Even if an Adamic interpretation can be well established, commentators have noted the troublesome adverbial particle אֵשׁ (“there”). In the words of Curtis, “[t]he adverb almost certainly requires a referent in the text.”³⁷ This is certainly

30 Anthony Gelston, ed., *The Twelve Minor Prophets*, Quinta., *Biblia Hebraica Quinta* 13 (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 2010), 60.

31 E.g., George A. Smith, *The Book of the Twelve Prophets* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1928), 1:289.

32 For instance, the 1952 Revised Standard Version, the 1989 New Revised Standard Version, 1968 Jerusalem Bible.

33 Merk J. Fetz, “Adam (place),” *Anchor Bible Dictionary*, 1:64.

34 Francis Anderson and David N. Freedman, *Hosea*, AB (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1996), 436.

35 Anderson and Freedman, *Hosea*, 436.

36 Joshua N. Moon, *Hosea* (London: Apollos, 2018), 128.

37 Curtis, “Hosea 6:7 and Covenant-Breaking like/at Adam,” 196.

true. Any interpretation needs to make sense of the whole verse. So, if Hosea 6:7 reads, “But they, like Adam, transgressed the covenant; *there* they dealt faithlessly with me,” how are we to understand “there”? It is possible to find the referent of אֵשׁ in Gilead which is in the proceeding verse (6:8). Curtis, however, rightly argues that in Hosea, every referent of אֵשׁ precedes the particle.³⁸ This can be a legitimate problem for an Adamic interpretation, since there are no viable referents in the preceding verses. Moon offers a solution. He observes that אֵשׁ need not refer to a geographical location,³⁹ but can instead refer, as BDB puts it, “to a spot localized in the imagination.”⁴⁰ And this use of אֵשׁ is also observable in Hosea. The most poignant example is found close to Hosea 6:7, in Hosea 6:10, “In the house of Israel I have seen a horrible thing; there [אֵשׁ] is Ephraim’s whoredom, Israel is defiled.” Here the “house of Israel” is not a geographical location but a rhetorical place of action. “There” may allude to an association between the lands of Israel and Eden: “There, in the same place as Adam...”,⁴¹ or it may be a rhetorical place where an action had occurred (cf., Hos 6:4–6).

A THIRD WAY: “PORQUE NO LOS DOS?”⁴²

There is a possibility that Hosea 6:7 refers to both Adam the person and Adam the place. This is the unique case that Curtis makes. Curtis does not compromise on the text, but rather argues through a careful analysis of the Hebrew.⁴³ In the HB, there are cases of double entendre.⁴⁴ Curtis notices that Hosea exhibits a propensity for wordplay, particularly polysemous wordplay. He offers several examples from Hosea 1:2, 4–5, 7; 4:16, 18; 9:16; 10:1 and more.⁴⁵ Although it is impossible to survey all the examples given, these are all reasonable examples of wordplay in Hosea. Curtis then makes the case that Hosea 6:7 is an example of a particular kind of wordplay: Janus parallelism. Popularised by Cyrus Gordon, a Janus parallelism evokes the two-faced Roman god of entries and exits. What is proposed by adherents of this parallelism is that a deliberately ambiguous word is utilized in a sentence which can be read with the previous line and the line ahead. Scott Noegel has observed a number of Janus parallels in Hosea (1:6–7; 4:2–3, 7–8, 16–17; 6:7–9; 7:16).⁴⁶ The most notable for our purposes is Hosea 6:7–9:

38 Curtis, “Hosea 6:7 and Covenant-Breaking like/at Adam,” 196.

39 Moon, *Hosea*, 128.

40 BDB §1027a.

41 Moon, *Hosea*, 129.

42 This is Spanish for “why not both?”

43 Curtis, “Hosea 6:7 and Covenant-Breaking like/at Adam,” 197–207.

44 See, Immanuel M. Casanowicz, “Paronomasia in the Old Testament” (John Hopkins University, PhD diss., 1894); Ronald L. Androphy, “Paronomasia in the Former Prophets: A Taxonomic Catalogue, Description, and Analysis” (Jewish Theological Seminary, PhD diss., 2011); Scott B. Noegel, “Wordplay” in *Ancient Near Eastern Texts*, ANEM 26 (Atlanta: SBL, 2021).

45 Curtis, “Hosea 6:7 and Covenant-Breaking like/at Adam,” 198–205.

46 Scott B. Noegel, *Janus Parallelism in Job*, JSOTSup 223 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1996), 151–54.

But they, like Adam/man, transgressed the covenant;
 There they dealt faithlessly with me.
 Gilead is a city of evildoers,
 Foot-tracked/deceitful (עֲקֵבָה) with blood
 As robbers lie in wait for a man,
 So the priests band together; they murder on the way to
 Shechem.

The word in question is עֲקֵבָה which can be translated as “foot-tracked” or “deceitful.” Thus, Gilead is “deceitful” with bloodshed as they break the covenant. At the same time, Gilead is “foot-tracked” with blood as they murder on the way to Shechem. With this example of Janus parallelism in the HB and particularly in Hosea, Curtis argues that the same Janus parallelism can be seen in Hosea 6:7 in the following way:

Like [their ancestor] Adam, they broke the covenant;
 Like [the residents of the town of] Adam, they double crossed
 me there.⁴⁷

This is undoubtedly a novel proposal, backed with serious scholarship. The question is whether it stands up to scrutiny.

A weak point with Curtis’ proposal is perhaps how a Janus parallel is found. As noted earlier, a Janus parallel utilizes an ambiguous word; a word that can be translated in at least two ways. The words עֲקֵבָה, however, are not so lexically ambiguous as to create a Janus parallel. There are no contextual clues that make reading עֲקֵבָה “like [the residents of the town of] Adam,” and there is no clear evidence that a covenant breaking in Adam was something that happened. These words עֲקֵבָה have become ambiguous because of the history of interpretation. Yet from a lexical standpoint there is nothing ambiguous about it. Moreover, the English gloss “Like [the residents of the town of] Adam...” is never defended. It seems since the preposition כִּי (“like/as”) cannot be used locatively (like כִּי [“in/at”]), Curtis has added the idea of comparison with the residents of the town of Adam. While the proposal is novel and has some convincing elements, ultimately it is not persuasive.

FURTHER JUSTIFICATIONS FOR AN ADAMIC INTERPRETATION

Knowledge of the Creation Story in Hosea

If we are to accept that עֲקֵבָה in Hosea 6:7 refers to the first human, the interpretation still has an issue: no other prophet names Adam. Is it, therefore, justifiable to accept that Adam is in view when it seems that Hosea, and many other prophetic books for that matter, do not mention him? This, of course, is not a conclusive argument. Hosea may have had, and indeed is allowed to have

47 Curtis, “Hosea 6:7 and Covenant-Breaking like/at Adam,” 207.

had, Adam in mind for just a single verse. However, the case for an Adamic reading can be strengthened by proving Hosea’s knowledge of the creation story.

Hosea, at a few points, shows knowledge of the creation story. In Hosea 2:18, we read, “And I will make for them a covenant on that day with the beasts of the field, the birds of the heavens, and the creeping things of the ground.” Even a cursory glance at this passage evokes Genesis 1 and Genesis 9:10. There are three animals that are mentioned in Hosea 2:18: beasts of the field, birds of heavens, and creeping things. DeRoche observes, “the only verse in the creation narrative that contains a list of the very three animals enumerated in Hosea 2:18 is Genesis 1:30”:⁴⁸ “And to every beast of the earth and to every bird of the heavens and to everything that creeps on the earth...” No other reference has all three animals but Hosea 2:18 and Genesis 1:30.

Another example comes from Hosea 4:3, “Therefore the land mourns, and all who dwell in it languish, and also the beasts of the field and birds of the heavens, and even the fish of the sea are taken away.” This verse, like Hosea 2:18, evokes the creation narrative. Interestingly, many commentators do not make a link to creation, especially Genesis 1:28, “Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it, and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and every living thing that moves on the earth.” While the vocabulary is not the same, the categories of animals are the same: on earth, in the air, and in the water. Yet there is a twist. Hosea 4:3 reverses the order. This is something that DeRoche notices. Hosea does not simply employ creation imagery through Genesis 1:28, he reverses it to announce a reversal of creation; a complete destruction of creation.⁴⁹

Thus, there is no doubt that Hosea knew the creation story. In two places, the book of Hosea not only alludes to but uses the same language as Genesis 1. Hosea 2:18 is perhaps the most conclusive since it shares unique vocabulary with Genesis 9:10.

The Anarthrous Preposition

Earlier in a counterargument against Calvin, it was proposed, albeit briefly, that the anarthrous nature of כְּמֹשֶׁה is good reason to accept an Adamic interpretation of Hosea 6:7. The reason, it was suggested, was that the MT often uses the preposition כְּ without the definite article when attached to the name of a person: כְּמֹשֶׁה (“like Moses” [Deut 34:10]) and כְּדָוִד (“like David” [2 Kgs 14:3; Amos 6:5; Zech 12:8]). This same thing can be said of any other preposition when attached to a name. If we continue our use of Moses and David as paradigms and use the preposition בְּ, one will see that בְּמֹשֶׁה (“in

⁴⁸ Michael DeRoche, “The Reversal of Creation in Hosea,” *VT* 31 (1981): 406.

⁴⁹ DeRoche, “The Reversal of Creation in Hosea,” 403.

Moses”) which occurs 6 times in the HB is always anarthrous (Exod 4:14; 14:31; Num 12:1, 2, 8; 21:5). The same can be said of דָּוִד (“David”) and its longer spelling דָּוִידָה Sam 17:28; 18:11; 19:1, 4, 10; 27:12; 2 Sam 10:6; 19:44; 20:1, 21; 1 Kgs 8:16; 12:16; Psalms 78:70; 2 Chron 6:6; 10:16).

The fact that prepositions which come before names in the HB are anarthrous also makes it unlikely that Hosea 6:7 is even connected to Joshua 3:16. The MT of Joshua 3:16 has אֲנִי־יְהוָה with the definite article. While it is true that the vowel markers in the HB are secondary because early Hebrew writing was consonantal (that is, written with consonants and no vowels),⁵⁰ nevertheless it is very difficult to suggest that the scribe(s) had Joshua 3:16 in mind when writing Hosea 6:7. If that were the case, one should expect at least a definite article (i.e., אֲנִי־יְהוָה).

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS PERTAINING TO HOSEA 6:7

From the previous analysis, it has been shown that the Adamic interpretation of Hosea 6:7 is best accounted for. The attempt to read “like man/humanity” offered in early Reformed exegesis runs into the issue of being redundant. The later proposal of Wellhausen is riddled with issues. The emendation from דָּ to אֲנִי lacks textual witnesses and it is highly unlikely that Hosea is alluding to 2 Kings 15 as the paradigmatic covenant-breaking episode. The location Adam is not mentioned in the passage, and it remains speculative whether a covenant was broken precisely in Adam. Additionally, some have pointed to the particle אֲשֶׁר (“there”); that it necessitates a geographical location. This conclusion was negated by demonstrating how the book of Hosea uses אֲשֶׁר to locate a place in the imagination. Furthermore, it was argued that despite Curtis’ novel attempt to see a Janus parallelism in Hosea 6:7, it lacks the fundamental attributes for being legitimate wordplay. Lastly, it was shown that the book of Hosea exhibits good knowledge of the creation narrative through citations of Genesis. Having surveyed all the possible interpretations of Hosea 6:7, this paper views the Adamic interpretation to be the most viable. Hosea argues that Israel had broken the covenant just like the first man.

CONTEMPORARY SIGNIFICANCE: CONFIDENCE TO TEACH THE WESTMINSTER CONFESSION OF FAITH

If the previous analysis is correct, we have very good reason to believe that a covenant was made with Adam. Fesko notes that just because someone argues for an Adamic referent in Hosea 6:7 “does not mean that he [or she] was an advocate of the covenant of works.”⁵¹ This is certainly true. The doctrine

⁵⁰ See, Ernst Würthwein and Alexander A. Fischer, *The Text of the Old Testament: An Introduction to the Biblia Hebraica*, 3rd ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2014), 3.

⁵¹ Fesko, *Adam and the Covenant of Works*, 248.

of the covenant of works is not contained within a single verse in Scripture. Fortunately there are many good works that have argued for this doctrine comprehensively.⁵²

The aim of this paper was to assess whether the language of “covenant of works” was biblical; whether God had made a covenant with Adam. It was argued that the language of “covenant” within “covenant of works” is indeed biblical language. Whether one’s desire is to bicker with the language of “works” as found in the WCF, or “covenant of life” in the Westminster Larger Catechism (Q.20), is not the issue at hand. Hosea 6:7 speaks of a covenant that was made with Adam. Therefore, Reformed scholars, ministers and elders, and all others can, without hesitation, call the agreement or administration that God made with the first man a covenant.

Ministers and elders within the Presbyterian Church of Australia, and any Reformed denomination, should be able to preach and teach the doctrine of the covenant of works without any caveats. The hope is that ministers and elders will not hesitate using the language that is set forth in the WCF 7.2. When teaching from the WCF, the WLC, or the Westminster Shorter Catechism (Q.12, 16), they can confidently refer to Hosea 6:7 as one decisive text that teaches that God made a covenant with Adam. There is no need to disagree with the WCF squeamishly or loathingly, nor is there a need to invoke a declaratory statement as an out clause which inevitably undermines the WCF. Instead the minister or elder who faithfully desires to teach their sheep that a covenant was made between Adam and God can do so with confidence.

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⁵² See, Meredith G. Kline, *Kingdom Prologue: Genesis Foundations for a Covenantal Worldview* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2006; Fesko, *The Covenant of Works*; Fesko, *Adam and the Covenant of Works*; Guy Prentiss Waters, J. Nicholas Reid, and John R. Muether, eds., *Covenant Theology: Biblical, Theological, and Historical Perspectives* (Wheaton, Ill: Crossway, 2020), esp. 63–78, 99–110.

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