

## The Abrahamic Covenant In The Thought Of John Tombes

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Individual anecdotes are not normative, but illustrative of the fruit of men's labors. The fruit of a belief will be seen in how it manifests itself in practice. Ideas have consequences. Let me illustrate. A friend with whom I attended seminary called me recently to discuss a matter affecting the life of the church he presently pastors. The church is Presbyterian. My friend has always been a traditionally conservative Presbyterian pastor holding to all of the Westminster Standards—even the Directory for Public Worship. His recent experience struck at the heart of how the infant's interest in the Covenant of Grace via the Abrahamic Covenant is working itself out in *some* covenantal Presbyterian or paedobaptist circles. A young woman in her late teens had become a nightmare to her Christian parents. She was disruptive at home and rebellious to the authority figures in her life. Her church prayed for her regularly over the course of almost two years. In fact, they prayed so regularly that it seemed to the pastor that the congregation had given her over as a hopeless cause. They had become desensitized through familiarity with her condition. A Christian friend of this young woman, however, also showed concern for her. She "reached out to her with a lifeline" (as the evangelical cliché says). This friend invited her to a church other than her family's where there were special summer evangelistic meetings. She agreed to attend. The rebellious one was struck by the force of the preaching and made a public profession of faith. (Let's not get lost in a visceral reaction to methodology at this point.) Late that night, she announced to her parents with tears of repentance interspersed with her words that everything was going to be okay from now on because she was now a Christian. Sounds good, doesn't it?

Her father went into a tirade. He had presumed his daughter was already regenerate by virtue of her election and her place as a "Covenant child." He would not be shown to be wrong. His hyper-covenantal

theology blinded him to the possibility that his daughter might have been unregenerate. In his view, she had "broken the covenant again" by making such a public profession of faith. After all, he had professed faith for her at her baptism sixteen or so years earlier. What might have been a merciful answer to the church's prayers was perceived as a greater evil tha...

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