

CHAPTER 1

A Brief Overview of Seventeenth-Century Reformed Orthodox Federalism

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It is no secret that various seventeenth-century Reformed orthodox theologians articulated theology utilizing a federal or covenantal model. There are many sources (primary and secondary) available for the contemporary reader which amply display and discuss this model.¹ We will examine briefly a few of the more important federal theologians of the seventeenth century to introduce readers to the world of seventeenth-

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¹ For instance, for primary sources see Herman Witsius, *The Economy of the Covenants Between God and Man: Comprehending A Complete Body of Divinity, Two Volumes* (Escondido, CA: The den Dulk Christian Foundation, Reprinted 1990); Nehemiah Coxe and John Owen, *Covenant Theology From Adam to Christ* (Owensboro, KY: RBAP, 2005); Samuel Bolton, *The True Bounds of Christian Freedom* (Edinburgh: The Banner of Truth Trust, Reprint edition of 1978); Edward Fisher, *The Marrow of Modern Divinity: In Two Parts – Part I. the Covenant of Works and the Covenant of Grace; Part II. An Exposition of the Ten Commandments* (Edmonton, AB, Canada: Still Water Revival Books, Reprint edition of 1991); Francis Turretin, *Institutes of Elenctic Theology, Volume Two* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 1994); and for secondary works see A. T. B. McGowan, *The Federal Theology of Thomas Boston* (Edinburgh: Rutherford House, 1997); John Von Rohr, *The Covenant of Grace in Puritan Thought* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1986); John L. Girardeau, *The Federal Theology: Its Import and Its Regulative Influence* (Greenville, SC: Reformed Academic Press, 1994); Charles S. McCoy and J. Wayne Baker, *Fountainhead of Federalism: Heinrich Bullinger and the Covenantal Tradition* (Louisville: Westminster/John Know Press, 1991); Mark W. Karlberg, *Covenant Theology in Reformed Perspective: Collected Essays and Book Reviews in Historical, Biblical, and Systematic Theology* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2000); Lyle D. Bierma, *German Calvinism in the Confessional Age: The Covenant Theology of Caspar Olevianus* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1996); Rowland S. Ward, *God & Adam: Reformed Theology and The Creation Covenant – An Introduction to the Biblical Covenants – A Close Examination of the Covenant of Works* (Wantirna, Australia: New Melbourne Press, 2003); Peter Golding, *Covenant Theology: The Key of Theology in Reformed Thought and Tradition* (Ross-shire, Scotland: Christian Focus Publications, 2004); Peter Lillback, *The Binding of God: Calvin's Role in the Development of Covenant Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2001); Willem J. van Asselt, *The Federal Theology of Johannes Cocceius (1603-1669)* (Leiden, Boston, Koln: Brill, 2001); John Murray, "Covenant Theology" in *Collected Writings, Volume Four* (Edinburgh: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1982), 216-40; Geerhardus Vos, "The Doctrine of the Covenant in Reformed Theology" in *RHBI*, 234-67.

century federal or covenant theology. This brief survey understands federal theology as a method and not as a distinct school.²

Federal or covenant theology did not begin in the seventeenth century. The seventeenth-century Reformed orthodox built upon the labors of their Reformed predecessors, who built upon the labors of others before them. Such theologians as Zwingli, Bullinger, Calvin, Ursinus, Olevianus, Rollock, Perkins, Ames, and Ball all played key roles in the early development of federal theology.³ We will look briefly at some of the key contributors to the development of federalism in the early and late seventeenth century, and even into the eighteenth century, to provide a wider context to introduce the reader to the thought-world of post-Reformation federalism. This should assist the reader as he continues through this volume. Knowing the historical-theological issues of the most productive era of the formulation of federal or covenant theology (among paedobaptists and Particular Baptists) will introduce readers to the ways and means utilized in such formulations and help understand some of the post-Reformation confessional statements and the biblical and theological issues at stake.

William Perkins

William Perkins, a late sixteenth-century English theologian, was a theology professor at Christ College, Cambridge.⁴ He is known by some as the father or chief architect of English Puritanism. He had several works of note, especially his *The Art of Prophesying* and *A Golden Chaine*. *The Art of Prophesying* was a hermeneutical and homiletical handbook which influenced English and American Puritanism.⁵ Those who influenced Perkins' theology most were men like John Calvin, Peter Martyr Vermigli, Theodore Beza, Jerome Zanchi, Casper Olevianus, and Franciscus Junius.⁶ Perkins utilized Ramist logic while articulating his theology. Peter Ramus was a sixteenth-century French

² Cf. Willem J. van Asselt, "The Fundamental Meaning of Theology: Archetypal and Ectypal Theology in Seventeenth-Century Reformed Thought," *Westminster Theological Journal* 64 (2002): 323, where he notes, "This should warn us against any facile juxtaposition of federal-biblical theology with scholastic-dogmatic theology..." 'This' in context refers to the fact that many late sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Reformed theologians utilized Junius' classification of archetypal and ectypal knowledge. Van Asselt claims that this is true of continental Reformed theologians as well as some English Puritans. John Owen makes such distinctions in his *Biblical Theology* (Pittsburgh: Soli Deo Gloria, 1994). (Cf. Chapter 8 of my *The Family Tree of Reformed Biblical Theology*, Owen, *Biblical Theology*, Chapter 3 Book I, and Sebastian Rehnman, *Divine Discourse: The Theological Methodology of John Owen* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2002), 57-71 for an extended discussion as it relates to Owen.) Once again, this is further evidence that Reformed scholasticism was a complex method and not a static system of theology. Reformed orthodox theologians could be and were often both scholastic and federal.

³ For a well-referenced treatment of the history of federal theology in the post-Reformation era see Ward, *God & Adam*. Cf. also Golding, *Covenant Theology*, 13-66.

⁴ Donald K. McKim, "Perkins, William (1558-1602)" in Donald K. McKim, editor, *Encyclopedia of the Reformed Faith* (Louisville and Edinburgh: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1992), 274-75.

⁵ Donald K. McKim, "Perkins, Williams (1558-1602)" in Donald K. McKim, editor, *Dictionary of Major Biblical Interpreters* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2007), 815.

⁶ McKim, "Perkins" in McKim, editor, *DMBI*, 815.

logician and philosopher who simplified Aristotelianism and developed a system of analysis that was utilized by the Cambridge Puritans and passed on to their heirs. Ramism analyzed discourse by defining and dividing. Axioms were divided into two parts or dichotomies. Divisions could be subdivided down to their smallest units. As an effect of humanism in Ramist logic, there was an emphasis on practicality. This contribution of Ramism in Puritanism created the tendency in Puritan exegesis of Scripture to create sermons under two main considerations—exposition/doctrine and use.⁷

William Ames

William Ames, a student of Perkins at Christ College, Cambridge, became professor of theology at the University of Franeker, the Netherlands in 1622. Ames' major work was his *The Marrow of Theology*.⁸ This work was very influential among various groups of Protestants in the seventeenth century, including Baptists. It follows Perkins' utilization of Ramist logic in the articulation of theology. Ames has been called the "chief architect of the federal theology."⁹

Ames was Johannes Cocceius' (see below) theology professor and could have been the source behind two of his contributions to federalism—(1) a mediating position on the relation between the *ordo salutis* and the *historia salutis* and (2) the concept of a progressive abrogation of the covenant of works.¹⁰ Commenting on Ames' teaching on the relation between the *ordo* and *historia salutis*, van Vliet says, "The horizontal movement and the vertical "strikes" are continually in a state of intersection; predestination and covenant meet in unity."¹¹ In his discussion "The Administration of the Covenant of Grace before the Coming of Christ" Ames combines aspects of the *ordo salutis* with aspects of the *historia salutis*. He does this in the three major Old Testament redemptive-historical epochs: from Adam to Abraham,¹² from Abraham to Moses,¹³ and from Moses to Christ.¹⁴ In each redemptive-historical epoch, Ames shows how the stages of the *ordo salutis* were exemplified or as Ames says, "adumbrated."¹⁵

Ames held to what van Vliet calls "a form of [the progressive] abrogation of the covenant of works."¹⁶ Commenting on the New Covenant, Ames says:

⁷ Cf. McKim, "Perkins" in *DMBI*, 816 and McKim, "Ramus, Peter (1515-1572)" in *ERF*, 314.

⁸ William Ames, *The Marrow of Theology* (Durham, NC: The Labyrinth Press, 1983).

⁹ Jan van Vliet, "Decretal Theology and the Development of Covenant Thought: An Assessment of Cornelis Graafland's Thesis with a Particular View to Federal Architects William Ames and Johannes Cocceius," *WTJ* 63 (2001): 405 and 414. Van Vliet is quoting Perry Miller.

¹⁰ Cf. van Vliet, "Decretal Theology and the Development of Covenant Thought," 416 for a fascinating discussion suggesting this very thing.

¹¹ van Vliet, "Decretal Theology and the Development of Covenant Thought," 415.

¹² Ames, *The Marrow of Theology*, 203 (XXXVIII:14-19).

¹³ Ames, *The Marrow of Theology*, 204 (XXXVIII:20-28).

¹⁴ Ames, *The Marrow of Theology*, 204-5 (XXXVIII:30-5).

¹⁵ Ames, *The Marrow of Theology*, 203 (XXXVIII:29).

¹⁶ van Vliet, "Decretal Theology and the Development of Covenant Thought," 418.

4. The testament is new in relation to what existed from the time of Moses and in relation to the promise made to the fathers. But it is new not in essence but in form. In the former circumstances the form of administration gave *some evidence of the covenant of works*, from which this testament is essentially different.¹⁷

While discussing Christian freedom under the New Covenant, Ames continues, “9. Freedom comes, first, in doing away with government by law, or *the intermixture of the covenant of works*, which held the ancient people in a certain bondage.”¹⁸ Ames viewed the Old Covenant as containing elements of the covenant of works which are not included in the New Covenant. This could be where Cocceius first heard of the progressive abrogation of the covenant of works, though in seed form. Cocceius’ theory of progressive abrogation will be discussed below.

Finally, Ames’ method of articulating the covenant of grace was chronological or along redemptive-historical lines.¹⁹ He also saw the promise of the redeemer in Genesis 3:15.²⁰

Johannes Cocceius

One of the most important and controversial Reformed orthodox federal theologians of the seventeenth century was Johannes Cocceius (1603-1669), a student of Ames.²¹ Though German born, Cocceius lived most of his life in The Netherlands. He attended the University of Franeker from 1626-1629. He ended his teaching career as professor of theology at Leiden from 1650-1669. He wrote commentaries, works on philology, dogmatics, ethics, and his famous *Summa doctrinae de foedere et testament Dei (Doctrine of the Covenant and Testament of God)* in 1648.²² This was the classic continental federal theology. “By means of the concept of *foedus* he sought to do justice, also in systematic

¹⁷ Ames, *The Marrow of Theology*, 206 (XXXVIII:4). Emphasis added.

¹⁸ Ames, *The Marrow of Theology*, 206 (XXXVIII:9). Emphasis added.

¹⁹ Cf. Ames, *The Marrow of Theology*, 202-10 (XXXVIII and XXXIX) and van Vliet, “Decretal Theology and the Development of Covenant Thought,” 416.

²⁰ Ames, *The Marrow of Theology*, 203 (XXXVIII:14).

²¹ Cf. William Klempa, “Cocceius, Johannes (1603-1669)” in Donald K. McKim, editor, *ERF*, 73-74; Willem J. van Asselt, “Cocceius, Johannes” in McKim, editor, *DMBI*, 315-20; Willem J. van Asselt, “Cocceius Anti-Scholasticus?” in Willem J. van Asselt and Eef Dekker, editors, *Reformation and Scholasticism: An Ecumenical Enterprise* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2001), 227-51; van Asselt, *The Federal Theology of Johannes Cocceius (1603-1669)*, 23-33; Willem J. van Asselt, “Structural Elements in the Eschatology of Johannes Cocceius,” *Calvin Theological Journal* 35 (2000): 76-104; Willem J. van Asselt, “The Doctrine of the Abrogations in the Federal Theology of Johannes Cocceius (1603-1669),” *CTJ* 29 (1994): 101-16; McCoy and Baker, *Fountainhead of Federalism*, 63-79; Jan van Vliet, “Decretal Theology and the Development of Covenant Thought: An Assessment of Cornelis Graafland’s Thesis with a Particular View to Federal Architects William Ames and Johannes Cocceius,” *WTJ* 63 (2001): 393-420.

²² It is of interest to note that the most famous “Biblical Theologian” of the seventeenth-century Reformed orthodox also wrote a work on Dogmatics.

theology, to the historical nature of the biblical narrative."²³ Some of his followers (i.e., Cocceians) sought to integrate elements of Cartesian philosophy into his federalism, "in spite of Cocceius's rejection of such a union."²⁴ Integrating covenant and kingdom he "developed a theology of history, or in his own words, "a prophetic theology."²⁵ Cocceius held a controversial view of the Sabbath, which was confronted by Voetius and his followers, as well as issues of continuity and discontinuity between the Old and New Testaments.²⁶

Cocceius' view of the covenant of works infused eschatology into his theology from the Garden of Eden.²⁷ "The covenant of works opened up the possibility of a history with an eschatological prospect."²⁸ Paradise "was a symbol and pledge of a 'better habitation.'"²⁹ He was not the only Reformed orthodox to argue in this manner. In fact, as we shall see, the intersection of protology and eschatology through the doctrine of the covenant of works was quite common. Cocceius viewed the covenant of works not as a contract, "but rather *amicitia*, friendship—a concept that has medieval roots and which extends back into classical antiquity."³⁰ He viewed God's covenant as "essentially monopoleuric" (i.e., one-sided) and yet assuming a dipoleuric (i.e., two-sided) character once man engaged himself and concurred with God's "covenantal initiative."³¹

He held a very unique view of progressive revelation in that he saw the covenant of works progressively abrogated as salvation history unfolded and advanced.³² Van Asselt comments:

One of the most peculiar constructions in the theological system of Johannes Cocceius certainly is the doctrine of the so-called abrogations. This doctrine, which is closely connected with the doctrine of the covenant of works and the covenant of grace, occurs in both systematic main works of Cocceius: in the *Summa Doctrinae de Foedere et Testamento Dei* of 1648 (§58) and in the *Summa Theologiae ex Scripturis repetita* of 1662 (cap. 31 §1). Briefly formulated, this doctrine describes some five degrees (*gradus*) by which God leads man into eternal life and by which the consequences of the violation of the covenant of works through the Fall are gradually abrogated.³³

²³ van Asselt, "Cocceius, Johannes" in McKim, editor, *DMBI*, 315.

²⁴ van Asselt, "Cocceius, Johannes" in McKim, editor, *DMBI*, 315.

²⁵ van Asselt, "Cocceius, Johannes" in McKim, editor, *DMBI*, 318; cf. van Asselt, "Structural Elements in the Eschatology of Johannes Cocceius," 85ff. for a discussion on Cocceius' doctrine of the epochs of the church as he found them in the book of Revelation and his fascination with the number seven in Scripture.

²⁶ van Asselt, "Cocceius, Johannes" in McKim, editor, *DMBI*, 316-17.

²⁷ van Asselt, *The Federal Theology of Johannes Cocceius*, 264.

²⁸ van Asselt, "Structural Elements in the Eschatology of Johannes Cocceius," 82.

²⁹ van Asselt, *The Federal Theology of Johannes Cocceius*, 264.

³⁰ van Asselt, *The Federal Theology of Johannes Cocceius*, 24, n. 3.

³¹ van Asselt, *The Federal Theology of Johannes Cocceius*, 39.

³² Cf. van Asselt, *The Federal Theology of Johannes Cocceius*, 271-87 for an extensive discussion.

³³ van Asselt, "The Doctrine of the Abrogations in the Federal Theology of Johannes Cocceius (1603-1669)," 101; cf. also van Asselt, "Structural Elements in the Eschatology of Johannes Cocceius," 83.

Cocceius' five degrees of abrogation were: (1) by the fall, (2) by the covenant of grace revealed through the first promise of salvation (Genesis 3:15)³⁴ and its subsequent unfolding in both testaments, (3) by the incarnation, (4) by the intermediate state, and (5) by the eternal state.³⁵ These degrees or stages of abrogation combine the *historia salutis* with the *ordo salutis*. Indeed, van Asselt says, "...the historical and the existential moments are combined."³⁶ Each epoch of the *historia salutis* has a corresponding state of condition in the *ordo salutis*.³⁷ Cocceius saw movement and development along salvation-historical lines and sought to give expression to that via the slow but certain abrogation of the covenant of works and the slow but certain increasingly fulfilled covenant of grace. His views gave the appearance of driving a wedge between issues of forgiveness and justification in the Old and New Testaments and, thus, his theory was rejected firmly by Voetius and his followers. Van Asselt argues that the Cocceians themselves failed to develop their teaching in a manner that accurately reflected Cocceius' thought and, thus, "the doctrine of abrogations as a means of coordination of salvation history and *ordo salutis* broke down, it became obsolete and so disappeared in Cocceian theology."³⁸

Despite his oddities, Cocceius' major contribution was the further development of the utilization of the concept of covenant throughout redemptive history (and even predating it via the *pactum salutis*) and articulating his theology in a more historical-linear fashion, though certainly not exclusively. He moved from the *pactum salutis* to the covenants of works and grace. "One of the most important features of Cocceius' theology is what we shall refer to as his *historical method*."³⁹ Cocceius viewed redemptive history as covenantal history and progressive. He utilized the *analogia Scripturae* and *analogia fidei*, as well as analogy, typology,⁴⁰ and "his so-called prophetic exegesis"⁴¹ method of interpreting and applying prophecy. Through his view of the abrogations, "Cocceius brought about a powerful dynamism in his view of the

³⁴ van Asselt, *The Federal Theology of Johannes Cocceius*, 58.

³⁵ van Asselt, "The Doctrine of the Abrogations in the Federal Theology of Johannes Cocceius (1603-1669)," 107-08; van Asselt, "Structural Elements in the Eschatology of Johannes Cocceius," 83; van Asselt, *The Federal Theology of Johannes Cocceius*, 271-72.

³⁶ van Asselt, "The Doctrine of the Abrogations in the Federal Theology of Johannes Cocceius (1603-1669)," 110.

³⁷ van Asselt, "The Doctrine of the Abrogations in the Federal Theology of Johannes Cocceius (1603-1669)," 110 and van Asselt, *The Federal Theology of Johannes Cocceius*, 278-82. Cf. the discussion in van Vliet, "Decretal Theology and the Development of Covenant Thought," 412ff.

³⁸ van Asselt, "The Doctrine of the Abrogations in the Federal Theology of Johannes Cocceius (1603-1669)," 116.

³⁹ van Asselt, *The Federal Theology of Johannes Cocceius*, 291.

⁴⁰ van Asselt, *The Federal Theology of Johannes Cocceius*, 56.

⁴¹ van Asselt, "Structural Elements in the Eschatology of Johannes Cocceius," 78.

covenant, which simultaneously lent it a strong eschatological orientation."⁴² Cocceius saw revelation as redemptive, progressive, and eschatological from its inception.⁴³

Nehemiah Coxe

Nehemiah Coxe was a Particular Baptist.⁴⁴ He is important in our brief survey for at least four reasons: (1) Coxe was the co-editor (and most likely the "senior" editor) of the Particular Baptist 2nd LCF;⁴⁵ (2) Coxe agreed with John Owen and other seventeenth-century Reformed orthodox theologians on the function of the covenant of works as it related to the Mosaic covenant in redemptive history;⁴⁶ (3) Coxe authored *A Discourse of the Covenants that God made with men before the Law...*, which is structured after the federal model, utilizes Reformed orthodox theological nomenclature, concepts, and sources, and is semantically Reformed orthodox, except portions of his exposition of the Abrahamic covenant(s);⁴⁷ and (4) Coxe introduces us to the seventeenth-century Particular Baptist formulation of covenant theology.

Coxe's treatise discusses God's covenant with Adam, God's covenant with Noah, and God's covenant(s) with Abraham.⁴⁸ It is constructed in a linear-historical trajectory from creation, to fall, to redemption in typical federal fashion.

Coxe held a robust federal view of the covenant of works. He called it the covenant of creation,⁴⁹ covenant of works,⁵⁰ covenant of friendship,⁵¹ and a covenant of rich

⁴² van Asselt, "Structural Elements in the Eschatology of Johannes Cocceius," 83, cf. *Ibid.*, 102, where van Asselt says of Cocceius, "...historical dynamics are of central importance to him."

⁴³ McCoy called Cocceius "the most eminent theologian of the federal school" (cf. McCoy, "Johannes Cocceius: Federal Theologian" in *Scottish Journal of Theology* 16 (1963): 352) and (we think wrongly) "not scholastic" (cf. McCoy, "Johannes Cocceius: Federal Theologian," 353). McCoy's analysis of Cocceius is fraught with Barthian presuppositions. For instance, he says, "God's Word, which is primarily Jesus Christ, is revealed through Scripture, not in the words alone, but from faith to faith under the illumination of the Holy Spirit." Cf. McCoy, "Johannes Cocceius: Federal Theologian," 355. "The language of Scripture places before us in its words only metonymy, metaphor and the like; God gives the message." Cf. McCoy, "Johannes Cocceius: Federal Theologian," 358. In the article just referenced, McCoy devotes a whole section to trying to prove that Cocceius was anti-scholastic. However, cf. van Asselt, "Cocceius Anti-Scholasticus?" in van Asselt and Eef Dekker, editors, *Reformation and Scholasticism*, 231-51 where he challenges and puts to rest McCoy's anti-scholastic interpretation of Cocceius.

⁴⁴ For a brief biography cf. James M. Renihan, "An Excellent and Judicious Divine: Nehemiah Coxe" in Nehemiah Coxe and John Owen, edited by Ronald D. Miller, James M. Renihan, and Francisco Orozco, *Covenant Theology From Adam to Christ* (Palmdale, CA: Reformed Baptist Academic Press, 2005), 7-24; James M. Renihan, "Confessing the Faith in 1644 and 1689" in *Reformed Baptist Theological Review* III:1 (July 2006): 33ff.; and Michael A. G. Haykin, *Kiffin, Knollys and Keach* (Leeds, England: Reformation Today Trust, 1996) for an introduction to three key Particular Baptists of the seventeenth century.

⁴⁵ Cf. Renihan, "An Excellent and Judicious Divine: Nehemiah Coxe," 19-21 and Renihan, "Confessing the Faith in 1644 and 1689," 33ff.

⁴⁶ Cf. Richard C. Barcellos, "John Owen and New Covenant Theology" in Coxe and Owen, *Covenant Theology*, 353-54. Coxe himself defers to Owen in Coxe and Owen, *Covenant Theology*, 30.

⁴⁷ Cf. Coxe and Owen, *Covenant Theology*, 71-140.

⁴⁸ For an outline of Coxe's treatise where this can be observed easily see Richard C. Barcellos, "Appendix One: Outline of Coxe" in Coxe and Owen, *Covenant Theology*, 313-15.

bounty and goodness.⁵² He held that God created Adam in his image with the law written in his heart. It was the sum of this law that was promulgated on Mount Sinai and delivered more briefly by our Lord “who reduced it to two great commandments respecting our duty both to God and our neighbor...”⁵³ Added to this moral law was “a positive precept in which he charged man not to eat of the fruit of one tree in the midst of the garden of Eden.”⁵⁴ The covenant of works or creation was not co-extensive with creation but an addition to it. Coxe says:

In this lies the mystery of the first transaction of God with man and of his relationship to God founded on it. This did not result immediately from the law of his creation but from the disposition of a covenant according to the free, sovereign, and wise counsel of God’s will. Therefore, although the law of creation is easily understood by men (and there is little controversy about it among those that are not degenerate from all principles of reason and humanity), yet the covenant of creation, the interest of Adam’s posterity with him in it, and the guilt of original sin returning on them by it, are not owned by the majority of mankind. Nor can they be understood except by the light of divine revelation.⁵⁵

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 relationship which they have to God as reasonable creatures, though upright and in a perfect state.⁵⁶

Adam had “the promise of an eternal reward on condition of his perfect obedience to these laws.”⁵⁷ The tree of life functioned sacramentally, as “a sign and pledge of that eternal life which Adam would have obtained by his own personal and perfect obedience to the law of God if he had continued in it.”⁵⁸ Adam’s violation of the

⁴⁹ Coxe and Owen, *Covenant Theology*, 39, 46, 49, 53, 58.

⁵⁰ Coxe and Owen, *Covenant Theology*, 45, 49, 53.

⁵¹ Coxe and Owen, *Covenant Theology*, 49, 51. This seems to be dependent upon Cocceius.

⁵² Coxe and Owen, *Covenant Theology*, 49.

⁵³ Coxe and Owen, *Covenant Theology*, 43. For a brief survey of the highly nuanced view of the functions of the Decalogue in redemptive history in Reformed orthodoxy see Appendix Two of my *The Family Tree of Reformed Biblical Theology*.

⁵⁴ Coxe and Owen, *Covenant Theology*, 43.

⁵⁵ Coxe and Owen, *Covenant Theology*, 49.

⁵⁶ Coxe and Owen, *Covenant Theology*, 36.

⁵⁷ Coxe and Owen, *Covenant Theology*, 44, 51. Coxe gives three proofs with discussion for the promise of an eternal reward on pages 45-46.

⁵⁸ Coxe and Owen, *Covenant Theology*, 45. Coxe justifies this function of the tree of life as follows: “The allusion that Christ makes to it in the New Testament (Revelation 2:7). ...The method of God’s dealing with Adam in reference to this tree after he had sinned against him and the reason assigned for it by God himself [i.e., Genesis 3:22ff.]. ...This also must not be forgotten: that as Moses’ law in some way included the covenant of creation and served for a memorial of it (on which account all mankind was involved in its curse), it had not only the sanction of a curse awfully denounced against the disobedient, but also a promise of the reward of life to the obedient. Now as the law of Moses was the same in moral precept with the law of creation, so the reward in this respect was not a new reward, but the same that by

positive precept of Genesis 2:17 was also a violation of “that eternal law that is written in his heart.”⁵⁹

Coxe sees the covenant of grace introduced via the promise of the gospel first revealed in Genesis 3:15. The 2LCF, 7:3 says, “This Covenant [the covenant of grace in context; cf. 7:2] is revealed in the Gospel; first of all to Adam in the promise of Salvation by the seed of the woman...”⁶⁰ In his *Discourse of the Covenants*, he says:

11. It was from this design of love and mercy that when the Lord God came to fallen man in the garden in the cool of the day, and found him filled with horror and shame in the consciousness of his own guilt, he did not execute the rigor of the law on him. Instead he held a treaty with him which issued in a discovery of grace. By this a door of hope was opened to him in the laying of a new foundation for his acceptance with God and walking well pleasing before him.

1. For in the sentence passed on the serpent (which principally involved the Devil whose instrument he had been in tempting man, and who probably was made to abide in his possession of the serpent until he had received this doom, Genesis 3:15) there was couched a blessed promise of redemption and salvation to man. This was to be worked out by the Son of God made of a woman, and so her seed, and man was to receive the promised salvation by faith and to hope in it. In this implied promise was laid the first foundation of the church after the fall of man which was to be raised up out of the ruins of the Devil’s kingdom by the destruction of his work by Jesus Christ (1 John 3:8).⁶¹

Coxe adds later:

From the first dawning of the blessed light of God’s grace to poor sinners faintly displayed in the promise intimated in Genesis 3:15, the redeemed of the Lord were brought into a new relation to God, in and by Christ the promised seed, through faith in him as revealed in that promise.⁶²

This understanding of Genesis 3:15 gives Coxe’s work a Christocentric flavor from the beginning. In the first paragraph, he says:

The great interest of man’s present peace and eternal happiness is most closely concerned in religion. And all true religion since the fall of man must be taught by divine revelation which God by diverse parts and after a diverse manner⁶³ has given out to his church. He caused this light gradually to increase until the whole mystery of his

compact had been due to Adam, in the case of his perfect obedience.” Here Coxe is articulating Owen’s (and others’) view of the function of the covenant of works under the Mosaic covenant.

⁵⁹ Coxe and Owen, *Covenant Theology*, 43, 51.

⁶⁰ Cf. *A Confession of Faith Put Forth by the Elders and Brethren of many Congregations of Christians (baptized upon Profession of their Faith) in London and the Country, Printed in the Year, 1677* (Auburn, MA: B&R Press, Facsimile edition, 2000), 27.

⁶¹ Coxe and Owen, *Covenant Theology*, 55.

⁶² Coxe and Owen, *Covenant Theology*, 59.

⁶³ Here he is dependent upon Beza. Cf. Coxe and Owen, *Covenant Theology*, 33, n. 1.

grace was perfectly revealed in and by Jesus Christ in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. God, whose works were all known by him from the beginning, has in all ages disposed and ordered the revelation of his will to men, his transactions with them, and all the works of his holy providence toward them, with reference to the fullness of time and the gathering of all things to a head in Christ Jesus. So in all our search after the mind of God in the Holy Scriptures we are to manage out inquiries with reference to Christ. Therefore the best interpreter of the Old Testament is the Holy Spirit speaking to us in the new. There we have the clearest light of the knowledge of the glory of God shining on us in the face of Jesus Christ, by unveiling those counsels of love and grace that were hidden from former ages and generations.⁶⁴

Not only is this statement programmatic for a Christocentric understanding of Scripture, it also reflects the fact that Coxe viewed special revelation as progressive. The 2LCF, 7:2 says, "This covenant is revealed in the Gospel; first of all to Adam in the promise of Salvation by the seed of the woman, and afterwards by farther steps, until the full discovery thereof was completed in the new Testament." Coxe saw Christ as the hermeneutical center and focal-point of the whole Bible (i.e., *scopus Scripturae* [the scope of the Scriptures]).

Coxe utilized Reformed orthodox theological nomenclature and concepts. For instance, in the preface of his work, Coxe says:

The usefulness of all divine truth revealed in the Holy Scriptures and the great importance of what particularly concerns those *federal* transactions which are the subject of the following treatise are my defense for an essay to discover the mind of God in them.⁶⁵

He clearly held to a covenant of redemption between the persons of the Trinity before the world began.⁶⁶ In the first chapter of his work, he briefly discusses the monopleuric (i.e., God's sovereign initiation or proposal⁶⁷) and dipleuric (i.e., man's restipulation⁶⁸) nature of covenantal engagements between God and men. Coxe defines the "general notion of any covenant of God with men" as follows: "A declaration of his sovereign pleasure concerning the benefits he will bestow on them, the communion they will have with him, and the way and means by which this will be enjoyed by

⁶⁴ Coxe and Owen, *Covenant Theology*, 33.

⁶⁵ Coxe and Owen, *Covenant Theology*, 29. Emphasis added.

⁶⁶ Cf. Coxe and Owen, *Covenant Theology*, 54 and 2nd LCF 7:3 and 8:1.

⁶⁷ Cf. Coxe and Owen, *Covenant Theology*, 35 and Richard A. Muller, *Dictionary of Latin and Greek Theological Terms* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, Second Printing, September 1986, 1985), 122, where he says, "**foedus monopleuron...**: one-sided or one-way covenant; the covenant as bestowed by God and exhibiting his will toward man."

⁶⁸ Cf. Coxe and Owen, *Covenant Theology*, 35 and Muller, *Dictionary*, 120, where he says, "**foedus dipleuron...**: two-sided or two-way covenant; *Foedus dipleuron*, therefore, indicates, not the covenant in itself or in its underlying requirements, but rather the further relationship of God and man together in covenant, and particularly the free acceptance on the part of man of the promise of God and of the obedience required by the covenant."

them.”⁶⁹ Covenantal engagements spring from God’s “condescending love and goodness.”⁷⁰ Covenant is not co-extensive with creation.⁷¹ God sovereignly proposes covenants with men in order to bring them to an advanced or better state than they are currently in and ultimately “to bring them into a blessed state in the eternal enjoyment of himself.”⁷² Adam “was capable of and made for a greater degree of happiness than he immediately enjoyed [which] was set before him as the reward of his obedience by that covenant in which he was to walk with God.”⁷³ Coxe even held the view that “Moses’ law in some way included the covenant of creation and served for a memorial of it...”⁷⁴ This was the view of both Ames and Cocceius above, as well as John Owen.⁷⁵ Finally, Coxe utilized typology in a manner similar to others in his day.⁷⁶

Coxe utilized Reformed orthodox sources. In his “Preface to the Reader” he acknowledges John Owen’s commentary on Hebrews 8. Coxe had thought about continuing his treatment of God’s federal transactions with man by dealing with the Mosaic covenant, however, Owen’s treatment of these issues satisfied him.⁷⁷ Coxe quotes or references many Reformed orthodox theologians throughout his work: for instance, Beza,⁷⁸ Cocceius,⁷⁹ Rivet,⁸⁰ Ainsworth,⁸¹ Strong,⁸² Pareus,⁸³ Owen,⁸⁴ Whiston,⁸⁵ and Junius.⁸⁶

⁶⁹ Coxe and Owen, *Covenant Theology*, 36. Coxe is quoting or paraphrasing Cocceius’ *Doctrine of the Covenant and Testament of God* (cf. Coxe and Owen, *Covenant Theology*, 36, n. 7).

⁷⁰ Coxe and Owen, *Covenant Theology*, 36.

⁷¹ Cf. Coxe and Owen, *Covenant Theology*, 36, and 49 both quoted above.

⁷² Coxe and Owen, *Covenant Theology*, 36.

⁷³ Coxe and Owen, *Covenant Theology*, 47.

⁷⁴ Coxe and Owen, *Covenant Theology*, 46.

⁷⁵ Cf. Owen, *Works*, XXII: 78, 80, 81, 142 and Richard C. Barcellos, “John Owen and New Covenant Theology: Owen on the Old and New Covenants and the Functions of the Decalogue in Redemptive History in Historical and Contemporary Perspective” in *RBTR* I:2 (July 2004): 12-46, which includes discussion and proof of Owen’s view.

⁷⁶ Cf. Coxe and Owen, *Covenant Theology*, 45 (the tree of life as a type of the eschatological state), 47-48 (Adam as a type of Christ), 57 (the garments or coats of skin as a type of imputed righteousness), and 62-64 (the Ark as a type of Christ or the church).

⁷⁷ Coxe and Owen, *Covenant Theology*, 30. Coxe said, “That notion (which is often supposed in this discourse) that the old covenant and the new differ in substance and not only in the manner of their administration, certainly requires a larger and more particular handling to free it from those prejudices and difficulties that have been cast on it by many worthy persons who are otherwise minded. Accordingly, I designed to give a further account of it in a discourse of the covenant made with Israel in the wilderness and the state of the church under the law. But when I had finished this and provided some materials also for what was to follow, I found my labor for the clearing and asserting of that point happily prevented by the coming out of Dr. Owen’s third volume on Hebrews. There it is discussed at length and the objections that seem to lie against it are fully answered, especially in the exposition of the eighth chapter. I now refer my reader there for satisfaction about it which he will find commensurate to what might be expected from so great and learned a person.”

⁷⁸ Coxe and Owen, *Covenant Theology*, 33.

⁷⁹ Coxe and Owen, *Covenant Theology*, 34, 36.

⁸⁰ Coxe and Owen, *Covenant Theology*, 33, 84, 86.

⁸¹ Coxe and Owen, *Covenant Theology*, 61, 86.

⁸² Coxe and Owen, *Covenant Theology*, 77.

Coxe articulated a Reformed orthodox view of the covenants of works, along with his Particular Baptist view of the covenant of grace⁸⁷ and the function of the covenant of circumcision made with Abraham. He understood revelation to be progressive and Christo-climactic. Christ, for Coxe, was the *scopus* of Scripture. Coxe also articulated a view of the Garden of Eden that we have seen before: God offered an eternal reward of unbroken communion and future blessedness with him to Adam. In other words, Adam had an eschatology; protology is eschatological in Coxe's federal scheme.

Herman Witsius

The Dutch theologian Herman Witsius (1636-1708) served several congregations as pastor then became professor of theology, serving "at Franeker (1675-1680), then at Utrecht (1680-1698), and finally at Leiden (1698-1707)."⁸⁸ He published his famous *The Economy of the Covenants Between God and Man Comprehending A Complete Body of Divinity*⁸⁹ in 1677. It was offered as somewhat of a peace effort between the Voetians and Cocceians.⁹⁰ According to Ramsey and Beeke, "In governing his systematic theology by the concept of covenant, Witsius uses Cocceian methods while maintaining essentially Voetian theology."⁹¹ "Witsius wrote his *magnum opus* on the covenants to promote peace among Dutch theologians who were divided on covenant theology."⁹² His *Economy of the Covenants* contains four books: Book I - The Covenant of Works; Book II - The Covenant of Redemption; Book III - The Covenant of Grace (*ordo salutis*); and Book IV - The Covenant of Grace (*historia salutis*).⁹³

⁸³ Coxe and Owen, *Covenant Theology*, 77.

⁸⁴ Coxe and Owen, *Covenant Theology*, 108.

⁸⁵ Coxe and Owen, *Covenant Theology*, 111.

⁸⁶ Coxe and Owen, *Covenant Theology*, 126.

⁸⁷ Coxe's view of the covenant of grace had distinct Particular Baptist nuances to it. Cf. Chapters 2, 3, and 16 below.

⁸⁸Herman Witsius, *The Economy of the Covenants Between God and Man Comprehending A Complete Body of Divinity*, Two Volumes (Escondido, CA: The den Dulk Christian Foundation, Reprinted 1990). For a brief biographical sketch see D. Patrick Ramsey and Joel R. Beeke "Introduction: The Life and Theology of Herman Witsius (1636-1706)" in *An Analysis of Herman Witsius's The Economy of the Covenants* (Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage Books and Fearn, Ross-shire, Scotland: Christian Focus Publications, 2002), vi.

⁸⁹ Ramsey and Beeke "Introduction: The Life and Theology of Herman Witsius (1636-1706)" in *An Analysis of Herman Witsius's The Economy of the Covenants*, iii-xxiv.

⁹⁰ See the discussion above for the issues at stake and Ramsey and Beeke "Introduction: The Life and Theology of Herman Witsius (1636-1706)," vi.

⁹¹ Ramsey and Beeke "Introduction: The Life and Theology of Herman Witsius (1636-1706)," vii.

⁹² Ramsey and Beeke "Introduction: The Life and Theology of Herman Witsius (1636-1706)," x.

⁹³ Cf. Ramsey and Beeke "Introduction: The Life and Theology of Herman Witsius (1636-1706)," xi for a slightly different, though essentially the same breakdown.

Witsius starts his *magnum opus* by discussing divine covenants in general.⁹⁴ He offers a brief study of the etymology of the Hebrew and Greek words for covenant.⁹⁵ He then states “the nature of the covenant of God with man” in these words:

A covenant of God with man, is an agreement between God and man, about the way of obtaining consummate happiness; including a combination of eternal destruction, with which the contemner of the happiness, offered in that way, is to be punished.⁹⁶

He argues that covenants are comprised of a promise, a condition, and a sanction.⁹⁷ The covenant of works, or nature, or of the law⁹⁸ is “an agreement between God and Adam...by which God promised eternal life and happiness..., if he [i.e., Adam] yielded obedience...; threatening him with death if he failed but in the least point: and Adam accepted this condition.”⁹⁹ Here we see Witsius utilizing the concepts of monopleurism¹⁰⁰ and dipleurism as did Coxe. Muller comments:

In their understanding of both covenants, moreover, both Witsius and a` Brakel bear witness to a resolution of the seeming problem of monopleuric and dipleuric definitions of covenant – and, in so doing, evidence yet another aspect of continuity with the intentions of the Reformers. Over against the view which has tended to set monopleuric against dipleuric definitions, as if the former indicated a reliance on the doctrine of election and the latter an almost synergistic emphasis on human responsibility, the lengthy etymological and exegetical discussion offered by Witsius indicates that all covenants between God and human beings are founded on divine initiative and are, in that sense, monopleuric. At the same time, these covenants, once made, bespeak a mutuality: The human partner must in some way consent to the covenant and exercise responsibility within it.¹⁰¹

⁹⁴ Cf. Richard A. Muller, “The Covenant of Works and the Stability of Divine Law in Seventeenth-Century Reformed Theology: A Study in the Theology of Herman Witsius and Wilhelmus A` Brakel,” in *CTJ* 29 (1994): 80, where he says, “The Reformed orthodox understanding of covenant rested on a complex of exegetical, etymological, theological, and legal considerations that evidence concern for the text of scripture, the culture of the Jews and other ancient Near Eastern peoples, the linguistic and cultural transition from Hebrew into Greek and Latin, the Christian exegetical tradition, and the doctrinal appropriation of ancient covenant language in the light of other fundamental theological questions – notably the relationship of Adam and Christ, the *imago Dei*, the problem of original righteousness and original sin, the history of salvation recorded in Scripture, and the distinction of law and gospel.”

⁹⁵ Witsius, *Economy of the Covenants*, I:42-44. Cf. Muller, “The Covenant of Works and the Stability of Divine Law in Seventeenth-Century Reformed Theology,” in *CTJ* 29 (1994): 81.

⁹⁶ Witsius, *Economy of the Covenants*, I:45.

⁹⁷ Witsius, *Economy of the Covenants*, I:46. Cf. Muller, “The Covenant of Works and the Stability of Divine Law in Seventeenth-Century Reformed Theology,” in *CTJ* 29 (1994): 84.

⁹⁸ Witsius, *Economy of the Covenants*, I:50.

⁹⁹ Witsius, *Economy of the Covenants*, I:50. Cf. Muller, “The Covenant of Works and the Stability of Divine Law in Seventeenth-Century Reformed Theology,” in *CTJ* 29 (1994): 75-101.

¹⁰⁰ Cf. Muller, “The Covenant of Works and the Stability of Divine Law in Seventeenth-Century Reformed Theology,” in *CTJ* 29 (1994): 85.

¹⁰¹ Muller, “The Covenant of Works and the Stability of Divine Law in Seventeenth-Century Reformed Theology,” in *CTJ* 29 (1994): 86.

A hint of Edenic eschatology can be seen here as well. Adam was to keep the law of nature, which is comprised of the Decalogue in substance¹⁰² and was “implanted ...at his creation,”¹⁰³ as well as keep the positive precept forbidding him from eating of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil (Genesis 2:16-17).¹⁰⁴ Witsius sees Adam in a probationary state and capable of arriving at a higher, more blessed state of existence. He says:

That man was not yet arrived at the utmost pitch of happiness, but [was] to expect a still greater good, after his course of obedience was over. This was hinted by the prohibition of the most delightful tree, whose fruit was, of any other, greatly to be desired; and this argued some degree of imperfection in that state, in which man was forbid the enjoyment of some good.¹⁰⁵

The more blessed state of existence was “eternal life, that is the most perfect fruition of himself [i.e., God], and that forever, after finishing his course of obedience...”¹⁰⁶ This promise of life flowed out of God’s goodness and bounty and not out of any strict necessity.¹⁰⁷ The Garden of Eden, according to Witsius, was a pledge, a type, a symbol, both temporary and anticipatory of a better state yet to be enjoyed.¹⁰⁸ In other words, protology is, as we have seen in other Reformed orthodox theologians, eschatological.

Witsius cites Hosea 6:7 as proof that Adam broke covenant with God in the Garden when he sinned.¹⁰⁹ Adam’s sin brought him and the entire human race to spiritual ruin.¹¹⁰

The covenant of redemption is the pre-temporal foundation for the temporal covenant of grace.¹¹¹ The covenant of grace is made between God and the elect.¹¹² It is first revealed in Genesis 3:15¹¹³ and then progressively unfolded in five redemptive-historical epochs: Adam to Noah; Noah to Abraham; Abraham to Moses; Moses to Christ; and the New Testament.¹¹⁴

Book IV is where Witsius follows a more *historia salutis* model. Genesis 3:15 is the first promise of the gospel and the first revelation of the covenant of grace. This crucial text is programmatic for Witsius. His exposition of Genesis 3:15 covers twenty pages.¹¹⁵

¹⁰² Witsius, *Economy of the Covenants*, I:62.

¹⁰³ Witsius, *Economy of the Covenants*, I:60.

¹⁰⁴ Witsius, *Economy of the Covenants*, I:60, I:68ff.

¹⁰⁵ Witsius, *Economy of the Covenants*, I:69; cf. also I:123-24.

¹⁰⁶ Witsius, *Economy of the Covenants*, I:73.

¹⁰⁷ Witsius, *Economy of the Covenants*, I:76ff.

¹⁰⁸ Witsius, *Economy of the Covenants*, I:106ff., esp. I:109.

¹⁰⁹ Witsius, *Economy of the Covenants*, I:135.

¹¹⁰ Witsius, *Economy of the Covenants*, I:146ff.

¹¹¹ Witsius, *Economy of the Covenants*, I:165.

¹¹² Witsius, *Economy of the Covenants*, I:281ff.

¹¹³ Witsius, *Economy of the Covenants*, II:108ff.

¹¹⁴ Witsius, *Economy of the Covenants*, I:313-16.

¹¹⁵ Witsius, *Economy of the Covenants*, II:108-28.

He then traces the covenant of grace through Noah, Abraham, Moses, and the prophets. Witsius holds that the Mosaic covenant cannot be viewed simply as a covenant of grace or works. It is a national covenant, subservient to both the covenants of works and grace. Witsius says, "It was a *national covenant* between God and Israel...[It] supposed a covenant of grace...and the doctrine of the covenant of works..."¹¹⁶

Witsius, as others we have surveyed, is somewhat typical in his articulation of federalism. He starts with the covenant of works. Adam sins and brings ruin upon himself and the entire human race. Because of God's pre-temporal purpose to save the elect through a Mediator, he reveals his purposes of grace through the first gospel promise in Genesis 3:15. This gospel promise is progressively expanded through various historical types¹¹⁷ and through explicit Old Testament prophecies and culminates in our Lord Jesus Christ, the *scopus* of Scripture.

Jonathan Edwards

Though Edwards was neither European nor seventeenth-century Reformed orthodox, he wrote within that theological tradition and was very aware of the intellectual currents of his day.¹¹⁸ Probably America's greatest theologian to date, Edwards was a prolific student and writer. He was somewhat unique in that he utilized a pre-critical hermeneutic, though living during the early days of the emerging critical era.¹¹⁹

In 1739 Edwards preached a series of sermons that ended up being slightly revised and published in 1774 as *A History of the Work of Redemption, containing the outlines of a Body of Divinity, including a view of Church History, in a method entirely new*.¹²⁰ In this work, Edwards sought, first, to discuss the redemptive story-line of the Bible in its scriptural order and then to give a history of the church as the implications of redemption accomplished applied throughout history. In his Preface, he says this body of divinity is unique in that it is written in the form of a history in order to show the most remarkable events "from the fall to the present time" and even to the end of the world which are "adapted to promote the work of redemption..."¹²¹

Edwards' *History of Redemption* is divided into three periods: I. From the Fall to the Incarnation; II. From Christ's Incarnation to His Resurrection; and III. From Christ's Resurrection to the End of the World. Each period is further subdivided. The first period contains these subheadings: from the fall to the flood, from the flood to Abraham, from Abraham to Moses, from Moses to David, from David to the Babylonian Captivity, and from the Babylonian Captivity to the incarnation of Christ. The biblical

¹¹⁶ Witsius, *Economy of the Covenants*, II:186.

¹¹⁷ Witsius, *Economy of the Covenants*, II:188-231.

¹¹⁸ D. A. Sweeney, "Edwards, Jonathan (1703-1758)" in McKim, editor, *DMBI*, 397.

¹¹⁹ Sweeney, "Edwards, Jonathan (1703-1758)" in McKim, editor, *DMBI*, 399.

¹²⁰ Cf. Jonathan Edwards, *The Works of Jonathan Edwards*, Volume One (Edinburgh: The Banner of Truth Trust, reprinted 1990), 532-619.

¹²¹ Edwards, *Works*, I:532. We will focus on the sections dealing with biblical history alone.

section is approached in a linear fashion, tracing the biblical history of redemption chronologically.

From the outset of the first period in Edwards' scheme, his Christocentricity is clear and ample. He says, "As soon as man fell, Christ entered on his mediatorial work."¹²² Christ's mediatorial work is founded in the covenant of redemption where "He stood engaged with the Father to appear as man's mediator, and to take on that office when there should be occasion, from all eternity."¹²³

His Christocentricity is further displayed, when he says that "the gospel was first revealed on earth, in these words, Gen. iii. 15."¹²⁴ "This was the first revelation of the covenant of grace; the first drawing of the light of the gospel on earth."¹²⁵ Edwards viewed redemptive history as Christocentric and progressive. "Thus you see how that gospel-light which dawned immediately after the fall of man, gradually increases."¹²⁶ He utilized typology to see Christ progressively revealed in the Old Testament until the fullness of time had come.

The incarnation and subsequent life, death, and resurrection of Christ were climactic events in Edwards' thought. The second period, from the incarnation to the resurrection, is

the most remarkable article of time that ever was or ever will be. Though it was but between thirty and forty years, yet more was done in it than had been done from the beginning of the world to that time.¹²⁷

Edwards even has traces of doctrinal formulations seen as far back as Ames. He intersects *historia salutis* with *ordo salutis*, though he extends what he calls "the work of redemption" to the end of the world. He says:

And here, by the way, I would observe, that the increase of gospel-light, and the progress of the work of redemption, as it respects the church in general, from its erection to the end of the world, is very similar to the progress of the same world and the same light, in a particular soul, from the time of its conversion, till it is perfected and crowned in glory. Sometimes the light shines brighter, and at other times more obscurely; sometimes grace prevails, at other times it seems to languish for a great while together; now corruption prevails, and then grace revives again. But in general grace is growing: from its first infusion, till it is perfected in glory, the kingdom of Christ is building up in the soul. So it is with respect to the great affair in general, as it relates to the universal subject of it, and as it is carried on from its first beginning, till it is perfected at the end of the world.¹²⁸

¹²² Edwards, *Works*, I:536.

¹²³ Edwards, *Works*, I:536.

¹²⁴ Edwards, *Works*, I:537.

¹²⁵ Edwards, *Works*, I:537.

¹²⁶ Edwards, *Works*, I:546.

¹²⁷ Edwards, *Works*, I:572.

¹²⁸ Edwards, *Works*, I:539-40.

Edwards also sees a two-fold utility of the Decalogue as given by God to Moses: (1) as “a new exhibition of the covenant of works”¹²⁹ and (2) as a rule of life.¹³⁰ Commenting on “God’s giving the moral law in so awful a manner at mount Sinai,”¹³¹ he says:

And it was a great thing, whether we consider it as a new exhibition of the covenant of works, or given as a rule of life.

The covenant of works was here exhibited as a schoolmaster to lead to Christ, not only for the use of that nation, under the Old Testament, but for the use of God’s church throughout all ages of the world...

If we regard the law given at mount Sinai—not as a covenant of works, but—as a rule of life, it is employed by the Redeemer, from that time to the end of the world, as a directory to his people, to show them the way in which they must walk, as they would go to heaven: for a way of sincere and universal obedience to this law is the narrow way that leads to life.¹³²

Though Edwards’ title includes the words “in a method entirely new,” some elements contained in this work have precedent in seventeenth-century Reformed orthodoxy. Edwards articulated redemptive history in a federal model. He held to the covenants of redemption, works, and grace. He saw the gospel first revealed in Genesis 3:15 and then progressively amplified in the Old Testament until the climactic event of the incarnation occurred along with its necessary redemptive accompaniments.

Conclusion

The intent of this brief survey is to introduce readers to the thought-world of the most productive era in the history of the church for the formulation of federal or covenant theology. Among the theologians surveyed above, there is both continuity and discontinuity of thought. The lone Particular Baptist, Nehemiah Coxe, clearly utilized the formulations of others in his day, yet departing at crucial points. The various Particular Baptist departures will become more evident in the chapters immediately following (2-9, but especially 2-3). However, the chapters dealing with biblical and biblical-theological issues (9-16) will pick up on some of the same issues brought up in this chapter and, especially, in the chapters that immediately follow.

¹²⁹ Edwards, *Works*, I:547.

¹³⁰ Edwards, *Works*, I:548.

¹³¹ Edwards, *Works*, I:547.

¹³² Edwards, *Works*, I:547-48. Edwards presents a two-fold utility of the moral law given at Sinai. The way in which he presents the material may lead some to think he is presenting two mutually exclusive positions; either “a new exhibition of the covenant of works” or “a rule of life.” I think it better to take it as both/and. For a discussion on the highly nuanced views of the Reformed orthodox on the functions of the Decalogue in redemptive history see Richard C. Barcellos, “John Owen and New Covenant Theology,” 12-46.

As will become evident, the seventeenth-century Particular Baptists were not merely immersing Presbyterians, as a friend of mine once said. Neither did they formulate their version of federal theology in order to avert the hand of persecution. Their formulation was based on biblical exegesis and the redemptive-historical theological synthesis of those exegetical labors. Their views had much in common with paedobaptist federalism, though their formulation departed at crucial points and did so with clearly stated reasons. The chapters that follow attempt to identify and discuss those reasons.