CHRIST AND THE COVENANT:
FRANCIS TURRETIN'S FEDERAL THEOLOGY AS A DEFENSE OF
THE DOCTRINE OF GRACE

A Dissertation Submitted to the Faculty of
Calvin Theological Seminary in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Doctor of Philosophy

by

J. Mark Beach

Grand Rapids, Michigan

May 2005
This dissertation entitled

CHRIST AND THE COVENANT:
FRANCIS TURRETIN’S FEDERAL THEOLOGY AS A DEFENSE OF
THE DOCTRINE OF GRACE

written by

J. MARK BEACH

and submitted in partial fulfillment of

the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

has been accepted by the faculty of Calvin Theological Seminary

upon the recommendation of the undersigned readers:

Richard A. Muller, Ph.D.

Lyle D. Bierma, Ph.D.

John Bolt, Ph.D.

Willem J. Van Asselt, Ph.D.

Henry De Moor, Th.D.
Vice President for Academic Affairs

Date

SEPTEMBER 9, 2005
To my Mother and Father
# CONTENTS

Acknowledgements .................................................................................................................. viii
Abstract ...................................................................................................................................... x

INTRODUCTION .......................................................................................................................... 1

CHAPTER ONE
SIXTEENTH- AND SEVENTEENTH-CENTURY FEDERAL THEOLOGY
AND ITS INTERPRETERS ............................................................................................................ 9

Introduction ................................................................................................................................. 9

A. The Diversity of Interpretation on the Rise and Development of
   Federal Theology .................................................................................................................. 12
   1. Survey of Historical Research on Federal Theology ...................................................... 13
   2. Theological Assessments of Federal Theology ............................................................. 44
   3. Appraising the Historical and Theological Assessments of
      Federal Theology .......................................................................................................... 60
         a. General Observations
         b. Further Observations

B. Statement of Thesis ............................................................................................................... 66

C. Scholarship on Francis Turretin ......................................................................................... 69

D. Method and Overview of Chapters .................................................................................... 77

CHAPTER TWO
FEDUS NATURE: DIVINE LAW, HUMAN OBEDIENCE, AND THE
ESCHATOLOGY OF THE ORIGINAL COVENANT BETWEEN
GOD AND HUMANS .................................................................................................................. 82

Introduction ............................................................................................................................... 82

A. The Covenant of Nature ....................................................................................................... 84
   1. Covenant Defined and Defining How God Can Enter into a Covenant
      with Humanity ................................................................................................................. 85
   2. Covenant as Monopleuric and Dipleuric .................................................................... 91
   3. God's Twofold Covenant with Humanity ..................................................................... 96
   5. The Contracting Parties of the Covenant of Nature ...................................................... 116
CHAPTER THREE


Introduction .................................................. 167

A. The Origin and Meaning of the Words bryth and diathêkê, and the Significance of epangélia and evangélion .................................................. 169
   1. תַּחְת .............................. 171
   2. Διαθήκη .................................. 173
   3. The Latin Term Fœdus and Scriptural Significations ................. 176
   4. The Covenant of Grace as a “Promise” (Ἐπαγγέλλω) ............... 177
   5. The Covenant of Grace as “Good Tidings” or “Gospel” (Εὐαγγέλιον) 178

B. The Nature of the Covenant of Grace .................................. 179
   1. The Covenant of Grace Defined ........................................ 182
      a. God as the Author of the Covenant of Grace ................. 183
      b. The Contracting Parties—God Offended and Man Offending 185
      c. The Mediator of the Covenant of Grace ......................... 186
      d. Addendum: The Pactum between the Father and the Son .. 188
      e. The Clauses of the Covenant of Grace ......................... 194
         (1) The First Party of the Covenant—God .................... 195
         (2) The Second Party of the Covenant—Man ................ 199

C. The Nature of Conditionality in the Covenant of Grace ............ 203
   1. Distinguishing the Idea of Conditionality .......................... 203
   2. Faith as an Instrumental Cause .................................... 208
   3. The Instrumental Causality of Faith in Distinction from the Meritorious Role of Works ................................................. 209
   4. The Instrumental Causality of Faith Has Reference to Christ Alone 210
   5. Are Repentance and Obedience Conditions in the Covenant of Grace? 212
6. Excursus: The Necessity of Good Works without the Merit of Good Works   217
   a. The Necessity of Means and Spontaneity                          217
   b. The Truth of Good Works                                         220
   c. The Diverse Connotations of Merit                                222
   d. The Conditions Demanded                                         223
   e. The Merit of Congruity                                           225
   f. The Merit of Condignity                                          225
   g. Strict versus *Ex Pacto* Merit                                   228

D. The Relationship between the Covenant of Works and the Covenant of Grace  229

Summary and Conclusion                                                   236

CHAPTER FOUR
*Fedus Gratiae* (Part 2): Polemics Surrounding the
Covenant of Grace                                                        245

Introduction                                                             245

A. The Unity of the Covenant of Grace                                     247

B. The Redemptive Scope of the Covenant of Grace                          257
   1. Opponents of the Particularity of the Covenant of Grace            258
   2. The Particular Scope of the Essence of the Covenant of Grace       261
   3. The Particularity of the Covenant of Grace Expounded and Defended  264
   4. Scriptural Proof of the Particularity of the Covenant of Grace     272

C. The Diversity (or Twofold Economy) of the Covenant of Grace           280
   1. The Old Dispensation—or The Old Testament                          281
      a. The Old Testament Distinguished in Three Ages                   283
      b. The Differences between the Law and the Covenant of Grace       287
      c. The Law as Part of the Covenant of Grace                        289
      d. The External Economy of the Covenant of Grace in the Old Testment 291
         (1) Matter and Form of the External Economy
         (2) The End or Goal of the External Economy
         (3) Marks and Effects of the External Economy
         (4) Adjuncts to the External Economy
      e. The Internal Economy of the Covenant of Grace in
         the Old Testment                                                 296
   2. The New Dispensation—or The New Testament                           299

D. The Difference between the Old and New Covenants                      302
   1. The Old and New Covenants Broadly and Strictly Considered           303
   2. A Controversy among the Reformers                                   305
   3. Controversy with the Lutherans                                     306
   4. The Differences between the Old and New Testament Broadly Considered 311
E. Intra-Reformed Debates concerning Christ's Suretyship in the Covenant of Grace — 315
   1. The Nature of Christ's Sponsio or Suretyship under the Old Testament —— 317
   2. The Debate Surrounding the Greeks Words ἀφεσίς and πάρεσις ———— 331

F. A Dispute with the Papists—State of the Fathers after Death -------------------- 349

G. Further Polemics against the Amyraldians—Is there a Third Covenant? ———— 351
   1. The Salmurian View ———— 352
   2. The Consensus View among the Reformed ———— 355
   3. Further Defense of the Consensus View ———— 362

Summary and Conclusion --------------------------------------------------------- 369

CHAPTER FIVE
CHRIST AND THE COVENANT: ASSESSING TURRETIN AND THE
ASSESSMENTS OF FEDERAL THEOLOGY ------------------------------------------ 380

Introduction ———— 380

A. Affirmations regarding Turretin's Federal Theology ----------------------------- 381

B. Affirmations regarding Interpretations of Federal Theology ———— 391

APPENDIX
THEOLOGICAL THESSES FOR PUBLIC DEFENSE ----------------------------------- 399

BIBLIOGRAPHY --------------------------------------------------------------- 401

A. Primary Sources ------------------------------------------------------------- 401
   1. Works by Francis Turretin ———— 401
   2. Other Works by Sixteenth- and Seventeenth-Century Theologians ———— 402

B. Secondary Sources ----------------------------------------------------------- 415
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

One does not complete a study of this nature without amassing a sizeable debt, and not only to a few people. An added difficulty is to convey adequately the way and degree to which these people have positively influenced the completion of this project.

My interest in Reformed scholastic theology first emerged in the Spring of 1980 when I took a class on “The History of Reformed Theology” at Dordt College, taught by Dr. James A. De Jong. In this course I was first introduced to names like Bullinger, Beza, Cocceius, Turretin, and Owen. The sketch of Reformed theology presented in that course awakened in me an interest in the Reformed theological tradition that remains to this day. It was in that course that I was first introduced to Turretin and read some of his theological work. My more immediate and sustained interest in federal theology blossomed while taking the Ph.D. course at Calvin Theological Seminary in the Fall of 2001 on “The Federal Theology of Johannes Cocceius (1603-1669),” taught by Dr. Willem J. van Asselt of Utrecht University. Dr. van Asselt’s enthusiasm for seventeenth-century Reformed theology was contagious, and his support and encouragement of my exploration into Turretin’s federal theology is gratefully acknowledged.

My foremost gratitude goes to my dissertation supervisor Dr. Richard A. Muller. Not only has he been an invaluable guide through a labyrinth of resources and issues, his direction and rich knowledge of the Reformed tradition has been an inspiration for my own work. I cannot sufficiently convey my thankfulness and debt of gratitude to him.

I also wish to thank the staff at the Hekman Library of Calvin College and Seminary, particularly the invaluable help from Paul Fields, Lugene Schemper, Karin Maag, and Susan Schmurr at the H. Henry Meeter Center for Calvin Studies. Their professional services were
a great help for obtaining many rare materials, and overwhelmingly reduced the need for me to travel in order to finish this study.

I must also offer a word of thanks to Mrs. Elisabeth Folkerts and the Reverend John Wesley White for their help in the French language. Their excitement and love for the French tongue has been a delight, and their assistance impossible to calculate.

It is likewise proper for me to offer a word of special appreciation to Dr. Cornelis P. Venema and Rev. White. Throughout this project each of them were an abiding source of fruitful conversation and encouragement for me to press on, even as their enthusiasm for this topic has sometimes exceeded my own.

Finally, and most importantly, I wish to express my overflowing gratitude to my wife, Sheryl, and our children, Brandon, Justin, and Brittany. Their presence in my life remains a source of fresh smiles, joyful companionship, and constant support.
ABSTRACT

The subject of this dissertation is Francis Turretin's federal theology as a defense of the doctrine of grace. Specifically, it deals with Turretin's exposition of the twofold covenant of God—that is, the covenant of nature and the covenant of grace. In treating this subject, the dissertation has a twofold objective—first, to contribute to an understanding of the theology of Turretin; second, to offer an evaluation regarding the validity of certain trajectories of scholarship pertaining to federal theology in general.

This study, in its analysis and exposition of Turretin's understanding of the twofold covenant, deals with several issues that have arisen in the secondary literature on federal theology, namely whether it is a species of legalism, whether it emerged in an effort to escape certain questions surrounding the doctrine of predestination, and whether it remained entangled in a doctrine of double predestination which prevented it from articulating a scriptural conception of the covenant. Related to these issues is whether there are two distinct and opposing traditions within sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Reformed theology. Each of these issues, then, has a bearing upon the proper interpretation of the federal movement. In view of the quite divergent interpretations and assessments of federal theology relative to the earlier codification of Reformed theology under Bullinger and/or Calvin, this dissertation differs with each of the above mentioned interpretations of federal theology. Instead, this study agrees with the line of scholarship that sees essential continuity between federal theology and the earlier codification of Reformed theology, especially relative to the doctrine of divine grace.
In analyzing Turretin’s explication of the twofold covenant, the dissertation shows how already in the covenant of nature God’s gratuitous relationship with humans comes to expression in that God, according to his goodness and justice, establishes the way humans might relate to him righteously and receive the gift of eternal blessedness. After the fall into sin, God does not abandon the standards of his holiness, nor does he abandon humans to the eternal penalty of their disobedience; rather, by the covenant of grace he redeems fallen humans by fulfilling the stipulations of the law on behalf of fallen people—all of which demonstrates that federal theology, according to Turretin’s articulation of it, is nothing less than a defense of a theology of grace and therefore does not compromise the doctrine of grace codified by the early Reformers.
INTRODUCTION

This dissertation examines the federal theology of Francis Turretin (or François Turrettini) (1623-1687). In doing so, it not only takes up a pinnacle theologian of the seventeenth century, it treats one of the most distinctive doctrines of the Reformed theology during that period—the doctrine of the twofold covenant, that is, the covenant of works and the covenant of grace. This study is entitled “Christ and the Covenant” since Turretin regarded Christ, the promised Messiah, to be the guarantor of the covenant promises and therefore the center of the covenant of grace. As Surety, Christ is the focus of the covenant, for he fulfills the stipulations of the original covenant of nature in his role as Mediator, undergoing the negative sanction of that covenant and fulfilling its requirements on behalf of his people. Thus, in Turretin’s theology, the covenant of grace is epitomized by Christ, who is God’s supreme and benevolent gift to fallen sinners. The testamentary character of the evangelical covenant likewise points to Christ, for he secures and bestows to sinners what they cannot obtain for themselves.

This brief portrait of Turretin’s doctrine of the covenant anticipates a thesis of this study, namely that Turretin’s federal scheme is a theology of divine grace. This dissertation intends to show that Turretin sets forth his doctrine of the twofold covenant as a defense and exposition of divine grace; it also intends to show that his federalism highlights what he judges to be the gospel in its purest expression—hence his sustained polemic against any compromise of the gracious nature of salvation. However, more fundamental than Turretin’s polemic aimed at various opponents is his own conviction, based upon exegetical analysis and theological formulation, regarding the validity, and therefore defensibility, of the federal scheme.
INTRODUCTION

We observe that Turretin labored at a period of time when federal theology had already been expounded by numerous Reformed theologians both on the Continent and the British Isles. Within that broad context, his own covenant views are neither novel nor distinctive. Rather, Turretin’s work as a theologian is in the role of codifier and defender of the faith. He well represented a consensus position among Reformed theologians, and thus his own theology is not distinctive except for his penchant to focus upon controverted issues, and to write with brevity and clarity on any given theological topic. In fact, Turretin’s theology is distinguished by disputation. Like many theologians of that era, he viewed disputation as the best method for theological instruction. As characteristic of scholastic method, Turretin’s theology is marked by a precise definition of terms and concepts and a careful description of matters in dispute, all of which contributed to and entailed sorting out everything extraneous to a given controversy. In this way he would bring his readers to the nub of an issue. Turretin, then, excelled at treating theological questions with clarity and insight. Yet he also grounded his work in biblical exegesis, followed by theological analysis. Although Turretin’s theological work may not be characterized as either innovative or imaginative, he excelled as a codifier of Reformed thought, laboring for theological consensus where possible, and defended Reformed theology from all opponents, rebuffing all foes.

In this connection, it is appropriate to clarify the parameters of this study and to place the consideration of Turretin’s covenant scheme within the context of scholarship surrounding federal theology as a whole. The focus of this dissertation is upon Turretin’s exposition of the doctrine of the covenants, particularly as he expounds his position in opposition to various adversaries. The views of other federal writers will be brought to bear on this study either to further illustrate Turretin’s view on a given matter or to show the diversity of opinion on a particular subject. The burden of this study will be to set forth Turretin’s views accurately within the context of the polemics of his age. In doing the above,
it is also necessary to engage the secondary literature on federal theology and the diverse interpretations of what this theology represents in the wider movement of Reformed theology in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

In this regard, a few comments are in order concerning the secondary literature on federal theology. It has become a commonplace in the literature, which we will survey in some detail in chapter 1, to refer to the development of federal theology as an attempt to ameliorate, as it were, the problematic doctrine of predestination—that is, to compensate for the alleged abstract decretal orientation characteristic of the Reformed system, and therefore to reorient Reformed theology to the history of salvation and God’s immanence in human affairs. However, it is also a commonplace to stigmatize federal theology as imposing a construct upon the Scripture, a speculative one at that, which erroneously imports into the Edenic paradise narrative the notion of covenant, creating a covenantal “schema” foreign to Scripture itself. Given a complex of theological issues, not least of which is the relationship between the Old and New Testaments, and how to account for the unity between the testaments, or from a different angle, how to account for the singularity of the way of salvation in the one covenant of grace, with Christ at the center of the divine project of salvation for the pious of the old and new dispensations, and how to explain the relationship between Law and Gospel in this project, federal theology is often portrayed as succumbing to a form of legalism and moralism with its doctrine of the covenant of works.

It should also be noted that on the theological front Reformed federalism meets severe negative criticism from the historians of doctrine and theological formulators of dialectical theology. The most frequent complaint is that federal theology introduces a harmful “contractual” understanding of God’s relationship with humans and imposes a wrongheaded and damaging conditionality upon the doctrine of salvation and the entire divine/human relationship. Similarly, within the narrow circle of conservative Reformed churches—churches that view themselves as standing in conformity to the confessional consensus of
the age of orthodoxy—there are voices of dissent, expressing concern that the twofold covenant (that of a covenant of works and a covenant of grace) as expressed in the Westminster Standards, and routinely a feature in more recent Reformed dogmatics, is an aberration to pure Reformed doctrine, introducing a false doctrine of merit into the divine/human relationship, thereby compromising the earlier formulations of Calvin and the sixteenth-century Reformed confession on the doctrine of divine redemption. In short, the doctrine of grace is eclipsed by a false notion of a legal relationship imposed upon man in his original, unfallen state—as if Adam had to earn God’s favor through obedience and so by his works merit blessing from God.

Alongside of these developments there is a growing body of scholarship that challenges these conclusions, arguing for a basic continuity between former and latter expressions of Reformed theology or at least denying that the rise of federal theology may rightly be assigned to one of two distinct traditions or strains of Reformed thought—the Rhenish reformation versus the Genevan reformation.

This study will follow generally in the path of this last assessment of federal theology, broadly conceived, judging that the other several trajectories of criticism are off-target in important ways inasmuch as they have failed to demonstrate a right understanding of the high Reformed federalism of the seventeenth century. This study, then, will argue that the “two traditions” thesis represents a fundamental misunderstanding of Reformed theology. Meanwhile, this study will engage the secondary literature both in its broad sweep and more minute particulars, arguing that Reformed federalism is part of a single tradition within the Reformed movement.

It should be noted, however, that this study will not trace out the scholarship on the origins of federal theology or enter into that much debated discussion. Nor will this study enter into debates concerning the nature of Protestant scholasticism inasmuch as the more recent reassessments of scholasticism have sufficiently disproved, or at least so seriously
called into question, the validity of earlier depictions of scholasticism it would be redundant to repeat those discussions. Instead, this dissertation seeks to explore federal theology in its mature or pinnacle form by examining the views of one of its major representatives from the Continent—in this case, the views of Francis Turretin. In doing so, this study intends to show that the burden of Reformed federalism is nothing other than the doctrine of grace as characteristic of Augustinianism at large, and that it is false—certainly a serious misreading of seventeenth-century federalism—to pit the doctrine of predestination against the idea of the covenant. It is also a misunderstanding to argue that the doctrine of predestination functions as a kind of grid through which covenantal ideas passed and were made to conform. Likewise it is a misreading to treat the contractual character of the covenant as a kind of synergism or a “remedy” to the doctrine of predestination; even as it is dubious and wrongheaded to posit two distinct Reformed traditions, one flowing from the Rhenish Reformers and the other issuing from Geneva, the former producing a federal theology that views the covenant of grace as dipleuric, the latter producing a predestinarian theology that treats the evangelical covenant as monopleuric.

This dissertation follows a different path of interpretation, and argues that the doctrine of the covenants as articulated and expounded in the federal system of Francis Turretin is nothing less than a sustained defense of soteriological monergism; it is an unrelenting *apologia* for the necessity of divine grace in the entire divine/human relationship, for that relationship itself, covenantal in its origin, is established by God’s benevolence and love; and in establishing a relationship of fellowship and blessing with his human creature, God requires that his free moral agents, inasmuch as they are moral agents fashioned in the divine image and created in true righteousness and holiness, relate to him according to his love, righteousness, and holiness. In other words, according to Turretin, the covenant relationship that God establishes with Adam in the Edenic situation does not pit love against law; nor does it set obedience against grace, and it certainly doesn’t choose between the perfections
of divine goodness and holiness. Rather, in Turretin's view, righteousness and grace or justice and love are features of the divine/human relationship because God is just, good, and benevolent—which is to say, in creating human beings God creates moral agents who are to relate to him according to his nature, even as they are obliged according to their nature as bearers of God's image to render to God all that is due him as God—whether he establishes a covenant relationship with Adam and his progeny or not. Stated differently, in creating humans as responsible moral agents, God cannot, in the view of his goodness and love, set aside his holiness and justice. This means, in keeping with the unity and simplicity of the divine nature, that God cannot in the interests of his kindly disposition toward his human creatures set aside his law for human creatures, as if they could live before him in rebellion and disobedience, acting toward him in treacherous ingratitude and hatefulness, without negative consequence.

This study further intends to show that, for Turretin, the twofold covenant schema clarifies the graciousness of grace, for it clarifies humanity's original standing before God, more clearly exhibits the nature of human sin and rebellion against God, and therefore better illuminates Christ's redemptive work as a divine gift. This is not legalism, not by the standards of Reformed theology, but purified and refined Augustinianism. It is not a subversion or a perversion of an earlier codification of Reformed theology, whether originating from Zürich or Geneva; rather, it is both a defense and a more robust articulation of that codification. It also is not an alternative doctrine or an alternative theology to that of predestination Calvinism; instead, it is a demonstration of the redemptive-historical mechanism of divine election and human responsibility. The divine decree does not function monergistically while the covenant of grace functions synergistically; nor does the divine decree testify to a unilateral covenant that undermines the possibility or reality of a bilateral relationship between God and humans. Predestination and covenant are not in competition with one another, not in Turretin's theology or Reformed federalism in general, for the entire drama
of redemptive history is only possible by God’s decree and providential governance. The doctrine of the covenant doesn’t somehow remodel and amend the Reformed doctrine of predestination so that that doctrine ceases to be Augustinian, Calvinian, or Dortian. Rather, for Turretin, it is the vehicle by which God enters into a living relationship with humankind; and in terms of the covenant of grace it is how God brings the salvation of sinners to fruition and accomplishment. What is more, the federal scheme enabled Turretin and other federal theologians to answer what might be the most profound question of Christian theology, namely *Cur Deus homo?*

Turretin’s theology is eliciting or polemical in nature. As such, this study argues that his exposition repeatedly and heartily defends the primacy of divine grace in the work of salvation. But prior to this, for the one precedes the other, this study shows how Turretin defends the primacy of God’s goodness and benevolence in the original paradise situation before the fall, inclusive of divine law as a part of his love and goodness toward man. For Turretin, God’s goodness and love are the *sine qua non* of the work of creation and redemption, even as God’s righteousness and holiness are honored both in the original creation and in the project of redemption.

There are three areas in particular where this study’s analysis of Turretin’s position aims to contribute to an understanding of seventeenth-century federalism. First, it considers how Turretin’s position helps to resolve and clarify in a fruitful way the persistent question concerning the relationship between the bilateral and unilateral character of the covenant. Turretin’s labors make evident how Reformed theology could, without contradiction, affirm both of these aspects of the covenant simultaneously. What is more, his teaching regarding the testamentary character of the covenant of grace does not compromise the bilateral nature of the covenant, for the Testator, Christ, meets all the conditions of the evangelical covenant, fulfilling what is demanded in that covenant according to its dipleuric or bilateral requirements. Second, in analyzing Turretin’s views, this study considers how a doctrine of
the covenant of works fits with the gospel of grace and how that covenant does not produce or insert some sort of legalism into God’s relationship with humans. Turretin’s exposition of the covenant resists this charge at every step, and in fact labors to defend the doctrine of grace against legalism and synergism of every kind. Last, this study considers how conditionality and merit function within the covenant scheme; or stated differently, it demonstrates how covenant conditions are fulfilled, so that divine predestination is maintained without compromising the nature of the covenant itself, since the covenant requires that all its stipulations and conditions be met.

As far as the order and structure of this study are concerned, it begins with a statement of the problem that afflicts the scholarship surrounding federal theology, introducing pivotal issues that need to be addressed, followed by a comprehensive survey of the secondary literature. Thereafter, it attempts to provide an interpretation of Turretin’s position on the covenant of nature and the covenant of grace. After this primary objective of examining Turretin’s viewpoint is completed, the study concludes with a consideration of how Turretin’s position brings resolution to certain perceived problems within federal theology.
CHAPTER ONE

SIXTEENTH- AND SEVENTEENTH-CENTURY FEDERAL THEOLOGY
AND ITS INTERPRETERS

Introduction

The doctrine of the covenants, or the twofold covenant, as it came to explicit expression in late sixteenth-century Reformed theology, is regarded as the distinctive trait of what is now called “federal theology.” The beginnings of this doctrine as a distinctive hallmark of Reformed thought can be traced back to Zwingli, though most characteristically to Bullinger’s theology and to those who came after him and developed his ideas. Although Calvin worked with and presupposed the apparatus of the covenant in constructing his own theology, he did not employ it either as a distinctive topic of theological discussion, nor did he craft his theology around the overarching framework of the covenants. In the subsequent development of Reformed theology, the covenant became a sublime hallmark and most distinctive feature of Reformed thought over against its Protestant allies and opponents. It first reached confessional status among the Reformed in The Irish Articles (1615), some three years prior to the Canons of the Synod of Dordrecht (1618-19).¹

By the 1640s it had achieved an even more dominant place within the Reformed churches both on the Continent and the British Isles, preeminently reflected in the Westminster Confession of Faith (1647):

The distance between God and the creature is so great that although reasonable creatures do owe obedience unto him as their Creator, yet they could never have any fruition of him

¹ “Man being at the beginning created according to the image of God (which consisted especially in the wisdom of his mind and the true holiness of his free will), had the covenant of the law ingrafted in his heart, whereby God did promise unto him everlasting life upon condition that he performed entire and perfect obedience unto his commandments, according to that measure of strength wherewith he was endued in his creation, and threatened death unto him if he did not perform the same”— Irish Articles, article 21. Quoted from Creeds and Confessions of Faith in the Christian Tradition, eds. Jaroslav Pelikan and Valene Hotchkiss, 4 vols. (New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 2003), II, 615.
as their blessedness and reward, but by some voluntary condescension on God's part, which he hath been pleased to express by way of covenant.

The first covenant made with man was a covenant of works, wherein life was promised to Adam, and in him to his posterity, upon condition of perfect and personal obedience.

Man by his fall having made himself incapable of life by that covenant, the Lord was pleased to make a second, commonly called the covenant of grace, wherein he freely offereth unto sinners life and salvation by Jesus Christ, requiring of them faith in him, that they may be saved, and promising to give unto all those that are ordained unto [eternal] life his Holy Spirit, to make them willing and able to believe.\(^2\)

By 1675, some twenty-eight years later, not only was the twofold covenant formula affirmed among the Swiss Reformed churches, but a specific polemic was waged in the Formula Consensus Helvetica to defend a right conception of the covenant against various aberrations.

Moreover that promise connected to the Covenant of Works was not a continuation only of earthly life and happiness, but the possession especially of eternal and celestial life, a life, namely, of both body and soul in heaven, if indeed man ran the course of perfect obedience, with unspeakable joy in communion with God. For not only did the Tree of Life prefigure this very thing unto Adam, but the power of the law, which, being fulfilled by Christ, who went under it in our place, awards to us nothing other than celestial life in Christ who kept the same righteousness of the law. The power of the law also threatens man with both temporal and eternal death.\(^3\)

This document also affirms the intratrinitarian covenant, namely the pactum salutis or covenant of redemption, and is jealous to safeguard the singular way of salvation subsequent to Adam's fall into sin. Thus it specifically addresses and rejects the Amyraldian three-covenant scheme.

We disapprove therefore of the doctrine of those who fabricate for us three Covenants, the Natural, the Legal, and the Gospel, different in their entire nature and essence; and in explaining these and assigning their differences, so intricately entangle themselves that they greatly obscure and even impair the nucleus of solid truth and piety. Nor do they hesitate at all, with regard to the necessity, under the OT dispensation, of knowledge of Christ and faith in him and his satisfaction and in the whole sacred Trinity, to speculate much too loosely and dangerously.\(^4\)

---

\(^2\) Westminster Confession of Faith, Chapter VII, 1, 2, 3. Quoted from Creeds and Confessions of Faith in the Christian Tradition, II, 615.

\(^3\) Helvetic Formula Consensus, Canon VIII. The translation is by Marin I. Klauber, printed in “The Helvetic Formula Consensus (1675): An Introduction and Translation,” edited by Martin I. Klauber, Trinity Journal 11 (Spring 1990): 103-123.

\(^4\) Helvetic Formula Consensus, Canon XXV.
However, even though the two covenant formula, with the doctrine of the *pactum salutis*, became one of the foremost doctrines of the Reformed churches, it was to fall on hard times less than a century after its Westminster formulation; and it continues to meet with considerable theological criticism and negative evaluation by theologians and historians of doctrine, although some scholars view it as an antidote to Calvinian or Bezan predestinarianism. With the fall of Reformed orthodoxy, particularly since the Enlightenment, where human reason displaced divine revelation as the basis of doctrinal formulation, and the rise of pietism, where the sophisticated and highly refined codification of Reformed theology was dislocated in favor of theology geared for the laity and the cultivation of practical Christian living, federalism ceased to be the defining characteristic of Reformed theology. It was no longer the focus of the theology that prevailed at that time—though federalism did receive something of a reprieve in the theological systems of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Nonetheless, covenant or federal theology has been on the receiving end of a great deal of theological scrutiny and criticism over the last one hundred years. With the advent of Karl Barth’s theological project, wherein the Swiss theologian offered rather sharp denunciations of seventeenth-century Reformed federalism, there has been both a resurgent interest in the origin and development of this theology and a continuing, mostly negative, evaluation of it as well.

But modern qualms about Reformed federalism—especially its late seventeenth-century variety—need to be put within the context of other modern theological agenda. It is

---


not enough to criticize a formulation of doctrine of the past unless there is honesty about the proposals one is espousing in opposition to and as alternative of it. Numerous studies of federal theology are tainted by this unacknowledged agenda, which then skews the objectivity with which one ought to approach the teachings of all earlier or prior theological programs and, further, wrongly tilts or overtly corrupts the evaluation with an anachronistic standard of a new orthodoxy.

In order to orient ourselves to the cluster of issues that surround discussions of federal theology, it is appropriate to consider the work of previous interpreters and the direction of previous research. Although little work has been done on Turrettin’s doctrine of the covenants, there exists a large body of scholarship that has examined features of federal theology from its origins to its developed form among a variety of federal theologians in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. This survey reveals the differing interpretations that currently exist among scholars of sixteenth- and seventeenth-century federal theology—both an older consensus of scholarship that argues for a rift within the Reformed movement vis-à-vis questions of covenant and divine election; and an emerging newer consensus that maintains the essential integrity and unity of the Reformed theology in its earlier and later codifications. The following survey of the important literature on this topic is intended, accordingly, to demonstrate and clarify this lack of consensus and to isolate the important questions pertaining to federalism and its relationship to the earlier codification of Reformed theology by the Reformers. In so doing, this offers an agenda for our examination and analysis of the doctrine of covenant in Turrettin’s federal theology.

A. The Diversity of Interpretation on the Rise and Development of Federal Theology

Over the last century or more, the historical scholarship surrounding Reformed orthodoxy in general, and Reformed federal theology in particular, has spoken in rather
discordant and inharmonious tones. Different trajectories of interpretation are easily discerned; but it is not so easily discerned how these various schools of interpretation ought to be classified. For our purposes, we will divide the secondary literature into two broad categories: (1) historically oriented research; and (2) theologically oriented analysis. After our survey of the secondary literature, an appraisal of it will follow.

1. Survey of Historical Research on Federal Theology

The initial assessment of federal theology in the history of modern scholarship brings forth the names of Alexander Schweizer, W. Gass, H. Heppe, O. Ritschl, and W. A. Brown, along with G. Schrenk and J. A. Dorner. These writers largely treat the rise of covenant
theology on the Continent. Perhaps the most pervasive and dominant voice of these many authors is that of Heinrich Heppe. In exploring the development of a distinctively German Reformed theology, Heppe argues that the work of Boquinus and Ursinus, as well as that of Hyperius and Olevianus, produced a covenant theology that, following in the general trajectory of Melanchthon’s rejection of a rigorous predestinarian theology, shrank back from Bezan scholasticism. Thus federal theology, as developed among the German Reformed, softened the radical Calvinism of Beza and introduced an alternative to the scholastic theology gaining ascendency in other parts of the Reformed world. 9

Heppe’s basic tenet that there are two distinct traditions of Reformed theology, one coming from the German side of the reformation, developing the idea of the covenant, and the other issuing from Calvin and Geneva, advocating an abrasive doctrine of double predestination, has, with modification, long been embraced by a large body of scholarship over the last one hundred and fifty years. Whether one is dealing with the rise of covenant theology on the Continent or its development on the British Isles, the “two traditions” thesis is commonly assumed by many scholars and rigorously adhered to. It has become a kind of lens through which to read the evolution of Reformed theology in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

However, there have been voices of persistent dissent from this view as well, voices that continue to sound in the present. These voices argue for the essential unity of Reformed theology on the question of covenant and predestination; or more explicitly stated, they argue that it is both inaccurate and false to oppose covenant theology to a Reformed

---

9 Heppe, Dogmatik des deutschen Protestantismus, I: 139ff.
theology of predestination. An early voice expressing this view is that of Geerhardus Vos. Vos seriously questioned the validity of Heppe’s analysis. “If were true, the covenant concept would have to be regarded with suspicion as a strange intrusion into Reformed territory.” What is more, this scheme encounters a weighty theological problem, for it implies a synergistic soteriology in opposition to monergism. Vos states the obvious point: “Whatever has grown in synergistic soil cannot bear any healthy Reformed fruits.” He concludes that Heppe’s representation is “completely untenable.”

Given this fundamental diversity of interpretation regarding the rise of covenant theology and its content, that is, a “two traditions” versus a single tradition approach, we do well to pause and consider the more pervasive and influential of these competing trajectories of analyses in order to place our consideration of Francis Turretin’s covenantal views within a proper framework of issues, allegations, and concerns.

We begin by noting that one body of scholarship limits itself to the origin and/or development of covenant theology as found in Puritan thought, both among the English Puritans and Scottish Presbyterians and the Puritans in New England as well. This scholarship does not ignore, however, continental influences upon English federal thought. In this connection Perry Miller’s depiction of covenant theology, especially as it came to expression within English Puritanism and also in New England, has long held an authoritative position among historians of Puritanism.

Miller portrays federal theology as a movement seeking to overcome the burdens and conundrums of Calvin’s predestinarian theology. “The development of the theory [covenant theology] must be viewed as a part of that seventeenth century systematization of Calvinism and was designed to counteract certain weaknesses in the original creed.”

According to Miller, Calvin left Reformed theology with a unsavory legacy: a conception of God as wholly transcendent, and a doctrine of predestination that undermined or de-emphasized human responsibility, leaving believers without assurance of their salvation. “He who creates is under no obligation to those whom he creates; God might slay His creatures, or torture them, or forget them, and none could call Him to account, but in the Covenant He has voluntarily tied His hands, willingly agreed to a set of terms . . . . He who might rule by fiat limits Himself to a contract.”

In short, Calvin’s doctrine of predestination depicted God as capricious and produced human passivity. “There was always the danger that the doctrine of predestination would lead in practice to the attitude: ‘If I am elected, I am elected, there is nothing I can do about it.’ If man must wait upon God for grace, and grace is irrespective of works, simple folks might very well ask, why worry about works at all?”

---


The Puritan conception of the covenant answers these problems, according to Miller, for it makes God more related to his human creatures and less inscrutable and unpredictable.\textsuperscript{14} The Puritan federal theologians, then, set for themselves the task of “caging and confining” Calvin’s God, who is “the transcendent force,” “the inexpressible and unfathomable Being.” They did this by means of “the law of ethics.”\textsuperscript{15} Thus by introducing the covenant idea, especially the bilateral character of the covenant, simple believers were drawn away from the speculations of divine predestination and pointed to the necessity of faith and obedience in the way of faith. In this way they could gain assurance of their salvation, since their response to the call of the gospel was both meaningful and experiential or tangible. For covenant theology, as painted by Miller, is nothing less than a divine-human transaction, the fulfillment of a bargain.

While the horrified ghost of Calvin shuddered to behold his theology twisted into this spiritual commercialism, New England parsons confidently asserted, “He who performs the conditions of the general Gospel Promise, doth in so doing make the good of it so to become his own by promise,” and thus does, “as it were bind the Covenant, and bring Christ himself into Bonds; so that God can as well deny himself, as refuse to justify such.” Therefore union with God promised to be no more a torturing uncertainty, not a ravishing of the surprised soul by a terrifying power, but a definite legal status, based on \textit{quid pro quo}.\textsuperscript{16}

Believers therefore need not speculate about whether they were elect or non-elect. Instead, they experienced God as calling them to faith and to action. Knowledge of one’s salvation is no longer an inscrutable secret, “locked up in the vastness of the transcendent Will.”\textsuperscript{17} Over against this harmful idea, covenant theology offers an objective criterion for one’s assurance of salvation. “He who fulfilled the condition of the Covenant could gain assurance, and the condition was belief followed by a conscious effort toward sanctification.

\textsuperscript{14} Miller, \textit{Errand into the Wilderness}, 55; idem, \textit{New England Mind}, 389, “The end of the Covenant of Grace is to give security to the transaction between God and men, for by binding God to the terms, it binds Him to save those who make good the terms . . . based on \textit{quid pro quo}.”

\textsuperscript{15} Miller, \textit{Errand into the Wilderness}, 56.

\textsuperscript{16} Miller, \textit{New England Mind}, 389.

\textsuperscript{17} Miller, \textit{Errand into the Wilderness}, 54.
providing a definite criterion for telling sheep from goats." Thus Miller views federal theology, with its doctrine of the conditionality of the covenant, as providing a meaningful summons to believers to fulfill the obligations of the Christian gospel, with good works functioning as identity markers of genuine faith against doubt. In addition, federal theology provided a benefit for Christian morality as well, for in overcoming the predestinarianism of Calvin's system, it safeguarded moral responsibility against moral laxity and presumption. Inasmuch as the covenant relationship between God and humans was a *quid pro quo* arrangement, believers were urged on to a life of obedience to divine law and could in that way experience God's favor.

It might be observed at this point that Miller seems oblivious to Calvin's doctrine of the sacraments, including baptism, and the assurance motif resident in his doctrine, as he seems oblivious to the fact that, for Calvin, unless a person is elect, he or she will not receive the faith needed to live a life in obedience to God, whether one conceives of this covenantally or not. Miller's portrait is simplistic, even naïve: a covenant relationship is substituted for the divine decree—the former the needed remedy for the latter. Naïve or not, much modern scholarship has been under Miller's spell, affiriming the contrast, even antipathy, between Calvin's theology and the federal project.

Following in the general path of Miller's work, though with significant modifications, is Leonard J. Trinderud's work on the origins of Puritanism. This article, written in 1951, has generated a great deal of discussion, being something of a point of reference for subsequent

---


20 Miller, *Errand into the Wilderness*, 73.

21 Cf. the similar assessment of David Wai-Sing Wong, "The Covenant Theology of John Owen" (Ph.D. diss., Westminster Theological Seminary, 1998), 4. Also to be noted is the list of authors Wong cites in criticism of Miller, 6 fn. 3.
scholarship. Trinterud’s thesis asserts a divide within Reformed theology on the doctrine of
the covenant between the Rhineland reformation and the work of Calvin at Geneva—the
former holding to a conditional covenant, the latter championing a testamentary covenant.\textsuperscript{22}

For Calvin, and so in the Geneva Bible, the covenant of God is God’s promise to man,
which obligates God to fulfill. Moreover, in the incarnation, death and resurrection of
Christ God did actually fulfill that promise to which his covenant bound him. . . .
Therefore, covenant and testament are identical. In the covenant theory of the Rhineland
and of the English reformers the covenant is a conditional promise on God’s part, which
has the effect of drawing out of man a responding promise of obedience, thus creating a
mutual pact or treaty. The burden of fulfillment rests upon man, for he must first obey in
order to bring God’s reciprocal obligation into force. Theologically, of course, the
difference between these two views is of the greatest moment.\textsuperscript{23}

Trinterud argues that what was essential for the Rhineland conception of the covenant,
namely that it bore the marks of being a treaty or pact between God and humans, a
conditional promise and a mutual agreement, a reciprocal arrangement or a bargain, is wholly
alien to Calvin’s treatment of the doctrine. In this connection Trinterud cites the work of
Perry Miller, who, as observed above, posited a essential difference between the federal
theology and the theology of Calvin.\textsuperscript{24} Trinterud himself boldly asserts that the Westminster
symbols set forth “the essential genius of the federal scheme over against that of Calvin”—
“best seen in the doctrines of revelation, predestination, law, gospel, grace, church, ministry,
and sacraments.” The Westminster treatment of these doctrines is in the lineage of the
Continental federal theology.\textsuperscript{25}

Trinterud observes that the Rhineland doctrine of the covenant was at least partially
rooted in a conception of natural law. As early as 1525 Oecolampadius asserted that the
covenant was a law of love and that this law was written on the human heart at creation, and
later written down in Scripture. Blessing from God required human obedience to him.

\textsuperscript{22} According to Trinterud, the Rhineland tradition would include among others, Zwingli, Jud, Bullinger,
Oecolampadius, Capito, Bucer, Martyr, and a large number of other leaders in the Reformation movement in
Zürich, Basel, Strasbourg, and other cities of the Rhineland.


\textsuperscript{24} Trinterud, “Origins of Puritanism,” 57 fn. 27.

\textsuperscript{25} Trinterud, “Origins of Puritanism,” 52.
“Here,” states Trinterud, “the entire law-contract structure is seen.” The principal idea of this covenant-conception, a law-covenant and a covenant-contract arrangement, is seen already in Zwingli, rooted in the medieval tradition of natural law. That natural law was turned into a covenant of works, the hallmark of federalism, is not an idea found in the Bible, says Trinterud; nor could its advocates cite ecclesiastical authorities in support of this view.

Trinterud does not deny that Puritanism is a home-grown movement, indigenous to England; nor does he deny that Genevan influences within Puritanism can be traced out. But he argues that these influences came late and that the advocates of the Genevan theology never prevailed within the English Reformation. Trinterud also does not deny that the federal theologians embraced the doctrine of predestination, for they were Augustinians. But embracing that doctrine hardly made them into Calvinists (strictly so-called). In fact, covenant theology possessed greater compatibility with Augustinian theology, being able to give intellectual expression to the English medieval heritage, which Trinterud describes as “the lush, warm flow of mystical piety and devotion, the bride-mysticism, the rich, highly involved allegorical interpretation of the Bible, especially the Song of Songs, the preaching of penitence, the love of pilgrimages and the pilgrim motif. . . .” For Trinterud, then, federal theology stands in opposition to Calvin’s theology—the former setting forth a conditional covenant, bilateral and dipleuric, calling humans to respond to God’s overtures of mercy, the latter treating the covenant as unilateral and monopleuric, positing salvation as an absolute and already accomplished fact.

Following in the same general path of Trinterud's view are the labors of Richard L. Greaves and J. Wayne Baker.\textsuperscript{31} Greaves agrees with the two traditions thesis, but believes that both traditions are evident within English federalism. More specifically, he maintains that through William Ames a more "distinctively Calvinist" notion of the covenant was propagated, while writers like John Preston and John Ball promoted the "Zwingli-Bullinger-Tyndale tradition." Regarding the Rhenish line, Greaves asserts that it is characterized by an emphasis upon covenant as contract, with a stress upon its conditionality, whereas Calvin's doctrine of the covenant accents the promissory aspects of the covenant, and its blessings are received as a divine gift.\textsuperscript{32} Greaves does not deny that both lines maintain the necessity of divine grace if humans are to respond to the offer of mercy; divine assistance is required. But he detects a subtle distinction regarding human response. "There is a difference between divine grace which effectually moves man to faith and repentance, and divine grace which enables the individual to repent and believe." Greaves acknowledges that the distinction is small, but argues that the "results are not." The former position amounts to a denial of the conditions of the covenant, since it is absolutely promised; while the latter upholds the conditionality of the covenant. Although the ability by which believers are able to perform what is required in the covenant comes from God, believers nonetheless fulfill the condition.

Greaves interprets this view, in contradistinction from the former view, to make room for

\begin{flushright}
\textit{from William A. Clebsch, \textit{England's Earliest Protestants, 1520-1535} (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1964), and others whose views we consider below.}
\end{flushright}


\textsuperscript{32} Greaves, "Origins and Early Development of English Covenant Thought," 23-33.
covenant breaking, apostasy, and unbelief.\textsuperscript{33} Meanwhile, according to Greaves, a fusion of these traditions was achieved near the end of the Elizabethan period in such writers as Dudley Fenner, Thomas Cartwright, and William Perkins. However, in the years that followed, the fusion gave way to divergency once more.\textsuperscript{34} We see, then, that Greaves offers up a much more intricate and nuanced portrait of federalism among the English Puritans than Trinterrud. His entire analysis however depends upon the validity of the two traditions thesis.

J. Wayne Baker likewise reasserts Trinterrud’s thesis by shifting the focus off English federalism and onto the Continental Reformer Heinrich Bullinger. In a recent defense of his work, Baker summarizes his view under four theses: (1) the covenant was the leading idea in Bullinger’s theology; (2) Bullinger’s concept of the covenant was bilateral or conditional, unlike Calvin’s unilateral and unconditional view; (3) coupled with Bullinger’s particular idea of the covenant, the Zürich Reformer posited a distinct doctrine of predestination that stands as an alternative to Calvin’s doctrine within the Reformed tradition; and (4) Bullinger represents an earlier Reformed tradition that is different from Calvin’s. According to Baker, Calvin and Bullinger disagreed with one another on divine predestination, and also to a certain degree on the nature of the covenant, specifically whether it was conditional or unconditional.\textsuperscript{35}

Baker believes that scholarship on Bullinger needs to be preserved or protected from both sixteenth century and twentieth-century Calvinists, and he feels at liberty to label modern historians of doctrine who challenge his interpretation of Bullinger’s theology,

\textsuperscript{33} Greaves, “Origins and Early Development of English Covenant Thought,” 22-23. Greaves cites John Owen, \textit{Salus electorum, sanguis Jesuc or the death of death in the death of Christ} (London, 1648), 103, as an example of a strict Calvinist who denies that the conditionality of the covenant. In another place he asserts, without any distinctions, that the strict Calvinists held that the covenant of grace was made with the elect alone. See Greaves, “John Bunyan and Covenant Thought in the Seventeenth Century,” 161.

\textsuperscript{34} Greaves, “Origins and Early Development of English Covenant Thought,” 29.

\textsuperscript{35} Baker, “Heinrich Bullinger, the Covenant, and the Reformed Tradition in Retrospect,” 376. Also see Baker’s \textit{Heinrich Bullinger and the Covenant: The Other Reformed Tradition}, 27-54, 193-215.
especially his interpretation of Bullinger’s theology in relationship to Calvin’s teachings on predestination and covenant, as contemporary “Calvinists” whose views may be summarily dismissed. Being a Calvinist apparently disqualifies one from being a historian. In fact, it is Baker’s historical scholarship that should be questioned at this point, for he fails to examine the wider corpus of Calvin’s writings, limiting himself to the Reformer’s *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, even as he fails to engage seriously the scholarship that treats Calvin’s view of the covenant as set forth in the *Institutes*, as well as his treatises, sermons, and commentaries.36

Traveling a somewhat different path, and arguing in opposition to Trinterud’s thesis at certain points, Jens G. Möller, in his 1963 essay, contends for the continuity or continuation of predestinarian Calvinism within the federal theology of English Puritanism. However, like others, he reads the materials through the lens of two strains of reformation theology—the one strain seizing upon the motif of predestination and accenting the triumph of grace in the work of salvation, the other strain emphasizing the legal expectation of the covenant or the demands of the law. The first strain is identified with Genevan Calvinism, the second with Zürich, following the legacy of Ulrich Zwingli and Heinrich Bullinger. In the Zürich strain of Reformed theology the covenant idea primarily has to do with the mutual agreement existing between contracting parties. Thus in God’s covenant relationship with human beings both parties—God and man—are called to meet certain obligations to one another in order to fulfill the covenant. The ethical aspect of the covenant is the dominant motif. In the

36 Baker, “Heinrich Bullinger, the Covenant, and the Reformed Tradition in Retrospect,” 376. Apparently the “Calvinists” Baker has in mind are Edward A. Dowey, Richard A. Muller, Cornelis P. Venema, and Lyle D. Bierma. However, Baker fails to interact carefully with these authors. He does not treat their documentation or arguments. Moreover, he ignores the work of other scholars who have carefully examined Calvin’s handling of the covenant theme, for example, Hoekema, “Calvin’s Doctrine of the Covenant of Grace,” 1-12; idem, “Covenant of Grace in Calvin’s Teaching,” 133-161; and Lillback, “Ursinus’ Development of the Covenant of Creation,” 247-288; idem, “The Continuing Conundrum: Calvin and the Conditionality of the Covenant,” 42-74; idem, *The Binding of God: Calvin’s Role in the Development of Covenant Theology*, Texts and Studies in Reformation and Post-Reformation Thought, ed. Richard A. Muller (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2001). Also see Eenigenburg, “Place of the Covenant in Calvin’s Thinking,” 1-22; Paul Helm, “Calvin and the Covenant: Unity and Continuity,” *The Evangelical Quarterly* 55 (April 1983): 65-81.
Genevan strain of Reformed theology, specifically as represented by Calvin, the covenant concept does not deny the ethical implications of the covenant, but the idea falls upon the sovereignty of God’s grace. Møller summarizes Calvin’s theology of the covenant as follows:

(1) Like his predecessors Calvin is well aware of the ethical significance of the covenant idea, but he—the champion of the doctrine of predestination—stresses the sovereignty of God in his covenant-dealing with man. (2) Like his predecessors Calvin shows that the covenant was substantially the same in every phase of the history of salvation. (3) Calvin’s covenant theology is primarily a theology of the Covenant of Grace which is opposed to the ‘damnationis ministerium’ of the Law. It is on this point that Calvin makes his most important contribution to the covenant theology. 

According to Møller, the English Puritans, despite certain increasing tendencies in the thought of William Tyndale (in line with Zürich) to over-emphasize human “deeds” as the condition for God’s fulfilling the covenant with his people, asserted the priority of divine grace in the covenant relationship, and thus the theology of Calvin prevailed. For example, the notes of the Genevan Bible (1560) contain the covenant theology of Calvin, says Møller. But this is not to say that the Puritans simply followed Calvin’s views step for step. William Perkins, among others, following the dictates of Ramist logic, dichotomized the covenant into the covenant of works, which is “the Law, tout court,” and the covenant of grace, which is grounded in Christ and is everlasting and unalterable, and can even be called a testament, for salvation is a divine gift. In any case, Calvin’s theology of grace prevails among the Puritans—though Tyndale’s “cruder covenant teaching,” with its ethical accents, lingers.

---

40 Møller, “Beginnings of Puritan Covenant Theology,” 60-63. Møller further asserts (p. 60) that the two-covenant doctrine of Perkins can be found in virtually “every Continental Calvinist as well.” Robert Letham likewise argues that the covenant of works may well be the product of the Ramist penchant to divide or dichotomize topics, see his “The Fodocus Operum: Some Factors Accounting for Its Development,” Sixteenth Century Journal 14 (1983): 457-467.
among them as well. In fact, insofar as the Puritans allowed the notion that God recompenses obedience with grace (the vow), they came closer to the legalism of medieval Catholicism than they would have thought possible; and here their covenant theology is a departure from Calvin’s project.\textsuperscript{41} It is not clear whether Møller reckons the introduction of the covenant of works as coming under this negative verdict as well.

William K. B. Stoever’s treatment of the covenant of works in Puritan theology, specifically in connection with the antinomian crisis in Massachusetts Bay in the late 1630s, more explicitly challenges Miller’s (and Trinterud’s) portrait. Stoever addresses the materials within the context of what he calls “the dialectic of nature and grace.” The Puritans simultaneously and resolutely affirmed both that creation is God’s own good work and that in being befouled by sin God has set upon a project to redeem and restore the creation, something only possible by God’s initiative and power as a “new creative act.” Thus, “In accordance with the latter affirmation they maintained the absoluteness of salvation by faith alone, the gratuity of regenerating grace, and the sovereignty of God’s will in all phases of redemption.” What this means for Puritan theology, Stoever avers, is that regeneration is taken up in this dialectic in such a way as to preserve “the integrity of the one and the efficiency of the other.”\textsuperscript{42} The mechanism of salvation is according to the dialectic of nature and grace, which is to say, God’s salvific and sovereign initiative in saving fallen humans is presupposed and man is viewed as wholly incapable in himself “of satisfying the conditions of both covenants.” Yet, says Stoever, “covenant theology upheld mankind’s place in the created order by making the covenant of works paradigmatic in both form and content of

\textsuperscript{41} Møller, “Beginnings of Puritan Covenant Theology,” 66-67.

God's redemptive activity.” Standing analysis of the dynamic between grace and condition within the covenant is grace is set forth in these words:

In the covenant of grace, blessedness is contingent upon willing obedience to God's command and upon man's act of faith. God, however, undertakes through Christ to supply the first condition and through infusion of supernatural grace into human faculties to enable individuals to fulfill the second. There is thus a 'sweet concurrence' between grace and natural human activity in regeneration, such that the distinctiveness and proper function of each is preserved and the conditions of salvation established at the creation of the world are satisfied.

The issue has to do with whether “created nature” took on at least an instrumental or mediatorial role in effectual calling. Although Perry Miller set Puritan federal theology in opposition to the predestinarian theology of Calvin, such that the doctrine of the covenant created a place for sincere moral overtures and conditions to apply within the covenant arrangement (as if the Puritans taught that fallen sinners could prepare themselves for divine grace), Stoever contests this portrait. His alternative thesis is that the affirmation of divine predestination and human inability does not entail a denial of created or recreated nature—that is, in restoring and recreating human nature, the human response (as restored by divine grace) is part of the fulfillment of the covenant of grace, and therefore human activity in regeneration is not excluded. Likewise the conditional element in the covenant of grace does not compromise or otherwise circumvent the absolute necessity and priority of divine grace in the work of salvation.

Thus covenant theology (Stoever asserts that there was a wide consensus among the Puritans of England and New England, and of the Continental Reformed as well) embraced the dialectical relationship of human response and activity and God's sovereign actions in the project of salvation. Concretely this means that the covenant of grace requires in form what was required in the covenant of works—namely

---

47 See especially chapter six in 'A Faire and Easie Way to Heaven', 97-118.
"consent and obedience from man." Salvation is not without faith, for example, but faith—a human activity—remains a condition of the covenant and a divine gift. More fundamental than that, all human merit is excluded in the entire work of salvation. "The Protestant sola gratia excluded the possibility that any human act could merit pardon from God."

Meanwhile, Michael McGiffert argues that William Perkins and other Puritan writers developed the doctrine of the covenant of works for the purpose of confirming and defending "the very graciousness of grace." In other words, in moving the Mosaic prescriptions from Sinai to Eden, which included the Law's curse as the negative sanction of the covenant of works, federal theologians were not so much interested in elevating the Law as they were anxiously interested in protecting the gospel. "It is not the Gospel but the Law, thus stripped of grace, that federalism placed at risk." Thus, they were not legalists, asserts McGiffert.

The tough question facing the Puritan federal theologians was how the practice of Law could be brought under the principle of grace so that the graciousness of grace was not compromised. McGiffert challenges the allegation of a number of modern writers—including James B. Torrance, R. T. Kendall, and Holmes Rolston III—namely, that federal theology is a species of legalism, deforming the covenant of grace into a covenant of works. He also challenges the notion that the covenant of works functioned paradigmatically for the entire system of federal theology. McGiffert argues that Puritans of the Perkinsian type

49 Stoeuer, 'A Faire and Easye Way to Heaven', 100.
50 Stoeuer, 'A Faire and Easye Way to Heaven', 110.
52 McGiffert, "Perkinsian Moment of Federal Theology," 134-135. In this connection McGiffert references Stoeuer's 'A Faire and Easye Way to Heaven', pp. 87ff., as among the authors who allege legalism against the Puritan federalist theologians. It is not evident, however, that Stoeuer makes this charge from the pages cited. Moreover, while Stoeuer does view the Puritans as affirming the paradigmatic character of the covenant of works for the system of federal theology, he seems to be correct in this assessment contra McGiffert. But that affirmation need not entail legalism, as we will argue in the body of this dissertation.
were more prone to antinomianism. "Their promotion of their version of the covenant of
works thus may be taken to signify not an ebullience of crude legalism but just the reverse: a
commitment to preserve the purity and gratuity of the Gospel, the freeness of free grace, the
very virtue of God—a commitment that was packed with antinomian potency."

McGiffert views the advocacy of the doctrine of the covenant of works as a case of
utility, with scant biblical support, and no sanction from the church fathers or from
authorities like Calvin and Ursinus. It was "entirely inferential." He accounts for it not as a
studied theological deduction, based on exegetical considerations; on the contrary, its origins
reside "in the character and experience of the minds that germinated it, in the general drift of
the early modern age from prescriptive toward contractual ways of organizing thought, and,
not least, in the structure of covenant theory itself."

As for the doctrine's utility, McGiffert describes it as allowing federal Calvinists "to
justify God's ways with the mass of humankind who were slated for spiritual execution for
violations of the law..." Meanwhile, the covenant of works introduced a contractual
arrangement between God and humans, "with the conditions of a legal quid pro quo
relationship." This kept the legal relationship between God and humanity in its own
sphere, so that the Law and its conditions were unable to threaten the purity of the covenant
of grace. The covenant of works gave "universal force" to the moral law of Sinai, binding all
persons in all places and at all times to its stipulations. McGiffert even refers to the

53 McGiffert, "Perkinsian Moment of Federal Theology," 135-136; also see his article, "From Moses to

54 McGiffert, "Perkinsian Moment of Federal Theology," 137; idem, "Grace and Works: The Rise and


58 McGiffert, "Grace and Works," 501. McGiffert explores the nature of conditionality and the so-called
contractual nature of the covenant of grace in the theology of William Tyndale, arguing that even given
Tyndale's penchant for moralism, his conception of the covenant of grace was not contractual, for the
conditions of the covenant turn out to have meanings that exempt them from the charge of legalism. See
covenant of works as a “device” that was designed to keep the law in its place—that is, within a covenant of its own. The law’s place and power must be checked; legalism must be sabotaged; human merit must be banished. In back of this, asserts McGiffert, is the Puritans’ bent or compulsion to divide everything into antipoles according to Ramist principles and “invest the division with ultimate significance.”

Even though antinomianism was the greater threat to covenant theology, “the thin edge of legalism” lurked nearby inasmuch as covenant members remained under the standards of the moral law and were called to lead a godly life. Precisely at this point conditionality became problematic, for ungodly behavior, “if egregious and incorrigible,” could break the terms of the covenant. The covenant of works enabled English Calvinists, says McGiffert, to keep the law in its place and to “immunize” the evangelical covenant against “contractual infection” and “legalistic contamination.”

When the poisoned bait of conditional merit was put away within the covenant or contract of works . . . the preachers could use the law without fearing its curse in order to press their people to labor for the proofs and benefits of grace. The covenant of works thus served the pursuit of holiness by ensuring the evangelical efficacy of the covenant of grace.

McGiffert’s work stands sharply against Trinterud’s (and Miller’s) project. He believes Trinterud “fundamentally misdirected” scholarship in his analysis and assessment of Puritanism, for among other things he over-emphasized the legalistic dimensions of continental and English federalism. Trinterud also exaggerated the differences between the Rhineland and Geneva, and the Rhineland influence upon Puritanism. McGiffert states, “On the main elements of covenant teaching its originators [in the Rhineland and Geneva] stood

---


as one.\textsuperscript{63} What is more, uniformity and consensus took longer to achieve than Trinterud intimates.\textsuperscript{64} And still more serious, Trinterud wrongly sets up an opposition (a la Miller) between Puritan federalism and Genevan Calvinism, failing to see that the federal theologians were thoroughgoing Calvinists.\textsuperscript{65} However, McGiffert’s own work does not reckon with the exegetical underpinnings of the covenant of works in the idea of the law of nature—an idea Calvin robustly defended, as did the federal theologians.\textsuperscript{66}

John von Rohr, following in the path of Møller, Stoever, and Michael McGiffert, argues that Puritanism during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries faced in two directions. On the one hand, it unashamedly embraced the importance of human responsibility and the element of contingency in man’s relationship with God. Von Rohr views this as the legacy of the implicit voluntarism within Protestantism, evidenced in the expectation that the believer respond in faith and obedience to God’s proclaimed Word. On the other hand, Puritanism inherited early Protestantism’s more explicit emphasis on the sovereignty of God in human affairs, especially in matters of salvation, for human salvation is according to God’s sovereign decree. Von Rohr sees this tension within the biblical materials as well, and so within the subsequent history of the church. But he argues that it is

\textsuperscript{63} McGiffert, “Grace and Works,” 472, and fn. 18.

\textsuperscript{64} McGiffert has demonstrated that not all Puritans were federalists, and not all were Perkinsian federalists. In fact, by the 1640s, federalism turned away from the implicit antinomianism of “the Perkinsian Moment.” See “Perkinsian Moment of Federal Theology,” 137-148.

\textsuperscript{65} McGiffert, “Grace and Works,” 500 fn. 92.

\textsuperscript{66} Calvin makes extensive use of the idea of natural law (cf. Institutes, II.viii.1; III.xix.15); also cf. Bullinger, Decades, II.i (II. p. 194); and the vast secondary literature pertaining to Calvin’s treatment of natural law, much of which is summarized by William Klemppa, “John Calvin on Natural Law,” in Calvin Studies IV, presented at a Colloquium on Calvin Studies at Davidson College and Davidson College Presbyterian Church, Davidson, North Carolina, eds. John H. Leith and W. Stacy Johnson, 1988: 1-24; reprinted in John Calvin and the Churches: A Prism of Reform, ed. Timothy George (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1990), 72-95. Note, too, that Calvin evidences the rudimentary features of a doctrine of the covenant of works when he argues that in the paradisal situation humans, by a proper exercise of free will, could attain, beyond “earthly life,” “eternal life” or “eternal bliss” (Institutes, I.xv.8). Examples of federal writers who clearly appeal to the importance of natural law include Francis Roberts, Mysterium & medulla Biblicorum: the mysterium and marrow of the Bible, viz. God’s covenants with man in the first Adam before the fall, and in the last Adam, Jesus Christ, after the fall, from the beginning to the end of the world: unfolded & illustrated in positive aphorisms & their explanation (London, 1657), 685-689; 714; Turretin, Institutes, XI.i.1-23; and many others.
even more pronouncedly evident within sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Puritanism. In light of this analysis, von Rohr’s thesis is that the Puritan’s “theological employment of the covenant theme, especially in its central figure, the covenant of grace, became a means of drawing together into fruitful and structured interrelationship these conflicting perspectives on the way of salvation.”

Thus, for von Rohr, the covenant helped the Calvinistic Puritans to cope with the relationship between divine sovereignty and human responsibility, being able to preserve a devotion to God’s grace as expressed in the doctrine of predestination while also emphasizing gospel piety and the Christian life as a lived response to God’s Word. “So the Calvinist heritage of sovereign grace was not compromised through the urging of human participation and agency, nor was that human responsibility rendered insignificant by the proclamation of God’s predestinating power.” Rather, writes von Rohr, “Both can be see as incorporated into the totality of God’s gracious covenanting with humanity—so felt these Puritan divines—for that covenant is both conditional and absolute.”

Von Rohr’s thesis, then, represents a significant departure from Miller’s and Trinterud’s portraits of covenant theology within Puritanism, for he is not denying the Calvinistic and predestinarian character of the federal project. Moreover, while the theology of Zürich displays a different emphasis concerning the human role in the covenant than what Calvin sets forth, that does not add up to a violent contrast between Rhineland theology and Genevan theology. Having said that, it is not surprising that Von Rohr challenges the view that Puritan federalism understands the covenant as a contract. "Where covenant participation is gift as well as task and religious experience as much as legal duty, a

---

different perspective prevails,” which means that “both the predestinarianism and the pietism of Puritan awareness can be seen as refusing a contractual *quid pro quo.*”

Von Rohr thus argues pointedly against the presentations of R. T. Kendall, Richard L. Greaves, and J. Wayne Baker regarding the doctrine of predestination in Puritan theology. He asserts that the Rhineland Reformers championed the doctrine of divine predestination, and the Rhineland contribution to Puritan thought included not just a particular conception of the covenant but also a conception of divine election. In short, a bilateral conception of the covenant does not exclude an Augustinian doctrine of predestination. Baker, for example, argues that Bullinger’s doctrine of predestination was single, not double, affirming predestination to life but denying a predestination to death—that is, reprobation. But von Rohr observes, “The fact that predestination is single rather than double does not alter its importance, for single predestination is itself election to salvation involving the necessity and certainty of divine saving act.” Single predestination is still predestination, “God’s determination of some to salvation by divine decree and act.”

Even more significant is von Rohr’s treatment of “covenant” and “testament.” Many scholars have represented Rhineland federalism as embracing covenant but excluding testament, while the theology of Geneva denies covenant and affirms testament—the former being bilateral, the latter unilateral. The challenge is then laid at the door of Puritanism to sort out and choose between two incompatible theologies. Von Rohr refuses this dichotomy. He believes it is dubious to assert a serious conflict between Zürich bilateralism and Genevan unilateralism. Both remained present within Puritanism. And in holding to a bilateral conception of the covenant, Puritan federalists did not abandon the ultimacy of

---

God's sovereign action in the covenant relationship. Thus, von Rohr's thesis asserts something of a union between the respective conceptions. "For the mainstream of Puritanism, therefore, it would appear that basically the bilateral and the unilateral were conjoined, human responsibility and divine sovereignty were unitedly maintained, and the covenant of grace was seen as both conditional and absolute."  

Lyle A. Bierma's work on continental federal theology even more strongly challenges the "two traditions" thesis of Miller, Trinterud, Greaves, and Baker (among others). Bierma asserts, "For all its popularity . . . this 'two traditions' thesis has never been very well documented," and in fact "it will not hold up under a closer scrutiny of the primary texts." He treats Zwingli and Bullinger as representatives of the "Zurich-Rhinelanders" and Calvin and Olevianus as proponents of the "Genevans." In short, Bierma argues that "Zwingli never describes the covenant relationship in such a way that God's blessings of salvation depend upon human fulfillment of certain conditions," as if the burden of fulfilling the conditions of the covenant rested with human beings. To participate in God's covenant blessing is according to divine election; and while faith is the way in which humans respond to the covenant, it is "an unearned gift of God bestowed on his elect, and works of obedience are the natural outgrowth of that faith." As for Bullinger, while it is undeniable that Zwingli's successor affirmed the bilateral character of the covenant, this must be rightly defined. For while it is true that the covenant calls persons to responsibility, that is, that they trust and worship God alone, it is "God who fulfills that responsibility in us and through us." Faith is altogether a divine gift imparted to the elect, and then, for Bullinger, "the

---

73 von Rohr, Covenant of Grace in Puritan Thought, 32-33.  
74 von Rohr, Covenant of Grace in Puritan Thought, 33.  
76 Bierma, "Federal Theology in the Sixteenth Century: Two Traditions?", 310.  
77 Bierma, "Federal Theology in the Sixteenth Century: Two Traditions?", 312.
benefits of God’s covenant grace do not ultimately depend on faith and obedience;” rather, “they include faith and obedience.”78

Bierma next treats Calvin’s view of the covenant. He disputes the consensus position of Trinterud, Möller, and Greaves, all of whom reduce Calvin’s concept to “a divine promise.” Bierma asserts that these authors have only half constructed Calvin’s doctrine, for Calvin’s position is much more than “a unilateral divine promise.” Calvin explicitly affirms the language of “mutual covenant” involving “mutual obligation,” as well as the idea of faith and obedience as requisite for meeting the condition of covenant.79 But like Bullinger and others, the fulfillment of the covenant relationship does not rest in the strength or ability of the human party of the covenant, for God works in covenant members what he requires of them. Baker’s thesis fails at this point as well, for although Bullinger held to a doctrine of single predestination in distinction from Calvin’s doctrine of double predestination, with respect to divine salvation the doctrine amounts to the same thing, for the reprobate or non-elect are still fallen and disabled by sin, incapable of true belief except God work faith in their hearts—something he does for the elect alone. “The possibility of fulfilling the condition of the covenant, therefore, is really no greater in Bullinger’s view of predestination than in Calvin’s.”80

Olevianus is the last theologian Bierma considers.81 He offers a portrait of Olevianus that is more nuanced than that presented by Baker. While it is true that Olevianus sometimes presents the covenant as a divine oath, “an unconditional, unilateral testament,” and as a “promise of reconciliation through Christ,” at other times he speaks of the covenant as “a

78 Bierma, “Federal Theology in the Sixteenth Century: Two Traditions?”, 313.
79 Bierma, “Federal Theology in the Sixteenth Century: Two Traditions?”, 313-14. Bierma cites Calvin’s commentaries on Psa. 103:18; Gen. 17:2; Rom. 9:4; Exod. 24:5; Psa. 132:12, and his sermons on Deut. 4:44-49 and 26:16-19; also Institutes, III.xxi.6.
80 Bierma, “Federal Theology in the Sixteenth Century: Two Traditions?”, 316.
81 Bierma presents an extended analysis of Olevianus’s view of the covenant in his book German Calvinism in the Confessional Age: The Covenant Theology of Caspar Olevianus (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1996), 63-105. The first form of this work was as a doctoral dissertation (Duke University, 1980).
bilateral commitment between God and the believer." There is a "mutual coming to terms," with mutual promises. And in reference to the covenant God made with Abraham Olevianus explicitly uses both the language of "promise," confirmed in Christ's sacrifice, and of a "two-side Bund und Freundschaft." In fact, in Olevianus's doctrine of the covenant, there is the constant interplay between the promise of reconciliation in Christ, which is a "monopleuric divine oath," and the reconciliation itself worked out in the life of the believer through faith, which is a "dipleuric divine-human pledge." Like Calvin, Olevianus readily uses the term promissio, but also like Calvin he is not adverse to using the term conditio. The covenant God establishes with Abraham is not, however, one founded upon equal partners with equal abilities—that is, it is not a mutual contract in the strict sense, for the human party is incapable of meeting the condition demanded of him. All of this means that in covenanting with sinners, God does not establish the covenant in any way through their ability or strength or merit to meet its conditions. "The fountain of salvation flows only in one direction—from God to us." God, then, fulfills the condition of the covenant in and through the human party, creating faith and obedience in them.\(^{82}\)

Bierma therefore concludes that there are "no substantial differences in the way the covenant was understood in the Zurich-Rhineland and Genevan theological traditions." In fact, "all the sixteenth-century Reformed covenant theologians—Zwingli, Bullinger, Calvin, Olevianus, Musculus, Ursinus, Perkins, etc.—recognized both a unilateral and a bilateral dimension to the covenant of grace within the context of a monergistic soteriology."\(^{84}\)

In a separate article, published in 1990, Bierma examines Heppe's thesis that early Reformed covenant theology functioned as a mitigating force against the harsh

---

\(^{82}\) Bierma, "Federal Theology in the Sixteenth Century: Two Traditions?", 317-19. In other writings Bierma explores whether Olevianus affirmed other covenants from Scripture besides the covenant of grace, see his "Covenant or Covenants in the Theology of Olevianus?" Calvin Theological Journal 22 (1987): 228-250; idem, German Calvinism in the Confessional Age, 107-140; also see idem, "Law and Grace in Ursinus' Doctrine of the Natural Covenant: A Reappraisal," in Protestant Scholasticism: Essays in Reassessment, 96-110.

\(^{83}\) Bierma, "Federal Theology in the Sixteenth Century: Two Traditions?", 319-20.

\(^{84}\) Bierma, "Federal Theology in the Sixteenth Century: Two Traditions?", 320-21.
predestinarian theology of Calvin and especially Theodore Beza. Olevianus emerges as an interesting test-case for Heppe’s paradigm inasmuch scholars are not agreed whether Olevianus should be categorized as a proponent of early federal theology or as an advocate of Calvin’s severe double predestinarianism. Bierma argues that while Heppe was correct to identify Olevianus as “a central figure in the development of German covenant theology,” there is nothing in Olevianus’s theology that supports the notion that “the covenant of grace serves to temper the doctrine of double predestination.”

85 Jürgen Moltmann’s portrayal of Olevianus as a “Ramist covenantalist” in opposition to the “Aristotelian-Bezan predestinarians” of his time is likewise off the mark, says Bierma. For the covenant of grace “in no way mollifies the double decree of election and reprobation.”

Moreover, to whatever degree Olevianus embraced Ramism, he did not cease to advocate and teach Aristotelian logic. In short,

Olevianus was neither a single-predestinarian federalist nor simply a double-predestinarian testamentalist. Though a federalist, he was also a double-predestinarian. Though a testamentalist, he also held to a doctrine of bilateral covenant. Though methodologically a Ramist, he was also an Aristotelian logician. Though very practical and personal in his theology, he was much more of a dogmatician than a heilsgeschichtliche theologian. Olevianus simply cannot be placed into one theological camp or the other.

87

Bierma’s work, then, stands in steadfast opposition to the “two traditions” thesis, and offers a alternative approach to the materials that signals the essential compatibility between divine election and the doctrine of the covenant within Reformed theology.

Mention must also be made of David A. Weir’s 1984 dissertation on the origins of federal theology, which was formally published in 1990. Weir defines federal theology as “a specific type of covenant theology, in that the covenant holds together every detail of the theological system, and is characterized by a prelapsarian and postlapsarian covenant schema.


87 Bierma, “Role of Covenant Theology in Early Reformed Orthodoxy,” 461.
centred around the first Adam and the second Adam, who is Jesus Christ.”\textsuperscript{88} The covenant that God made with Adam prior to the fall is virtually identical to the Mosaic covenant and emphasizes “conditionality,” since obedience is required in order to inherent future blessing. Moreover, being a covenant established with man at creation, it remains “binding upon all men at all times in all places.” Weir does not recognize an eschatology as being built into this covenant, for he asserts, “If Adam had not fallen, his children would have been obligated to keep this Edenic covenant.”\textsuperscript{89} Weir also understands Calvinistic federalism to affirm the primacy of the prelapsarian covenant in God’s relationship with man.\textsuperscript{90}

Weir’s principal concern is to trace out the origins of federal theology in the sixteenth century, and in doing so to explain why the introduction of the idea of a covenant of works, the distinguishing trait of this theology, was everywhere accepted among the Reformed in the next century. He limits the historical timeframe which he treats to 1560 to 1590. “It is during this time that the transition from the Old Testament/New Testament (or old covenant/new covenant) schema to the covenant of works/covenant of grace schema occurred.” As Weir further explains, “The old and new covenants as found in the Old and New Testaments were considered to be one covenant of grace, and the new idea is that of the prelapsarian covenant with Adam.”\textsuperscript{91} After this period, the dual covenant motif “flowered everywhere in Reformed theology, and it is impossible to draw historical connections after that time.”\textsuperscript{92}

Weir detects a distinct shift in Reformed theology between the First Helvetic Confession (1536) and the Westminster Larger Catechism (1647). Whereas the former states that the entire purpose of Scripture is that humans might know that God is gracious and

\textsuperscript{88} Weir, Origins of the Federal Theology, 3.
\textsuperscript{89} Weir, Origins of the Federal Theology, 4.
\textsuperscript{90} Weir, Origins of the Federal Theology, 4.
\textsuperscript{91} Weir, Origins of the Federal Theology, 35.
\textsuperscript{92} Weir, Origins of the Federal Theology, 36.
kind to them, made most manifest through Christ his Son, something we receive by faith alone and express in love to our neighbors, the latter teaches that the chief purpose of Scripture is to teach humans what they should believe concerning God and what duty God requires of them, these two ideas forming the divisions of the catechism itself. Weir argues that the First Helvetic Confession “teaches that the Scriptures principally expound grace,” while the Westminster Larger Catechism teaches the Bible principally expounds “duty.” This shift in emphasis, Weir asserts, “is largely the product of the federal theology, and its emphasis on the fundamental relationship between God and man as found in the Garden of Eden, articulated in the covenant of works, and characterized by Adamic duty which is binding upon Adam and all his descendants.”

But the seeds of covenant theology are not planted in the soil of ethics or morals, asserts Weir. The origins of federalism are rooted principally in a question that plagued the Reformed churches on the Continent and the British Isles, and later in New England, namely the question of predestination. “The rise of the federal theology ... came primarily as a result of questions about God, his nature, and his relationship to man and the universe.” Weir believes that when theologians like Theodore Beza moved the doctrine of predestination from the place it held in Calvin’s theological enterprise, that is, within doctrine of salvation (a place where it was treated as an article of faith), to the doctrine of God and the divine decrees, it took on ominous implications, for the danger was magnified that God is to be held responsible for sin—Adam being destined to fall in fulfillment of divine election and reprobation. According to Weir, “The prelapsarian covenant with Adam was a means by which orthodox Calvinists of the late sixteenth century, some of whom adopted the Bezan form of explaining predestination, could maintain the tension between

---

93 See First Helvetic Confession, article 5.
94 See Westminster Larger Catechism, Q/A 5.
96 Weir, Origins of the Federal Theology, 158.
prelapsarian Adamic human responsibility and divine sovereignty.\textsuperscript{97} Thus related to this was that of theodicy—with the scheme of the covenant of works providing a clear account of human responsibility and failure.\textsuperscript{98} Moreover, in saying this, Weir does not believe that federal theologians were motivated from any clear Scriptural witness in support of the doctrine. “None of the sixteenth-century commentaries on Genesis 1-3 mention the prelapsarian covenant until after 1590.” The doctrine did not arise from biblical exegesis or a careful study of the Scriptures, avers Weir; rather, it arose from “systematic, dogmatic thinking.” In effect, it provided (at least a partial) remedy to a problem.\textsuperscript{99}

This is not to deny, however, that covenant theology had significant implications for other aspects of Reformed dogmatic thinking and ecclesiastical life.

The federal theology . . . did have implications, and in the area of covenant thinking these are sometimes more important and more far-reaching than its origins. The theology of the sacraments, the relationship between Church and State, the morphology of conversion, the problem of Pelagianism, the doctrine of creation and the subsequent rise of science, the celebration of the Christian sabbath, the doctrine of justification, and Christian ethics are all areas in which the federal theology would leave its mark during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.\textsuperscript{100}

For Weir, federal theology is essentially a form of legalism, but the motivation behind its development was to mitigate the rigors of Bezan predestinarianism. In that assessment Weir’s thesis has much in common with the analysis of Heinrich Heppe, J. A. Dorner, George P. Fisher, and William Adams Brown.\textsuperscript{101}

\begin{footnotes}
\end{footnotes}
The conclusions of this school of thought, however, have been strongly contested by Richard A. Muller in his article on the covenant of works in seventeenth-century Reformed theology.\textsuperscript{102} Muller demonstrates that theological formulation among seventeenth-century Reformed theologians did not require a definitive proof text in every case; rather, certain doctrines were constructed from a combination of Scriptural texts and related biblical loci. He also demonstrates that these theologians exercised more exegetical care, and exhibited greater sensitivity to the nuances of biblical language and syntax, than many scholars represent them to display or as being capable in their work.\textsuperscript{103} As Muller observes, “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 discussion offered by Witsius indicates that all covenants between God and human beings are founded on divine initiative and are, in that sense, monopleuric.”\textsuperscript{104} However, once established, the covenants have a certain dipleuric dimension; there is a legitimate mutuality which does not subvert divine election. As Muller asserts, “It is not the case . . . that covenant language cuts against election and grace and that covenant doctrine either relaxes the strict doctrine of the decrees or is itself rigidified by contact with the doctrine of predestination during the scholastic era of Reformed theology.”\textsuperscript{105}

Muller also shows how the covenant of works idea was rooted in the natural order (or creation) and natural law—all of which was grounded in God’s sovereign goodness and benevolence. There is no antithesis as such between a legal relationship existing between God and humans at creation and that same relationship being founded upon God’s favor or

\textsuperscript{102} Muller, “Covenant of Works and the Stability of Divine Law,” 75-100; also see his article, “Perkin’s \textit{A Golden Chain},” 69-81.

\textsuperscript{103} Muller, “Covenant of Works and the Stability of Divine Law,” 75-76; 80-87.

\textsuperscript{104} Muller, “Covenant of Works and the Stability of Divine Law,” 86.

\textsuperscript{105} Muller, “Covenant of Works and the Stability of Divine Law,” 87.
graciousness toward them. Meanwhile, the covenant of works schema allowed Reformed theologians to propose an alternative to the Augustinian accounting for the transmission of Adam’s sin to his posterity. That all sinned “in Adam,” as the apostle states, “could now be interpreted federally, with profound ramifications for Christology and soteriology.” Muller further shows that the doctrine of the covenant of works did not originate from exegetical conclusions drawn from the early chapters of Genesis or from Hosea 6:7 (“like Adam [or man] they have transgressed the covenant”). A large collection of texts, with theological implications, gave support to the doctrine—perhaps most decisive was Romans 5 and the representation model presented there, with Christ as the antitype of Adam. But Muller is most concerned to demonstrate how the law of God stands prior to the reality of sin and the formal establishment of any covenant. The law is twofold, consisting in the “law of nature,” something implanted into all persons and binding upon them, and the “symbolic law,” concerning the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Affirming the above, however, does not imply that divine grace doesn’t ground God’s relationship with humans, since divine condescension is required if any relationship is to exist between God and finite creatures. In other words, rather than placing God’s perfections in competition with each other, the federal writers opted for “the ultimate parity of the divine attributes.” Given that, it is false to assert (as some writers do) that Calvin viewed the prelapsarian situation as characterized by divine graciousness, to the virtual exclusion of any duties or obligations on Adam’s part, while the federal theologians accented the fulfillment of God’s law to the exclusion of divine grace.

Muller states that the covenant of works was constructed by federal theologians “for the sake of undergirding the Reformation principle of salvation by grace alone.” In other

---


107 Muller, “Covenant of Works and the Stability of Divine Law” 90, 94.

words, it is a doctrine that repudiates legalism. Although certain critics pit divine love against divine law, according to seventeenth-century federal theology, these are falsely opposed to one another. It is likewise a mistake, according to the federal writers, to set up an antithesis between nature and law; in fact, without the priority of law, there can be no sin, for sin is the violation of law. In fact, the law enjoins love. Natural law, then, is inseparable from God’s goodness and love. Moreover, if law and love (or grace) could rightly be opposed to each other, such that where there is love or grace there can be no law, then the covenant of grace and the nature of Christ’s atonement would be open to assault.\textsuperscript{109}

Lastly, Muller demonstrates that federal theology, in affirming the stability of divine law throughout the history of God’s relationship with humans, points entirely away from a legalistic conception of salvation. God does not overthrow the requirements of the covenant of works in the face of human sinfulness—as if he might have stipulated a less perfect obedience as the result of sin and the condition for salvation. Instead of legalism, the dual covenant schema points to “the fullness of Christ’s work of satisfaction and to the totally unmerited character of the salvation provided by grace through faith to believers.” Christ fulfills the requirements of the covenant of works, and that altogether, for sinners. Meanwhile, the doctrine of the \textit{pactum salutis}, along with the priority of promise over condition, actually testifies to “the priority of the gracious divine will over law, of the divine intention of fellowship with the creature over the stipulation of conditions.” What is more, “The purported legalism of the continuing covenant of works as presented in the demands of the law is nothing less than the permanence of the original divine intention to ground fellowship in the nature of God and in the \textit{imago Dei}.”\textsuperscript{110}

\footnote{Muller, “The Covenant of Works and the Stability of Divine Law,” 93-94, 95.}

\footnote{Muller, “The Covenant of Works and the Stability of Divine Law,” 96-97, 99.}
Muller’s analysis stands at sharp odds with the “two traditions” thesis, even as it stands at sharp odds with certain theological critics of federalism, namely J. B. Torrance, Holmes Rolston III, and David N. J. Poole, whose assessment we will consider below.

In concluding this part of our survey, we made brief mention of Cornelis P. Venema’s study of Bullinger’s doctrine of predestination. Although Venema’s study does not focus upon federal theology as such, he does carefully address the “two traditions” thesis that numerous scholars assume to be valid, and in treating Bullinger’s view of predestination, he also considers the Rhenish Reformer’s treatment of the covenant. Responding especially to J. Wayne Baker, Venema argues in line with Richard Muller and Lyle Bierma that there are not two distinct Reformed traditions within Reformed theology. He demonstrates that Bullinger’s doctrine of predestination was thoroughly monergistic, even if singular in orientation versus Calvin’s double predestinarianism. What is more, it was not a “conditional predestinarianism.”

Given that the Zürich Reformer’s doctrine of salvation was monergistic, Venema argues that Bullinger’s doctrine of the covenant in no way compromised the Augustinian doctrine of divine election; and though Bullinger accented the conditionality of the covenant in certain contexts and the bilateral or diplegiric nature of the covenant of grace in certain aspects, again, this did nothing to compromise the altogether gracious character of divine salvation. Venema further shows how Baker misconstrues Calvin’s doctrine of the covenant, failing to reckon with the way Calvin and other Reformed writers could speak of the covenant in both unilateral and bilateral ways, and view faith as both a divine gift and a human obligation.

* * * * *


Thus far in our survey of the literature surrounding federal theology, we note that much of the scholarship assumes the validity of the “two traditions” approach to Reformed theology as that theology came to maturity and further development in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. However, while some scholars view these two traditions as standing in opposition to one another on questions of predestination, covenant and their relationship, others argue for a more harmonious integration of the two traditions, such that the accents of each tradition were assimilated and unified. Still other scholars challenge the “two traditions” approach in toto, and instead argue that the double emphasis upon covenant and election is to varying degrees a common feature of Reformed theology virtually from its inception. In any case, these two accents do not produce two traditions; for divine election was never denied by German Reformed theology, despite Melanchthon’s influence, or by the Rhenish Reformers, with Bullinger’s doctrine of single predestination, and the dimpleuric character of the covenant was affirmed along with its testamentary features by Calvin and those who were influenced by him.

2. Theological Assessments of Federal Theology

In treating federalism in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, some writers have treated the materials less historically and offered a more overt theological evaluation of them. For example, in his book, The Structure of Divine Society, F. W. Dillistone argues that federal theologians corrupted the covenant idea, as expressed in Calvin, transforming it into a formal, legal, and contractual arrangement. According to Dillistone, this sapped the doctrine of the covenant of its biblical vitality and creativity. Inasmuch as it was constricted into a legal contract, deadly consequences for religion were the result. “Once the idea is accepted that a Covenant is in its essence an affair of strict conditions—if you will do something, I will do something—the heart of the Gospel has been lost.”13 Why? Because the biblical model, according to Dillistone, is that of the dialectic between law and gospel as

the one and only way “the One Personal Living God” deals with humans at all times and under all circumstances both “in judgment and in grace.” Meanwhile, says Dillistone, according to federal theology’s conception of the covenant of grace, though faith is a divine gift to the elect, there is no longer “the possibility of man’s personal response in faith”—that is to say, “There is no real meeting and hence again no real covenant.” Rather, covenant has become “a *deus ex machina*,” ceasing even to be a contract, automatically bestowing life and salvation to the elect. The law-gospel dialectic is exchanged for a dichotomy between “Contract and Compulsion”—the covenant of works being a contract that man will receive life on condition; the covenant of grace giving life by compulsion.

One of the most outspoken critics of seventeenth-century federal theology has been James B. Torrance. He assesses this movement as a serious aberration from Calvin’s theology, introducing the notion of conditions to man’s relationship with God, as if the covenant were more of a contract than a covenant, and as if the covenant parties are mutually obligated to one another—each needing to meet certain conditions for some future blessing to result.

Torrance argues that God’s covenant with humans is unconditional, and therefore he sets the language of love against the language of contract. “There is no such thing as conditional love in God or in man, and that fact is enshrined in the theological concept of ‘a covenant of love’. It is precisely this which makes a covenant so different from a *contract*.” For Torrance, then, a covenant must be radically opposed to a contract; and God’s dealings with humans are covenantal, never contractual. “The *God of the Bible is a Covenant-God and not a*”

---


contract-god.” Torrance believes that his own view is Calvin’s as well. Everything in the project of redemption has been completed or accomplished by Christ in the flesh. The work of the Holy Spirit in bringing persons to faith is “to make us cognitively aware (cognitio) of what we already are in Christ (Comm. on John 10,8ff.).”

In affirming the unconditionality of the covenant, Torrance makes the commonplace claim that God’s kindly disposition toward sinners is without any consideration of their merit or worth before him. However, he also asserts that God’s covenant with humans is “unconditional in the costly claims it makes upon us.” Apparently what Torrance means by this remark is that the claims were costly for God in giving Christ for sinners, but the claims upon sinners are unconditional—and thus not costly to them. Having stated matters in this way, Torrance admits that “cheap grace” and “antinomianism” lurk nearby—and both must be avoided. But the larger concern for Torrance is the problem of conditional covenant, conditional grace, and legalism. For legalism turns God’s gracious covenant into a contract. Whereas the biblical model places indicatives prior to imperatives, contract religion—that is, legalism—reverses the order and places imperatives ahead of indicatives. Without any documentation, Torrance claims that seventeenth century theology, due to the desire for civil and religious liberty, led to “contractual ways of thinking about God’s relation to men, and legalistic interpretations of Calvinism which were to leave an unhappy legacy in much Scottish religion, [and] which was to disturb many of Scotland’s ablest theologians in the years to come.”

---

118 Torrance, “Calvin and Puritanism in England and Scotland,” 268 fn. 9; idem, “Covenant or Contract?”, 56.
120 Torrance, “Calvin and Puritanism in England and Scotland,” 269-270.
Torrance believes that the entire project of federal theology is "built upon a deep-seated confusion between a covenant and a contract," which is nothing less than "a failure to recognise that the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ is a covenant-God and not a contract-God." This isn't to deny, writes Torrance, that a covenant embraces obligations, promises, and warnings. "But the obligations of the grace are not conditions of grace, and it is false in Christian theology to articulate moral obligation in contractual terms." The problem with this scheme is that it makes law prior to grace, whereas the biblical picture, according to Torrance, is the reverse. Grace is prior to law; and this is the case not only with respect to human redemption, but also creation. The "grammar of creation" is that of grace, which means the two covenant schema is altogether foreign to the Bible, even as it is foreign to Calvin's theology.

Torrance's most fundamental critique of federal Calvinism is that it is not a species of (Barthian) universalism. He views it as erroneous to assert that God relates to all people with justice but to some people with love or grace. This makes the attribute of justice to be more primary than God's attribute of love. What is more, federalism sets up "a radical dichotomy between the sphere of Nature and the sphere of Grace, of natural law and the Gospel, with the result that the relationship between the Church and the world, Church and State, is no longer understood Christologically as in the Greek Fathers and basically in Calvin and Knox, but in terms of Gospel and natural law." This is to sink back into the medieval dichotomy where grace not only presupposes nature but is necessary for its perfection. Meanwhile with the rise of federalism, argues Torrance, we see the simultaneous emphasis upon double

---

121 Torrance, "Calvin and Puritanism in England and Scotland," 271; idem, "Covenant or Contract?", 66.

122 Torrance, "Calvin and Puritanism in England and Scotland," 272. Torrance cites Calvin's Institutio II.ix.4 as proving that this was Calvin's position as well. In fact, this citation offers virtually a mirror portrait of what characterized seventeenth-century federalism, as will be demonstrated in the body of this dissertation. Also see Torrance, "Strengths and Weaknesses of the Westminster Theology," p. 49, where the same points are argued.

123 Torrance, "Strengths and Weaknesses of the Westminster Theology," 47; idem, "Covenant or Contract?", 68-69.
predestination wherein “election precedes grace,” such that Christ’s person and work are “subordinated to the doctrine of the decrees.” Now the project of redemption is reduced to the execution of the decrees for the salvation of the elect. The most prominent practical and pastoral issue becomes determining whether one is among the elect or not; hence the “practical syllogism” (*syllogismus practicus*) occupies center stage in Puritan theology. Against Calvin and the early Reformers, with the emergence of federalism (in line with the supralapsarianism of Beza, Gomarus, Perkins, Samuel Rutherford and the dominant Puritan tradition), faith becomes a “reflex” act, looking for evidences in oneself for his or her salvation, or tokens of being elect.\(^{124}\)

This federal Calvinism, according to Torrance, received confessional status among the Reformed, at least in a milder form, in the Westminster Confession (1647).\(^{125}\) One of the major weaknesses of these documents, avers Torrance, is precisely the federal theology found within them. Although the doctrine of God as formulated and depicted in the Westminster Confession there is clear evidence that an Augustinian conception of God prevails—God is sovereign and God is free—nonetheless the confession fails in that it stresses that God’s *will* is sovereign and free versus teaching that God’s *being* is freedom. The Being of God means that he is “a God of Love whose freedom is always the freedom of his love.” The principal problem with federalism, then, with its conception of double predestination, is that “God is loving *toward* some men but not essentially *in his Being*.” This scheme gives us an “arbitrary God” and a “contract God.” In short, “The federal scheme has abandoned the Irenaean doctrine of recapitulation of all things in Christ,” and has adopted instead “a Western Nature-Grace model.”\(^{126}\) As part of the network of the western


theological tradition, federal Calvinism views grace as too much separated from Christ, who merely purchases benefits or "graces" for sinners, with the dominant idea becoming how to obtain grace. Similar ideas relate to grace as something quantitative, being for some (the elect) but not for all (the reprobate)—and even then grace is bestowed upon the elect according to medieval notions of merit. What is obscured in federal theology, the Westminster Confession being a case in point, is that God’s grace means "God giving himself in love in Christ, and doing for us in Christ what we cannot do for ourselves." Instead of a Christological focus, the accent is anthropological, as if grace is merely "the God-given answer to human need." ¹²⁷ "The whole focus of attention moves away from what Christ has done for us and for all men, to what we have to do IF we would be (or know that we are) in covenant with God."¹²⁸

"The very distinction [between a covenant of works and a covenant of grace] implies the confusion between a covenant and a contract—the one Latin word foedus meaning both and hence obscuring the distinction." In fact, what is fundamentally in error in the federal system is that grace is impoverished, for there is

a shift of emphasis from what God has so freely and unconditionally done for all men in Christ, to a more subjective interest in what we have to do—to our need for repentance, personal covenanted, obedience, subjective grounds for assurance, closing with Christ, signing the covenants, keeping the sabbath, a preoccupation with election and the outward evidences of election.¹²⁹

Yet Torrance also acknowledges in another place that the conditions of the covenant are accomplished by Christ on behalf of the elect. Nonetheless the entire scheme of a covenant of works "implies that God is a contract-God, and denies that God is related to all

¹²⁸ Torrance, "Covenant or Contract?", 69.
¹²⁹ Torrance, "Covenant or Contract?", 70.
men in Love (Agape).” Torrance thinks he is contrasting Calvin’s doctrine with seventeenth-century federalism when he writes

For Calvin, all God’s dealings with men are those of grace, both in Creation and in Redemption. They flow from the loving heart of the Father. The two poles of his thought are grace and glory—from grace to glory. There has been only one eternal covenant of grace promised in the Old Testament and fulfilled in Christ. ‘Old’ and ‘New’ do not mean two covenants but two forms of the one eternal covenant—the central theme of Book Two of the Institutes.¹³¹

Torrance’s reading of Calvin can be contested at numerous points, even as his reading of Reformed federalism is subject to serious disputation.

The most vehement opponent of covenant theology in North America probably has been Holmes Rolston III. Rolston scores covenant theology for introducing a dual covenant formulation, especially its notion of a covenant of works. This covenant, says Rolston, is “based on divine law and justice; it is a legal, in contrast to an evangelical, covenant.”¹³² While Rolston acknowledges that federal writers spoke of merit ex pacto, he believes that the locution “covenant of works” had a “very deadening effect on anything said about grace” in connection with this covenant. Inasmuch as the covenant of works cannot be abolished and is established for perpetuity means that God fundamentally deals with humans on the basis of “eternal principles of justice” that are still in force.¹³³ Thus, even though God also institutes the covenant of grace for man’s salvation, the whole theological enterprise of federal theology “remains colored by the primal covenant.” The covenant of works “is the polestar by which we traverse all religious terrain; it fixes the coordinates of our theological geography.”¹³⁴ What is to be rejected at root is the notion that man’s primal relationship with God is that of law and justice, of demand and reward, of legal requirements and conditions

¹³¹ Torrance, “Covenant or Contract?”, 62.
¹³³ Rolston, John Calvin versus the Westminster Confession, 17-19.
¹³⁴ Rolston, John Calvin versus the Westminster Confession, 21-22.
instead of God's irrevocable love and grace. Rolston also argues, given the primacy of the covenant of works, that Reformed anthropology is locked into a "concept of duty," which again is a theme alien to Calvin. The Westminster Confession, Rolston maintains, sets forth the scheme: "law, law broken, then grace," which is contrary to Calvin's vision, namely "grace, grace lost in ingratitude, and grace restored."

The work of Dillistone, Torrance, and Rolston has not gone uncontested. These writers have met opponents in Donald MacLeod, Paul Helm, Andrew T. B. McGowan, David B. McWilliams, Rowland S. Ward, Cornelis P. Venema, and Richard A. Muller. Generally speaking, these opponents believe it is more accurate to talk about "Calvin and the Calvinists" versus "Calvin against the Calvinist." Muller's work, which we have already considered, is the most incisive in this regard. McWilliams show that a particular set of

---

135 Rolston argues this point in his own (and in our judgment skewed) exposition of Calvin's theology in chapter two, *John Calvin versus the Westminster Confession*, 23-37.


theological assumptions, derived from Karl Barth, dictate Torrance's and Rolston's analysis and evaluation of federal theology. Venema's article likewise demonstrates the Barthian presuppositions in back of the Torrance-Rolston analysis; he also refutes various caricatures of the covenant of works from a variety other authors. Helm offers a case for continuity between Calvin and federalist theologians, mostly by demonstrating how Calvin's theology has the same ingredients and theological assumptions as federalism.

One of the most penetrating essays written on the doctrine of the covenant in Reformed theology, however, remains Geerhardus Vos's rectoral address by that title. Vos argues that the "kernel" of the doctrinal of the covenant of works resides in the "representation principle" which can be found "in the oldest Reformed theology." Wherever this "Reformed principle" was applied, federalism emerged, which accounts for its universal development in the Reformed schools. Equally important is Vos's observation that the doctrine of the covenant of works, or federalism's twofold covenant doctrine, rests largely upon one's understanding of Adam in his original state, for one's view on this matter brings with it an eschatological perspective that in turn, given the fall into sin, also has important ramifications for soteriology.139

A different line of theological assessment is presented by those who accuse Reformed federalism of yielding to voluntarism in one form or another.

R. T. Kendall, for example, like others, views federal theology as a serious departure from Calvin's project; but Kendall sizes up this departure as rooted in voluntaristic notions of faith. Thus Kendall's immediate interest is to examine the "seat" of faith, whether it is located in the understanding or in the will, and then in connection with this he addresses several other issues, namely whether in the ordo salutis faith precedes repentance (or vice versa), whether assurance of salvation may be experienced by a direct act versus a reflex act

of faith, and whether the doctrine of temporary faith undermines assurance, especially when that assurance is grounded in one's sanctification. These issues, however, are explored by noting the negative developments via Beza, Ursinus, Perkins, and others of a experimental predestinarianism that grounds the assurance of redemption in a knowledge derived from the "practical syllogism." Throughout his study Kendall marks out what he believes to be the profound differences between the experimental predestinarian theology of Beza, Perkins, and Ames, which later developed into the mature federal theology of the Westminster standards (1647), and the theology of John Calvin.¹⁴⁰

For Kendall, a particularly regrettable feature of the Westminster federal theology is the notion that the Law precedes the gospel in divine/human relationship, and that repentance precedes faith in the way of salvation. He thinks that the Westminster theologians succumb to voluntarism, and as proof Kendall points to the consistent use of words like "accepting," "receiving," "assenting," "resting," "yielding," "answering" in Westminster's doctrine of faith—all of this contrary to Calvin. Moreover, although the Confession speaks of faith as the "instrument of Justification," something Calvin does as well, the meaning is distinct inasmuch, for Calvin, "faith as an instrument is God's act, opening blind eyes; for the Westminster divines, even though in the context of God's prevenient grace, faith is man's act: "Faith, thus receiving and resting on Christ, is the alone instrument of Justification" (XI.2).¹⁴¹

However, what is fundamental for this theology, says Kendall, is its voluntaristic doctrine of faith—"a faith that is gathered to be saving only if there are also discernible graces of the Spirit." Since contrary to Calvin these theologians denied that Christ died for all people, affirming a limited atonement instead, believers could not be sure that Christ died

¹⁴¹ Kendall, Calvin and English Calvinism, 201.
for them or that they were elect. Such assurance had to be sought in fruits of faith or evidences of sanctification.\textsuperscript{142}

All of these negative and unfortunate features, according to Kendall, are portrayed and confirmed in the doctrine of the covenants as expressed in the Westminster documents. The covenant of works is promised on the conditionality of faith; and even the covenant of grace requires that sinners have faith, faith being the condition for their justification. Although faith is a divine gift, it is also an act of the will. And although justification is free and of grace, it cannot be enjoyed without assurance; and assurance is based upon “perseverance in repentance and good works.” Says Kendall, “The old covenant was promised upon the condition of ‘perfect and personal obedience’; the new is promised upon the condition of faith—‘yielding obedience to the Commands’.” The only apparent difference between these two covenants, according to Kendall, is that “perfect obedience was required under the old covenant and doing our best is required under the new.”\textsuperscript{143} Thus Kendall reads federal theology as teaching a kind of medieval doctrine of “doing what is in you,” with God’s grace compensating for or rewarding that effort. Since faith is an act of the will, to say that justification is by faith comes close to saying that justification is “the reward for doing our best to be holy and good.” Despite its robust predestinarian theology, which makes salvation wholly a divine gift, the Westminster divines’ doctrine of faith nonetheless “tends to put the responsibility for salvation right back on to man.”\textsuperscript{144} Assurance is grounded upon the shifting sands of one’s own conscience (namely, that his or her repentance is sincere and good works are well intentioned), and the Christian life is not founded upon gratitude to God but upon “one’s keen interest in salvation itself.”\textsuperscript{145} For Kendall, the federal theology as represented by the Westminster standards, though well intentioned in seeking to glorify God

\textsuperscript{142} Kendall, \textit{Calvin and English Calvinism}, 202-204.

\textsuperscript{143} Kendall, \textit{Calvin and English Calvinism}, 205-206.

\textsuperscript{144} Kendall, \textit{Calvin and English Calvinism}, 206.

\textsuperscript{145} Kendall, \textit{Calvin and English Calvinism}, 207.
and purify the church from ungodliness and the threat of antinomianism, fell into a kind of legalism and brought believers to "endless introspection." "Whatever else may be said about Westminster theology, one fact is plain: it is invulnerable to the charge of Antinomianism." What is more, "Calvin's thought, save for the decrees of predestination, is hardly to be found in Westminster theology...; and it [the Westminster theology] hardly qualifies as "Calvinistic." 146

Kendall's work has been widely challenged. One of the most sustained criticisms of Kendall's work is by Paul Helm. Helm contests Kendall's entire project—from his interpretation of Calvin on faith and assurance to his treatment of the nature and extent of Christ's atonement, to the nature of Christian conversion. 147

Meanwhile, a quite distinct assessment of the alleged voluntarism that afflicts federal theology is set forth by Stephen Strehle. In his published dissertation, Calvinism, Federalism, and Scholasticism, Strehle argues that the voluntarism of such medieval writers as Duns Scotus and William of Ockham, in separating God's will from God's other attributes, meant that nothing limits the divine will and whatever God wills is reckoned righteousness merely in his willing it. According to Strehle, all Reformed theology, in distinction from Luther, exhibits this late medieval perspective, especially evidenced in the emphasis on forensic justification, whereby God declares persons just who are unjust. God, by a simple act of his will, calls what is not righteous (in this case, the sinner) righteous on the basis of the alien righteousness of Christ. This is also reflected in the doctrine of limited atonement, for what is of infinite value, being sufficient for all persons (namely, Christ's sacrificial death), God arbitrarily declares by an act of simple volition to be efficacious only for some. Similarly, the entire covenant scheme of Reformed federalism is, according to Strehle, "in essence a divine

146 Kendall, Calvin and English Calvinism, 208, 212.
fabrication, relating the unrelated.” The covenant involves “an act of divine condescension, in which God capitulates to reward certain prearranged conditions, outside of any inherent moment or reference in them.” Federalism, both as it pertains to Adam’s and Christ’s headship, is absent “ontological reality.” According to Strehle, “Relationships between merit and reward, faith and justification, or in this case, Adam and his children exist only within this divine fantasy.” The imputation of Adam’s sin to his posterity is as much as fiction as the imputation of Christ’s righteousness to the elect. Federalism renders Christ’s blood atonement unnecessary inasmuch as the way of salvation is by divine fiat, in keeping with the basic tenets of voluntarism and nominalism. There is no “ontological mechanism” to connect the believer to Christ and his saving work.

Forming the background to this is the doctrine of the covenant of works. The foedus operum, says Strehle, posits the idea that Adam and his posterity could secure eternal life through their own obedience prior to the covenant of grace. Christ is altogether absence from this arrangement, while a law of works prevails as a means of salvation or eternal life. Tied to this idea is the most regrettable notion that man is “compacted into a covenant of mutua obligationis” and “accorded a decisive role in securing its promises.” Writes Strehle,

Man is required to fulfill what is due and to request thereupon his due. Of course, there is a feeble attempt to mitigate the force of these statements through the application of the doctrine of predestination, but such would only return the Calvinists to Augustine, not Luther. No matter how irresistible grace may be envisaged, God still depends here upon a condition wrought within man, in order to bestow His blessings.

Calvinism, according to Strehle, sold the gospel for a mess of pottage, the pottage coming in the form of Franciscan scholasticism and voluntarism. Federalist theology traded

---


149 Strehle, Calvinism, Federalism, and Scholasticism, 314.

150 Strehle, Calvinism, Federalism, and Scholasticism, 316-317.

151 Strehle, Calvinism, Federalism, and Scholasticism, 318.

152 Strehle, Calvinism, Federalism, and Scholasticism, 387-388.

the Calvinists.\textsuperscript{155} N. Diemer, for example, in his book, *Het Scheppingsverbond van Adam*, believes he can discern what he terms “the pure Reformed position” on the covenant as this was given expression in the sixteenth century by a number of Reformed theologians laboring in Switzerland, specifically Zwingli, Bullinger, and Calvin.\textsuperscript{156} Each of these Reformers, says Diemer, taught that the state of Adam before the Fall is principally different from the covenant of grace, that both Adam and Christ are covenant heads, and that the covenant of grace begins with Genesis 3:15. An organic covenant relation exists between God and man prior the Fall. At this early stage, argues Diemer, Reformed theology had not been infected with the teaching of “humanistic federalists” (*humanistische foederaislen*) or “humanists” (*humanisten*). Diemer also deems Ursinus and Polanus to abide in the pure line. Although Ursinus spoke of a “covenant of nature” and Polanus used the language of “covenant of works,” neither man forsook the idea of the organic nature of the covenant. For Diemer, the organic nature of the covenant means that the covenant relationship is rooted in creation as man is created in the image of God. He sets this in opposition to a mechanistic, humanistic, and formalized idea of the covenant where specific stipulations must be met on condition of obtaining a supernatural life. The *Three Forms of Unity* express the pure teaching on the covenant as well. Meanwhile, Diemer brands Melanchthon the villain who introduced “humanistic federalism” (*humanistisch foederaisme*) into Reformed theology in the way of “natural law.” Subsequently, the pure line of thinking about the covenant was weakened and compromised. Other “compromisers” of the correct understanding of the covenant include

\begin{enumerate}
\item The treatment of Diemer presented here is taken almost verbatim from my article, “Doctrine of the *Pactum Salutis* in the Covenant Theology of Herman Witsius,” 110-111. For a more detailed analysis of Diemer’s views, see Karlberg, “The Mosaic Covenant and the Concept of Works in Reformed Hermeneutics,” 22-31.
\end{enumerate}
J. Cloppenburg (who formalized the definition of covenant), the Westminster Assembly, F. Junius, and virtually all Reformed theologians of the late sixteenth and early seventeenth century. There are exceptions, though few: F. Gomarus, J. Ussher, the Irish Articles, and W. Ames, and then later on P. van Maastricht, and A. Kuyper.\(^{157}\)

Diemer also argues that if the correct conception of the covenant was weakened at this stage, further on into the seventeenth century it was altogether perverted. Under a chapter entitled “The Reformed Position Forsaken,” Diemer lumps together such individuals as J. Wollebius, M. Martini, and L. Crocius in Germany, and J. Cloppenburg, J. Coccejus, H. Witsius, and J. van den Honert in the Netherlands, as examples of Reformed theologians who completely corrupted the doctrine of the covenant. In particular, Diemer views the notion of a covenant of works as a corruption. He faults the above-mentioned theologians for mechanically linking the fulfillment of the law as the meritorious condition for obtaining eternal life. Obedience to the law, then, is the cause (oorzaak) of receiving God's love and righteousness. Meanwhile, man is not created perfect (volmaakt) in his original state, which means that Adam had yet to be ushered into his highest state of blessing and had to earn (verdienen) his way to a better situation. As created, Adam is no friend or son of God, with the right to the divine inheritance. Rather, Adam is God’s friend only through the covenant of works, and his inheritance must be earned. As a consequence of the above errors these theologians, says Diemer, likewise put the covenant of grace in the wrong place, while the covenant of works continues to function negatively in that new covenant.\(^{158}\) Following Diemer’s narrative, the same sad story can be told in England as well, where the doctrine of the covenant reached a similar dead-end.\(^{159}\) The light of recovery may be seen in the

\(^{157}\) Diemer, *Scheppingsverbond met Adam*, 10-32.

\(^{158}\) Diemer, *Scheppingsverbond met Adam*, 32-54.

\(^{159}\) Diemer, *Scheppingsverbond met Adam*, 55-64. Throughout Diemer leans rather heavily upon the work of G. Schrenk, *Gottesreich und Bund in älteren Protestantismus* (Gütersloh, 1923); he also appears to be following a certain trajectory of interpretation of H. Heppe.
Netherlands, however, with *De Walchersche Artikelten* (1693), and in the work of theologians like P. van Mastricht, M. Leydecker, W. à Brakel, J. Marck, A. E. Franken, A. Rotterdam, B. de Moor, and (partially) in A. Comrie.

Mark W. Karlberg has taken up Diemer's mantle, at least to some degree. Karlberg embraces Diemer's thesis that an organic versus a mechanical or humanistic view of the covenant is traceable in Reformed theology. At bottom, for Karlberg, the core issue is the medieval conception of nature and grace, which comprises a harmful dualism. Writes Karlberg, "Apparently at some point, the Reformed dogmaticians ran short of new wineskins and unwittingly used the old, medieval wineskins!"\(^{160}\) What is unacceptable for Karlberg is any notion of a covenant relationship being superimposed upon the natural order. This constitutes a nature/grace dualism, according to Karlberg. The correct conception requires that the covenant arrangement be organically related to creation, or better, indigenous to creation itself.\(^{161}\)

3. Appraising the Historical and Theological Assessments of Federal Theology

a. General Observations

Much of this secondary literature pertaining to federal theology has been interested in questions about the origins of covenant theology in general (E. von Korff, G. Möller, L. Trinterud, P. Miller, J. Möller, R. Greaves, J.W. Baker, L. Bierma, D. Visser, J. von Rohr, G. Vos, David N.J. Poole, B. Loonstra, P.A. Lillback), or the covenant of works in particular (G. P. Fisher, N. Diemer, J. Murray, Stoever, D. Weir, M.W. Karlberg, P. Lillback, M. McGiffert, C. Venema, R. M. Muller), or in analyzing the covenantal ideas of other prominent sixteenth- or seventeenth-century Reformed theologians (e.g., G. Schrenk, C. S.

---


McCoy, V. F. Priebe, H. Faulenbach, D.W.S. Wong, K. Hutter, D. Visser, W. van Asselt), or in assessing the significance of the emergence of Reformed federalism within English Puritanism, especially in relation to Calvin and disputes about his (so-called predestinarian) theology—some arguing that covenant theology mitigates the rigors of predestination (J. A. Dorner, P. Miller, G. P. Fisher, Wm. A. Brown), while others offer a different assessment of Calvin's theology and Reformed federalism in relation to it (J. Møller, M. McGiffert, Wm. K.B. Stoever, J. von Rohr). Still others argue that Puritanism, with its covenant theology, wholly capitulated to voluntarism and thereby abandoned all vestiges of Calvinism (Kendall). J. Møller, however, sees continuity with Calvin within Puritan covenant theology inasmuch as priority was given to divine grace. Nonetheless, argues Møller, a strain of legalism was introduced into Puritanism, derived from Zwingli and Bullinger and exhibited in Tyndale.

In general it should be observed that while Puritan covenant theology has received some careful attention, along with increasing scholarly attention to Cocceius in the Netherlands, the Swiss and French continental tradition of Reformed federalism has not received any extended scholarly exposition and analysis, although there has been attention given to features of Amyraldianism (B. Armstrong, R. Nicole, F. Laplanche, R. Stauffer, H. Kretzer).162

Meanwhile a large body of theological criticism, largely of neo-orthodox orientation, charges seventeenth-century covenant theology with producing a form of legalism, corrupting the relationship between law and gospel, and therefore perverting the theology of Calvin and other early Reformed writers on the matter of grace (e.g., K. Barth, T. F. Torrance, J. B. Torrance, D. Poole, D. J. Bruggink, W.W. Benton, Jr., H. Rolston III, F. W.

Dillistone, Nico T. Bakker, and others). Alongside of this criticism is an earlier line of scholarship that views seventeenth-century Reformed federalism as, for the most part, dominated by the central dogma of predestination or, alternatively, functioning to mitigate the rigors of predestination (see H. Heppe, J. A. Dorner, G. P. Fisher, W. A. Brown, F.C. Lincoln, D. Weir, P. Miller, O. Weber, D. Wallace, P. Toon, W. Klempa, C. Graafland, and a reevaluation by J. van Vliet). In this connection, some argue that there are pure and impure strands of Reformed covenant theology, a healthy strand derived from Calvin and an impure line going back to Melanchthon and the Rhineland Reformers—the latter falling into a formalized and legalized covenant scheme (e.g., N. Diemer; sympathies for this analysis by Karlberg). This becomes a story of a form of legalism undermining a gospel of grace. Or alternatively, the healthy lineage of the covenant is traced back to H. Bullinger, and corrupt predestinarian strands are said to be derived from Calvin (see, e.g., J. W. Baker, and refutations of Baker by L. Bierma and C. Venema).

We discover, then, that there is no consensus within historical scholarship regarding the rise, development, significance, and meaning of Reformed covenant theology. The scholarship is divided in its analysis and assessment of Reformed federalism, both in relation to its continuity with the first codification of a Reformed doctrine of grace and in terms of its relationship to divine predestination. Despite the growing body of literature on the subject of seventeenth-century covenant theology, it is evident that the doctrine needs to be analyzed and assessed more contextually, particularly since a large portion of the scholarship imposes a modern theological grid upon the materials, misreading and misinterpreting them accordingly, or operates with a central dogma thesis that has been shown to be suspect at best or altogether indefensible at worst. Alongside of these observations, it must also be observed that much of the scholarship has approached these historical materials with outdated (and now refuted) assumptions about sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Reformed scholasticism and its implications for the content of Reformed theology.
b. Further Observations

Clearly, from the secondary literature it is impossible to hear a melodious song regarding the specific traits of Reformed federalism—it's positive features, its negative consequences, the reasons for its development, and the quality of its theological arguments and ecclesiastical-spiritual benefits. Divergent and conflicting interpretations of sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Reformed covenant theology persist, particularly as focused upon the implications of the covenant of works. But even with respect to the covenant of grace the problem can be perceived in that the language of conditionality is judged by one trajectory of scholarship as proof that federal theology introduced a form of legalism into the Reformed camp, and therefore represents a devolution from Calvin's theology and his Reformed contemporaries. By this assessment Turretin's theology would be part of the devolution. On the other hand, another trajectory of scholarship interprets Reformed covenant theology to be turning the earlier codification of Reformed theology under Bullinger (or Calvin) into a predestinarian system a la Beza, creating a theology deduced from predestination as the central dogma, which in turn, despite valiant efforts to escape its own system of thought by means of an appeal to the biblical idea of the covenant, entrapped itself within a scholastic scheme that undermined any notion of covenant conditionality and human responsibility within the covenant relationship, and consequently harmfully diminished or altogether undermined the significance of redemptive history. Again, Turretin would be placed under this ban. Therefore the one stream of negative assessment views covenant theology in its developed form, with its notion of a covenant of works or a covenant of nature, as conceiving of God's relation to humans as fundamentally a relation of conditions to be met and merits to be achieved, and in this way orchestrates a theology of works, undermining divine grace. The other stream of negative assessment views the covenant theology of this period as dominated by other more central and consequent doctrines, particularly the doctrine of predestination, which emasculates the doctrine of the
covenant, so that the relation of God with humans in the way of salvation is cast back into the divine decree. This then gives way to a form of determinism, eclipsing redemptive history.

Clearly these two dominant streams of interpretation cannot both be correct, for they seriously diverge from one another and offer diverse evaluations on what ails seventeenth-century Reformed federalism, though both are agreed that this theology is an aberration from the earlier codification of Reformed theology represented by Calvin especially, or alternatively, by Heinrich Bullinger. The problem the intellectual historian faces is determining which one of these streams of interpretation is correct, or whether perhaps both have misread and misinterpreted Reformed federal theology in the seventeenth century. A steady line of scholarship, going back to Vos, and carried forward by Muller, Bierma, and others has produced a serious challenge to the validity of both of these paths of interpretation and the implicit theological critique that lies in back of them.

We intend to argue that an exposition of Turretin’s doctrine of the covenant confirms the validity of this last trajectory of scholarship, which argues against the “two traditions” thesis and asserts the more fundamental unity or continuity within the Reformed movement.

Francis Turretin offers himself as an apt choice for numerous reasons. First, he represents the high point of federal theology that came to fruition in Geneva—one of the more important Reformed centers of learning in the seventeenth century. In fact, after Turretin’s death in 1687 there is a declension from Reformed orthodoxy and covenant theology simultaneously in Geneva. Salmurian theology subsequently dominates and a rank rationalism prevails as well, bringing further declension. Second, Turretin, in writing an elenctic theology, treats the federal system from a defensive and polemical posture, demonstrating the kinds of issues federal theology confronted in the late seventeenth century from opponents Roman Catholic, Lutheran, Remonstrant, Socinian, Anabaptist, and Amyraldian. Thus Turretin’s treatment of the doctrine of the covenant in its twofold form
sets forth the kinds of criticism it was facing in its fully developed form, some criticisms that this theology still confronts by modern critics or opponents. Third, since Turretin wrote a fairly comprehensive theology, despite its elenctic form, in his *Institutio* we confront not only a system of theology but a federal theology systematized. Although Turretin’s theology is not as fulsome as it might be (as he indicates in the preface to the reader, “Let no one think that a full and accurate system of theology is delivered here”—instead, Turretin explains that his work covers “the principal controversies which lie between us and our adversaries [ancient and modern]”)—nonetheless, in rebutting adversaries Turretin’s treatment of topics is usually adequately abundant. His method does, however, mean that some topics of theology, inasmuch as they are not a matter of dispute, are not treated. In any case, Turretin’s *Institutio* remains a comprehensive theology, despite its polemical scope. This has the advantage of allowing us to examine features of Turretin’s Christology and soteriology as these are interwoven into his federal project. Fourth, Turretin had a wide and diverse educational background in theology since, after graduating from the Academy at Geneva, he spent two years studying at the major Reformed universities and theological schools in the Netherlands and France. This gave him first hand knowledge of the debates within the Dutch churches and the Salmurian theology that was being sharply controverted at the time and subsequently.  

Fifth, in his own work as a professor of theology and pastor in Geneva Turretin was involved in the debates within the Swiss Reformed churches concerning Cocceianism, and more especially the wranglings concerning the theology of Saumur—the latter theology creating serious tensions within the Genevan Academy itself. Turretin’s work as a theologian, then, was never a matter of abstract academics or intellectual curiosity; rather his labors as a theologian were tied to the welfare of the churches he served. In spite of writing a theology that was filled with disputation, Turretin wrote in an irenic spirit, and was even-handed with opponents. His goal was to resolve controversy among the Reformed

---

163 Biographies of Turretin will be noted below.
churches where possible, demonstrating that sometimes a debate finds a solution with a simple distinction. In any case, as one who engaged in unremitting polemics, Turretin aimed to ameliorate not exacerbate controversy among the Reformed churches. All of this applies to his exposition of the doctrine of the covenant as well. Sixth, we should also bear in mind, as Muller has observed, that “Turretin was a codifier and a gatherer of opinion rather than an original thinker.” Thus, “As a defender of a form of orthodoxy, he strove to weigh options, to refute errors and adversaries, and to present a normative statement of Reformed theology to his students and his peers.”\textsuperscript{164} This makes his work particularly suitable for analysis since he aims to represent a consensus orthodox position on matters of dispute. Finally, inasmuch as Turretin, among the continental orthodox writers, has had the most influence upon American Reformed theology, he offers himself as a natural choice for further study and investigation within an American academic context.\textsuperscript{165}

B. Statement of Thesis

In this dissertation I shall argue, against the allegations of at least two broad streams of historical scholarship and contemporary theology, that Francis Turretin’s treatment of the doctrine of the covenant, which is fairly representative of the late seventeenth-century consensus within Reformed orthodoxy, neither constitutes a species of legalism, compromising a theology of grace, nor does it serve up the doctrine of the covenant in order to mitigate God’s decree of election and reprobation. A contextualized exposition of Turretin’s theology of the covenant, with special care to follow Turretin’s positive exposition and polemical defense of federalism, demonstrates that his concern is to expposit an Augustinian theology of grace against any compromise. Turretin’s federal theology, being


reasonably representative of the high Reformed orthodoxy of this period, neither necessitates nor implies a form of legalism; rather, it aims to safeguard the theology of grace as first codified by Calvin and his Reformed contemporaries. Likewise, rather than produce a theology with predestination as its central dogma, Turretin is an example of a late seventeenth-century federal theologian who attempted to give an appropriate place to redemptive history as expressed in God’s covenant arrangement with humans, while simultaneously adhering to the Reformed confessional consensus pertaining to the doctrine of predestination. Thus contrary to the diverse trajectories of historical scholarship and contemporary theology which challenge the continuity and purity of Reformed federalism vis-à-vis the doctrine of grace as expositions by Calvin (or alternatively H. Bullinger) and the early codification of Reformed theology, this dissertation contends that both the charge of legalism and the charge that predestination functions as a central dogma compromising the doctrine of the covenant are untenable, and that in fact Turretin’s theology (and Reformed federalism in general) escapes both of these allegations.

Our aim, by means of a careful and contextualized reading of the primary sources, is to demonstrate how covenant theology hangs together or coheres within its own soteriological schema. Thus in expositing Turretin’s view, we will have occasion to consider how conditionality functions and does not function within the covenant program. A close reading of the documents of this period, Francis Turretin’s Institutio Theologiae Elencticae being the primary document, will demonstrate that covenant theology, Turretin representing

---

166 Turretin’s Institutio theologicae elenctica was published and reprinted numerous times in various editions. The most recent editions of his works, which include the Institutio, appeared in 1847, being published at Edinburgh and New York. According to James T. Dennison Jr., the editor of the English edition of Turretin’s Institutio, the 1847 Edinburgh/New York edition “was a reprint of the 1688-90 version with corrections in a few Scripture citations.” This text of the nineteenth-century version does not appear to “differ from the 1696 printing (which, in turn, was a reprint of the 1679-85 original version in three volumes), except in the matter of a few Scripture citations (this is also valid for the 1688-90 version . . . ). The 1679-85 version was reprinted in 1680-86 (also in three volumes). A ‘new edition checked for accuracy and enlarged in many places’ appeared in 1682-88 (three volumes). This corrected and enlarged version was reprinted in three volumes in 1688-90. The 1696 reprint of the 1679-85 version was the first to include the emendation of Melchoir Leydekker and the odes of Adrian Reeland. This version was again reprinted in 1701 (three volumes). There was another printing in 1734:
something of a consensus position, is much more nuanced than the “two traditions”
approach has represented it to be. By focusing upon Turretin’s doctrine of the covenant,
specifically the pivotal role the covenant of works plays in his theological system and the
fundamental convictions surrounding the prelapsarian divine/human relationship, as well as
his concern to preserve the unity of the covenant of grace despite its diverse economies, we
will demonstrate that the burden of federalism was to think through the doctrine of salvation
biblically and theologically. The covenant of works, then, was not a “device” posited in an
attempt to mitigate the rigors or intellectual puzzles presented by the doctrine of
predestination, nor was it offered as a kind of “theodicy” to bolster human responsibility in
the face of the riddle of evil and human fallibility. Nor does the doctrine of the covenant of
works introduce a religion whereby human beings merit their way into God’s favor through
good works. Rather, in asserting that divine law undergirds humanity’s relationship with God
in all situations, this covenant secures what is fundamental to the divine/human relationship
as a relationship between Creator and the human creature made in his image. God is holy
and humans, in order to live in fellowship with God, must likewise be holy. This simply
means that God’s grace and goodness do not negate his justice and holiness (and vice versa).
The covenant of works, therefore, does not succumb to legalism, for divine grace also
undergirds the divine/human relationship in all of its dispensations—pre-fall and post-fall.

I also maintain that the covenant of grace, as expounded by Turretin, declares the
triumpf of grace, for in his federal theology God does not ignore the conditions that the
covenant requires but fulfills them in his human creatures through the one who guarantees

---

a three-volume set of the *Institutio* and a four-volume set which added Turretin’s *Disputationes* (as volume 4) in
order to make up an *Opera*. This *Opera* was the basis of the complete Edinburgh/New York printing—volume
4 being released in 1848.” Quoted from “Editor’s Preface,” in Francis Turretin, *Institutes of Elenctic Theology*,
1992-1996), I: xxvii-xxviii. While Dennison’s analysis is generally correct, he fails to observe that a four volume
dition of Turretin’s writings appeared in 1696, which included the funeral oration of Benedict Pictet, the
fourth volume containing the *Disputationes*. In short, an *Opera* appears by 1696, and the 1754 edition is likely a
reprint of the 1696 edition. Throughout this study I will be quoting from the Giger translation, though I have
corrected it in several places. Latin quotations are taken from the 1848 Edinburgh printing, corrected in more
than a few places from the 1696 Utrecht/Leyden edition.
the covenant's fulfillment, Christ the surety. Thus the doctrine of the covenant is, for Turretin, part of a matrix of soteriological issues focused on Christ, involving the nature of Christ's atonement, divine election, faith and justification, and sanctification and perseverance. In this light I maintain that the charge of legalism, compromising a Reformed theology of grace, as well as the charge that federalism either mitigates the doctrine of predestination or is still controlled by that doctrine, yielding to a deductivistic and deterministic decretalism, each and all are without foundation. Such charges, and the interpretations behind them, are, insofar as they are directed toward Turretin's covenant theology, untenable. This study seeks a more nuanced assessment of Reformed federalism vis-à-vis questions of legalism on the one hand and the forfeiture of redemptive history on the other. Thus a more nuanced reading and interpretation of seventeenth-century covenant theology, through a major representative of the period, serves as a corrective to the two traditions approach of much modern scholarship.

C. Scholarship on Francis Turretin

The historical literature and theological scholarship pertaining to Francis Turretin's theology is meager but growing, and likely to continue to grow since the recent publication of his chief theological work, *The Institutes of Elenctic Theology* (3 vols.). His other major writings, in the form of disputations, remain in Latin, besides two volumes of sermons in French, which have also been translated into seventeenth-century Dutch. The works of Eugène de Budé and Gerrit Keizer remain the only full-length biographies of Turretin.167

The first scholarly work devoted to Turretin in English is John W. Beardslee III's dissertation, which sets forth a summary synopsis of Turretin's entire theological program, that in comparison and contrast with the theology of Turretin's son, Jean-Alphonse Turretin (1671-1737). Unfortunately Beardslee's work is mired in numerous discredited assumptions regarding Protestant scholasticism, besides being infected with a polemic aimed against the Princeton theology epitomized by Charles Hodge (1797-1878). He does, however, offer a brief sketch of features of Turretin's doctrine of the covenant. His interest here, as in treating all aspects of Turretin's theology, is to demonstrate the effects of a scholastic methodology on Reformed theology, specifically how so-called scholastic rationalism gave way to speculation and how scholasticism itself, with its supernaturalism, was an outdated theological enterprise that could not meet the challenges of the Cartesian revolution and the other harbingers of change in the late seventeenth century. Beardslee argues that Turretin's covenant scheme is under the constraints of a doctrine of double predestination, or what he calls "decretal Calvinism." Turretin, says Beardslee, plotted his theological course with the doctrine of the decrees. Nothing in Beardslee's treatment of Turretin's doctrine of the covenant addresses the issue of an alleged legalism in federal theology.\textsuperscript{168}

In recent years Turretin's doctrine of the covenant has been sketched in several other dissertations. Stephen Strehle has given a brief (though unsatisfying) sketch of Turretin's covenant views in his dissertation dealing with the Reformed doctrine of the covenant. Strehle's treatment of Turretin's views is part of a broader survey of numerous Reformed theologians. In my judgment, Strehle's exposition fails in three ways: (1) he does not examine Turretin's views within the context of his larger theological project; (2) he does not give any consideration to the exegetical rationale Turretin offers in support of his covenant scheme; and (3) he neglects to explore with sufficient care how Turretin expounded his views against

numerous opponents—Amyraldians, Cocceians, Remonstrants, Socinians, and Roman Catholics. His thesis, as outlined above, is that Reformed covenant theology as a whole is a species of Franciscan nominalism, employing its dubious notion of *pactum*, and despite gallant efforts to overcome the implications of this aberrant concept—namely, a religion laboring under the matrix of “grace-works” salvation—it could only inconsistently limp along, out of step with a genuine theology of faith and grace. For Strehle, Reformed federalism is nothing less than a corrupted theology—the corruption coming from late medieval nominalism—which erroneously depicts God as capitulating to reward certain prearranged conditions, outside of an inherent moment or reference in guilty and corrupted sinners. Strehle’s thesis I estimate to be altogether dubious and constitutes a serious misreading of Reformed federalism in its entire project. Strehle cannot conceive of a “purified” or “biblical” construal of *pactum*.

More significant is a recent article by Stephen R. Spencer on Turretin’s concept of the covenant of nature. Spencer argues that two conflicting strains appear in Turretin’s exposition of this topic—that Turretin speaks with two voices in defining and treating the covenant of nature. On the one hand the covenant relation of God with humans seems to function as something additional to and distinguishable from the more basic Creator-creature relationship; on the other hand, the covenant itself appears to be necessarily implied by and essential to the Creator-creature relationship. Spencer’s study is not without value, and he acknowledges that the idea of merit in this covenant relationship is not, as formulated by Turretin, strictly applicable. Yet he still regards the covenant scheme as articulated by Turretin to be “questionable” in safeguarding against or precluding “human merit.” Thus his article lends support to, though it represents a milder version of, the criticism that is aimed

---

more broadly and sharply against Reformed federalism in general. We will dispute features of Spencer's interpretation of Turretin in the next chapter.

Mention should be made of an article by Peter J. Wallace and the sketch of Turretin's doctrine of the covenant in Jeong Koo Jeon's work which deals with the covenant views of John Murray and Meredith Kline. Wallace offers a synopsis account of Turretin's doctrine of the covenants, laboring to examine, in some degree, Turretin's views in the context of seventeenth-century opponents. Wallace situates Turretin between the extreme polemics of his age and argues that the great Genevan advocated a moderate covenant theology that sought to escape the twin pitfalls of theological arrogance and theological relativism. Thus Turretin tried to hold together the fragmented remnant of the continental Reformed churches. Wallace's interest is to show that Turretin was a practitioner of a moderate and even-handed polemics, such that, although employing a scholastic method, Turretin exhibited an irenic spirit as he labored to bring unity among the churches in the face of Arminian and Amyraldian challenges, as well as other intramural discussions. While Wallace's analysis of Turretin's exposition of the doctrine of the covenant is helpful, it is truncated and only indirectly addresses the issues of legalism and the question of predestination in relation to the covenant. The same assessment applies to Jeon's treatment. While offering a brief outline of numerous features of Turretin's views, Jeon's interest is not an analysis and assessment of Turretin's theology of the covenant, nor does he engage the scholarship surrounding sixteenth- and seventeenth-century federal theology.


Paul Timothy Jensen’s dissertation sets forth a comparison between Calvin and Turretin on soteriology, specifically comparing the two Genevans on the topics of predestination, vicarious satisfaction, and free will. This work is valuable in demonstrating the continuity and essential unity that existed between Calvin and Turretin on these topics. It is helpful for discussions surrounding the doctrine of the covenant inasmuch as these disputes may not disregard theological anthropology, including human freedom and depravity, as well as christological questions that define God’s rescue of sinners through Christ’s work of satisfaction. Nonetheless, Jensen’s study does not address either Calvin’s or Turretin’s handling of the covenant.¹⁷³

Another study that sets Turretin’s views next to the views of another theologian is the dissertation by Stephen R. Spencer. Spencer explores Turretin’s doctrine of the incarnation in comparison to Thomas Aquinas’s handling of the topic. Like Jensen’s study, while this work offers helpful supplemental material pertaining to Turretin’s covenant doctrine, its focus is elsewhere. However, in examining Turretin’s theology of the incarnation, Spencer also offers valuable observations regarding Protestant scholasticism in relation to the medieval model.¹⁷⁴

A work that explores Turretin’s use of the church fathers is E. P. Meijsing’s Reformierte Scholastik und Patristische Theologie. Meijsing gives this work the subtitle, “Die Bedeutung des Väterbeweises in der Institutio Theologiae Elencticae F. Turrentins,” which, aptly, is indicative of its contents. Meijsing offers useful analysis of scholasticism and of features of Turretin’s doctrine of God and Christology, but his attention is not upon the issues surrounding


federal theology. However, this work represents the rich field that is open to scholars of Turrettin and other seventeenth-century orthodox theologians.\footnote{E. P. Mei\ss ering, Reformierte Scholastik und pietisti\tsch Theologie: die Bedeutung des V"aterbeweises in der Instituto theologian elencatis F. Turrettini: unter besonderer Ber"ucksichtigung der Gotteslehre und Christologie, Bibliotheca humanistica & reformatorica, v. 50 (Nieuwkoop: De Graaf, 1991).}

To date, one of the most comprehensive studies on a particular feature of Turrettin’s theology—in this case, Turrettin’s idea of theology and its bearing on his doctrine of scripture—is the dissertation by Timothy Ross Phillips. Phillips demonstrates that the (former) scholarly consensus regarding Protestant scholasticism is off the mark, for contrary to the notion that this movement reduced the Bible to “a system of rational and comprehensive teachings,” producing “a speculative, rationalistic, and legalistic form of Christianity,” which also fails to have a christocentric focus, Phillips discovers in the case of Francis Turrettin (who is a protestant and a scholastic) none of these charges apply. The natural light of reason is subordinated to the realities of faith. The signatum of Scripture are not rational evidences for it, but “the distinctive, inherent and unique characteristics of the reality of theology. Since theology is a habitus, it is conceived as an apprehension of a specific reality, namely “the sui generis reality of divine wisdom.” Theology, then, is not defined as “doctrines existing in a book.” Phillips’s study is not without value for understanding Turrettin’s (and likely by extension, other late seventeenth-century Reformed theologians) conception of the nature and practice of theology, the authority of scripture, and the instrumental use of reason in the construction of doctrine.\footnote{Timothy R. Phillips, “Francis Turrettin’s Idea of Theology and Its Bearing Upon His Doctrine of Scripture” (Ph.D. diss., Vanderbilt University, 1986). In light of the work of John D. Woodbridge, Biblical Authority: A Critique of the Rogers/McKim Proposal (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1982), and Phillips on Turrettin’s doctrine of Scripture, along with the work of others, the thesis of Jack B. Rogers and Donald K. McKim relative to Protestant scholasticism in general and Turrettin’s doctrine of scripture in particular has been shown to be wholly untenable. See Roger’s and McKim’s The Authority and Interpretation of the Bible: An Historical Approach (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1979), 172-84; 267-69; 279-81. We also mention Phillips’s article “The Dissolution of Francis Turrettin’s Vision of Theologia: Geneva at the End of the Seventeenth Century,” in The Identity of Geneva: The Christian Commonwealth, 1564-1864, 77-92. Against the allegation of Rogers and McKim that Turrettin was a rationalist, see Sebastian Rehman, “Alleged Rationalism: Francis Turrettin on Reason,” Calvin Theological Journal 37 (2002): 255-269; also relevant to this discussion is the article by Willem J. van Asselt,
work commits a "fundamental error" in failing to understand properly the meaning of *habitut*, which in fact has to do with "a mental disposition to receive a knowledge that exists, objectively, prior to the disposition to know it" rather than "a qualitatively new cognizance and volition for reality," as if the objective content of theology emerges from "the activity of the *habitut*." Obviously, given the topic of Phillips' dissertation, it does not address issues directly related to Turretin's federal theology.

In this connection the article by Richard Muller, "Scholasticism Protestant and Catholic: Francis Turretin on the Object and Principles of Theology," should be noted, for Muller offers an insightful analysis of how Turretin understood the discipline of theology, demonstrating that seventeenth-century Protestant theologians like Turretin aimed to produce "a technically sophisticated school-theology" which could more convincingly confront Roman Catholic polemicists and develop "the implications of the Reformers' teaching for a full system of Christian doctrine." It certainly was not a deductivistic system derived from "a single doctrinal locus." Muller also helpfully situates Turretin and his *Institutio* within the movement of Reformed theology, for Turretin's system of theology "stands at the apex of the development of scholastic theology in the post-Reformation era, prior to the decline of Protestant system under the impact of rationalism, pietism, and the Enlightenment of the eighteenth century." Muller likewise helpfully observes that Turretin's theological method had recourse to "the whole of the Christian tradition." Echoing themes like but independent of Phillips, Muller expounds Turretin on the role of reason and philosophy in the theological enterprise, showing that theology rests on testimony rather than the evidence of reason, yet also refusing the way of the Enthusiasts who ignorantly

---


wage war on all philosophy. In any case, it is false to brand Turretin a rationalist and Reformed orthodoxy a species of rationalism. 178

James T. Dennison Jr. has written a useful short biography of Turretin’s life and career; and in a separate article he situates and contextualizes Turretin’s labors in Geneva as “at the dawn of the Enlightenment” and “in the twilight of scholasticism or Reformed orthodoxy.”179

While each of the above studies makes a contribution to Turretin scholarship, most of them focus on aspects of his theology that are only indirectly related to his doctrine of the covenant; the few articles that do treat Turretin’s federal theology offer no more than a sketch of his intensive and detailed exposition of that topic. In contrast, I wish to present an extended exposition of Turretin’s treatment of this doctrine, giving attention to his exegetical and polemical directives. Moreover, none of these studies addresses in any kind of sustained or comprehensive way the aforementioned trajectories of scholarship, with their theological concerns, and the alleged problems of legalism on the one hand or of an over-bearing predestinarianism on the other, and how each of these issues relate to the doctrine of the covenant among seventeenth-century Reformed theologians. In fact, Strehle’s and Spencer’s pieces, respectively, serve as recent examples of the scholarship that questions whether Reformed covenant theology, with a doctrine of the covenant of works, escapes legalism—illustrated by a representative like Turretin.

In short, a study of length and depth has yet to be written on Turretin’s doctrine of the covenant.

178 Muller, “Scholasticism Protestant and Catholic,” 193-205. For Muller’s full discussion of these and like issues surrounding theological prolegomena in Reformed orthodoxy, see his Post-Reformation Reformed Dogmatics: The Rise and Development of Reformed Orthodoxy, ca. 1520 to ca. 1725, 4 vols., – v. 1. Prolegomena to theology (revised); idem, After Cabin.

D. Method and Overview of Chapters

The method I will employ in this study shall be first and foremost descriptive, taking care to place Turrettin and his ideas within his own historical-contextual situation, while interacting with and offering analytical exposition and evaluation of previous lines of historical scholarship and modern theological portrayals and criticisms of federal theology in general and Turrettin’s covenant doctrine in particular. Thus there are two levels of exposition and analysis—first, I am concerned to accurately expound and analyze Turrettin’s doctrine of the covenant in what he regards as its biblical derivation and theological complexity, starting with his understanding of the covenant of nature, then moving on to his treatment of the covenant of grace, followed by an exposition and analysis of how his covenant scheme is worked out in the doctrines of regeneration, justification, and sanctification; second my aim is to analyze and critique trajectories of scholarship and theological criticism against federal theology which, I shall argue, have failed to appreciate the nuances within seventeenth-century covenant theology or which have blatantly misinterpreted and caricatured this theology, Turrettin’s doctrine of the covenant serving as a test case. This second component of the dissertation shall be taken up in connection with the exposition of Turrettin’s views, and then further evaluated in the concluding chapter.

In terms of primary source materials, I shall focus on Turrettin’s most definitive work, his Institutes of Elenctic Theology, with reference to his other writings insofar as they are relevant to a particular issue.

In providing a contextually nuanced exposition of Turrettin’s theology of the covenant, I will give close analysis to his polemics against various opponents and to certain pivotal ideas, setting these within the context of the expositions of his Reformed predecessors and contemporaries. In this way we can gain a better sense of where Turrettin’s covenant theology is commonplace, or contrariwise unique, within the wider movement of Reformed federalism. In doing the above, this study will give careful consideration to
Turretin’s definition of terms and how those terms play out or are employed across his theological system. I will also give careful attention to the exegetical component of Turretin’s argument. All of this will demonstrate that the charges of legalism, and secondarily of predestinarianism, are both wide of the mark.

In this first chapter we have already examined at length the scholarship surrounding sixteenth- and seventeenth-century federal theology, noting that Turretin represents federal theology at its pinnacle development. In the chapters that follow, our aim is to set forth a rather detailed exposition of Turretin’s doctrine of the covenant, noting his polemical interests. In doing so we discover that his federal theology is driven by concerns to preserve the doctrine of grace in human redemption, and that his theology is neither legalistic nor predestinarian, though a doctrine of predestination is fully affirmed and defended. Rather, in line with earlier codifications of Reformed theology, Turretin’s federal theology is a theology of grace. We also discover that Turretin’s theology, while scholastic, is throughout driven by biblical exegesis and theological formulation derived from biblical exposition.

As for the chapters that follow: chapter 2 is pivotal to this study inasmuch as it sets forth how Turretin conceived of God’s relationship with human beings prior to the fall, and what were the conditions and obligations, blessings and sanctions of that relationship. The chapter demonstrates that underlying what Turretin calls “the covenant of nature” is an expression of divine favor and goodness, for the covenant relationship itself, rather than representing a kind of legalism, bespeaks God’s favor and kindly manner by which he enters into a relationship with his human creatures, and even establishes an arrangement that can issue forth into an eternal blessedness. In this covenant arrangement, according to Turretin, humans are not subjected to an eternal test of obedience or subjugated to a persistent state of testing as posse peccare; that is, they do not exist in the precarious state of fallibility for eternity, for the idea of obligation—the achieving of certain works of obedience—and the promises of blessing that ensue in obedience to the divine command are not strictly speaking
meritorious, since the reward for such acts of obedience far exceeds what any human can earn before God. Strictly speaking, for Turretin, the creature can never merit or earn anything before God. Whatever obedience the creature renders to God is due God as God, as the Creator. Consequently, in obeying God human creatures have only done what they ought to have done as his creatures. This means, then, that the covenant of nature (or of works), contrary to the allegations of introducing a kind of legalism into Reformed theology, in fact safeguards God’s gracious and kindly relationship to his human creatures from the outset, for God rewards human obedience after a manner that far exceeds anything that such obedience may rightly demand or expect (contra Socinus, Volckelius, and others). Unless God establish or set up a relationship between himself and his human creatures that graciously promises blessings for obedience, humans are without any reward for their obedience. In short, Turretin’s doctrine of the covenant of nature demonstrates that human works are graciously rewarded according to an altogether benevolent covenant arrangement. Moreover, by means of his doctrine of the covenant of works, Turretin safeguards the unity of God’s relationship with humans, so that what was promised to Adam in fulfilling God’s commands finds parity with Christ’s redemptive work in fulfillment of all righteousness.

The next chapter brings us to Turretin’s exposition of the covenant of grace. The heart of this covenant is Christ in his role as surety. Turretin first defines key biblical words pertaining to covenant and explores their import. This brings him to affirm the divine authorship of the covenant of grace, and from there he examines the responsibilities or mutual obligations of the contracting parties of the covenant. However, at the heart of the covenant of grace stands Christ as mediator—a role ordained for him from eternity according to the eternal covenant of redemption. Thus while human obligation is not discounted or subverted, Turretin also shows how the covenant of grace is ultimately dependent upon God’s work of grace in the hearts of sinners for the fulfillment of the covenant stipulations. In other words, the provision of Christ as mediator is directly linked
to God's work of grace upon the sinner. Thus in expounding the clauses of the covenant, Turretin considers how conditionality and merit play out in the covenant scheme; and he removes many misunderstandings by defining and distinguishing the different senses of these terms, since they can mean different things in different relationships. Finally in this chapter Turretin demonstrates how the covenant of works is related to the covenant of grace—that is, both how these covenants differ from one another and how they are the same, for a line of continuity exists between them. This continuity is revealed in the work of Christ as surety. In his substitutionary role, Christ undergoes the negative sanction of the covenant of works, including its curse of death, even as he lives up to all of its prescriptions and obligations. In this sense, God's covenant with human beings is singular in nature, but possesses a twofold character. This means that God's way with humans does not change, though the basis for preserving his way of fellowship with humans now requires Christ as surety, and so answers Anselm's question, *Cur Deus homo?* All of this demonstrates that, again, the charge of legalism is wide of the mark, for throughout this chapter we discover Turretin's ever present concern to safeguard divine grace. In fact, for Turretin, grace can be preserved without God casting off the stipulations which are integral to the relationship that human beings have with him as their Creator (and Redeemer).

The fourth chapter of this study explores how Turretin expounds other features of his doctrine of the covenant, particularly with a polemical interest against various opponents, including Socinians, Remonstrants, Lutherans, Papists, Anabaptists, as well as Amyraldians and Cocceians. Turretin's chief burden is to explain the unity of the covenant of grace in light of its twofold economy. In doing so we discover Turretin's carefully nuanced discussion of the role of the law within the evangelical covenant. Turretin also examines the differences that exist between the old and new covenants, and in defending the fully gracious character of divine redemption we are shown why he rejects the Cocceian position regarding the gradual abrogation of the covenant of works in the history of salvation, as well as his
rejection of the Amyraldian doctrine of a third covenant. Turretin’s polemics are directed toward a defense of the primacy of grace in the work of salvation, with a focus upon the testamentary character of the covenant through Christ the surety. Indeed, Christ’s suretyship testifies that the redemption of human beings is by God’s work of rescue, from first to last. Moreover, this chapter demonstrates that the covenant of grace reaches its salvific intention in and through Christ the surety of the covenant. Although the testamentary focus of the covenant of grace is principal, the bilateral or dipleuric nature of the covenant is not diminished, for Christ suffers the full negative sanction of the original covenant of works, and also completely fulfills its obligations on behalf of his people. In this way we see that the union between Christ and sinners forms the heart of the way of redemption.

The last chapter will offer an interpretative summary of conclusions concerning Turretin’s federal theology under eight headings: (1) the twofold covenant and the “representation motif” (2) the perpetuity of divine law in God’s relationship with humans; (3) the pactum salutis and Christ’s suretyship; (4) the dipleuric and monopleuric character of the covenant; (5) federal theology as a theology of grace versus legalism; (6) predestination and covenant; (7) the unity of the covenant of grace; and (8) federal theology and earlier codifications of Reformed theology. This is followed by a summary assessment of certain trajectories of scholarship pertaining to federal theology. Thus each section of this chapter will take up specific issues in light of the charges and interpretations of modern historical scholarship and certain contemporary theologians. I will thus draw together and set forth the conclusions that may legitimately be drawn from our previous analysis of Turretin’s thought and show how the triumph of grace characterizes Turretin’s theology, such that the charge of legalism cannot be substantiated, and likewise how predestination does not supersede or swallow up Turretin’s covenant scheme.
CHAPTER TWO

FAEDUS NATURE:
DIVINE GOODNESS AND DIVINE LAW, AND THE ESCHATOLOGY OF THE ORIGINAL COVENANT BETWEEN GOD AND HUMANS

Introduction

The doctrine of the covenant of nature, or as it is more commonly called, the covenant of works, has generated a great deal of criticism and is often depicted by theologians and historians of doctrine as an aberration or corruption of Reformed theology. There is no question that it represents a development within the Reformed movement, though signs of it can be detected in the works of W. Musculus, A. Hyperius, and Z. Ursinus.\(^1\) As evident from the survey of literature in the previous chapter, there are numerous criticisms directed against the doctrine of the covenant of works. Perhaps these criticisms can be summed up as follows: First, it is argued that the doctrine of the covenant of works is speculative, not biblically or exegetically defensible, for the language of covenant is not to be found in the early chapters of Genesis. Some view the twofold covenant idea as a product of Ramist logic, given Ramism’s penchant for bifurcation. In addition, inasmuch as the covenant of works is said to have little or no support from the church fathers, it lacks pedigree, which further confirms its dubious character. Second, the doctrine is reckoned an invention of sorts, a theological device designed to help solve or relieve other theological problems—principally the issue of divine culpability for human sin; or alternatively, it protects the

---

doctrine of grace by giving the law a covenant all its own. Third, it is alleged that the covenant of nature reduces man’s relationship to God to a contract, such that conditions are set forth in the form of a legal *quid pro quo* relationship. All of which bespeaks a confusion between covenant and contract, and in that confusion forfeits God’s love as the fundamental characteristic of his relationship with all persons. Fourth, the covenant of works is said to introduce a kind of “merit religion,” whereby humans stand before God on their own merits and by their own good works make their way to further blessing. Man’s primal relationship with God, then, is that of law and justice, of demand and reward. Inasmuch as this doctrine asserts the primacy of divine law over God’s grace in the divine/human relationship, it embraces a legalism that in turn defines and characterizes God’s way with human beings at every step. Fifth, the doctrine of the covenant of works entails (usually) an eschatology of some kind, such that Adam, in his paradisal state, is able to strive for something better, and therefore can be translated to a higher and more blessed state if he fulfills the obligations of this covenant, that is, if he performs perfectly the works required. The idea of an eschatology in the Edenic situation, like the covenant of works itself, is regarded as speculative, having no basis in the Genesis narrative or Scripture as a whole.\(^2\) We will keep these criticisms in mind as we examine Turretin’s views.

It should be observed, however, that fundamental to discussions regarding the covenant of works is how one answers a more basic question, namely, in the original paradisal situation, what rights do human beings possess of God and what obligations do they owe him as their creator? David Weir, following Diemer, maintains that there are basically three options regarding man’s original state in Eden:

(1) Man is in a state of pure grace, in which he must be upheld in righteousness by the grace of God. However, to make God so intimately involved with man and man so dependent upon God will lead to problems when the delicate question of Adam's Fall comes up. (2) Another possibility is the Roman Catholic conception of man's existing in a dualistic state of nature and grace, in which there is a 'natural' aspect to man and a 'grace' aspect to man. The Protestants rejected this conception, but the Roman Catholic Church continued to struggle with it. (3) The third possibility is that man is in a state of nature, in that being in the image of God he is created into a state of godly independent perfection.3

It can be disputed that these options represent the only choices, or that any of them captures the biblical conception of the prelapsarian state of Adam as understood by Turretin or other federal theologians of the seventeenth century. We will address this matter below. Of equal significance, however, is another question which pertains to the relationship between eschatology and Adam's prelapsarian state. Was the paradisal situation an end in itself, such that, had Adam obeyed God, he would have eternally persisted in the Garden of Eden? Or stated differently, was Adam to remain eternally under the test of obedience? Or was the test itself temporal in nature, so that in obeying God Adam was to be ushered into a non-fallible state? The answers given to these questions have large implications for other aspects of federal theology, or any theology, for the answers encompass the whole vision and outcome of God's way with human beings.

In this chapter we will present Turretin's doctrine of "the covenant of nature" and seek to answer the type of questions and issues raised above. We will also interact with and evaluate the work of other scholars concerning their interpretation of Turretin's doctrine and the doctrine of federal theologians in general. Last, in light of our examination and analysis of Turretin's views, we will offer a summary of conclusions at the end of the chapter.

A. The Covenant of Nature

Turretin's exposition of the covenant of nature follows his discussion of creation and providence; however, he prefaces an examination of this covenant with a brief consideration of the state of man before the fall. Turretin treats the nature of Adam's liberty or free agency

---

in the state of innocence, noting in Augustinian fashion that humans can be viewed in a fourfold state: as created, as fallen, as restored by grace, and as appointed to glory. Adam’s liberty was not the liberty of “independence” but liberty “from coaction,” “from physical necessity,” and “from slavery (both of sin and of misery).” Adam, however, was not free from “mutability.” In spite of being created just and upright or holy and righteous, he was mutable and could stand or fall from his original condition, sin or not sin. Immutability is not a gift of nature but “of grace.” As for Adam’s mutable state, Turretin argues that this does not consist of “indifference.” Rather, Adam’s liberty in the state of innocence was the power “not to sin” (posse non peccare).

1. **Covenant Defined and Defining How God Can Enter into a Covenant with Humanity**

Turretin’s treatment of “the covenant of nature” begins with a straightforward definition of the term “covenant.” Here it should be observed that he saves his comprehensive and technical analysis of the key biblical words מִשְׁמעָה (myth) and διαθήκη (diatheke) for his exposition of the covenant of grace. That said, we note that Turretin begins his discussion by observing that a covenant among people commonly refers to “a mutual agreement between two or more persons concerning the mutual bestowal of certain goods and offices for the sake of common utility.” Three conditions are attached as requisite to this common conception of covenant. First, the persons involved in this covenant relationship must possess a kind of equality, that is, they must be “equal” (aequales) either in a

---

4 Turretin, *Institutio theologicae elecetricae*, VIII.i.1-9. Turretin also treats the question whether Adam had the power to believe in Christ, provided God had revealed Christ to him. This is a matter raised by the Arminians, who deny that Adam could believe on Christ, since they wish to argue a universal, sufficient grace of God. If Adam did not have the power to believe in Christ, he did not forfeit this ability by his fall. Thus God cannot demand Adam’s progeny to believe on Christ except he first bestow a sufficient grace that enables fallen persons to believe *if they will*. See Turretin’s discussion and rebuttal of this position in his *Institutio theologicae elecetricae*, VIII.ii.1-10. (References to Turretin’s *Institutio* are by topic, question, and section number, that is, *locus*, *questio*, and *partio*. Cf. “Man’s Creation, in an Holy but Mutable State,” (London, 1660), in *The Works of John Howe*, 6 vols. (London: The Religious Tract Society, n.d.): I, 461-476

5 Turretin, *Institutio theologicae elecetricae*, VIII.iii.1. “Cum Deus inter homines dicatur vulgo mutuo pacto duarum pluriumve personarum de certis bonis et officiis mutuo prastandis communis utilitatis ergo.”
simple sense or possess a kind of equality of status or order. Second, the persons within this arrangement must be capable of conferring whatever “goods or duties” (bona vel officia) are mutually promised or required, and that the parties are in the covenant willingly and freely (αὐτεξούσιοι), as by their own independent power or authority. Third, the persons in the covenant are not obliged to do what is stipulated “without that agreement” (absque illa pactione).  

Consequently, says Turretin, a covenant strictly defined cannot exist between God and humans, for all three conditions are missing in God’s relationship with humans. The covenant members are altogether unequal (God being infinitely greater than man), even as there is no proportion “between the goods which God promises by his covenant or the duties which man is bound to perform (from which no utility approaches to God, who is in the highest degree self-sufficient [autarkestatō, cf. Ps. 16:2]).” Moreover, humans cannot claim any sort of “independence” (αὐτεξούσιος) from God; instead, they are bound to their creator and owe him complete obedience apart from “any agreement” (uilio pacto) to render such unto him. Likewise, what can humans bring to the covenant relationship? Their dependence upon God is absolute, both in relation to the good (or blessing) promised to them and the duty assigned to them. For what God has stipulated for humans to do in the covenant relationship is only possible for them to achieve if God supplies the power or ability to do it. Thus, to refer to God’s initial relationship with man in paradise as a “covenant” is only possible because God “through his infinite condescension” chose to

---

6 Turretin, *Institutio theologicae elencticæ*, VIII.iii.1. It is common for seventeenth-century federal theologians to begin their discussion of the covenant with a consideration of the idea of covenants in general.

7 Turretin, *Institutio theologicae elencticæ*, VIII.iii.1. “ut nec inter bona que Deus suo fædere promittit, et officia que homo prestarre tenetur, ex quibus nihil utilitas Deo αὐτεξοιται accedit, Ps. xvi, 2.” Psalm 16:2: ἐν τοῖς πλοῦσι σου ἐξευάλωσα τὸ κατ' ἑαυτόν σου θεον ἀρχηγὸν κατάποιετον. (“O my soul, thou hast said unto the LORD, Thou art my Lord: my goodness extendeth not to thee”—AV). William Ames, *Medulla st theologiae*, 3rd ed. (London, 1630); in English, *The Marrow of Theology*, translated, with an introduction by John Dykstra Eusden (Boston: Pilgrim, 1966; reprint, Durham, NC: The Labyrinth Press, 1983). I.xi0, states that this covenant “is not between those who are equal before the law but between lord and servant.” Hence, it is the covenant “of God, who is the author and chief executor.”
relate to his creatures in a covenantal way.\(^8\) Thus, for Turretin, a covenant between divine and human parties, strictly defined, cannot exist, but God commandeers the concept, so to speak, and as Stephen Spencer observes, despite being an “ill-fitting” concept, “God chose to use it in his relationship with his creature.”\(^9\)

Turretin accents these points by emphasizing that if God had wanted to prescribe “obedience” to his human creatures apart from any “promise of reward” he was within his sovereign rights to do so. Such is his prerogative as their creator. But God tempers his “supreme dominion with his goodness” (sed ut supremum illud dominium bonitate sua temperaret), which means that the covenant of nature is not only an expression of God’s “infinite condescension” but also of his overflowing “goodness” inasmuch as God stipulates the obedience that is due him, and couples this with “the promise of a reward.” Turretin offers this elaboration:

As he [God] wished to assert more strongly his own right over man, so he demonstrated the highest benignity in this—that he (himself in need of nothing) willed to invite to a nearer communion with him (and more powerfully allure by the bond of love and mutual obligation), the creature (already subject to him by right of creation and owing him all things from natural obligation) by entering into a covenant with him, so that man now excited by the promise of God can certainly expect happiness, not from his mere philanthropy (philanthropia) alone, but also from a covenant (on account of his truthfulness and fidelity).\(^10\)

We see that, for Turretin, humans as created are obliged to render to God all that is due him as God. As created, being the creatures God made them to be, they are already and

---

\(^8\) Turretin, *Institutio theologica elenctica*, VIII.iii.1. “Deus ... per summam οὐκεχαίρουν cum Creaturis voluit fœdus aliquod inire.”


\(^10\) Turretin, *Institutio theologica elenctica*, VIII.iii.2. “In quo, ut Jus suum in hominem fortius asserere voluit; ita summam benignitatem demonstravit in eo quod ipse nullius rei indigus, creaturam sibi jam ex creationis jure subditam, et ex naturali obligatione omnia debentem, inito foedere, ad propiorem sui communionem invitare, et isto amoris et mutuoae obligationis nexu potentius allicere voluit; Ut jam homo promissione Dei excitatus, felicitatem, non ex mera solium ejus φιλανθρωπια, sed etiam ex pacto propter veritatem ut fidelitatem ejus certo expectare possit.” Francis Roberts, for example, in his, *Mysterium & medulla Bibliorum: the mysterie and marrow of the Bible, viz. God’s covenants with man in the first Adam before the fall: and in the last Adam, Jesus Christ, after the fall, from the beginning to the end of the world: unfold & illustrated in positive aphorisms & their explanation* (London, 1657), p. 23, calls God’s entering into a covenant with Adam before the fall “an Act of Divine Grace and favour, not of debt.” Cf. Won Tack Lim, “Covenant Theology of Francis Roberts” (Ph.D. diss., Calvin Theological Seminary, 2000).
immediately under the obligation to give God his due, for God is God and they are his creatures. In this sense, even apart from any sort of covenant relationship, humans (in their bare existence) are under the demand to love and serve God according their capacity as creatures made in the divine image. Moreover, this obedience is without compensation or reward; it is simply owed to God.

But, as Turretin explains, God chose to treat his human creatures with generosity. By establishing a covenant with man, inclusive of obligations and promised blessings, obedience can issue forth into a greater and more intimate relationship. In exercising his sovereign rights over his human creatures, God simultaneously displays his unsurpassed kindness and goodness by inviting man into a more intimate and meaningful communion with himself through a covenant relationship, a covenant involving “the bond of love” and “mutual obligation.” God, according to his goodness, promises to reward man for the obedience that he naturally owes him. “That God should give a reward would exceed obligations; the promise of that reward, certified formally in the covenant relationship, only heightened the display of benignity.”

Consequently, in this way man can be motivated to serve God not only by natural obligation but also by divine promise, for God’s promise to man is nothing less than eternal happiness in the mutual bonds of fellowship and communion. Turretin thus accentuates God’s sovereign freedom, coupled with his benignity, in displaying the divine right over humans, which is exercised for their blessing.

Turretin’s accent here is one frequently made by seventeenth-century Reformed theologians. For example, J. H. Heidegger, in line with Turretin, maintains that God establishes a covenant with man according to his “eminent right” (eminens ius) and his

---

11 Spencer, “Francis Turretin’s Concept of the Covenant of Nature,” 74. Cf. Samuel Rutherford, The Covenant of Life Opened: or, A Treatise of the Covenant of Grace (Edinburgh, 1655), p. 16, where he states: “The rationall creatures owe suitable, that is, rationall obedience to the Creator, but God is under no obligation to give life, especially so excellent a life as communion with God, in glory, yet he does it.”
“singular goodness” (*singularis bonitas*).\(^{12}\) God’s sovereignty joined to his kindly disposition opens the way for a covenant relationship. As Heidegger observes about God: “He alone as the Lord can make a covenant with man, and He alone as good wills to do so.”\(^{13}\) Thus God exercises his sovereignty according to his goodness, and so he appoints man to covenant fellowship. This underscoring of God’s goodness or kindness is seen in other writers as well. John Ball argues that since this covenant is authored by God alone, the divine initiative in bringing it into existence testifies of God’s “free grace and love.” Indeed, only by grace does God enter into a covenant relationship with human beings, “above the desert of the creature.”\(^{14}\) Turretin’s own words could have easily been inspired by the Westminster Confession of Faith (1647):

> The distance between God and the creature is so great, that although reasonable creatures do owe obedience unto Him as their Creator, yet they could never have any fruition of Him as their blessedness and reward, but by some voluntary condescension on God’s part, which He hath been pleased to express by way of covenant (VII.1).

Here we observe that many scholars underestimate the significance of this feature of seventeenth-century Reformed federalism, for in back of it is a fundamental conception regarding the Creator-creature distinction, or how God as the transcendent creator can relate to his creatures. Among the Reformed orthodox of the seventeenth century, it is not possible to affirm God’s dominion and sovereignty, and also to assert that God is under a natural covenant obligation to his creatures. Samuel Rutherford expressed the sentiment this way: “The Lord is debtor to neither person nor things. He as Lord commands, but it is

---


\(^{13}\) In Hepp, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 282. (IX.9.)

\(^{14}\) John Ball, *A Treatise of the Covenant of Grace* (London, 1645), 7. Ball also writes, p. 7: “The Author of the Covenant is God, not God and man, for God doth enter into Covenant with man, not as his equall, but as his Soveraigne, and man is bound to accept of the conditions offered by the Lord.”
condescension that he commands Covenant-ways, with promise of a reward to the obeyer.”

This is simply to say that God is generous to his creatures; and it demonstrates how the criticisms of J. B. Torrance (and others) are rather wide of the mark at this point. For Torrance depicts the covenant of works as the view in which “God made Adam the child of nature who could discern the laws of nature by the light of reason, and on the basis of nature, law and reason, made a covenant or contract with Adam that if he kept the law of nature, God would be gracious to him and his posterity.” This depiction is both misinformed and a caricature as well. God doesn’t begin to be gracious to Adam upon the fulfillment of an obligation. Rather, that God enters into a relationship with Adam at all, that he fashions Adam as a moral agent who can know him; and that God so arranges Adam’s relationship with himself that human obedience issues forth unto eternal happiness, each of these testifies to God’s kindness and favor. The alternative runs into serious obstacles, as can be illustrated by a simple question: May Adam sin against God with impunity? Are there no consequences to human disobedience? May Adam ignore the God by and for whom he was created? May he ignore God’s holy ways with no penalty? The presupposition of federal theologians is that every human creature owes the Creator all that is due the Creator, so that given a person’s increased capacity as a creature of God (i.e., to know and glorify God), he or she is obliged to the same unto God. That God chooses to “reward” humans for giving the Creator his due is according to God’s graciousness and love, for the creature does not have rights over the Creator. This is a fundamental premise for federal theologians—something that Turretin makes explicit.

15 Rutherford, Covenant of Life Opened, 15.
2. Covenant as Monopleuric and Dipleuric

Turrettin next offers a brief explanation of the range of meaning in the word “covenant,” specifically as applied in God’s relationship with humans. The diversity of meaning allows for the distinction between covenants as *monopleuric* and *dipleuric*. Turrettin notes that not every covenant requires a stipulation of obedience on the part of the creature, for sometimes a covenant, “taken more broadly,” consists of “a simple divine promise,” without obedience being required or indicated. Such is the case with the Noahic covenant—God simply promises never again to destroy the earth with a flood, a promised sealed with the sign of the rainbow (cf. Gen. 9:9-11). Turrettin also cites the Lord's promise to Israel, that inasmuch as he is faithful in his appointment of day and night, so he will ever secure descendants of Israel to himself (cf. Jer. 31:35; 33:25). Covenant arrangements like these are secured or guaranteed by God’s promise alone, apart from the stipulation of obedience. Consequently, they are “one-sided” or monopleuric (*μονόπλευρον*) in character.\(^{17}\)

Yet, for Turrettin, though the idea of a covenant may be expressed in this way, in its strict and proper definition (that is, as a covenant exists between divine and human parties), it “denotes the agreement of God with man by which God promises his goods (and especially eternal life to him), and by man, in turn, duty and worship are engaged [restipulatur] (certain external signs being employed for the sake of confirmation).”\(^{18}\) Covenant, according to this arrangement, is “two-sided” or dipleuric (*δίπλευρον*) in character, which refers to the mutual obligation that the “contracting parties” have toward one another, namely, “a promise on the part of God and stipulation of the condition on the part of man.” The covenant arrangement is confirmed by “certain external signs.”\(^{19}\)

---


\(^{18}\) Turrettin, *Institutio theologiae elenctica*, VIII.iii.3. “At stricte et proprio notat pactionem Dei cum homine, per quam Deus sua bona, et precipue vitam eternam, illi promittit, et ab homine vicissim officium et cultum restipulatur, certis signis externis confirmationis causa adhibitis....”

\(^{19}\) Turrettin, *Institutio theologiae elenctica*, VIII.iii.3. “hinc promissione a parte Dei, inde conditionis stipulatione ab hominis parte.”
At this juncture a number of writers argue that the covenant concept is subverted and transformed into a contract idea. But it may be argued that these writers, rather than Turrettin, have failed to reckon adequately with the covenant concept. For Turrettin is not interested in arguing for a unilateral or monopleuric notion of the covenant in the interest of preserving a prefabricated doctrine of grace; rather, as we shall see, he allows the covenant idea to be defined according to its common and Scriptural usage within distinct contexts, and demonstrates how the doctrine of grace is safeguarded and fulfilled within the covenant arrangement.

We see, then, that Turrettin is careful to differentiate how “covenant” is used and applied. Spencer offers a helpful statement that sums up and clarifies how Turrettin uses the term covenant on three levels:

*Stricto Loquendo* covenants designate a relationship that can exist only between human beings (or at least between equals), and even then only if certain conditions obtain. By accommodation or condescension, God has chosen to enter into a relationship that resembles a human covenant and can thus, in a manner of speaking, be designated such. While not a covenant *stricto loquendo*, to call this dileuric combination of promise and stipulation is, *stricto et proprie*, a truer use of the term than the unilateral promise of benefits. (The second use of *stricto* is obviously a less strict use than the first.)

The dileuric character of the covenant, especially the language of “contracting parties,” “mutual obligations,” “stipulated conditions,” and “promised rewards” has generated much criticism by contemporary theologians and historians of doctrine. We will examine these criticisms in some detail later in this chapter after a consideration of Turrettin’s explication of the covenant parties and the promises exhibited in the sacramental trees. Here we observe that some federal theologians, more so than Turrettin, wish to accent the monopleuric character of this covenant arrangement between God and humans in the covenant of nature. Given that the covenant is wholly at God’s initiative, and given that whatever promised rewards in response to prescribed obligations are granted *ex pacto*, the

---

20 Cf. Torrance, “Covenant or Contract?”, 51-76.
21 Spencer, “Francis Turrettin’s Concept of the Covenant of Nature,” 75.
covenant is “primarily a one-way covenant (foedus μονόπλευρον).” Hепpe cites Cocceius to illustrate this accent: “Men make covenants for mutual benefits, God makes His covenant for His own benefit” (hominis enim de mutuis beneficiis, Deus de suis foedus facit). And since God’s covenant is fundamentally “a declaration of the way to perceive [obtain, receive, per sipere] the love of God and to get possession of union and communion with Him,” it is rightly called a “one-way (μονόπλευρον) covenant.” But Hепpe also cites Heidegger as illustrative of the double emphasis:

Neither would children dare of right to make a pact or contract with their parents, nor subjects with their king, nor slaves bought with silver (ἀγυρψμόντοι) with their owners, nor conquered with their conquerors, because the laws of prescribing for their superiors are voided of power. And much less can man, God’s son, slave, dependent, subject bind Him (God) by his conditions by making a contract with God. To that extent God’s covenant with men is not mutual but μονόπλευρον. It belongs to the one side or part.23

Here Heidegger first echoes the emphasis in Cocceius, as quoted by Hепpe. But Heidegger, with seventeenth-century federal theologians in general, including Cocceius, does not deny the mutuality and dilepetic features of the covenant, and in this regard he shares the point Turretin wishes to emphasize in his own discussion.

22 Hепpe, Reformed Dogmatics, 282. The quotations of Cocceius are from his Summa doctrinae de foedere et testamento Dei (Amsterdam, 1648), §5. (“divina declaratio de ratione percipiendi amoni Dei et unionе ac communione ipsius potiendi”). “Het Verbond dat God met de mens heeft, is anders dan het verbond van mensen onder elkaar. De mensen sluiten immers en verbond, waarbij het gaat om wederzijdse weldaden. God sluit een Verbond, waarbij het gaat om Zijn weldaden. Het Verbond van God is immers niets anders dan de goddelijke verklaring van de manier om de liefde van God te ontvangen en om de vereniging en gemeenschap met Hem te verkrijgen”—from Johannes Cocceius, De Leer van het Verbond en het Testament van God, trans. W. J. van Asselt and H. G. Renger (Kampen: Uitgeverij De Groot Goudriaan, 1990), 20. In §7 of this work, Cocceius focuses upon the two-sided or dilepetic aspects of this covenant; it is not the case that Cocceius emphasized the one-sided aspect of the covenant to the exclusion of its two-sided character. For a discussion of Cocceius’s treatment of this issue, see Wilhem J. van Asselt, The Federal Theology of Johannes Cocceius (1603-1669), Studies in the History of Christian Thought, ed, Robert J. Bast, trans. Raymond A. Blacketer (Leiden: Brill, 2001), 249-252.

23 Hепpe, Reformed Dogmatics, 282; the quotation from Heidegger is from his Corpus theologiae christianae, IX, 9 (italics added); idem, Dogmatik der evanglich-reformierten Kirche, p. 227, “Nec liberi cum parentibus, nec subditis cum rege, nec servis ἀγυρψμόντοι cum heris, nec vicinis cum victoribus pacisci et contrahere iure ausint, quia legis praeescrindi superioribus suis potestate destituuntur. Ac multo minus homo, Dei filius, servus, clerus, subditis cum Deo contrahendo legibus suis eum obstringere potest. Eatenus igitur foedus Dei cum hominе non mutuum, sed μονόπλευρον, unius lateris seu partes est.” Cocceius uses this same language, Summa Doctrinae de foedere et testamento Dei (1648), §6. Also see Ames, Medulla ss theologica, L.x.10; Petrus van Maastricht, Theoretico-practica theologica (Utrecht: de Water, Poolsum, Wagens & Paddenburg, 1714; Editio nova, 1724), III.xii.11; in Dutch translation as Beschouwende en Praktishale Godgeleerden, trans. Henricus Pontanus, 4 vols. (Rotterdam: Hendrik van Pelt, De Wed. P. van Gilst, Jacobus Bosch, en Adrianus Douci; Utrecht: Jan Jacob van Poolsum, 1749).
Nor is it simply μονόπλευρον, in the sense in which the covenant is so called which God is said to have made with day and night, Jer. 33.20. — It is not God alone who prescribes and promises something to man; man also passes over into God’s covenant, Dt. 29.12 (that thou shouldst enter into the covenant of the Lord thy God, and into His oath which the Lord thy God maketh with thee this day). He promises obedience to God, when He (God) imposes His conditions and He awaits a promise from Him. And so clinging to God in accordance with the terms of the Covenant he (man) so to speak binds Him (God) by his διαλογία or assent, with the force of a divine disposition, to bestow love and benefits upon him. So that in this way the conditions of man and God are distinct, their assent is distinct and in this sense the actual covenant is rightly termed mutual and two-way (διπλευρον).”

Most federal theologians, recognizing that God accommodates himself to the idea of covenant, focus on the two-sided or dipleuric aspect of the covenant relationship, both in speaking of covenants in general and of the covenant of nature. For example, Amandus Polanus says that it is “a bargain which God has made with men”; Heidegger calls the covenant of works “God’s pact with Adam in his integrity” ( pactum Dei cum Adamo integro); James Ussher says it is “an agreement which it pleaseth Almighty God to enter into with man concerning his everlasting condition”; Anthony Burgess states that in distinction from a law or testament, “a Covenant doth require consent and agreement between two parties”; Thomas Blake speaks of a “mutual consent of parties”; Francis Roberts calls it “God’s gracious Agreement with Adam, and with his Posterity”; while Herman Witsius says it is “the agreement between God and Adam created in God’s image,” or “an agreement between God and man, about the way of obtaining consummate happiness, including a commination

[24] Heppe, Reformed Dogmatics, 282-83; the quotation from Heidegger is from his Corpus theologian christianar, IX, 9; idem, Dogmatik der evangelisch-reformierten Kirche, pp. 227-28, “Neque tamen simpliciter μονόπλευρον est eo sensu, quo foedus, quod Deus cum die et nocte pepgisse (Jerem. 33, 20) dicitur. — Nam non solus Deus homini aliquid praeceptit et promittit, sed etiam homo transit in foedus Domini (Deut. 29, 12), Deo astipulando ei obedientiam promittit et ab eodem promissa expectat atque ita Deo iuxta foedern legem adhaerescens eundem per διαλογία seu astipulacionem suam vi divinae dispositionis ad praestandum amorem et beneficia veluti obligat, ut ita distinctae Dei et hominis conditiones, distincta stipulation atque eo sensu foedus ipsum mutum et διπλευρον recte dicitur.” On the mutuality of the covenant, see Ames, Metailla ss theologica, l.x.9; Cocceus, Summa doctrinarium foedere et testamento Dei, §7; Herman Witsius, De Economia Foederum Dei cum Hominibus, Libri Quatuor (Herborna, 1712), in English, The Economy of the Covenants between God and Man: Comprehending a Complete Body of Divinity, trans. William Crookshank, to which is prefixed the Life of the Author, 2 vols. (London: R. Baynes, 1822); reprinted with an essay by J. I. Packer, “Introduction: On Covenant Theology” (Escondido, California: The den Dulk Christian Foundation, 1990), Book 1, chapter 2 treats the contracting parties, chapter 3 the law and conditions, and chapter 4 the promises of the covenant of works; van Mastricht, Theoretico-practica theologa, III.xii.12.
of eternal destruction."²⁵ Perhaps John Ball offers the most thorough analysis of this feature of the covenant.

[O]ftentimes in holy Writ the name Covenant is so used, that in it plainly signify a free Promise of God, but with stipulation of duty from the reasonable creature, which otherwise was due, no promise comming betwixt, and might have been exacted of God, and ought to have been performed of the creature, if God had so pleased, Psalm 50.16 and 25.10. Psalm 44.17. For a Covenant is quiddam complecsum, implying two things, distinguished either re or ratione, the one covenanting, the other restipulating or accepting. As also two parts covenanted. First, the giving of some future good. Secondly, the retribution of some performance. The first without the second, is no more then a Promise: the second without the first is no lesse then a Law... But when two persons upon these two parts concurre, it is that we call a Covenant properly...²⁶

The Covenant in gentrall may be described, a mutuell compact or agreement betwixt God and man, whereby God promiseth all things, specially eternall happinesse unto man, upon just, equall and favourable conditions, and man doth promise to walk before God in all acceptable, free and willing obedience, expecting all good from God, and happiness in God, according to his Promise, for the praise and glory of his great Name.²⁷

That seventeenth-century federal theologians, including Turrettin, accented the mutual agreement or compact that forms the covenant demonstrates that they were trying to give proper place to the meaning of the covenant idea itself. It also demonstrates that they were not interested in allowing the doctrine of predestination to mute other Scriptural motifs and categories. At the same time, they recognized that the covenant is a concept to which God accommodates himself, infinitely condescending to establish a relationship with humans, inclusive of promised blessings and stipulated conditions. Thus because the covenant is between God and man, the Creator and creature, it is monopleuric in its origination, for

²⁵ Amandus Polanus, The Substance of Christian Religion Soundly Set Forth in two books by definitions and partitions framed according to the rules of a natural method, trans. Elijah Wilcock (London: Joh. Oxenbridge, 1595), 87-88; Heidegger, Corpus theologiae christiana, IX, 15, quoted from Heppe, Reformed Dogmatics, p. 283; idem, Dogmatik der evangelisch-reformierten Kirche, p. 224; James Ussher, A Body of divinitie (London, 1645), 123; Anthony Burgess, Vindiciae Legis, or A Vindication of the Morall Law and the Covenants, 2nd ed. (London: Thomas Underhill, 1647), 124; Thomas Blake, Vindiciæ Fodens, 2nd ed. (London, 1658), 11; Francis Roberts, Mysterium & medulla Biblicorum, 24; Wittius, De Economia Fœderum Dei cum Hominibus, I.i.1; I.i.9; also see van Mastricht, Theoretico-practica theologica, III.xii.12.

²⁶ Ball, Treatise of the Covenant of Grace, 3-4; also David Dickson, Therapeutica Sacra (Edinburgh, 1664), 71-86.

²⁷ Ball, Treatise of the Covenant of Grace, 7.
humans cannot reach up to God in the way of a covenant; God must reach down to them. Such is Turretin’s focus.

3. God’s Twofold Covenant with Humanity

Turretin next elaborates upon his terse statement about the covenant in its *dipleuric* character. First, he explains that Scripture sets forth a “double covenant” (*Fœsus geminum*) scheme: “of nature” and “of grace.” These are not two covenants, but God’s covenant with a twofold character. In shorthand form Turretin describes the double character of the covenant as that of “works” and “faith”; the former is “legal,” the latter is “evangelical.”

The foundation of this distinction rests upon four factors: (1) on the different relations God can have with man, that is, “as Creator and Lord” and as “Redeemer and Father”; (2) on man’s diverse condition, namely, his state of perfection or his fallen condition; (3) on “the diverse mode of obtaining life and happiness (either by proper obedience or by another’s imputed)”; and (4) on the distinct duties or obligations assigned to man: works or faith. Turretin clarifies the distinction by juxtaposing the various relations, conditions, modes, and duties:

For in the former, God as Creator demands perfect obedience from innocent man with the promise of life and eternal happiness; but in the latter, God as Father promises salvation in Christ to the fallen man under the condition of faith. The former rests upon the work of man; the latter upon the grace of God alone. The former upon a just Creator; the latter upon a merciful Redeemer. The former was made with innocent man without a mediator; the latter was made with fallen man by the intervention of a mediator.

Turretin proceeds to explain the first part of this double covenant in this context—the covenant of nature. He defines this covenant as “that which God the Creator made with innocent man as his creature, concerning the giving of eternal happiness and life under the

---


condition of perfect and personal obedience.”\textsuperscript{30} It is a \textit{pactum} (an agreement), which Turretin will elaborate upon later. And it is called a covenant of “nature,” or a “natural” (\textit{naturale}) covenant, not because God is somehow naturally obligated toward humans but “because it is founded on the nature of man (as it was at first created by God) and on his integrity or powers.”\textsuperscript{31} It is also called a “legal” (\textit{legale}) covenant because the condition that man is obliged to meet is “observation of the law of nature engraved within him”; and it is called a covenant of “works” (\textit{opera}) because it depends upon the works of proper obedience to God.\textsuperscript{32}

The terminology used by Reformed Federal theologians to describe the pre-fall covenant has also been the source of much criticism directed against covenant theology.

\textsuperscript{30} Turretin, \textit{Institutio theologicae elencticae}, VIII.ii.5. “\textit{Fedus naturae est, quod Deus Creator cum homine integro tanquam sua creatura pactus est, de illo felicitate et vita æterna donando sub conditione perfecte et personalis obedientiae.” Turretin’s formal definition is quite abbreviated compared to that offered by many of his predecessors and contemporaries. For other formal definitions, much more elaborate than Turretin’s, see sources cited in Heppe, \textit{Reformed Dogmatics}, 283-285; and in Rowland S. Ward, \textit{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), 89-91; also see van Mastricht, \textit{Theoretico-practica theologica}, concerning covenant in general, III.xii.7; concerning the covenant of nature, III.xii.9; Wilhelmus à Brakel, \textit{AOGIKH AATPEIA, dat is Redelijke Godsdienst in welken de goddelijke Waarheden van het Genade-Verbond worden verklaard . . . alsmede de Bedoeling des Verbons in het O. en N.T. en de Ontmoeting der Kerk in het N.T. vertoond in eene Verklaring van de Openbaringen aan Johannes}, 3 parts (Dordrecht, 1700; reprinted, Leiden: D. Donner, 1892-94); in English, \textit{The Christian’s Reasonable Service in which the Divine Truths concerning the Covenant of Grace are expounded, defended against Opposing parties, and their practice advocated as well as the Administration of this Covenant in the Old and New Testaments}, trans. Bartel Elshout, with a biographical sketch by W. Fieret and an essay on the “Dutch Second Reformation” by Joel Beeke, 4 vols. (Ligonier, PA: Soli Deo Gloria Publications, 1992-95), I: 355.

\textsuperscript{31} Turretin, \textit{Institutio theologicae elencticae}, VIII.iii.5. “\textit{Vocatur naturale . . . quia in natura hominis, prout primitus a Deo condita est, et in illius integritate seu viribus, fundatur.”}

\textsuperscript{32} Turretin, \textit{Institutio theologicae elencticae}, VIII.iii.5. Rowland S. Ward (\textit{God and Adam: Reformed Theology and the Creation Covenant} [Wantirna, Australia: New Melbourne Press, 2003], p. 95), observes that the terms and locutions used to describe the prelapsarian covenant vary because God’s relationship with Adam can be viewed from diverse perspectives. “As the original relationship, to be fulfilled through use of the endowments given him, it may be called the covenant of \textit{creation or of nature}. Being made with Adam before sin it may be called the covenant of \textit{innocence}. As made between parties who were friends it may called the covenant of \textit{friendship or of love} (but not of \textit{reconciliation}, which implies disagreement when there was none). The blessing in view may lead us to call it a covenant of \textit{life} (although it was also a covenant of \textit{death} if disobeyed), while the requirement of obedience to God suggests the term \textit{legal covenant or covenant of law or of works or of obedience}. Consideration of the tender love and generosity God showed may suggest the term covenant of \textit{favour}.” Cf. Robert Rollock, \textit{A Treatise of God’s Effectual Calling}, trans. Henry Holland (London: T. Man, 1603), 6-7; Raphaelis Eglinus, \textit{De foedere gratiae, disputatio V} in \textit{Tractatus theologici de coena domini et foedere gratiae quinis disputatibus interinctius} (Marburg, 1614), II, 10-12 (see Heppe, \textit{Reformed Dogmatics}, pp. 283-284); Francis Roberts, \textit{Mysterium & Medulla Bibliorum, The Mystery and Marrow of the Bible: viz, God’s Covenants with man} (London, 1657), 16-19; Obadiah Sedgwick, \textit{The Bowels of Tender Mercy} (London, 1661), 6; William Strong, \textit{Discoverie of the Two Covenants} (London, 1678), 2; Thomas Blake, \textit{Vindiciae Foederis}, 9; and van Mastricht, \textit{Theoretico-practica theologica}, III.xii.8.
Turretin’s preferred terminology is the covenant of nature (foedus naturæ), a locution that refers to and circumscribes the power that lies within the human creature to rightly respond to God. Of course, that man as first created possesses such a nature, with its powers, is wholly God’s act. Turretin is not saying that human nature in the state of integrity, that is, man’s nature as such, founds or establishes the covenant of nature; rather, the covenant of nature is founded on man’s nature. The precondition for God’s establishing the covenant of nature is that he endow and fashion man with certain gifts and abilities, including the law of nature inscribed on the human heart. Turretin is not saying that nature itself or creation as such is this covenant, but he is linking God’s kindly condescension to his work of creation. Because God fashions man in his image, after his likeness, creating an upright creature capable of relating and responding to God, the covenant of nature can be founded on that human nature. William Ames makes this point by speaking of God’s special government of rational creatures, for he governs them in a “moral way.” Thus this feature of God’s relationship to man is something “added to” his basic government of reasonable creatures. “From this special way of governing rational creatures there arises a covenant between God and them.”

Although at this point Turretin does not mention the law of nature, it seems to be implicit in what he says. Other federal theologians make this connection explicit. Johannes Cocceius, for example, states:

So far as the covenant of works rests upon the law of nature, it may be called the covenant of nature. . . . [Moreover, since man is made in God’s image] it . . . belongs to the created image of God to be subjected to the law of its Creator. Nothing is more natural than that the thing made should belong to its Maker and be subjected to Him in every way in which it may be subjected naturally to Him. Nothing is more at variance with nature and first truth, than that a rational being adorned with the image of its Maker should not be the servant of God as his Maker, should be outwith the law, should not be subject to Him, should not obey Him.

33 William Ames, Marrow of Theology, 1.x.1, 2, 3, and 9.
34 Johannes Cocceius, Summa doctrinae de foedere et testamento Dei (Amsterdam, 1648), II, 22; quoted from Huppe, Reformed Dogmatics, 284; idem, Dogmatik der evangelsch-reformierten Kirche, p. 228, “Foedus operum, quanten lege naturae sititur, foedus naturae appellari potest. . . .” And since man is created in God’s image and
Raphael Eglin says that the pre-fall covenant “has been naturally inscribed on men’s hearts from the beginning by God’s saving finger, the sole remnant of it still surviving being merely remorse of conscience.” Hence the “legal covenant” is rightly called the “covenant of nature.” Mastricht says it is a covenant of nature “not only because it demands obedience to that law which, for its greatest part, was inscribed upon and created into man’s nature, but also because it was entered into with the entire human nature, which according to the command of procreation was also still to come....”

The diverse terminology applied to the prelapsarian covenant has to do with the particular feature of the covenant being considered. If the condition of the covenant is under consideration, it is a legal covenant. If meeting that condition is in view, it is called a covenant of works (which is to say, a covenant of obedience).

4. Proofs Supporting the Existence of a Covenant of Nature

Turretin is aware that the idea of a *fasus nature* (a covenant of nature) meets with opposition. Not only was this the case in the seventeenth century; modern historians of doctrine and theologians also challenge the validity of this doctrine. For example, F. W. Dillistone asserts, “The so-called Covenant of works is really a fictitious invention which has dependent upon him, says Cocceius, “neque tantum naturae est rationali creaturae ut homini habere imaginem Dei, sed et ad imaginem Dei creatam pertinet subicii legi conditoris. Nihil enim magis naturale est, quam facturam faciendi esse et illi subicii omni modo, quo ei naturaliter potest subiici; nihil cum natura et prima veritate magis pugnat, quam rationalem et imagine factoris exornatum non esse servum Dei, ut factoris, esse exlegem, non subicii, non obtemperare.”


36 Petrus van Maastricht, *Theoretico-practica theologia*, III.xii.8; in Dutch translation as Beschouwende en Praktikale Godgeboerheit: “een Verbond der nature, omdat hetzelve niet alleen afsecht gehoorzaamheid aan die Wet die voor haar grootste gedeelte in ‘s menschen natur ingeschreven en ingeschapen was; maar oock omdat hetzelve met de gansche menschelijke nature, naar de order van voorttellinge ook welke als noch toekomstig was is ingegaan....” The role of natural law or the law of nature is integral to a right understanding of the *fasus nature*, see Richard A. Muller, *Dictionary of Latin and Greek Theological Terms: Drawn Principally from Protestant Scholastic Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1985); also see Heidegger, *Corpus theologiarum christianarum*, IX, 28-29, 37; Cocceius, *Summa doctrinarum de foedere et testamento Dei*, II,13; sources cited by Heppe, *Reformed Dogmatics*, pp. 291-292, as well as Witsius, *De Economia Foederae Dei cum Humanis*, Iii.i.1-2; van Maastricht, *Theoretico-practica theologia*, III.xii.9, 18; and à Brakel, *Christian's Reasonable Service*, I: 356-65.
Turretin is convinced of the contrary, however. Therefore he takes a detour to defend the notion of this covenant against opponents, specifically Simon Episcopius and the Remonstrants, who deny that such a covenant was made with Adam. Since the notion of God establishing a covenant with Adam in his state of innocence continues to draw sharp criticism by contemporary theologians and critics of Reformed federalism, it is appropriate to examine closely Turretin’s arguments in support of it. He wages his polemic under four proofs.

First, Turretin observes that the essential parties of the covenant, God and humans, are both present in the situation in paradise—something granted and not disputed. God is man’s creator, and therefore his governor, and consequently his legislator. Or more pointedly, as the creator of his human creatures, God is not able not to be their governor, and from this their legislator. In addition, since God is benevolent and good, he is also the rewar\[dor (remunerator) of those who seek him (Heb. 11:6). The appeal to this text serves as a reminder that God’s disposition is kindly and good, and that is why he conjoins a reward to obedience to his law—a law he sets forth to man in order to direct him in the way he should go. God, however, is in no way obliged to attach a reward to obedience to his law. As earlier noted, God does this because he is “good in his own nature.”

---

38 Turretin cites Episcopius’s *Institutiones theologicae*, 1. ii. c. 1 in *Opera theologica* (Amsterdam, 1650).
40 Turretin, *Institutio theologica elencticae*, VIII.iii.6. “Deus, qui prout erat hominis creator, non poterat non esse ejusdem gubernator, et ex hoc legislator . . .”
41 Turretin, *Institutio theologica elencticae*, VIII.iii.6. Cocceius argues, *Summa doctrinae de foedere et testamento Dei*, II, 22, in a similar vein, saying that “no one can επεφευρέν θεοῦ God, that is, will to please Him, worship Him, seek Him, approach Him, walk with Him (for these phrases are used by St. Paul as equivalents), save one who believes that God is who both ought to be sought and may become the rewarder of them that seek Him, and does become the rewarder of them that seek Him - Heb. 11.6.” Quoted from Heppe, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 284.
The other party of the covenant of nature is man (homo). As God’s “creature” (creatura), man is wholly dependent upon God and not able not to be such; as God’s “upright” (integra) creature, man could keep the divine law inscribed upon his heart; as God’s “rational” (rationalis) creature, man ought to be governed only in a rational manner, that is, by the intellect and will. This “rational manner” is directed by means of the “prescription of a law,” and along with it “the promise of rewards” and “the threatening of punishment.”

Besides this, and lastly, since man was created in God’s image of holiness, “he ought to be led to a communion of that happiness also which is the inseparable attendant of holiness.”

Turretin’s argument is here stated so succinctly that it takes on an inferential character—which is to say, in laying out the distinct features and character of the relationship that exists between God and man, Turretin shows how a covenant relationship is possible and may rightly be inferred. However, more precisely stated, the covenant relationship is established through God’s desire to further bless his human creatures and enter into a deeper communion with them. This was possible because of their inborn, or better, “increased” capacity to pursue holiness and fellowship with God, being made in his image. The force of Turretin’s argument is that the covenant of nature is present because God decided to specifically stipulate obedience, with threatenings of punishment and promised reward. Lying behind this divine decision is the logically prior work of fashioning man in the divine image, creating him with the capacity for a covenant relationship.

Thus God, in his role as “creator-governor-legislator-rewarder” of humans, treats man in a way distinct from other creatures and after a manner that allows man both to know the divine will and to pursue it with the knowledge that a reward awaits the one who follows

---

42 Turretin, *Institutio theologiae eleccionis*, VIII.iii.6. “... tum legumae prescriptione, tum premiorum promissione, et penarum comminatine.”

43 Turretin, *Institutio theologiae eleccionis*, VIII.iii.6. “Et quia erat ad imaginem sanctitatis divinae conditus, etiam ad communioem beatitatis ejus, qua individual sanctitatis est comes, perduci debetat.”

44 I am borrowing this locution from Spencer, gleaned from Turretin.
in its way. There is a journey and outcome to this relationship, such that, if followed on man’s part in the way of obedience, there issues forth an immutable blessed state of happiness according to God’s promise. Therefore, as the creator of man (his divinely-allied moral creature),\(^\text{45}\) God governs him necessarily; and in accord with his goodness he legislates man’s heart and life with the intent of bringing him into an immutable blessed state. This entire arrangement, then, bears the marks of a covenant, with the implication being that, in acting as man’s creator-governor-legislator-rewarder, God secures the presence of a covenant.\(^\text{46}\)

Similarly, Turretin’s remarks about man as the other covenant party demonstrates (again, by way of inference) that the essential elements of a covenant are present, for man is completely dependent upon God, even necessarily so as his creature. Moreover, man is an upright moral creature, capable of keeping the law; and since he is a rational being he is capable of being directed through legal prescriptions, involving both promised rewards and threatened sanctions. Attached to these is the reality of man as God’s image-bearer, which means that he is uniquely formed to be led in the path of fellowship with God, the way of immutable happiness and holiness in God’s presence.

Thus given man’s nature, man being made in God’s image and created for fellowship with him, and given that man is naturally endowed with a desire to pursue happiness, a covenant relationship with God is possible; and more, since God has set forth clear legal prescriptions with promised blessings in the way of obedience or punishments in the way of disobedience, we may rightly infer that a covenant relationship is certainly established.

\(^\text{45}\) Turretin’s discussion of the image of God in man is found in his *Institutio*, V.x.1-23. Turretin states that the image of God in man “consisted in gifts bestowed upon man by creation,” being gifts both “essential” and “accidental,” both “internal” and “external,” and “by which he was placed in such a degree of nature, perfection and authority that no visible creature was either more like or more closely allied to God.”

\(^\text{46}\) Cf. Spencer’s remarks, “Francis Turretin’s Concept of the Covenant of Nature,” 77: “Turretin takes this creator-governor-legislator-rewarder role on the part of God as the essence of the divine covenantal relationship. When these elements are present, a covenant must be present. These characteristics are thus not only always present when a covenant exists; they guarantee the presence of a covenant, as necessary and sufficient conditions.”
In this connection we take issue with a feature of Stephen Spencer’s analysis of Turretin’s presentation of the covenant of nature. Spencer contends that there are two conflicting strains within Turretin’s exposition of the covenant of nature. The one strain is that the Creator-creature relationship itself constitutes this covenant, or at least necessarily implies it. The other, more dominant, strain is that this covenant relationship is something additional to and distinguishable from the Creator-creature relationship. He maintains that, for Turretin, “A central assertion seems to be that God could not not enter into a covenant (of works or of some other kind) because there was in fact no other way for God to be suitably related to ‘his rational creature.’”

However, it seems better and more accurate to say that Turretin argues that the more basic Creator-creature relationship—specifically God as the sovereign creator who is disposed to bless man, and man his image-bearer, who is fashioned with the capacity to know God and pursue holiness—establishes the foundation that makes possible the more intimate covenant relationship. For Turretin does not argue, contra Spencer’s claims, that the Creator-creature relationship itself constitutes a covenant—if that were the case, there would be no reason for God to set forth specific stipulations relative to the trees in the garden of Eden and the consequences of disobedience (and the implied blessings). What Turretin has argued at this point is the entire package, namely, that God is creator-governor-legislator-rewarder. Spencer’s concern, of course, is that Turretin is inconsistent in affirming God’s freedom of infinite condescension in entering into a covenant with humans on the one hand, and then on the other hand asserting that God can relate to humans in no other way than covenantally, for where he imposes his law, there exists a covenant relationship. Thus God is

---


48 The only seventeenth-century federal theologian of whom I am aware that identified covenant and creation, or regarded the creation of man in God’s image constitutive of covenant itself is Thomas Goodwin, “Of the Creatures, and the Condition of Their State by Creation” [1682], in The Works of Thomas Goodwin, 12 vols. (1861-1866; reprint, Eureka, CA: Tanski Publications, 1996), VII, 22-27; 48-53. This identification, however, appears traceable to Olevianus’s work (see Bierma, German Calvinism in the Confessional Age, 117-120).
actually no longer free to relate to his human creatures except within a covenant—a covenant that becomes necessary and essential.

But contrary to Spencer's analysis, Turretin, with numerous other federal theologians of the seventeenth century, makes clear that God was under no obligation to reward human obedience except he stipulate such. To be sure, natural law required obedience to God, but apart from a covenant relationship, there is no reward or any sort of divine obligation to man to bless him. This is precisely why God's entering into a covenant relationship with his human creature involves condescending, infinitely so, unto them, to promise and reward blessings to them, with threatened curse too, that they cannot hope to obtain or expect, except by way of covenant. Moreover, in desiring to be good to humans as his image-bearers, God chose the way of covenant best suited for that purpose. Turretin's position is consistent with other covenant theologians of this era. For example, John Ball argues that God chose to deal with humans in the way of a covenant for three reasons: (1) that as his creatures, they might know what they could expect from God, no matter their state; (2) that they might ever know what to render back unto God; and (3) that God best deals with his reasonable creatures after this manner, for they are created to be subject to him.49

The second proof Turretin offers in support of the covenant of nature has to do with the function law plays in a covenant relationship. Turretin states that "a law was imposed

---

49 Ball, Treatise of the Covenant of Grace, 6. Cf. Calvin's comments (The Epistles of Paul to the Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians and Colossians, trans. T.H.L. Parker [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1963], comm. on Gal. 3:17) that apart from a covenant that God establishes with man, no reward is due to works of obedience, and we may not expect any reward for our works unless God graciously agrees to accept them. Also Witsius, De Oeconomia Fœderum Dei cum Hominibus, I.i.11; Thomas Brooks, The Covenant of Grace Proved and Opened (London, 1675) in The Works of Thomas Brooks, ed. Alexander B. Grosart, 6 vols. (1861-67; reprint, Edinburgh: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1980), 5: 286, where he writes: "Promise this with me, that God both commonly deals with man in the way of a covenant; that being a way that is most suitable to man, and most honourable for man, and the most amicable and friendly way of dealing with man. No sooner was man made, but God entered into covenant with him. . . . There is a covenant of works in paradise, a covenant with the world by Noah, a covenant with Abraham, and also with the Jews at Sinai. "Thus you see that God has commonly dealt with man in the way of a covenant."
upon Adam, which necessarily implies a federal agreement and contract.”53 In receiving this law of God—Turretin is referring to the explicit stipulation and warning of Genesis 2:16, 17—Adam has bound himself to obey it out of duty (ex officio), under threat of the punishment denounced through the same. For his part, God likewise, as the one who exacts obedience, binds himself to supply “indemnity” (indemnitatem) and “security” (securitatem) for Adam.51 Turretin is not referring here to the law of nature that is imposed upon man as created; rather, he is referring to the explicit stipulations given to Adam in the Garden of Eden, for he cites Genesis 2:17, noting that

Although Moses sets forth only one part of that federal sanction (referring to punishment, Gen. 2:17), still he proves that the former concerning the promise should not be excluded, both from the sacrament of the tree of life (by which it was sealed) and from the threatening of death (which by reason of contraries had the implied promise of life and from the various passages of Scripture which express more clearly the nature and sanction of the law, as Lev. 18:5—“If a man do these, he shall live in them,” cf. Dt. 27:26; Ezek. 20:11; Mt. 19:17; Gal. 3:12).52

It should be noted that Spencer misrepresents Turretin’s position at this point, for he states that Turretin’s “second line of proof makes ‘law’ a necessarily covenantal concept.” He further states that, for Turretin, “All laws are said to necessarily imply a federal agreement and contract.” Thus, “All legal situations are . . . covenantal situations.” Turretin’s position, as Spencer sums it up, is wherever there is law there is covenant. In fact, this is a dubious portrayal of Turretin’s view, for Spencer reads Turretin’s form of expression (“a law was imposed upon Adam, which necessarily implies a federal agreement and contract”)53 to be a generalized rule that any law imposed upon anyone implies a federal agreement and contract.

50 Turretin, Institutio theologae eleccionis, VIII.iii.7. “Lex Adamo posita fuit, quæ necessario importat pactum et contractum aliquem fœderalem . . . ”
51 Turretin, Institutio theologae eleccionis, VIII.iii.7.
52 Turretin, Institutio theologae eleccionis, VIII.iii.7.
53 The Latin text is “Lex Adamo posita fuit, quæ necessario importat pactum et contractum aliquem fœderalem,” hence a more precise English translation would be: “A law was placed upon Adam, which necessarily introduces some federal agreement and contract” (Institutio, VIII.iii.7).
Turretin’s argument, however, only requires that the law imposed upon Adam—since it was imposed or placed upon him by God, and a particular law at that, concerning a thing indifferent in itself—necessarily brings about a federal agreement and contract. Indeed, if this were not the case, God could act tyrannically, exacting obedience that he need not honor as such; or from the side of the human party, if the law imposed upon humans did not entail, necessarily, a federal agreement or contract of some sort, then they could ignore God’s law with impunity. William Bridge makes explicit what is the substance of the Reformed position as it bears on Turretin’s definition:

[A covenant] is a mutual agreement, and herein a Covenant differs from a Law. A Law properly is a commandment with penalty. No sooner was man made, but he was under a Law, to be obedient unto God his Maker; and in case he broke it, God by the Law of Nature might punish him. But then when God said unto him, In the day that thou eatest thereof, thou shalt die the death, then God entered into a Covenant, man accepting thereof.54

It is precisely because the Creator-creature relationship is unlike the creature-creature relationship that God condescends, accommodating himself to the “covenant” concept, so that he may enter into a covenant with his human creatures. A covenant between God and man is possible only through God’s infinite condescension and goodness, and even then it is not a covenant “strictly and properly” in the way of common human relationships and covenants. It is a covenant through divine accommodation, and in the way of divine accommodation God enters into a covenant relationship with humans, placing Adam under a law—specifically the probationary law of the Garden of Eden, with its attendant sanctions of both curse and blessing—wherein the creator not only prescribes obedience but prescribes obedience he promises to bless and reward with life (even as disobedience brings punishment and death). The covenant arrangement itself is born of God’s sovereignty and goodness, and on the human creature’s part it is entirely undeserved.

The broader context of Turretin’s treatment of the covenant of nature may not be isolated from his abbreviated and tight statements in defense of the idea. The context makes it plain that Turretin is referring to the specific law imposed upon Adam in the Garden of Eden, complete with its warning of death. Turretin does not claim that any law implies a covenant; he certainly does not make “law” as such “a necessarily covenantal concept.” He merely argues that the law given to Adam in the garden introduced or brought into the picture a kind of federal or covenantal agreement or contract inasmuch as death is threatened, and “by reason of contraries,” along with the support of other Scripture, an implicit promise of life. This reading is confirmed by the next sentence (in the Latin text), where Turretin says: “Although Moses sets forth only one part of that federal sanction (referring to punishment, Gen. 2:17). . .” (“Licet vero alteram tantum partem sanctionis istius federalis exprimat Moses, quæ refertur ad poenam, Genes. ii. 17 . . .”). Note well, Turretin here explicitly refers to the law given to Adam in paradise (“Lex Adami posita fuit”) as “that [istius] federal sanction.” It isn’t an abstract law or any law as such that constitutes a covenant; not at all. The law to which Turretin refers is the paradise commandment to refrain from eating of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. This law came with sanction, and that is why it is a covenant.

Spencer is likewise not convinced that Turretin’s argument, as stated, is sufficient to persuade Episcopius that a covenant of nature exists between God and Adam. For even though Turretin claims that the imposition of the law, with its reception, brings with it an “officially binding” character upon both parties of the covenant, such is mere assertion—an assertion that “itself is in need of support, if it is to have force.” Again, Spencer treats law here in abstraction, not as the specific law given to Adam by God in paradise as part of the

---

55 Contra Spencer, “Francis Turretin’s Concept of the Covenant of Nature,” 79.
56 Turretin, Institutio theologiae sive etiam, VIII.iii.7. Italics added.
57 Spencer, “Francis Turretin’s Concept of the Covenant of Nature,” 79.
probationary arrangement. Consequently, he thinks that Turretin fails to supply "the additional elements which are required for a covenant 'properly speaking.'" Turretin's argument, as understood by Spencer, creates a bare principle: "law necessarily implies federal agreement and contract." From this it would seem that Turretin makes "covenant a much more common phenomenon that might otherwise be thought." Spencer even asks what sort of covenant Turretin might have in mind "when he asserts that imposed law 'necessarily implies some federal agreement or contract'? A covenant strictly or loosely conceived? A monopleuric or a dipleuric covenant?"

Unfortunately, Spencer's misinterpretation of Turretin's fundamental point skews his discussion at this point. In fact, that the law given to Adam is not merely a law in general is confirmed later in Turretin's discussion, where he explicitly states that the law placed upon Adam was "twofold" in nature: "the moral or natural law and the symbolic." Thus the law imposed on Adam is, to be sure, in part a general law imposed on all humans as image-bearers of God. But there is also a special law imposed upon Adam—the paradise command regarding the forbidden fruit. The former refers to God's general will that man live in accord with "every kind of holiness," while the latter was God's special command to Adam to abstain from eating the forbidden fruit. For Turretin, God's special paradise requirement functioned as a "compendium" and "specimen" of the law in its totality. What is more, Turretin argues that man's obligation of obedience to God is likewise of a double character: a natural obligation and a federal obligation."

---

58 Spencer, "Francis Turretin's Concept of the Covenant of Nature," 79.
59 Spencer, "Francis Turretin's Concept of the Covenant of Nature," 79.
60 Turretin, Institutio theologiae elegantiae, VIII.i.12.
61 Turretin, Institutio theologiae elegantiae, VIII.i.12. Diemer detects a dualism in such an affirmation (see his Schapenverband met Adam, 10ff; 32ff). But as demonstrated above, Turretin isn't positing a dualism; instead, he is distinguishing between creation and covenant, for the creation doesn't contain the prohibition regarding the Tree of Knowledge; and God as creator is not man's debtor. Here we also note that Karfberg ("The Mosaic Covenant and the Concept of Works in Reformed Hermeneutics," 22-31) fails to substantiate the dualism thesis any better than Diemer. Throughout his study Karfberg, like Diemer, presupposes a dubious and outdated reading of what nature and grace amount in thinkers like Thomas Aquinas. Coupled with this
Turretin lists a number of Scriptures, each of them like Leviticus 18:5, stating that life is through obedience to the law and curse abides on the one who fails to uphold the law.

The third argument or proof that Turretin offers in support of the covenant of works is Hosea 6:7, where unrepentant Israel is said to have “transgressed the covenant like Adam” (אָנָחָה לְאַדָּם נִשְׂטַר), “Et ipsi sicut Adam violarunt facund.” Turretin acknowledges that it is grammatically legitimate to understand this phrase to refer to “the inconstancy of men,” for humans, being “naturally false and fickle,” commonly violate covenants. But Turretin also argues that it is grammatically permissible to understand the phrase to refer to Adam, “(that they [the Israelites] may be said to have violated the covenant like Adam, their first parent, who miserably broke the covenant contracted with him by God).” Turretin appeals to Job 31:33 (“If I covered my transgressions as Adam” AV) in support of rendering כְּאָדָם as “like Adam,” for the identical construction is present there. The reference in Job unmistakably refers to Adam, who sought to hide his sin by covering himself with garments woven of leaves. Or as Turretin says, “Here is a manifest reference to the fact of Adam’s endeavoring to excuse and hide his sin (Gen. 3:12).”

In some respects this is Turretin’s weakest argument in support of the existence of the covenant of works—mostly because his defense is quite truncated. Schaff however is mistaken in claiming that Hosea 6:7 is the sole text federal theologians can appeal to in

prior problem, Karlberg superimposes a particular interpretation and conception of the nature/grace relationship as the standard by which earlier codifications of Reformed theology are then judged as orthodox or unorthodox. This entire methodology is suspect, for it is theological when it needs to be historical in its approach; in any case, it begs the question since Karlberg simply assumes as true what in fact needs to be demonstrated and proven. For an alternative evaluation of Thomas Aquinas on the question of nature and grace, see, for example, Arvin Vos, Aquinas, Calvin, and Contemporary Protestant Thought: A Critique of Protestant Views on The Thought of Thomas Aquinas, foreword by Ralph McInerny (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1985), 123-160; also cf. Muller, “The Covenant of Works and the Stability of Divine Law,” 92 fn. 60

62 Turretin, Instituo theologiae elencticæ, VIII.iii.8.
63 Turretin, Instituo theologiae elencticæ, VIII.iii.8.
64 Turretin, Instituo theologiae elencticæ, VIII.iii.8. The correct reference is Gen. 3:10.
support of the idea of a covenant of works.\textsuperscript{65} Meanwhile Beardslee argues that the ambiguity of Hosea 6:7 makes it "unsuitable for proving a doctrine,"\textsuperscript{66} whereas Spencer faults Turretin's line of reasoning on several fronts, believing that Turretin begs the question when he says that Hosea 6:7 may legitimately refer to Adam. Says Spencer, "That is precisely the bone of contention," observing that Calvin judged the reference to Adam to be "untenable." Spencer also contends, against Turretin, that since the Hebrew construction in the Job passage is identical to the Hosea passage, it is "a problematic support" at best.\textsuperscript{67} But most troublesome is what Spencer alleges to be Turretin's "reasoning." According to Spencer, "He [Turretin] finds a 'manifest reference' [in Job 31:33] to Adam's attempt to excuse and conceal his sin." Then Spencer concludes: "This Turretin regards as supportive of the existence of a covenant. The transgression implies a norm or law, and this, as we have seen, implies a covenant, in Turretin's judgment."\textsuperscript{68} Spencer has in fact missed the force of Turretin's argument completely, for the appeal to the Job passage is merely to demonstrate that it is grammatically permissible, even preferable to render לְאָדָם as "like Adam," rather than "like men." The point Turretin is making is that Scripture does explicitly refer to God's relationship with Adam in the Garden of Eden as a "covenant." It is not Turretin's burden, as alleged by Spencer, to contend that the Job passage argues the existence of a covenant. Rather, Turretin merely maintains that in Job 31:33, the Hebrew לְאָדָם should not be translated as "like men." What is a "manifest reference" is that Adam is in mind here, not men in general, for the Job passage is a clear allusion to Genesis 3:7-10 where Adam,


\textsuperscript{66} Beardslee, "Theological Development at Geneva under Francis and Jean-Alphonse Turretin (1648-1737)" (Ph.D. diss., Yale University, 1956), 516.

\textsuperscript{67} Spencer, "Francis Turretin's Concept of the Covenant of Nature," 80-81. A more contemporary analysis of Hosea 6:7 is provided by B. B. Warfield, "Hosha VI:7: Adam or Man?" in \textit{Selected Shorter Writings of Benjamin B. Warfield}, 2 vols. (Nutley, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Co., 1970), I, 116-129. After a detailed examination of this text, Warfield concludes, pp. 127, 128, that to translate the phrase "like men" is both "vapid and meaningless," and the objections against the rendering "like Adam" are "imported from without the clause itself."

\textsuperscript{68} Spencer, "Francis Turretin's Concept of the Covenant of Nature," 81.
because of his sin, tried to hide from God and cover his nakedness with fig-coverings. At this juncture, Turretin is making a grammatical, not a theological, point. Thus, Turretin’s argument is neither question begging, nor is his appeal to the Job passage problematic in being an identical construction. That the two passages in question share the identical Hebrew construction is precisely the point—if the Hebrew construction in Job 31:33 is rightly translated as “like Adam,” then it may be legitimately translated the same way in Hosea 6:7. The same argument is set forth by Petrus van Mastricht, who states that the best translations take יֵעָנָא in Hosea 6:7 “propr., not appellative.”\(^{69}\) Turretin’s view is not atypical of many federal theologians of the seventeenth century. The Dutch Annotations sets forth both interpretations of this Hebrew construction:

\[
\textit{like Adam:} \text{ (following the footsteps of their first forefather, who, notwithstanding he was so abundantly endowed and blessed by me, yettransgressed my Command, and revolted from me. Compare Job. 31.33. and Isa. 43.27. with the annotat. Oth. as men, i.e. as if they had to do with a meer man, not with me the Almighty and righteous God).}^{70}\]

Similarly, the Annotations upon all the Books of the Old and New Testaments,\(^ {71}\) or the “Westminster Annotations” popularly so-called, also prefers the translation “\textit{like Adam},” for he was “the first sinner of all, who brake Gods first Covenant with mankinde, whence followed the generall curse upon all men.” Job 31:33 and Isaiah 43:27 are referenced. John Diodati, in his Pious and Learned Annotations upon the Holy Bible, offers commentary identical to the Westminster Annotations.\(^ {72}\)

\(^{69}\) Petrus van Mastricht, Theoretica-practica Theologia, III.xii.23, from Heppe, Reformed Dogmatik, 289; in Dutch, Beschouwende en Praktikale Godgelykerheid, “het woordt יֵעָנָא Keådâm niet vertalen als een gemeen naamwoord, door als een mensch; maar als een’ eigenen naam, door als Adam. . . .”

\(^{70}\) The Dutch Annotations upon the whole Bible: Or, all the holy canonical Scriptures of the Old and New Testament . . . as . . . appointed by the Synod of Dort, 1618, and published by authority, 1637, 2 vols., trans. Theodore Haak (London, 1657).

\(^{71}\) Annotations upon all the Books of the Old and New Testaments, wherein the Text is Explained, Doubts Resolved, Scriptures Paralleled, and Various Readings observed, by the Joyn-Labour of certain Learned Divines (London: John Legatt and John Raworth, 1645).

\(^{72}\) John Diodati, Pious and Learned Annotations upon the Holy Bible, 2nd ed., translated into English (London, 1648).
The fourth proof Turretin puts forward to establish the validity of a fœdus nature focuses upon both the character of God and the status of man as created in God's image. Turretin maintains that “such a covenant was demanded not only by the goodness and philanthropy (φιλανθρωπία) of God . . . but also by the state of man and the desire of happiness impressed upon his heart by God.”

It fits with God's character to enter into a covenant with his human creature, for God created man for himself—that is, God created man to be a creature that desires happiness in fellowship with God. Consequently, God would act out of harmony with his own nature if, having created man for himself, he failed to relate to man covenantally. For the covenant relationship that God establishes with man provides a way for Adam and his descendants to enjoy eternal fellowship with God. Without such a relationship, Adam could expect no reward or fuller and richer fellowship with God except to render what was due God as God according to his capacity as the creature God made him to be. With the covenant relationship, the Creator-creature relationship between God and man can come to full fruition, for God promises to reward human obedience with a life of eternal fellowship with God, no longer subject to fall and testing. This suits or fits man's own state before God, desiring eternal fellowship and happiness with his creator; and it is consistent with, even demanded by, God's own nature. For he loves man created in his image and acts benevolently toward him by establishing this covenant.

In fact, Turretin says that God's “goodness” and “philanthropy” come to expression in no more fit way “than by receiving nearer to himself and making happy with his communion the man seeking him.”

Turretin also argues that man's desire for happiness (which God made part of his nature) is both “right” and “lawful.” Thus it was proper for God to open the way for the fulfillment of this desire, not allowing it to lie “empty” or “frustrated,” and

---

73 Turretin, Institutio theologiae elencticæ, VIII.iii.9. “Quarto, Tale fœdus postulabat, nor modo Dei bonitas et φιλανθρωπία . . . sed et ipsius hominis status, et felicitatis appetitus ipsius cordi a Deo impressus.”

74 Turretin, Institutio theologiae elencticæ, VIII.iii.9. “. . . quæ non potuit convenientiæ se exercere, quam hominem se quærentem ad se propius recipiendo et communiœ sua beando . . .”
to do so "on the ground of man's obedience." If this is denied, that is, if God failed to do this, then he would have acted unkindly and deceptively toward man, giving him a "vain desire." For Turretin, to consider the possibility of such is "blasphemous."\(^ {75} \)

Although Spencer speculates that Turretin's argument regarding God's goodness can at this point have the appearance of being in conflict with divine freedom, especially the language that God's goodness "demanded" (postulabat) a covenant and that human happiness "ought" (debuit) to be fulfilled, he acknowledges that this "can be explained as cases of hypothetical necessity," observing that "God was not obligated to give this desire to humans, but having done so, it is not right not to provide for its fulfillment." Similarly, says Spencer, "God was under no obligation to create; he would not have been inconsistent with his character had he not created anything." And, in fact, Spencer points out that Turretin "argues elsewhere that the necessity and obligation spoken of regarding the covenant of nature are only hypothetical necessities, only on the basis of prior realities, i.e. the creation of the world, itself a free and nonobligatory act."\(^ {76} \) Spencer seems unaware, however, that for the Reformed orthodox God's entire relation to the world is a hypothetical necessity and that Turretin's way of speaking of God's freedom is the standard Reformed view.

Here we do well to consider further Turretin's conception of God's goodness (if only briefly), for he defines the goodness of God, and the qualities subsumed under it (love, grace, and mercy), as the attribute by which God communicates "good" to his creatures. God alone is supremely, absolutely, and intrinsically good, even as he alone is originally, perfectly, and immutably good, both relatively and extrinsically "as beneficent towards creatures (which is called benignity)." Part of what defines God's goodness is that it is

---

\(^{75}\) Turretin, *Institutiones theologicae elencticarum*, VIII.iii.9.

\(^{76}\) Spencer, "Francis Turretin's Concept of the Covenant of Nature," 82. Spencer cites *Institutio*, I.i.12-13, and notes that the Incarnation is another example of hypothetical necessity, *Institutio*, XIII.iii.14.
“communicative of itself.” Thus God’s goodness *ad intra* is naturally disposed to display and share itself *ad extra*. Turretin conceives of God’s love flowing from his goodness; grace, in turn, succeeds love, “by which God is conceived as willing to communicate himself to the creature from gratuitous love without any merit in the creature and notwithstanding its demerit”; and God’s mercy “attends upon the grace of God.” We simply note, as Muller observes, that among the Reformed orthodox “the concept of the bonitas Dei... is one of the primary attributes of God’s self-manifestation”; moreover, “in view of the trinitarian nature of God, this ultimate goodness ought not to be viewed an monolithic or static: God’s goodness *in se* or *ad intra* is communicable.” Or as Turretin states, “From goodness flows love by which he communicates himself to the creature and (as it were) wills to unite himself with and do good to it...”

Turretin’s defense of the doctrine of a covenant of nature is rather clipped and truncated, or at least not as fulsome as might be expected from an elenctic theology. For example, Turretin does not address the objection that since the term “covenant” is not found in the creation and paradise narrative, it is speculative to assert that the relationship existing between God and man in that situation is covenantal. Turretin believes that Scripture, specifically Hosea 6:7, does refer to this situation as a covenant relationship, and therefore he most likely judged that it is unimportant whether the term is used in Genesis 1-3. Some federal theologians, however, take on this objection more directly. Thomas Brooks states:


Though the name be not in the Scripture, yet the thing is in the Scripture, as will evidently appear by comparing Scripture with Scripture. Though it be not positively and plainly said in the blessed Scripture that God made a covenant of works with Adam before his fall, yet, upon sundry scripture grounds and considerations, it may be sufficiently evidenced that God did make such a covenant with Adam before his fall; and therefore it is a nice cavil, and a foolish vanity, for any to make such a noise about the word covenant, and for want of the word covenant, boldly to conclude that there was no such covenant made with Adam, when the thing is lively set down in other words, though the word covenant be not expressed...81

This in fact is Turretin’s approach. He looks at “sundry scripture grounds and considerations” and argues in effect that “the thing is lively set down in other words.”

Although other arguments were available to Turretin for proving the existence of a covenant of nature, he judged these four to be sufficient to establish his case.82

Turretin’s exposition of the covenant of nature is, to this point, altogether standard fare for an orthodox Reformed theologian in the seventeenth century. In expounding upon the proofs, Turretin has also expounded upon his understanding of the covenant and its aim, at least partially. As is true for all federal theologians, the covenant of nature, or whatever nomenclature is used to describe it, is integral to other doctrines and sets up the context for understanding the condition from which humans have fallen and the promised blessing unto which their lives can alone find fulfillment. In short, the relationship that God exercises with humans is grounded in the covenant of nature, such that all persons find themselves related to God on its terms; even the covenant of grace is directly related to and a fulfillment of its

---

81 Brooks, *The Covenant of Grace Proved and Opened*, in *Works*, 5: 293. John Ball, *Treatise of the Covenant of Grace*, p. 5, offers an additional perspective on this question: “[I]n making Covenant with the creature God is not tied to verball expressions, but often he contracts the Covenant in reall impressions in the heart and frame of the Creature, which is apparent in the Covenant so often mentioned with the unreasonable creature, and this was the manner of covenanting with our first parents in the state of Innocency: but is most observable in the restored reasonable creature, when God shall put his Lawes into their hearts, and write them in their inward parts, Jer. 31.33, and the more perfect the creature growes, the more reall shall the impression be...” Also, p. 6: “We reade not the word Covenant betwixt God and man, ever since the Creation, both in Innocency, and under the fall: but we have in Scripture what may amount to as much.”

82 Other federal theologians offer either fewer or more proofs than Turretin, some of which are different than his foursome. For example, Johannes Cocceius, *Summa doctrinar*ae de foedere et testamento Dei*, §8, sets forth three proofs; Petrus van Mastricht, *Theoretico-practica theologia*, III.xii.23, expounds upon five distinct proofs. Also see Francis Roberts, *Mysterium and Medulla Biblicorum*, 20-22; Burgess, *Vindiciae Legis*, 122-124.
prescriptions, for the latter covenant constitutes God’s gracious intervention to escape the former’s negative sanction.  

Since the proofs do not only defend the existence of the covenant of nature but give a partial exposition of it, they are not an unimportant aspect of Turrein’s understanding of this covenant.

5. The Contracting Parties of the Covenant of Nature

Turrein proceeds to examine what he terms “the subject or contracting parties” of the covenant of nature, that is, God and man (Deus et Homo). God acts in his capacity as “Creator and Lord,” whereby he exercises “legislatory power” (legislatoria potestas) on the one hand, and “goodness in remunerating” (bonitas in remunerando) on the other. Says Turrein, as the creator of man, God must needs govern his creature; and he must do this in a way consistent with his nature, which is to say, he must govern his rational creature “rationally” (λογικά). God does this by imposing “fit laws” (per legum idonearum positionem)—that is, laws suited to man. According to his goodness, God loves his human creatures and rewards them for their obedience. Even more, he cannot do otherwise.

Man, the other party of the covenant, can be viewed from two relations: “as just” (qua justus) or “as first” (qua primus). The former relation has to do with man’s ability or “power” (virtus) to do what is required of him. Since he, as righteous, possesses the power to perform what God demands of him, he is obliged to meet the requirement. In other words, God does not require of Adam what he cannot perform, for, says Turrein, “no one is bound to an

---


84 Turrein, *Institutio theologicæ elencticæ*, VIII.iii.10. Turrein says that God is not able not to govern his creature, even as he is not able not to love and reward the creature doing what is required. “Illa quidem, quia qua Creator non potest non creaturam gubernare . . .” And “Hæc vero, quia non potuit non creaturam suum officium præstantium amare, et remunerari.” Witsius and other federal theologians treat the contracting parties in ways similar to Turrein; see, for example, Witsius, *De Æconomia Foederum Dei cum Hominibus*, I.i.1-3; van Mastricht, *Theoretico-practica theologica*, III.xii.1-2.
absolute impossibility.”

The latter relation, man *qua primus*, treats Adam in relation to the whole human race. Adam is “the root” (*radix*) and “seminal principle” (*principium seminal*ē*) from whom springs the human race, and also “a public person” (*persona publica*) and “representative head” (*sapiet representatio*ē*) of that race—that is, of those who descend naturally from him. “Hence that covenant pertained not only to Adam, but to all his posterity in him.”

For the bond Adam has with his progeny is both “natural” (*naturali*)—being “the common father of all”—and “forensic” (*forensi*)—constituted as “the chief and head of the human race” according to God’s wise appointment. Thus Adam is contracted in this covenant for both himself and all who are his, even as he possesses or loses “the goods bestowed upon him, as goods common to the whole of nature.”

In this connection Turretin appeals to the “the illustrious Amyrald” (sic) [“Amyrauldus” or “Amyraut”] for support, since the Saumur professor does not deny but affirms Turretin’s point.

Meanwhile the “pact” (*pactio*) itself consists of two parts: “on the one side, the exaction of duty on the part of God and a restituation on the part of man; on the other side, the

---

85 Turretin, *Institutio theologicae elencticae*, VIII.i.11.

86 Turretin, *Institutio theologicae elencticae*, VIII.i.11. “Unde fraxus istud non ad Adamum solum, sed in illo ad omnes ejus posteros pertinuit.” See also from Hynan, *Summa doctrinae de fide et testamento Dei*, II, 45, 46; I, 9; Daniel Wyttenbach, *Testamenta theologicae dogmaticae modo scientifico protractatae*. 3 vols. (Frankfurt: Joh. Benj. Andreae et Henr. Hort, 1747–49), II, 574; and Wittius, *De Economia Foederum Dei cum Hominibus*, I.i.14, who states: “Tota prorsum hominis historia id evincit, non singularem personam eum aeternitatem esse, sed universam naturam humanam in eo fuisse spectatam.” Crookshank translation: “The whole history of the first man proves, that he is not to be looked upon as an individual person, but that the whole human nature is considered as in him.” Polish, *Substance of Christian Religion*, p. 88, speaks of the covenant of works as “a bargain of God made with men concerning eternal life…” (italics added). Ames, *Marrow of Theology*, I.x.30, says that since Adam was “the first of mankind,” and all persons derive from him, “a law was given to him not only as a private person... but as a public person or the head of the family of man.” Francis Roberts, *Mysterium et Medulla Bibliorum*, p. 24, defines the covenant of nature as involving “the first Adam and his posterity.” J. Heidegger, *Corpus theologiae christianae*, IX, 15, says that in the covenant of works God makes a pact with Adam “in his integrity, as the head of the whole human race.” So also Johannes Wolffius, *Compendium theologiae christianae* (Oxford, 1657), Bk. I.x.8; van Maistrich, *Theorico-practica theologia*, III.xii.10, 11, 24.

87 Turretin, *Institutio theologicae elencticae*, VIII.i.11.

88 Turretin quotes Amyraut’s “Theses theologicae de Tribus Foederibus Divinis,” 8 in *Syntagma Theosiam Theologicam in Academia Salzmuriensi variis temporibus disputatarum*. 2nd ed. 4 parts. (Saumur: Joannes Lesner, 1664), 213.
promise of blessing on the part of God and the acceptation on the part of man. 89 We briefly examine each part, since the covenant relationship requires both of them. In the first part, God exacts duty and man restipulates—that is, promises or engages in return to fulfill the duty imposed.

As noted earlier, the law or duty imposed is “partly general” and “partly special,” for the law imposed on Adam is twofold: the moral or natural law and the symbolic law. The general law, which is the moral law of nature inscribed on all human hearts, includes knowledge of God and the duty to worship him (Turrein cites Romans 2:14, 15), and duties towards other humans, to act justly toward them and to perform “every kind of holiness.” Although this is not a written law, contained in a book, it is an engraven law, stamped upon the heart. Turrein asserts that the law of nature is “principal” and “primary,” since any “special precept” or “symbolic law” functions to explore obedience to the natural law. Clearly, for Turrein, God’s law is of one piece. The specific prohibition serves to focus man’s obedience to God, whether he will know and worship God and perform “every kind of holiness” to God and his neighbor, in accord with the law imposed upon him as the one created in God’s image.

The special law or duty given to Adam “was founded upon the symbolic and positive law,” wherein God explicitly forbade Adam to eat from the tree of knowledge of good and evil. The whole law of God, says Turrein, was contained in that commandment “as in a compendium and specimen” (an idea he enlarges upon later in his discussion). But in relation to the natural law this special duty has a “secondary” character, for in imposing this law upon Adam, God is building upon the law of nature that is already inscribed upon the human heart. 90

---


90 Turrein, *Institutio theologiae elencticae*, VIII.iii.12.
Turretin briefly elaborates upon the nature of the stipulated obedience. He maintains that the obedience demanded by the law should evidence certain marks: it must spring from sincerity of heart, that over against hypocrisy; it must encompass all of God's precepts, not only certain ones; it must be "perfect" and "absolute," not tainted or partial; and it must be "constant" and "perpetual" versus intermittent or temporary. This covers the nature of human obedience to God in relation to its "principle," "object," "degree," and "duration."  

Having examined the nature of obedience Turretin next discusses the distinction between a "natural obligation" and a "federal obligation." This corresponds to the double character of the divine law imposed on Adam—the natural law and the special law. Here we reach a pivotal juncture in Turretin's exposition of the covenant of nature.

Although man was already bound to this obedience by a natural obligation as a rational creature, necessarily subject to the dominion of God and his law, yet he was more strongly bound by a federal obligation which God so stipulated that man—by the powers received in creation—could perform it, although in order that he might actually perform it, he still needed the help of God both to actuate these faculties and powers and to preserve them from change. This help did not tend to the infusion of any new power, but only to exercising the efficacy of that power which he had received. Now this did not belong properly to the covenant of nature, but always depended on the most free good pleasure (eudokia) of God; otherwise the covenant of nature had been immutable, and man had never sinned.

---

91 Turretin, *Institutio theologicae seleniticae*, VIII.iii.13. Herman Witsius, *Economy of the Covenants between God and Man*, I.i.13, argues that man wouldn't be "without guilt" if he refused the proposed covenant, for man, being subject to God, is bound by the universal law to accept everything he proposes, and God, being sovereign, may rightly grant his benefits to his rational creatures and appoint the conditions of obtaining the same. "[H]ence this covenant, as subsisting between parties infinitely unequal, assumes the nature of those, which the Greeks called Injunctions; or covenants from commands. . . . It is not left to man to accept or reject at pleasure God's covenant. Man is commanded to accept it, and to press after the attainment of the promises in the way pointed out by the covenant. Not to desire the promises, is to refuse the goodness of God. To reject the precepts is to refuse the sovereignty and holiness of God; and not to submit to the sanction, is to deny God's justice." De *Economia Fonderum Dei cum Hominibus*: "Unde hoc fœdus, quum inter admodum inaequalibus sit, naturam eorum fœderum induit, quae Græci proœctasmata, aut συνθήκες ἐκ τῶν ἐπηαγμένων νομοθέτων . . . Non est in arbitrio hominis fœdus Dei amplexet vel reiciere pro lubitu. Praeceptum est homini ut id amplectatur, anhelans ad promissam, per viam fœderis monstratam. Promissa non desiderare, est abnegare Dei bonitatem, Praecepta repudiare, est abnegare Dei eminætiam & sanctitatem. Sanctioni non subscribere, est abnegare Dei justitiam"

92 Turretin, *Institutio theologicae seleniticae*, VIII.iii.14. "Ad hanc vero obedientiam, licet homo obligatus jam esset obligacione naturali, qua creatura rationalis, qui non potest non subsese dominio Dei, et ipsius Legi, fortius tamen obstrictus fuit obligacione federali, quam Deus ina stipulatus est, ut homo, viribus quas in creatione acceperat, eam praestare posset, quamvis ut ilam actu praestaret, ipsi adhuc opus esset auctor Dei, quo facultates ille et vires tum actuarentur, tum a mutatione preservarentur. Quod auxilium non tendebat ad virtutem novam aliquam ipsi infundendam, sed tantum ad efficaciam illius virtutis exercendam, quam acceperat. Hoc autem non pertinebat propris de fædus natura, sed a liberirima Dei eôdocia semper pendebat, alias fædus naturae fiisset immutabile, nec homo unquam peccasset." Not unrelated to this issue is the Reformed doctrine of *concursus*, see...
Here we see, again, that Turretin does not confuse covenant with creation. For man is related to God as creature; but he is also (or additionally) related to God as covenant creature. The natural obligation of obedience that humans owe God is not itself a covenant relationship, for that Creator-creature relationship per se does not include any sort of promised blessing; there is no promised outcome or felos to this relationship. However, with the imposition of specific laws, with sanctions, God establishes a relationship with Adam (and his descendents) that is covenantal in nature, and so man is also under the obligation of covenant obedience to God. This fits with Turretin’s earlier discussion that God, acting out of and according to his infinite goodness, seeks man’s welfare and blessing by condescending to enter into a covenant relationship with his human creature. The covenant relationship involves sanctions (blessing and curse), and purposes that man attain a richer and fuller fellowship with God. That the two relationships are distinguishable is borne out from the twofold obligation humans are under, which goes back to God’s law in its two parts—general and special. Thus the covenant relationship is founded on the prior creator/creature relationship, but the two relationships are distinguishable and not to be simply equated with one another. Thus Spencer says, “Here, covenant is an additional relationship, intensifying the already extant, distinguishable, and apparently separable natural obligation as a rational creature.”

93 This remark is mostly on target, except it would be more correct to say that

---

Muller, Dictionary of Latin and Greek Theological Terms; Turretin, Instituto theologica elenctio; Vli-ix, especially questiones v, vi; Witsius, Economy of the Covenants between God and Man, I.viii.13-29; à Brakel, Christian’s Reasonable Service, I: 336-341; Pictet, Christian Theology, 154-160; also the sources cited in Heppe, Reformed Dogmatics, 256-261; and Ridgley, Commentary on the Larger Catechism, I: 358-361.

93 Spencer, “Francis Turretin’s Concept of the Covenant of Nature,” 86. Spencer points to another Reformed orthodox writer who shares Turretin’s emphasis: Johannes Marckius, Compendium theologiae christiana ad didactic-elencticum (Groningen, 1686), XIV.24, quoted in Heppe, Die Dogmatik der evangelisch-reformierten Kirche, p. 231, “Sic Jehovah, qui Deus erat Adami creaciones et conservationis iure, talis quoque factus est si foderis, subiectionis et expectata ab Ipso remunerazione;” idem, Reformed Dogmatics, p. 287, “So the Lord who was Adam’s God by right of creation and preservation, likewise became so by dint of the covenant, by his submission to it and by the reward he expected of Him.” Spencer also refers to Geerhardus Vos, De Verbondelijk in de Gerenomeerde Theologie (Rooderdam: Mazijk’s Uitgeversbureau, 1939), English translation “The Doctrine of the Covenant in Reformed Theology,” in Redemptive History and Biblical Interpretation: The Shorter
man's natural obligation to perform "every kind of holiness" is itself taken up into the covenant relationship and may not subsequently be separated from it.

In this connection, we pause to note that N. Diemer's analysis of federal theology cannot be sustained. He thinks that unless creation and covenant form a single identity, so that covenant is organically related to covenant, an unbiblical dualism emerges since something supernatural is added to or superimposed upon the created order, rendering creation inadequate or in some way second-rate. Turrettin, however, in refusing to identify creation with covenant has not compromised the goodness of creation or somehow rendered it second-rate; rather, the creator/creature relationship is incorporated into the covenant relationship and even presupposes it. What Turrettin refuses to do, however, is to confuse these relationships, for creatures as creatures are without rights before the creator. God does not owe humans eternal life as such. Moreover, God does not become the debtor of human beings by creating them, for creation is an act of freedom. This is why Turrettin argues that unless God condescends to enter into a covenant relationship with humans, thereby choosing to become man's debtor through an act of goodness and love, they remain without rights before him. This is simply to assert that the sovereign Lord is sovereign in both creation and covenant. Of course, theoretically it is possible to regard creation itself as a kind of covenant, but that identity runs into trouble inasmuch as the paradisal situation depicts God issuing specific commands to Adam, with negative sanctions stipulated if he violates those commands.

No matter how Diemer or others may wish to assess Reformed federalism, the Edenic commands regarding the trees in the Garden are extra-creational, certainly not indigenous to creation itself. They are something extra; and it is this something extra—depicted in the prohibitions regarding the trees and the symbolism God assigns to them—that establishes

Writings of Geerhardus Vos, p. 244, "[T]he covenant of works is something more than the natural bond which exists between God and man."
the covenant relationship. This covenant relationship, however, also and at the same time
takes up into it itself the creator/creature relationship, including man being fashioned in the
divine image and created as a moral agent with the natural law inscribed upon his
conscience. Consequently, inasmuch as God issues specific commands to Adam in paradise,
something is added to and superimposed upon the creator/creature relationship. The
something that is “added” is the covenant relationship with its threatened negative sanction
and by implication positive eschatology.

In any case, for Turretin, although the law of nature is primary or first, bringing with it
natural obligation (for man, as God’s rational creature, is “necessarily subject to the
dominion of God and his law”), nonetheless the special law imposed upon Adam and his
progeny in the garden, despite being secondary in character, brings a federal obligation that
“more strongly” (fortius) binds man to obey God and perform “every kind of holiness.”

An important feature of Turretin’s discussion is to be noted at this point. Correlating
to this stronger obligation is man’s capacity to perform it, for man in a state of integrity
(status integritatis) is able to do his duty inasmuch as God stipulated that man “by the powers
received in creation” could obey him. Yet Turretin immediately adds that man does not
actually do so without divine assistance, which consists of God putting man’s “faculties” and
“powers” into action and keeping them in their right status. This divine aid is not some sort
of donum superadditum, as if it were an “infusion of any new power” in man. Instead, God’s
help tends to “the excercising the efficacy of that power” that he bestowed upon man at
creation.94 As Spencer observes: “‘Nature’ in ‘Covenant of Nature,’ though part of a
nature/grace couplet, clearly does not imply existence, activity, or attainment apart from

94 Cf. Ward, God and Adam, p. 106, who observes that federal theologians did not view this covenant as
adding “supernatural qualities to the man of nature”; rather, they saw this covenant as a means by which God
could “crown the creature made in his image with glory and honour such as could not be attained by him in
any other way.”
God.” God provides man both with the powers to obey him and their “efficacious use.” In addition, this divine assistance is not a specific feature of the covenant of nature, that is, God is not obliged to provide assistance in order to secure for man the meeting of his federal obligation. Rather, that God chooses to render such help, says Turretin, always depends upon God’s good pleasure, which is to say, if God was obliged to give this assistance under the stipulations of the covenant of nature, the covenant would have been wholly monopleuric and unbreakable (not dipleuric and breakable), and man could not have fallen into sin, for he would have been immutably sinless.

Thus we see that Turretin fully affirms God’s freedom at this point; and we see that insofar as man is unable to act apart from God’s help (the help that actuates man’s created powers) the fulfillment of the covenant of nature is dependent upon “the most free good pleasure [εὐδοκεία] of God.” This means that the establishment of the covenant of nature, and also its fulfillment, is a matter of God’s sovereign choice.

This brings Turretin to the other side of the pactio—that is, the sanction prescribed in the covenant of nature. The sanction is twofold, involving God’s promise of “reward” (premii) and “gain” (mercdis), and his “threatening of punishment” (comminatione pene). The promise consists of nothing less than the “highest happiness (of eternal life),” and this means that such life is passed “in heaven,” not “on earth.” The threatening consists of

---

95 Spencer, “Francis Turretin’s Concept of the Covenant of Nature,” 86. Spencer cites Thomas Aquinas in this connection, Summa Theologiae, vol. 22, ed. and tr. W.D. Hughes, Blackfriars (New York: McGraw-Hill; London: Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1969), 1a-2ae, 62, 1. Cf. Anthony Burgess, Vindiciae Legis, p. 129, who states: “Adam was not able to obey any command of God, without the help of God. Though some will not call it grace, because they suppose that only cometh by Christ, yet all they that are orthodox do acknowledge a necessity of God’s enabling Adam to do what was good, else he would have failed.” More directly to the point is Witsius’s discussion, De Öconomia Fœderum, I.viii.13-27.

96 Turretin, Institutio theologiae elencticæ, VIII.iii.15. John Ball, Treatise of the Covenant of Grace, p. 6, states explicitly what Turretin leaves implicit, namely, that “As in Innocency God provided and proposed to Adam, etemal happinesse in the present enjoyments, and caufs for perfect obedience: which appeares from Gods threatening, Gen. 2.17. For if man must die if he disobeyed, it implies strongly that Gods Covenant was with him for life, if he obeyed.”
“death” and “whatever in Scripture comes under the name of death to express punishment of all kinds.”

The sanction’s outcome, or which of the two sanctions comes to fruition, depends upon whether certain obligations are met. This pactio brings forth a “mutual obligation of the parties.” However, although the obligations are mutual, they are not identical for each party, for the parties are wholly unequal and differ in their “condition.” Man, as one party of the covenant of nature, is obliged to love God with all his heart. Thus, on the one hand, man as a party of the covenant is under obligation to love God “from the pact” (ex pacto). However, in back of this, man is under obligation to love God as his creature. Turretin calls this obligation “absolute and simple from the nature of the thing.” That obligation, however, rooted in the Creator-creature relationship, does not constitute a covenant relationship—as Turretin clearly distinguishes between them—nor does it specify covenant sanction for man’s benefit, either of promised gain or of threatened death. We see, then, that the obligation that man owes God is rooted in creation and reinforced and specified ex pacto.

God’s obligation to man in the covenant relationship, though a mutual obligation, is altogether different. For the obligation that God is under as the first party of the covenant is “gratuitous” (gratuita)—meaning it derives from “the pact” that God establishes. This important feature of Turretin’s understanding of the covenant of nature and how God relates to humans as bearers of his image should not be underestimated. God finds himself under obligation to man according to his own “gratuitous promise” (promissione gratuita), “by which God was bound not to man, but to himself and to his own goodness, fidelity and truth.” This manner of speaking helps Turretin both to safeguard God’s freedom and to reaffirm the distinct difference between divine obligation and human obligation. Turretin

---

97 Turretin, Institutio theologiae elencticæ, VIII.iii.15.
98 Turretin, Institutio theologiae elencticæ, VIII.iii.16.
99 Turretin, Institutio theologiae elencticæ, VIII.iii.16. “per quam Deus, non ipsi homini, sed sibi, suaeque bonitati, fidelitati, et veracitati obstringebatur...”
cites Romans 3:3 and 2 Timothy 2:13—passages that affirm the faithfulness of God (including faithfulness to himself) in the face of human unfaithfulness and failure. Thus God’s obligation to man is altogether self-imposed, and even then the obligation is not strictly speaking a “debt” (debitum) God owes man. Rather, it is a debt God owes himself, a “debt of fidelity” (fidelitatis debitum) and only that. It emerges from “the promise by which God demonstrated his infallible and immutable constancy and truth.”

Therefore man cannot claim any right (jus) before God. In fact, Turretin bids us to understand passages like Romans 4:4 (“Now to him that worketh is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt”—AV) in a “respective sense,” that is, “not as the proportion and condignity of the duty rendered to God by man (Rom. 8:18; Lk. 17:10), but to the pact of God and justice (i.e., the fidelity of him making it).”

Spencer interprets Turretin to be saying: “Not only is God not bound antecedently to the human race, but he technically is not bound to them even within the covenant”—citing for support Turretin’s explicit statement that God is not bound to man but to himself and his own goodness in the covenant arrangement. Given this understanding of Turretin’s scheme, Spencer questions whether God’s fidelity to himself needs to be separated from his covenantal fidelity, arguing that the two texts Turretin refers to (Romans 3:3 and 2 Timothy 2:13) only prove the former and do not address the latter. Contrary to Spencer’s analysis, however, it does not appear that Turretin is saying that God’s “fidelity to himself” is “exclusive of” his “covenantal fidelity.” Quite the opposite, God’s fidelity to himself secures his covenantal fidelity. Turretin’s point is an uncomplicated one. In saying that God

---

103 Turretin, Institutio theologicae elencticae, VIII.iii.16.

104 Turretin, Institutio theologicae elencticae, VIII.iii.16. “Quod si Apostolus jus sive debitum videtur agnoscer, Rom. iv. 4, non alio sensu intelligendum est, quam respective, non ad proportionem, et condignitatem officii, quod homo praestat Deo, Rom. viii. 18, Luc. xvii. 10, Sed ad Dei pactum, et paricentis justitiam, id est, fidelitatem.”


is not bound to man but to himself in the covenant arrangement, he is merely arguing that insofar as we may speak of a divine obligation to man in the covenant, this obligation is self-imposed and that gratuitously (that is, it is voluntarily and freely entered into by God, and so not owed to or earned by man). Consequently, we may never speak of God’s obligation in the covenant as if it stems from something in man that produces a debt in God; rather, God’s obligation stems from himself, and being true to himself God meets his “obligation” ex pacto to himself to man. Clearly, it is Turretin’s concern to show that the divine “obligation” to man can be called such only in a unique way—being derived from God’s own gratuitous promise, and so dependent upon the pactio he sovereignly and freely established out of his goodness.

This reading of Turretin is confirmed by considering how the Genevan pastor-professor sets up his argument about the mutual obligation through a contrast—“with respect to man…” (respectu hominis) on the one hand, and “with respect to God…” (respectu Dei) on the other. Man, besides being under obligation to God ex pacto, is under obligation to God absolutely and simply “from the nature of the thing,” inasmuch as God is man’s “Creator” and “Benefactor.” God however isn’t under obligation to man from the nature of the thing, either absolutely or simply. God’s obligation is “gratuitous, as depending upon a pact or gratuitous promise.” Consequently, when Turretin says that God “was bound not to man, but to himself and to his own goodness,” he isn’t arguing (as Spencer alleges) that God “technically is not bound to [the human race] even within the covenant.” Rather, Turretin is showing that God’s obligation to man in the covenant relationship is derived from himself, and in being bound to himself, God is faithful to his promise to us.

Meanwhile, as Turretin has already argued, God was not obliged to establish this pactio in any case. However, having established this pactio or feudus naturae, God still is not in man’s debt because of something in humans. As Turretin earlier noted, since God is man’s benefactor, whatever humans have is wholly from God. Turretin’s point seems to be, though
he does not actually pen the words, that God (absolutely and simply from the nature of things) cannot be placed in man’s debt.\textsuperscript{105}

Spencer thinks that Turretin’s view is to be distinguished from that of Cocceius, and appeals to Heinrich Huppe’s analysis of this issue. It appears, however, that Spencer’s appeal to Huppe is off the mark, for Huppe says the following about Cocceius:

Cocceius (\textit{Summ. th.} XXII, 23-24, 27-28) most emphatically insists that God’s \textit{debitum} here is not to be connected with a \textit{dignitas operum} in man. God could never become man’s debtor: (1) Man as a creature is essentially the “slave of God” \textit{[servus Dei]} and himself owes everything to God; (2) he has nothing which he has not received from God. A \textit{debitum} on God’s part only exists \textit{ex pacto}, “and that by the single agreement by which works are exacted as the condition of righteousness.” But this \textit{pactum} is worthy of God, “in so far as it cannot not intervene between God and man. And he who knows that man was made by God in His image, also realises, if he waits, that man is called by God to communion with God in life eternal and glorious through the accomplishment of works.”\textsuperscript{106}

Contrary to Spencer, it seems that Turretin’s point is identical to Cocceius’s. In fact, this is a common emphasis among federal theologians. William Ames, for example, forthrightly states: “In this covenant the moral deeds of the intelligent creature lead either to happiness as a reward or to unhappiness as a punishment. The latter is deserved, the former not.”\textsuperscript{107}

Thus even when man fulfills the obligation of the covenant, the reward promised is \textit{not deserved}. Apart from the covenant, God did not owe even his obedient creatures anything. In the words of John Ball, God established this covenant of “his free grace and love,” and Ball argues that while God grants reward in the way of justice,

\begin{quote}
yet it was of grace that God was pleased to bind himselfe to his creature, and above the desert of the creature: and though the reward be of justice, it is also of favour. For after \textit{perfect obedience performed} according to the will of God, it had been no injustice in God, as he made the creature of nothing, so to have brought him unto nothing: it was then of grace that he was pleased to make that promise, and of the same grace his happinessse should have been continued.\textsuperscript{108}
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{105} Turretin, \textit{Institutio theologica elencticar}, VIII.iii.16.

\textsuperscript{106} Huppe, \textit{Reformed Dogmatics}, p. 288.

\textsuperscript{107} Ames, \textit{Marrow of Theology}, I.x.11.

\textsuperscript{108} John Ball, \textit{Treatise of the Covenant of Grace}, 7. The use of the term “grace” does not affirm or assume any redemptive dimensions; it merely underscores the idea of the undeserved character of God’s kindness and that God is not in man’s debt. Anthony Burgess observes, \textit{Vindiciae Legis}, p. 129, that although some orthodox writers do not like to use the term “grace” in this connection, because they want to reserve the word for that which comes by Christ in his salvific work, all who are orthodox acknowledge the necessity of divine action if
Samuel Rutherford writes in a similar way:

Communion with God in glory, is a reward not due by nature, but by the free gift of God to the most perfect law obedience.

God may put the respect of a reward upon any obedientiall end. But that Adam should have such an eminent life, for the reward of his obedience as a communion with God, which is farre above his obedience, is the free donation of God: nor is there any necessary connexion between Adams perfect obedience, and so high and eminent a life, nor can this Covenant, as touching such a promise, be written in his heart. God then never loved to make any Covenant, yea even that of Works, without some acts and out-goings of grace, and the hyre was grace, how is he not to be served, who loves to hyre and allure us to be happy?²⁰⁹

Herman Witsius reckons this as a commonplace among the Reformed: “I lay this down as an acknowledged truth, that God owes nothing to his creature. By no claim, no law is he bound to reward it. For all that the creature is, it owes entirely to God; both because he created it, and also, because he is infinitely above it.”²¹⁰

This suffices to demonstrate that the various depictions of the doctrine of the covenant of works as a kind of legalism, as alleged by Torrance, Rolston, Poole, and others, fail to offer an accurate portrait of the standard federal view. The entire covenant relationship in paradise is according to divine condescension and overflowing goodness to his human creatures.²¹¹ This also suffices to demonstrate that for both Turrettin and federal theologians in general God was not to be regarded as man’s debtor. But saying that is not to


²⁰⁹ Rutherford, Covenant of Life Opened, 22.

²¹⁰ Witsius, Economy of the Covenants between God and Man, Liv.11; also cf. John Barret, God’s Love to Man, and Man’s Duty towards God: manifested in several Discourses on the Covenants of Works and Grace (London, 1678), 41-43.

suggest that God’s ex pacto obligation to himself, a fidelity to himself, is exclusive of covenental fidelity to man. Instead, his fidelity to himself produces covenental fidelity—to do to man according to his sanction.

Such is confirmed in the next paragraph of Turretin’s Institutio. In opposition to several trajectories of scholarship that reads Reformed federalism as a species of legalism or a kind of works-merit religion, Turretin demonstrates that the covenant relationship between God and humans, already in the covenant in paradise, cannot be construed in those terms. Merit in a proper or strict sense cannot define man’s relationship with God. “If therefore upright man in that state had obtained this merit, it must not be understood properly and rigorously.”112 The “merit” to which Turretin refers is the reward or blessing promised to Adam (and his descendents) if he obeyed God’s stipulation and prohibition in the Garden of Eden. But why can’t merit properly or rigorously defined apply to man’s relationship with God? The answer has to do with the nature of creatureliness.

Since man has all things from and owes all to God, he can seek from him nothing as his own right, nor can God be a debtor to him—not by condignity of work and from its intrinsic value (because whatever that may be, it can bear no proportion to the infinite reward of life).

As Turretin conceives and explains the relationship between God and humans in the covenant of nature, he robustly dismisses any notion of debt or merit in the proper sense. Humans can never earn their way to God, or merit a reward strictly speaking, not even in fulfilling their covenental obligations, for no matter how perfectly humans fulfill their covenental obligations, that work or obedience or loving faithfulness to God is never commensurate with the sanction of blessing promised in the covenant. This fits with

112 Turretin, Instituti theologialm elencias, VIII.iii.17. “Si quod ergo merium homo integer in illo statu obinuisset, non intellegendum est proprie et in rigore.”

113 Turretin, Instituti theologialm elencias, VIII.iii.17. “...quia cum homo omnia habeat a Deo, et Deo debet, nihil jure tanquam suum potest ab illo repetere, nec Deus illi debitor esse potest: Non per condignitatem operis, et ex intrinseco ejus valore, quia quaecunque illud sit, nullam proportionem habere potest cum premio vitae infinito...."
Turretin’s discussion that God was within his rights to demand obedience from man without providing any kind of blessed outcome for man correlating to it.

Thus, that there is blessing correlating to human obedience or loving faithfulness to God is borne of God’s goodness expressed by way of a covenant relationship, and within that relationship, that is, *ex pacto*, God blesses faithfulness with the sanction stipulated, just as *ex pacto* God grants man the right to expect reward within the gratuitous covenant arrangement. Thus “from the pact and the liberal promise of God (according to which man had the right of demanding the reward to which God had of his own accord bound himself),”¹¹⁴ man possesses a right gratuitously bestowed upon him by God and so he may look to God to keep his promise—even though the promised blessing is not strictly earned or merited. God as man’s debtor is only conceivable as a divine act of infinite condescension; the debt is first to himself *ex pacto* and therefore to man. Man cannot seek from God anything “as his own right.” Daniel Wyttenbach, writing some years after Turretin, also makes this point:

By perfect obedience Adam could not have merited anything. God could rightly have demanded such obedience, being the Most High and Absolute Lord, and man owed such obedience, both on account of the divine perfections and for the sake of his own happiness and the tremendous benefits received from God, and so obedience, even the most perfect, would have been sheerly due to Him.—Eternal life was accordingly promised to man and represented in no sense as a reward. . . . Adam could not have asked eternal life of God save in virtue of the pact.¹¹⁵

This fact is further established when the covenant of nature is compared with the covenant of grace. Since the *fœdus gratiae* is based upon “the sole merit of Christ,” humans

---

¹¹⁴ Turretin, *Institution theologiae scolasticae*, VIII.i.i.17, “. . . *ex pacto*, et liberali Dei promissione, juxta quam jus postulandi praemi homin habuisse, ad quod Deus ultero se obligaverat . . .”

have no ground for seeking anything from God as a right. Christ alone acquires for his people "the right to life."\textsuperscript{116}

Beardslee rightly states that, for Turretin, "the idea of merit" is excluded "in any form from the covenant of works."\textsuperscript{117} Spencer also rightly interprets Turretin to be saying that "humans can never have a truly meritorious relationship to God," something that is true in both the covenant of nature and the covenant of grace. But, as earlier observed, Spencer misinterprets Turretin’s position when he argues that Turretin makes a separation between God’s fidelity to himself and a covenantal fidelity to man. For God’s fidelity to himself does not exclude a covenantal fidelity to humans. Spencer believes that Johannes Cocceius stakes out a better position than Turretin regarding the divine obligation in the covenant relationship, for the Leyden theologian "seems to advocate a gratuitous, \textit{ex pacto} obligation of God to humans."\textsuperscript{118} Spencer fails to see that Cocceius’s view coincides with Turretin’s position almost point for point.\textsuperscript{119}

To say that "a \textit{debitum} on God’s part only exists \textit{ex pacto}" and this debt cannot be "connected with a \textit{dignitas operum} in man" is precisely Turretin’s purpose in saying that, even in the covenant, God is bound not to man but to himself. He isn’t denying that God has a covenant commitment to man, for he affirms a mutuality of obligation between the covenant parties. But the divine indebtedness is gratuitous and derivative; it is an

\textsuperscript{116} Turretin, \textit{Institutio theologicae elencticae}, VIII.iii.17. "Et comparare ad fidem Gratiae, quod solo merito Christi nititur, quo jus ad vitam nobis acquirit." Turretin adds, however, that "this demanded antecedently a proper and personal obedience by which he obtained both his own justification before God and life, as the stipulated reward of his labors." ("Hoc vero obedientiam propriam et personalem postulabat antecedenter, ex qua et justificationem suam coram Deo, et vitam obtineret, tanquam mercedum pactam sui laboris.")

\textsuperscript{117} Beardslee, "Theological Development at Geneva," 455.

\textsuperscript{118} Spencer, "Francis Turretin’s Concept of the Covenant of Nature," 88 fn. 30.

\textsuperscript{119} Cf. Heppe, \textit{Reformed Dogmatics}, p. 288, "Cocceius (\textit{Summ. th. XXII}, 23-24, 27-28) most emphatically insists that God’s \textit{debitum} here is not to be connected with a \textit{dignitas operum} in man. God could never be man’s debtor. (1) Man as a creature is essentially the 'slave of God' [\textit{servus Dei}] and himself owes everything to God; (2) he has nothing which he has not received from God. A \textit{debitum} on God’s part only exists \textit{ex pacto}, 'and that by the single agreement by which works are exacted as the condition of righteousness' [\textit{ex uiso pacto, quo opera ut condition institutis exigatur}.'] Cf. van Asselt, \textit{Federal Theology of Johannes Cocceius}, pp. 256-257, where he demonstrates how Cocceius, like Ames, treated the idea of the covenant of works as a relationship of friendship with God (\textit{amicitia cum Deo}).
indebtedness to himself *ex pacto* directed to man. Never is God's indebtedness to man apart from what he himself does for man in the way of fulfilling the covenant requirement. For humans have nothing that they have not received from God.

B. The Sacraments of the Covenant of Nature

1. The Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil (*de Arvore Scientiae Boni et Mali*).

The next *quaestio* that Turretin takes up is directly related to the *fedus naturae*, for there is significance both in the name given to the tree of the knowledge of good and evil and in its function as a symbolic law by which God tests man.\(^\text{120}\)

After noting that it is a "useless curiosity" to try to determine what kind of tree is named here, Turretin addresses the important question regarding the distinct name given to

---

this tree.\textsuperscript{121} He argues that the tree of the knowledge of good and evil was so denominated “not formally”—as if the tree itself knew good and evil; “not effectively” (contra certain Jews and the Socinians)—as if the tree produced or aided in giving knowledge to whomever ate of it; “not putatively”—as if the tree derived its name from Satan’s lie. Rather, this tree bears this name “sacramentally,” that is, due to its sacramental function, and “eventually a posteriori by anticipation.”\textsuperscript{122} The sacramental character of the tree is seen in that “it was an exploratory sign and a warning to avoid the experiential knowledge of evil equally with good.” The eventual \textit{a posteriori} reason for this denomination comes from the reality that in eating of this tree, Adam “was really about to experience the difference between the good of obedience and the evil of disobedience.” Thus what Adam willfully failed to learn “by precept,” he realized “by experiment.” This knowledge is double sided: Adam learned of the enormity of his own evil, and thus the enormity of the goodness he yielded; and he learned of the enormity of the evil that came down upon him, and so the heights of happiness he forfeited and the depths of misery into which he plunged himself.\textsuperscript{123}

Turretin concludes that God utilized this precept with the aim of exploring Adam’s obedience to him. Thus God revealed the special law, with its prohibition, regarding the freedom to eat of every tree except the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, the violation of which brings death (see Gen. 2:16, 17). Turretin says: “This is called ‘a positive law’ because it did not bind man from the nature of the thing (which was in itself indifferent), but

\textsuperscript{121} See Turretin, \textit{Institutio theologiae eleonae}, VIII.iv.1-2.

\textsuperscript{122} Turretin, \textit{Institutio theologiae eleonae}, VIII.iv.3.

\textsuperscript{123} Turretin, \textit{Institutio theologiae eleonae}, VIII.iv.3. As Beardslee states, “Theological Development at Geneva,” p. 462, “The sacramental lies in God’s will; He used the tree to represent the obligation of obedience. The name is ‘proleptic’ in that from this tree and his experience with it, man learned what he would not learn by precept.” So also from Heppe, \textit{Reformed Dogmatics}, p. 293, Matthaeus Martinius (\textit{De gebr. Mundi} 228): “The tree of the knowledge of good and evil derives its appellation from the result, because of course it would turn out, that if man snatched to himself its fruit contrary to God’s veto he would know by his actual trial how much good he would have lost and into how much evil he would have plunged himself.”
from the mere will of God." 124 This is an important point for demonstrating that Adam (as a public person) was actually tested in his obedience to God, for it explicitly demonstrates that God established a covenant relationship with man that is distinct from, though grounded in, the Creator-creature relationship between God and man his image-bearer. Inasmuch as Adam could not discern this special law from the law of nature, and inasmuch as the arbitrariness of the law (not binding ex natura rei) requires unquestioning loyalty to God as Lord and to his will, "God gave this precept to man for his trial." 125

Thus the special law given to Adam in the garden also has a "symbolic" character, for it serves as "symbol" (symbolum) and "trial" (experimentum) of man's obedience to God. Turretin asserts that the entirety of the "natural law" (Lex naturalis) lies embedded in this law, and he quotes from Tertullian, that the "primordial law given to Adam in paradise, was, as it were, the matrix of all God's precepts." 126 In fulfilling this special precept, Adam would have exhibited "his uncorrupted love and obedience towards God"; however, in disobeying it, he displayed a preference for his own will (and for the will of the devil) in opposition to the will and dominion of God. 127

Turretin offers five reasons why this "exploratory law" (Lex exploratoria) was needed beyond the natural law engraved upon the human conscience. First, this law reaffirmed God's dominion over man, to whom God granted dominion over the other creatures of the earth, so that "man might understand himself to be a servant [servum] bound to obey and

124 Turretin, Institutionum theologicarum, VIII.iv.4. "qua vocatur Lex positive, quia non obligat hominem ex natura rei, qua in se erat indifferentes, sed ex mero Dei arbitrio."

125 Turretin, Institutionum theologicarum, VIII.iv.4, 7. Wolvebius, Compendium theologicum christianum, Bk. I.viii.i.3, states that the twofold sacrament of the covenant of works had a twofold purpose: "(1) That man's obedience might be put to the proof, by his eating or abstaining; (2) that the first [the tree of life] might signify eternal happiness for those who obeyed, and the second [the tree of knowledge of good and evil], the loss of the highest good and the coming of the greatest evil for those who disobeyed." (Beardslee translation). Also see Heppe, Reformed Dogmatics, 291, 293-294.

126 Turretin, Institutionum theologicarum, VIII.iv.4. Turretin's quotation is taken from Tertullian's An Answer to the Jews 2 (ANF 3:152; PL 2.599). Turretin, Institutionum theologicarum, VIII.iv.4.

127 Turretin, Institutionum theologicarum, VIII.iv.4.
adhere to him." Thus by means of this "peculiar law" (peculiari Legis), which concerns "a thing absolutely indifferent" (de re absolute indifferente), God declares his lordship over man more clearly than the natural law can do, for the natural law is susceptible to being regarded as a mere "property of nature and not a law" (proprietatem naturae non autem Legem). In short form, this law testifies to the divine freedom on the one hand and to man's duty on the other. There is nothing beyond God's "own pure free will" that accounts for this prohibition; and therefore Adam is to obey God in this regard for no other reason than God wills it.

Many federal theologians argue this point in this way. According to Ball, by this special command God enjoins man "to manifest his loyalty and humility, by abstaining from some act in itself indifferent, for no other reason but because he was so commanded." For the commandment functioned symbolically, given as a test and probation, to determine whether Adam "would submit to the good pleasure of God in an act of itself merely indifferent, because he was so commanded." Similarly, John Barret argues that God adds this special or positive law to the unchangeable law of nature in order "to try his creature's obedience," and man is thereby "immediately bound to obey it."

The second reason for this exploratory law was to render sin "more conspicuous" by means of the "external symbol," exposing evil in its concealment (or in the way of faithful compliance, obedience is exhibited in its virtue). If there had been no prohibition in eating

---

128 Turretin, Institutio theologiae elenctic, VIII.iv.5.

129 Turretin, Institutio theologiae elenctic, VIII.iv.5. "Ut hinc Dei dominium, qui arbitratu suo puro puto id vetat, eius nulla alia praeter voluntatem ejus ratio est indaganda; Inde vero hominis obsequium apparet, nullam jussi, vel interdici rationem indagantis, sed se ad morem gerendum componentis, ob solam imperant voluntatem."

130 John Ball, A Short treatise containing all the Principall Grounds of Christian Religion, by way of questions and answers (Cambridge, 1615; 4th printing, London: Thomas Pavier, 1634), 66.

131 Ball, Treatise of the Covenant of Grace, 10; also cf. Anthony Burgess, Vindiciae Legis, 106.

132 John Barret, Good Will Towards Men, or A Treatise of the Covenants viz: Of works, and of grace—old and new (London, 1675), 35. Also see, Heppe, Reformed Dogmatics, pp. 293-294, and the sources he cites concerning the probative command.
from this tree, there would have been no sin in doing so (as Augustine observes). But given the prohibition, disobedience is shown to be a great evil.\textsuperscript{133}

Third, the exploratory law (beyond the natural law) was given to declare that man was created as a creature with “free choice” (\textit{liberi arbitrii}). God imposes this law upon man only because he possesses this freedom.

The fourth reason Turretin offers to explain the necessity of this special precept is that God might teach Adam not to think that his happiness consists “in the enjoyment of earthly things,” such as the beautiful fruit—if that were so, God would not have deprived Adam of it.\textsuperscript{134}

The last reason for this exploratory law was to teach Adam “that God alone and his service must be sought before all things as the highest good[,] and that we should acquiesce in it alone.”\textsuperscript{135} Turretin’s burden in offering these five reasons for the “exploratory law” is to argue that man undergoes a trial or test in paradise as part of the covenant arrangement. Precisely because creation may not be equated with covenant, the law of nature does not suffice as a specific test, for in that law God has not bound himself to covenantal sanctions according to his promise. The covenant arrangement, however, with this special precept, involves sanction explicitly, and in this way man is tested in his love for God and devotion to his will alone.

The trial itself was not a weighty or difficult test, as later was the case with Abraham. In giving his specific permission to eat of all the trees except the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, God tested Adam in something “neither great nor difficult” so that

\textsuperscript{133} Turretin, \textit{Institutio theologiae elencticæ}, VIII.iv.5. Turretin quotes Augustine’s \textit{The Literal Meaning of Genesis} 8.13 (ACW 42:52; PL 34:383-84).

\textsuperscript{134} Turretin, \textit{Institutio theologiae elencticæ}, VIII.iv.5.

\textsuperscript{135} Turretin, \textit{Institutio theologiae elencticæ}, VIII.iv.5. “Ut doceret Deum solum, et ejus obsequium, posthabitis rebus omnibus, ut summum bonum quærendum fuisset, et in eo solo acquiescendum.”
“obedience might be easy.” In this way man would be divested of all excuse for failing to do what God prescribed.\textsuperscript{136}

In response to (perhaps) unspoken questions, namely, how can failure to comply with this arbitrary command constitute a serious transgression against God? Or, isn’t the penalty imposed upon Adam either too severe or disproportionate in relation to the crime? Turretin appeals to Augustine for an answer. For Augustine argues that the thinking behind such questions betrays an inability “to measure the great iniquity of sinning,” especially given that “there was so great a facility of not sinning.” As Abraham’s obedience is rightly celebrated for its greatness in response to God’s hard demand—the sacrifice of Isaac—, so Adam’s disobedience is even greater in failing to submit to God’s easy requirement—the prohibition regarding the forbidden fruit.\textsuperscript{137}

God’s intention in putting man to this test was “partly to make known to man himself his own weakness,” so that in undergoing this trial he might learn the great dissimilarity that exists between creator and creature. In addition, the divine intention also involved the opportunity for God to reveal his glory in relation to man, which otherwise would have remained hidden, namely, the manifestation of his mercy and justice in the face of Adam’s fall and human sin.\textsuperscript{138}

2. The Tree of Life (\textit{De Arbore Vitae})

There was another sacramental tree that signified and sealed the promise in paradise—the tree of life. Turretin maintains that this tree was not so denominated because of some kind of effectual power in itself, as if it possessed “an innate power of vivifying man” and keeping death at bay. For the tree is “a finite power” and therefore does not have “an

\textsuperscript{136} Turretin, \textit{Institutio theologiae elencticar}, VIII.iv.6.

\textsuperscript{137} Turretin, \textit{Institutio theologiae elencticar}, VIII.iv.6. The quotation from Augustine is taken from \textit{City of God} 14.15 (FC 14.385; PL 41:423).

\textsuperscript{138} Turretin, \textit{Institutio theologiae elencticar}, VIII.iv.7.
infinite efficacy of extending life to an infinite time.” These points are made against Bellarmine and certain papists. Ward asserts: “When the trees in the Garden are discussed the Reformed everywhere reject the idea that the tree of life had the inherent ability through God’s provision to preserve man’s life if he ate of it from time to time.”

Rather, the tree of life is so designated chiefly because of “signification,” that is, it is a sign or symbol of the immortality that God would have granted to man if Adam had prevailed in keeping the stipulations of the covenant of nature. Thus the tree of life, like the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, is a sacrament. Here Turretin quotes Augustine, who states, “[Adam] had nourishment in other trees; in this, however, a sacrament.”

Heppe demonstrates that the Reformed orthodox reached consensus regarding the tree of life as a sacrament. In particular he cites Cocceius on the significance of the tree of life, for Cocceius maintained that, as a symbol, the tree of life taught Adam that “life was outside himself, the possession of which would exclude all death and make him ἀθανάτος, to which he was invited and which he sought…”

The signification or symbolic character of this tree is threefold, bearing a relation to vita praeterita, vita futura, and status gratiae. First, with respect to past life, Turretin says that the

---

139 Turretin, *Institutio theologiae elencticae*, VIII.v.1-2. Turretin addresses this question at greater length at VIII.v.5, where he argues that God’s expulsion of man from paradise, “lest he reach out his hand and take also of the tree of life and eat, and live forever” (Gen. 3:22), did not imply that the tree had the power to give life in itself or rescue sinful man from his mortality. The words of Genesis 3:22 only indicate “the cause of his ejection from paradise on account of sin (by which, as by his own fault, he had cut himself off from that life, which was the thing signified).” Adam thus forfeited the right to this sacrament. Perhaps Adam preposterously thought that he could regain life by the tree because of its name. In any case, says Turretin, God expels him from paradise to preclude such a foolish endeavor, for Adam should not partake of the sign of immortality. Cf. Cocceius, *Summa doctrinarum de foedere et testamento Dei*, II, §§33, 34 and Witsius, *De Oeconomia Foederum Dei cum Hominibus*, I.vi.12, both of whom direct arrows against the error of Socinus, namely that the tree of life possessed the power to prolong Adam’s life.


141 Turretin, *Institutio theologiae elencticae*, VIII.v.3. The quotation is from Augustine’s *The Literal Meaning of Genesis* 8.4 (ACW 42:38; PL 34.375); also see Witsius, *De Oeconomia Foederum Dei cum Hominibus*, I.vi.11-13; van Mastricht, *Theoretico-practica theologica*, III.xii.20-21, 31; à Brakel, *Christian’s Reasonable Service*, 362-63.

142 Heppe, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 296-298; the quotation from Cocceius comes from *Summa theologiarum ex Scriptura repetita*, XXIII, 13; in Heppe, p. 298. Also see Cocceius’s discussion in *Summa doctrinarum de foedere et testamento Dei*, II, §§32-40.
tree of life functioned as a symbol that called to Adam’s attention that his life was a gift from God. “As often as he tasted its fruit, he was bound to recollect that he had life not from himself, but from God.” Second, with respect to future life, “it was a declarative [σημαντικόν] and sealing [σφραγιστικὸν] sign of the happy life to be passed in paradise and to be changed afterwards into a heavenly life, if [Adam] had continued upright.” Third, with respect to the state of grace, the tree of life was “an illustrious type of the eternal happiness prepared for us in heaven.” Perhaps more important is its signification as typifying Christ himself, for he bestows the tree of life to his people in the paradise of God (Rev. 2:7), the tree that is in the midst of the heavenly Jerusalem unto the healing of the nations (Rev. 22:2).

From the above Turretin concludes that “the life which this tree signified and sealed was not properly either the longevity or the immortality of the body alone; rather it was the eternal happiness to be obtained at length in heaven.” In short, the tree was a sacrament that signified and sealed eternal life.

Turretin proceeds to address at greater length the way in which the tree of life signifies Christ himself, arguing that Christ is “the true tree of life.” He reaches this conclusion on the basis of Scripture’s identification of Christ as the source of life (cf. John 1:4; Acts 17:28), the resurrection and the life (John 11:25ff.), and the author of eternal life (Acts 4:12). Salvation is found in no other name. As the tree of life receives particular attention in the book of Revelation, where it clearly has weighty symbolic value, Turretin understands Christ to be the tree of life that dwells in the midst of his church (Rev. 2:7), and stands at the center of

---

143 Turretin, Instituo theologiae elencticæ, VIII.v.3. Cf. Witsius, Economy of the Covenants between God and Man, I.vi.13, who argues that in the paradise situation the tree of life signifies “the Son of God, not indeed as he is Christ and Mediator, (that consideration being peculiar to another covenant,) but in as much as he is the life of man in every condition, and the fountain of all happiness.” However, as Christ and Mediator, he is likewise the tree of life, blessing man with “heavenly life.”

144 Turretin, Instituo theologiae elencticæ, VIII.v.4. “Vita ergo quam arbor ista significabat et obsignabat, non fuit corporis solius proprie vel longévitas, vel immortalitas; sed ætæa beatitudine in celis tandem obtinenda, que vita ætææ nomine in Scriptura venit . . .” Cf. Cocceius, Summa doctrinarum de foedere et testamento Dei, II, §§32, 38; Witsius, Economy of the Covenants between God and Man, I.vi.2-5; van Mastricht, Theoretico-practica theologia, III.xii.20-21, 31; à Brakel, Christian’s Reasonable Service, 362-363. Also see the discussion in Heppe, Reformed Dogmatics, pp. 296-298, including the sources cited there.
the street of the city of God (Rev. 22:2). He bears the fruit of life, twelve kinds, each month (i.e., “perpetually”) producing for the blessing of the twelve tribes of Israel, that is, “for all the members of the church, which from his fullness draw all gifts necessary for them.” Christ’s righteousness is “unceasing for the consolation and sanctification of believers.” His green leaves are undying and bring healing to the nations, for Christ is the cure for all our diseases (Isa. 53:5; Matt. 11:28).  

For Turretin, the significance of the tree of life must not be underestimated for understanding the implicit sanction of blessing contained in the fedus naturæ. Though he does not make this point explicit in the current context, the tree of life argues for a blessing beyond man’s mutable state in paradise, for the final result or outcome of the redemptive work of Christ is not to restore humans to Adam’s fallible state in the paradise of Eden; rather, there is a union between heaven and earth, and the heavenly blessing that Christ achieves for his people is nothing less than the sanction of promised blessing set forth in the covenant of nature, made clear to Adam in the two sacramental trees.

In the next paragraph of his exposition, Turretin proceeds in this direction as he draws out three conclusions pertaining to the sacramental trees of paradise. Turretin states his first conclusion with these words:

Hence it is evident that these two trees of paradise are not free from mystery. For as the first was a sacrament of trial (which prescribed to man his duty) and the second a symbol of the reward (by which God wished to remunerate his obedience), so each shadowed forth to us in the best manner, the mode of God’s acting in the church by commands and promises.  

The tree of the knowledge of good and evil set forth what man, as one party of the covenant, owes God, exploring and discovering that obedience. Meanwhile, the tree of life put on display “the blessing” man enjoys in paradise and the “most ample reward” that God

---


was prepared to give him for his obedience.¹⁴⁷ Here we see that the sacramental trees are integral for understanding the covenant of nature and how the respective sanctions of blessing and curse are signified and sealed therein.

The second conclusion Turretin reaches is this:

[I]he law and the gospel can also be contained under this double symbol. For the law (as the tree of the knowledge of good and evil) is given to us as a trial of obedience and by sin (no less than that) is made the occasion of death and the minister of condemnation. The gospel, however, is the saving and quickening tree of life because it is “the word of life” (Jn. 6:68).¹⁴⁸

Here Turretin draws bold lines from the sacramental trees in the covenant of nature to the law/gospel paradigm, which would mean that both a word of law and a word of gospel is spoken, or signified and sealed, in the covenant of nature. The specific parallel that Turretin is interested in, however, has to do with the parallel between the law and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, both of which test man in his obedience, declaring that disobedience earns condemnation and death.

Although Turretin does not at this point draw a parallel between the law’s impotence to supply for Adam what was needed to secure his conformity to it and the relative weakness of the covenant of nature in comparison with the covenant of grace, the implication is present inasmuch as Turretin has earlier argued that unless God “actuate [man’s] faculties and powers and to preserve them from change” he cannot fulfill the special law imposed upon him or persevere in an innocent state. Divine assistance, then, is necessary if Adam is to fulfill the covenant of nature; but such assistance is not promised in it. Instead, the divine aid needed is dependent upon “the most free good pleasure of God”; otherwise, says Turretin, the covenant of nature would have been “immutable” and it would have been

¹⁴⁷ Turretin, Institutio theologiae elencticæ, VIII.v.7.
¹⁴⁸ Turretin, Institutio theologiae elencticæ, VIII.v.7. “Secundo Lex et Evangelium possunt etiam sub gemino hoc symbolo contineri. Lex enim, ut arbor scientiae boni et mali, ad explorationem obedientiae nobis datur, et per peccatum non minus ac illa, fit occasio mortis, et ministerium condemnationis. Evangelium vero est arbor vitae salutantis et vivificata, quia est Verbum vite, Jo. vi. 68.”
impossible for man to sin. By way of contrast, however, the covenant of grace does supply what is needed for its fulfillment; and further, what is necessary to secure our salvation is promised in it. Thus the gospel is the salvific and regenerating tree of life, for it declares life in what it signifies and seals.

This brings Turrettin to his final conclusion regarding the sacramental trees.

Third, the former [i.e., the tree of the knowledge of good and evil] exhibits the image of Adam from whom sin and death flowed; however the latter [the tree of life] exhibits Christ from whom righteousness and life arise (1 Cor. 15:22).

In this connection we again see that, for Turrettin, the sacramental trees of the *fœdus naturæ* set forth that covenant’s double sanction: death in the way of self-will and disobedience and life in the way of dependence upon God and faithfulness to him. As Peter Wallace states:

> [F]ar from being empty symbols, the sacraments of the covenant of nature conveyed the realities which they symbolized. The tree of life had for its substance Christ himself, and the one who partook of it received the benefits of the covenant. This typological interpretation may be distinguished from Cocceius’s approach because Turrettin does not see the trees merely as pointers to the reality, but also insists that the reality was present.

Thus, interpreting the paradise narrative of Genesis in light of the history of redemption, Turrettin sees in the tree of the knowledge of good and evil—in its word of law—a portrait of Adam in his failure, bringing death to all his descendants, while in the tree of life—in its good message—a portrait of Christ in his righteousness, bringing life to all who are in him. ("For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive." 1 Cor. 15:22 – ESV.)

---

149 Turrettin, *Institutio theologiae eleuthericae*, VIII.iii.14. Anthony Burgess, *Vindiciae Legis*, p. 129, states: "Adam was not able to obey any command of God, without the help of God. Though some will not call it grace, because they suppose that only cometh by Christ, yet all they that are orthodox do acknowledge a necessity of God’s enabling Adam to do what was good, else he would have failed." These remarks are rather far removed from an effort to protect God from culpability for Adam’s fall and so are quite far removed from the idea that the covenant of works is a theological invention, a kind of theodicy, introduced in an effort to render humans more responsible for their failure and fall in Adam.

150 Turrettin, *Institutio theologiae eleuthericae*, VIII.v.7. "Tertio, Illa Adami, a quo peccatum et mors fluxit: Ista vero Christi, a quo justitia et vita ortitur, 1 Cor. xv. 22, imaginem exhibet." Also see Pictet, *Christian Theology*, 142-143.

C. The Covenant of Nature and the Promise of Eternal and Heavenly Life

This brings Turretin to the question: “Whether Adam had the promise of eternal and heavenly life so that (his course of obedience being finished) he would have been carried to heaven.” Turretin defends an affirmative reply to that query, specifically against the Socinian idea that the covenant relationship between God and Adam was not spiritual in nature and also against Amyraut’s threefold covenant scheme.

1. Socinian and Amyraldian Opponents

The Socinians argued that in paradise Adam was not to expect any other happiness than “an earthly and animal” existence, which “could also be interrupted by death.” The promise of eternal life is among the blessings taught in the New Testament, not a promise made to Adam in paradise. “[N]o hope of it was given to the first man”; at best, “only a certain very obscure signification was to be gathered from the enigma of the tree of life.”

Turretin also attacks the threefold covenant scheme of “the illustrious Amyraut.” The Salmurian theologian posited a natural covenant, a legal covenant, and an evangelical covenant. Part of what Amyraut taught in connection with this scheme was that the promise of eternal life (enjoyed in heavenly bliss) was attached to the evangelical covenant alone. The promise annexed to the natural covenant was simply the continuation of the fruits and blessings experienced in paradise. Turretin quotes Amyraut directly that the

---


153 Turretin, *Institutio theologicae élëcticae*, VIII.vi.1. Turretin references Faustus Socinus’s *Prælectionis theologicae* 1 [1627], pp. 1-2 and Johann Volkelius’s *De vera religione* (Rakov, 1630), 56-72. Herman Witsius, *Economy of the Covenants between God and Man*, Liv.1, also wages a polemic against the Socinians in this regard; he quotes Volkelius who states the following: “Scarcе, if at all, was any general promise made to the men of that age: but rather threatenings and terrors were then set before them. Nor do we see God promising, upon Adam’s abstaining from the fruit of that tree, any reward of obedience; but only denouncing destruction, if he did not obey, Gen. ii. 17.” Also: “Moreover, the reason why God at that time would be obeyed, without proposing almost any general reward, seems to be this; because, at the very beginning of the world, he would shew to all that he owed nothing to any, but was himself the most absolute lord of all.” For Volkelius’s Latin text see *De Æconomia Foederum Dei cum Hominibus*.

154 We will treat Amyraut’s threefold covenant scheme in chapter four in connection with Turretin’s exposition of the covenant of grace.
promise affixed to this covenant consists of "the life, perpetual and abounding in all kinds of good, which can belong both to the soul and the body of man constituted in the state of upright nature, and that to be enjoyed in the earthly paradise." The promise fastened to the legal covenant comprised "the most perfect happiness both of soul and body to be enjoyed in the land of Canaan."

Turretin, in opposition to both of these positions relative to the matter of the promise of eternal and heavenly life, argues that the consensus among the orthodox is that the promise annexed to the covenant of nature encompassed not only the blessed life of paradise but also a life of heavenly bliss for eternity. Thus, after the "trial of his faith" or

---


156 Turretin, *Institutio theologicae elections*, VIII.vi.2.

157 There is actually some diversity of opinion among the Reformed orthodox on this matter, with a strong tendency toward consensus in the later period of high orthodoxy. Heppe, *Reformed Dogmatics*, pp. 294-295, accedes consensus, whereas Ward, *God and Adam*, pp. 108-111, demonstrates that among British and Scottish federal theologians there was no universal accord regarding the life promised in the covenant of nature—whether it was a continuation of life in paradise only or entailed a transfer to heavenly glory. Says Ward, "There was no general agreement at the time of the Westminster Assembly [1647], hence the question is not decided in the documents produced by it" (p. 108). By the time of the Helvetic Formula Consensus [1675], however, on the Continent at least, it appears that the promise of eternal heavenly life has become, as Turretin says, "the received opinion among the orthodox." John Ball was among those who regarded the positive sanction of the covenant of nature as a continuation of earthly life, stating that the supposition that Adam, if he had persisted in a state of obedience, would have been translated to a state of glory in heaven "is more than any just ground will warrant; because in Scripture there is no such promise. And if we must: not presume above what is written, we may say, Adam should have continued in that blessed estate in which he was created."

upon meeting the test of obedience in paradise, Adam was to be translated into heavenly paradise. The issue, Turretin explains, is not whether Adam, in his upright state, enjoyed the "privilege of immortality," nor whether he possessed the promise of perpetual "happiness and life" if he persevered in the same; rather, the issue is whether the blessed sanction contained within the fedus nature promised life in heaven or only life upon earth in paradise. The "learned men" of the school of Saumur affirm the latter, says Turretin; he and the orthodox affirm the former.158

2. The Theological Importance of Prelapsarian Covenant Eschatology

At this point we might question why this is an important question for Turretin and other federal theologians of seventeenth century. The answer comes to expression in Turretin's defense of his position, which he sets forth with six reasons.

The first reason Turretin offers is that "the law of works," that is, the law of Moses that God subsequently gave to fallen man, and more particularly to Israel his covenant

---

158 Turretin, Institutio theologiae elencticae, VIII.vi.3. The Helvetic Formula Consensus (Formula Consensus Helvetica, 1675), which Turretin helped to draft, and which wages a polemic against Salmurian doctrines, addresses this matter directly in Canon VIII: "Moreover that promise connected to the Covenant of Works was not a continuation only of earthly life and happiness, but the possession especially of eternal and celestial life, a life, namely, of both body and soul in heaven, if indeed man ran the course of perfect obedience, with unspeakable joy in communion with God." The citation is taken from Martin I. Klauber's translation, in Trinity Journal 11 (1990): 117; also see Klauber's introduction to this confession, pp. 103-114. The Latin text is reproduced in H. A. Niemeyer, ed. Collectio Confessionum (Lipsiae: Iuliu Klinkhardt, 1840), 739-39. According to Klauber, the original can be found in the Ms. fr. Vol. 469 fols. 6r-7v at the Bibliothèque publique et universitaire at the University of Geneva. Heidigger wages the same polemic against Amyraut in Corpus theologiae christianae, IX, 53-54 (cf. Heppe, Reformed Dogmatics, p. 295), where he notes that man already had possession of a body and an immortal soul in creation and these blessings did not need to be acquired by works, and he further argues that a mere perseverance of a life in paradise could still result in death. On the school of Saumur and the Helvetic Formula Consensus, see Reinhold Seeberg, Textbook of the History of Doctrines, trans. C. E. Hay, 2 vols. (1895-1898; reprint, Grand Rapids: Baker, 1977), II: 424-26; Philip Schaff, "The Helvetic Consensus Formula. A.D. 1675," in Creeds of Christendom, I: 477-489; Roger Nicole, "Moysé Amyraut (15596-1664) and the Controversy on Universal Grace: First Phase (1634-1637)" (Ph.D. dissertation, Harvard University, 1966); idem, Moysé Amyraut: A bibliography with special reference to the controversy on universal grace (New York: Garland Pub., 1981); Brian G. Armstrong, Calvinism and the Amyraut Heresy: Protestant Scholasticism and Humanism in Seventeenth-Century France (Jan Rohls, Reformed Confessions: Theology from Zurich to Barmen, Columbia Series in Reformed Theology, trans. John Hoffmeyer; "Introduction: Confessing after Barmen" by Jack L. Stotts (Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster John Knox Press, 1998), 27-28.
people, "had the promise of heavenly and eternal life." Turretin appeals to several biblical texts in support of this, arguing that within the Mosaic law the promise is stated: if persons perform the statues and ordinances of the Lord, they shall live (Lev. 18:5). Similarly, Jesus told the young ruler to keep God's commandments if he wanted to enter into life (Matt. 19:16, 17). The apostle says that the law was given to bring life (Rom. 7:10). In each instance the life referred to was not an earthly life in paradise, but the heavenly bliss of eternity. But for postlapsarian man the law is powerless to "justify" anyone; it cannot result in life. This impotence of the law, however, testifies to the original place God had attached to its performance in upright Adam. Thus the promise of heavenly life for eternity was also part of "the law prescribed to Adam."  

Turretin's argument takes the form of a theological conclusion drawn from the wider scope of divine revelation and the unfolding of the history of redemption. If keeping God's law was to result in heavenly life and blessing at one stage in redemptive history, promising not merely a return to Adam's situation in paradise—a posse peccare and posse non peccare existence in which Adam was mutable and subject to corruption—but a transition to an immutable state of non posse peccare, then the implication is that God's promise in the covenant of nature in paradise was to translate Adam to the higher (no longer precarious) state of heavenly blessing upon meeting the test of faith and obedience; otherwise, the promise attached to keeping the law in the covenant of grace would result in something not

---

159 Turretin, *Institutio theologicae elencticae*, VIII.vi.4. The Helvetic Formula Consensus, Canon IX: "Wherefore we can not agree with the opinion of those who deny that a reward of heavenly bliss was offered to Adam on condition of obedience to God. We also do not admit that the promise of the Covenant of Works was any thing more than a promise of perpetual life abounding in every kind of good that can be suited to the body and soul of man in a state of perfect nature, and the enjoyment thereof in an earthly Paradise. For this also is contrary to the sound sense of the Divine Word, and weakens the power of the law considered in itself." Cited from Klaufer's translation, *Trinity Journal* 11 (1990): 117. Also see Heppe, *Reformed Dogmatics*, pp. 294-295, and the sources he quotes, including Heidegger and Wytenbach; as well as Pictet, *Christian Theology*, 140-142; and Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, 1.6.1-2; Ioannis Calvini Opera Selecta, 5 vols., eds. Peter Barth and Wilhelm Niesel (Munich, 1926-1952), III, 34-37; hereafter cited as OC. For a case that Calvin had a kind of rudimentary doctrine of the covenant of works, see Peter A. Lillback, *Binding of God Calvin's Role in the Development of Covenant Theology*, 276-304.
intended in God’s original covenant of nature.\textsuperscript{160} The question implicit in Turretin’s argument (a question he does not ask) is why obedience to the law would produce heavenly and eternal life for postlapsarian humans and not for prelapsarian Adam? Turretin argues, in short, for a prelapsarian eschatology that is commensurate with a postlapsarian eschatology.

In keeping with the trajectory of this argument, Turretin adds a second, namely that Christ’s redemptive work—which is a work of salvation that brings “eternal and celestial life”—comes by way of fulfilling all righteousness of the law for us (Rom. 8:4; Gal. 4:5).

This could not have been done unless the law had promised heavenly life to the obedient. For as he rendered to God the Father no other obedience than what the law demanded, so by fulfilling the law, he acquired no other life than what was promised by the law. Besides, since Christ died that through him we might recover what we lost in Adam and merited for us eternal life, it is necessary that it should have been lost for us in Adam and that Adam would have attained it, if he had persevered in obedience. Nor would Christ be called the tree of life, if he had not restored that life to us whose promise this tree sealed to our first parents.\textsuperscript{161}

Interestingly, Turretin returns to his understanding of the tree of life in order to bolster his point, for it would be incongruous that the tree of life as depicted in the Apocalypse, where redemption has a distinct heavenly character beyond Adam’s situation in paradise, mean something different than what was intended in the paradise narrative. An important feature of Turretin’s argument is that the full implications and meaning of the paradise

\textsuperscript{160} In connection with a discussion of Adam’s (fourfold) liberty in his state of innocence (Institutio, VIII.i.1-8), Turretin considers the liberty of man in his fourfold state (Institutio, VIII.i.9), namely the liberty of glory in blessedness, where man is not able to sin (non possis peccare); the liberty of sinners in a state of sin, where they are not able not to sin (non posse non peccare); the liberty of believers in a state of grace, where they are able to sin and not to sin (posse peccare et non peccare); and the liberty of Adam in the state of innocence, where he was able not to sin (posse non peccare). Institutio, VIII.i.7: “Adam was placed in such a state in which he could stand and fall, sin and not sin” (“In eo quippe statu positus fuit Adamus, ut posset stare et cecere, peccare et non peccare.”) Strictly speaking Adam’s liberty resided in his being able not to sin (posse non peccare), but his state was mutable, and he was able to sin (posse peccare). See Turretin’s comments at VIII.i.9. The idea of the fourfold state is a commonplace among Reformed theologians of the seventeenth century. Cf., for example, Johannes Wollebius, Compendium theologiarum Christianarum, Bk. I. VIII.i.12.

\textsuperscript{161} Turretin, Institutio theologicaeaelsticae, VIII.vi.5. “quod fieri non potuisse, nisi Lex vitam celestem obedienti addivisset. Ut enim non aliam obedientiam Deo Patri prestitit, preter eam, quam Lex exigebat, Ita non aliam vitam acquisivit per impiedonem Legis, quam quae Lege promitteratur. Adde quod cum Christus mortuus sit, ut per ipsum recuperemus quod amisimus in Adamo, et vitam celestem nobis meritum sit; Necesse est illam nobis perisse in Adamo, et Adamum ad illam prerventurum fuisse, si perseverassent in obsequio. Nec Christus arbor vite appellaretur, nisi eam vitam nobis restitueret, cujus promissionem hae arbor protoplastis obsignabat.”
narrative come through the unfolding story of salvation. In light of Christ’s coming and his work of salvation, including the future consummation, a fuller and richer understanding of the covenant situation in paradise can be drawn out and underscored. Thus Turrettin’s argument is both exegetically and theologically more sophisticated than sometimes depicted.

Third, in support of the idea that the positive sanction of the covenant of nature was eternal and heavenly life, Turrettin sets forth an argument of comparison. Since the negative sanction of this covenant consisted of both temporal and eternal death for the violators of it, which consists of a death suffered in hell, the positive sanction of this covenant consisted of both eternal and heavenly life for the fulfillers of it, which was to consist of life passed in heaven. The negative consequence was according to God’s justice; the promised positive outcome was according to God’s goodness. Besides, it makes little sense for God to delight in “aggravating punishments” and “lessening rewards,” for that would suggest that in the covenant of nature God threatened eternal, spiritual and hellish punishments but only promised earthly blessings.\(^{162}\)

The fourth reason Turrettin presents is rooted in the divine nature itself, for “the state of the highest good of God communicative of itself demands this.” The portrait here depicts God’s goodness as bursting forth to enter into fellowship with his rational creatures and image-bearers. The same goodness that prompts God to create and enter into a covenant relationship with humans, requires that God, in having created and entered into a covenant with them, promise a blessing that is full and permanent—that is, eternal and heavenly life.\(^{163}\)

Next Turrettin shifts from the nature of God to the dignity of man, which provides him a fifth reason. For Turrettin, the situation in paradise, where God could give of himself to a certain degree, does not measure up to the heavenly “beatific vision,” without which we

---

\(^{162}\) Turrettin, *Institutio theologicae elenctica*, VIII.vi.6. Regarding the negative sanction of the covenant, see the sources cited in Heppe, *Reformed Dogmatics*, pp. 298-300; and regarding the positive sanction, pp. 294-295, 298.

\(^{163}\) Turrettin, *Institutio theologicae elenctica*, VIII.vi.7.
cannot experience the “immediate and absolute fruition of God.” The dignity of man as a spiritual creature desires heavenly fellowship with God as its goal and outcome; that is to say, as a creature whose “noblest part is spirit (even of heavenly origin),” man is made for God, fervently yearning for “heavenly goods,” for only heavenly blessings are able to satisfy his “infinite appetite for the highest good.”¹⁶⁴ This fits with a prominent accent in seventeenth-century Reformed theology, namely that God created man for his fellowship, or in the words of the Westminster Shorter catechism, “to glorify God and to enjoy him forever.” Turretin’s point is this: such enjoyment must be of a heavenly and eternal nature.

The sixth and last reason Turretin offers in support of the idea that the positive sanction of the covenant of grace consisted of a heavenly blessing versus an earthly paradise only has to do with the difference between journey and outcome or path and home. Says Turretin, a heavenly and eternal felicity was God's intended blessing for man in the fœdus nature “because the state of the way (status viae) ought to differ from the state of native country [or homeland] (status patriae),” that is, “the place of contest and trial” ought to differ from “the place of reward and wages.”¹⁶⁵

The paradise in Eden was the place of Adam’s testing and his life there was status viae. Thus, inasmuch as boot camp and battlefield (so to speak) do not meetly serve as one’s home, another place should be designated humanity’s status patriae, which is heaven. If this were not the case, then Adam’s trial in paradise would have involved no additional or higher blessing from that which he already knew and participated. His rendering obedience to the special paradise stipulation would not have offered something beyond or better than he already enjoyed; it would have merely offered a route for preserving what he already had.¹⁶⁶

¹⁶⁴ Turretin, Institutio theologiae elenctica, VIII.vi.8.
¹⁶⁵ Turretin, Institutio theologiae elenctica, VIII.vi.9. “Quia alius debet esse Status viae, et Status Patriae; locus certaminis et expeditionis, et locus praemii et mercedes.”
¹⁶⁶ Turretin, Institutio theologiae elenctica, VIII.vi.9.
Turretin implies (but does not actually state) that such a covenant arrangement, without the sanction of a promised heavenly and eternal life as the reward for obedience, would ever keep man in a status as one on the way but never home, ever tested and on trial but never triumphant, ever in a state of *posse peccare* and *posse non peccare* but never in a state of *non posse peccare*. For if this kind of covenant arrangement between God and humans were possible, God would not treat man according to his goodness inasmuch as he would leave him in a mutable state and offer no incentive for obedience except the threat of death; there would be for man nothing to gain that he did not enjoy prior to God’s special stipulation, and everything to lose. Later in his discussion, Turretin argues that “the happiness and perfection of the way must differ from that of the residence.” To be sure, Adam did not want for anything in paradise; but the happiness and perfection he enjoyed there were suited for the *status via*, and “many things could be wanting which are required for the happiness of the residence.”

Adding to his sixth reason Turretin observes that if Adam had persevered in obedience, the paradise in Eden, even the whole earth, would have been too small to contain Adam and all his posterity; they could not have remained perpetually upon the earth. The promised blessing, therefore, had to be something more than life in the earthly paradise. “From all this it appears that the promise given to Adam was not only of a happy life to be passed on earth, but a heavenly and eternal life.” Turretin appeals to Calvin, specifically Calvin’s comments on Genesis 2:17, where he asserts that “the earthly life” would have been temporary for Adam, for God would have brought him into heaven “without destruction and uninjured.”

---

167 Turretin, *Institutio theologiae elencticae*, VIII.vi.15. “Alia debet esse beatitudo et perfectio vic, alia vero patriae. Licit nihil defuent Adarno in paradise ad beatitudinem et perfectionem, quae convenit statui vic, deesse tamen plura poterant, quae requiruntur ad beatitudinem patriae.”


3. Considering Particular Texts of Scripture

Having dealt with the “statement of the question” (status questionis) and offered his reasons for an affirmative answer to the quæstio under consideration, Turretin proceeds to “sources of solutions” (fontes solutionem).

Turretin is careful to point out, and once again reiterates, that the fedus naturæ or fedus naturale is not denominated such because it could only confer things that man possessed from creation. Nor is it the case that there is (or must be) a built-in proportionality between the prescribed duties man owes God and the blessings God promises man, as if heavenly life must be excluded because it is too great a blessing and not rightly earned. This is an altogether erroneous notion, for it wrongly supposes that “the promises of God are regulated according to the proportion of our merit.”¹⁷⁰ This is never the case. The blessings of the divine promises depend not upon human merit but upon “God’s will and goodness.” As Beardslee observes, Turretin’s emphasis on heaven is probably part of the emphasis on grace. For both Cocceius and Turretin the idea of merit is excluded in any form from the covenant of works inasmuch as God never owed man anything or expected him to earn the rewards of the covenant. Rewards are divine gifts, free gifts, and gracious gifts.¹⁷¹

The angels serve to illustrate this point. “There was no proportion between the constancy of angels keeping their original state and the infinite reward of a confirmed heavenly life.” Similarly, if Adam had obeyed God and abided under his will, he would have enjoyed the infinite reward of a confirmed heavenly and eternal life. Such an infinite blessing, however, could not have been a matter of strict condignity or merit, for as God does not punish as we fully deserve, he likewise “rewards far beyond desert.”¹⁷²

¹⁷⁰ Turretin, Instituzio theologicae elezisticae, VIII.vi.10. “quia gratis et falso supponitur promissiones Dei regulari secundum proportionem meriti nostril, cum contra pendient a voluntate et bonitate Dei.”


¹⁷² Turretin, Instituzio theologicae elezisticae, VIII.vi.10. “Ut enim Deus citra condignum punit, ita ultra condignum longe remuneratur.”
Turretin admits that Scripture does not expressly announce a state of heavenly bliss to be bestowed upon Adam as a consequence to his obedience. However, he argues that we may legitimately conclude that this positive sanction was included in the covenant of nature, for it is directly implied by the converse of this sanction, namely the threat of eternal death, and the tree of life sacramentally seals this promise to man, which is its obvious signification. And while it may be true that Moses set forth these things in rather obscure language, that does not mean, say Turretin, they were conveyed unclearly or indistinctly to Adam.  
Turretin even speculates that though Christ alone promises eternal life to us in our sinful state, Adam might have possessed these promises “by his own obedience, according to God’s pact.”

While this is possible, it is not a very convincing argument as it stands. But, then, in fairness to Turretin, he is not staking very much on it; it certainly doesn’t stand by itself. Actually, his arguments are intended to have a cumulative effect; and both individually and collectively they support the claim that eternal and heavenly life is promised in the covenant of nature.

There are particular texts of Scripture that might be used, however, in an effort to rebut this feature of Turretin’s federal theology. Turretin thus gives his attention to several passages of Scripture that seem to be at odds with this claim.

He starts with Hebrews 8:6 (“Christ has obtained a ministry that is as much more excellent than the old as the covenant he mediates is better since it is enacted on better promises”—ESV). If the new covenant is enacted or established on “better promises,” it seems false to claim that the promises of the covenant of nature were the same as those of the covenant of grace? Turretin’s response is that the new covenant promises are better “as to substance” (non quoad substantiam) but “as to mode” (quoad modum), for the promises are

---

173 Turretin, Institutiones theologicae elencticae, VIII.vi.11.

174 Turretin, Institutiones theologicae elencticae, VIII.vi.12. “Christus solus dat nobis promissiones vitae aeterna in statu peccati; Sed in statu naturae Adamus potuisse illas habere per propriam obedientiam ex pacto Dei.”
the same in both—eternal and heavenly life. But in the covenant of grace these promises are obtained in a far superior manner—through Christ as Mediator; and in him we receive the help by which “we can certainly persevere.” By contrast, in the covenant of nature we obtain these promises in a much inferior manner—through our own obedience; and while help is necessary if we would persevere, it is not a certainty. Thus, unlike the natural covenant, in the covenant of grace the divine promises are clear and efficacious, for Christ applies them more “firmly” (firmiss) and “certainly” (certius).\footnote{175} Turretin explains. Whereas the \textit{fides nature} “promises life only to man perfectly just and deserving,” the \textit{fides gratiae} “promises not only life, but also salvation to man altogether undeserving and unworthy (namely to the sinner).”\footnote{176} Thus the promises of the new covenant are “better” inasmuch as they concern both Christ as Mediator who guarantees their fulfillment and man as “sinner” who requires not merely a translation from earthly paradise to heavenly and eternal life but deliverance from hellish and eternal death. However, that the covenant of nature did not have a mediator does not mean it could not promise and confer upon Adam heavenly life, if he persevered in obedience, for the angels could be confirmed in a blessed and immutable state of good apart from a mediator.\footnote{177}

It might be argued that the contrast between the covenants in Hebrews 8:6 is not between the covenant of nature and the covenant of grace, but between the Mosaic covenant and the new covenant in Christ’s blood. It is surprising that Turretin does not briefly address this issue at this juncture given the variety of interpretations found among

Reformed writers on this point. However, it appears that the predominant position among seventeenth-century federal theologians was to regard the Mosaic covenant, strictly considered, as a written and formalized manifestation of the covenant of works, though part of the covenant of grace. Turretin does contemplate these issues carefully and at length in his exposition of the covenant of grace.

Another passage that draws Turretin’s consideration is 1 Corinthians 15:45, 46 (“And so it is written, The first man Adam was made a living soul; the last Adam was made a quickening spirit. Howbeit that was not first which is spiritual, but that which is natural; and afterward that which is spiritual”— AV). Although Turretin does not believe this passage is germane to the issue of what was promised Adam in paradise, he does believe it speaks to the “condition” of each Adam and “what they ought to communicate to their posterity,” namely the first Adam, earthly, physical life, and Christ, the second Adam, heavenly and eternal life through his quickening spirit. Turretin’s point is not that Christ is removed from earthly, physical life or that Adam was without moral and spiritual gifts or incapable of eternal and heavenly life. Rather, his point is that this passage cannot be used to support the notion that the promises in the covenant of nature were merely earthly and physical in nature, whereas the promises in the covenant of grace, through Christ, are heavenly and eternal. In this passage the contrast between Adam and Christ is relative to what they can bestow to their heirs. Adam cannot bestow eternal and heavenly life to his descendents, but he can bestow physical and earthly life to them in the way of propagation of the race. Adam was made a “living soul,” endowed with wisdom, righteousness, and holiness, and therefore

178 Cf. Witsius, De Economia Fœderum Dei cum Hominibus, IV.iv.38-39; 47-57. Witsius refuses to identify the Sinaitic covenant directly with either the covenant of works or the covenant of grace. Also cf. Ames, Medulla ss theologica, Bk. I, XXXVIII; Welleius, Compendium theologiarum christianarum, Bk. I, XXI. Also the discussion and sources cited in Kevan, Grace of Law, 113-117; von Rohr, Covenant of Grace in Puritan Thought, 49-51, especially fn. 88, p. 50; Ward, God and Adam, 126-139.

179 Cf. Turretin, Institutio theologiae eklekticae, XII.vii.1-49 (The Twofold Economy of the Covenant of Grace); and especially XII.vii.1-25 (The Difference between the Old and the New Covenants), especially XII.viii.6.
capable of living an eternal heavenly life with God. But he is not capable of making what was 
dead alive. The second Adam, however, is a “quickening spirit,” who imparts eternal and 
heavenly life to his once dead posterity.\textsuperscript{180}

Turretin also focuses his attention on 1 Corinthians 15:50 (“Now this I say, brethren, 
that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; neither doth corruption inherit 
incorruption” ’— AV). Turretin is careful to argue that the antipathy here is not between what 
is physical or substantive versus what is spiritual, for if that were the case we would have to 
abandon belief in the resurrection of the body. Eternal and heavenly life is not opposed to 
what is physical or bodily, our material composition as such; rather, the antipathy is moral 
and qualitative—flesh and blood considered “as liable” (obnoxia) or exposed “to corruption 
through sin, which did not belong to Adam in the state of nature.”\textsuperscript{181} The promise of eternal 
and heavenly life in the covenant of nature would have required that Adam’s body undergo 
some kind of change so that he would no longer exist in a “state of animality,” where he 
depended upon food for the stomach and sleep for the body, along with “other necessities 
of life,” for these dependencies do not exist in “a state of glory.”\textsuperscript{182} This correlates, however, 
with what will (and must) be the transformation of our bodies at the resurrection, in keeping 
with the promises of the covenant of grace. And while Adam remained ignorant of how (τὸ 
πώς) this was to take place, it was enough that he knew the reason (τὸ ὅτι) for this promised 
blessing.\textsuperscript{183}

\textsuperscript{180} Turretin, \textit{Institution theologiae elencticæ}, VIII.vi.16.

\textsuperscript{181} Turretin, \textit{Institution theologiae elencticæ}, VIII.vi.17. \textit{“Caro et sanguis non possunt heredare Regnum Dei ... 
non quatenus spectantur simpliciter \textit{physico, et substantiva}, alias carnis resurrectio non esset credenda; sed tamen 
\textit{moraliter, et qualitativa}, ut sunt corruptioni per peccatum obnoxia, quod Adamo in statu nature non 
conveniebat.”}

\textsuperscript{182} Turretin, \textit{Institution theologiae elencticæ}, VIII.vi.17.

\textsuperscript{183} Turretin, \textit{Institution theologiae elencticæ}, VIII.vi.17.
D. Assessment of Criticisms against the Covenant of Nature

From the above exposition of Turretin’s treatment of the covenant of nature, we are now in a position to assess the criticisms of this doctrine which we outlined at the beginning of the chapter. Numerous authors regard the doctrine of the covenant of nature to be speculative at best and harmfully unbiblical at worst. Either way, this is a serious charge to level against a seventeenth-century Reformed theologian since the federal writers believed the doctrine to be derived from Scripture, certainly not an instance of speculation or theological guesswork. Speculation violated the nature of the theological enterprise as they conceived of it; and to affirm a doctrine not taught in Scripture was tantamount to denying the Scripture principle, which virtually disqualified one from being a Reformed theologian.\footnote{184 Turretin, \textit{Institutio theologiae elencticae}, I.v.4; cf. Muller, \textit{Post-Reformation Reformed Dogmatics}, I: 225ff., 280ff., 430ff.; II: 151-223; and especially 340-370; Willem J. van Asselt, “The Fundamental Meaning of Theology: Archetypal and Ectypal Theology in Seventeenth-century Reformed Thought,” \textit{Westminster Theological Journal} 64 (2002): 319-335; and Phillips, “Francis Turretin’s Idea of Theology and Its Bearing upon His Doctrine of Scripture” (Ph.D. diss., Vanderbilt University, 1986), 245-359.}

As we have observed above, Turretin is careful to defend the scriptural character of the covenant of nature. More to the point, however, is that Turretin, and seventeenth-century federal writers in general, affirmed the doctrine of the covenant of works because it was regarded as a scriptural given. The doctrine was not derived from a bare analysis of the early chapters of Genesis. Rather, it was a doctrine derived from a matrix of theological themes and scriptural teachings. While some scholars are burdened to explain the motivating factors behind the covenant of works—factors that range from the reintroduction of the Aristotelian idea of natural law, to the desire to protect God from culpability for human depravity, to theories about the need for assurance in Calvinist theology, to changing political ideas relative to social contract theories, to the prevalence of Ramist philosophy within Reformed thinking\footnote{185 Benton, “Federal Theology: Review for Revision,” in \textit{Through Christ’s Word}, 189-200.}—each and all of these explanations disregards another possibility which in fact shows itself to be more defensible, namely, that this doctrine
emerged as a further outworking of themes already present within Reformed theology, rooted in the “representation principle” (to which Vos refers) and other important themes within Reformed Christology, soteriology, and eschatology. In other words, as Muller has argued, the doctrine of the covenant of works is “a secondary or derivative albeit still fundamental category of doctrine,” derived from a matrix of biblical texts.\(^{186}\)

What is more, to charge that the doctrine of the covenant of nature is unbiblical is to make a modern theological judgment that is not particularly enlightening for the historian of ideas. Certainly any number of the seventeenth-century opponents of federal theology regarded the doctrine to be contrary to Scripture. But it is unhelpful to speculate about the motivating factors behind the doctrine if serious consideration is not given to these theologians’ own explanation and defense of this teaching.

Modern critics, hostile to the theology of Reformed orthodoxy and the doctrine of predestination in particular, reveal their own theological predilections or preferences in speculating about the motivating factors giving birth to this doctrine inasmuch as they fail to document that the federal writers themselves expressed such motivations or even hinted that the doctrine of the covenant of works was useful or functioned in the ways proposed. Thus the second charge, namely, that this doctrine is an invention of sorts, introduced in an effort to solve certain tensions or problems within Reformed theology relative to questions of assurance or human responsibility is likewise off the mark.

Furthermore, the charge that the covenant of works reduces man’s relationship to God to a bare contract, devoid of God’s love and grace, is also false. As we have seen in the above exposition, Turretin asserts the rights of the creator over the creature. This is principal and fundamental. However, what is also principal and fundamental is that God condescends in love and benevolence in order to open a way for humans to fellowship with him unto eternal life. In other words, mere creatures are without rights, but covenant creatures have the

\(^{186}\) Muller, “The Covenant of Works and the Stability of Divine Law,” 75-76.
right to eternal felicity according to God's stipulations. That right to "life-everlasting-with-
God" comes in the way of living in fellowship and obedience to God. It does not come in
the way of disobedience and rebellion against God.

Numerous critics of federalism view the stipulation of life on the condition of
obedience to God as introducing a contract or merit religion into the divine/human
relationship, reducing it to a *quid pro quo* schema and producing a rank legalism. However, in
light of Turretin's treatment of the covenant of nature, we may ask whether that charge is an
accurate description of that covenant relationship—indeed, whether it is even a remotely
accurate description. Inasmuch as this covenant is founded upon God's kindliness toward
humans, and inasmuch as the blessing of eternal life is something that is not owed to
humans except God reward Adam's act of obedience with an eternal and blessed gift, it is
hardly a *quid pro quo* relationship. Humans owe God obedience regardless of a stipulated
reward—which means the reward is wholly gratuitous. Nothing is merited in the strict sense
since nothing is merited apart from the covenant relationship itself, which is gratuitously
bestowed by God. Thus no sort of merit of condignity or of congruity is operative within
the paradisal situation. Rather, for Turretin and federal theologians in general, the entire
covenant arrangement is a divine gift to human creatures—creatures who are without rights
before God except God grant such to them. Thus the entire covenant arrangement is
grounded in God's grace or undeserved favor.

As for the alleged legalism, this charge is strange inasmuch as it seems to presuppose a
divine/human relationship in which God's law has no role. But this then brings us to several
questions that beg for immediate answers. For example, in establishing a relationship with
his human creatures, is God to disregard or set aside his holiness and justice? May humans
disobey God without penalty? Similarly, why should God's law be cast in a negative light, as
if it is something harmful or detrimental to human beings? In other words, given the
conception of God that prevailed among federal theologians during that period, which
included the well-known panoply of divine perfections, why would God’s divine holiness and righteousness, along with his other divine attributes, not be part of what defines and circumscribes the divine/human relationship? Isn’t it possible for God to be merciful and just at the same time, or loving and righteous? Rather than set divine law against divine love or God’s righteousness against God’s goodness, or a legal dimension in God’s relationship with humans against a benevolent dimension in that relationship, Turretin, with all federal writers, conceives of God in the unity of his perfections. Law isn’t more primary than God’s graciousness or benevolence; but neither is divine law forfeited for the sake of divine goodness. On the contrary, for Turretin, God, according to his goodness, stipulates the way of obedience and holiness; and God will even achieve human redemption according to his love by fulfilling his law—that is, God, according to his mercy, will provide the way to satisfy his justice.

Finally, as earlier observed, the doctrine of the covenant of works is criticized for speculating upon the eschatology of paradise. We have noted that federal theologians were not altogether united on what blessing awaited Adam and his posterity had he obeyed God’s commands in Eden. G. Vos, as we noted in chapter 1, has addressed this question with care. While the issue is regarded as speculative, especially since there is nothing in the Genesis account to warrant positing some heavenly reward for Adam, this criticism fails to reckon with the theological method of seventeenth-century federal theologians. As we have seen in the case of Turretin, he does not build the case for a paradisal eschatology from the Genesis narrative alone; rather, given a strong belief in the inspiration of the Bible as a product of divine revelation, this brought with it a strong belief in the unity of the Scripture as a product of divine inspiration. Thus Turretin looks to the eschatology of the covenant of grace and the heavenly glory that awaits those redeemed by Christ to inform the eschatology of the covenant of works. Since the book of Revelation refers to the trees of paradise and their symbolic nature in order to describe the heavenly blessedness that awaits the redeemed,
it is not speculation but a sophisticated theological analysis that leads Turretin and other federal theologians to posit an eschatology in the covenant of works.

In addition to the criticisms we have already addressed, there looms the criticism that the covenant of works is something altogether foreign to the codification of Reformed theology under Calvin and others. This can be taken in different ways. Certainly the formalized concept of the covenant of works is not part of Calvin’s theology or other early Reformed theologians. On another level, however, certain features or key ingredients of the covenant of works are evident in Calvin’s theology or Augustinian theology in general. Consider the following:

Fundamental to discussions and assessments of federal theology is how one sizes up the rights humans possess of God and the obligations they owe to him as their creator, particularly how this should be assessed from the original situation in paradise. Inasmuch as federal theology follows in the path of established Augustinianism on this point, and so in the path of Calvin and other prior codifiers of the Reformed tradition, the formulation of a covenant of works marks a development of, but does not signal an aberration from, that consensus. In other words, a case can be made that Augustinian theology, with Calvin’s work rightly or wrongly often viewed as the premier Protestant exposition of Augustinianism (at least with respect to theological anthropology and soteriology), shares with federal theology certain assumptions, or better convictions, regarding the original paradise situation. Both argue that Adam owes God obedience according to the explicit stipulation to refrain from eating the fruit of the Tree of knowledge; both maintain that God treats Adam and his posterity as one, such that Adam’s fall has direct and immediate consequences for all his descendents, that is, the entire human race. Both therefore see a link between Adam’s fall and the universality of human guilt and corruption. Both, especially in light of Romans 1 and 2, affirm a certain form of general revelation that leaves sinners without excuse before God apart from special revelation and the gospel, even as both assert that some conception of
natural law (or an increased sense of right and wrong) is implanted in human nature, again leaving sinners without excuse for failing to render to God all that is due him as God. Both also affirm that had Adam not fallen into sin eternal life and blessing would have been the outcome for Adam and his progeny. What is affirmed about Calvin and Augustinian theology here may also be affirmed regarding Zwingli, Bullinger, and virtually any (and probably all) of the early codifiers of Reformed theology.

blessed with more righteousness. God, however, does not propose, nor is he prepared, to reward Adam for disobedience, or reward Adam and his progeny even if they spurn his holiness and rebuff his word. Never is sin judged permissible so that grace may abound. On the contrary, Adam's fall brings terrible consequences to himself and to all his posterity, with God's gracious redemption in Christ as the only remedy. All of which is to say, in creating his human creatures God's goodness toward them brings with it the call to obedience unto him. God's kindliness argues for the imposition of divine law, for fellowship with God is along the path of holiness, not sinfulness. Consequently, the violation of holiness is a violation of God's kindliness and love; even as it is a violation of love for and trust in God.

In short, the covenant of works clarifies a long held set of ideas within Reformed theology, such as, man owes God obedience; and God stipulates obedience and promises eternal life in the way of obedience signified by the trees of paradise. Disobedience, on the other hand, brings eternal death and damnation except God intervene to provide a remedy. God does intervene; and according to his grace he sends Christ as the remedy and way of rescue for fallen and sinful people. By his sacrifice, Christ satisfies God's justice and fulfills God's law, bringing peace with God for those united to him through faith, so that in him there is restoration and the blessing of eternal life.

We see, then, that the basic ingredients of the covenant of works were in place within early Reformed theology. This covenant was not born of speculation but of a desire to clarify, according to Scripture, the nature of Christ's redemptive work. Soteriological issues are primary. As Muller observes, this covenant took on "an explanatory role over against the doctrine of salvation."188 The covenant of nature is a natural outworking of the representation motif of the New Testament, depicted under the headship of Adam and of

Christ;¹⁸⁹ and as A. B. Van Zandt has properly maintained, the federal theologians were concerned to safeguard the doctrine of salvation against Socinian and Arminian opponents.¹⁹⁰

Last, as noted above, Diemer and Weir posit three options for humans existing in the prelapsarian state: (1) humans exist under divine grace from first to last; (2) humans exist under a scheme of nature and grace in which there is a “natural” aspect to man and a “grace” aspect to man; and (3) humans exist in a state of nature, such that being made in God’s image they are created into a state of godly independent perfection.

None of these options, however, captures Turrettin’s portrait of humans in the prelapsarian state, though option one comes the closest. The third option is to be rejected since man never has an existence, godly or otherwise, independent of God. Option number two is wrongheaded not so much in recognizing that God can bring something more to creation than what is originally bestowed, for if that were objectionable so would be the idea of prelapsarian divine revelation; rather it is wrongheaded in treating nature and grace as aspects to man. Option number one fails to reckon with the reality of divine law as a feature or expression of God’s non-redemptive grace or gratuitous favor; in short, it fails to see divine law as an expression of God’s goodness. In fact, for Turrettin, the first option is nearest to his conception, but he refuses to oppose natural law to divine love (and vice versa).¹⁹¹ This further demonstrates that legalism is not the mark of the covenant of works, nor is divine love compromised by affirming the necessity of human obedience. Rather, as demonstrated above, for Turrettin and other federal theologians, creation and covenant are

¹⁸⁹ See G. Vos, “The Doctrine of the Covenant in Reformed Theology,” in Redemptive History and Biblical Interpretation, 243-246; cf. Rom. 5:12ff; also see A. B. Van Zandt, “The Doctrine of the Covenants Considered as the Central Principle of Theology,” in The Presbyterian Review 3 (1882): 29, who argues that the fundamental principle undergirding federal theology is “the principle of representation,” which in turn “supposes a personal substitution on the part of both the first and the second Adam in behalf of those represented by them respectively.”


¹⁹¹ Cf. van Asselt’s treatment of the pneumatological, eschatological, and soteriological aspects of the covenant of works in Cocceius’s theology (Federal Theology of Johannes Cocceius, 261-268).
distinct from one another, but creation is taken up into the covenant relationship. This isn’t a nature/grace dualism; instead, it is a distinction between a relationship that is defined and rests solely in terms of the creator/creature relation and a relationship defined also by covenant stipulations and promised blessings.¹⁹²

**Summary and Conclusion**

Without attempting to summarize all the contours of the preceding exposition and analysis of Turretin’s defense of the covenant of works, it is possible to offer some provisional conclusions on the nature of this doctrine and anticipate how it will fit into Turretin’s federal scheme, which is marked by a defense of divine grace in the project of salvation.

In examining Turretin’s treatment of the covenant of nature we have discovered that the numerous criticisms directed against this doctrine are wide of the mark. Although human obedience or “works” define and characterize this covenant, God’s goodness and favor forms its foundation—so much so that God condescends and accommodates himself to the covenant idea. Moreover, as G. Vos pointed out more than a century ago, the doctrine of the covenant of works is largely determined by how one conceives of the original state of humans in paradise and whether there is an paradisal eschatology. Was the Edenic situation the pinnacle of human destiny, the first and last destination for human beings? For Turretin and the federal theologians (and for Calvin), it was not. Although Adam was created in perfect uprightness, he was fallible and mutable. Eternal life and immutable uprightness were yet to be obtained. Adam was therefore to live before God in obedience, for such is proper to God and due him. Adam’s failure, however, brought death to himself and to all his posterity, which Christ alone is able to remedy.

¹⁹² On this point, see van Asselt’s discussion, *Federal Theology of Johannes Cocceius*, 259-261; also n. 27, p. 260, in response to N. Diemer.
We have seen that for Turretin the obedience that Adam was to render to God may not to be conceived as strictly meritorious; rather, the merit is in the way of God’s gracious arrangement; it is an *ex pacto* merit—and this should not be thought surprising. Inasmuch as humans owe obedience to God as creatures, possessing no inherent rights to a reward, and inasmuch as the reward promised for obedience to God far exceeds what that obedience deserves, merit in the strict sense is excluded in the covenant of works. Thus the covenant of works or of nature is not a *coventant of merit*, for the creature can never in the strict sense merit or earn blessing from God. This means that, even with the stipulation of “works,” it is a covenant of God’s love, goodness, and blessing. This is not to deny, given human disobedience, that it can become a covenant of God’s justice, punishment, and wrath—for such is the nature of covenants. But what is more basic in this covenant is that God establishes a way for his human creatures to enjoy eternal fellowship with himself. Contrary to allegations that this doctrine introduces a kind of legalism into Reformed theology, the prelapsarian covenant actually safeguards God’s charitable and kindly relationship to his human creatures from the outset, for God rewards human obedience after a manner that far exceeds anything that such obedience may rightly demand or expect. Unless God establish a relationship between himself and his human creatures that gratuitously promises blessings for obedience, humans are without any reward for their obedience. Thus, Turretin’s doctrine of the covenant of nature demonstrates that human works are graciously rewarded according to an altogether benevolent covenant arrangement. Moreover, in Turretin’s rejection of Amyraut’s threefold covenant scheme, we see his desire to safeguard the unity of God’s relationship with humans, so that what was promised to Adam in fulfilling God’s commands finds parity with Christ’s redemptive work in fulfillment of all righteousness.

We also observe that doctrine of the covenant of nature will serve to clarify certain features of the covenant of grace—specifically with respect to Christ’s work of satisfaction as Mediator. This is only to say that even in treating the natural covenant, Turretin’s burden,
with federal theologians in general, is to exposit, declare, and highlight the covenant of grace. The covenant of works expostits grace not only in that the covenant relationship itself is gratuitously established by God, but also in that the works or obedience stipulated in this covenant are shown to be permanent and not arbitrary, for God does not lay them aside; rather, according to his own gracious provision, God sends Christ, as one born under the law, to bear the law’s terrible penalty and curse and to live in conformity to the law in every respect unto the fulfillment of all righteousness as required by the law. And the covenant of works declares and highlights grace since Christ’s atoning work finds its definition by the legal covenant—which is to say, according to the gospel covenant Christ performs the works requisite to save sinners, and that according to the stipulations and sanctions of the original prelapsarian covenant. In this way, the required works are maintained; Christ performs them. In this way, the good works of fallen sinners are altogether excluded for obtaining acceptance with God.
CHAPTER THREE

FEDUS GRATIE (Part 1):
THE NATURE, CONDITIONS, AND EFFICACY OF
THE COVENANT OF GRACE

Introduction

In the previous chapter we began to examine Francis Turretin’s doctrine of the covenant, starting with his exposition and defense of the covenant of nature. We did that cognizant of the different kinds of historical and theological assessments made of seventeenth-century Reformed federalism in general, and its doctrine of the covenant of works or covenant of nature in particular.

Although the covenant of nature is the most distinguishing characteristic of federalism, the doctrine of the covenant of grace still forms the heart and soul of this theology, for Christ is the first and last word of God’s grace to sinners. That Christ constitutes the center of the evangelical covenant is displayed in his role as Surety—something that will become evident in our exposition of Turretin’s treatment of the gospel covenant. At its heart, the salvation of human beings requires that God not set aside or ignore his original arrangement with Adam and his posterity, including its blessings, sanctions, and rewards. In other words, the salvation of fallen human beings requires that the sanctions of the first covenant arrangement be applied and that the way of obedience and love for God find fulfillment in the second Adam. Thus Christ in a substitutionary role for the elect undergoes the sanctions of the original covenant of nature and fulfills the command of obedience that is also part of that original arrangement.

In this chapter we will focus on Turretin’s exposition of the covenant of grace, saving to the next chapter a consideration of his polemics directed against Socinian, Arminian, Lutheran, Amyraldian, and Cocceian emphases or doctrines. Here the aim is, as in the last chapter, to read
Turretin within his seventeenth-century theological context, to follow the contours of his teaching concerning the covenant, and to determine to what degree the sorts of criticisms and evaluations of this covenant teaching, sketched in the first chapter, accurately portray Reformed federalism and legitimately exposes weaknesses in it or perhaps where modern critical evaluations have misinterpreted this theology and therefore have misdirected its criticisms. In short, we must address four areas of criticism: (1) whether the contractual nature of the covenant relationship leads to a devolution of the gospel of grace, introducing a destructive legalism that subverts the centrality of divine grace in the covenant arrangement; (2) whether the conditions that are part and parcel of a covenant relationship undermines the free grace of God in the salvation of sinners; (3) whether human merit plays any role in the covenant of grace, that is, whether sinners, in the way of faith, repentance, and good works, merit any reward; and (4) whether the doctrine of predestination, coupled with an alleged cold scholasticism, swallows up the doctrine of the covenant. In examining Turretin’s doctrine of the covenant of grace, we will return to these issues at the end of the chapter. Our first concern, however, is to analyze correctly Turretin’s teaching on the covenant of grace, examining certain features of it in detail, following his own sequence of discussion, while looking at other features of it in more general terms. Where appropriate we will introduce other federal writers whose views either confirm, further explicate, or diverge from Turretin’s teaching.

First we will consider Turretin’s discussion of the meaning and import of the biblical words pertaining to the covenant. Second we will examine the basic ingredients of this covenant, examining the definition, author, contracting parties, Mediator of this covenant, as well as the intratrinitarian covenant that lies in back of the covenant of grace and the clauses stipulated by this covenant, pertaining to both parties—God and humans. Next we consider how Turretin treats the nature of conditionality within this covenant—in what sense conditionality applies and does not apply—with an excursus on the necessity of good works without the merit of good
works; thus the idea of merit is carefully examined. Finally, we investigate Turretin’s treatment of
the relationship between the covenant of works and the covenant of grace.

As in the previous chapter, we will argue that federal theology does not introduce a
legalistic scheme or any form of a “works” religion into Reformed thought, and that its doctrine
of grace is not at odds with earlier codifications of Reformed theology. Secondarily, we will
argue that Reformed federalism, as a defense of the Augustinian doctrine of grace, adheres
unswervingly to divine predestination. Turretin exhibits how the doctrine of election may be
legitimately integrated into the covenant of grace without subverting the covenant idea itself.

A. The Origin and Meaning of the Words bryth and diathēkē, and the Significance of
epangēlias and evangēlium

Turretin entitles his twelfth topic, wherein he treats at length and in detail the covenant of
grace, “The Covenant of Grace and Its Twofold Economy in the Old and New Testaments.” In
distinction from his exposition of the covenant of nature, when he turns to a discussion of the
covenant of grace, he offers a fairly detailed and extended analysis of the biblical words
pertaining to this issue—specifically the words רְשֵׁי (bryth) and διαθήκη (diathēkē), followed by an
analysis of how the covenant of grace can be and is designated simply as ἐπαγγελίας (epangēlias)
and εὐαγγέλιον (evangēlium). However, Turretin does not come to address the meaning of the
covenant of grace formally as a topic of theology until he has explained the nature and use of the
law, for the law precedes the covenant of grace.

Briefly we observe that the law, for Turretin, as for the Reformed and Lutherans in
general, has three uses—a civil use, functioning to order society by restraining sin and holding

---

1 For an extended consideration of the etymology and meaning of the biblical words for covenant by other
federal theologians, see, among others, Cocceius, Summa doctrinarum de foedere et testamento Dei, IV, §§1-11; Ball, Treatise of
the Covenant of Grace, 1-6; Witsius, De Economia Foederum Dei cum Hominibus, I,11-14; Leigh, Treatise of the Divine
Promise, 85ff.; Gillespie, Ark of the Testament Opened, 43-164; and Brooks, Covenant of Grace Opened and Paved, in Works
83. Brian Lee treats the development of covenant terminology in the sixteenth- and seventeenth-centuries, as well as
Cocceius’s semi-technical terminology, see his “Biblical Exegesis, Federal Theology, and Johannes Cocceius:
Developments in the Interpretation of Hebrews 7:1-10 – 10:18” (Ph.D. diss., Calvin Theological Seminary, 2003),
15-85; idem, “The Covenant Terminology of Johannes Cocceius: The Use of Foedus, Pactum, and Testamentum in a
wickedness in check through (threat of) punishment, a pedagogical use, exposing sinners in their sin, teaching them of their depravity, and pointing them to Christ, and a third or normative use, wherein the law serves as a guide for Christian living, so that those who are regenerated by the Spirit and united to Christ by faith, being delivered from the penalty of the law, now live a life of gratitude to God in keeping with their faith, following the law as the way pleasing to God, for Christ has fulfilled the law for them.

The placement of the law in Turretin’s theology, after dealing with the human fall into sin and a discussion of human free agency before and after the fall, but prior to treating the covenant of grace and the person and work of Christ’s person and work, appears to have a twofold function. On the one hand, the law confirms and explicates the content of the law of nature written on the human heart; on the other hand it exposes and condemns fallen humans in their sin and sinfulness, thereby demonstrating the depth of their failure and their inability to remedy their situation. Hence the covenant of grace follows upon an exposition of the law, for the standard of God’s holiness and righteousness is clearly contained in the law, and therefore the sort of cure needed is implicitly posited. God’s law is his standard of holiness; and divine redemption will not come by way of forfeiture of the law, or God yielding his holiness; rather, redemption will come along the path of the fulfillment of the law.  

---

Thus, with the depth of humanity's ailment and estrangement from God exposed by the law, and the standard for holiness fully explicated in the same, Turretin is in a position to set forth and defend the doctrine of the covenant of grace.

The significance of this covenant is not to be underestimated in Turretin's theology. He believes it is rightly called God's "greatest work" and "worthy of the highest admiration."\(^3\)

Moreover,

Since it is of the greatest importance in theology (being as it were the center and bond of all religion, consisting in the communion of God with man and embracing in its compass all the benefits of God towards man and his duties towards God), our highest interest lies in rightly knowing and observing it.

Given that, Turretin further asserts:

the discussion of it demands peculiar accuracy (ακριβείαν), that the truth may be confirmed against the errors by which Satan has endeavored in almost every age to obscure and corrupt this saving doctrine.\(^4\)

With these words Turretin is positioning himself within the Augustinian tradition and demonstrating that he intends to defend a full-blown theology of grace against all compromise.

1. ἤρεμος

He begins by considering the etymology of the word ἤρεμος (bryth). This demonstrates Turretin's desire to discover the meaning and significance of the covenant concept from Scripture. Moreover, he notes that "the nature of the covenant" is "more easily understood" by using this procedure. Turretin observes that for the ancient Jews, the most common word for covenant was ἤρεμος (bryth), acknowledging that the term is "of uncertain etymology," for some see the term as derivative from the root brh, meaning either "to eat" (being tied to the feasting that is

---

\(^3\) Turretin, *Institutio theologiae elencticae*, XII.7.2. "Ita Fœdus Gratiae, quod maximum merito vocatur opus Dei et summa admiratione dignum . . . ."

associated with the making of covenants) or “to choose” (since the making of a covenant involved choosing persons, things, and conditions). In support of this idea Turretin points to the Jews as God’s chosen covenant people, being called in Scripture “the children of the covenant” (Acts 3:25), “the people of God,” “a chosen generation” (1 Pet. 2:9), “for here there is a mutual election both on the part of God choosing men for a people and on the part of men choosing God for their God (as it is expressed in Jos. 24:22, 25).” Others, however, derive the term from הָרָא (hrr), meaning “he has purified” and “he has declared,” for the faith and genuine friendship of the contracting parties in a covenant are purified and declared. Meanwhile, Turretin believes that better and more convincing options are available for consideration. As he states, “Others, with more propriety, deduce it from the root br’ [ם ר] which in the Piel signifies “he cut in pieces”; or from the root bthr [בָּר] of the same meaning by a metathesis of the letters th [ת] and r [ר].” This word is used in Genesis 15:10 and Jeremiah 34:18 in the confirmation of covenants, for in making covenants the animal was cut in two and the parties of the covenant walked between the divided pieces, indicating that if either party violated the covenant the violator should likewise be cut in pieces—the clear depiction of Gen. 15:10, 17. This understanding is confirmed by the Arabic term for making covenants and the custom among the ancient Chaldeans, so that “to strike” or “to cut a covenant” is called יָהְרֵב in the Old Testament. All of which leads Turretin to comment:

This suits the gospel covenant very well. It is founded on Christ being dead (as is said in Gal. 3:17, “the covenant was confirmed in Christ” [diathēkē kekerômenē eis Christon])—the covenant begun in Christ wounded and smitten and even in that divided immaculate Lamb in whom

---

5 Turretin, *Institutio theologicae elencticæ*, XII.i.2. See the similar discussion in Cocceius, *Summa doctrinae de foedere et testamento Dei*, I, §§1-11; and in that connection van Asselt, *Federal Theology of Johannes Cocceius*, 249-250; Witsius, *De Economia Foederum Dei cum Hominibus*, I.i.2.

6 Turretin, *Institutio theologicae elencticæ*, XII.i.2. “Alii convenientius deducunt a radice יָהְרֵב, quod in Pihel significat dissipavit, vel a radice יָהְרֵב, dissipavit, per metathesis literarum הָרָא, וְּהָרָא, qua voce utetur Scriptura, quum foederum confirmatorum meminit, Gen. xv. 10, et Jerem. xxxiv. 18, quia in foedere pangingo dissectione pecorum utebantur, et transitu per medias partes victimarum cæsarum, significantes dissecandos pariter qui forcus violarent, ut liquet ex Genes. xv. 10, 17.”

7 Turretin, *Institutio theologicae elencticæ*, XII.i.2.
God was reconciling the world unto himself (2 Cor. 5:19); and through whom passing (as it were), he confirmed and ratified that covenant.⁸

2. Διαθήκη

Next Turretin turns to the Greek word διαθήκη (diathēkē), a term used by the Greeks to refer to every kind of covenant or agreement (in the New Testament the word is often used in this way).⁹ But, as Turretin observes, it peculiarly denotes in the New Testament “a testamentary disposition with a federal agreement.” This is seen most explicitly in Hebrews 9:15, 16 (“Christ is the mediator of the new testament, that by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions that were under the first testament, they which are called might receive the promise of eternal inheritance”).¹⁰ Turretin notes that the Septuagint, which the writer of Hebrews follows at this point, translates הָעָבָדָה by διαθήκη (diathēkē) rather than συνθήκην (synthēkēn), the latter signifying a simple agreement.

Turretin is concerned that the profound significance of this not be missed. “The covenant of grace,” he asserts, “partakes both of a testament and of a covenant”—that is to say, it is something that is wholly gratuitous and completely bestowed upon its recipients and at the same time, in other respects, it is an agreement. Because of this dual (but by no means equal) character of the covenant of grace, Turretin remarks that this covenant may be rightly called “a covenant by a testament” (Testamento fadus) or “a testamentary covenant” (Fodus Testamentarium) or a “federal testament” (Testamentum federale). He takes care to elaborate upon this. It is a “covenant” because, as is true in all covenants, there exists “an agreement between parties” and “conditions” are laid down “on both sides”—both God and man meet certain conditions. Moreover, in the

---

⁸ Turretin, Institutio theologiae elencticæ, XII.i.2. “quod non male quadrat in fudus Evangelicum, quod in Christo moruuo fundatur, ut dicatur, Gal. iii. 17. διαθήκη κεκατομμένη εἰς Χριστον, fudus initium in Christo leso et percusso, ac proinde diviso agno illo immaculato, in quo Deus erat mundum sibi reconcilians, 2 Cor. v. 19, et per quem quasi transiens, fudus illud confirmatum et ratum fecit.”

⁹ Turretin, Institutio theologiae elencticæ, XII.i.3. Turretin cites Luke 1:72; Acts 3:25; 7:8; Rom. 9:4; Gal. 3:15; 4:24; Eph. 2:12; Heb. 8:6, 8, 9.

¹⁰ Turretin also refers to Matt. 26:28 and 1 Cor. 11:25. This citation is Giger’s translation of Turretin’s Latin: “Christum factum fuisse Mediatores N. Test., ut, morte intercedente ad expiationem peccatorum precedentium sub primo Testamento, vocati accipiant promissionem hereditatis.” Also see Witsius, De Economia Foederum Dei cum Hominibus, I.i.4; and Patrick Gillespie, Ark of the Testament Opened, 315-334.
covenant of grace there is a Mediator who serves to reconcile “the discordant parties.” But it is also a “testament,” and that for three reasons: First, an inheritance is promised, and as a necessity this means that the testator’s death is a required antecedent, for only upon the death of the disposer does one become an heir of the goods according to the testator’s will. “Since therefore the covenant (diathēκē) is a promise (eπαγγελία) of this kind (in virtue of which the inheritance is discerned), it must necessarily be testamentary. On this account, the apostle adds, ‘For where a diathēke is [to wit, by which an inheritance is promised, i.e., a testament], there must also of necessity be the death of the testator.’”

Second, this covenant is a testament because it was established solely for “our advantage,” for a testament is established to benefit the heirs, not the testator as such. Thus humans are reconciled to God not for “mutual benefits” but solely for man’s benefit. As Wöllebius states, the covenant of grace is called “a testamentum, διαθήκη, a disposing, because by it God appoints a heavenly inheritance for his children, to be acquired by the intervening death of Jesus Christ his Son.” Third, the conditions which are part of the covenant of grace, although stipulated for both parties, are entrusted to the party who is able to execute them—the one altogether faithful to his own word—so that they find fulfillment by God alone. “Hence it is founded upon the mere grace of God and upon no disposition and merit of man” (which Turretin will set out to prove fully later).

Having argued that διαθήκη (diathēke) can signify a testament, Turretin does not deny that it is frequently used in the New Testament to denote a covenant (κοινωνία) or an agreement; and in fact sometimes the Septuagint translates the word ἱνὴ (bryth) with διαθήκη (diathēke), and does

11 Turretin, Institutio theologiae elencticæ, XII.i.3. “Cum igitur διαθήκη sit ejusmodi ταγγελία, cuius vi haereditas cernitur, necesse est ut sit Testamentaria. Ideo subiect Apsolus, Ubi enim διαθήκη, nimium qua haereditas promittitur, id. testamentum, mors Testatoris intercedat necesse est.” Also see Cocceius, Summa doctrinarum de foedere et testamento Dei, I, §4; Witsius, De Æconomia Foederum Dei cum Hominibus, III.i.10-11.

12 Wöllebius, Compendium theologiarum christianarum, Bk. I.xxx, proposition II; p. 118 in Beardslee’s translation.

13 Turretin, Institutio theologiae elencticæ, XII.i.3. “Quia licet utinque conditiones proponantur, unius tantum partis, nimium Dei, virtute et fidelitatem executioni mandatur. Unde sola Dei gratia nititur, nulla vero hominis dispositione et merito, ut suo loco fusius probabatur.” Also see Witsius, De Æconomia Foederum Dei cum Hominibus, II.i.5; and the citations from Heppe, Reformed Dogmatics, pp. 373-375. Also see Brooks, Works, V. 298-299.
so precisely in those places where the term cannot be understood except as an agreement or covenant (cf. 1 Sam. 11:1; Gen. 31:44). The scope of the term is confirmed in the New Testament as well, for in passages like Luke 1:72 and Acts 3:25 διαθήκη (diathēkē) clearly signifies a covenant as agreement, referring to the covenant made with the fathers in Abraham. The covenants (diathēkai) that belong to the Jews (Rom. 9:4) cannot denote a plurality of testaments, for we do not find a plurality of testaments in Scripture; covenants, however, are often renewed. Similarly, in Galatians 4:24 we find reference made to “two diathēkai”—namely, the legal and the evangelical. Although the “testamentary relation” (ratio Testamenti) is connoted and replete in Hebrews 8 and 9, this is not to the exclusion of the “federal relation” (σχέσις Ἰουδαϊσμος), for a Mediator reconciles the parties opposed to one another in order to unite them to one another, and that per fudus.15

Turretin wishes to allow both dimensions of διαθήκη (diathēkē) to be given proper weight, and thus he feels compelled to qualify his statements. Acknowledging that the apostle urges the “testamentary notion” (notionem Testamentariam) in Hebrews 9:15, for example, so that “the necessity of the death and satisfaction of Christ (as the testator) may be more clearly set forth and the efficacy of grace (to which all things must be ascribed in the covenant of grace) more strongly demonstrated,” Turretin immediately moderates that comment by reminding his readers that this doesn’t exclude the “federal relation” (relationem federalem), which demands of humans “faith and obedience” (fidem et obedientiam). A controversy need not exist in this regard, provided both relations are given their due and not ignored. However, there is a priority of the one over the other, and this will prove to be decisive in Turretin’s scheme as a federal theologian in the Augustinian tradition of a theology of grace. For, says Turretin, the testamentary aspect of

14 Turretin, Instituio theologiae eleccionis, XII.4. Turretin supports his argument with an appeal to Henricus Stephanus (Estienne), Thesaurus Graecae linguae, Guillaume Budaeus (Bude), “Commentarii linguae Graecae,” Opera Omnia (1557); and Hesychius, Hegychii Alexandrini lexicon. See also Witsius, De Oeconomia Fœderationis Dei cum Hominibus, I.1.4.

15 Turretin, Instituio theologiae eleccionis, XII.5.
διαθήκη (diathēkē) is "principal and primary" (principα et primaria), whereas the federal relation must be regarded as "secondary and subservient to the former" (securdaria priori subserviunt).\textsuperscript{16}

We should not forget that Turretin defines the covenant in bilateral terms; he will not, however, allow any dipleuric conception of the covenant to fall into synergism, nor will he forfeit the primacy of divine grace in the work of salvation. Inasmuch as the covenant relation is better characterized as a bilateral and not a unilateral arrangement, he also makes clear that the conditions required of the human party, who is fallen into depravity and dead in sin, must be met by God himself on behalf of the sinner. Therefore through his gracious operations in the sinner's heart, the requirements or conditions of the covenant are fulfilled. Salvation remains a divine gift; hence the primacy of the testamentary character of the covenant of grace.\textsuperscript{17}

3. The Latin Term Fædus and Scriptural Significations

At this point Turretin turns to the Latin term fædus, which typically translates חָרָם and διαθήκη, noting that its etymology is variously described, with a variety of connotations attached. His burden, however, is that in using this Latin word we not fail to understand the scriptural content of covenant and so employ the word in a scriptural manner. For in the Bible the idea of a covenant between God and humans properly denotes "a pact and agreement," with duties stipulated and reward promised.\textsuperscript{18}

This is not to deny that there are improper uses of the term in Scripture. For example, on one occasion covenant is taken as a "simple promise"—as when God promised not destroy the world again with a flood (Gen. 9:9). Sometimes "it is taken metonymically for the symbols and sacraments of a covenant: as circumcision is called a covenant (Gen. 17); the eucharistic ‘cup’ is

\textsuperscript{16} Turretin, Instituto theologiae elencticæ, XII.i.6.

\textsuperscript{17} Cocceius likewise accent the testamentary character of the covenant of grace; see his Summa doctrinae de foedere et testamento Dei, IV, §§86–87; also see the dissertation of Brain J. Lee, "Biblical Exegesis, Federal Theology, and Johannes Cocceius"; idem, "The Covenant Terminology of Johannes Cocceius," 11–36; and Bierma’s treatment of Olevianus on this topic, demonstrating how this pivotal theologian roughed out the relationship between the monopleuric and dipleuric characteristics of the covenant by an early federal theologian (German Calvinism in the Confessional Age, chapter three, pp. 63–105; also p. 151.

\textsuperscript{18} Turretin, Instituto theologiae elencticæ, XII.i.7, 8.
said to be ‘the new testament in the blood of Christ’ (Lk. 22:20), i.e., a sign and seal of it.”

Besides these examples, Turretin points to others as well. His real concern however is with the proper signification of the term.

Turretin sets forth three reasons why this covenant is referred to as “the covenant of grace.” First, it is “of grace” causally, proceeding from divine grace in the strict sense (Luke 1:54, 55, 72, 74; Eph. 1:6; Titus 3:4). Second, it is “of grace” materially, “because all things in this covenant are gratuitous and thus even the conditions (Jer. 31; Ezek. 36). Last, it is “of grace” as medium, for God wished to exhibit his rich grace by means of it (Eph. 2:7). Turretin also asserts that this covenant is simply called the “gospel” or “evangelical” as “the object of evangelical doctrine” (Rom. 1:16, 17). In addition, the covenant of grace is called the “new” covenant, for it succeeded the covenant of works, and its renewal in Christ under the New Testament dispensation renders it altogether “eternal” and “immutable,” rendering it free from any kind of abrogation (Heb. 8; Jer. 31, 32).

4. The Covenant of Grace as “Promise” (Ἐπαγγελίας)

Turretin observes that sometimes the covenant of grace is designated as “promise” (Ἐπαγγελίας) or “good tidings” (Εὐαγγελίου). It earns the designation “promise” first by way of “eminence” (κατ’ ἐξοχήν), for the covenant of grace is wholly of divine origin and alone salvific. Thus inasmuch as the covenant of grace is simply called “promise,” it is unlike all earthly and perishable or revocable promises; as promise it is like that given to Abraham regarding his line in Isaac (Rom. 9:9; Gal. 4:23) or the inheritance of Canaan as the promised land (Heb. 11:9). Moreover, Turretin avers that this promise is to be distinguished from the promise of life attached to the law in the performance of its stipulations and duties, for the promise attached to the law is easily voided by transgressing the law. Instead, when the covenant of grace is

---

19 Turretin, *Institutio theologicae eloquentiae*, XII.i.8.
20 Turretin, *Institutio theologicae eloquentiae*, XII.i.9.
21 Turretin, *Institutio theologicae eloquentiae*, XII.i.9.
denominated “the promise,” the referent is to “the Messiah and the spiritual and eternal benefits to be bestowed by him.” Romans 4:13, 14 confirms this, as does Galatians 3:16-18.

Turretin argues that the covenant of grace is called “promise” to highlight the fact that it is founded completely on the divine pledge. In other words, this covenant is rooted in God himself or, more specifically, in God’s sovereignty and fidelity. As such, it is unlike all human covenants which are dependent upon the mutual obligations of parties (and frail, fallible parties at that); and it is also unlike the covenant of works, for although that prior covenant was founded on God’s goodness and brought with it divine promises, it was still dependent upon human obedience if it was to find fulfillment or “be put into execution.”

Lest there be any doubt, Turretin makes explicit the theological significance of the covenant of grace being called “the promise”; he does this by clearly exhibiting the contrast between the two covenants. For with respect to the covenant of grace God wished the whole of this covenant to depend upon his promise, not only with regard to the reward promised by him, but also with regard to the duty demanded from us. Thus God performs here not only his own part, but also ours; and if the covenant is given for the happiness of only the one party, it is guarded and fulfilled by the fidelity of only one party. Hence not only God’s blessings fall under the promise, but also man’s duty; not only the end, but also the means and conditions leading us to it.

5. The Covenant of Grace as “Good Tidings” or “Gospel” (Evangelion)

Turretin observes that although the word evangelion (εὐαγγέλιον) was used by the Greeks to refer to any sort of “good and joyful tidings” (and the ancient Jews used the word in the same way), in the New Testament the Greek term refers, by way of “eminence” (κατ’ ἐξοχήν), to the tidings concerning Christ’s advent and the covenant of grace, with its salvific content, both

---

22 Turretin, Institutio theologiae elencticæ, XII.i.11. The idea of promise was prominent among British writers as a description for the Old Testament dispensation of the covenant of grace. For example, cf. Ball, Treatise of the Covenant of Grace, 27-36; Leigh, Treatise of the Divine Promise, 1-8; Roberts, Mysterium & Medulla Biblicorum, 184-191, and then comprehensively, 192-1227.

23 Turretin, Institutio theologiae elencticæ, XII.i.11. “Sed hic Deus a promissione sua pendere voluit totum hoc fœdus, non modo ratione premii a Deo promissi, sed etiam ratione officii a nobis postulat; ut Deus hic exequatur non modo quod suarum erat partium, sed etiam quod ad nos spectabat; et si fœdus datur tantum ad unius parsis felicitatem, unius tantum partis fidelitate custoditur et impletur. Unde non modo Dei beneficia cadunt sub promissum, sed etiam hominis officia; non modo finis, sed etiam media et conditiones, que ad cum nos ducunt....”
established and accomplished in him. In a broad and general sense it is used to denote "the gratuitous covenant made in Christ" (for example, Rom. 10:16; 1 Pet. 4:6). In a more strict and particular sense it is used to refer to "the promise and doctrine concerning Christ about to come" (for example, Gal. 3:8), and still more properly to refer to "the doctrine of Christ manifested and the fulfillment of all the promises"—that is, it refers to Christ's saving mission in the world or his completed work vis-à-vis the promise. Turretin also notes that the covenant of grace is referred to as the "promised gospel" (Rom. 1:1, 2), something evident in both the Old and New Testaments. Thus both the Old and New Testaments are called "gospel," and the doctrine or message of the Old and New Testaments are both called "promise" (Gal. 3:14; 2 Tim. 1:1).  

Apparently Turretin's burden here is to show that the covenant of grace is not some strange theological construct; rather, it is simply the gospel itself, or to state it more precisely, the gospel's content is defined by the promised redemption that finds its fulfillment in Christ's advent and redemptive work. The promise and the gospel are the covenant of grace.

Turretin further appends a brief section to this discussion, noting that there are numerous other "very emphatic synonymous words used to express this covenant," such as "the oath" (Luke 1:73); "the sure mercies promised to David" (Isa. 55:3); "the law of faith" (Rom. 3:27); and the "quickening spirit and the ministration of righteousness" (2 Cor. 3:6, 9).  

Again, his purpose seems to be a concern to demonstrate that the covenant of grace is the content of the gospel, and it is denoted and connoted even when the words "covenant" or "grace" are not employed.

B. The Nature of the Covenant of Grace

After treating the key biblical terms for covenant and examining their force, Turretin next offers an exposition of the covenant of grace, including an analysis of the contracting parties that

---


25 Turretin, Institutio theologiae elencticæ, XII i.13.
form this covenant, the Mediator provided to fulfill its terms, and the clauses that define the stipulations, promises, and blessings of this covenant.

Turretin explains that God delights to enter into fellowship with his human creatures and thus he desires to maintain a church in every time and era. This fellowship or communion with God is for the “fruition of happiness,” and God deemed a covenant arrangement the best means to this end, where “there is a mutual approach of the contracting parties to each other and a close and familiar union. . . .” On God’s part this demonstrates his “wonderful condescension” (σουκατάκευμεν) inasmuch as God in all of his incomprehensible majesty and splendor brings himself down to “the most miserable state of his creatures.” For humans this covenant relationship displays “the extraordinary dignity” to which they are exalted by divine grace, “that from the lowest depths of misery they should be admitted to the communion and glory of God blessed forever.”

Turretin is careful to remind us that a covenant, “properly and strictly speaking,” cannot exist between God and humans “because there is no room for a contract (which takes place between equals), nor any obligation of God, but a spontaneous communication of himself.” Instead, says Turretin, what we call a covenant between God and humans is what lawyers call a “quasi-contract” (quasi-contractus), for by his own “singular grace” God chose to enter into a covenant with humans.

---

26 Turretin, Institutio theologiae selencticae, XII.i.i. “Ita non aliter communionem illam instituere illi placuit, quam per viam fidei, in quo mutuus datur partium contrahentium ad se invicem accessus, et arcta ac familiaris consociatio, quod a parte Dei miram σουκατάκευμεν ejus arguit, per quam ex incomprehensibili Majestatis splendore sese demittit voluit ad miserrimum creaturarum statum, et a parte hominum eximiam dignitatem, ad quam Dei gratia eos evehit, ut ex profundissima miseriae abysso, ad Dei in secula beneficiti communionem et gloriam admittantur.”

27 Turretin, Institutio theologiae selencticae, XII.i.ii. “Quamvis vero proprie et stricte loquendo non possit dari fœdus inter Deum et hominem, quia non datur locus contractus, qui inter pares iniur, nec ulla Dei obligatio, sed spontanea sui communicatio . . . Deus tamen singulares gratias voluit cum homine fœdus inire, quod locum habet quasi-contractus, ut in jure loquuntur.” This point stands at sharp odds with Torrance’s charge that federalism is guilty of reducing the idea of covenant to a bare contract (J. B. Torrance, “Covenant or Contract?,” 51-76; “Calvin and Puritanism in England and Scotland,” 267; idem, “The Strengths and Weaknesses of the Westminster Theology,” 48ff) and with Miller’s and McGeiffert’s allegation that federalist theologians thought of the covenant as a quid pro quo relationship (Miller, New England Mind, 389; “Grace and Works: The Rise and Division of Covenant Divinity in
The first covenant into which God entered with humans was a legal covenant. This covenant of works dealt with man as innocent and unfallen; the promise of eternal life offered therein pending on the perfect fulfillment of the law ("do this and live") and the threat of death prescribed for failure to do so ("cursed is he who continueth not"). Adam, and in him all persons as his progeny, was the human party of this covenant. The second covenant that God established with humans was an evangelical covenant or covenant of faith. This covenant, called the covenant of grace, comes to man in his fallen state, sinful and guilty; the promise is in the way of faith so that the believer is promised "safety in Christ and on account of Christ"; and it is made with all the elect in Christ. The English federal theologian, Edward Leigh, referring to David Dickson, states that the covenant of grace is "absolute and peculiar only to the elect," but is "conditional" in reference to all, such that Christ provides a righteousness and salvation to all who believe, so that any who will take him on these terms shall be saved.

According to God's pity and gracious sanction, the covenant of grace is his constituted remedy to the curse humans are under for failure to meet the terms of the covenant of nature. It is a remedy in Christ, whereby God not only provides escape from the misery of curse and death but also the attainment of "most perfect happiness" (perfectissimam beatitatem). Says Turretin, "This remedy (or method) justice demanded, wisdom found out and mercy and power procured in Jesus Christ, the only begotten Son of God, our Mediator, the foundation of that covenant."

Although Turretin does not cite any confessional materials in this connection, the sentiment he

Elizabethan Puritanism," Harvard Theological Review 75/4 (1982): 464.) Von Rohr stands opposed to both of these assessments of federal theology (see his Covenant of Grace in Puritan Thought, 31).

28 Turretin, Instituto theologiae elencticae, XII.ii.3.

29 Leigh, Treatise of the Divine Promises, 92; Leigh references Dickson's Therapeutica Sacra: showing briefly the method of healing the diseases of the conscience, concerning regeneration (Edinburgh: Evan Tyler, 1664), Bk. I, chapter 9; also Blake, Vindiciae foederis, 2nd ed., chapters 12-15; and Bulkley, Gospel Covenant, part 4, chapter 3-5. It is common among federal theologians to distinguish between those who share in the covenant in an outward sense versus those, namely the elect, who participate in the salvific essence of the covenant. See, for example, Westminster Larger Catechism Q/AS 30, 31, 32. Also see Witius, De Oeconomia Foederum Dei cum Hominibus, II.i.5; Heidegger, Corpus Theologicum, XI.8; cf. Heppe, Reformed Dogmatics, 382, 383.

30 Turretin, Instituto theologiae elencticae, XII.ii.4. "Remedium hoc seu rationem Justitiae requisivit, Sapientia invenit, et Misericordia ac Potentia praestitit, in Jesu Christo unigenito Dei Filio, Mediatore nostro, fedoris istius fundamentum."
expresses here is similar to that found in the Belgic Confession (1561/1619), the Heidelberg Catechism (1563), the Second Helvetic Confession (1566), and the Canons of Dort (1618-1619), besides the Westminster Standards (1647). 31

1. The Covenant of Grace Defined

This brings Turretin to a formal definition of this covenant:

This covenant of grace is a gratuitous pact entered into in Christ between God offended and man offending. In it God promises remission of sins and salvation to man gratuitously on account of Christ; man, however, relying upon the same grace promises faith and obedience.

Turretin adds to this definition a second, differently nuanced description:

Or it is a gratuitous agreement between God offended and man offending, concerning the bestowal of grace and glory in Christ upon the sinner upon condition of faith. 32

Similar definitions are easily set forth from other federal theologians. Cocceius defines the covenant of grace as “an agreement between God and sinful man, God declaring his free good pleasure to give righteousness and an inheritance to a fixed seed in the Mediator by faith for the glory of his grace. . . .” Sedgwick offers these words: “The Covenant of grace is a new compact or agreement, which God made with sinful man, out of his own mere mercy and grace, wherein he promiseth that he will be our God, and that we shall be his people; and undertakes to give everlasting life, and all that conduceth thereunto, unto all who believe in Christ.” 33

Turretin asserts that two things require our attention in reference to this: first, the nature of this agreement; and, second, the properties or components that constitute it. To understand

---

31 Cf. Belgic Confession, art. 20; Heidelberg Catechism, Q/As 11-18; Second Helvetic Confession, Chapter 11: 15, 16; Canons of Dort, II, 1-4; Westminster Confession, chapter 8: 4, 5.

32 Turretin, Institutio theologiae eleccionis, XII ii.5. “Fœsus gratiae est pactum gratuitum inter Deum offensam et hominem offendentem in Christo iuvent, in quo Deus homini gratis propter Christum remissionem peccatorum et salutem pollicerur, homo vero eadem gratia fretus polliceretur fidem et obedientiam. Vel est conventio gratuita inter Deum offensam et hominem offendentem de gratia et gloria in Christo homini peccatori sub conditione fidei conferenda.”

33 Cocceius, Summa doctrinarum de foedere et testamento Dei, §76. “Fœsus gratiae est conventio inter Deum et hominem peccatorem Deo declarante librum benefacitum suum de iustitia et hereditate certo semini danda in mediatore per fidem ad gloriam gratiae ipsius . . . .” Also see Sedgwick, Bowels of Tender Mercy Sealed in the Everlasting Covenant, 13; Lucas Trelcatus, Scholasticæ et methodicae hærum communium s. theologiae Institutio (London: J. Bill, 1604), Bk. II, pp. 107-111; Heidegger, as cited in Heppe, Reformed Dogmatics, p. 382, and other authors cited there; as well as van Mastricht, Theoretico-practica theologia, V.114; Ball, Treasuries of the Covenant of Grace, Chapter III, p. 12f.; John Flavel, Works, VI: 176-177; also see David Dickson’s full treatment of covenant in his Therapeutica Sacra, 86-133.
the nature of this covenant we must consider (a) who is its author; (b) who are the contracting parties; (c) the Mediator of it; and (d) the clauses of this covenant, that is, the things covenanted, both on God’s part in the way of promise and on man’s part in the way of stipulated duty.

a. God as the Author of the Covenant of Grace

God is the author of the covenant of grace, which means that he is the “principal efficient” of it, the covenant being established “by his mere goodness and free good will” (ἐλδοκία). For in Scripture this covenant is always called the covenant of God, not the covenant of man. God alone desired and was able to bring about a covenant relationship with fallen humans, for “he alone had the power, as the supreme Lord and prince, of contracting with the creature and dispensing with that supreme right by which (according to the covenant of works) he could have punished the sinner himself without any hope of pardon.” Turretin’s point here is not to be minimized. Since humans were under a sentence of death, according to God’s original sanction, only God could provide a remedy to the terrible malady afflicting humans and bringing them to ruin. Thus God alone could rescue damnable sinners “by substituting a new covenant in the place of the former.” And inasmuch as God did this solely out of his own good pleasure, according to his mercy and goodness, nothing in fallen humans, either of merit or of misery, accounts for this gracious covenant. “For if innocent man could merit nothing with God, how much less the guilty sinner?” And if the misery of humans impelled God to be gracious and redeem them, why didn’t the misery of fallen angels impel God to do the same for them? No, the cause or reason for God’s mercy and gratuitous love is God’s good will (ἐλδοκία) alone. In Zechariah’s song, says Turretin, this is termed God’s “tender mercy” (σπλάγχνα ἐλέους) (Luke 1:78); and Paul calls it “the exceeding riches of his grace” (τοῦ ὑπερβαλλόντα πλοῦτον τῆς χάριτος αὐτοῦ) (Eph. 2:7). 34

This “good will” of God is eternal, according to his own counsel, and it is therefore also “common and undivided” (commune et indivisum) among the three persons of the Trinity—God

34 Turretin, Institutio theologiae etnicicae, XII.i.6. Cf. Witsius, De Economia Foederum Dei cum Hominibus, II.i.3.
the Father instituting it, desiring to communicate himself to fallen humans and giving his Son; God the Son, being the "cause and foundation" (causa et fundamentum) of it through his blood, serving as Mediator and "internuncio and executor" (internuncius et executor) of the covenant for its fulfillment, acting as the Surety for men; and God the Spirit, being the matter (materia) promised and the witness (testis) to it, as well as "the earnest of the heavenly inheritance." 35

God, as the author or cause of this covenant, also makes use of other means to implement or administer it to his people. Thus the "instrumental causes" (cause instrumentales) of this covenant are both the word and sacraments. The word, in this regard, does not directly or as such entail the moral law, for the law is the letter that kills, being a ministration of death (2 Cor. 3:6). Rather, the word in mind here is the gospel, revealing divine grace and Christ's righteousness (Rom. 1:16, 17). As for the sacraments, they serve as instrumental causes in that God uses them as "signs" (signa), pointing to the substance of the covenant, and as "seals" (sigilla), guaranteeing the same (Rom. 4:11); moreover, the sacraments function as "moral instruments" (instrumenta moralia), applying the covenant of grace to us. Simultaneously, in our receiving them, the sacraments function as external symbols of our "confederation" (confederationis) with God and as "restipulations" (restipulationes) whereby we commit ourselves to God as recipients of the promises of the covenant. Meanwhile, ministers serve as ambassadors and legates of the covenant—ambassadors by whom God speaks to us and calls us into his covenant, and legates by whom he calls us to obedience and sets forth his demands, that is, "authoritatively stipulates with us." 36

---

35 Turrettin, *Institutio theologiae elencticae*, XII.i.7. In reference to the Father's role, Turrettin cites John 3:16 and Gal. 4:6; in regard to the role of the Son he cites Matt. 26:28; Eph. 1:3, 4; Mal. 3:1; 1 Tim. 2:5; Heb. 9:15; 7:22; and in connection with the Holy Spirit's role he cites Gal. 3:14; Rom. 8:16; Eph. 1:14; 2 Cor. 1:22.

36 Turrettin, *Institutio theologiae elencticae*, XII.i.8. Turrettin treats the doctrine of faith and effectual calling under Topic XV (see especially questions 1, 4-6) and the doctrine of the sacraments under Topic XIX (baptism in particular under questions 11-20). The idea of "instrumental causes" of the covenant, that is, the Word and sacraments as means of administering divine grace is not only a standard idea in federal theology but also in Reformed theology in general, and even early Christian thought. Cf. Calvin, *Institutes*, III.i-iii; IV.iii.1; IV.xiv; OS, IV, 1-84; V, 42-44, 258-285; Heidelberg Catechism, Q/As 21, 65-67, 83-84; and in that connection see Ursinus, *Commentary on Heidelberg Catechism*, 112-116, 340-353, 440-448; Jeremias Bastianus, *An Exposition or Commentaries upon the Catechisms of Christian religion, which is taught in the Schooles and Churches both of the Low Countries and the Dominions of the
b. The Contracting Parties—God Offended and Man Offending

Although in his formal definition of the covenant of grace Turretin only mentions two parties in this covenant, there are actually three parties or subjects: God offended (Dens offensus), man offending (Homo offensendi), and Christ as the Mediator (Christus Mediator) who reconciles man to God—a justly angry God. Yet God, as author of this covenant, acts as a “merciful Father and Redeemer,” and though offended and angry, he himself provides the path to be appeased, and that according to his “love of benevolence.” Thus, since sin has abolished the natural communion that once existed between God and his human creatures, in establishing the covenant of grace God does not do so acting in his capacity as Creator and Lord as such, nor in his role as the preeminent One over all creatures, nor as a just legislator who may exact moral perfection, for humans are corrupt and wholly incapacitated and unable to fellowship with God. Only as a merciful God and a loving Father is the way opened for this covenant—that is, for the reestablishment of communion with God, God himself wishing “to reconcile offending men to himself.” Here Turretin cites Romans 5:8 (“but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us”) and Eph. 2:4 (“But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he us . . . made us alive together with Christ”).

As for man offending, he is a party of this covenant as a sinner, not simply as a creature or as God’s upright creation. He is dead in sin, under divine wrath, estranged from God, and plunged into the misery of his own guilt. However, humans are not parties of this covenant

---

37 Turretin, Institutio theologiae eleccionis, XII.ii.9.
merely as sinners, if that were so, then all sinners would be counted within it—and in fact God has not elected each and every sinner to eternal life, for some are reprobated. Instead, the human parties of this covenant are not sinners as such, but the “contrite sinner” who believes by the power of the “free election of God.”

This brings us to the third party of the covenant of grace—Christ the Mediator.

c. The Mediator of the Covenant of Grace

Turretin gives extended attention to Christ as the Mediator, who in that capacity is the third party of the evangelical covenant. Since there was no alienation or estrangement existing between God and man in the covenant of nature, a Mediator was not needed; however, given the rift and enmity that now characterizes the relationship between God and humans, the only way a covenant relationship can exist is through Christ in his role as Mediator. For God must remain true to his own justice, which means he will not endure sinful human beings except a remedy be provided; and for man’s part, in his unrighteousness he lacks the ability or desire to approach God. Thus not only did God, according to his “wonderful mercy,” will to reestablish a covenant relation with fallen people, but he resolved to do this by bestowing a Mediator through whom the new covenant is both made possible and secured.

What is more, this Mediator must needs meet certain requirements if he is to effect reconciliation between God and humans—or, more specifically, remedy their alienation from God.

Now this Mediator ought to be God and man, partaking of both: man indeed, that he might suffer and die, because only by suffering and a bloody death could sin be expiated and the sinner restored to favor (Col. 1:20, 22; Heb. 2:14, 15); but God, that his death might have an infinite value, surpassing the measure of a creature, and that having overcome death he might live forever with his people and, standing between both, he might first do in nature what he was bound to effect afterwards in grace.39

38 Turretin, Instruzione theologica elenctica, XII.ii.10. Turretin’s theological anthropology, including an extended account of human depravity and incapacity to know God or seek him in fellowship, or even to desire God is found in IX.i-v. Witsius accents that the parties of the covenant are between God and the elect, see his De Eeconomia Foederum Dei cum Hominibus, II.i.5; III.i.1, 2-3.

39 Turretin, Instruzione theologica elenctica, XII.ii.11. “Mediator autem iste Deus et homo esse debuit, et ex utroque medius: Homo quidem, ut pati posset et mori, quia nonnisi per passionem et mortem cruentam peccatum
This formulation is reminiscent of Calvin's theology and the words of the Heidelberg Catechism, Q/As 12-18, which makes the point that divine justice must be satisfied, but no mere creature can effect the satisfaction for sin, sustaining the burden of God's wrath and delivering others from it. 40 Consequently, the requisite Mediator must be a true and righteous man, and yet more powerful than all creatures, that is, he must also be true God. For divine justice requires that the same human nature that sinned make satisfaction for sin. Sinners, however, cannot satisfy for other sinners. Therefore what is needed is one who is both truly human and also truly God, so that by the power of his Godhead he can bear in his human nature the weight of God’s wrath, and thereby obtain righteousness and life for others. Such a Mediator is none other than the Lord Jesus Christ.

At this juncture Turretin briefly addresses an intramural squabble among Reformed theologians concerning whether the covenant of grace was made “with Christ as one of the contracting parties and in him with all his seed” (which would make it directly parallel to the Adamic covenant of nature) or whether it was made “in Christ with all the seed so that he does

potuit expiari, et peccator in gratiam restitui, Col. i. 20, 22; Heb. ii. 14, 15; Deus vero, ut mors ipsius haberet valorem infinitum, qui creature modum excederet, et ut morte supera in aeternum cum suis viveret; Et ex utroque medius, ut in natura prius faceret, quod in grata postea efficere debat.” Turretin fully treats Christ's work of satisfaction under Topic XIII.

40 Cf. Calvin, Institutes, II.xii.1-3; O.S., III, 437-440. In this connection we observe that S. Strehle's assessment of federal theology as positing a legal fiction of sorts, succumbing to a rank Franciscan voluntarism, is wholly off the mark (see his Calvinism, Federalism, and Scholasticism, 314-18; 387-89). Strehle's work misunderstands Calvin and federal theology in its entire project, and for several reasons. Not only is Strehle mistaken in asserting that the forensic doctrine of justification entails a kind of voluntarism and nominalism, falsely characterizing the doctrine as God declaring persons who are unjust just, he likewise fails to understand the decisive and perpetual role of God's law within the divine/human relationship. For federalist theologians, Turretin being a case in point, the twofold covenant scheme—both the covenant of works, which requires human obedience to God, and the covenant of grace, which provides the way of redemption in Christ (who is the one who undergoes the penalty of the law and also fulfills its obligations on behalf of sinners)—is concerned to uphold the centrality of God's righteousness and holiness in his relationship with humans. It certainly is not the case that the bond humans have with Adam or with Christ is absent any “ontological reality.” If Strehle's analysis of federal theology were correct, the incarnation of Christ would be altogether superfluous and unnecessary according to the federal scheme, which is patently false. In fact, it is Strehle's position that appears to compromise the importance of divine law and God's justice, as if humans can relate to God without the obligation of obedience to him. Strehle also fails to grasp that an ex parte relationship between God and humans is itself an expression of divine goodness and love—that is, an expression of God's gratuitous favor. Rather than forfeiting divine righteousness and justice, federal theology's burden, contra Strehle, was to uphold both God's goodness and justice.
not so much hold the relation of a contracting party as of Mediator, who stands between those at variance for the purpose of reconciling them.”

Turretin’s verdict is to the point: “It is superfluous . . . to dispute about this because it amounts to the same thing.” Rather than enter into these debates, he argues that what is central and essential here is that “a twofold pact” (“or the two parts and degrees of one and the same pact”) be given proper attention—namely the pact between the Father and Son in the counsel of redemption, and then the pact that God makes with the elect in Christ to effect salvation for them by reason of Christ’s work “under the conditions of faith and repentance.” For the former pact is made with Christ as Surety and head of those being saved, while the latter is made with the members in Christ as Surety and head. Peter Wallace rightly refers to this as “a good example of Turretin’s clear-headed attempt to forge unity among the orthodox.”

d. Addendum: The Pactum between the Father and the Son

For Turretin, then, if we are to speak of the Mediator as one of the parties of the covenant of grace, it is necessary to understand the pact (pactum) between the Father and the Son. Consequently he takes a detour of sorts and expounds upon this doctrine, first setting out to prove that a pact exists between the first and second persons of the Trinity, followed by an examination of how this covenant can be considered in “the three periods” (in tribus momentis).

---

41 Francis Roberts, for example, Mysterium & Medulla Biblicum, p. 69, refers to the parties of this covenant (which he calls the covenant of faith) as that of God, Christ, the last Adam, and his seed. Thus he defines this covenant as follows: “The covenant of faith is God’s gracious compact or agreement with Jesus Christ the last Adam, and in him with all his Seed, after the fall: Touching their recovery out of the state of Sin and Death, into a state of Righteousness and eternal life, by Christ.” Likewise, Obadiah Sedgwick, Bowels of Tender Mercy Sealed in the Everlasting Covenant, 3-5; William Strong, Discourse of the Two Covenants, 124ff. The opposing view is represented by John Barrett, God’s Love to Man and Man’s Duty towards God, 127-134.

42 Turretin, Institutio theologiae elencticæ, XII.ii.12. “Superfluum, inquam, est de eo discipare, quia res codem redit; Et certum est duplex hic pactum necessario attendendum esse, vel uni ejusdemque pacti duas partes et gradus. Prius Pactum est, quod inter Patrem et Filium intercedit, ad opus Redemptionis exequendum. Posterior est, quod Deus cum Electis in Christo contrahit, de illis per et propter Christum salvandis sub conditione fidei et resipiscen.tiae. Prius fit cum Sponsore et capite ad salutem Membrorum; Posterior fit cum Membris in Capite et Sponsore.”


44 Besides Turretin’s treatment of this topic, also see Witsius, De Economia Fœderum Dei cum Hominibus, II.ii.1-16; II.iii.1-24; Cocceius, Summa doctrinarum et foederae et testamento Dei, V, §§88-90; also van Asselt, Federal Theology of Johannes Cocceius, pp. 229-230, 245-247, on Cocceius’s views; Heppe, Reformed Dogmatics, 377-379; van Mastricht,
What is remarkable about Turretin’s proof for this doctrine is that it is entirely rooted in the economy of redemption itself, which is a Cocceian trait. In other words, the relationship between the Father and the Son in the way of historia salutis points back and testifies to the eternal agreement within the Godhead to be implemented in the fullness of time. For Turretin argues that this pact “contains the will of the Father giving his Son as a ἀγοραστής (Redeemer and head of his mystical body) and the will of the Son offering himself as a sponsor for his members to work out that redemption (ἀπογοραστής).” This is revealed in Christ’s own ministry on earth, which is pursued according to divine appointment. For in the economy of salvation Scripture portrays the Father as requiring the Son’s obedience, even unto death on a cross, while promising him as reward a name that is above every name. Meanwhile, the Son is depicted as offering himself to do his Father’s bidding, ordained and appointed to fulfill his office as the Christ of God for the establishment and consummation of the kingdom of God.

Luke 22:29, says Turretin, figures prominently in this portrait (“I appoint unto you a kingdom, as my Father hath appointed unto me”). Here we see that the Father appointing the Son to the work of redemption. Herman Witsius also appeals to this text, asserting that Christ

---

45 Cf. van Asselt, Federal Theology of Johannes Cocceius, 229-236; 242-247.

46 Turretin, Institutione theologiae elencticæ, XII.ii.13. “Pactum Patris et Filii continet voluntatem Patris Filium dantis ut λυτρον, Redemptorem, et Caput Corporis sui mystici, et voluntatem Filii se ut Sponsorum pro Membris suis sistentis ad ἀπογοραστῆν istam peragendam.” Heidegger offers a much more comprehensive definition of this covenant (Corpus Theologiae, XI, 12), as cited by H fitte, p. 376: “The covenant of God the Father with the Son is a mutual agreement, by which God the Father exacted from the Son perfect obedience to the law unto the death which he must face on behalf of chosen seed to be given him; and promised him, if he gave the obedience, the seed in question as his own perquisite and inheritance; and in return the Son, in promising this obedience to God the Father and producing it in the literal act, demanded of Him in turn the right to demand this seed for himself as an inheritance and perquisite.” Turretin’s more refined presentation has a texture that is more convincing.
himself demonstrates that such a covenantal agreement exists between the Father and the Son. Witsius translates this verse as follows: “and I engage by covenant unto you a kingdom, as my Father hath engaged by covenant unto me.” The key term in this locution is the Greek word διατήρημα, which Witsius renders as testamentaria dispositione addico and dispositione testamentaria addixit. Just as the elect obtain the kingdom by virtue of some covenantal or testamentary arrangement, likewise Christ—which demonstrates, then, that his work as the incarnate redeemer is part of an intratrinitarian pact.

Turretin also cites certain texts from Isaiah that depict the Son as the one whom God gives as a covenant for the people (Isa. 42:1, 6; 49:6, 8). This Mediator, whom God bestows as a gift, being appointed as a light to the Gentiles and bringing salvation unto the ends of the earth, fulfills his vocation in his threefold office as priest, prophet, and king (see Psa. 110:4; Isa. 61:2; Ps. 2:8). Thus the Son comes into the world with the purpose of fulfilling the law of the covenant: to lay down his life for the sheep, which is a commandment he received from the Father (John 10:18).

The Son’s acceptance of this task is evident in voluntarily submitting himself to his Father’s will and the covenantal law, becoming our Surety. Here Turretin appeals to Hebrews 10:5, 7 (which is a citation of Psalm 40:6-8), wherein the Son affirms his devotion to God, having come into the world to do the Father’s will, for God’s law is written on his heart. What is more, the Son actually performs the work of redemption assigned to him (Gal. 4:4), being faithful to keep God’s law and abide in his love (John 15:10), confessing at the end of his earthly ministry (in the words of his high priestly prayer): “I have glorified you on earth, having accomplished the work that you gave me to do. And now, Father, glorify me in your own self,

---

47 Witsius, De Æconomia Foederum Dei cum Hominibus, II.ii.3. It should be observed that Witsius’s citation here is in Greek, followed by a Latin translation: “κύριο διατήρημα ἐμοί, καθὼς διέδεικεν ὁ ο πατὴρ μου βασιλεὺς.” “Et ego testamentaria dispositione addico Regnum, sicut dispositione testamentaria addixit mihi illud Pater.” Thus Witsius’s Latin could be translated as: “And by a testamentary arrangement I confer unto you a kingdom, as by a testamentary arrangement my Father has conferred unto me.”

48 Witsius, De Æconomia Foederum Dei cum Hominibus, II.ii.3.

49 The Hebrew construction, not noted by Turretin, is the same in Isa. 42:6 and 49:8: יִשְׂרָאֵל לֶךְ בָּרוּךְ!
with the glory that I had with you before the world existed.... Holy Father, keep them in your name, which you have given me. ... Sanctify them in the truth; your word is truth” (John 17:4, 5, 11, 17).50

For Turretin, the pactum salutis is manifest in Jesus’ own affirmation of coming into the world with a mandate or mission to accomplish, which is to do the Father’s will for the salvation of sinners. This covenant or pact, however, can be considered from three angles, for concerning this covenant Turretin says there are tres periodi—that of destination, that of promise, and that of execution. That is to say, we can contemplate this covenant from God’s eternal decision, as well as from God’s gospel promise given immediately after the fall, and also from: the execution of that promise in Christ’s incarnation.51

Concerning the period of destination, Turretin observes that from eternity, according to God’s counsel as the holy Trinity, the Son “was given as a sponsor and Mediator to the church.” Turretin argues that this is seen from Proverbs 8:23, where Wisdom, personified as a woman, speaks of herself in saying: “I was anointed from everlasting,” which means that from eternity the Son willed with the Father (for they are one in will) to be “appointed to perform the office of Mediator in time.” Turretin also appeals to the words of 1 Peter 1:20 (“Christ was foreordained before the foundation of the world . . .”), that is, foreordained to be the lamb of God without blemish or spot, to ransom his people with his precious blood.52 Psalm 2:7, 8 is also apropos (“I will declare the decree: the Lord hath said unto me, Thou art my Son; this day I have begotten thee. Ask of me, and I shall give thee the heathen for an inheritance”), for here “Christ describes the eternal destination (made in the decree of God) of himself, who is the

50 Turretin, Institutio theologiae eloquentiae, XII.i.14.

51 Here it should be observed that Wallace, in noting Turretin’s distinctions in this regard, fails to distinguish between Turretin’s exposition of the covenant of grace in general and his more specific detour into the covenant of redemption or the pactum salutis, that is, the pact between the Father and the Son. Cf. his article, “The Doctrine of the Covenant in the Elenctic Theology of Francis Turretin,” 169.

52 Although Turretin does not spell this out in so many words, such is the context of 1 Peter 1:20, especially verses 18 and 19.
eternally begotten Son of God and on that account alone capable of undertaking so great an office as King of the whole church.”

As for the period of promise, Turretin states that in response to the human fall into sin God set about to do what had been appointed from eternity, for in view of the enmity and alienation that impedes a positive covenantal fellowship God and man, God now actually appoints Christ as Mediator, according to his word and the office of his suretyship. In other words, in the postlapsarian circumstances the Son begins to do those things associated with his office as Mediator—prophetic pronouncements (acting both immediately and mediately), royal or kingly duties (for the establishment of his kingdom), and priestly intercession (interceding for the elect in view of his future atoning sacrifice).  

Finally, in regard to the period of execution, Turretin asserts that this refers to that moment when the Son of God actually became incarnate for the purpose of performing the work of salvation that he was appointed from eternity to accomplish. Turretin simply references Hebrews 10:5, 7 in this connection (“Consequently, when Christ came into the world, he said, ‘Sacrifices and offerings you have not desired. . . . ’ Then I said, ‘Behold, I have come to do your will, O God’”), for in coming to do the will of the Father, Christ offers himself as the most perfect sacrifice for sin in antithesis to the legal sacrifices that were finally ineffectual for this purpose.

This detour into the intratrinitarian pactum between the Father and the Son serves to highlight the nature and purpose of Christ’s work as the Mediator of the evangelical covenant. It may be fairly argued that in developing this doctrine seventeenth-century federal theologians were motivated to depict vividly the official character of Christ’s mediatorial work and the “sentness” or apostolic nature of his operations, for he is one appointed and sent to fulfill a task,

53 Turretin, *Institutio theologiae elencticae*, XII.ii.15.
54 Turretin, *Institutio theologiae elencticae*, XII.ii.15.
being assigned a mission, and in fact willingly offered himself for this sacrificial and substitutionary role. More specifically, it defines Christ’s mediatorial role as that of Surety—the Guarantor of all the blessings of this covenant, inclusive of its conditions and stipulations. Indeed, essential to the covenant of grace is a right understanding of what is entailed in calling Christ the Mediator of this covenant. For he is the Sponsor or Surety of the covenant people (an idea Turrettin will expound upon later).\textsuperscript{56} In addition, this \textit{pactum} underscores the eternal nature of the covenant of grace, which is altogether consistent with the scriptural doctrine of predestination, though Turrettin does not argue for the intratrinitarian covenant on the basis of that doctrine.\textsuperscript{57}

In expositing the nature of Christ’s mediatorship as a third party in the covenant of grace Turrettin is careful to accent what Christ does in this role, given that a mediator stands between parties at enmity with one another. Thus Christ acts on behalf of both man and God in order to do that which is required of persons made in God’s image, fulfilling what is owed to God by them, and to do that which God promises to the elect according to divine mercy. Stated in more detail, as Mediator, Christ satisfies for human sin, paying all our debts before God through his obedience and sacrificial death, even sanctifying us by his Spirit, while also serving as the legate of the Father, declaring God’s mercy, and calling us to faith and obedience, which are the duties and conditions of the covenant of grace. Moreover, he promises and secures all the benefits of the covenant by his own blood, for in this way he seals the new covenant unto us, even as he ratifies it in us by the Holy Spirit, according to his effectual operations. Therefore we are shown that

\begin{quote}

a twofold obstacle to a covenant had to be removed. On the part of God, his enmity on account of man’s sin and on the part of man, his enmity on account of the righteousness of God; God was to be reconciled to man and man to God. Christ effected the former by the
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{56} We will consider this in a separate section, see Turrettin, \textit{Institutiona theologica electiue}, XII.ix. The connection between the eternal intratrinitarian \textit{pactum} and Christ’s role as \textit{sponsor} seems to find early expression in the work of Olevianus (cf. Bierma, \textit{German Calvinism in the Confessional Age}, pp. 107-112).

\textsuperscript{57} Cf. van Asselt’s helpful analysis of Cocceius’s treatment of this question in \textit{Federal Theology of Johannes Cocceius}, 239-247; also see G. Vos, “Doctrine of the Covenant in Reformed Theology,” 251-253.
merit of his blood, by which he satisfied for us and reconciled God to us; the latter by the
efficacy of the Spirit, by which he sanctifies and converts us and by converting, reconciles us to
God. And thus he perfectly fulfilled what had to be done either on God’s part with us or on
man’s part with God, unto a full consummation of the covenant of grace.⁵⁸

The covenant of grace is thus wholly centered upon Christ and fulfilled in him. This is why
it is of grace; and it is not to be thought that humans, as one of the parties of this covenant, offer a
contribution or fulfill a prescription or meet a condition apart from Christ and all that he does
for them, bestowing every benefit and blessing of the gospel covenant. In fact, this comes to
further notice when we examine Turretin’s discussion of the clauses or “things covenanted” in
this arrangement.

e. The Clauses of the Covenant of Grace

The specific clauses or things covenanted in the covenant of grace have to do with matters
directly pertaining to God on the one hand and man on the other—God promising his gracious
blessing, while duties are prescribed to man. Each of these can be seen in general terms and as
particular stipulations. The general formulation is seen on God’s part in his divine promise to be
our God and on the human side in the call or demand to be his people. Turretin notes that this
is stated “in the fewest but weightiest words” and encompasses all that God promises to man as
well as all that is demanded from man, both promised blessing and our manifestation of love for
God in the way of worship and service. The promise is “the soul and substance of the covenant,
the foundation and compendium of all the other promises given to believers in the Scriptures.”
There is nothing “higher, fuller, sweeter or more firm” than this promise—often repeated in the
Scriptures.⁵⁹

⁵⁸ Turretin, *Institutio theologiae elencticae*, XII.ii.16. “Ita duplex obstaculum fœderis removeri debit: A parte Dei,
Inimicitia ejus propter peccatum hominis, et a parte hominis inimicissima hominis propter justitiam Dei; Deus fuit
reconciliandus homini, et Homo Deo. Christus prius fecit per meritum sanguinis, quo pro nobis satisfecit, et Deum
nobis reconciliavit; posterius per efficaciam Spiritus, qua nos sanctificat et convertit, et convertendo Deo reconciliat.
Atque ita perfecte implevit, que vel ex parte Dei apud homines erant peragenda, vel ex parte hominum apud Deum,
ad plenam fœderis gratiam consummationem.”

⁵⁹ Turretin, *Institutio theologiae elencticae*, XII.ii.17. “Et ad Promissionem quidem quod attinet; talis est et tanta, ut
merito anima et substantia fœderis dicatur, fundamentum et compendium ceterarum omnium promissionum, que
fidelibus dantur in Scriptura; qua nihil sublimius, nihil plenius, nihil suavius, nihil firmius dari potest.” Turretin
(1) The First Party of the Covenant—God

More specifically, that God promises to be “our God” means more than his general authority, care, and dominion over all creatures, which is evident in his providential care and governance of all things. Rather, it refers to that covenantal relationship and fellowship of his grace whereby “God communicates himself to the sinner to bestow upon him immortal life and happiness.” This is according to his “benevolence and love” (*per benevolentiam et amorem*), manifest in the blessings he imparts to his church. 60

Turretin categorizes these general blessings under four headings, which prove to be remarkably comprehensive in scope: (1) reconciliation and union with God; (2) the communication of all the good things of God; (3) conformity to God in his image; and (4) the eternity and constancy of divine love and union with God. The first of these, reconciliation and union with God, has to do not only with being at peace with God but also with God giving himself to us so that “ever after he may be ours as much essentially (*ouσιοδότοι*) (as to his nature and attributes) as hypostatically (*hypostatικόθοι*) (as to the persons and personal operations).” 61 Naturally, peace with God is included in this, for unless God is appeased sinners cannot have communion with him. But in being appeased, God is a merciful Father to us (Ps. 16:5; 73:26; 119:57; Hos. 2:23), a committed husband (Hos. 2:19; Cant. 2:16), one who adopts us as his children (2 Cor. 6:18), and a ruler and king who chooses and claims us as his people. 62 What is more,

---

references the following texts: Gen. 17:7, 8; Exod. 20:2, 29:45; Deut. 5:2, 3, 6; Jer. 24:7; 30:22; Ezek. 13:9; Jer. 31:33; 2 Cor. 6:16; Heb. 8:16; Rev. 21:3; Ps. 33:12.

60 Turretin, *Institutio theologiae elencticæ*, XII.ii.18.

61 Turretin, *Institutio theologiae elencticæ*, XII.ii.19. “Reconciliationem et communionem cum Deo, per quam non tantum nobis placatur, sed et seipsum nobis dat, ut deinceps sit noster tam οὗσιόδοτος, quoad naturam et attributa, quam υποστατικόθος, quoad Personas, et operationes personales.”

promises; the sufficiency of God for the communication of all manner of happiness. And as sin brought innumerable evils upon us, we find a remedy for all in the divine properties: wisdom heals our ignorance and blindness, grace our guilt, power our weakness, mercy our misery, goodness our wickedness, justice our iniquity, the sufficiency and fulness of God our poverty and indigence, fidelity our inconstancy and fickleness, holiness our impurity and life our death.\textsuperscript{63}

What is true of God with respect to his attributes is also true with respect to his triunity, for each of the divine persons labor for our redemption, giving themselves to us for this purpose: the Father elects us and becomes our Father by adopting us; the Son redeems us, acting as our Surety to make satisfaction for our sins, renewing us and ruling over us as our head; and the Holy Spirit sanctifies and consoles us, dwelling in us as his temples and imparting his varied blessings to us. In this way we commune with God as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit (1 John 1:3; 2 Cor. 13:14). This is why baptism, as a seal of the covenant of grace, is administered in the name of the Triune God, “blessings flowing from each person—the mercy of the Father, the grace of the Son and the power of the Holy Spirit.”\textsuperscript{64}

Second, in promising to be our God, the Lord manifests the blessing of communicating to us all the good things of himself. “He cannot be our God without all things belonging to him becoming ours; and as all things belong to God, ours also are all things in heaven and on earth” (as Paul states in 1 Corinthians 3:21, 23); and in order to illustrate and bolster this point, Turretin cites Rom. 4:13; Ps. 84:11; Rom. 8:31; Ps. 23:1; Eph. 1:3; Col. 3:11; 1 Cor. 15:28; and Rev. 21:7).\textsuperscript{65}

The third general blessing of the covenant of grace that Turretin specifies is conformity to God in his image. God not only bestows to us “the salutary effects of his properties,” he also re-

\textsuperscript{63} Turretin, \textit{Institutio theologiae selencticae}, XII.ii.20. “Ira autem se nobis donat Deus, ut noster sit quoad omnia attributa, que in commodum et salutem nostram cedunt, et nostra bene dicuntur fruione et usu, quia effecta corum salutaria ad nos dimanant; Nostra est Dei sapientia ad directionem, Potentia ad protectionem, Misericordia ad peccatorum remissionem, Gratia ad sanctificationem et consolationem, Justitia ad hostium vindictam, Fidelitas ad promissionum executionem, Sufficentia ad felicitatis omnimodo communicationem. Et ut peccatum innumerum in nos mala accersivit, invenit et remedium adversus omnia in proprietatibus divinis: Sapientia medetur ignorantiae et cæcitati, Gratia reatui, Potentia infirmitati, Misericordia miseria, Bonitas malitiae, Justitia iniquitati, Sufficentia et Plenitude Dei paupertät et indigentiae, Fidelitas inconstantiae et levitata, Sanctitas impudicitia, et Vita morti.”

\textsuperscript{64} Turretin, \textit{Institutio theologiae selencticae}, XII.ii.21.

\textsuperscript{65} Turretin, \textit{Institutio theologiae selencticae}, XII.ii.22.
makes us in his image so that his attributes bear “their mark and likeness” in us and in this way we may partake of the divine nature (2 Pet. 1:4), and enjoy “the perfect mode of communion” with God. God restores us in order to “irradiate” his light (Matt. 13:43; also 2 Cor. 3:18; 1 John 3:2). Indeed, says Turretin, “no communion can be held with God except on the basis of conformity to him”—both conformity to God in “holiness and moral virtues” (Matt. 5:48; 1 Pet. 1:15) and conformity to God in “life and happiness” (John 14:19; Ps. 102:27, 28; Matt. 22:32). Turretin also notes that two things are necessarily supposed in this: first, that the blessing of the covenant implies a communication of life and immortality, and that the covenant benefits “the whole man,” including the resurrection of the body, so that believers enjoy life and happiness in soul and body.66

The last general blessing that defines the meaning of God covenanting to be “our God” is the perpetuity of these blessings, that is, the eternity and constancy of these good things, especially the endurance of his love. Since the covenant name of God announces his eternity and the promise forever to be God, the covenant entails the eternal promise to be our God. In short, “as long as God will be God (and he will be so forever), he will also be our God that we may forever enjoy his communion and happiness.” The psalmist testifies to the eternity of God and the eternity of his being our God (Ps. 48:14), a most strong support and consolation for believers in the face of temptation and a testimony to the inviolability of true faith. “If God will be ours forever, what further can we fear of evil or expect of good since we shall be conquerors in him forever?”67

Besides the four general blessings that Turretin enumerates, he observes that many other “special promises” of God are given to us—rooted of course in the four already mentioned. In brief fashion Turretin itemizes these special promises as follows (though it doesn’t appear that he is trying to be exhaustive): the bestowal of the Holy Spirit (Ezek. 36:27); the remission of sins

---

66 Turretin, Institutio theologiae elencticae, XII.ii.23.

67 Turretin, Institutio theologiae elencticae, XII.ii.24.
(Jer. 31:34); regeneration (Jer. 31:33); adoption (2 Cor. 6:18); the exchange of a stony heart for a renewed heart of flesh (Ezek. 36:26); perseverance (the peculiar blessing of this covenant because of its inviolability and eternity) (Jer. 32:40); and all the spiritual blessings of grace and glory (Gen. 12:3; Gal. 3:8, 9, 14; Acts 3:26; Eph. 1:3). Says Turretin, “All these are usually designated by the word ‘salvation,’ which implies not only the possession of life (which had a place in the first covenant), but also deliverance from death (which had been introduced by sin).” This idea of salvation can be summed up under four concepts: justification, sanctification, consolation and peace of conscience, and eternal glorification. Justification brings freedom from the curse that rests upon us; sanctification removes sin’s corruption; peace of conscience releases us from the pangs of guilt, even as it enables us to face life’s afflictions and consoles us in the face of physical death, which is the last enemy; and eternal glorification ushers us from eternal death into full happiness.  

As is evident from this exposition, Turretin conceives of the promise of the covenant of grace as embracing the whole program of divine redemption, encompassing every aspect and benefit of God’s saving work, and the eternal glory and fellowship that defines God’s relationship to his restored people. It certainly is not, as Beardslee suggests, “a factor in the doctrine of salvation.” The comprehensive scope of the promise also helps us see that the relationship humans have with God is not at their own initiative but God’s—his initiative being to save sinners who have violated the covenant of nature and stand under its catastrophic sanction of death. Inasmuch as God is true to his word, the divine promise of the covenant of grace is the security or guarantee of its accomplishment, for this covenant, as a covenant of rescue, is wholly dependent upon God for its fulfillment.

We also see that in offering a theological exposition of divine revelation, everything that can be said about God’s relationship with fallen humans is, for Turretin, properly subsumed

---

68 Turretin, *Institutionum theologiae selenitae*, XII.i.25.

under the covenant of grace; and even though Turretin offers an exposition of the God’s law before turning to the topic of the evangelical covenant, this too could fittingly come under its rubric since Turretin will argue that the Mosaic law is part of the twofold economy of the covenant of grace. Although he does not at this point offer an explanation why he chooses to expound the law where he does in his elenctic theology, as we argued earlier, it appears from an organizational and structural standpoint that this placement better enables him to demonstrate the natural link existing between the natural and moral law on the one hand and to accent the sinner’s great need for the covenant of grace on the other hand—the latter by pointing out the role the law has in placing them under its condemning curse. We will examine Turretin’s treatment of this issue below.\(^70\)

(2) The Second Party of the Covenant—Man

Next we address the clauses of the covenant of grace that pertain to man as the second party of the covenant, that is, the prescribed stipulations or duties required of him to perform. Again, these can be seen in general and particular terms. The general description is that we should be “God’s people” inasmuch as he is “our God” (Jer. 31:33). Implied in this simple designation is “a mutual exchange of benefits and duties, so that if God is our husband, we should be his chaste and faithful spouse; if he is our Father, we should be sons; if a King and Redeemer, we should be his peculiar people who live as the ransomed of the Lord.”\(^71\)

Consequently all the duties belonging to humans, what they ought to be as the other party of the covenant, is prescribed by and comprehended in the singular call to be his people.

This is to be distinguished from the kind of dependency that people universally have on God or the kind of dominion and governance God exercises over all people. For to be his covenant people involves not only being subject to this general sort of lordship, it means “to

\(^{70}\) See Turretin, *Institutio theologiæ elencticæ*, XII.vii. and XII.xii, also XI.xxiii.

\(^{71}\) Turretin, *Institutio theologiæ elencticæ*, XII.i.26. “ubi relatio inter Deum et nos designatur, quæ importat mutuum beneficiorum et officiorum commutationem, ut si Deus Maritus est nostri, simus ejus Uxor casta et fidelis, si est Pater, simus Filii, si Rex et Redemptor, simus Populus peculii, qui vivamus ut redempti Jehovae.”
cleave to him in worship and obedience, so as to be nothing, to have nothing, to be capable of and do nothing which is not of God, i.e., which may be referred to his glory. Turretin lays out this idea under three headings: (1) separation from the world and consecration to God; (2) worship and obedience; and (3) the two principal duties of faith and repentance.

Separation from the world and consecration to God calls the human parties of the covenant to live to God alone, for he created and redeemed them, and chose them to enter into a covenant with him in order to bring them to himself. Therefore it is altogether fitting for them (even more, they are bound) to worship and serve him alone, as Scripture repeatedly exhorts believers to do. For we are to be spiritual sacrifices to God, body and soul (Rom. 12:1; 1 Cor. 3:16, 17)—our minds devoted to God and knowledge of him, our wills directed to his worship, our affections bound to him in love, our eyes contemplating his wonders, our ears listening to his voice, our mouths celebrating his praise, our hands doing his work, and our members being used as tools of righteousness for his glory (Rom. 6:13).

Worship and obedience is likewise comprehensive in its scope, while being singularly directed and devoted to God. We are to be zealously engaged in furthering his kingdom and disseminating his truth, while coming to the defense of his cause and seeking to obey his commands. In this way we demonstrate our gratitude for every blessing of his promise. In fact, the benefits we receive from God must be conjoined with our worshipful response to them; they are indissolubly linked and bound together. Indeed, Turretin is concerned to drive this point home. "In vain do we hope that God will be our God, unless in turn we are his people and bear witness to the love of the Father, unless we give the obedience of children to him. In vain do we

---

72 Turretin, Institutio theologiae eleucticae, XII.i.26.
73 Turretin treats at length, respectively, calling and faith, and sanctification and good works, under Topics 15 and 17.
74 Here Turretin references Deut. 7:6, 7; 26:17, 18; 1 Cor. 6:19, 20; 2 Cor. 5:14, 15; 6:17, 18; Rom. 14:7-9.
75 Turretin, Institutio theologiae eleucticae, XII.i.27.
hope that he will bestow the promised blessings, unless we perform the duties required of us.”

It is evident that Turretin feels obliged to thwart a kind of passive and quietistic response to the divine promise of the gospel covenant.

Among the duties required of us, Turretin asserts that faith (fides) and repentance (resipissentia) are the chief or principal ones. Faith embraces God’s promises, while repentance fulfills God’s commands. “[T]he one answers to the promise of grace (promissioni gratiae)—’Believe and thou shalt be saved’; the other is commanded by the evangelical law (Leges Evangelicae)—’Walk before me, and be thou perfect’ (Gen. 17:1).” Inasmuch as there are two preeminent or “special benefits” (principia beneficia) that God bestows in the covenant of grace—the forgiveness of sins and the writing of the law on the heart—so there are two corresponding duties required of man: faith, by which the remission of sins is received and applied to the sinner; and repentance, which is the desire for sanctification and therefore aims to live according to the law inscribed upon the heart—even as Christ bids us to repent and believe the gospel (Mark 1:15).

If Turretin feels obliged to accent the necessity of an obedient response to God’s promises in the covenant of grace, he is equally concerned to explain that such a response is itself a benefit of the divine promise. He elaborates upon this as follows:

Although these two duties are commanded by God as works due from man, still they are also promised by him as his gifts. Thus they are here to be considered at the same time both as the duties of man and as the blessings of God: “I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes” (Ezk. 36:27). It is the singular privilege of this covenant above the covenant of nature that the conditions themselves depend upon the grace of God and pass over into promises. This is the reason why it cannot be made void as the first covenant (which was founded upon man’s strength), but remains efficacious and eternal. It depends entirely upon God and all things in the covenant are gratuitous (as also the very conditions).  

76 Turretin, Instituio theologiae elenctica, XII.ix.28. “Frustra speramus Deum fore nostrum, nisi vicissim simus ejus populus; et Patris amorem testaturum, nisi Filiorum obedientiam illi preestemus; et ipsum beneficia qua promisit collatumur, nisi officia quæ a nobis exigit impelamur.”

77 Turretin, Instituio theologiae elenctica, XII.ix.29.

78 Turretin, Instituio theologiae elenctica, XII.ix.30. “Licet autem duo ista officia precipiantur a Deo, ut opera ab homine debita, tamen promittuntur etiam ab ispo, ut dona Dei; ut hic spectanda sint simul, et ut hominis officia, et ut Dei beneficia, Ezek. xxxvi. 27, ’Postam Spiritum meum in medio vestri, et faciam ut ambuletis in statuis meis,’ &c. Quod singulare est istius frederis privilegium supra fredu nature, ut conditiones ipsae pendean de Dei gratia, et
Turretin could hardly stake out his position more clearly—even if the position itself is not easy to grasp in every respect. The covenant of grace does not negate or undermine the call to obedience to God, or jettison the way of love for God and neighbor as the essential properties of devotion and service to the Lord.\textsuperscript{79} It is not the case that the covenant of nature is a relationship wherein God requires humans to love and obey him in contrast to the covenant of grace wherein human love for and obedience to God are voided or annulled. It is similarly not the case that whereas the covenant of nature sets up conditions to be met so that God and man may enjoy fellowship with one another, the covenant of grace discards all conditions and instead proposes that God and man commune with one another without stipulations of any kind. The covenant of grace still bears the characteristics of a covenant—that is, insofar as God’s relationship with humans can be accommodated to this concept (as Turretin has already indicated). The characteristics of a covenant entail mutual obligations, with promises and duties to be performed. However, what the covenant of grace provides in contrast to the covenant of nature is the divine enablement to fulfill what is required on man’s part, and that wholly in Christ and therefore in every respect a gift. The conditions must be met, and God provides for their fulfillment, according to his promises. Thus the conditions themselves are completely met in man, but that entirely by God’s grace, God’s strength, and God’s promise, which is the same as an irrevocable and certain declaration.

Since the question of the conditionality of the covenant of grace is at the heart of a great deal of modern criticism directed against seventeenth-century federal theology, we are obliged to examine the nature of this conditionality carefully. In fact, in the next \textit{quaestio} Turretin offers an

\textsuperscript{79} Cf. van Asselt’s discussion of this matter in his exposition of Cocceius’s views, \textit{Federal Theology of Johannes Cocceius}, 253-254; and Cocceius, \textit{Summa doctrinarum de foedere et testamento Dei}, XII.
extended analysis of these covenantal conditions and how they relate to God’s gracious provisions for our salvation.

C. The Nature of Conditionality in the Covenant of Grace

Turretin asks the question, “Is the covenant of grace conditional and what are its conditions?” In composing an answer to that query he first observes that this question has been occasioned by the controversy with the papists over the doctrine of justification. He notes, however, that it has become a matter of controversy among “the evangelicals” as well, for some deny that the promises of the covenant of grace are conditional, fearful that the law will be confounded with the gospel and with the promises of each, while others maintain that conditions apply, concerned that faith and holiness of life not be compromised and that libertinism not find a foothold. Says Turretin (typical of his desire to remedy false dilemmas among the Reformed), “[I]t is easy to reconcile these views by laying down some distinctions.”

1. Distinguishing the Idea of Conditionality

He begins, per usual, with the statement of the question, showing that the idea of a condition can be distinguished in various ways and that the nature of the covenant promise and the covenant itself can likewise be distinguished:

(1) Condition can be used either [1a] antecedently and a priori or [1b] concomitantly and consequently a posteriori. The former conception “has the force of a meritorious and impulsive cause to obtain the benefits of the covenant (the performance of which gives man a right to the reward)”; the latter conception refers to “the relation of means and disposition in the subject, required in the covenanted.”

(2) A condition is either [2a] natural, which means that the condition is fulfilled by the natural strength of the subject, or [2b] supernatural and divine, which means the condition is fulfilled by the provision and action of divine grace.

---

(3) The promise of the covenant can be understood in a twofold manner: either [3a] concerning the end, which focuses on salvation in its consummate fullness, or [3b] means, which has to do with faith and repentance. Both the end and the means, however, are the gift of God.

(4) The covenant itself can be understood in a threefold way: [4a] in relation to its institution by God; [4b] in relation to its first application to the believer; and [4c] in relation to its perfect consummation.81

With this conceptual apparatus in place, Turretin is prepared to offer his analysis of the question at hand. First he states that if the idea of condition is taken in the sense of [1a], antecedently and a priori, so that it functions as “the meritorious and impulsive cause” of salvation, or in the sense of [2a], natural, as if fulfilling the conditions of salvation rested in man’s natural ability or strength of will or character, then “the covenant of grace is rightly denied to be conditional.” For, as Turretin understands the scheme of salvation in Scripture, redemption is altogether “gratuitous, depending upon the sole good will (eudokia) of God and upon no merit of man.”82 Every blessing is founded on Christ’s righteousness alone, not on any action of ours. Conditionality in these senses cannot apply to the evangelical covenant. However, if the idea of condition within the covenant of grace is taken in the sense of [1b], consequently and a posteriori, so that condition functions as an “instrumental cause, receptive of the promises of the covenant” and as “the disposition of the subject,” who is admitted into the covenant by grace, then the covenant, so understood, is “conditional.” In support of this conception, Turretin amplifies his argument, maintaining that the covenant is often proposed with an “express condition” (Turretin cites as examples John 3:16, 36; Romans 10:9; Acts 8:37; and Mark 16:16).83 Moreover, the covenant contains numerous “threatenings,” which would be entirely out of place unless conditions applied in some legitimate sense; and, in fact, inasmuch as faith and obedience

81 Turretin, Institutio theologicae eloquentiae, XII.i.ii.2.

82 Turretin, Institutio theologicae eloquentiae, XII.i.ii.3. “quia est mere gratitutum, quod a sola Deo eudokia pendet, a nullo vero hominis mento; nec jus ad vitam potest fundari in ualla actione nostra, sed in sola justitia Christi.”

83 Note, for Turretin, when Scripture speaks of the way of salvation, it is speaking about the covenant of grace. Calvin likewise grounds every blessing in Christ, Institutes of the Christian Religion, III.xv.5; OS, IV, 243-244.
are required, their absence in a person leaves that person culpable. Finally, if every sense of conditionality were denied in the covenant of grace, the implication would be that

God is bound in this covenant to man and not man to God (which is perfectly absurd and contrary to the nature of all covenants, in which there always is a mutual agreement and a reciprocal obligation because the contracting parties are bound on both sides—as between a husband and wife, a king and his subjects, etc.).  

As Patrick Gillespie observes in his massive work on the covenant:

The conditions of the Covenant of Grace are consequent conditions, which denote no causality, nor proper efficiency in the condition, with respect to the thing promised, but an instrumentality and connexion, and thus faith hath no proper efficiency in our Justification, but only an instrumentality; and Faith and Holiness both are not conditions nor causes why the thing promised are given to us, but qualifications of the subject capable of righteousness and life by the Covenant of Grace, which shew that God will not justifiie an unbelieving person, nor will he save a profane person, Rom. 4:5.  

Turretin next takes up the manner regarding in what sense the promises of the covenant can be understood as conditional. If they are regarded in the sense of [3a], concerning the end, referring to salvation in its full and perfect outcome, then they are without question conditional, for the promises are “always made under the condition of faith and repentance.” But if the promises are conceived in the sense of [3b], as means—so that they refer to faith, regeneration or repentance as means to salvation coming to its goal—“they certainly cannot be conditional, but are simple and absolute because otherwise there would be granted a progression into infinity and the condition of the condition would always be demanded (which is absurd).”  

Lastly, Turrettin addresses the conditionality of the covenant in terms of a threefold relation. If it is conceived in the sense of [4a], in relation to its institution by God in Christ, it is without any previous condition, for nothing is prior to God’s own decision, and so the covenant

---

84 Turrettin, Institutio theologica elenctica, XII.iii.3. “Quia alias sequetur Deum in hoc fædere obstrictum esse homini, non autem hominem Deo, quod absurdissimum, et contrarium naturæ omnium fæderum, in quibus datur conventio mutua, et reciproca obligatio, quia utrique tenetur partes contraheentes, ut inter Virum et Uxorem, Regem et Subditos, &c.”


86 Turrettin, Institutio theologica elenctica, XII.iii.4. “Si promissiones fæderis intelligantur de fin, nemo negare potest esse conditionales, quia fiunt semper sub conditio fidei et penitentiae; Sed si sumantur pro promissionibus de mediet, nimmerum de fide et regeneratione seu penitentia, certum est non posse esse conditionatas, sed similes esse et absolutas, quia alias daretur processus in infinitum, et conditio conditionis semper postulatur, quod absurdum.”
in its conception and institution "rests upon the grace of God and the merit of Christ alone" (sola gratia Dei et Christi merito nititur). If however it is regarded in the sense of [4b], in relation to its first acceptance and application to the believer, it is conditional, for it has faith as a condition, and the believer is brought into union with Christ in the way of faith. Finally, if the covenant is understood in the sense of [4c], in relation to its perfect consummation, both condition and means are present, for no one shall see God who does not have faith—and with faith, repentance and the desire for holiness.  

Having applied this set of distinctions to the idea of conditionality and to the covenant of grace itself, Turretin proceeds, again per usual, to a defense of his staked out position under the heading "source of explanation" (fontes solutionum). While granting a certain legitimate understanding of the conditionality of the evangelical covenant, Turretin believes it is important that we not confound or mix up the promises pertaining to the law and the promises pertaining to the gospel, for "a manifold difference" (multiplex discrimen) always exists between them. Turretin defines these as differences residing in the matter (in materia), in the origin (in origine), and in the end (in fine). The promises of the law and the gospel are different in materia "because the legal condition is an entire and perfect obedience to the law (Rom. 10:5), but the evangelical [condition] is faith (Rom. 10:9; Jn. 3:16)—not perfect and free from all blemish, but living and sincere (1 Tim. 1:5; Jam. 2:14)." They are also different in origine, for faith is from God and is supernatural in origin, completely dependent upon divine grace, whereas the legal condition is from man's own natural strength. Thus, while God commands the legal condition (perfect obedience), he does not bestow or promise such obedience to man. In regard to the promises of the gospel, however, God not only commands faith (which is the evangelical condition), he also promises and grants faith as a gift. Turretin references Jeremiah 31:33 ("But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the LORD: I will put my

---

87 Turretin, *Institutio theologicae elencticae*, XII.iii.5.
law within them, and I will write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people”—NRSV); John 6:45 (“It is written in the Prophets, ‘And they shall all be taught by God.’ Everyone who has heard and learned from the Father comes to me”—ESV); and Ephesians 2:8 (“For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing, it is the gift of God”—ESV).

The differences between the promises of the law and the gospel also pertain to their end. Concerning the legal condition (perfect obedience) it can be said that it functions as a “meritorious cause,” at least improperly and congruously (saltum ex congruo et impropri), of the thing promised, namely life (“Do this and live”). But concerning the evangelical condition this cannot properly be said at all, for faith does not bring about the reward of salvation in any respect and has no meritorious function whatsoever, even improperly or congruously, inasmuch as it is “the pure gift (χάριμα) of God” (Rom. 6:23), functioning as an instrument by which we apprehend the blessings of the covenant (Acts 26:18; Rom. 5:17), and without which these blessings pass us by (Heb. 11:6). Although Turretin will explore further the relationship between faith and conditionality, at this point he bundles these ideas together in the form of a conclusion:

If the covenant of grace was said to depend upon an unstable human condition, its efficacy and immutability would be overthrown. But because the condition is supernatural and divine (produced by the efficacy of omnipotent grace), so far is it from being weakened by it that on the contrary it is more and more strengthened. According to Paul, “It is of faith, that it might be by grace; to the end the promise might be sure to all the seed” (Rom. 4:16). The covenant of grace does not rest upon a condition in us, but upon the mere grace of God and his inviolable faithfulness and the infinite merit of Christ.

In affirming this Turretin immediately considers two possible objections to his position—specifically, what is the significance and what are the implications of Christ’s words to the young

---

89 Turretin, *Institutio theologiae elencticae*, XII.iii.6.

90 Turretin, *Institutio theologiae elencticae*, XII.iii.7. “Si fœdus gratie dicetur pendere a conditione humana instabili, ejus efficacia et immutabilitas eveteretur, sed quia condidio est supernaturalis et divina, que ab efficacia omnipotenti gratie producitur, tantum abest ut per eam labefactetur, ut contra magis magisque firmetur, ex Paulo, Rom. iv. 16, ‘Ex fide est, ut sit per gratiam, ut promissio sit firma toti semini,’ quia fœdus non nititur conditione quae sit in nobis, sed mera Dei gratis, et inviolabili ejus fidelitate, et infinito Christi merito.”
ruler to obey the commandments in order to be saved (Matt. 19:17)? And given the testamentary nature of this covenant, is it a covenant at all, for if the conditions are translated into promises, fulfilled in us by God, how can we speak of a federal relation? Turretin answers the first matter by noting that Christ is not teaching that “the same obedience is demanded in the same manner in both covenants,” that is, the dispensation of the Mosaic Law and that of the gospel. Besides, Christ acts to instruct the young man regarding the requirements of the Mosaic Law, not regarding the gospel, for he wishes to convict “this boastful legalist” of his inability to keep the law and lead him to the Mediator of the covenant of grace.91 As for the second issue, Turretin maintains that the covenant of grace does not forfeit its federal character in being set forth under the idea of a testament, since, as already explained, it is “a covenant by a testament,”92 and conditions must needs be accomplished on the part of man, even if God works his grace in man for their fulfillment.93

But what exactly are the conditions of the covenant of grace? For example, is faith to be reckoned as the lone condition of this covenant, or must repentance and obedience, as proof of a new life, accompany it? Turretin carefully explores the manner and relation (schesis) in which faith is a condition.94

2. Faith as an Instrumental Cause

First Turretin asserts what is not meant in saying that faith is a condition of the covenant of grace, noting that faith, if spoken of “absolutely” and “according to its nature and essence,” cannot be a condition. Faith is not “accepted for righteousness,” nor is it a form of “obedience of the law,” though it is something commanded by God. Rather, faith must be viewed as a condition of the covenant only “relatively” and “instrumentally,” for by means of faith believers

91 Turretin, Institui theologiae elencticar, XII.iii.8.
92 See Turretin, Institui theologiae elencticar, XII.i.3.
93 Turretin, Institui theologiae elencticar, XII.iii.9. Also see Witsius, De Economia Fodern Dei cum Hominibus, III.i.10-20.
94 Turretin, Institui theologiae elencticar, XII.iii.10.
“embrace Christ” and look to him “for righteousness,” obtaining eternal life through him. In this connection Turretin observes that faith is distinguished from “the works of the law” precisely because it is not taken absolutely. Moreover, taken in an instrumental sense, faith can only fit or reside with five things: (a) it can consist with God’s grace alone, for faith, according to its proper action, involves receiving what God gives (Rom. 5:17; John 1:12; also Rom. 4:16; Eph. 2:8); (b) it can consist with humans only in their sinful ruin, for at the first moment of justification the only pleasing thing in a believing sinner is faith itself; (c) faith can consist only with Christ’s satisfaction and righteousness, since Christ applies our faith to himself; (d) faith can consist with eternal life only as a divine gift bestowed to us from God, for faith apprehends such a gift in the gospel (Rom. 3:24, 25; 1 Cor. 1:30; Eph. 1:3, 4; 2:8); and (e) faith can consist only with the promises of the gospel, for life is set before man as already purchased, not as something to be achieved in the way of keeping the law. What is more, says Turretin, faith cannot be a condition of the covenant in an absolute sense, since Christ is our righteousness (1 Cor. 1:30; 2 Cor. 5:21), which means that our redemption and life are only in him. Thus, in short, conditionality “cannot be ascribed to faith materially (inasmuch as it is a work),” however, considered “instrumentally (inasmuch as it is the hand apprehending),” conditionality does apply.95

3. The Instrumental Causality of Faith in Distinction from the Meritorious Role of Works

We discover, then, in the covenant of grace faith stands in opposition to “righteousness” or “obedience” because “they cannot stand together causally.” This isn’t to say that faith and righteousness (or faith and obedience) cannot rightly subsist together, for true faith is faith that is “efficacious through love or obedience.” But it is to say that the causality of each is of a distinct species in its totality—the one, obedience or righteousness, “meritorious and principal,” the other, faith, “only organic and instrumental.” Turretin elaborates on this, noting that

---

95 Turretin, *Institutio theologiae eleonetricae*, XII.iii.11.
rightness gives, and consists in mutual love of God, while faith receives, and consists in a persuasion of God’s love. In the covenant of grace, faith displaces works, usurping its role as to effect, though faith and works are distinguished from one another in their respective causality—that is, faith now obtains for us what works was intended to achieve in the covenant of nature, though, as Turretin states, the “genus of cause” is different in each case.  

4. The Instrumental Causality of Faith Has Reference to Christ Alone

In speaking of the conditionality of faith, Turretin is careful to point out that it bears this relation only “in reference to Christ”—that is, it is the means or instrument of “our union with Christ,” for only in union with Christ do we participate in him and all his benefits. Likewise, only in union with Christ are we received into the covenant—Christ being the “foundation” of the covenant and the “bond” of our communing with God. “However, because it is of great importance for us to know whether our faith is truly a faith of union, this can be perceived not so much a priori as a posteriori (from its operations).”  

This leads Turretin to examine something of the fruits of true faith. Citing an abundance of scriptural materials, Turretin sums up his analysis by arguing that true faith especially produces “two acts” (duos actus) that signify and immediately and necessarily follow upon union with Christ:

[O]n the part of Christ, a sense of his love through the consolation of the Holy Spirit, who, by sealing adoption in our hearts, persuades us that we are the sons of God, heirs of God and fellow-heirs with Christ; that Christ dwells in us and has become ours (Rom. 8:15, 16; 1 Jn. 3:24). On our part, the mutual consent of our love through a desire of sanctification by which as Christ loves us, we in turn love him; as he gives himself for us, we give ourselves entirely to him, so that we no longer live to ourselves, but in the faith of the Son of God who loved us and gave himself for us (Gal. 2:20; 2 Cor. 5:15). The spouse pathetically [sensitively] describes this, “My beloved is mine, and I am his” (Cant. 2:16).

96 Turretin, Instituti theologiae elenciticae, XII.iii.12.

97 Turretin, Instituti theologiae elenciticae, XII.iii.13.

98 For example, Turretin cites Cant. 5:10, 16; Phil. 3:8; John 1:14; 21:15 as passages urging or showing how fervent love for Christ is the fruit of true faith; Ps. 42:1; 84:1, 2; Phil. 1:23 as demonstrating that faith produces the burning desire to enjoy God; and Hos. 4:8; Rom. 6:2; Matt. 10:37; 1 John 2:15, 16; and Jam. 4:4 as urging separation from the world and carnal desires. Others passages he addresses in this connection are Matt. 13:46; Heb. 11:25, 26; Matt. 19:27; 9:12, 13; Rom. 8:1, 10. See Instituti theologiae elenciticae, XII.iii.13.

99 Turretin, Instituti theologiae elenciticae, XII.iii.13. “a parte Christi, sensum amoris ejus per consolationem Spiritus Sancti, qui obstantio adoptionem nostram in cordibus nostris, nobis persuadet nos esse Filios Dei, heredes Dei, et coheredes Christi, Christum habitare in nobis, et factum esse nostrum, Rom. viii. 15, 16, 1 Joh. iii. 24; a parte
It is noteworthy that Turretin is concerned not to forfeit the call to obedience that is found throughout the New Testament, even as he is jealous simultaneously to affirm the gracious character of salvation as wholly a divine achievement, and to affirm that the faith uniting sinners to Christ (faith itself being a work and gift of God in them) will bear fruits that demonstrate union with Christ.100

In keeping with this accent, the mutual consent of our love for Christ is not some sort of future pledge to reform one’s ways, as if conversion may be delayed from day to day; rather, it is a present reality in which Christ is embraced as “Redeemer and Lord,” as “Surety and head,” along with “blessings and duties.” Turretin rejects the notion that persons may take hold of Christ’s merit while denying his dominion in their lives. Christ is embraced, in the way of the faith that unites sinners with him, as Surety and head, unto justification and sanctification, as Savior to redeem them and as Lord to govern them, so that believers are prepared to live and die with him. “Thus our communion with Christ will be true and saving and with all the blessings of Christ: fellowship ‘in the same Spirit’ (Rom. 8:9; 1 Cor. 6:17); ‘in the same life’ (Gal. 2:20); ‘in the same righteousness’ (2 Cor. 5:21; Jer. 23:6); ‘in the same glory and inheritance’ (Jn. 17:21; Rom. 6:8; 8:17).” Meanwhile, as those in communion with Christ and recipients of his blessings, he may expect from us sincere, full, and constant love and submission to him (John 21:17; 1 Pet. 1:8; Eph. 5:24; Matt. 11:29; Ps. 2:11; 110:3).101

noster vero continentium mutuum amoris nostri, per sanctificationis studium, quo ut Christus nos amat, amamus eum vicissim, ut se dat nobis, nos totos illi damus, ut non amplius vivamus nobis, sed in fide Filii Dei qui nos dilexit, et seipsum dedit pro nobis, Gal. ii. 20, 2 Cor. v. 15, quod Sponsa pathetice describit, Cant. ii. 16, “Amicus meus est meus, et ego sum ipsius.”

100 Turretin sets forth a comprehensive exposition of vocatio and of fides under Topics XIV and XV.

5. Are Repentance and Obedience Conditions in the Covenant of Grace?

The last matter that Turretin addresses in relation to the conditionality of faith, and more generally the nature of conditions in the covenant of grace, is whether faith solely and alone functions as a certain kind of condition or whether it is accompanied by other virtues in this role, specifically, “repentance” (resipiscensia). Among the Reformed orthodox, observes Turretin, this is a matter of dispute, but it is easily resolved in making a distinction, keeping in view the diverse ways in which we can understand a condition.

It may be taken either broadly and improperly (for all that man is bound to afford in the covenant of grace) or strictly and properly (for that which has some causality in reference to life and on which not only antecedently, but also causally, eternal life in its own manner depends). If in the latter sense, faith is the sole condition of the covenant because under this condition alone pardon of sins and salvation as well as eternal life are promised (Jn. 3:16, 36; Rom. 10:9). There is no other which could perform that office because there is no other which is receptive of Christ and capable of applying his righteousness. But in the former, there is nothing to hinder repentance and the obedience of the new life from being called a condition because they are reckoned among the duties of the covenant (Jn. 3:17; 2 Cor. 5:17; Rom. 8:13).102

The ambiguity that Turretin wishes to clear up in this regard may not be underestimated in its importance, for he is dealing with the practical problem of the relationship between justification and sanctification, or from another angle, he is dealing with the two-sided character of the covenant itself, consisting of promise and demand. Human salvation, as conceived and understood by the Reformed orthodox, cannot be reduced to or simply encapsulated in the doctrine of justification. Although justification is at the heart of Reformed soteriology, it is not the entirety of salvation. Sanctification and glorification are equally part of the project of redemption. It is neither accurate nor permissible to reduce salvation to the remission of sins without the corresponding transformation of heart and life. With respect to humans, salvation in

102 Turretin, Institutio theologiae et staticae, XII.iii.15. “Potest enim, vel late et improprii sumi, pro iis omnibus que homo in fœde gratia tenetur praestare, vel stricte et proprii pro illa, quæ habet causatatem aliquam ad vitam, et a qua non tantum antecedenter, sed et causatiter suo modo pendet vita ætæm. Si posteriori sensu, fides est sola condition fœderis, quæ sub hujus solius conditione remissio peccatorum et salus ac vita ætæm promittitur, Johan. iii. 16, 36, Rom. x. 9, nec ulla datur alia que munus istud obire possit, quia nulla alia datur, que sit receptiva Christi et applicativa justitie ipsius. Sed priori nihil obtat penitentiam et novæ vitæ obedientiam conditionem dici, quia inter officia fœderis continentur, Joh. xiii. 17, 2 Cor. xv. 17, Rom. viii. 13.” Cf. Witsius, De Economia Fœderum Dei cum Hominibus, III.i.7-9; Heppe, Reformed Dogmatics, 385-386.
its full compass entails not only a deliverance from sin’s guilt but also a renewal and renovation of the inner person from sin’s corruption, so that rebirth produces new obedience (though fragmented and tainted), culminating in the final consummation of all things, and bringing forth the believer’s transformation unto perfection, resurrection of the body, and translation to glory. Thus, those who are “saved,” who are the objects of divine salvation, not only enjoy the remission of their sins through faith in Christ but also enjoy the Spirit’s sanctifying presence, producing in them repentance and obedience, self-denial and a life lived as a sacrifice to God. In short, regeneration and conversion are manifested in the life of the believer, and without renewal of life, without fruits of faith, without obedience (even though flawed and defective), one is not saved—just as one is not saved who is never perfected and ushered into glory with a resurrected and glorified body—for salvation involves all these things.

The issue in question is whether these other features and parts of salvation beyond the gift of faith also function in some sense as conditions of salvation. Turretin’s point is simple: if the word condition is used in a broad sense to include all of the above—which also means it is used in an improper sense—then repentance and all the other duties prescribed in the covenant of grace may be called conditions. However, if one is to use words properly, and to conceive of conditionality in a strict and accurate sense, not merely in the sense of that which must antecedently be present for the subsequent to come about, but especially in the sense of some causality being present—even if it is only an instrumental causality—then repentance and evangelical obedience are altogether and wholly excluded from functioning as conditions in the covenant of grace or being called such.\(^\text{103}\)

Turretin explores this matter further by arguing that though repentance and new obedience (or holiness of life) are not in any sense causal conditions for being received into the covenant of grace and being united to Christ the Mediator of the covenant, through whom every blessing flows to us, nonetheless, they are what he calls conditions of “means” and “inseparable

\(^{103}\) Turretin, *Institutio theologiae elesticae*, XII.iii.15.
attendants of true and sincere faith,” for Christ doesn’t extend the benefit of himself through faith without the other benefits that manifest the veracity of faith and that represent the fullness of salvation being carried forward in him. Because of its significance to our topic, we again quote Turretn in full:

the condition is either antecedent to the acceptance of the covenant (which holds the relation of the cause why we are received into it) or subsequent (holding the relation of means and the way by which we go forward to its consummation). In the former sense, faith is the sole condition of the covenant because it alone embraces Christ with his benefits. But in the latter sense, holiness and obedience can have the relation of a condition because they are the means and the way by which we arrive at the full possession of the blessings of the covenant. If they do not have causality either with respect to justification (or eternal life flowing from it), still in other respects they pertain to this covenant both as inseparable attendants of true and sincere faith because “faith ought to be effectual through love” (Gal. 5:6), as the qualities of those to be saved (Mt. 5:8; 25:35, 36; Heb. 12:14), as fruits of the Spirit in Christ (Rom. 8:2, 9, 10) and marks of our conformity with Christ (Rom. 6:4, 5; Col. 3:1; Eph. 2:4, 5), as proofs of our gratitude towards God (Tit. 2:14), as testimonies of our sonship (1 Jn. 3:3; Rom. 8:15) and as duties which the rational creature owes to God (Lk. 17:10).104

If the entire warp and woof of human duty as stipulated within the covenant of grace is in mind, not only faith but the repentance that ever accompanies it, along with the striving to conform and conduct oneself according to the dictates of the divine law (motivated from a heart brimming with gratitude to God and compelled by love), each and all evidences of new life and the Spirit’s fruits, bearing witness to the new creation of restored life, if this is what is in mind, then Turretin’s conclusion is uncomplicated: conditionality in any causal sense is excluded. However, inasmuch as those being saved are, according to the covenant of grace, brought forward in the way of salvation along the path of repentance and sanctification or through the means of mortification and revivification until they are finally translated to glory, this leads Turretin to say that such means may be called conditions in an a posteriori or subsequent sense,

104 Turretin, Institutio theologiae elencticar, XII.ii.16. “Condicio, vel est antecedens acceptionem fretidis, quae habet rationem cause, ut in illud recipiamur, vel subsequent, quae habet rationem medii et viae, per quam tendimus ad ejus consummationem. Priori sensu fides sola est conditio fretidis, quae sola amplectitur Christum cum suis beneficiis; Sed posteriori sanctitas et obedientia rationem possunt habere conditionis, quia sunt medium et vias per quam tendimus ad plenam possessionem bonorum fretidis; Et si non habent causalitatem sive respectu justificationis, sive respectu vitae exterae, quae ab illa resultat; aliis tamen respectibus ad hoc fretus pertinent, tum ut fides verae et sincere comites inexcusabiles quae, ‘fides debet esse per charitatem efficax,’ Gal. v., tum ut qualitates salvatorum, Matth. v. 8, et xxv. 35, 36, Heb. xii. 14, tum ut fructus Spiritus in Christo, Rom. viii. 2, 9, 10, et notae conformitatis nostrae cum Christo, Rom. vi. 4, 5, Col. iii. 1, Ephes. ii. 4, 5, tum ut documenta gratitudinis nostrae erga Deum, Tit. ii. 14, tum ut testimonia nostrae filiationis, 1 Johan. iii. 3, Rom. viii. 15, tum ut officia Deo debita a creatura rationali, Luc. xvii. 10.”
granting them the status of conditions not strictly or properly, but as attendant means God establishes and (as well shall see in the next chapter) themselves works of God in sinners for their salvation.

As Turretin is careful to show, justification, as a particular feature and blessing of the covenant of grace, does not constitute the whole of this covenant. While it does constitute the whole of salvation in the sense of defining the reconciliation and peace believers have with God, their sins being fully remitted, justification does not define every aspect of salvation in its consummation. Consequently, not all features and aspects of divine salvation bear the same relation to justification on the one hand as to the covenant of grace on the other. Faith alone concurs to justification, says Turretin; but other virtues beside faith are requisite for observing the whole of the covenant.

For these two things ought always to be connected—the acceptance of the covenant and the keeping of it when accepted. Faith accepts by a reception of the promises; obedience keeps by a fulfillment of the commands, “Be ye holy, for I am holy” [1 Pet. 1:16; Lev. 11:44]. And yet in this way legal obedience and evangelical obedience are not confounded because the legal is prescribed for the meriting of life, the evangelical, however, only for the possession of it. The former precedes as the cause of life (“Do this and thou shalt live”); the latter follows as its fruit, not that you may live but because you live. The former is not admitted unless it is perfect and absolute; the latter is admitted even if imperfect, provided it be sincere. That is only commanded as man’s duty; this also promised and given as the gift of God.105

Turretin’s graphic portrait of “legal obedience” versus “evangelical obedience” at this point is easily misunderstood, for even the “merit” of legal obedience is not a strict or condign merit. As we saw in examining Turretin’s exposition of the covenant of nature, that God would bless and reward human obedience is itself a gracious or kindly arrangement, for God is not indebted to his human creatures in any respect unless he places himself under obligation in the way of a covenant relationship. Moreover, the merits of such obedience is never commensurate

105 Turretin, Instrum. theologicae elecmicae, XII.iii.17. “Duo enim hae conjungi semper debent, acceptatio fidei, et acceptati observatio; fides acceptat per receptionem promissionum, obedientia observat per impletionem mandatorum: Sancti estote, quia sanctus sum. Nec tamen hac ratione confunditur obedientia Legalis et Evangelica, quia Legalis præscriptur ad merendam vitam, Evangelica vero tantum ad eam possidendum: illa precedit ut causa vitae, Fac hoc et vivas, ista sequitur ut ejus fructus, non ut vivas, sed quia vivis; illa non admittitur nisi perfecta et absoluta omnibus numeris, Ista admittitur etiam imperfecta, modo sit sincera; Illa tantum jubetur ut officium hominis, Ista etiam promittitur et datur ut donum Dei.” Under Topics XVI and XVII respectively, Turretin offers a thorough exposition of justification and sanctification.
with the promised reward God gives, neither as this is defined in the covenant of nature nor in the Mosaic stipulations. Turretin’s burden, then, is to argue that the covenant of grace does not exclude the call to obedience; and, in fact, in receiving God’s gracious promise of forgiveness through faith, believers are surrendering themselves to his lordship, for where there is faith, following from it is a new life (though still imperfect) that serves God from a changed heart. This too, however, is according to the promise of the covenant of grace and, like faith, is a divine gift. All of this demonstrates that Turretin is concerned to keep the two-sided nature of the covenant, divine promise and human obligation, in tact, without compromising the testamentary character of the covenant at its core.

He is also concerned to show that legal obedience and gospel obedience are quite distinct from one another, for in the former instance the obedience required had to be perfect unto the attainment of life or continual blessing as its cause, whereas in the latter instance the obedience commanded is for possessing (i.e., for participating in and enjoying the privileges of) the life given in Christ, for obedience is a fruit of the new life believers have already been given and therefore already possess. The *obedience* of faith, though imperfect and still tainted with sin’s corruption, is not rejected of God but accepted, for in being the obedience of *faith* it is sincere, and so such obedience is perfected and reckoned in Christ.\(^{106}\)

\(^{106}\) See Turretin’s treatise “De satisfactione Christi disputationes, cum indicibus necessariorum. Adjectae sunt ejusdem duae disputationes: (a) De circulo pontificio. (b) De concordia Jacobi et Pauli in articulo justificationis” (Geneva, 1666), reprinted in *Francisci Turrentini Opera*, 4 vols. (Edinburgh: 1847-1848), IV: 749-752, sect. 31-34; also see Witsius, *Conciliorum, or Irrational Animalversions, on the Controversies Agitated in Britain, under the unhappy names of Antinomians and Nononomians*, trans. Thomas Bell (Glasgow: W. Lang. 1807), chapter IV, pp. 55-58; chapter V, pp. 59-66; idem, *De Economia Foderum Dei cum Hominibus*, III.viii.21-26. The Belgic Confession (1561/1619), art. 24, states that the good works of the believer united to Christ proceed “from the good root of faith,” and God deems them “good and acceptable” since “they are all sanctified by his grace.” The Belgic Confession explains that good works acquire their goodness from Christ himself: “Yet they [good works] do not count toward our justification—for by faith in Christ we are justified, even before we do good works. Otherwise they could not be good, any more than the fruit of a tree could be good if the tree is not good in the first place. So then, we do good works, but not for merit—for what would we merit? Rather, we are indebted to God for the good works we do, and not he to us, since it is he who ‘works in us both to will and do according to his good pleasure’—thus keeping in mind what is written: ‘When you have done all that is commanded you, then you shall say, *We are unworthy servants; we have done what it was our duty to do.*’ Also see Geneva Catechism (1536), Q/As 116-126, especially 121; Heidelberg Catechism (1565), Q/As 62, 63; and also the Scots Confession (1560), art. 15, which states: “For as God the Father beholds us in the body of his Son Christ Jesus, he accepts our imperfect obedience as if it were perfect, and covers our works, which are defiled with many stains, with the righteousness of his Son.” Confer also Second Helvetic Confession (1566),
6. Excursus: The Necessity of Good Works without the Merit of Good Works

Because of the confusion that might obtain concerning Turretin’s exposition of legal and gospel obedience, and because of the importance that the idea of merit played within Reformation debates, particularly in relation to the gracious nature of salvation, we do well in this connection to consider briefly Turretin’s elucidation of the necessity of good works in conjunction with his treatment of sanctification. Turretin demonstrates that even good works are a work of divine grace, and the idea of merit requires careful definition.\textsuperscript{107}

a. The Necessity of Means and Spontaneity

After waging a strong polemic in support of his contention that sanctification does not reach perfection in this life (for where sin remains in the life of believers, there is no fulfilling of the law),\textsuperscript{108} Turretin is also and equally concerned to contend in favor of the necessity of good works for salvation—though not for justification.\textsuperscript{109} Wishing to err neither in defect (by denying the necessity of good works) nor in excess (by affirming the necessity of merit and causality in good works), Turretin opts for a middle position, wherein the necessity affirmed is not a necessity of merit but a necessity "of means, of presence" and "of connection or order"—that

\textsuperscript{107} Turretin also addresses this topic in his treatise "De bonorum operum necessitate" (1673), the fourth disputation in the collection of ten miscellaneous disputations in Turrettini Theologiae, 4 vols. (Leyden, Utrecht, 1696), IV, pp. 73-92 in the second half of the volume; also in Francisci Turrettini Opera, 4 vols. (Edinburgh: 1847-1848), IV, pp. 269-83.

\textsuperscript{108} See Turretin, Institutio theologiae elencticae, XVII.ii.10-26.

\textsuperscript{109} Turretin, Institutio theologiae elencticae, XVII, the third \textit{questio}. It should be observed that this had been a major point of debate among the Lutherans.
is, “they are required as the means and way of possessing salvation.” Turretin maintains that his affirmation of the necessity of good works, which certain Lutheran and Reformed writers deny, requires careful and proper explanation. He is largely concerned to answer the slanders of various Roman Catholic opponents. Thus, “although works may be said to contribute nothing to the acquisition of salvation,” writes Turretin, “still they should be considered necessary to the obtainment of it, so that no one can be saved without them.”

In defending the necessary nature of good works, Turretin first appeals to God’s will as the “the supreme and indispensable rule of our duty,” but also examines the nature of the thing itself and the state and condition of man as requiring them. The covenant of grace, like all covenants, consists of two parts: God’s promise on the one hand and the stipulated obedience that believers owe God on the other. Even as God’s promise is the source of every blessing, human obligation is likewise comprehensive—since all requisite duties are owed to God. Thus God works the fulfillment of these obligations as his blessings in us, yet they remain obligations of his covenant. For God, in his tri-unity, redeems us, adopts us, and indwells us, and so his children are called to live in conformity to these blessings. As the gospel ushers believers into a state of grace and liberty, which is not carnal license, it urges them in the way of obedience so that they become servants of righteousness (Rom. 6:18). Although Christ frees us from the curse of the law, he did not free us from “the obligation to obedience”—an obligation God’s human creatures may never abandon. Grace itself calls its recipients to render to God all that is due his name. Gratitude is expressed in love, not lasciviousness (Gal. 5:13; Jude 4), in the desire for holiness, not in sin abounding (Rom. 6:14, 15). For all of the blessings and benefits that

110 Turretin, *Institutio theologicae elencticae*, XVII.ii.2-3. Johannes Woulfius, *Compendium theologiae christianae*, Bk. II.i.15, states the same point as follows: “[Good works] are necessary as a means because they are evidences and signs of calling and election and true faith, and because they are the means or road, which is traveled to heavenly bliss. Just as, if someone travels for the sake of obtaining an inheritance, the road or journey is indeed a means, but not the meritorious cause of the inheritance, so it is also in this matter.” Quote from Beardslee translation.

111 Turretin, *Institutio theologicae elencticae*, XVII.iii.4.

112 Turretin, *Institutio theologicae elencticae*, XVII.iii.5. Turretin references 1 Thess. 4:3, 4; 1 John 4:21; John 13:34; Matt. 5:16; 1 Pet. 1:15, 16; 2 Pet. 1:5-7, 10; Rom. 6:11, 12; 12:1ff.
believers receive from God aim at their sanctification and salvation, even eternal election (Eph. 1:4). And their future glory is likewise tied to good works inasmuch as “good works have the relation of the means to the end (Jn. 3:5, 16; Mt. 5:8); of the ‘way’ to the goal (Eph. 2:10; Phil. 3:14); of the ‘sowing’ to the harvest (Gal. 6:7, 8); of the ‘firstfruits’ to the mass (Rom. 8:23); of labor to the reward (Mt. 20:1); of the ‘contest’ to the crown (2 Tim. 2:5; 4:8). . .” Besides, the good works of believers, though imperfect, in being offered in service to God, bring him glory, build up one’s neighbors, and comport with the whole project of a person’s salvation.\textsuperscript{113}

Turretin distinguishes the role of good works in relation to justification, sanctification, and glorification.

They are related to justification not antecedently, efficiently and meritoriously, but consequently and declaratively. They are related to sanctification constitutively because they constitute and promote it. They are related to glorification antecedently and ordinatorily because they are related to the means to the end; yea, as the beginning to the complement because grace is glory begun, as glory is grace consummated.\textsuperscript{114}

What this amounts to, for Turretin, is that in defending good works against licentiousness, he is not confusing law with gospel or compromising “gratuitous justification by faith alone.” “Good works are required not for living according to the law, but because we live by the gospel; not as the causes on account of which life is given to us, but as effects which testify that life has been given to us.”\textsuperscript{115} This means that the necessity of good works is not a necessity of “compulsion” but of spontaneity and volition. And while the good works of faith remain a necessity of “means” and of “debt,” for the creature always owes God all that is due God, they

\textsuperscript{113} Turretin, \textit{Institutio theologicae elencticae}, XVII.iii.5-13.\textsuperscript{114} Turretin, \textit{Institutio theologicae elencticae}, XVII.iii.14. “Ratione prioris non se habent antecedentur, efficienter, et meritorie, sed consequenter, et declarative. Ratione Sanificationis, se habent constitutiva, quia eam constituunt et promovent. Ratione Glorificationis vero antecedentur et ordinatoria, quia ad eam referuntur ut medium ad finem, lino ut initium ad complementum, quia gratia est gloria inchoatio, ut gloria est gratia consummatio.”

\textsuperscript{115} Turretin, \textit{Institutio theologicae elencticae}, XVII.iii.15. So too Wollebius, \textit{Compendium theologiae christianae}, Bk. II.1.15, “Good works are necessary because of a commandment and as a means; not as cause and [source of] merit.”
do not supplement the work of Christ for the salvation of sinners. On the contrary, they are
wrought in believers by the Holy Spirit as gift.\textsuperscript{116}

b. The Truth of Good Works

Thus, having explained the necessity of good works, Turretin also considers their truth and
merit. The truth of good works has to do with what is needed for them to be truly good.
Turretin maintains that four things are requisite, namely, that good works be done: (1) from the
faith of a renewed heart; (2) according to the prescriptions of God’s law; (3) in a lawful mode,
not merely external but internal as well; and (4) for God’s glory. By this definition, the works of
unbelievers, i.e., of any who are not united to Christ, do not qualify as “good.” However, the
works of believers are “truly good,” even though they fail to qualify as “perfectly good.”\textsuperscript{117}

Turretin offers a three-part defense of the claim that believers perform “truly good”
works. They qualify as such, first, because they are performed by the impulse of the Holy Spirit,
which is to say, the Spirit is their primary cause (Ezek. 36:27; Gal. 5:22; Rom. 8:9, 10; Phil. 1:6;
2:13). Second, they please God, indicative of their nature as things that are not properly or by
themselves sin (1 Pet. 2:5; Heb. 11:4-6; 12:28; Rom. 12:1; 14:18; Phil. 4:18)—though Turretin
admits that the first and principal reason for their “acceptance is Christ, in whom we are pleasing
to God (Eph. 1:6).” Third, God promises to reward good works, which would be a mere fiction
if they were not in some sense truly good.

For although works have nothing in themselves which can deserve and obtain such a reward
(which on this account is gratuitous, as will soon be shown), still they have a certain ordination
and aptitude that they are ordained to a reward, both from the condition of the worker, who is
supposed to be a believer (i.e., admitted into the grace and friendship of God), and from the
condition of the works themselves, which although not having a condignity to the reward, still
have the relation of disposition required in the subject for its possession. This condition being
fulfilled, the reward must be given as, it being withheld, the reward cannot be obtained.\textsuperscript{118}

\textsuperscript{116} Turretin, \textit{Institutio theologiae elencticæ}, XVII.i.iii.16.

\textsuperscript{117} Turretin, \textit{Institutio theologiae elencticæ}, XVII.iv.5-6, 9. Also see Ursinus, \textit{Explic. Catech.}, pp. 313-314; Ames,
\textit{Medulla ss. theologiae}, Bk. II.iii.3; \textit{Leiden Synopsis}, XXXIV.2; Johannes Brauinius, \textit{Doctrina Foederum seu Systema Theologiae
didactis et elencticis} (Amsterdam, 1699), I.iii.113, 114; citations from Heppe, \textit{Reformed Dogmatics}.

\textsuperscript{118} Turretin, \textit{Institutio theologiae elencticæ}, XVII.i.iii.12. “Nam licet operà nihil habeant in se quod mereri possit et
consequi talem mercedem, quae ideo est mere gratuita, ut postea diceretur; Tamen habent quandam ordinationem et
aptitudinem ut ordinentur ad premium, tum ex conditione operantis, qui supponitur fidelis, ic est, in gratiam et
Turretin further clarifies how imperfect works can be truly good by distinguishing “the mode” from “the thing itself.” Thus “as to mode they are never performed with that perfection which can sustain the rigid examination of the divine judgment (on account of the imperfection of sanctification),” yet “as to the thing itself they are good works.” Those who are unregenerate are incapable of good works strictly defined, but not so with the regenerate, for the latter have everything that is requisite “from which the goodness of an action results and so are truly and not apparently such (although as to degree they may fail and have blemishes mixed up with them).”\footnote{Turretin, \textit{Institutio theologica elencticæ}, XVII.iv.13. Also see \textit{Leiden Synopsis}, XXXIV.26; Heidegger, \textit{Corpus Theologiarum}, XXIII.55, 58; citations from Heppe, \textit{Reformed Dogmatics}; and Calvin, \textit{Institutes of the Christian Religion}, III.xiv.3,4.} Consequently, even our faith and our prayers have “defects” and “blemishes” attached to them—as such, they might qualify as sins in certain respects. However, we are not said to be justified by the sin of faith. “Thus the work of faith is not the instrument of justification with respect to such imperfections, but with respect to the act itself (which is produced by the Holy Spirit and under that reduplication).”\footnote{Turretin, \textit{Institutio theologica elencticæ}, XVII.iv.14.} Indeed, insofar as there is any “good” in our good works, it is God who works \textit{good works} in us; their imperfection and taint remains our contribution. Therefore every good work is marred by sin in some degree, yet God is not culpable. What is more, because our good works have the mixture of what is good and what are defects, they can be regarded as unworthy and subject to punishment with respect to the evil of our flesh in them, but worthy of reward inasmuch as the good in them and the act itself arises from the Spirit.\footnote{Turretin, \textit{Institutio theologica elencticæ}, XVII.iv.15-17. For a similar defense of the necessity of good works, see Braunius, \textit{Doctrina Fœdernæm}, I, i, 5, 14; van Mastricht, \textit{Theoretico-practica theologia}, VI.viii.27; Heidegger, \textit{Corpus Theologiarum}, XXIII.62.}
c. The Diverse Connotations of Merit

The merit of good works is an important aspect of Turretin’s discussion, and an important topic for understanding the texture and nuance of his doctrine of the covenant of grace. Turretin observes that the word merit has diverse connotations. It is used either “broadly and improperly” or “strictly and properly.” The first usage refers to “the consecution of any thing”—that is, “to merit” means simply “to gain” or “to obtain” or “to attain.” The fathers often use the term “merit” in this sense. The strict and proper usage of “merit,” however, “denotes that work to which a reward is due from justice on account of its intrinsic value and worth.” Turretin observes that it was only after the schoolmen misapplied the teaching of the fathers that the word “merit” came to refer to persons properly meriting “eternal life by their works,” and that their “good works are meritorious of eternal life, not only from the covenant, but also by reason of the work itself.”

This last observation is not to be missed, for the Reformed orthodox affirmed, as we have observed before, ex pacto merit. The schoolmen, however, and certain advocates and critics of Reformed federalism today advocate a strict merit in opposition to merit ex pacto. We will come back to this below. First we note that, according to Turretin, the Romanists define “merit” as a work that has a reward due. Merit is further distinguished between two kinds: merit of congruity (congrui) and merit of condignity (condigni). Turretin rejects both of these notions.

The merit of congruity refers to a work that is morally good and done from free will without the aid of divine grace; as such the “good works” performed belong to the unregenerate person prior to the reception of grace. However, in doing what they can, being morally inclined to God’s law, it is fitting and congruous for God, according to his goodness, to “infuse the grace of justification” into those so disposed. Thus it is congruous for God to give a person a reward

---

122 Turretin, Institutio theologicae eleltiae, XVII.v.2. Also see Calvin, Institutes of the Christian Religion, III.xv.2.
123 Turretin, Institutio theologicae eleltiae, XVII.v.2.
124 Turretin, Institutio theologicae eleltiae, XVII.v.3. Turretin acknowledges that some Roman Catholic theologians disapprove of the distinction, see XVII.v.4.
appropriate to his or her power of acting. The merit of condignity on the other hand has to do with persons who have thus become the recipients of divine grace; the "good works" they do are done from free will with the aid of divine grace. As such their works have an intrinsic value and are "altogether worthy" of reward, not only because they agree or concur with God's nature, but because their value requires an "equality between the work and the reward." These works are condign because the merit and the reward are proportional to one another.\textsuperscript{125} The distinction has to do with the merit of the individual's own effort versus that of the Holy Spirit's operation. In the former case, "the act is only a . . . half-merit, inasmuch as no human act can justly deserve the reward of salvation." In the latter case, however, "the act could be viewed as . . . a full merit, inasmuch as the work of the Spirit is absolutely good and is the ground of a truly and justly deserved salvation." In short, this distinction enabled "late medieval scholastics to argue that a minimal act might be performed and, because of it, first grace conferred."\textsuperscript{126}

Over against these false conceptions of merit Turretin notes the definition offered by Biel, namely, that merit is "'a work imputable to praise'" (i.e., worthy of praise)—which for Turretin is an altogether acceptable definition and would end the controversy; for, again, it is not disputed that the good works of believers ought to be praised. The controversy has to do with what conditions must be met in order to render a good work meritorious or such that a reward is due it according to justice, not only distributively but also commutatively—that is, a just equity between the work performed and the reward received?

d. The Conditions Demanded

For Turretin, true merit demands that five conditions be met:

(1) that the "work be undue"—for no one merits by paying what he owes (Lk. 17:10), he only satisfies; (2) that it be ours—for no one can be said to merit from another; (3) that it be absolutely perfect and free from all taint—for where sin is, there merit cannot be; (4) that it be equal and proportioned to the reward and pay; otherwise it would be a gift, not merit . . . ; (5)

\textsuperscript{125} Turretin, \textit{Institutio theologica elencticar}, XVII.v.3; also cf. Wollebius, \textit{Compendium theologiae christianae}, Bk. II.i.11.

that the reward be due to such a work from justice—whence an “undue work” is commonly defined to be one that “makes a reward due in the order of justice.”

In light of these stipulations, Turretin’s verdict is that humans cannot perform any work whatsoever that would mount up to having merited anything before God, either of congruity or condignity.

(1) They are not undue, but due; for whatever we are and can do, all this we owe to God, whose debtors we are on this account called (Lk. 17:10; Rom. 8:12). (2) Nor one is ours, but all are gifts of grace and fruits of the Spirit (Jnm. 1:17; Phil. 2:13; 2 Cor. 3:5). (3) They are not perfect, but alloyed as yet by various impurities (Rom. 7:18; Gal. 5:17, 18; Is. 64:6). (4) They are not equal to future glory because there is no proportion between the finite and temporary and the infinite and eternal (Rom. 8:18; 2 Cor. 4:17). (5) The reward promised to them is purely gratuitous and undue and so to be expected not from the internal merit of the work and its intrinsic worth, but only from the free estimation of it by the one who crowns it (Rom. 6:23; 4:4; 11:6).

This means that in the proper sense of the word there is no merit of man before God, no matter his state—whether that of innocency and freedom, or that of fallenness, depravity, and bondage, or that of restoration and glorified perfection. This also means that Adam would not have merited eternal life according to strict justice, even if he had not fallen into sin, “although (through a certain condescension [synchatabasim] God promised him by a covenant life under the condition of perfect obedience.” This obedience, however, can be viewed as meritorious from divine grace alone, ex pacto, and only in the broad sense, for God’s covenant forms the

---

127 Turretin, *Institutio theologicae elencticae*, XVII.v.6. “1. Ut opus sit indebitum, nemo enim meretur persolvendo quod debet, Luc. xvii. 10, sed satisfacit. 2. Ut sit nostrum, nemo enim de alieno potest dici mereri. 3. Ut sit perfectum omnibus numeris et omni navel carens; nam ubi est peccatum, ibi non potest esse meritum. 4. Ut sit aequale et proportionatum prae mini et mercendi, secus donum fuert, non meritum . . . . 5. Ut praelium tali operi ex justitia debeatur. Unde vulgo definiatur Opus indebitum, praeium ex ordine justitiae ex indebito faciens debitum.”

128 Turretin, *Institutio theologicae elencticae*, XVII.v.7. “1. Quia non sunt indebita, sed debita, quicquid enim sumus et possimus, hoc totum debemus Deo, cuius iude debitores dicimur, Luc. xvii. 10, Rom. viii. 12. 2. Nullem est nostrum, sed omnia sunt dona gratiae et fructus Spiritus, Jac. i. 17, Phil. ii. 13, 2 Cor. iii. 5. 3. Non sunt perfecta, sed variis adhuc nevis inquisita, Rom. vii. 18, Gal. v. 17, 18, et Isa. lxiv. 6. 4. Non sunt aequale gloriae future, quia finiti et temporati ad infinitum et aeternum nulla est proportio, Rom. viii. 18, 2 Cor. iv. 17. 5. Mercis que illis promittitur mere est gratuita et indebita, adeoque expectanda, non ex internu operis merito, et intrinseca ejus dignitate, sed tantum ex coronantis liberrima dignatione, Rom. vi. 23, et iv. 4, et xi. 6.” A similar discussion is found in Wollebius, *Compendium theologiae christianae*, Bk. II.i.15.
foundation by which human works are accorded any merit and rewarded with life eternal—something not at all commensurate with the deed or deeds rendered.129

e. The Merit of Congruity

As for the merit of congruity, Turretin offers numerous arguments against it. First Turretin maintains that “nothing good can be either thought or done by sinful man as yet renewed. . . .” Besides, “grace which is due is not grace,” and it is absurd to assert that humans can offer something to God that they did not first receive from God (cf. 1 Cor. 4:7). Moreover, fallen persons are God’s enemies and deserve only his just punishment. Turretin also bids readers to consider that merit cannot properly belong to a person who performs only some good deeds, for to fail at one part of the law is to break the whole law (cf. James 2:10).130

f. The Merit of Condignity

The merit of condignity does not fare any better in Turretin’s assessment. Turretin notes that among his Roman Catholic opponents there exists a diversity of opinion. Some hold to a condignity “by reason of the work”; others, such as Scotus, affirm condignity “only by reason of the divine covenant and acceptance”; and yet others (for example, Bellarmine) offer a combination view, whereby human works are viewed as meritorious “neither simply in themselves, nor only from the covenant, but with respect to the covenant and the work at the same time.” The Council of Trent decided the question with these words:

If anyone should say that the good works of a justified person are so the gifts of God, that they are not also the good merits of the one justified, or that the one justified by good works, which are done by him through the grace and merit of Jesus Christ, whose living member he is, does not truly deserve an augmentation of grace, eternal life, and the obtaining of that eternal life, if he dies in grace, and even the increase of glory, let him be accursed.131

129 Turretin, *Institutio theologiae elencticae*, XVII.v.7. Ames makes some of the same points in his *Medulla ss. theologicae*, Bk. II.iii.17-20.


131 Session 6, Canon 32, Schroeder, p. 46; quoted from Turretin, *Institutio theologiae elencticae*, XVII.v.10. “Si quis dixerit Hominis justificati bona opera ita esse bona Dei, ut non sint etiam bona ipsius justificati merita, aut ipsum justificantum bonis operibus, quæ ab eo per gratiam et Jesu Christi meritem, cujus membrum vivum est, fiunt, non vere mereri augmentum gratiae, vitam æternam, et ipsius vitae æternæ, si tamen in gratia excessest, consecutionem, atque etiam gloriam augmentum, Anathema sit.”
Turretin acknowledges that Scotus’s position comes nearer the truth, but it too must be rejected since to speak of “condign merit” in connection with “merit by covenant” is to abuse words. Inasmuch as the reward bestowed far surpasses the worth of the work performed, condign merit is a misnomer. What is more, this manner of speaking induces one to Pharisaical pride, so that we ascribe too much to our works and too little to God’s mercy.\textsuperscript{12}

Most of the adherents to Rome however held to Bellarmine’s combination view, and so Turretin feels compelled to clarify the question. That good works are pleasing and acceptable to God is not to be denied “provided a gratuitous and not a due reward is meant.” Turretin even admits that it is possible and lawful for one to work with an eye to the reward if certain cautions are observed—namely, that the one working understands that the reward is itself a “gratuitous boon” and not a “due price,” and that God’s glory comes first and remains principal, whereas one’s reward is secondary and can never become the chief motivation. And although there exists a certain relation between good works and eternal life (like that between “way and goal” or “contest and crown”), the relation is not that of a cause to an effect. Consequently, there is no “proportion of equality” or “commensuration.” On the contrary, as argued in treating the covenant of nature, God is not man’s debtor, strictly speaking, even by way of covenant. While Turretin does not deny that God has bound himself to his own promise and so must fulfill what he promises, nonetheless, God, the initiator of the covenant, ultimately remains a debtor only “to himself and his own faithfulness.” Thus the question finally comes to this: “Do works, from their intrinsic value and worth, merit and obtain the reward promised by God and by the virtue of which they can be said to effect salvation itself?” Turretin and the Reformed orthodox deny such a notion, for it strikes at the heart of the entire idea of divine grace and the work of salvation, even as it compromises a biblical conception of God’s relationship to his human creature.\textsuperscript{13}

\textsuperscript{12} Turretin, \textit{Institutio theologicae elencticar}, XVII.v.11.

\textsuperscript{13} Turretin, \textit{Institutio theologicae elencticar}, XVII.v.12-14.
First, eternal life is a genuine gift of God to sinners, and not a debt (cf. Rom. 4:4), for while death is according to wages earned, life is not according to wages. As Turretin asserts, “life and death are indeed the ultimate end of man, but the condition of each is not equal”—death is merited by sin and distributive justice is due; eternal life however is a “gratuitous gift,” not merited, and “conferred from pure liberality.” Since salvation is of mercy, it rendered undue and therefore cannot be from human merits.\footnote{Turretin, \textit{Institutio theologiae elencticae}, XVII.v.16-17.}

But what of Christ’s merits? Didn’t he merit salvation and eternal life for believers? Turretin maintains (and this is his second argument) that the role Christ’s merits play in human salvation is precisely to the point, for in saving sinners, he merits everything in their stead; consequently, there can be no room at all for human merit, Christ’s excepted. In fact, Christ’s redemptive work is “incapable of being shared (\textit{aboinónto}) with others because they belong to the duty demanded of him alone.” His redemptive work is altogether sufficient: in itself and does not stand in need of any supplement from us; to argue contrariwise is to derogate and denigrate Christ’s merits, for to merit means to gain a right that didn’t otherwise obtain. This means that “if men ought to merit by their works, it follows that before their merits they had no right to it and thus Christ did not perfectly merit it (which cannot be said without blasphemy).” How can sinners be heirs of salvation if it can be bought?\footnote{Turretin, \textit{Institutio theologiae elencticae}, XVII.v.18.}

Third, since believers are the servants, or better, the slaves of God, all that they do is already owed—hence merit is impossible (cf. Luke 17:10). Even Bellarmine must concede this point and in this concession his position is completely compromised. Moreover, though Bellarmine affirms God’s gracious covenant as the way of reward, he fails to grasp the significance of it. For although God in his condescension made a “gratuitous covenant” with man, so that he must remain faithful to his own promise, this does not mean that “anything is
due to our works as if they were meritorious, since he crowns his gifts in us, not our merits.”\(^{136}\) For our works, as already argued (and fourthly) “are destitute of the conditions of true merit.”\(^{137}\)

Finally, given that eternal life and the state of glory is “an inheritance,” meaning it is a gift bestowed by God’s gracious adoption, it cannot be counted as earned by our merits. Turretin further explains that even though good works might be considered as requisite for entering into the inheritance God gives to those in Christ, it does not follow that such works are the cause of obtaining what God gives. Causes must be distinguished from conditions—works are conditions but not causes or merits for obtaining the inheritance God freely bestows to believers. It is given as a reward from grace, not a reward from debt. And note, again, that good works are features of sanctification and the project of salvation, not of justification and being reckoned righteous in God’s sight.\(^{138}\)

**g. Strict versus Ex pacto Merit**

Turretin also bids his readers to consider the difference between God acting from strict justice and from an *ex pacto* justice, i.e., from a justice of faithfulness to his covenant:

Strict justice of equality, which has reference exactly to the equality of a work, differs from the justice of faithfulness tempered by mercy, which regards the truth of the divine promise and the covenant which God condescended to make with us. God presents life to our works from the justice of faithfulness, by which he is faithful and true in fulfilling his promises; but not from the justice of equality, as regarding the merit of the work. . . . This is so not because it is just to pay the due reward to our merits, but because it is just for God to stand to his promises and not suffer the death of Christ to be made void.\(^{139}\)

Thus God blesses and rewards “according to works” (*kata ta erga*), not “on account of” *(die)* them, denoting the proportion of the quality of the work rather than that of a supposed

---

\(^{136}\) Turretin, *Institutio theologiae elencticae*, XVII.v.21; also see XVII.v.31.

\(^{137}\) Turretin, *Institutio theologiae elencticae*, XVII.v.22. Here Turretin cites Rom. 8:18 and 2 Cor. 4:17.


equality between the work and the reward. Moreover, "the causal particles *gar* and *dia* ascribed to
good works (Mt. 25:35; Rev. 7:15) are not causal, but ratiocinative (as often elsewhere: Mt. 16:2,
3; Jn. 16:27; 1 Cor. 10:5)," demonstrating the cause of the consequence, not of the consequent.
In other words, they demonstrate the marks of those who will be saved; but they do not merit or
cause or bring about salvation. They serve as proofs *a posteriori* of salvation, that believers were
rightly absolved of their sins; but they do not function as causes *a priori* of salvation. Again,
salvation is a gift of grace, not a reward earned. God judges believers worthy of salvation
according to their persons are found robed in Christ's righteousness, not according to their
works.\textsuperscript{140}

It would take us too far a field to consider this question further. However, in closing out
his discussion of sanctification Turretin offers this pastoral plea and prayer:

God grant that, dismissing a vain confidence in our own merit, we may rest in the most perfect
merit of Christ alone and so keep faithful to him and fight the good fight even unto the end
that we may receive a crown of righteousness; due not to our merit, but most graciously
promised to us from the heavenly rewarder. To him, the author and finisher (*archégō kai teλēcτη*)
of our salvation, the one and triune God, "from whom, by whom and to whom are all things,
be praise and glory world without end." Amen.\textsuperscript{141}

D. The Relationship between the Covenant of Works and the Covenant of Grace

Given Turretin's comments regarding legal obedience and evangelical obedience, it is not
surprising that he feels obliged to elaborate upon the relationship between these covenants, or
employing the terminology he uses at the outset of his treatment of the covenant of nature—the
twofold character of God's covenant with humans. The particular question at issue is how the
covenant of works and the covenant of grace "agree with" and "differ" from one another.

\textsuperscript{140} Turretin, *Institutio theologiae eleventh*., XVII.v.26-28. In sections that follow, §§ 29-45, Turretin considers
numerous biblical passages that (in his judgment) some misconstrue as supporting the notion of the merit of good
works; he also considers the question concerning areolae—that is, a certain superlative reward given to those
whose faithfulness has been severely tested and so merit this gift. Turretin rebuts this idea while not denying that
there are degrees of glory as distinct rewards of grace.

\textsuperscript{141} Turretin, *Institutio theologiae eleventh*, XVII.v.45. "Fæxit Deus ut missa inani propriorum meritorum fiducia,
in solo Christi merito perfectissimo acquiscamus, et ita fidem illi servemus et bonum cartamen usque ad finem
decertemus, ut justitie coronam, non meritis nostris debitam, sed gratiosissime nobis promissam, a coelesti
Agenothesia, reportemus. Illi vero *Δικηνησι καὶ τελειωτῇ* salutis nostræ, Deo Uni et Trino, A *Quo, per Quem, et ad Quem
sunt omnia, sit laus et gloria in secula seculorum. Amen."
These covenants agree, says Turretin, in a fivefold way: (1) in that the author of each covenant is God, for he alone, as Creator, possesses the right to establish a covenant with the creature; (2) in that the contracting parties in each covenant is God and man; (3) in that the general end is likewise the same in each covenant, namely God's glory; (4) in that the extrinsic form of each covenant is the same, for annexed to each is a restipulation; and (5) in that the promise of life, eternal and heavenly happiness, is promised in each covenant. However, even within these general areas of agreement there are nuances of distinction. The manner in which these two covenants differ from one another is perhaps most conveniently set forth by means of a chart.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Foedus naturae</th>
<th>Foedus gratiae</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Author</strong></td>
<td>God as Creator and Lord</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Parties</strong></td>
<td>God and man</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Foundation</strong></td>
<td>Man's obedience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Promise</strong></td>
<td>Eternal life</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Condition</strong></td>
<td>Works</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>End</strong></td>
<td>Declaration of justice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Manifestation</strong></td>
<td>Conscience in the state of nature</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Order</strong></td>
<td>First (violator has hope in new covenant)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

---


144 Wallace, “The Doctrine of the Covenant in the Elenctic Theology of Francis Turretin,” 164 fn. 63, observes that “Turretin expands on this point, insisting that faith was required in the first covenant, but as a work of obedience; and works are required in the second covenant, not as an antecedent condition for eternal life, but as a 'subsequent condition as the fruit and effect of the life already acquired' (XII.iv.7),” further commenting, “This might be a useful insight for contemporary debates regarding the relationship between faith and works in the covenant of grace.”
Extends

Universal in Adam
Glory to obedient man
Terror to fallen man
Bondage to sinners
Drives man away from God.

Particular with the elect in Christ
Glory to God alone
Grace to fallen man
Freedom to sinners
Calls men back to God.\textsuperscript{145}

The above chart offers a shorthand sketch of the differences between the covenant of nature and the covenant of grace. There is more that ought to be elaborated upon, however, or at least more clearly elucidated. With respect to "author" (\textit{author}), in the first covenant God acted as Creator, "impelled by love and benevolence towards an innocent creature," while in the second covenant he acted as Redeemer, impelled by "special mercy and grace towards a miserable creature." Both covenants give exhibit to particular divine attributes, though in each one divine gratuitousness prevails and is in full display—the one an act of God's goodness and kindliness, the other an act of "special mercy and grace."\textsuperscript{146} In the second covenant a Mediator is requisite inasmuch as God cannot have fellowship with fallen humans except by way of reconciliation and appeasement, and likewise fallen humans cannot enter into communion with God without being reconciled to God by a Mediator. Thus the first covenant is fittingly called a covenant of friendship (\textit{fides amicitiae}), while the second is a covenant of reconciliation (\textit{fides reconciliationis}).\textsuperscript{147}

The "foundation" (\textit{fundamentum}) of the covenant also requires some explication, since man's obedience is foundational to this covenant only in a relative sense. Although Turretin does not here repeat an earlier made point, as he indicated before, human obedience, resting on "the strength of nature" and human "free will," is still an \textit{ex parte} arrangement. Many critics of federal theology object to the notion of human obedience playing any role in the covenant


\textsuperscript{146} Turretin, \textit{Institutio theologicae electricae}, XII.iv.2. "ad primum impulsus fuit amore et benevolentia erga Creaturam integram, ad posterius misericordia et gratia speciali erga Creaturam miseram."

\textsuperscript{147} Turretin, \textit{Institutio theologicae electricae}, XII.iv.3.
relationship. What is not clear, however, is whether such critics wish to maintain that human disobedience is acceptable before God or consistent with communion with him, or whether they would jettison the necessity of Christ's obedience as Mediator of the covenant of grace. According to federal theology, however, the evangelical covenant is founded on "Christ and his obedience"; therefore, Christ is called a "covenant of the people" (Isa. 49:8). Human obedience is required in each covenant, for humans may never enjoy communion with God in disobedience, disregarding his will and holiness, and failing to love him. In the first covenant this obedience is expected from man, acting from the strength of his nature still unfallen; in the second covenant human obedience is still required (hence the incarnation), but now it is through a Mediator who acts on behalf of fallen sinners and in their stead, so that they rest in God's strength and mercy. Thus, by way of contrast with the first covenant, in the second covenant what is required of man is fulfilled by another, so that he is now "in the hand of God, by whose power he is most effectually guarded forever (1 Pet. 1:5)."

The "promise" (promissio) is the same in each covenant, except in the covenant of nature eternal life was promised as a "due reward" (Rom. 4:4), whereas in the covenant of grace this life, in the way of deliverance from sin and death, is "the gift of God" (Rom. 6:23).\(^\text{149}\) Again, Turretin's curt comments are open to misperception and abuse if his earlier exposition of the covenant of nature is ignored. That eternal life is the "due reward" promised in the covenant of nature does not mean, for Turretin, that humans earn their way into God's favor or can demand blessings from God as inherent rights, provided obedience is rendered to him. On the contrary, Turretin carefully sets forth the idea that man, faithfully obeying God, may expect a "due reward" from him only because God, according to his own divine goodness and benevolence, condescends—indeed, freely, sovereignly, and infinitely condescends—to establish a covenant


\(^{149}\) Turretin, *Institutio theologicae elencticae*, XII.iV.5.
with man, for man can expect reward from the creator only on the basis of God's kindly covenant arrangement by which he gratuitously promises to reward and bless human obedience.

Here it must be observed that although Turretin produced three massive volumes of elenctic theology, sometimes he writes in an abridged fashion, and since he may not be expected to repeat and rehearse all the nuances of his views on each given topic, we must remember to interpret his laconic remarks at certain places in light of his fulsome discussion at other places. In any case, the contrast presented here between "due reward" on the one hand and "divine gift" on the other is a contrast between man acting without a Mediator in the first instance, left to his natural capacity in the state of innocence, and in the second instance Christ acting on man's behalf as his Mediator, bearing the penalty that had accrued to sinners in the covenant of nature and fulfilling God's law in their stead. In both instances, however, whether we are speaking of due reward or the divine gift, we are talking about ex pacto blessings of God, for there are no gifts or rewards bestowed to humans that are not rooted in God's goodness or in his salvific grace.\(^\text{150}\)

As for the "prescribed condition" (conditio prescriptus) of the two covenants, the reason they diverge from one another is not because faith is absent from the covenant of works and works are absent in the covenant of grace; rather, the divergency here has to do with the different relation faith and works bear in the respective covenants. "For in the first covenant, faith was required as a work and a part of the inherent righteousness to which life was promised"—that is, faith is necessary as a "theological virtue," whose object is God as Creator. "But in the second [covenant], [faith] is demanded—not as a work on account of which life is given, but as a mere instrument apprehending the righteousness of Christ (on account of which alone salvation is granted to us)." As such, faith is an "evangelical condition" worked in us by God's grace, whose object is God as Redeemer, taking hold of Christ as Mediator. With regard to works, says

\(^{150}\) Cf., for example, Turretin, Institutio theologiae elencticæ, VIII.iii,16-17 and VIII.vi.12, where Turretin asserts that the promise of heavenly bliss is obtained by Adam's obedience according to God's pact.
Turretin: “they were required in the first [covenant] as an antecedent condition by way of a cause for acquiring life; but in the second, they are only the subsequent condition as the fruit and effect of the life already acquired.”\(^\text{151}\)

The “end” (finis) of each covenant is a relative concept in some respects, for finally God has but one purpose according to his decree or counsel, so that all things work for his glory.\(^\text{152}\) However, the more immediate end that serves God’s glory in the first covenant is a manifestation of his justice in condemning Adam and his progeny for failure to live according to its demands. In response to Adam’s failure, God is a strict Judge, and he may rightly condemn the human race without pardon. In the second covenant the immediate end is the display of God’s mercy and overflowing love, revealing his fatherly forbearance, for he opens the way of salvation to sinners according to his grace.\(^\text{153}\)

The distinct “manifestations” (manifestaciones) of each covenant is important for Turretin since the former is rooted in nature, whereas the latter is revealed through supernatural revelation. The covenant of works, then, was made in the state of nature and was made known by nature through natural law, being imprinted on man’s conscience (Rom. 2:14, 15). By contrast, the covenant of grace does not have any natural roots; it is wholly hidden and unknown, except God, according to his good pleasure, makes it known. In the words of Jesus, flesh and blood cannot reveal it, only God can do this (Matt. 16:17; also see 1 Cor. 2:9).\(^\text{154}\)

\(^{151}\) Turretin, *Institutio theologiae elencticae*, XII.iv.6-7. “Nam fides in primo feedere exigeatur, ut opus et pars justitiae inherentis, cui vita primitibatur. Sed secundo exigitur, non ut opus propter quod vita detur, sed ut merum instrumentum apprehendens justitiam Christi, propter quam solam salus nobis conceditur. In illo fides fuit virtus Theologica ex viribus nature, quae in Deum Creatorem ferebatur; In isto fuit conditio Evangelica per modum supernaturalis gratiae, que fertur in Deum Redemptorem. Et ad opera quod attinet, requirebantur in primo, ut conditio antecedens per modum cause ad vitam acquirendum, sed in secundo se habent tantum ut conditio subsequens per modum fructus et effectus vite jam acquisitus.” Turretin also states: “In primo precedere debebant justicandum, in secundo sequuntur justicatum.”

\(^{152}\) See Turretin’s discussion, *Institutio theologiae elencticae*, IV.iv. (also note XII.iv.1)


\(^{154}\) Turretin, *Institutio theologiae elencticae*, XII.iv.9.
As to the "order" (ordo) of these covenants, since the covenant of works is first and the covenant of grace follows it, there is recourse from the former to the latter. But there is no further recourse if one violates the covenant of grace—no further remedy or hope is available to sinners to be reconciled to God. "On this account," writes Turretin, "the sin against the Holy Ghost is unpardonable because it is committed against the covenant of grace."\(^{155}\)

The two covenants also differ in "extent" (extensio), for the first was universal in scope, including all of Adam's posterity—that is, the human race—so that all people, with the law written on their heart, are under that covenant, including its threatened sanction; the second covenant, however, is particular in scope, "made with the elect alone and those to be saved in Christ (as will hereafter be proved)."\(^{156}\)

Finally, Turretin explains how the covenant of works and the covenant of grace differ in their respective "effects" (effectus). The first gave place for man glorying in himself had he kept it; but in failing to do that, a different effect was the result, bringing terrible shame and terror, along with bondage and accursedness, so that man hides from God. (Turretin might have added, that had Adam kept this covenant, the effect would have also been eternal life and eternal happiness in communion with God. But clearly has interest here is to distinguish and depict the differences between these covenants.) By contrast, the second covenant gives no place for man to glory in himself, for it is founded on God's grace entirely and excludes all boasting. The effect of this covenant is salvation itself, which is God's work, resulting in freedom and blessing, so that sinners heed the call to God's throne of mercy and confidently seek his help in every troublesome circumstance, knowing they will find it.\(^{157}\)

Turretin's discussion of the similarities and differences between the covenant of nature and the covenant of grace is important since he will next turn to tackle the controversies

\(^{155}\) Turretin, Institutio theologiae elencticae, XII.iv.10.

\(^{156}\) Turretin, Institutio theologiae elencticae, XII.iv.11. Turretin addresses the matter of the covenant of grace being made with the elect, and in what sense the non-elect are in this covenant, under Topic XII, quæstio vi, §§ 5-32.

\(^{157}\) Turretin, Institutio theologiae elencticae, XII.iv.12.
surrounding the unity of the covenant of grace. Given on the one hand the somewhat intricate relationship between natural law and the Mosaic law, with the latter being the written expression of the former, and on the other hand the carefully nuanced relationship between the Mosaic law and the gospel, each representing distinct stages in the covenant of grace or what Turretin calls the new versus the old covenant, it was necessary for him to accent how the covenant of works and the covenant of grace differ. In this way he is better set up to address the matters ahead.

What should not be missed, however, is that, for Turretin (and for seventeenth-century federal theologians in general), there is an essential continuity between the covenant of works and the covenant of grace, since the remedy provided for fallen humans in the evangelical covenant comes through Christ the Mediator, as the God-man, who undergoes the sanction of the covenant of works on behalf of his chosen people (all the way unto death, even the accursed death on the cross), and who lives up to all the prescriptions of natural law, and by extension, all the obligations of the Mosaic law as well, meeting every test of obedience; and, as the second Adam, Christ perfectly obeys God on behalf of those whom the Father has given him. In this sense, the covenant of God with humans is singular (as Turretin earlier indicated), though obviously it has a twofold character (that of nature and that of grace).

Because of the diverse administrations and dispensations that exist in the covenant of grace, Turretin’s next concern is to argue for the unity of this covenant against numerous opponents, a subject we will take up in the next chapter.

**Summary and Conclusion**

We have seen that Turretin’s exposition of the covenant of grace begins with a careful examination of the biblical terms for covenant, along with a consideration of certain important words related to the covenant idea. Taken together, the biblical terms for and surrounding the covenant testify to the wholly gratuitous nature of God’s salvific work. Of particular significance is the testamentary character of the covenant of grace, for the blessings of this covenant are altogether a divine gift, a bestowal of blessing upon the human party of the covenant, which
means that attaining of the gift is not dependent upon the human recipient in any respect. Hence Turretin speaks of this arrangement as a "covenant by testament." Similarly, inasmuch as the evangelical covenant is the fulfillment of the divine promise, it is altogether founded upon God's own pledge. It is a covenant of grace causally, materially, and as to medium.

The gracious character of this covenant is further explicated in that, in the strict sense of the word, a covenant cannot exist between God and humans, for a contractual arrangement is impossible between unequal parties, and a most radical inequality naturally exists between the Creator and his creatures. What is more, God is under no obligation to establish a covenant with fallen sinners in any case. Nonetheless God accommodates himself to what amounts to a "quasi-contract." In light of Turretin's remarks concerning the covenant of grace it is difficult to see how those who allege that federal theology introduces a sterile contractual arrangement into the divine/human relationship has validity. For the center of the covenant of grace is Christ—not only in what he does on behalf of the human party of the covenant, but also the blessings he procures for them in the way of the believer's union and communion with him. There is nothing impersonal about this covenant. On the contrary, as Surety, Christ engages himself to perform a terrible work of redemption for offensive sinners, and they only know salvation in personal and corporate fellowship with him.

Moreover, Turretin argues that God is the author of the covenant of grace; it is his covenant. He also engages his Son, according to the divine pactum, such that the incarnation is likewise, not surprisingly, God's work. For as the God-man, Christ meets the demands of God's justice, being the Mediator of the covenant. God mercifully appoints him for the rescue of sinners, a rescue that requires Christ to undergo the negative sanctions of the covenant of works, suffering God's righteous wrath and curse against sin. Turretin thus shows us that Christ, in the way of the covenant of redemption, is the center and focal point of the entire project of salvation, and so of the covenant of grace. Although the intratrinitarian pactum and the covenant of grace remain distinct from one another, they are also interrelated. For the covenant of grace is
“a gratuitous pact” between God offended and man offending, according to Turretin, and “entered into in Christ.” The content of God’s promise to fallen humans is “remission of sins and salvation to man gratuitously on account of Christ.” The covenant of grace, then, is about God’s gracious mercy in Christ. As Mediator, Christ forms the third party of this covenant.

Meanwhile, Turretin has shown us that the covenant of grace, in being a covenant, requires that certain obligations or conditions be fulfilled, both in what God must do in order to save sinners according to his grace, and what the human party must do in the way of faith and repentance. God promises to be “our God,” which is a comprehensive promise of blessing, including, not least of which, salvation itself. The human parties of the covenant are “his people,” for they have been ransomed and belong to him; and the two principal duties required of them are faith and repentance. However, inasmuch as the human parties of the covenant are dead in sin, they are incapable of performing these requirements. This is why God works these blessings in them as well, also according to his grace. These stipulated requirements are, then, likewise gifts of grace—which is to say, these conditions require both a work of Christ for sinners and a work of Christ in sinners.

This brings Turretin to a careful consideration of the nature of conditionality in the covenant of grace. He lays out distinctly in what sense conditionality is and is not a legitimate concept when applied to the covenant of grace. As for faith and repentance as conditions in the evangelical covenant, they possess no meritorious function whatsoever since they are divine gifts worked in sinners. Turretin labors to demonstrate that the covenant of grace does not depend upon human ability in any sense, for if the work of the human party of the covenant proved decisive at any point, the efficacy and immutability of this covenant would be undermined. The conditions of the covenant require God’s omnipotent grace and inviolable faithfulness, grounded in the infinite merit of Christ. In fact, the divine role is so prominent in the covenant of grace, with the conditions becoming promises, Turretin feels obliged to explain that although the testamentary character of this covenant is undeniable, and is to be celebrated, it is still a
covenant, for conditions must needs be fulfilled on the part of the human party, even if God is working in human beings to meet the required stipulation.

Turretini further explicates the nature of conditionality by noting that faith alone, and not repentance or human obedience, is the requisite condition in the strict and proper sense, for faith alone binds the believer to Christ and only in union with Christ is obedience possible, for only in union with Christ are the believer's good works reckoned good. This means that repentance and obedience may be considered conditions of the covenant of grace only in the broad and improper sense; as such, however, they are conditions of "means" and "inseparable attendants of true and sincere faith." Where God bestows the gift of faith, by which the believer is bonded to Christ and clings to him for the forgiveness of sins, he likewise bestows all other attendant blessings, inclusive of a new life of obedience which is lived to the glory of God. Turretini's burden is to affirm the wholly gracious character of salvation, which, as it turns out, includes the call to obedience and a life of good works, blessings worked in believers also by divine grace. Moreover, given the frailty and imperfection of the believer's good works, God forgives and perfects them, for they are reckoned in Christ. Evangelical obedience, then, may not be equated with legal obedience; they must be clearly distinguished from one another. For humans do not merit blessing from God. The only way in which merit and reward apply in the divine/human relationship is in the way of the covenant—which means evangelical obedience or good works are without merit strictly considered, and are of grace. Turretini, for this reason, lays out the differences between the covenant of works and the covenant of grace.

Here we observe that although redemption has a legal dimension, for God will have his righteousness preserved and honored, federalism hardly succumbs to legalism. Those who are united to Christ by faith do not work their way to God; rather, Christ bears the penalty of the divine law, specified in the covenant of works, undergoes its terrible sanction of death and curse, and satisfies God's justice for sinners in doing so. Thus Turretini's exposition of this covenant makes clear that the conditions of this covenant involves Christ undergoing the penalty of the
covenant of works and fulfilling its obligations so that the human parties of the covenant may come to faith, and by faith, being brought into union with Christ, all the benefits and blessings of Christ belong to them. In both respects, Christ fulfills the conditions of the covenant—first \textit{for sinners} and also \textit{in sinners}.

Now we are in a position to address the four issues noted at the beginning of the chapter that modern theologians and historians of doctrine put forward in critique of federal theology, deeming this theology as a harmful aberration from earlier codifications of Reformed theology.

The first issue is whether the contractual nature of the covenant of relationship lead to a devolution of the gospel of grace, introducing a destructive legalism that subverts the centrality of divine grace in the covenant arrangement.

As we have already observed, Turretin accents the testamentary character of the covenant, which undermines the nature of the covenant as a contract. But even prior to that, a strict contractual understanding of the covenant simply cannot exist between God and human beings, for humans only have what God grants to them. Besides, God and human beings are so altogether unequal—the difference being no less than that of Creator/creature—that a contract as such is impossible. As noted above, Turretin argues that the covenant of grace is a \textit{quasi-contractus} at best, for God must grant what is required, that is, the conditions stipulated for the human party of the covenant he must fulfill in them. This constitutes no devolution of the gospel, certainly not by the standards of an Augustinian theology of grace or of the sixteenth-century codification of the Protestant Reformation. On the contrary, the legalistic dimension that can be depicted and defined within the covenant of grace is Christ meeting the negative sanction of the covenant of works and fulfilling what is required in God's law. In fact, for Turretin and the federal theologians as a whole, this is the glory of the covenant of grace.

The criticism of theologians and historians of the dialectical school of theology (i.e., those sympathetic with the dominant features of Karl Barth's and Emil Brunner's theologies) is nothing more than a snipe, for at bottom they cannot substantiate the charge of legalism.
Instead their grievance against federal theology is that its doctrine of grace is not inclusive of all human beings, that it is not a species of salvific universalism. As a side note it should be observed that there is nothing in the external or formal apparatus of federalism that excludes universalism. The federal theologians, however, following in the path of historic Christian theology and what they perceived Scripture to teach relative to the scope of salvation, and given their adherence to the classic creeds of the Reformed churches codified in the sixteenth century, deny universal salvation. It should also be observed that Turretin’s discussion of legal versus evangelical obedience completely excludes conceiving of human salvation in legalistic terms, except to say that Christ, on behalf of sinners, fulfills God’s holy and perfect will.

The second issue is whether the conditions that are part and parcel of the covenant relationship compromises or overthrows the free grace of God in the salvation of sinners. This question has already been answered in our exposition and summary of Turretin’s treatment of covenant conditionality. There are conditions to be fulfilled in the covenant of grace; and as already shown these conditions are fulfilled for sinners and in sinners by Christ as Surety. More specifically, conditions do not apply to the covenant of grace if they are understood as antecedent and a priori, or as natural, dependent on human ability, or concerning the means through which salvation is accomplished. However, conditions do apply if they are understood as concomitant and a posteriori, or as supernatural, dependent on God’s action, or concerning the end which is salvation itself. This exposition of conditionality does not overthrow God’s free grace in saving sinners; on the contrary, it safeguards divine grace and celebrates his merciful work of redemption as a gracious gift. It also demonstrates that the covenant idea itself is safeguarded.

The third issue is whether human merit plays any role in the covenant of grace, or stated differently, whether sinners, in the way of faith, walking in repentance and seeking to perform works of love, merit any reward. Turretin shows that the concept of merit requires definition, for in its broad usage it simply means to obtain something; but in its strict usage it means a
reward is due or owed from justice because of the intrinsic value of a work performed. While the word can be used legitimately in a broad and improper sense, in its strict and proper connotation the word, whether describing congruous merit or condign merit, is inapplicable to the covenant of grace with respect to the works performed by believers. For a work to qualify as meritorious certain conditions must be met. As Turretin argues, whatever obedience humans render to God is already due God, and to fail to give God all that is due him is to be indebted to him. This means that humans cannot merit anything from God in the strict sense inasmuch as their obedience is what they already owe him. Besides, even if humans would render all glory unto God and wholly obey him, for merit to apply these works must come from themselves. As it is, however, any glory believers give to God and obedience they render to him is wrought in them by God himself. No reward is due; no merit has been achieved. In addition, for something to be meritorious before God, it must be perfect; and the works of believers, including their faith, is not perfect but tainted and weak. Moreover, for the works of believers to merit a certain reward requires, if strict merit is to apply, that their works are commensurate with the reward itself—in other words, what is performed must be equal and proportional to what is given. Human works hardly merit, in this sense, the heavenly and eternal reward bestowed, which demonstrates that the reward itself is of grace not of merit. Finally, it must be the case, if strict merit is to apply, that God would be unjust not to reward the work performed. Again, human works do not place God under obligation, for the reward given is entirely gratuitous, rooted in Christ’s work for sinners, a pure gift. All of the above clearly shows that for Turretin and federal theologians in general humans do not merit before God, and the allegation that federal theology consists of a contractual legalism is entirely false. The language of merit only applies to sinners from divine grace and God’s kindly condescension, entering into a gratuitous covenant with human beings, whereby he grants a reward to their works far beyond what those works deserve. In this sense, federal theologians affirmed ex pacto merit.
The last issue is whether the doctrine of predestination or divine election swallows up the doctrine of the covenant of grace. Several issues are intertwined or interrelated on this matter, and part of the answer must wait to the next chapter. At this point we may say that the nub of the issue is the saving scope of Christ's work as Surety. In his exposition of the gospel covenant, Turretin hardly mentions the doctrine of predestination except to argue that Christ, in his role as Surety, intercedes on behalf of and makes satisfaction for God's elect. In this sense, the covenant is addressed in its redemptive essence to the elect alone. Again, this is a question of the scope of divine grace, not its character. Turretin does not, nor does any Reformed theologian of the sixteenth or seventeenth century, negate the doctrine of divine election with respect to Christ's work of atonement or the application of redemption to lost sinners. Arguably, the pivot point in Reformed soteriology, its decisive trait, remains irresistible grace or the Spirit's sovereign role in opening human hearts to the message of the gospel—hearts poisoned and dead in sin—and bringing persons to faith in Christ. Inasmuch as federal theologians were committed to the unity of divine revelation, and sought to hold to the teaching of Scripture in its variety of accents and motifs, such as covenant and election, they aimed to interrelate and integrate distinct doctrines with one another. Federal theology, as exhibited in Turretin's work, neither forfeits the doctrine of the covenant in favor of the doctrine of predestination, nor yields the doctrine of predestination in favor of the doctrine of the covenant. As will be demonstrated in the next chapter, Turretin will argue that some people, the non-elect, can be members of the covenant of grace in a different way than those who are God's elect.

Turretin has argued that the plan of redemption, which is displayed in the covenant of grace, with Christ submitting himself to legal sanctions and penalties and meeting certain conditions of obedience, safeguards God's integrity in that he does not change his way with human creatures. Moreover, grace is preeminently exhibited in that God graciously provides Christ as Surety. God saves human beings not by setting aside what they are obliged as creatures to give him or what is due him at God (as if he would allow disobedience to go unpunished or no
longer require that his Word be honored and heeded). Rather, God upholds his original commands, extends his original promises, and applies his original sanctions, for Christ meets all obligations and conditions that are entailed in a right relationship with God, including suffering on our behalf the penalties for the violation of the stipulations of that relationship. Christ does this in order to merit for us what is not ours by right to possess, and he does this according to God’s loving and gracious provision. Consequently, the idea of merit is a matter of God being true to his original word to Adam and graciously making provision to keep that word, with its blessings and sanctions—all of this unto our salvation. Salvation, then, is never a matter of humans making their way to God according to works. All of this Turretin will make even more explicit in his polemics against Arminian, Socinian, Amyraldian, and Cocceian opponents, which we will consider in the next chapter.
CHAPTER FOUR

PÆDUS GRATILÆ (Part 2):
POLEMICS SURROUNDING THE COVENANT OF GRACE

Introduction

Up to this point we have followed Turretin’s explication of the covenant of grace in detail, tracking his argument concerning the nature and meaning of this covenant. For the most part his presentation has been positively focused, with polemical concerns at a minimum. However, with his discussion of the unity of the covenant of grace, Turretin’s exposition moves in a more disputative and confrontational direction. Specifically, he squares off against Socinians, Remonstrants, and certain Anabaptists concerning the unity of the evangelical covenant, calling them modern proponents of Pelagianism. In fact, Turretin regards the controversy with them as quite significant inasmuch as these opponents argue that the way of salvation in the Old Testament differs from the way of salvation in the New Testament—that is, according to Turretin, they deny that the fathers of the Old Testament were “saved by the gratuitous mercy of God in Christ, the Mediator (God-man, theanthrópo) through faith in him about to come.”

In charging these adversaries with (a species of) Pelagianism we discover the threat Turretin judges them to represent, as well as why this endangers the covenant of grace. If the fathers of the Old Testament did not obtain salvation on identical terms with believers in the New Testament, one must posit two ways of salvation under this covenant—at least one of which is apart from Christ or not truly centered in him. But if that is so, the gratuitous nature of the covenant has not only been seriously compromised but altogether overthrown. For the covenant of grace has Christ at its foundation and center.

---

1 Turretin, Institutio theologicaaelenctica, XII.v.1. “et nolunt Patres V.T. salvatos esse ex gratuita Dei misericordia in Christo Mediatore theanthrópo, per fidelem ipsius venturi.”
Our interest in this chapter is to examine how Turretin further refined and explicated his doctrine of the covenant of grace within the context of various controversies and polemical issues that in his judgment threatened the essentially gracious character of the covenant, and therefore threatened the gracious way of salvation for sinners. Having considered the relationship between the covenant of works and the covenant of grace in the previous chapter, this chapter opens with an examination of Turretin’s discussion of the unity of the covenant of grace. This is followed by the controversial idea of the particularity of the evangelical covenant; Turretin argues vigorously for particularity, believing that nothing less that the gospel of grace is at stake. Next we consider Turretin’s discussion of the twofold economy of the covenant of grace. This topic proves quite important to federal theologians inasmuch as it enabled them to discuss the singular way of salvation under the evangelical economy while also being able to explain in what sense the law stands opposed to the gospel as well as serves the gospel. After this we look at Turretin’s treatment of the difference between the Old and New Covenants and the controversies surrounding that topic. Further disputes are also considered, mostly of the intramural variety, as we look at Turretin’s polemics concerning the nature of Christ’s suretyship against the Cocceians and whether the Amyraldians are correct in positing a distinct third covenant.

Although we cannot present every detail and contour of Turretin’s discussion, we will follow his arguments closely, looking particularly at those features of his argument that demonstrate his concern to safeguard the singular way of salvation in both the Old Testament (or the old covenant, also under the Mosaic law) and the New Testament (or the new covenant, with the promised redeemer manifest in Christ), even as we will call attention to issues surrounding conditionality and merit with respect to the covenantal relationship between God and humans.\(^2\) We also see how the doctrine of predestination plays out in

\(^{2}\) Turretin distinguishes between the Old Testament and New Testament, or the old covenant and the new covenant; and although there are certain continuities between the Mosaic law and natural law, and in that
connection with the testamentary character of the covenant. In waging a sustained polemic against various opponents, both without and within the Reformed camp, Turretin labors to safeguard what he understands to be the gospel of grace and the centrality of Christ's redemptive role in the work of salvation.

A. The Unity of the Covenant of Grace

As Turretin takes up the unity of the covenant of grace, he meets opponents primarily in the form of Socinians and Arminians, both of whom posit a distinct way of salvation in the Old Testament over against the way of salvation through Christ's blood in the New Testament. In each case, a certain Pelagianizing tendency looms near, and Turretin girds himself up to rebut this foe.

According to Turretin, the error of the Socinians—including such writers as Faustus Socinus (1539-1604), Johann Volckelius (d. 1618), Valentine Smaltzius (1572-1622)—is well stated in the Racovian Catechism. He quotes these words from it: "Nowhere will you discover in the law of Moses, either eternal life or the gift of the Spirit promised to those obeying the precepts of the law, as it is evident they are promised in the law given by Christ."³ Not that the Socinians were denying that the fathers of the Old Testament were saved or enjoyed eternal happiness; rather, they denied that such blessings were promised to Old Testament believers and that such blessings were centered in Christ. Thus Socinus argued that the new covenant, in distinction from the old, promises the remission of sins openly, not denying that God granted forgiveness to the ancient fathers.⁴ However, as before,

---


the Socinians denied that the remission of sins anticipated Christ's sacrifice as such, or that Christ was the one unto whom they looked for forgiveness. The issue, then, was not that the Socinians denied the salvation of the fathers of the Old Testament; the issue was whether Old Testament believers "looked to Christ or were saved in the hope of his coming."5 The Socinians offered a negative reply to that question, forthrightly rejecting the notion that the pious under the Old Testament, by means of the ceremonies and sacrifices of the levitical stipulations, looked to Christ "in which he was typified, and were saved in the hope of his coming. . ."6 The object of faith for Old Testament believers was God and his promises, not Christ and his redemptive work, for Christ was not yet made known.7

Turretin also points out the error of the Remonstrants. Although Arminius cannot be charged with their error, his followers regarded as "absurd, ambiguous and useless" the notion that the pious of the Old Testament had faith in Jesus Christ, for the revelation of Jesus Christ in the Old Testament is only indirect and obscure, and consequently faith was not directed towards Christ.8 Turretin quotes Simon Episcopius (1533-1643), who states that the promise of eternal life cannot be found in the old covenant, though it may be believed to have been included under the general promises contained in the Old Testament.9

The Anabaptists, too, come under Turretin's review in this regard. Here Turretin refers to the Frankenthal Colloquy, which speaks of the Old Testament people as if they were "a herd of swine," who were without hope of "heavenly immortality." Whatever blessings they

---

5 Turretin, Institutio theologiae elencticae, XII.v.2.
7 Smaltsius, Refutatio Theism D. Wolfgangi Franzi, Disp. 12 (1614), p. 459; and Volkelius, De vera Religione 4.3 (1630), p. 176; references from Turretin, Institutio theologiae elencticae, XII.v.2.
9 Turretin cites Episcopius' "Apologia pro confessione sive declaratione . . . Remonstrantes." 7 in Opusum theologiorum (1665), Pr. II, p. 155; idem, "Institutiones theologicae," 3.4.1 in Opera theologica (1678), p. 156; see Turretin, Institutio theologiae elencticae, XII.v.3.
enjoyed, such were temporal and earthly—an opinion held by Servetus as well, against whom Calvin polemicizes.10

For Turretin, the issue was whether the old and new covenant were “the same as to substance and the essential parts of the covenant, i.e., both as to the covenanted themselves and as to the federal pact consisting in mutual obligation of the parties.”11 In affirming an identity in this regard, Turretin isn’t denying that there were various differences as to accidentals and that different modes and dispensations are evident, as well as other multiple differences (which he treats later).12 As he states, “The difference is in some accidentals which detract nothing from the substantial unity”—for that difference refers to the varying economy and administration of the covenant only.13 However, if Christ is not the Mediator in both the old and new covenant, and if Christ is not the object of faith in each one, so that an essential identity fails to abide between them in the way of reconciliation and salvation, and the same promise of spiritual and heavenly blessing does not exist in each, then Christ’s centrality in the way of salvation is compromised in this covenant and, with it, the centrality of divine grace itself. For salvation is found in Christ alone (Acts 4:12), “and that too according to the inviolable promise of the gratuitous covenant.”14

---

10 The reference to the Frankenthal Colloquy is found in Protocoll . . . Frankenthal, Art. 15, 16 (J. Meier, 1573), pp. 292-335. Calvin’s argument against Servetus on this matter is found in Institutes of the Christian Religion, II.10.1; III.1, 303-404; see Turretin, Institutionum theologicarum, XII.v.4; also XII.v.32, 44, 45.

11 Turretin, Institutionum theologicarum, XII.v.5: “Sed, [queritur] An idem fuerit quoad substantiam et partes essentiales fidei, id. tum quoad fideiipsos, tum quoad pactum fidealem mutui partium obligationem constantem? An idem utroque Mediator Christus, eadem in Christum fides, eorumdum beneficiorum spiritualium et celestium promissiones, eadem reconciliationis et salutis via, variante tantum fideiis economia et administrationem? Quod Adversarii negant; nos affirmamus.”

12 Turretin takes up a discussion of the economical diversity of the covenant of grace in Institutionum theologicarum, XII.vii., and the differences between the Old and New Testaments in XII.viii.

13 Turretin, Institutionum theologicarum, XII.v.3: “Differentiam autem esse in accidentibus nonnullis, quae nihil derogant unitati substantiali.”

14 Turretin, Institutionum theologicarum, XII.v.5-6. “. . . nec aliqu nomen datum esse sub coelo jam a principio, ex quo salus sperat possit, Act. iv. 12, idque juxta fideis gratuitii inviolabilem promissionem.” Also see XII.v.29-30.
Turretin sets forth a seven-pronged argument in favor of the unity between the testaments, averring that the identity of the covenant is proved: (1) from the Scriptures, (2) from the identity of the covenant of grace, (3) from the identity of the Mediator, (4) from the identity of condition, (5) from the identity of the promises, (6) from the identity of the sacraments, and (7) from the use of the law. Rather than examine each of these in detail, we will focus on features of several of them.\footnote{See also Witsius, De (Economia Foederum Dei cum Hominibus, III.ii.1-43; Ball, Treatise of the Covenant of Grace, 23ff.; Leigh, Treatise of the Divine Promises, 100-120; Blake, Vindiciae Foederis, 2nd ed., 202-204; Bulkley, Gospel Covenant Opened, 112-141; Barret, God's Love to Man, and Man's Duty towards God, 298-351; as well as Heph, Reformed Dogmatists, 391ff.; and Ames, Medulla ss. theologarum, Bk. I, chapter 39; Wollebius, Compendium theologarum christianarum, Bk. I, chapter XV, XXI; and among sixteenth-century writers, see Calvin, Institutes of the Christian Religion, 11.x.1-23; OS, III, 403-422 Musculus, Common Places of Christian Religion, 290-293; Theodore Beza, Confessio christianarum fidei, 3.18; Bucanus, Body of Divinity: or Institutions of Christian Religion, 236-241; Zanchius, H. Zanchius: His Confession of Christian Religion (Cambridge, 1599), 53, 91-99.}

As for the first argument, in support of the idea that the covenant of grace specified in the New Testament is the same as the covenant earlier established with Abraham, Turretin cites Luke 1:68, 70, 72, 73; Acts 3:25; Gal. 3:8; Rom. 4:3; and Gal. 3:17—for the promise given to Abraham is “the covenant that was before confirmed of God in Christ” (foedus primo ratificatum a Deo in Christo).\footnote{Turretin, Institutio theologarum elencticarum, XII.iii.7. Turretin's citation follows the Textus Receptus text tradition, with its insertion of εἰς χριστόν. Thus it reads: διέθεσεν προκεκυριομένη ἕως τοῦ θεοῦ εἰς χριστόν. Cf. Ball, Treatise of the Covenant of Grace, 47-92.} Turretin's third argument regarding the identity of the Mediator should likewise not be ignored. Christ is the foundation of the covenant of grace—old and new. He is the blessed seed of the woman promised in Genesis 3:15, who would crush the serpent’s head (also see Heb. 2:14; Rom. 16:20), even as he is the promised seed of Abraham through whom all the nations of the earth are blessed (Gen. 22:18; cf. Gal. 3:16). He is the angel of the \textsc{Lord}'s presence ( Isa. 63:9); the angel of the covenant (Mal. 3:1); and he is “a covenant of the people and of the Gentiles,” which is to say, he is its Mediator ( Isa. 42:6; 49:8). As such, he bears the grief of his people and was smitten for their sins ( Isa. 53:5, 6). Meanwhile, argues Turretin, the New Testament similarly presents Christ as the Mediator of the covenant (see 1 Tim. 2:5; Heb. 8:6; 9:15; 13:8), by whose grace the pious of the Old
Testament were saved (Acts 15: 10, 11). In fact, he is the one about whom all the prophets spoke (Acts 10:43); and there is no other name under heaven by which anyone can be saved (Acts 4:12). As such, he is the way, the truth, and the life, the only pathway to the Father (John 14:6). In this connection, Turretin wages specific polemics surrounding the meaning of Hebrews 13:8, Acts 15:11, Acts 4:12, and Revelation 13:8 (as related to Rev. 17:8; 21:27).

His fourth argument is from the identity of condition, for he says that in each covenant—old or new—the same condition for the attainment of salvation applies, namely faith. For example, Abraham’s faith was imputed for righteousness (Gen. 15:6), and serves as an example to us (Rom. 4:11; Gal. 3:6-8). David, too, lives by faith—Turretin references Psalm 116:10 (“I believed, therefore have I spoken: I was greatly afflicted”—AV) and compares it to 2 Corinthians 4:13 (“We having the same spirit of faith, according as it is written, I believed, and therefore have I spoken; we also believe, and therefore speak”—AV). In reference to the so-called heroes of the faith, expounded in Hebrews 11, there too we see the old covenant fathers living by faith. Habakkuk 2:4 says, “The just shall live by faith,” about which Turretin observes: mention is there made both to faith and to justification in the way of faith—something consistent with Romans 1:17. Peter states explicitly in Acts 10:43: “To him [Christ] all the prophets bear witness that everyone who believes in him receives the forgiveness of sins through his name” (ESV). And the faith of the pious in the old covenant was no general faith, which did not focus on Christ (the Savior) to come, for the way of salvation is in Christ alone and Old Testament believers were also commanded to

---

18 See Turretin, *Institutio theologicae sylvestriane*, XII.v.11.
20 See Turretin, *Institutio theologicae sylvestriane*, XII.v.13. Turretin elsewhere states (XII.v.36) that though Moses served as mediator of the old covenant, Christ is not excluded from that office even at that time, for Moses’ mediatorship functioned as a type of Christ’s, and his work is only effectual through Christ. Thus Christ is the true peacemaker, bringing reconciliation between the Father and us by his merit.
believe in him (Exod. 23:20, 21; Deut. 18:18, 19; Psa. 2:12; Isa. 53:1, 5). Besides, says
Turretin, Paul’s argument fails if Abraham’s faith has a different object than ours inasmuch
as he is the father of all believers; and his faith is unto justification, which is not possible
except through Christ (Gal. 3:6, 7; Rom. 4:16).  

Turretin gives most attention to the fifth argument, namely that the same spiritual
promises were given in both testaments, although the promises of the old covenant often
came under “the shell and veil of temporal things.” In brief, his argument is that the
promise made to the fathers is the glad tidings about Jesus Christ (Acts 13:32), and thus
Paul’s gospel is according to those promises and does not differ from what Moses and the
prophets taught (Acts 26:22). Moreover, blessings enjoyed by New Testament believers were
already promised in the Old Testament, among others: the gift of the Holy Spirit (Gal. 3:14;
Ezek. 36:26, 27); justification and the forgiveness of sins (Gen. 15:6; Psa. 32:1; Isa. 43:25; Jer.
31:33; Acts 10:43); sanctification (Deut. 30:6; Ezek. 36:26; Psa. 51:12); and eternal life, and
this according to the federal promise (Matt. 22:31, 32), the inheritance given to Abraham and
his seed (Gal. 3:18; Heb. 9:15), the city which has foundations and the heavenly country
(Heb. 11:10), the life promised to believers (Isa. 55:3); even as this is consistent with Job’s
assurance that his Redeemer lives (Job. 19:25), David’s assurance of his own resurrection and
life (Psa. 16:10; 22:26), and Daniel’s expectation of the resurrection to eternal life (Dan. 12:1,
2).  

After responding to various objections related to this, Turretin moves on to his sixth
and seventh arguments, the latter being that “the very law of Moses . . . instructed [the
fathers] concerning the covenant of grace and prepared and stimulated them to embrace it

---

21 Turretin, Institutio theologiae eleventhae, XII.v.14. See as well Turretin’s remarks (XII.v.35) concerning “the
righteousness of faith” under the gospel economy and under the term “gospel” rather than the term “law.”

22 Turretin, Institutio theologiae eleventhae, XII.v.15.

23 Turretin, Institutio theologiae eleventhae, XII.v.15; also see Turretin’s comments (XII.v.34) regarding the
relative (versus simple) superiority of the promises is the new covenant, based upon Heb. 8:6.

24 See Turretin, Institutio theologiae eleventhae, XII.v.16-20.
(which could not have been done if the covenant of grace had not already gone into effect). Turretin appeals to Galatians 3:24 regarding the law as a “schoolmaster unto Christ” and to Romans 10:4 concerning Christ as the end of the law. He demonstrates and buttresses these points by pointing to the law’s three parts—that is, its moral, forensic, and ceremonial dimensions, for the moral law was used by God to excite and stimulate the fathers “to seek and embrace the expiation and pardon of sins in Christ” (Rom. 3:19, 20; Gal. 3:10, 19, 24); the forensic law (that is, the civil laws that governed Israel before Christ) was the seal or identity marker of the nation from which the Messiah would spring (Gen. 49:10); and the ceremonial law pointed the fathers to the evangelical covenant since “the ceremonies of the law were types and figures of Christ who was to come, adumbrating his sacrifice for sins and confirming the minds of believers concerning the enjoyment of it (Col. 2:17; Heb. 9 and 10).”

Turretin further argues for the unity of the covenant of grace by making a distinction, born of exegetical considerations. He notes how the word gospel is used and distinguished in Scripture. For the gospel, which refers to the grace of God in Christ, is used in two ways: it refers to the promise (ος ἐπαγγελία); or it refers to the gospel (ἐπαγγελία) in its fulfillment or manifestation. Thus the gospel existed in the Old Testament as promise, and so was kept secret in that respect (Rom. 16:25), while it came to full reality in the New Testament, though already present prophetically in the old covenant (Rom. 1:2). “The apostle, therefore, does not mean that the gospel was altogether unknown under the Old

25 Turretin, Institutio theologiae elencticæ, XII.v.23. “Lex ipsa Mosis, sub qua Patres fuerunt, de fideere gratie eos erudivit, et ad illud amplectendum preparavit et stimulavit, quod non potuisset fieri, nisi fœdus gratie jam locum habuisset.”

26 Turretin, Institutio theologiae elencticæ, XII.v.23. For Turretin’s comments on the law strictly considered, as standing in opposition to the gospel, see XI.xxii-xxvi; XII.v.31.
Testament, but when compared with the light of the New Testament, by which he made it more clearly known and to more persons (Eph. 3:5).\textsuperscript{27}

This means that the beginning of the gospel narrative is initiated with the ministry of John the Baptist and Jesus’ appearing (Mark 1:1), but the doctrine of the covenant of grace—of God’s gracious salvific dealings with fallen humans in Christ—is already declared by Moses and the prophets (Mark 1:2, 3). Indeed, the Law and the prophets prophesied until John (Matt. 11:13), which refers to different covenantal dispensations, not to a difference in the substance of the covenant. For the gospel was always present in the law, though not with the clarity given in the new covenant. Thus that which is administered in the old and new covenant is the same, with the modes of that administration varying—the former in the way of prophecy (προφητεία) and symbol; the latter in the way of the gospel (εὐαγγέλιον). The “thing” and the “mode of the thing” must not be confused here.\textsuperscript{28}

This is seen with respect to Christ himself, for although the pious of the Old Testament did not see Christ in the flesh, they did perceive the blessings and fruits of his mediatorial work (see 1 Pet. 1:12). Says Turretin, “the power of Christ’s death, however far distant, could exert its efficacy over them for the expiation of sins and in producing peace of conscience (as moral causes are wont to act before they are).”\textsuperscript{29} Moreover, the Old Testament fathers did not merely believe that Christ would come; they believed in him as the one to come (Acts 19:4, 5)—trusting in him as the promised Messiah and Savior, the one who alone can save sinners. “Now although Christ did not as yet exist physically as incarnate, still he existed from the beginning morally (with regard to destination and promise

\textsuperscript{27} Turretin, \textit{Institutio theologiae eleutheriae}, XII.v.24, also see XII.v.27. Cf. Ball, \textit{Treatise of the Covenant of Grace}, 27-32.

\textsuperscript{28} Turretin, \textit{Institutio theologiae eleutheriae}, XII.v.25-26.

\textsuperscript{29} Turretin, \textit{Institutio theologiae eleutheriae}, XII.v.28; also XII.v.29.
as to be incarnate).” Therefore, notes Turretin, “by the efficacy of his divinity, he could even then bestow his benefits upon believers.”

Since the Old Testament teaches and testifies of Christ (though not with the clarity of the New), making him known through promises and types, the faith of the fathers was also in him, but less enlightened and more obscure. However, “the same thing [res eadem] . . . was always known and proposed as the object of faith, but the mode [modus] was less clearly discovered before the advent of Christ than after it. . . .” Old Testament believers, therefore, exercised a faith directed to God’s promise in Christ, and this includes the way of redemption in him, for the numerous oracles and types point to this, as does the paschal lamb, in each of the two goats, and the entire Levitical system of sacrifice (Lev. 16:5ff.). Moreover, without Christ as the object of faith through the promise, the pious of the Old Testament would have to believe that the blood of bulls expiated sin, which means their faith is lower than the pagans themselves, who held to no such notion.

Turretin acknowledges that the disciples were slow to perceive the implications and meaning of Christ’s death and resurrection, but that merely points to a failure in the subject to understand correctly what God had already revealed. “Their faith, therefore, could be true as to the object, but still mixed with error,” being adversely influenced by erroneous notions concerning the kingdom of the Messiah, adhered to and propagated by many Jews (see Matt. 20:21; 16:22; cf. John 2:19; Matt. 12:39, 40; also Matt. 26:12).

---

30 Turretin, Instituti theologiae elencticae, XII.v.37.
31 Turretin, Instituti theologiae elencticae, XII.v.38. Cf. Calvin, Institutes, II.x.2, wherein the Genevan Reformer speaks of the covenant made with the patriarchs as “so much like ours in substance and reality [substantia et re] that the two are actually one and the same. Yet they differ in the mode of dispensation” (“Patriam omni foedus adeo substantia et re ipse nihil a nostro differt, ut unum prosum atque idem sit: administratio tamen variat”)—OS, III, 404. Also see his comments, Comm. Gal. 3:23. Turretin’s language stands in direct continuity with Calvin’s usage.
32 Turretin, Instituti theologiae elencticae, XII.v.39. In this section, Turretin bids the reader to consult the following passages: Psa. 22; 69; Isa. 53; 63; Dan. 9:27; Zech. 12:10.
33 Turretin, Instituti theologiae elencticae, XII.v.40-43.
It is also erroneous to assert that spiritual blessings were not included in the blessings promised in the old covenant, or that the Holy Spirit was not in some measure bestowed in that dispensation. Express mention is made of eternal life in the Old Testament (though admittedly this is not as clearly revealed as it was in the New Testament). Similarly, the gift of the Holy Spirit was already bestowed under the old covenant, but sparingly and to fewer persons, “as it were, drop by drop.” Under the new covenant, however, it is dispensed liberally, “like a river inundates the whole church” (John 7:39).  

As has become evident, Turretin labors to defend the unity of the covenant of grace because salvation is a divine project from first to last, and because salvation is in Christ alone—in both the old covenant dispensation and in the new covenant dispensation. In opposition to the contention of a variety of critics of seventeenth-century federal theology, the two covenant schema of a covenant of nature and a covenant of grace, forming a twofold relationship in God’s covenantal dealings with humankind, does not succumb to a theology of works versus a theology of grace or any sort of Pelagianizing tendencies; on the contrary, Turretin seeks to ward off the Pelagian elements he believes are present within the Socinian, Remonstrant, and Anabaptist systems of thought. He contends that the way of salvation is constant and singular in all dispensations of the covenant of grace—through Christ alone. This means, as he further contends, that Old Testament believers took hold of Christ by faith, albeit from afar, through the divine promises that were conveyed and typified in the covenant of grace under the old dispensation—including the Mosaic stipulations in their moral, civil, and ceremonial aspects. Salvation, then, was never apart from divine grace,


never according to works performed by sinners estranged from God, and therefore never apart from God’s initiative; for salvation in every dispensation is founded on and centered in Christ only. He is the one genuine Mediator in this covenant, even as he is the single head of the covenant of grace.

In short, the covenant of grace, in spite of its diverse administrations, forms an essential and irrevocable unity (unitas).  

B. The Redemptive Scope of the Covenant of Grace

Turretin takes up another controverted issue surrounding the covenant of grace when he considers the objects of this covenant, that is, those with whom God enters into a covenantal relation for their salvation. The question has to do with the focus and scope or amplitude (amplitudo) of the covenant of grace. This topic has generated a great deal of discussion in the literature surrounding seventeenth-century federalism, for it meets with much criticism by historians of doctrine and contemporary theologians who see the classic Reformed doctrine of predestination as compromising the intentions of the federal theologians themselves and finally subverting a right understanding of the covenant of grace. Turretin’s concern, however, like many federal theologians, is to safeguard the gracious character of divine salvation against any sort of Pelagianizing tendencies. This means that both the doctrine of predestination and the doctrine of the covenant must be given proper force; and since for Turretin God’s revelation forms a unity of divine truth (contrary to Beardslee’s anachronistic criticism that Turretin failed to have a critical view of

---

36 Cf. Calvin, Os, III, 403-422; Institutes, II.x.1-23, wherein we see that Turretin’s federal theology stands in clear continuity with Calvin’s project. Also see Barret, God’s Love to Man, and Man’s Duty towards God, 298-351.

37 Among others, see Heppe, Dogmatik des deutschen Protestantismus im sechzehnten Jahrhundert, I:139ff.; also see chapter 1, fn. 8, as well as the two traditions thesis as argued by Trinierud, Greaves, and J. Wayne Baker and others; cf. chapter 1, fn. 31.
Scripture), these doctrines should be related to one another and to other teachings of Scripture without compromising or diminishing any of them.\(^\text{38}\)

1. Opponents of the Particularity of the Covenant of Grace

The opponents Turretin targets here come in a diverse form, for he aims his polemical darts not only at the Remonstrants, following out the controversy at the national Synod of Dordrecht (1618-19), but he also challenges theologians identified with Moïse Amyraut (1596-1664) and the school of Saumur, opponents whom Turretin regards as “our men.” Inasmuch as the Genevan church and the Academy of Geneva was embroiled in controversy surrounding Amyraldian and Salmurian ideas, Turretin wages a polemic to defend Reformed orthodoxy against what he regarded as compromises to the good deposit of the faith. For the theologians of Saumur and their sympathizers (some of whom were Turretin’s colleagues at the Academy) evidenced, in Turretin’s view, suspect (even dangerous) tendencies of language and thought that needed to be confronted and rigorously disproved.\(^\text{39}\) Again, for Turretin, what is at stake in the controversy is the gracious nature of divine salvation or the meaning of “grace” in the covenant of grace.

In waging his polemic to defend the gracious nature of salvation, Turretin affirms that redemption, since it is a divine project, cannot meet with failure—that is, God saves those whom he intends to save and therefore the redemptive scope of the covenant of grace is particular. His opponents argue the contrary. “The patrons of universal grace,” says Turretin,

\(^\text{38}\) See Beardslee, “Theological Development at Geneva,” 517.

assert that this covenant is inclusive of all humans. "They draw an argument from the
universality of Christ's death, which they place as a foundation under the covenant of grace,"
for, states Turretin (representing their view), they believe that Christ was sacrificed for all so
that God might have "the power of contracting a new covenant with the human race." 40
This is an important topic pertaining to the evangelical covenant inasmuch as Turretin, like
all Reformed theologians of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, upholds the
Augustinian doctrine of predestination, which asserts that not all fallen human beings are the
objects of God's saving mercy, and that according to his own good pleasure in divine
election. 41

Turretin, then, is concerned to answer the Remonstrants on this matter, as well as to
demonstrate the inadequacies of the Salmurian school pertaining to this question.

Specifically, Turretin turns to the Remonstrant contention at the Synod of Dordrecht
(1618-19) concerning the merit of Christ's death and its salvific scope, which stated that the
merit of his death reconciled God the Father to the whole human race, on account of which
God was able, and in fact willed, to enter into "a new covenant of grace with sinners and
men exposed to damnation." 42 According to the Remonstrants, this new covenant is universal
in character, exclusive of no nation or individual, so that even the nations living under the
Old Testament dispensation were as much exposed to the covenant promises as Israel

40 Turretin, 

41 Federal writers were fully predestinarian, a mark of all Reformed theologians of the sixteenth and
seventeenth centuries, contra, among many others, Miller, Trinterud, Baker and the "two traditions" thesis. For
a demonstration of Bullinger's predestinarianism see Venema, Heinrich Bullinger and the Doctrine of Predestination:
Author of "the other Reformed Tradition", 35-100. Biema likewise demonstrates that Olevianus's doctrine of the
covenant did not temper or somehow ameliorate his doctrine of predestination, see German Calvinism in the
Confessional Age, 83-84. Turretin epitomizes federal theology, yet also held firmly to the doctrine of
predestination, see Topic IV. He devotes approximately an equal number of pages to the doctrine of
predestination as he gives to expositing the covenant of nature and the covenant of grace.
herself. Moreover, if the nations would meet the required conditions, they too could enjoy the blessings of the covenant.\footnote{turttem cites the *Acta Synodi Nationalis . . . Dordrechti* (1620), Pt. I, pp. 115-16, on Article 2, "Concerning the Death of Christ"; also Johannes Arnoldus Corvinus, *Defensio Sentenceae D. Iacobi Arminii . . . adversus . . . Tillem 3* (1615), p. 98; idem, *Petri Mahnai novi anatomiae* (1632), p. 440. See Turretin, *Institutio theologiae elecricae*, XII.vi.2.}

Meanwhile Turretin also sets forth the position of certain universalistic proponents, arguing that not only do the Lutherans answer with the Remonstrants on this question, some of “our men”—that is certain Reformed writers of the Salmurian school—likewise advocate a “universal grace.” He quotes Paul Testard (1599-1650) who claims that God established with “the whole human race” not only the covenant of nature, which after the flood was renewed in the Noahic covenant, but the Abrahamic covenant and the new covenant in Christ as well—these too, like the others, are universal in nature. The covenant of grace, then, has not been entirely hidden from any nation or individual. Consequently, there must needs exist three species of the divine call: the real (realem) by works, the verbal (verbaem) by the gospel, and the internal (internam) by the Spirit.\footnote{Turretin cites Testard’s *Eirenikon*, Th. 112 (1633), pp. 82-83; Th. 111, p. 82; Th. 113, pp. 83-84. See Turretin, *Institutio theologiae elecricae*, XII.vi.3. On Testard’s role in the controversies surrounding Salmurian ideas, see Brian G. Armstrong, *Calvinism and the Amyraut Heresy*, 84-99.} Turretin also offers a quotation from Moïse Amyraut to the same effect: “The degree of love and mercy by which God was induced to make such a covenant with sinners, bears upon them all equally. The consequent, therefore, is that it should be considered to have been made with all me.”\footnote{Turretin cites Amyraut’s “Thesis theologicae de tribus fœderibus divinis,” in *Syntagma thesium theologicae in academia Salmarium variis temporibus disputatorum*, 220. See Turretin, *Institutio theologiae elecricae*, XII.vi.3.}

Turretin takes care to point out that the covenant of grace can be conceived in two distinct ways—“either with regard to its promulgation or external presentation in objective grace; or with regard to its bestowal or internal reception in subjective grace.” This helps to bring clarity to the question at hand, for Turretin maintains that those who are traveling the Pelagian path (such as the Socinians and Remonstrants) view the covenant as universal in
both ways. "They assert that sufficient objective and subjective grace is given to each and all that they may be saved if they will." The Amyraldians, however (whom Turretin reckons as among the Reformed), refer the universality of the covenant to objective grace only, denying that it refers to subjective grace. As Peter Wallace aptly observes, Turretin recognizes that whereas the Arminians "insist that sufficient grace is granted to all both objectively and subjectively," the Amyraldians allow the "universality of the covenant only to objective and not to subjective grace."

2. The Particular Scope of the Essence of the Covenant of Grace

Turretin asserts that the "common" and "received opinion" among the Reformed is opposed to universalism, for the covenant is particular, at least with respect to its "internal essence" (essentia interna), being established with "the true elect members of Christ"—this in distinction from its "external dispensation" (externa dispensatio), which can include those who are non-elect. Turretin is careful to enlarge upon this distinction.

The former answers to the internal calling and the invisible church of the elect (which is constituted by it). The latter, however, answers to the external calling and the visible church of the called. In the latter respect the covenant is regarded only as to promulgation and presentation by the external call; and as to external benefits, which flow from that presentation, in the preaching of the word; the administration of the sacraments and the participation in sacred things (of which as many as in the people or in the church retain the same profession, become partakers; and thus it is extended even to many reprobates who remain in the visible church). In the former respect, it is further extended to the acception and conferring and reception of all federal benefits and internal communion with Christ by faith. In this sense, it pertains to none other than the elect, who are really partakers of the covenant according to God's intention, in whom he fulfills the very conditions of the covenant and to whom he not only offers but actually confers the benefits of the covenant. In whatever manner this covenant is regarded, they [the Reformed] deny it to be universal, not only as to acception and bestowed, but as to promulgation or presentation (which although at one time wider and more general, still never was absolutely universal, nor can be so called).

45 Turretin, Institutio theologiarum elencticarum, XII.vi.4.

46 Wallace, "Doctrine of the Covenant in the Elenctic Theology of Francis Turretin," 173. Wallace further states the following: "In other words, the Amyraldians only grant a hypothetical universalism in the atonement of Christ, but while there is a universal covenant by which their salvation is objectively accomplished, it is not subjectively applied, because the subjective covenant is particular. In opposition, Turretin states that the covenant is particular both objectively and subjectively."

47 Turretin, Institutio theologiarum elencticarum, XII.vi.5. "Illud vocationi interme, et Ecclesie invisibili Electorum, quae per eam constituitur, respondet. Hoc vero vocationi externae et Ecclesie visibili Vocatorum. Posteriori
Here Turretin sets forth a common distinction employed by seventeenth-century federal theologians. In the words of Witsius:

as we restrict this covenant to the Elect, it is evident we are speaking of the internal, mystical, and spiritual communion of the covenant. For salvation itself, and every thing belonging to it, or inseparably connected with it, are promised in this covenant, all which, none but the Elect can attain to. If, in other respects, we consider the external economy of the covenant, in the communion of the word and sacraments, in the profession of the true faith, in the participation of many gifts, which, though excellent and illustrious, are yet none of the effects of the sanctifying Spirit, nor any earnest of future happiness; it cannot be denied, that, in this respect, many are in covenant, whose names, notwithstanding, are not in the testament of God.48

As to the internal essence of the covenant—that is, its salvific outcome and communion with God—covenant theologians argued that only persons who are elect enjoy those said privileges, for unto them alone is the testamentary character of this covenant applied. These persons are the recipients of the internal call of the gospel by the Spirit's regenerating and renewing work. They do not receive merely the external blessings and privileges of the covenant but God works in them the salvific essence of the covenant, such that they receive and accept all its blessings, for they enjoy rebirth and come to faith and repentance; they trust in Christ as their Surety and have the forgiveness of their sins; they are united to Christ

48 Witsius, The Economy of the Covenants between God and Man, III.i.5—De Economia Foederum Dei cum Hominibus: “Porro quam Fedus hoc ad Elector restringimus, clarum est nos de interna, mystica, & spirituali fedenis communiione loqui. Ipsa enim salus hoc federe promittitur, & omnia que sunt εἰς τὴν ἀμφίπολιν & infallibilum cum salute nexit habent; que propter electos nemius contingunt mortalium. Alias si externa Fedenis Oeconomia spectetur, in communione verbi & Sacramentorum, in professione veræ fidei, in participatione multorum donorum, que, utur eximia ac luculenta sint, non tamen effecta sunt Sanctificantis Spiritus, neque arha secutur felicitatis; negari non potest, quin eo respectu multi federati sint, quorum tamen nomina in Testamento Dei non comarent.” Also see the Westminster Larger Catechism, Q/As 30-32, cf. Thomas Ridgley, Commentary on the Larger Catechism; Previously Entitled. A Body of Divinity, 1:449-451. For further references, see chapter 3, fn. 29. An early example of this sort of distinction can be found in Olevianus (see Bierma’s discussion in German Calvinism in the Confessional Age, 80-82, 84).
by faith and meet all the conditions of the covenant because Christ fulfills those conditions in them. The result is that Christ does not merely offer but actually confers the blessings of the covenant upon them. Thus, as to its internal essence, Turretin argues that the evangelical covenant is particular and applies to the elect alone.

However, persons who are not among the elect and yet have received the sign of the covenant of grace are counted within this covenant with respect to its external dispensation or outward administration. They, with the elect, are part of the visible church, but they are not part of the invisible church. Thus the external call of the covenant comes to them, offering them its promises and blessings. In receiving the outward sign and seal of the covenant, all of God’s promises are presented to them in the way of faith. They likewise participate in the benefits of being part of the visible church and are the recipients of the church’s ministry, both of the word and the sacraments. But the saving essence of the covenant—including rebirth, faith and repentance, union with Christ, the remission of sins, and peace and communion with God—is neither worked in them nor bestowed upon them. They receive only the outward administration of the covenant of grace. Thus, for Turretin and virtually all federal theologians of the seventeenth century, the covenant of grace may not be viewed as universal in scope, but is particular inasmuch as the saving grace of God, therein promised through Christ as Surety, is effectuated in the elect alone.49

Turretin clarifies this issue by asserting that the question concerns the “purpose and intention” of the covenant of grace, whether it is universal in scope or restrictive in its compass. (Turretin and Reformed orthodoxy affirm the latter; the opponents opt for the

49 Louis Berkhof (Systematic Theology, 4th edition [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1939, 1941], pp. 284-285) is mistaken when he argues that Turretin, along with other Reformed theologians of the seventeenth century, failed to explain how the non-elect are within the covenant of grace in some sense and consequently could become “covenant-breakers.” In fact, Turretin employs the very distinction that Berkhof claims was used by other writers. The distinction is discussed at length by Samuel Rutherford, Covenant of Life Opened, Part I, chapter XV, pp. 118-128 (also see chapter XIII); Francis Roberts, Mysterium & Medulla Bibliorum, 97-102; and John Barret, God’s Love to Man, and Man’s Duty towards God, sect. 15, pp. 352-361. The special privileges of those who belong to the covenant externally is briefly treated by Barret, see sect. 16, 362-364, as he also treats at length the particular and special benefits that apply to those who belong to the covenant internally, see sections 18, 19, pp. 451-477.
former.) The question also pertains to the call to faith itself, particularly whether the
testimony of general revelation summons persons to the covenant of grace inasmuch as the
gospel has not been proclaimed to or set before all people. (Turretin and the Reformed
orthodox deny that general revelation has this function; their opponents affirm it.) The
question focuses not so much upon Christ as savior, but whether adults must needs know
him in order to be saved. (Turretin and the Reformed orthodox maintain that such
knowledge is requisite and that no adult person is saved without a knowledge of Christ; their
adversaries deny that such knowledge is necessary). Lastly, the question is not about a kind
of general grace of God, “whether God is every day bestowing upon individuals various
blessings by which he testifies his goodness and grace to miserable sinners,” for all are
agreed that this is so; rather, the issue is whether such blessings are salvific, “flowing from
the covenant of grace and the merit of Christ, and are dispensed by God, as Father and
Redeemer, with the intention of their salvation.” (Turretin and the Reformed orthodox deny
this; their opponents affirm it.)

3. The Particularity of the Covenant of Grace Expounded and Defended

Having clarified the question, Turretin proceeds to defend and expound the
particularity of the covenant under seven headings. The first is the covenant’s destination
(destinatio). According to God’s eternal counsel and will, he never proposed to pity the whole
human race; rather, he selected and appointed persons to salvation from the common mass
of fallen humanity in Adam. Inasmuch as God’s eternal purpose does not comprise a
universal covenant, likewise no such covenant appears in time.

---

51 Turretin, *Institutio theologiae elencticæ*, XII.vi.7. Turretin treats the particular scope of Christ’s atonement
under Topic XIV.xiv.1-54; also see Witsius, *De Economia Fœderum Dei cum Hominibus*, II.ix.1-36; John Owen,
“The Death of Death in the Death of Christ,” in *The Works of John Owen* (including exposition of Hebrews), 23
“Problematum de merito Christi,” in *D. Gisberti Vœtii Selectarum Disputationum*, ed Abraham Kuyper
(Amsterdam: Joannem Adamum Wormser, 1887), 173-217; especially 191ff.
Turretin next moves to the procurement (procuratio) of the covenant, for the covenant of grace is founded on and procured by Christ’s work of satisfaction, which is particular—being made “only for those in whose place (according to the ordination of God) he was bound to substitute himself as surety.”

Turretin also expositions the particularity of the covenant on the basis of the promises stipulated within it (promissiones fidei), for the promises belong only to those to whom the promises are given.

Now they belong not to each and all, but only to the elect and believers, upon whom the blessings comprehended under those promises are conferred. For those promises are absolute, not conditional, springing from the mere grace of God, not depending on any condition in man. This not only the notion of a testament given to that covenant indicates, but also the nature of the promises, which not only concern the end, but also the means and conditions themselves (which thus exclude every condition). And although the promise of the covenant is conditionally proposed and applied to individuals, it does not follow that the promise itself depends upon man’s will and so is not absolute. That conditional promise is a consectary of an absolute promise and it is thus commanded as the duty of man that it may be produced at the same time and at once in the elect as the gift of God.

Here we see Turretin returning to the question of conditionality and emphasizing again that God fulfills the conditions stipulated in that covenant in those whom he has chosen for eternal life. The promises of the covenant are themselves absolute, not conditional, for they do not depend upon anything in the human creature. Turretin calls the conditional proposals and promises of this covenant a “consectary” (consectarium) or a logical consequence of the absolute promise of God. God then fulfills his promises in the way of such conditional proposals. But in every case, he is the agent who, in making promises entirely derived from

---

52 Turretin, Institutio theologiae elencticæ, XII.vi.8.

53 Turretin, Institutio theologiae elencticæ, XII.vi.9. “At non ad omnes et singulos, sed tantum ad electos et fideles pertinet, quibus bona promissionibus illis comprehensa conferuntur, quia promissiones istae sunt absolute, non conditionatae, quae a sola Dei gratia oriantur, non ab illa conditio quae sit in homine suspenduntur: quod non modo notio Testamenti, quae Fidei isti datur, indicat; sed et natura promissionum, quae non tantum sunt de fine, sed et de mediis ipsis et conditionibus, quae proinde omnem conditionem excludunt. Licet vero promissio fidei singularibus personis conditionate proponatur et appelleatur, non sequatur ipsam promissionem pendere a voluntate hominis, adeoque absolutam non esse; quia propositio illa conditionata est consectarium promissionis absolutae; et ita imperatur tanquam officium hominis, ut producantur simul et semel in electis ut Dei donum.”
and according to his grace, fulfills his promises in the elect, for he realizes not only the end but also the means and conditions of his promises; indeed, he fulfills the means and conditions in his elect in order likewise to fulfill the end—namely their salvation. In fact, this covenant cannot be conceived as universal in scope precisely because the promises contained within it are not conditional in a way that renders their outcome dependent upon humans. Salvation is wholly a divine work. If God had designed to save all people, then the amplitude of the covenant of grace would have been universal in extent. However, what is decisive for Turretin and for all the Reformed orthodox in the seventeenth century is that salvation, as God’s enterprise, means that those who are saved, in keeping with the promises of the covenant of grace, come under the parameters of his redemptive plan or purpose. They are saved by Christ’s work alone, for “he merited not only salvation and glory for them, but also the grace of the Spirit, regeneration and faith,”⁵⁴ that is, he works and perfects in them the graces of faith and rebirth according to the conditions of the covenant.

A question emerges here, however, that has caused a great deal of confusion within the contemporary literature surrounding the federal conception of the covenant of grace—namely the state of those who are reprobated of God (the non-elect) and yet receive the sign of God’s promise in the covenant of grace. Here Turretin briefly addresses the relationship between the evangelical covenant and divine predestination. First he acknowledges that a distinction can be made between the covenant of grace viewed as “absolute upon the performance of the condition” and as “conditional.” It is to be taken for granted, he says, that God entered into a covenant relationship with a class of persons from whom he demands a fulfillment of the covenant’s conditions but unto whom he does not confer the fulfillment of those conditions in and for them. In other words, in receiving the sign of the covenant and being brought under its stipulations, God calls them to faith and repentance but does not work that grace in them. But Turretin is quick to point out that to speak in this

⁵⁴ Turretin, Institutio theologica elenctica, XII.vi.8.
way is repugnant to the covenant of grace, which is altogether unlike the covenant of nature in this respect: whereas the legal covenant promises life upon a condition which it exacts from man but does not effectuate in him, the evangelical covenant promises salvation and life upon condition of faith which it both demands from fallen human beings and works in them. Turrettin argues that Jeremiah 31:31-33 confirms this, for forgiveness and the writing of the law upon the heart, which is nothing less than regeneration, are blessings of the new covenant. Thus Turrettin is most concerned to speak properly of the conditionality of the evangelical covenant:

Now although it may be called conditional in a certain sense (inasmuch as it has a condition subordinated to it, although to be absolutely fulfilled by God, by whose intervention the thing promised is granted), still it is properly absolute, both a priori (because it has no cause except the perfectly free will of God) and a posteriori (because God determined to give to all the elect [fidelibus] certainly and infallibly the condition itself without another condition).

Then Turrettin draws the lines between divine election and the covenant of grace clearly and distinctly:

No one (except absurdly) will say that this can be extended to those whom God hated from eternity and decreed to pass by (by granting them neither his word nor faith, the two means of salvation).\(^{55}\)

Because of the testamentary character of the covenant of grace, God fulfills the covenant in those whom he has chosen from eternity to be united to Christ and share in all the benefits of his redemptive program. Federal theologians of the seventeenth century, Turrettin included, in adhering to an Augustinian doctrine of predestination, recognized that the guarantee or internal seal promised in the covenant would meet fulfillment only in those whom God had eternally decreed to participate in Christ, for salvation is a divine work from first to last. If God actually promised to the reprobate the internal essence or essential

\(^{55}\) Turrettin, \textit{Institutio theologica selenctica}, XII.vi.10. "Quamvis vero conditionatum dici possit quodam sensu, quatenus conditionem habet sibi subordinatam, esti a Deo absolute efficiendam, cuius interventu res promissa detur, absolutum tamen proprie est, tum a priori, quia nullem causam habet prater liberamation Dei voluntatem, tum a posteriori, quia a Deo constitutum est ipsum conditionem sine alia conditione certo et infallibiliter omnibus fidelibus dare; quod ad eos extendi posse, quos Deus ab æterno odit, et quos præterire decrevit, nec Verbum nec Fidem, quæ duo sunt salutis media, indulgendo, nemo nisi absurde dixerit."
blessing of the covenant—namely peace and communion with God through Christ—then either he would need to fulfill this promise in them, in which case the reprobate are not reprobate (which is an absurdity), or since they are reprobate he would need to deny to them what is promised, in which case God is unfaithful to his own promises or incapable of saving those whom he promises to save (which is also an absurdity, not to mention a blasphemous idea).

Consequently, in addressing this issue, the testamentary character of the covenant holds sway. Although the covenant of grace, like all covenants, has two sides, with mutual obligation, this manner of speaking is not meant to imply an equality among the parties, as in human covenants. This is only to say that although seventeenth-century covenant theologians used terms like “contract” or “pact” or “agreement,” this (merely) represents an effort to remain close to the root and cognate meanings of the biblical terms. In addition, such terms enable them to set forth biblical obligations and exhortations as covenantal demands. This is in keeping with the nature of God’s law, which remains stable or constant in its demands in both the covenant of nature and the covenant of grace, and so for all eternity. God’s nature requires that the creatures who are created in his image relate to him according to the dictates of his law. God does not deny his nature in dealing with human beings. On the contrary, he requires them to live before him uprightly and obediently. Since humans departed from this obligation in the covenant of nature, coming under the sanction of death and accursedness, the remedy provided by God in the covenant of grace is through Christ as Surety, as the one who fulfills the requirements of divine law, including suffering the threatened sanction of accursedness and death, in order to rescue others and welcome them back into fellowship with God.

For Turretin, the question is basic and uncomplicated: either Christ did this for all persons, and so all persons will be saved (which Scripture contradicts and simple observation confirms), or Christ did this for those whom the Scriptures calls God’s chosen or the elect.
Thus the covenant of grace is particular in focus, for Christ truly saves those whom he intends to save, according to the testamentary nature of his sacrificial work and the covenant of grace.

The fourth defense that Turrein offers in support of the particularity of the covenant of grace is what he calls its “promulgation” (promulgatio)—“if the covenant of grace were universal, then its promulgation would also have to be universal, or else God would fail in his purposes.” But, in fact, that has never happened, for it has never been universally published or broadcast to all people. Instead, multitudes are without any knowledge of it and remain so; and inasmuch as the covenant of grace has not been revealed to all people—with entire nations having no comprehension of it—its dissemination is shown to be particular, not universal.

The fifth argument for the non-universal character of the evangelical covenant is that no one is saved without some knowledge of Christ (cognitio Christi), for faith must have an object, and there is no faith in Christ except the word is preached and heard (see Rom. 10:17). With respect to adults, “Christ does not save except as known and apprehended by faith” (Turrein cites Isa. 53:11; John 6:29, 40; 17:3). If however knowledge of Christ is unnecessary for salvation, then the gospel is superfluous. Moreover, “since multitudes still at this day are without it, it cannot be said that they were included in the covenant of grace, which is founded upon Christ.”

---

57 Turrein, *Institutio theologiae elencicae*, XII.vi.11. Turrein treats Hos. 1:9; Rom. 9:25; Eph. 2:12; Psa. 147:19, 20; Acts 14:16; Rom. 10:14. He further treats objections from Psa. 147:19, 20 and Eph. 2:12, replying in connection with the former text that the revelation of God in nature is of a different species than special revelation, for although it testifies to God as creator, it cannot lead people to him as redeemer. As for his reply in connection with the latter text, Turrein says among other things that inasmuch as the gospel has never been preached to scores of persons and peoples, the covenant of grace does not apply to them. In fact, if God seriously intended their salvation, he would have made the gospel known to them. See *Institutio theologiae elencicae*, XII.vi.12-14.
58 Turrein, *Institutio theologiae elencicae*, XII.vi.15.
Turretin further explores and defends the restrictive scope of the covenant by considering, sixthly, the signification of the sealing of the covenant (obsignatio faderi). Since the sealing of the covenant of grace is particular, both externally (by means of the sacraments which belong to the church alone) and internally (by the Spirit who is given only to the members of Christ) (Eph. 1:13), a universal conception of the covenant is excluded. What is more, strictly and properly speaking, the covenant of grace applies or is sealed for the salvation of the elect alone. For some within the church are called, wherein the offer of the seal of the covenant is set forth and signified but the real application or sealing of the covenant is for the elect alone, that is, for believers. Says Turretin, “So far is the covenant from being sealed for salvation unto unbelievers that on the contrary their own condemnation is sealed because they pronounce judgment upon themselves.”

The seventh and final defense Turretin offers concerning the covenant’s particularity focuses upon the absurdity of confounding nature with grace (Ab absurdo, quia confunditur natura cum gratia). As Wallace observes, Amyraut, for his part,

found himself returning to a natural theology, affirming the natural ability but moral inability of man to respond to God's general revelation. Turretin pounces on this, contending that the assertion of a universal call to the covenant of grace confounds nature and grace, all for the sake of a universal objective grace which is subjectively impotent.

As Turretin already argued, general revelation is insufficient to lead fallen persons to God as redeemer. He reinforces that argument by contending that nature (or the created order) does not set forth a universal call or invitation to the covenant of grace. Those who maintain that it does, Turretin avers, confound nature (Naturam) with grace (Gratia), knowledge (τὸ γνωστὸν) with faith (τὸ πιστῶ), which means “we must ascribe to the voice of

---

59 Turretin, Institutio theologiae elenctica, XII.vi.16.

nature and of creatures, the preaching of the divine mercy manifested in Christ alone by the Scriptures.\textsuperscript{61}

The futility and problems of this line of thought earns Turretin’s complete denunciation.

And since universal objective grace is vain and illusory without subjective grace, we must either say that sufficient strength is restored to each and all, by which they can (if they will) obey God and be received into the covenant (which is nothing else than to sacrifice to the idol of free will and wholly to abolish discriminating grace, against Paul; as if something is or can be in us which is our own [according to Pelagius] and does not proceed from the unmerited grace of God, 1 Cor. 4:7; or that God intends something under an impossible condition which neither man can have of himself, nor does God, who alone can, will to bestow upon him).\textsuperscript{62}

We see, then, that Turretin responds to the Amyraldian scheme not only by affirming the particularity of the evangelical covenant but by demonstrating that, inasmuch as there a single covenant of grace, it must be singular in its intention and promulgation. It is repugnant to the nature of the covenant of grace that it be conditional, for this is nothing other than an reintroduction of the covenant of works, whereby God promises life and salvation on the basis of a condition.\textsuperscript{63} Given human depravity and man’s moral impotence, no one can fulfill the condition on his own. In fact, this condition doesn’t depend on man; rather, it depends on God to give what man cannot do. Thus he “determined to give to all the elect certainly and infallibly the condition itself without another condition.”\textsuperscript{64} We also see that Turretin refuses the Pelagian highway. There is nothing in humans from creation that can serve to bring them to Christ or the way of salvation. The creation itself, and their own increated capacities, are hopelessly compromised by the fall; and because of human depravity

\textsuperscript{61} Turretin, \textit{Institutio theologiae elencticar}, XII.vi.17.

\textsuperscript{62} Turretin, \textit{Institutio theologiae elencticar}, XII.vi.17. “Et cum vana sit et illusoria Gratia universalis objectiva sine subjectiva; Vel dicendum est vires sufficientes omnibus et singulis restitui, per quas possint, si velint, Deo obsequi, et in fideus cooptari, quod nihil aliud est, quam liberi arbitrii idolo lirate, et gratiam discriminantem, contra Paulum, penitus abolere, quasi aliquid sit vel esse possit in nobis, quod sit ex nobis, juxta Pelagium, et non ex indebita Dei gratia, 1 Cor. iv. 7; Vel Deum aliquid intenderet sub condizione impossibili, quam nec homo habere ex se potest, nec Deus illi vult iurgiri, qui solus potest.”


\textsuperscript{64} Turretin, \textit{Institutio theologiae elencticar}, XII.vi.10.
people cannot obey God if they will, for their depravity infects their will and what they desire. Salvation is a divine project, completely and altogether. Besides, the created order (or nature), while offering an irrefutable witness to God’s majesty and presence (so much so as to leave persons without excuse in failing to acknowledge God), does not testify of the way of redemption in Jesus Christ.

4. Scriptural Proof of the Particularity of the Covenant of Grace

In moving on to the “sources of explanation” for answering this question, Turretin musters his arsenal of biblical arguments in support of the particularity of the covenant. The first gospel promise, in Genesis 3:15, is not universal but particular in scope, for the seed of the woman is set in opposition to and is distinct from the seed of the serpent. The woman’s seed refers to Christ and those “who are Christ’s” (Heb. 2:14, 15)—that is, “to the seed taken individually and antonomastically, to whom this primarily belongs; secondarily, to the seed taken collectively for his mystical body or believers. . . .” Moreover, throughout the New Testament believers, excluding unbelievers, are understood as the woman’s seed (Turretin references Rom. 16:20; 1 John 2:14; 5:4, 18; 2 Cor. 2:14; Heb. 2:14, 15; Rev. 12:11). The seed of the serpent are called, at least morally and figuratively, children of the evil one (Turretin cites John 8:44; 1 John 3:8; Acts 13:10; Matt. 3:7). Inasmuch as an abiding enmity exists between these opposing seeds, the one cannot be inclusive of the other. What is more, Christ works faith in those whom he saves in order to conquer the devil.\(^6^5\)

Turretin next turns to Genesis 6:18, and the covenant God established with Noah and the rest of the human race, and all breathing creatures in the preservation of the world from a flood. Although this covenant is universal in scope, it does not follow that the covenant of grace is of the same extent, for the working of salvation in Noah and his line is finally limited.

\(^6^5\) Turretin, *Institutio theologiae elencticæ*, XII.vi.18-19.
to Shem, with whom Japheth’s posterity was to be associated (Gen. 9:26). John 1:9 likewise cannot rightly be construed as supporting universalism.\(^{66}\)

For Turretin, the definite nature of Christ’s atonement has clear implications pertaining to this question as well, for matters must be considered or treated in their proper relation. Thus, some things may only be affirmed provided some condition is present, otherwise its affirmation must be denied.

For example, it can indeed be affirmed that the pagans are commanded and bound to believe the gospel, if it were announced to them; but it is not true that they are commanded and bound to believe the gospel, although not announced to them. It can indeed be affirmed that Christ died for them, if the gospel should be announced to them and if on hearing the gospel they would repent and believe, because then they would belong to the elect and the covenanted. But it cannot be affirmed (nor is it true) that Christ died for them, even if they do not believe and repent, or hear the gospel; for then the argument is drawn from the conditional to the absolute.\(^{67}\)

Turretin here demonstrates that the covenant of grace is not universal since not all repent and believe the gospel; moreover, the gospel has not been propagated to all.\(^{68}\) But more to the point, it is a mistake to affirm the universal character of the evangelical covenant based upon the conditional nature of the gospel’s appeal (“if you believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, you will be saved”). For the condition does not establish the absolute. Only if the condition is fulfilled can one draw the conclusion that its antecedent applied to them, which when applied to this question means that inasmuch as particular persons repent and believe, they may say that Christ died for them. But if they refuse to repent or believe, they may not affirm that the covenant of grace is established with them, at least not in its essential salvific reality.

---


\(^{67}\) Turretin, *Institutio theologiae elencticae*, XII.vi.22. “v. g. Posset quidem affirmari, Paganos juberi et teneri credere Evangelio, si illis annunciatur; sed verum non est illos juberi et teneri credere Evangelio, etsi non annuncietur ipsis. Posset quidem affirmari Christum pro illis esse mortuum, si ipsis annunciatur Evangelium, et si audito Evangelio respiscerent et crederent, quia tunc pertinere ad electos et frateratos. Sed non posset affirmari, nec verum est, Christum pro illis esse mortuum, etsi nec credant nec respiscant, nec quicum audiant de Evangelio, quia tunc ducitur argumentum a conditionato ad absolutum.”

\(^{68}\) Cf. Calvin, *Institutes*, III.xxi.1; Os, IV, 368-370.
Turretin also argues that an expression of God's goodness or patience to pagans, a
type of general grace of God, does not imply that "the mercy and placability of God were
revealed to them." Without Christ and his atoning work no such notion can be sustained.
What is more, the covenant of grace is not merely about the revelation of God's placability
or appeasement but of actual "reconciliation" and friendship with God (καταλλαγὴς), which
is to say that it is of little use to know that God can be placated unless we also know that he
has been placated.69 To be sure, varied "temporal blessings" testify to God's existence and
 providential beneficence (Acts 14:17), but these do not yield knowledge of God's saving
 grace in Christ in keeping with the promises of the covenant of grace. As Turretin observes:
"Now it is one thing to testify his beneficence and forbearance (anochet) towards men by the
giving of bodily goods or by a suspension and delay of merited punishment (arising from the
goodness and wisdom of God, the Creator and governor, in the order of nature); another to
show his mercy in the remission of sins and the communication of spiritual and eternal
goods (which cannot be done without Christ)."70 Turretin appeals to Calvin's exposition of
Acts 14:17 as a confirmation of his own view, namely that the testimony of nature is
insufficient to lead sinners to salvation.71 Turretin also considers Acts 17:26, 27,
demonstrating that although this passage intimates that God is clearly manifest in the works

69 Turretin, Institutio theologicae elencticæ, XII vi 23. See Wallace's remarks ("The Doctrine of the Covenant
in the Elenctic Theology of Francis Turretin," 174-175): "The first option is impossible, because God's
common grace (what Turretin calls "various testimonies of his goodness and patience to the pagans") does not
reveal his mercy—only the satisfaction of Christ can do that. But even if it did point to God's placability, it
would still be insufficient for salvation, because it is not enough to know that God is willing to be reconciled to
us, we must also know that he is (or at least will be) reconciled to us [XII.vi.23]. Hence we are left with the
second option—that God intends something which he has no intention of accomplishing—which is a patent
absurdity."

70 Turretin, Institutio theologicae elencticæ, XII vi.24. "Alìud vero est beneficiam suam ut deoχή testari erga
boniores per bonorum corporalium commissione, vel per panarum debitorum suspensionem et dilatationem; quod oritur ex bonitate et
sapientia Dei Creatoris et Gubernatoris in ordine nature; Alìud misericordiam elicit in remissionem peccatorum et bonorum
spiritualium et externorum communicationum, quod sine Christo fieri nequit."

71 See Calvin's commentary on Acts 14:17 in Commentarii in Acta Apostolorum (Amstelodami: Joannem
Jacobi Schipper, 1667), 130. Also see Formula Consensus Helvetica, canons XVIII, XX.
of creation and providence and that those who seek him may find him, it does not teach that God thereby intends to effectually or "savingly" call sinners to himself by this testimony.72

While it is true that "where sin abounded, grace abounded more" (Rom. 5:20), that does not mean that the covenant of grace must extend as widely as the covenant of nature, for the comparison is that of "intensity and efficacy." For the salvation of one person is greater than the loss of thousand. And while it is also true that Adam represented all persons in the covenant of nature, bringing all into ruin by his fall, again that does not mean that the covenant of grace must extend to every person for their restitution. The seed of the woman is clearly distinct from and more limited in scope than the common ruin in which persons find themselves in Adam.73

What is more, the promises of the covenant of grace simply have not been promulgated to all, as is plain already in the Old Testament (Turretin cites Deut. 7:7, 8; Psa. 147:19, 20; Acts 14:16; 17:30). The same is true in the New Testament, for many nations have not had the privilege (even to this day) to hear the gospel. It is clear from Scripture that the "the promises are only relatively and limitedly universal from the twofold manner of the divine dispensation; the one external as to obligation (which is extended indiscriminately to classes of individuals, although not to individuals of classes); the other internal (as to application and fruit) with respect to all and each believer, without distinction of nation, sex or age and condition."74 Thus, the texts that seem to teach an unrestrained universalism actually have restrictions placed on them. Universalism can refer to believers from both Jews and Gentiles (not including unbelievers) (Rom. 3:22, 23; 10:12; Acts 10:43; 13:43; John 3:16); or it can refer to promises that are only received by faith (a

72 Turretin, Institutio theologiae elencticae, XII.vi.25-26. In further arguing this point, Turretin touches on Heb. 11:6; Rom. 10:17; Acts 17:30; Col. 1:13; and refers to his treatment of Rom. 1:19, 20; 2:4 under Topic IV, Question 17.

73 Turretin, Institutio theologiae elencticae, XII.vi.27-28.

74 Turretin, Institutio theologiae elencticae, XII.vi.29.
divine gift not bestowed to all) (Gal. 3:14; Rom. 4:13). For not all persons have faith; only the elect are given this gift (2 Thess. 3:2; Tit. 1:1, 2). What might first appear universal in scope is reserved for "the children of promise" (Rom. 9:6, 7). If God intended the salvation of all people, all would infallibly be saved. But inasmuch as he did not elect all from eternity, and inasmuch as he does not bestow in time the gift of the gospel and of faith (the very gifts requisite for receiving the blessing of salvation), it is evident that the promise is not universally extended.\footnote{75 Turretin, \textit{Institutio theologicae elencticæ}, XII.vi.29-30.}

This does not mean, however, that the certainty of salvation is threatened or in some way compromised, for the federal promises, though not absolutely universal in scope and given to all, are universal with respect to believers. Here Turretin appeals to a practical syllogism as contributing to that consolation believers may know, "whose major is founded on Scripture and minor is built upon the testimony of the believer's heart." The practical syllogism (\textit{syllogismus practicus}) as explained by Muller "states the logic of assurance in terms, first, of the scriptural promise, and, second, of the inward, spiritual fruits of the application of Christ's work by the Holy Spirit." Or stated differently, "the major [premise] must be read in Scripture, the external Word (\textit{Verbum externum})," and "the minor" premise must be read in the heart, "the internal Word (\textit{Verbum internum})."\footnote{76 Muller, \textit{Dictionary of Latin and Greek Theological Terms}, 293.} Turretin follows this logical construction exactly, and states it this way: (1) \textit{the Major}: "the gospel promises pertain to each and all believers"; (2) \textit{the Minor}: "now I believe;" (3) \textit{Conclusion}: "therefore they pertain to me."\footnote{77 Turretin, \textit{Institutio theologicae elencticæ}, XII.vi.31. "Promissiones Evangelii ad omnes et singulos credentes pertinent; At ego credo; Ergo ad me etiam pertinent." Turretin speaks of the \textit{syllogismus practicus} in connection with the doctrine of election as well, where (\textit{Institutio theologicae elencticæ}, IV.xiii.4) he speaks of it as follows: "Whoever truly believes and repents is elect; now I believe, etc., therefore I am elect" ("Quisquis vere credit et resipiscit electus est; Acqui ego credo, &c. Ergo electus sum"). Also see Witsius, \textit{De Economia Foderum Dei cum Hominibus}, III.iv.28. Calvin also comes to something close to the \textit{syllogismus practicus} (see \textit{Institutes of the Christian Religion}, III.i.38; III.xiv.18-20; III.xv.8; III.xxv.4-5); as does the Heidelberg Catechism, Q/A 86—"and we do good so that we may be assured of our faith by its fruits. . .; also see Canons of Dordrecht, Head V, art. 10. The Belgic Confession, art. 24, pulls in the opposition direction relative to the believer's assurance of salvation. Joel R. Beeke takes up at length the question of assurance in Calvin and his heirs in \textit{The Quest for Full Assurance}:}
addition to his argument drawn from the practical syllogism, Turretin points out that consolation or assurance is not actually strengthened in the universalistic schema; rather, it is weakened, for if the promises apply to believers and unbelievers alike, indiscriminately, that is, to those being saved and to those being damned, all assurance of salvation is undermined. "For what foundation of consolation can be in that which is common to those who will be saved and to those who will be lost?"

Turretin also appeals to Calvin at this juncture, particularly the Reformer's denial that God willed all men to be saved. Calvin makes the simple point that inasmuch as God has not revealed the gospel to all people (the very thing without which one cannot be saved), it is evident that he does not intend, according to his eternal purpose, to save all persons. He has not illumined all hearts with his Spirit, but has bestowed that gift to a few.

It should be observed that Turretin's vigorous denial of the universality of the covenant of grace, along with his rigorous polemic to defend its particular scope, is born of a desire to safeguard the efficacious nature of the covenant of grace, which is simultaneously a desire to uphold its testamentary and gratuitous character. In other words, Turretin is jealous to show that God doesn't fail in his salvific purpose, that he doesn't intend or try to save certain persons whom he fails to save—as if they are unsavable, somehow beyond his reach. If that were true, the believer's confidence in his or her own salvation would be undermined, for the inescapable implication would be that any person who is an object of God's mercy...

---


and saving intention might prove to be unsavable, or, in being saved, subsequently fall away; and in that way and to that degree sin would prove to be greater than God’s grace. Moreover, in that way and to that degree the covenant of grace would be thwarted in its purpose and so would fail, at least partially, in its intention. Such a notion cuts against the grain of the covenant as a divine testament, even as it emasculates Christ’s suretyship. In fact, federal theologians of the seventeenth century, like their Reformed predecessors of the sixteenth century, were resolute (believing the gospel itself to be at stake in this matter) in affirming that no class of persons and no individual person is beyond the reach of God’s ability to save them, but certain persons may well be outside the scope of God’s purpose to save them, something altogether inscrutable to us.

Turrettin’s discussion of the syllogismus practicus further demonstrates his concern to protect the believer’s assurance of salvation or to fortify the believer in the certainty of his or her election. Like Calvin and other Reformed theologians, he points believers to the

---

80 Directly related to this idea is the permanency of the covenant of grace. See Cocceius, Summa doctrinae de foedere et testamento Dei, §§245-265; van Mastricht, Theoretico-practica theologia, V.i.24 (iv); also see Heppe, Reformed Dogmatics, 388-389, as well as Francis Roberts, Mysterium & Medallia Biblicorum, 139-158; Sedgwick, Bowels of Tender Mercy Sealed in the Everlasting Covenant, 138-148; Patrick Gillespie, Ark of the Testament Opened, part II, 88-116.

81 Predestination is typically discussed in Reformed dogmatics, with a distinct treatment of both election and reprobation. See Turrettin, Topic IV, especially questions 11, 14, 17; also Cocceius, Summa Theologiae, XIV, XXXVII-XXXIX; and the discussion of Cocceius’ treatment of this topic by van Asselt, The Federal Theory of Johannes Cocceius, 197-226; Witsius, De Economia Foederum Dei cum Hominiibus, III.iv.1-30; van Mastricht, Theoretico-practica theologia, III.i-iv, especially chapter 4 on reprobation; Peter Martyr Vermigli, Loca communia D. Petri Martyris Vermilii . . . ex variis ipsius autors scriptis, in unum librum collecti & in quatuor Classes distributi, editio secunda (London: Thomas Vautrolleris, 1583), 443-476; Musculus, Common Places of Christian Religion, 501-517; Zanchius, H. Zanchius: His Confession of Christian Religion, chapter III, 14-18, Polorus, Substance of Christian Religion, Bk. I, 16-17; Trelcaitus, Scholastica et methodica locorum communium s. theologiae instituti, Bk. II, 31-38; Bucanus, Body of Divinity, or, Institutions of Christian Religion, 445-472; Ames, Medulla ss. Theologiae, Bk. I, chapter 25; John Downname, Summae of Sacred Divinity (London, 1628), 285-307; Wollebius, Compendium theologiae christianae, Bk. I, chapter 4; Leigh, Systems or Body of Divinity, 268-279; Rijssenius, Summa theologicae electus, chapter VI. Heppe, Reformed Dogmatics, 150-189. Also see Calvin, Institutes, III.xxxi.5, 7; III.xxxi.2. As noted above, for Calvin, the doctrine of election can be inferred from the historical fact that “the covenant of life” is not preached and propagated to all people; and where it is preached it meets with the diverse response of acceptance or rejection according to God’s eternal decision (III.xxxi.1). See Wendel, Calvin: Origins and Development of His Religious Thought, 263-284; and Fred H. Klooster, Calvin’s Doctrine of Predestination, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1977). Cf. The Scots Confession (1560), art. 8; Second Helvetic Confession (1566), chapter 10, [1], [2]; Westminster Confession of Faith (1647), chapter 3, 3-8. Among later writers see Pictet, Christian Theology, 202-218; Ridgley, Commentary on the Larger Catechism; Previously Entitled A Body of Divinity, I:254-321; John Brown, Systematic Theology of John Brown of Haddington, 147-170. Also cf. Rohls, Reformed Confessions, 148-166; von Rohr, Covenant of Grace in Puritan Thought, 113-153.
promises of the gospel in Christ. The major premise of the syllogism is what God has revealed in his word—the promises of the covenant of grace, with Christ as the believer’s Surety, and union with Christ forming the heart of the doctrine of salvation. The minor premise is not so much an examination of perfection, or evidence of an ever-victorious faith over every sin and temptation; rather, it is an examination of the presence of faith itself, of repentance and change of heart. That this syllogism was open to abuse, and could be used actually to undercut rather than underscore one’s assurance, is continually disputed. The Belgic Confession, for example, pulls the believer in a different direction when it states that the believer’s assurance is not necessarily supported by his or her fruits of faith.

Although we do good works we do not base our salvation on them; for we cannot do any work that is not defiled by our flesh and also worthy of punishment. And even if we could point to one, memory of a single sin is enough for God to reject that work. So we would always be in doubt, tossed back and forth without any certainty, and our poor consciences would be tormented constantly if they did not rest on the merit of the suffering and death of our Savior.82

It should be observed, however, that it is possible to construe the syllogismus practicus as arguing for something as modest as what is depicted in the Belgic Confession. For this confession rests the believer’s assurance in the way of faith, which rests “on the merit and suffering and death of our Savior.” That is simply the exercise of faith, the manifestation of its presence which the syllogism asserts in its minor premise. Nonetheless, the syllogismus practicus focuses the question, at least at a certain stage, upon the believer’s subjective convictions about the sincerity of his or her faith. The goal, in any case, is that believers would find assurance by resting on God’s promises, centered in Christ as the Guarrantor of the evangelical covenant.

82 Belgic Confession, art. 24, quoted from Creeds and Confessions of Faith in the Christian Tradition, II, 417. The Second Helvetic Confession (chapter 10, [7.]) reminds believers to look for their election in Christ in responding to the call of the gospel: “For the preaching of the gospel is to be heard, and it is to be believed; and it is to be held as beyond doubt that if you believe and are in Christ, you are elected.”
C. The Diversity (or Twofold Economy) of the Covenant of Grace

Having established the “substantial unity” of the evangelical covenant, Turretin proceeds to address the question of its “economical diversity.” While it is common to speak of the diversity of God’s wisdom depicted in the works of nature, the divine wisdom, according to Turretin, is more clearly set forth in the works of grace, especially in the “varied dispensations” of the covenant of grace. Like various “faces,” the mystery of Christ is first proposed “somewhat obscurely” in the “promise” of the Old Testament economy, then “more clearly” in the “fulfillment” of the New Testament economy (see Heb. 1:2).83

The opponents Turretin confronts under this question (“Why did God will to dispense the single covenant of grace in different ways?”) are chiefly Remonstrants or Arminians. In this question Turretin explores the number of ways in which the covenant of grace was dispensed and what was its economy. As the Remonstrants addressed this question, they were influenced by Arminius’ own work in this regard. For the legacy left by Arminius was his attempt to explain the unfolding revelation of God and the idea of the covenant by means of a threefold covenantal scheme: the covenants of “Lex, Promissio, et Evangelion.”84

Turretin aims his darts of criticism against this scheme, as he later also aims his darts against the threefold covenant scheme of Amyraut.

After addressing the question why God decided to act in the way of a “twofold economy” within the evangelical covenant, that is, the Old Testament and the New Testament (stating that that query finds its answer in “the sole will of God,” which is “abundantly sufficient to bridle curiosity”), Turretin proceeds to treat in turn each

---


dispensation or administration, dealing at length with the "old dispensation" and then briefly with the "new dispensation."\textsuperscript{85}

1. The Old Dispensation—or The Old Testament

Turretin states that the Old Testament extends from Adam to Christ, while the New Testament stretches from Christ to the end of the world. These distinct dispensations of the covenant of grace are discerned in this: that which pertains to the Old Testament is everything and whatever was "typical," connoting imperfection, and testifying that the ransom [λύτρον] was yet to be paid. Meanwhile, what belongs singularly to the New Testament is everything and whatever indicates "redemption actually purchased by Christ."\textsuperscript{86}

Turretin is aware that some among the Reformed sought to divide the covenant of grace into a threefold division, so that not only was there the two parts known as the Old Testament and the New Testament, but within the Old Testament there was two distinct periods: (1) the period of promise before the law, that is, the period from the promise in paradise to Moses; and then (2) the period under the law, from Moses to Christ (here the Old Testament actually begins); with the New Testament era commencing in the advent of Christ, that is, (3) the period under the gospel.\textsuperscript{87}

\textsuperscript{85} Turretin, \textit{Institutio theologicae elencticae}, XII.vii.2. Although Turretin judges this to be a sufficient answer, he doesn't resist offering a more complex reply, stating that God dispensed the covenant of grace in diverse ways because (1) his mode of acting demanded it, for God's glory is revealed in achieving great things by various steps, successively; (2) the condition of the church demanded it, moving as it does from a stage of infancy to maturity, so that God first lips to his people in the measure of his revelation, and then there is a gradual progression to a fuller revelation; (3) the dignity of the Messiah and the excellence of the work he performed was better suited to this scheme, wherein humans were convicted of their need for and came to desire such a gracious Savior; (4) the nature of the things involved fit with this diversity as well, for it had to do with prophecies that were future and later were fulfilled—thus, at first, matters are set forth more obscurely; subsequently, in the time of fulfillment, they are presented with greater clarity. See Turretin, \textit{Institutio theologicae elencticae}, XII.vii.2-5.

\textsuperscript{86} Turretin, \textit{Institutio theologicae elencticae}, XII.vii.7. "Quicquid in dispensatione istius fideis typicum fuit et connotans imperfectionem, et confessionem nondum solutœ λύτρου, id ad Vet. Test. pertinet. Quicquid redemptionem actu praestatam per Christum, id Novo Test. proprium est."

\textsuperscript{87} Turretin, \textit{Institutio theologiae elencticae}, XII.vii.7. Witsius, \textit{De Economia Foederum Dei cum Hominibus}, III.iii.20-31, discusses this at length, as do other federal theologians.
Turretin opts for the common twofold division, however, and the traditional labels Old and New Testaments. His argument is from scripture, for the promise of paradise is not reserved or restricted to the period prior to the giving of the law; rather, that promise, along with other promises, stretch forward throughout the period “under the law”—even until Christ. What is more, that which is called the “Old Testament” may not be confined to the “Mosaic economy,” but comprehends the entire dispensation prior to the coming of Christ—that is, from the human fall in paradise to Christ’s advent (2 Cor. 3:14). This is confirmed by Scripture in numerous ways. Hebrews 9:15, for example, speaks of Christ’s redemptive work satisfying for the transgressions under the first testament. And Hebrews 8:13 speaks of those things that have become outdated in view of Christ’s appearing, including rites and ceremonies of the old economy that predate the Mosaic legislation.  

This is not to deny, however, that there is genuine development and progress in the Old Testament. Although the same religion prevailed both before and after the law of Moses, various enrichments and renewals were added to promises and demands already given, issuing improvements in the manner of serving God. Thus in the time of Abraham there is a more explicit federal relation displayed, while a more explicit testamentary disposition is set forth in the time of Moses. But this doesn’t mean that the Old Testament didn’t commence until Moses and the law. On the contrary, all of this illustrates that “the progress of the revelation of the covenant of grace may be marked and the infancy and rudiments of that economy (which were before the law) may be distinguished from its more perfect constitution.”

---


89 Turretin, *Institutio theologica elenctica*, XII.vii.10. Cf. Witsius, *De Oeconomia Foederum Dei cum Hominibus*, IV.iv.47-57, who does not see the Mosaic covenant as formally identified with either the covenant of works or the covenant of grace, calling it instead “a national covenant” between God and Israel and the reciprocal promise of which presupposes “a covenant of grace” but is formally nothing else than “the rule of duty” and “an instrument of the covenant”; and by way of contrast see also Francis Roberts, *Mysterium et Medulla Bibliorum*, pp. 734-988, who sees the law given at Sinai as a covenant of faith, not of works, being “full of
a. The Old Testament Distinguished in Three Ages

In light of the history of revelation, in its unfolding and development, Turretin distinguishes within the Old Testament three periods (periodes) or stages (curricula). The first is the age (eta) from Adam to Abraham, wherein “the sum of the covenant of grace was contained in the briefest, but still most clear words of the first gospel (protevangelii) or first promise” (as recorded in Genesis 3:15), the substance of which is this: “A certain one will at some time arise who will snatch from perdition those with whom God had made a covenant, that he will be bruised by the one through whose deceit they had fallen into this calamity.” From this promise God’s abounding mercy shines forth, providing a remedy to man’s ruin “on the spot,” according to his grace. This prophecy refers to Christ, for by the “seed of the woman” Christ is meant, “antonomastically” (antonomastic), that is, as a substitute title, and principally (principaliter). Besides, the victory over the seed of the serpent is altogether from God; and numerous texts from the New Testament testify that Christ is the fulfillment of this promise. All of which brings Turretin to this conclusion: “the primeval promise given to our first parents (although somewhat obscurely) contained as in a compendium the principal parts of the covenant of grace and of the gospel.”

---

90 Turretin, *Institutio theologicae scholasticae*, XII.vii.11-13. Gal. 3:16; and especially John 12:31; 14:30; Luke 10:18; Col. 2:15; Heb. 2:14, 15; Rom. 16:20; 1 John 3:8; Rev. 12:8, 9. Turretin also asserts (XII.vii.16) that all those belonging to Christ may be included in the “seed” which opposes Satan (for the word “seed” is collective), that is, in a secondary and dependent sense (which was Calvin’s opinion; *Comm. Gen.* 3:15; *Institutes*, I.xiv.18; II.xiii.2).

91 Turretin, *Institutio theologicae scholasticae*, XII.vii.17. “Ex quibus facile colligitur primævam illam promissionem datam Protoplastis, licet obscurius, præcipuas partes Faderis gratiae et Evangelii velut in compendio continuisse.” Cf. Ball, *Treatise of the Covenant of Grace*, 36-47. Some federal theologians add a distinct age from Adam to Noah, then from Noah to Abraham, etc.—for example, Witsius, *De Economia Fœdorum Dei cum Hominibus*, III.iii.11-19; also see Bk. IV. John Ball gives separate treatment to the covenant with David and with the Israelites after their return from captivity in Babylon (*Treatise of the Covenant of Grace*, 23ff., 143ff., and 156ff.). Noteworthy is the comprehensive exposition of van Mastricht, *Theoretico-practicæ theologia*, VIII.i-iv, almost comprising an entire volume. He sets forth four distinct dispensations: under the Patriarchs, under Moses, under Christ, and under eternity. Francis Roberts, *Mystrium & Medulla Biblicorum*, probably sets forth the most elaborate and extended presentation of the covenant in its distinct dispensations, tracing the particular features of it in the history of salvation. Roberts’ work on the covenant amounts to more than 1700 pages,
The second age (et alii) is from Abraham to Moses. Inasmuch as the first era had succumbed almost completely to idolatry and the divine promise was virtually obliterated from the minds of men, “God (having selected and called Abraham) renewed the covenant with him and his seed, engaging that the Messiah should be born of his posterity and demanding faith and obedience in turn from him (Gen. 22*:18; 17:1, 2).”

Although this promise contained temporal and earthly blessings, spiritual and heavenly (that is gospel) blessings were principally in view, as reflected in the teaching of the apostle—for it pertains (1) to justification (cf. Gal. 3:8, 13, 14); (2) to adoption (Gal. 3:29; 4:28); (3) to conversion (Acts 3:25, 26); (4) to the promise of the Spirit (Gal. 3:14); and (5) to glorification (Matt. 8:11; Luke 16:23; Matt. 25:34). What is more, although the blessing on the seed of Abraham has reference to his natural progeny, or natural seed, it also has reference to Christ, the mystical and blessed seed through whom all the nations of the earth are blessed in the way of redemption—that is, for those in union with him (see Gal. 3:16; Gen. 15:6; 2 Cor. 1:20).

The promise to Abraham is encapsulated in God swearing to be God to him and to his seed after him (Gen. 17:7)—adding to that promise a threefold ratification (κύρωσις) (see Gen. 15:10-18; also Jer. 34:18; Gen. 17:9-14; Gen. 22:16; also Heb. 6:17, 18).

Besides ratifying his covenant with Abraham, God proposed two conditions, namely “faith” (fides) (Gen. 15:6) and “conversion and the desire of sanctification” (conversio et

wherein he distinguishes the covenant into seven distinct stages: from Adam till Noah; from Noah till Abraham; from Abraham till Moses; from Moses till David; from David till the Captivity; from the Captivity till the death of Christ; and finally from the death of Christ till the end of the world. Cf. Lim, “Covenant Theology of Francis Roberts.” Also see Barret, God's Love to Man, and Man's Duty towards God, 33ff.; and Heppe, Reformed Dogmatics, 393-396. Cf. Westminster Confession of Faith (1647), chapter VII, 5; and Formula Consensus Helvetica, XXIV.

92 Turretin, Institutio theologiae elencticae, XII.vii.18. “... cum promissionis divinae memoria in hominum animis fere obsoletisset, et idolatriæ contagio, etiam sanctum genus Semæ et Thare familias contaminasset, Jos. xxiv. 2, Deus selecto evocatoque inde Abrahamo, fœdus cum ipso et semine ejus renovavit; Messiam ex ipso posteri nasciturum spondens, et fidem ac obsequium vicissim ab eo postulans, Gen. xiii. 18, et xvii. 1, 2.”

93 Turretin, Institutio theologiae elencticae, XII.vii.19.

94 Turretin, Institutio theologiae elencticae, XII.vii.20.

95 Turretin, Institutio theologiae elencticae, XII.vii.21.
sancificationis studium) (Gen. 17:1). Not only are both of these sealed and taught to Abraham, the father of believers, in the sacrament of circumcision, they are clearly and powerfully exhibited in Abraham's life. For in the way of faith, powerfully exercised, "he believed things so difficult and almost incredible: the possession of a land held by a most powerful nation, while he was a single individual; offspring, himself and Sarah being now stricken in years; the blessing of all nations in his seed, yet never seen by him" (see Rom. 4:18-21). In addition, paired with Abraham's faith was his obedience, for not only did Abraham forsake his father's house and his homeland to journey to an unknown place in obedience to God (and that being done while wholly ignorant of what the outcome might be [see Heb. 11:8]), but, what is more, Abraham faced

[In the "offering up of his son" (Heb. 11:17; Gen. 22:2), the greatest and most grievous trial of all; not only to lose an innocent, beloved and only son, but to kill and butcher him with his own hands, so that he who had been a father in giving life, should become a murderer (homicida) to take it away. And that promptly and without delay, the knife being passed through each member, to tear him to pieces after the manner of a sacrifice and to offer him as a whole burnt offering, so that he might be entirely consumed; and that too after the thing had been premeditated, three whole days being occupied with such thoughts. It seemed a sacrilege rather than a sacred thing, contrary to all divine and human law, against the light and influence of nature itself, against the promise given concerning of the blessed and blessing seed, and thus against the eternal faith and salvation of Abraham and all the covenanted. And yet he obeyed and was prepared from faith in the resurrection of the dead to offer even such a son (Heb. 11:19), which remarkable obedience obtained for him the name of "friend of God" (Is[a]. 41:8; Jer. 2:23).]

Thus the age from Adam to Abraham, preceding this one, the period from Abraham to Moses, is more appropriated under the economy of a promise, whereas this one is more directly under the economy of a covenant, where the condition and demand of faith and

--

96 Turretin, Instituti theologiae eleuthericae, XII. vii. 22.
97 Turretin, Instituti theologiae eleuthericae, XII. vii. 22. "In oblatione filii, Heb. xi. 17, Gen. xxii. 2, quae maxima omnium et durissima fuit tentatio, filium innocentem, dilectum, unicum non tantum amittere, sed occidere et propriis manibus mactare, ut, qui pater fuerat ad vitam dandum, esset homicida ad eam suferendum: Et illud prompte et sine mora, ducto per singula membra ferro, sacrifici in moxem dilatate, et in holocaustum offerre, ut totus consumeretur, idque premeditato, toto triduo inter istas cogitationes exacto; quod sacrilegium potius quam sacram videbatur, contra just omnem divinum et humanum, contra naturae ipsius lumen et motum, contra promissionem datam de Semine benedicto et benedicente, adeoque contra Abrahami et omnium fraterorum aeternam fidem et salutem. Et tamen obedivit, et paratus fuit ex fide resurrectionis mortuorum etiam talem filium offerre, Heb. xi. 19, quae singularis obiedientia illi nomen amis Dei obtinuit, Is. xli. 8, Jac. ii. 23."
obedience is manifestly expressed, being only implicit before. Now sacrificial rites are sealed by the sacrament of circumcision, and the seed of the woman foretold in the original promise becomes more openly and distinctly manifest.  

The third age (\textit{etatis}) stretches from Moses to Christ, i.e., “from the promulgation of the law in the desert until the manifestation of the Messiah.” This period constitutes an era of many changes and developments, including the birth of Israel as a nation, being nurtured under Moses “for whose benefit the covenant of grace \textit{fudus gratiae} had not only the relation of promise and covenant, but a more perfect and testamentary form \textit{sed formam perfectiorem et magis testamentariam} which was ratified by the blood of victims (Ex. 24:6-8), as the symbol of the blood of Christ (Mt. 26:28).”  

The covenant was enlarged and expanded objectively and numerically, as well as subjectively and ceremonially—with many prophecies added and sacrifices typifying the death of Christ. In fact, God revealed himself in delivering Israel as a nation from Egypt not only as \textit{יְהֹウェ} (the Almighty) (Gen. 17:1)—i.e., the omnipotent and self-sufficient one—but also as \textit{יָהֵウェ} (Yahweh) (Exod. 6:2, 3), \textit{I AM}, who, according to the eternity and immutability of his essence, remains constant and faithful in carrying out his promise to deliver Israel from her Egyptian enslavement, something subsisting with “the fulfillment itself.”

It was during this specific interval or stage of the Old Testament that the law was “promulgated.” This law was given by God, even as it is of God. And the manner in which it was given at Sinai, both majestic and terrible, testifies to God’s awesome majesty and signifies for us something about the nature of the law itself—being a minister of death and condemnation. That this law was set forth under the evangelical covenant has raised a number of perplexing questions regarding what role or function it fulfills and what place it

---

occupies within that covenant. Hence the query, given that the law performs such a terrifying function and utters words of condemnation and curse upon sinners, what place might it have within the gracious covenant of God? For what is most characteristic about the covenant of grace is God’s sweet promises to sinners—that God himself calls sinners to himself, portrayed as one appeared.\(^\text{101}\)

b. The Differences between the Law and the Covenant of Grace

Turretin begins by describing some of the differences between the law and the covenant of grace.

[\(\text{The law (contained in the decalogue) is of natural right, founded on the justice of God; while the covenant of grace is of positive and free right, founded on his good pleasure (\textit{udókia}) and mercy. The latter sets forth a surety, promises remission of sins and salvation in his satisfaction; not only demands but also effects obedience. But in the decalogue, no mention either of a surety or promise of salvation to be given to sinners occurs; but a bare promise of life to those doing and a threatening of death to transgressors. Hence the law of works (comprised in the decalogue) is everywhere contradistinguished by Paul from the law of faith and the promise of grace (Rom. 3:27; Gal. 3:17, 18)[\(\text{][\(\)]) for as the law is not of faith (Gal. 3:12), so neither is faith of the law. So great is the contrariety between these two means that they are wholly incompatible (\textit{ayxistata}) with each other.\(^\text{102}\).}]

This is a critical passage for understanding the theology of grace that Turretin, as part of his theological project, is jealous to defend against any corruption or hint of compromise. In keeping with the covenant of nature, the law revealed at Sinai does not introduce humans to a different God than the God of creation and paradise—which is to say, that natural law, as part of the created order, conforms to the law of Moses; and the law of Moses, especially the Ten Commandments (or the decalogue), reflects the nature of God. For God cannot be

---


other than who he is. Whereas God is free to create or not create the world, he is not free to be just or unjust. Therefore, having created the world, God's justice or righteousness is inevitably and necessarily set forth inasmuch as humans, being created in the divine image, may not relate to God except in terms of his righteousness. Consequently the decalogue, founded on God's nature, i.e., his justice, reveals what has continually been his will for human beings—including the penalty for failure to live with God on his terms, namely, in conformity to his just nature. The law thus reveals the blessing of life to those who walk in its ways, without any deviation, but warning of certain death for transgressors of it.

The covenant of grace, however, must needs be distinguished from the law in several respects. First, the evangelical covenant is not founded upon God's justice, nor is it something inevitably manifest to those created in God's image. Rather, it is founded upon God's good pleasure (εὐδοκία), according to God's own sovereign freedom, which means that God would still be God, in all respects good and holy, had he decided not to rescue fallen sinners. However, if God had failed to require those created in his image to live with him according to his own righteousness and justice, then God would not be God, for in this failure he would act contrary to his nature—which is to say, he would act contrary to his own holiness and justice. We might say, for Turretin, the law is established because of who God is in an ontic sense; whereas the covenant of grace is established because of God's own volition, being an expression of his mercy and goodness.

Turretin also notes that whereas the law urges the way of obedience, even pointing to the promise of life along that path, it is powerless to secure that obedience. What is more, the law threatens death for any breach of conformity to it. The covenant of grace by contrast, being founded upon God's mercy and freedom, provides a Surety or Guarantor who acts on behalf of sinners, promising forgiveness and salvation through his work of satisfaction. In addition, while it is true that the covenant of grace, like the law, requires obedience (for God cannot deny his own justice), unlike the law, it also enables obedience—
which is to say, God grants the gift of faith and repentance (and so the gift of rebirth and a new heart) to those who are the recipients of the essential promise of this covenant, for he gives them his Spirit who bonds them to Christ and makes a life of obedience, as the covenant stipulates, possible. By contrast, the law is altogether powerless in these respects. The law warns, but cannot save; it threatens but cannot enable. The law urges the right path, but cannot lift a finger to make a journey down that path either certain or possible.

Thus Turretin points out how these differences between the law and the covenant of grace are explained by the apostle Paul. Lest there be any confusion, the apostle sharply contrasts the law of works and the law of faith and sets forth the opposition between them as absolute. This opposition rests in the fact that the law cannot give what it demands, since it is impotent to enable obedience to its demands, even as the law cannot give sinners faith in the Surety, or give sinners the Surety himself. For faith is not from the law; rather, faith is from God's mercy and goodness, even as the Surety—the object of that faith—is from God's mercy, according to his good pleasure, all of which is descriptive of the covenant of grace itself.

c. The Law as Part of the Covenant of Grace

Does this then mean that the Mosaic law is not an expression of the covenant of grace or that it has nothing in common with that covenant? To such queries Turretin argues a negative reply. For he doesn't deny that the covenant of grace was established with the people of Israel, as seen both in the covenant's sanction given in Exodus 19:5 ("Now therefore, if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people: for all the earth is mine" – AV) and from its ratification alluded to in Exodus 24:8, 9 ("And Moses took the blood, and sprinkled it on the people, and said, Behold the blood of the covenant, which the Lord hath made with you concerning all these words. Then went up Moses, and Aaron, Nadab, and Abihu, and seventy of the
elders of Israel” — AV). Even the decalogue, which in many respects is an expression of the covenant of works, fulfills its proper office and function in support of the covenant of grace.

For since the law was made weak in the flesh after sin (Rom. 8:3), the way of life by it became altogether impossible for man. Hence Paul testifies that the law was not given that it might give life (Gal. 3:21) or that the promise first given might be abrogated (Gal. 3:17), but “on account of transgressions,” that sin being uncovered by it, the necessity of grace might be the more clearly seen.103

The law of Moses, then, belongs to the evangelical covenant in a twofold function: (1) serving as a “schoolmaster” by convicting persons of their sins with the intention that, fearing death, they despair of themselves; and (2) setting forth the rule or measure of God’s holiness according to the covenant of grace, thereby making known the obedience that counts as conformity with it. The law, then, has this double function within the covenant of grace, while it also has a double relation to this covenant—partly antithetical to it because of human transgression, but principally in its service by driving sinners to despair of themselves and to seek God’s mercy. For it should also be noted that the law is not wholly without a message of God’s mercy inasmuch as the preface to the decalogue makes clear that the God who dictates his law is the very one who has graciously delivered his people from bondage.

Turretin would also bid us not to forget that there are promises of blessing annexed to the second and fifth commandments.104

That said, Turretin asserts that during the period of the law the covenant of grace was administered under “a rigid legal economy” (rigida oeconomia legalis)—for God’s people were still immature and Christ had not yet come and made satisfaction for sins. But even this legal economy in its rigid character must be understood under a twofold relation (σχέσης): the one

103 Turretin, Institutio theologiae elencticæ, XII.vii.29. “Cum enim Lex facta sit infirma in carne post peccatum, Rom. viii. 3, impossibilis et invia peritus homini per eam facta est ad vitam via. Unde Paulus testatur, Legem non datam esse, quae posset vivificare, Gal. iii. 21, vel ut abrogatur promissio primitas data, v. 17, sed propter transgressiones, ut recte per eam peccato, clarius pataret gratia necessitas.” Cf. Witsius, De Oeconomia Fœderum Dei cum Hominibus, III.iii.4-6, 14-18, 31; Blake, Vindiciae Fadris, 2nd ed., 205-230; Flavel, Works, VI, 323-327; 330-340; Owen, Works, XXI, 466-470; 493-512; XXII, 48-50, 68-100; 112-119; and Wong, “Covenant Theology of John Owen,” 203-223. Also see Calvin on the unity and difference between the two testaments, Institutes, II.x-xi; and Rohli’s discussion, pp. 88-90, in Reformed Confessions.

104 Turretin, Institutio theologiae elencticæ, XII.vii.30.
legal and “more severe” (una Legalis severior), the other evangelical and “sweeter” (altera Evangelica suavor). Under its legal relation, the law is a republication of the covenant of works, showing humans what they owe God and the consequences of failing to live according to his will. As such, it introduced the “intolerable yoke” of ceremonies, and in its legal function it is called “the letter that kills” (2 Cor. 3:6) and the “handwriting” that condemns us (Col. 2:14). In this relation, the law sentences persons to death and condemnation—that declaration manifest in the blood of circumcision and the blood of the sacrificial victims.\textsuperscript{105}

Under its evangelical relation, however, the law is a “schoolmaster” unto Christ (Gal. 3:24) and contains “the shadow of things to come” (Heb. 10:1)—that is, the blessings belonging to Christ. Thus, in the way of faith, believers could see, under the “bark and veil” of the law, the path to “spiritual and evangelical truth,” which over time the Spirit made clearer through further promises, oracles, types, shadows, and figures, all pointing to “the thing itself” (res ipsa), Christ crucified.\textsuperscript{106}

Given this twofold relation, the administration or dispensation of the Old Testament can be viewed under a twofold economy—either under “the external economy of legal teaching” or under “the internal truth of the gospel promise” lying beneath it. We examine each of these in detail, following Turretin’s exposition.

d. The External Economy of the Covenant of Grace in the Old Testament

(1) Matter and Form of the External Economy

Turretin distinguishes between the matter and form (materia et forma) of this external economy. Thus “the matter” of that external economy of legal teaching has to do with the law in its three uses or functions: the moral (moralis), the ceremonial (cæsimonialis), and the forensic (forensis) or civil use. The first of these was “fundamental” or basic, with the others

\textsuperscript{105} Turretin, \textit{Institutional theologicae elencticæ}, XII.vii.31.

\textsuperscript{106} Turretin, \textit{Institutional theologicae elencticæ}, XII.vii.32.
being "appendices" of it. Meanwhile "the form" was "the pact" (pactio) that was added to the external dispensation. As a pactio it involves two parties—both God and those with whom he establishes the covenant. For his part, God promises the land of Canaan, including rest and happiness within it, pointing to the heavenly and eternal sabbath rest mentioned in Hebrews 4:3, 9, even as (by extension) God promises eternal life in the clause, "Do this and live." On the part of his people, this pactio, attached to the law, stipulates obedience to the whole law, i.e., perfect righteousness (Turretin cites Deut. 7:26; Gal. 3:10) and justification by it (Rom. 2:13). But as Turretin explains, this stipulation is not of the substance of the law, but only "accidental," "since it was added only in order that man by its weakness (adynamian) might be led to reject his own righteousness and to embrace another's, latent under the law." 

(2) The End or Goal of the External Economy

Turretin next considers both the "end" of the law, that is, its goal or purpose, as well as the "marks" and "effects" of the law. The purpose or goal of the economy of the law was not the justification of sinners. In both its moral and ceremonial capacities, the law does not have this aim, which can be demonstrated both by way of negation (κατ' ἀποκαταστάσιν) and affirmation (κατὰ ἀναποκαταστάσιν). The moral law, negatively, uncovered human sin and guilt and provoked sinners to sin (see Rom. 3:20; 7:7); it also revealed the impossibility of its fulfillment by those already sinful, and so denounced sin and announced curse (Rom. 8:3; Gal. 3:10). Likewise, the ceremonial law does not aim to justify sinners, for, negatively, its sacrifices, which were carnal, repetitive, and conditional—that is, mutable, being figures and shadows, not the reality or substance, of the thing—demonstrated that justification before God was not the law's intention (see Heb. 8:12; 10:1; Col. 2:17). Positively or by way of

---

107 Turretin offers a comprehensive exposition of the law under topic XI of his Institutio, treating the law in its three uses, as well as the abrogations of the law in questions xxii-xxvi.

108 Turretin, Institutio theologicae electiae, XII.vii.32. "Sed hæc stipulatio in fœdere Israëlitico fuit tantum accidentaria, ut prope quæ idem fuerit tantum addita, ut per illius δονατίον homo ad sui justitiae abdicationem, et alienæ, quæ sub Lege latebat, amplexum deduceretur."
affirmation, this law gave the people an external form of religion that God stipulated, while it served the covenant of grace by sketching out the “spiritual economy” to come. As Turretin states: “God here acting after the manner of illustrious artists, who before putting their hand to the work, are accustomed first to draw a rude outline with the pencil of the idea (skiaographian) of it conceived in the mind (hōs en typō).” What is more, the law, because of its burdensome yoke, renders the yoke of Christ “more easy” (Matt. 11:28, 29).

(3) Marks and Effects of the External Economy

The “marks and effects” (characteres et effecta) of that economy, which were external, Turretin is also concerned to examine. Specifically, he defines five such marks or effects, as well as three “adjuncts” (adjecta) that should be discerned and understood. The first mark and effect is “the promise of the Messiah’s coming,” and with that promise it is made clear that this era is characterized by the delay of the satisfaction for sin, which must finally come through him (1 Pet. 1:10-12). For righteousness has not yet come (Dan. 9:24), and “sins remained without a true expiation, until they should be destroyed by the satisfaction of Christ.”

Another mark and effect of this external economy is that of “obscurity” (obscuritas). The sun of righteousness had not yet risen; instead, this economy gave us but a prophetic word concerning him, “like a candle shining in a dark place” (2 Pet. 1:19). Thus the Old Testament may be contrasted with the New Testament as resembling the difference between night and day. The ceremonies were like a “veil,” depicted and foreshadowed by the veil over Moses’ face, for there Moses denotes the whole dispensation of the Old Testament (see

109 Turretin, Institutio theologicae elencticae, XII.vii.33. “Deo hic agente ad modum praestantium artificium, qui antequam manum operi admoveant, ejus ideam animo conceptam, nudi prīsus penicillo ως ἐν τύπῳ per σχεδογραφίαν delineare solent...”

110 Turretin, Institutio theologicae elencticae, XII.vii.34. Turretin here goes on to explain, and will argue at length under another quaestio, that it is not the case that sin and guilt still rested upon the Old Testament fathers, for their sins were transferred to Christ as the surety, but there sins still existed as unexpired upon the surety, that is, until Christ’s advent and his atonement for sin. Thus the sins of Old Testament believers awaited expiation by the mediator of the covenant of grace—that is, Christ the guarantor of that covenant.
2 Cor. 3:13). Likewise the veil of the tabernacle and the temple, forbidding entrance into the holy of holies, declares obscurely the righteousness to come.111

"Bondage" (servitus) is the third mark and effect Turretin mentions as characterizing the external economy of the Old Testament. To those who sought salvation in it, the law brought nothing else than a "servile condition," which may be described as "a pact of slaves" (pactum servorum) (Gal. 4:24, 25), and this in an absolute (absoluta) and total (totalis) sense. However, to those who look to Christ in it, it brought bondage only in a relative sense (secundum quid). Yet they were, nonetheless, under a heavy yoke and subject to servile labor, for so Christ depicts them (Matt. 11:28), and Paul argues that under this economy a child doesn't differ from a servant (Gal. 4:1). The worst of it, however, was that the law demanded what it could not give—"it exacted fulfillment and yet did not supply the strength for it . . ." What is more, the "malediction" it spoke to transgressors was confirmed by the ceremonies it mandated—ceremonies that were rude and imperfect, burdensome and performed under threat of death; in short, oppressive, and, therefore, called "the yoke of bondage" (Gal. 5:1) and an unbearable burden (Acts 15:10),112 even as the law produced a "spirit of bondage" (spiritus servitutis) (Rom. 8:15). The spirit of bondage is to live in continual anxiety, for punishment is feared from God who is viewed preeminently as judge. The law announced grace both obscurely and sparingly, "not that believers were absolutely destitute of the spirit of adoption . . . but because it excited emotions suitable to that condition, in which the heir being still a child did not differ much from a servant."113

The next mark and effect Turretin considers comes in a pair: "rigor and severity" (rigor et severitas). Given what has been said above, these characteristics are not unexpected. For the legal prescriptions set forth under the external economy of the Old Testament operated

111 Turretin, Instituti theologiae elekticarum, XII.vii.35.
112 Turretin, Instituti theologiae elekticarum, XII.vii.36.
113 Turretin, Instituti theologiae elekticarum, XII.vii.37.
through "compulsion," urging and impelling obedience through fear of punishment rather than from love of God and righteousness. Moses is a hard taskmaster; by his rod of discipline obedience is more extorted than given from a heart of delight. Thus the law instills terror (even in Moses himself) (Heb. 12:21). However, the rigor of the law was not pointless, for Israel’s disobedient ways and hard heart could be bridled in virtually no other way.\footnote{\textit{Turretin, Institutio theologiae elencticar, XII.vii.38.}}

The last mark and effect Turretin expositis is "purity of flesh" (\textit{puritas carnis})—that is, those ceremonial rites and washing required by the law and as belonging to this external economy (Heb. 9:13), the performance of which depicted "external purity of the flesh and immunity from carnal guilt." This is noted in contradistinction from "purity of conscience" and "immunity from the spiritual guilt of sin" that characterizes the New Testament economy. For the ceremonial rites of the flesh, although performed in an outward form only, without faith and repentance, still earned freedom from punishment with respect to the forensic or civil court; however, to be free from the spiritual punishment in the court of heaven, these ceremonies, functioning as "figures" and "types," had to be performed with faith and repentance, looking to that which they foreshadowed.\footnote{\textit{Turretin, Institutio theologiae elencticar, XII.vii.39.}}

\textbf{(4) Adjuncts to the External Economy}

Besides these marks and effects, Turretin also specifies three adjuncts that are attached to the external economy of the law, namely, weakness and imperfection (\textit{infirmitas et imperfectio}), mutability and abrogation (\textit{mutabilitas et abrogatio}), and glory and splendor (\textit{gloria et splendor}). Turretin speaks of weakness and imperfection because this economy knew "no true ransom (\textit{lytron}) for sin (but only a type of it), nor the accompanying power of the Spirit to subdue the flesh and furnish strength to fulfill the law." Justification and sanctification were unobtainable by the law (Acts 13:39; Heb. 10:1, 2; 9:14, 15), for it served to condemn and pronounce the sentence of death (2 Cor. 3:6, 7; Heb. 7:18). As is stated in Hebrews, this
economy was not “faultless” (Heb. 8:7). Why? “On account of its weakness and unprofitableness” (διὰ τὸ αὐτὴς ἄσθενες καὶ ἄνωφελός) (Heb. 7:18).\(^{116}\)

As for mutability and abrogation, Turretin points again to the temporary character of the ceremonial ordinances, with its meats and drinks, and its divers washings and the like, all of which could not “sanctify the conscience.” Instead, because of the “imperfection” resident in these stipulations, they are succeeded by a more perfect economy, being abrogated, for when the sun shines, mere candles are unnecessary.\(^{117}\) Finally, the glory and spendor by which this economy was instituted, manifest most clearly in the miracles that accompanied the promulgation of the law, explains why the apostle Paul calls it a “ministry of glory” (2 Cor. 3:7, 9). However, as noted before, this glory mostly inspired fear and terror, so that it is also called a “ministry of death” and a “ministry of condemnation,” even making Moses tremble (Heb. 12:21). And as the glory that shone from Moses’ face faded away (2 Cor. 3:7), so this economy of the law proved itself to be mutable and transient—both worn out and antiquated (2 Cor. 3:11).\(^{118}\)

c. The Internal Economy of the Covenant of Grace in the Old Testament

Next Turretin considers the internal economy of the covenant of grace under the Old Testament—that is, the internal truth of the gospel promise lying under the law. For, says Turretin, what lies beneath the law, being “latent under it,” belongs to the “substance of the covenant of grace and of the gospel promise.” This isn’t an insignificant point for Turretin to make, since in this way the law is truly and properly an expression of the evangelical covenant.

The gospel promise, latent under the law, and being administered “in different ways” (diversimodo) and by “various degrees” (varios gradus), contained Christ himself, for he is the

---


\(^{117}\) Turretin, *Institutio theologica elenctica*, XII.vii.41.

\(^{118}\) Turretin, *Institutio theologica elenctica*, XII.vii.42.
foundation of the covenant and he is adumbrated by the ceremonies of the law. His suffering and death are likewise foreshadowed and promised, though obscurely and hidden. “Hence the gospel is said to have been formerly a hidden mystery (Rom. 16:25) because obscurely proposed under the various veils of figures, but still so that through them it could be seen (as was done by Moses, Heb. 11:26); and promises (temporal as well as spiritual), which the formula of the covenant (“I am thy God”) includes in itself.”

This promise, then, given by God, contained Christ and both temporal and spiritual blessings—the former involving the land of Canaan as an inheritance and earthly blessings; the latter being primary and principal “as absolutely necessary for salvation.” The spiritual blessings have to do with the substance of the covenant of grace. Turretin is careful to define his position in this regard:

Now although that revelation of grace was somewhat obscure and sparing as to mode (being wholly enigmatical and specular, and such that Christ could be beheld in it only under a veil—as formerly Moses, 2 Cor. 3:7), still it was sufficient as to substance. Hence the knowledge of the ancients and their faith was founded upon it (although it varied as to circumstances and mode and might be called implicit in this sense and confused), by which the thing indeed is known, but not in such a way that it is also known as to all (which distinguishes it from other things). We wish this to be understood of the state of the church of the Old Testament and not of particular persons (as Abraham, Moses, David and others who enjoyed a richer knowledge of the divine mysteries). Still it did not differ as to substance and no less saved them, than faith under the New Testament saves us. For Christ saves, not as perfectly known and according to all circumstances, but as truly and seriously apprehended.

Here Turretin again makes clear that the way of salvation under the Old Testament does not differ from the way of salvation under the New Testament. For as sparing and

---

119 Turretin, Institutio theologiae elencticae, XII.vii.43.

120 Turretin, Institutio theologiae elencticae, XII.vii.44. "Quamvis vero revelatio ista gratie obscurior fuerit et parciior quoad modum, ut potesque tota enigmatica erat et specularis, et talis quae Christus non nisi sub velo poterat conspici, ut olim Moses, 2 Cor. iii. 7, fuit tamen sufficiens quoad substantiam. Unde cognitio Veterum, et eorum fides illa nitebatur, ut diversa fuerit quoad circumstancias, et modum, et implicita hoc sensu et confusa dici possit, per quam res quidem cognociscitur, sed non ut secundum omnia, quibus ab alis rebus distinguatur, etiam cognoscatur. Quod intellectum volumus de statu Ecclesiae V. T. non vero de his vel ilhis individualis, Abrahamo, Mose, Davide, et aliis, qui uberiores mysteriorum divinorum cognitione fuerunt prouti. Non tamen diversa quoad substantiam, et non minus servavit illos, quam fides sub Novo Test. nos servat; quia Christus servat, non qua perfecte cognitus, et secundum omnes circumstancias, sed ut vere ac serio apprehensus."
diminished the message of grace was through the law, and though Christ could only be apprehended as veiled, and was known not fully but only partially, it was sufficient as to substance. In this way, the law still conveyed, internally and obscurely, the message of grace; and in this way the spiritual promises conveyed therein were the same in substance as that found and more fulsomely displayed in the New Testament.

As for the substance of the covenant, Turretin articulates six spiritual promises latent under the old economy. The first is “the remission of sins and justification,” something the law in itself could not grant, for these blessings are received only through faith in Christ (Acts 13:39; Rom. 4:7); nonetheless, under the old economy the message was sufficiently clear that forgiveness is by grace through faith in the one God promised as the Messiah (see Psa. 32; Rom. 4). The second spiritual promise is “adoption,” for the people of Israel did not only experience an outward adoption, but an inward adoption as well, “without which the former would have been useless” (Rom. 9:4; Gal. 4:2). They were children of God, calling him their Father, but needing the rods of schoolmasters (Job. 34:36; Isa. 63:16; Gal. 4:2, 3). Next Turretin refers to “sanctification” as another of these spiritual promises, something commanded as well (see Lev. 26; Isa. 1).^{121}

The fourth of the spiritual promises latent under the old economy is “the gift of the Spirit.” This promise was included in the covenant with Abraham (Gal. 3:13, 14) and is mentioned throughout the Old Testament (see Isa. 44:3; Ezek. 36:26, 27; Zech. 12:10). Turretin recognizes that the bestowal of the Holy Spirit in the New Testament differed from what was given in the Old, both “intensively as to degree” and “extensively as to gifts.” And so, bearing in mind these differences, the Spirit was nonetheless manifest as the Spirit of illumination, granting the more obscure mode of God’s revelation at that time and the ignorance of various circumstances; the Spirit of adoption or sonship, whereby Old Testament believers could know infallibly that they were God’s children (though mixed with

---

^{121} Turretin, *Institutio theologiae elencticæ*, XII.vii.45.
the spirit of bondage); and the Spirit of consolation and hope, though again with the threat of the law looming over them.  

The fifth spiritual promise was "the resurrection," for Christ deduced this from the formula of the covenant—God is not the God of the dead but of the living (Matt. 22:32).  

Last in the list is "eternal life," for this too, as the apostle deduces, is contained in the covenental formulary (where Abraham looks for a city whose foundations were built by God [Heb. 11:10]), besides the prophecies that announce it.

2. The New Dispensation—or The New Testament

The new dispensation of the covenant of grace succeeds the old dispensation after the appearance of Christ, which means it is an administration of the evangelical covenant "without the law and ceremonies" (sine Legis et Ceremoniis). What makes it "new" (nova) does not touch upon the "substance" (substantiam) of the covenant, which remains the same in both dispensations. Rather, it is new (1) as to the circumstances and mode; (2) as to the excellence and glory of this dispensation; (3) as to perpetual duration. For with the advent of Christ, the covenant of grace is set forth "without a veil and the law," and so in this way it appears as though it were new or renewed. What it more, it sets forth Christ not as one to come but as one who has come, and in this respect it is new both "intensively as to degree of light and extensively as to amplitude," for now it extends to all nations without discrimination. In this we see, too, the surpassing excellence and glory of this dispensation of the evangelical covenant, for it is remarkable and superior to the old inasmuch as it does not cease, but is perpetual (see 2 Cor. 3:9, 10; Rev. 5:9; Psa. 33:3).

Turretin next exposit[s] eight characteristics of the new dispensation of this covenant—characteristics that most distinguish the new economy of the covenant from the former one.

---

122 Turretin, Institutio theologiae elencticæ, XII.vii.45.
123 This is my reference to the text to which Turretin alludes, also see Mark 12:27; Luke 20:38.
124 Turretin, Institutio theologiae elencticæ, XII.vii.45.
125 Turretin, Institutio theologiae elencticæ, XII.vii.46.
First, this new economy of the covenant is defined by “the advent of the Messiah.” Everything he did, along with all that he suffered, was toward the fulfillment of the whole law (totius Legis)—“the ceremonies, prophecies and the entire righteousness [totius justitiae] prescribed by God in the law.” Second, in light of the above, the new dispensation is defined by “the abrogation of all the ceremonies and of the whole legal dispensation.” Until this abrogation, the covenant of grace remained veiled by these rites and ceremonies, and the carnality of the same. However, with their abrogation (or extinction), the veil has now been lifted.  

The new economy is defined, thirdly, by “the effusion of the Holy Spirit,” which is marked most especially by bestowing those gifts necessary for salvation. For although those gifts were formerly given under the old economy, now they are bestowed upon the church with perpetuity and greater intensity, imparting greater light, trust, and comfort upon believers, even as they are more expansive in their reach, revealing more and greater things; and they are directed to all persons—from the least to the greatest (Turretin here alludes to John 16:13; 1 John 2:20; Heb. 8:11).  

Fourth, the new economy of the covenant is defined by “the calling of the nations,” which, although anticipated and occasionally evidenced in the old dispensation, comes to its proper fullness in the new dispensation. Fifth, this new dispensation is defined by “adoption,” which, once more, although not unknown or enjoyed in the Old Testament, now it is experienced without the fear and dread of the law, but is acquired through Christ’s work accomplished (Rom. 8:15; John 1:12). The sixth characteristic that distinguishes and defines the new administration of the evangelical covenant from its obsolete economy is “liberty,” not only the spiritual liberty that also existed in the Old Testament period, but

---

126 Turretin, *Institutio theologiae elencticar*, XII.vii.47.  
127 Turretin, *Institutio theologiae elencticar*, XII.vii.47.
liberty from the external features of the law, the legal ceremonies, being set free to serve Christ alone (Col. 2:20-22; Gal. 5:1). 128

Seventh, the new economy is defined by “sanctification,” which reaches higher and is most characterized by its internal sincerity (versus outward formality) due to the greater measure and virtue of the Spirit, even as believers are motivated by the example of Christ. Finally, the eighth characteristic of the new economy is “eternal life.” As stated before, it is not the case that such a blessing was unknown in the Old Testament; however, the promise of eternal life belongs uniquely to the New Testament economy in four respects: (1) in respect to “actual acquisition,” which is through the shedding of Christ’s blood; (2) in respect to “the actual entrance of Christ as man into heaven,” which is a blessing not merely for himself but also for all those united to him, for eternal life in heaven is our true sanctuary (Heb. 6:20); (3) in respect to “a far more illustrious manifestation” of it, for the confidence and hope of believers is now much greater than before, since the fear of death is removed and the veil is taken away; and (4) in respect to “the more frequent promises” of it, for while the old economy emphasized temporal promises, not excluding eternal life, the new economy accents life eternal, not denying temporal blessings. 129

Attached to the new economy of the covenant are certain adjuncts (adjuncta). Turretin mentions three: “posteriority of time,” for the new economy follows after the older economy, though the substance of the covenant abides under both economies; “dignity and perfection,” for the new economy is superior in worth, accomplishment, and excellence than the old; and “perpetuity,” since the new economy abides unto Christ’s second advent, whereupon it is transformed into “immediate and direct communion with God,” when God is all in all. 130

130 Turretin, *Institutio theologiae elencticæ*, XII.vii.49.
In this and the preceding section Turretin has argued for the essential unity of the covenant of grace, even under its twofold economy. Against those who would posit three covenants, such as Amyraut,\textsuperscript{131} and establish a false and inappropriate dichotomy between the law and the covenant of grace, Turretin demonstrates the complexities of this topic and of their relation by showing how the law is and is not part of the evangelical covenant. He explains the law’s limitations and inadequacies, as well as its function and twofold relation to the covenant of grace, both legal and evangelical. Finally, he shows how the law can only point to (but cannot provide) the remedy for human sin and guilt—the remedy coming by God’s mercy in Christ the Surety in the way of faith. The law itself, then, neither provides the Surety not produces faith—all of which testifies to the impotence of the law. That law, given human fallenness, and given the law’s own proper function, is not to be overestimated. For while in its evangelical relation to the covenant of grace, it is a schoolmaster, a pedagogue that drives sinners to despair and would bring them to God’s mercy in Christ—just as it continually and properly reveals to them the content of God’s righteous will—it nonetheless cannot provide what it demands, nor can it offer the remedy. In fact, its threat is as potent as its promise, for not only does it declare, “Do this and live,” it also declares, “Fail to obey and die.” As for its legal relation to the covenant of grace, the law is actually antithetical to it, declaring the way of the covenant of works afresh, including the terrible negative sanction of death to those who do not fulfill its demands—which is everyone, except the one God provides in the covenant of grace itself—Christ, who forms the center of the evangelical covenant.

D. The Difference between the Old and New Covenants

In treating the difference between the Old and the New Covenants Turretin asks whether what distinguishes them is something “essential,” reaching to the substance of

doctrine, or is the difference merely “accidental,” referring to their distinct dispensations. Turretin offers neither a negative nor a positive reply; instead, distinctions are necessary for an accurate reply. “As the Old and New Testaments have a multiple signification, so the proposed question ought to be answered in different ways, and the varying opinions (even of the orthodox) on both sides be reconciled.”

1. The Old and New Covenants Broadly and Strictly Considered

Turretin begins by explaining that his concern has to do with the “doctrine” that is delivered in each of the testaments. Thus considered, the Old Testament can be taken either “broadly” or “strictly.” In its broad designation, not only does the Old Testament refer to the entire dispensation under which the fathers lived—that is, from the beginning of the world to the coming of Christ in the flesh—but as for the doctrine contained in that testament it teaches the doctrine of grace, openly promising to the fathers salvation and life under the condition of perfect obedience to the law, along with the threat of death, as well as issuing the “intolerable burden of ceremonies and the yoke of the most restricted Mosaic polity.” More reservedly (under this broad category), it teaches salvation “under the condition of repentance and faith in the Messiah about to come.” What this comes down to, for Turretin, is that the Old Testament, in contradistinction from the New, embraces three things: (1) “old doctrine” that is partly legal in content and partly evangelical in content; (2) “an old servile form of worship and ecclesiastical service,” that foreshadowed what was necessary for salvation and was to come, but did not provide that reality, even as this service

\[\text{132} \quad \text{Turretin,} \text{ Insectoria theologicae clercicae, XII.viii.1.} \text{ On the difference between the Old and New Testaments, also see Ball,} \text{ Treatise of the Covenant of Grace, 31-36; Leigh,} \text{ Treatise of the Divine Promise, 101-103; Blake,} \text{ Vindiciae Foederis, 2nd ed., 205-210; Bulpkley,} \text{ Gospel Covenant Opened, 166-181; Barret,} \text{ God’s Love to Man, and Man’s Duty towards God, sect. 14, pp. 298-351; and Wollebius,} \text{ Compendium theologiae christianae, Bk. 1, chapter XV; and among sixteenth-century writers, see Calvin,} \text{ Institutes of the Christian Religion, II.xi.1-14; Musculus,} \text{ Common Places of Christian Religion, 293-295; Beza,} \text{ Confessio christianae fidei, 3.18; also 4.23; Bucanus,} \text{ Body of Divinity or: Institutions of Christian Religion, 241-253.}\]
was laborious and burdensome; and (3) an outdated “external polity” that confined itself to a single people and place.\(^{133}\)

Strictly considered, the Old Testament “denotes the covenant of works or the moral law given by Moses—the unbearable burden (\textit{abastakti}) of legal ceremonies being added, absolutely and apart from the promise of grace.” That the promise of grace is set forth in the Old Testament is seen in the intention of the lawgiver; for in joining together the three aforementioned things, God set up the old economy to lead unto Christ. That the Old Testament denotes the covenant of works is accidental to the covenant itself, “springing from an ignoring of the true end and the devising of a false.” For the true end of the Old Testament economy was “Christ for righteousness to every believer (Rom. 10:4). . . .” The Jews, however, in their self-righteousness missed this inasmuch as the promise was veiled “under a wrappage of types and of figures”—Christ and the promise of grace being “clothed with legal rites” (2 Cor. 3:14). Thus they gave the law a false end—as if by faithfully observing it “they might be justified before God and be saved (Rom. 10:3-5).” This explains therefore the apostle’s vigorous polemic against this error, for he takes their abuse of the law, understood in that strict sense, with its false end, and everywhere opposes the same to the promise.\(^{134}\)

Turretin next explains how the new covenant can likewise be taken either “broadly” or “strictly.” Taken broadly, the new covenant constitutes the covenant of grace “in general made with sinners” both before and after Christ’s advent; taken strictly, it refers only to the New Testament, that is, its promulgation after Christ appeared in the flesh, and shall continue to the end of the world.\(^{135}\)

\(^{133}\) Turretin, \textit{Institutione theologiae eleonectiae}, XII.viii.2-3.  
\(^{134}\) Turretin, \textit{Institutione theologiae eleonectiae}, XII.viii.4.  
\(^{135}\) Turretin, \textit{Institutione theologiae eleonectiae}, XII.viii.5.
That point being made, Turretin turns to address a controversy that emerged between the Reformed themselves, and then a controversy that was waged back and forth between the Reformed orthodox and the Lutherans.

2. A Controversy among the Reformed

The intramural dispute that Turretin briefly considers has to do with whether it is legitimate to regard the two covenants as "diverse in substance"—or more specifically, whether the old covenant may be regarded in both a broad and strict sense. Some among the Reformed (Turretin mentions among others Robert Rollock [1555-1598], Johannes Piscator [1546-1625], Lucas Trelcatius, Sr.136 [1542-1602]) did not regard the old covenant as setting forth any gospel content—that is, they denied that the Old Testament taught the gospel of God's grace in the Messiah to come, which seems to be a frequent accent of the apostle Paul as well, for he opposes the letter to the Spirit—that is, he juxtaposes the law, which exposes human sin and functions as a ministry of death, to the Spirit, who removes the veil that covers the human heart and brings a ministry of righteousness (see 2 Cor. 3; Gal. 4). Thus they "take the old covenant strictly," Turretin observes, "not only separating the promise of grace from it, but opposing the one to the other." This means, then, that the two covenants—old and new—constitute distinct species of covenant; the former is the covenant of works; the latter is "the covenant of the gospel and of faith." However, others among the Reformed (namely, John Calvin [1509-1564], Peter Martyr Vermigli [1499-1562], and Zacharias Ursinus [1534-1583]), "take the word covenant more broadly, as embracing also the promise of grace (although somewhat obscurely)." As Turretin himself demonstrates (and what amounts to his view as well), these writers argue that inasmuch as

136 Apparently Turretin has Lucas Trelcatius Sr. in mind here, for Lucas Trelcatius Jr. (1573-1607), in his Scholastica et methodica locorum communium s. theologiae institutionis, Lib. 2, pp. 109, 110, explicitly states that the old and new Testaments are the same as to "substance," agreeing in what is essential, differing in accidentals. "Atque hæc Substantia est Fœderis, quod cum homine post lapsum ipsius pepigit Deus, cujus veritas in veteri & novo Testamento, Lege & Evangelio, expresse & perfecte continetur." And, "Ratio hoc Fœus Administrandi varia fuit, pro distinctione temporum, quibus alia facies, & forma, illi eidem substantiæ rei, superaddita fuit." Also: "Conveniencia, in Substantia utiusque statutitur. Nam nullæ sunt differentiae essentiales, sed accidentales, ex diverso Dispensationis Modo: unde Causis omnibus conveniunt."
the promise of the covenant of grace was dispensed one way before Christ's coming and another way after his appearance, it is legitimate to "distinguish it into two—the old and new—by a distribution not of genus into species (as the former), but of subject according to accidents (which the others do not deny); thus they differ only as to the different use of terms, but not as to the thing itself (as Calvin observed)."  

That this matter is as easily resolved as Turretin intimates merits further consideration. It is undeniable that Turretin's burden is to demonstrate common ground among the Reformed wherever possible. Although his appeal to Calvin is rather cryptic, in examining Turretin's reference to Calvin's Institutes it is clear that the Reformer's explanation of how the law contains the promise of grace expresses Turretin's own view. For example, Calvin states that in order to refute the error of salvation by works, the apostle "was sometimes compelled to take the bare law in a narrow sense, even though it was otherwise graced with the covenant of free adoption."  

3. Controversy with the Lutherans

Next Turretin turns to the "opinion of the Lutherans concerning the difference between the old and new covenants." Obviously Turretin raises this matter because the Lutheran position is different than the staked out Reformed view—the controversy emerging in connection with the sacramental debate. The Lutherans maintain that the two covenants are distinct in "substance," for the old covenant does not contain "the promise of grace." Turretin quotes Jesper Brochmannus [Brockmand] (1585-1652), who states that the consensus Lutheran position is that the Old Testament is properly understood as "that legal  

---

137 Turretin, Institutio theologica elencticæ, XII.viii.6. "Et quia promissio illa diversimodo dispensata fuit ante et post Christum, distinguunt in duo, vetus et novum, distributione non generis in species, ut priores, sed subjecti secundum accidentia, quod alii non negant; ut disensus sit tantum in diversa terminorum usurpatione, sed non in re ipsa, ut observavt Calvi. lo. ii. Inst. c. 7, s. 2." The citation from Calvin's Institutes is II.vii.2. This sort of debate is even more prevalent in the British tradition. Noteworthy, too, is Biema's consideration of Olevianus's handling of this issue, see German Calvinism in the Confessional Age, 130-140.

138 Calvin, Institutes of the Christian Religion, II.vii.2; OS, III, 328-329.

139 The sub-heading at XII.viii.7.
covenant which God made with the Israelites under the ministry of Moses,” and that the Reformed improperly assert that the two covenants—that of the old and the new—are “the very same in substance.”

Turretin’s reply begins by correcting what constitutes the Reformed view, for the Reformed do not deny that these covenants “differ in entire substance” from one another insofar as the Old Testament and the Mosaic covenant are taken “strictly and absolutely as to the legal relation (schesis).” In this sense, the law opposes grace and Moses opposes Christ (John 1:17); the letter is a ministration of condemnation in opposition to the ministration of righteousness by the Spirit (2 Cor. 3:6, 7). However, when the Old Testament is understood “broadly” and in its “evangelical relation” (schesis)—that is, bearing its pedagogical function—it does “not differ as to substance, but only as to manner of dispensation.” Is this distinction too subtle? Too difficult to keep distinct? Or is it too artificial? Turretin, for his part, uses the distinction not as a case of scholastic logic chopping but in an effort to account for the diverse manner in which Scripture speaks of the law, and also in an attempt to explain that diversity under the presupposition of the unity of divine revelation. What is more, Turretin is simply following in the long tradition of the Reformed understanding of this topic.

---

141 Turretin, Institutio theologicae elencticae, XII.viii.8.
In fact, in defending the Reformed position on this question, and seeking to refute the Lutheran understanding, Turretin’s argument is firstly exegetical and theological in focus. In opposition to the idea that the old Mosaic covenant does not contain, either openly or by implication, the promise of grace, Turretin offers a fourfold argument. First, in that covenant God reveals himself as a God of grace and mercy, for he is the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob who reveals himself to Moses and Israel as the God of “gratuitous adoption and love” (Deut. 4:6-8; 7:6-8), demonstrating that the Mosaic covenant, not in its legal but evangelical relation, is a covenant of grace. Second, the gracious character of the Mosaic economy is depicted in “the kind of doctrine,” “the form of worship,” and “the mode of polity” set forth within it. The doctrine was so “legal” in its demands for moral obedience that it also issued “the promises” of grace in Christ. The form of worship was but a shadow prefiguring and anticipating the reality and fulfillment in Christ. And the mode of polity was designed to distinguish God’s people from the other nations, as the people from whom Christ came forth and among whom he preached and satisfied for sin. Third, the twofold form of this covenant testifies to its gracious character, for in its external form we see that people are legally obliged to obey God and God is obliged to give life upon perfect obedience; but in its internal form this covenant contains the gratuitous promise that God shall be their God and they shall be his people (Lev. 26:11, 12; 2 Cor. 6:16). Fourth, that the old Mosaic covenant declares the promise of grace is evident in its threefold effect, namely, “(a) the preparation of the sinner for seeking Christ by the moral law (Rom. 10:4; Gal. 3:24); (b) the showing of him by the ceremonial law (Heb. 10:12; Col. 2:16, 17); and (c) the offering of the same by the promise of grace connected with both.”

Turretin reinforces his polemic against the Lutheran view by arguing that Brochmand cannot maintain his position with consistency. For in affirming that Christ is the only way of salvation, even for the fathers of the Old Testament, and that both testaments treat of

---

Christ, though each in a different manner, Brochmann has essentially expressed the Reformed position—with the difference between the Mosaic economy and the new covenant referring to the mode of dispensation, not the substance of the matter. What is more, although Brochmann rightly distinguishes between the promise and its fulfillment, he fails to reckon with the application of salvation, including participation in the fruits of Christ’s sacrificial death. For these blessings were applied to the Old Testament fathers in the way of promise prior to its actual fulfillment—something Brochmann (inadvertently) acknowledges.\footnote{144}

Again, Turretin is not denying that there is an important sense in which the old and new covenants may be said to differ from another—after all, the difference between these covenants is the focus of this quæstio. The issue, however, is the way in which this difference is affirmed—which, then, is in the way of distinguishing the old covenant in its strict consideration and its broad consideration. Strictly considered the old covenant differs essentially from the new; broadly considered the old covenant is of the same substance as the new, which is to affirm the essential unity of the two covenants. Thus the old covenant in its strict consideration differs “essentially from the new.” This is how the law is understood by the apostle in the allegory of Sarah and Hagar—Sarah depicting freedom, Hagar bondage (Gal. 4:24). Similarly, the sharp polemic the apostle wages against false teachers who deny the antithesis between law and gospel, confounding the two instead, is reflected in his portrait of the law as the letter that kills and condemns, that over against his portrait of the gospel, which is a ministration of the Spirit that brings life and justifies (2 Cor. 3:6, 7).\footnote{145}

Turretin further argues for the “unity” and “difference” between the old and new covenant in opposition to the Lutherans in asserting that the agedness of the old covenant does not mean it differs essentially from what endures, provided that that which has become


\footnote{145 Turretin, Institutio theologiae elencticæ, XII.viii.12.}
old refers to “mode” and “circumstances” of the dispensation, “not to the thing itself.” Thus, while it is true that the Old Testament, even in reference to its gospel relation (soteria), has become old in regard to its circumstances and mode of dispensation, what is essential to it endures and remains fresh, namely Christ, who is the same yesterday, today, and forever (Heb. 13:8). This means that among other things, the carnal worship of the Old Testament was destined to be abrogated, for what the blood of animals establishes differs “essentially” from what Christ’s blood establishes. For the former could dedicate the Old Testament only with respect to the letter (Exod. 24:3, 4; Heb. 9:18, 19), whereas the latter also dedicates the Old Testament in its mystical relation. This must needs be the case, for the blood of animals functions as type, the true blood that saves is the blood of Christ, “by whose efficacy and merit alone the ancients could be saved” (Matt. 26:28).146

To further distinguish the Reformed position from the Lutheran proposal, Turretin carefully explains the different sort of opposition that exists between the two testaments and that which exists between law and gospel.

There is not the same opposition throughout between the Old and New Testaments as there is between the law and the gospel. The opposition of the law and the gospel (in as far as they are taken properly and strictly for the covenant of works and of grace and are considered in their absolute being) is contrary. They are opposed as the letter killing and the Spirit quickening; as Hagar gendering to bondage and Sarah gendering to freedom, although the law more broadly taken and in its relative being is subordinated to the gospel. But the opposition of the Old and New Testaments broadly viewed is relative, inasmuch as the Old contained the shadows of things to come (Heb. 10:1) and the New the very image (tēn eikōn).147

---

146 Turretin, Institutio theologicae elencticae, XII.viii.13-14.

In addition, as a further reinforcement of his argument, Turrettin argues that the Old and New Testaments agree in substance (broadly viewed), for the Old Testament, like the New, sets forth sacraments that are both significative and exhibitive. That is, the sacraments of the Old Testament (like those of the New) both signify and exhibit the thing signified; and what should not be missed is that the thing signified is Christ. Thus circumcision functions unto Abraham as a “seal of the righteousness of faith” (1 Cor. 10:4). And although during the old dispensation Christ had not yet appeared in the flesh, he is nonetheless exhibited not physically but morally in the promise in the way of such faith, for faith is “the substance of things hoped for” (Heb. 11:1).  

Moreover, turning to another matter, Turrettin maintains that while it is true that Moses and Christ can be juxtaposed, it is important to rightly consider the distinct ways in which they can be compared with one another—he specifies three such ways:

1. relatively, as type and prototype because Moses prefigured Christ in various particulars, whom on that account he predicts would be a prophet like unto himself (Dt. 18:15);  
2. comparatively, as the lesser is compared with the greater and the servant with his master (Heb. 3:4-6);  
3. by way of dissimilarity and opposition, inasmuch as the law was given by Moses and grace and truth by Jesus Christ (Jn. 1:17). Grace is opposed to the curse of the moral law and the truth to the shadows and figures of the ceremonial law, or it is called true grace as not concealed under typical and carnal figures.  

4. The Differences between the Old and New Testament Broadly Considered

Next Turrettin turns to set forth in a positive fashion the Reformed orthodox view regarding the difference between the Old and New Testaments (not strictly considered, for in this regard the two testaments differ as to substance, but broadly considered, in regard to which they do not differ in substance but only as to “accidents”—that is, as to “the circumstance and manner and degree of the thing”). Turrettin enumerates eight such differences. The Old and New Testaments differ:

---

148 Turrettin, *Institutio theologica eloquenalis*, XII.viii.16.  
149 Turrettin, *Institutio theologica eloquenalis*, XII.viii.17. For relevant collateral references, see footnotes 102, 103.
(1) As to time, for Christ—the center of the covenant—is depicted in the Old Testament as “to be manifested and to come,” whereas the New Testament depicts him as “already manifested and exhibited” (see Luke 10:23, 24).\textsuperscript{150}

(2) As to clarity, since in the Old Testament the mysteries come “veiled” and under the form of “shadows” and “types,” the Old Testament itself being “wholly symbolic and figurative,” whereas the mysteries are “unveiled” in the New Testament, the latter testament being characterized as “plain and open” (see 2 Cor. 3:7, 18; Heb. 10:1; Tit. 2:11; Heb. 4).\textsuperscript{151}

(3) As to easiness, for the administration and worship stipulated in the Old Testament was “far more burdensome” than what is required in the New—the difference is evident in the number, signification, and observance of the sacraments in each testament (see 1 Cor. 11:24).\textsuperscript{152}

(4) As to sweetness, because the Old Testament acccents the requirement of perfect obedience to the law (though “not to the simple exclusion of gospel promises”), while the New Testament accentuates the gospel promises (though “not to the exclusion of the law impelling to offer new obedience by the grace of regeneration”); yet the burdens are distinctly different, for the yoke of Christ (which is nothing less than “the cross” of following Christ) is “easy and light” inasmuch as New Testament believers are blessed with the full measure of the Holy Spirit’s bestowal (see Gal. 6:14; Matt. 11:30; Acts 2:17, 18, 28).\textsuperscript{153}

(5) As to perfection, for although the Old Testament knows “an essential perfection as to the substance of the covenant of grace,” this isn’t the case with respect to “accidental perfection as to degree;” for its economy is “typical” and “shadowy,” and in this way it differs from the new as radically as a shadow differs from the very image, even as the

\textsuperscript{150} Turretin, \textit{Institutio theologiae eklesticae}, XII.viii.18.

\textsuperscript{151} Turretin, \textit{Institutio theologiae eklesticae}, XII.viii.19.

\textsuperscript{152} Turretin, \textit{Institutio theologiae eklesticae}, XII.viii.20.

\textsuperscript{153} Turretin, \textit{Institutio theologiae eklesticae}, XII.viii.21.
Levitical priesthood is weak and unprofitable, and the sacrifices it stipulates are imperfect and cannot comfort the conscience. Hence the New Testament attains perfection in regard to substance and accident; announces the reality and enjoys its presence; abrogates the entire Levitical system in the coming of the one who is priest in the order of Melchizedek; and instates a worship that is “in Spirit,” apart from camal types and confinement of place, and “in truth,” without the Mosaic shadows (see Heb. 7:8-10; Psa. 40:7, 8; John 4:23; Col. 2:17; Heb. 10:1). 154

(6) As to freedom, inasmuch as “the spirit of bondage unto fear” prevails under the external dispensation of Old Testament, so that the fathers, being infants and minors, were under the severe and rigid guardianship of the law, ever driven to obedience for fear of punishment rather than by the promises of grace; and in this way they were under “the yoke of he law,” though possessing the right of freedom because of the gospel promises in the covenant of grace, and did not obtain a strong sense of that freedom. The New Testament however engenders freedom and fully reveals it, for “the Spirit of adoption” prevails under this dispensation of grace, which also provokes the declaration that God is our Father; what is more, being emancipated from the burden of guilt under the law, believers are treated as mature sons, so that they are in full possession of the blessings of the evangelical covenant, which both console them and encourages them in the way of faith (see Rom. 8:15; Gal. 4:1, 2, 26; Isa. 61:1, 2; Rom. 8:15; 2 Cor. 3:17). 155

(7) As to amplitude, for the Old Testament restricted the covenant privileges to one nation among the nations of the earth—the Jews, whereas the New Testament extends the covenant to “all indiscriminately,” and God works his blessing among all peoples and tribes in every place. The wall of separation has been broken down, and Jews and Gentiles are

154 Turretin, *Institutio theologiae elencticae*, XII.viii.22.
united into the one body of Christ (see John 4:22; Psa. 147:19, 20; Acts 10:34, 35; Eph. 2:12, 14; Col. 3:11).  

(8) Lastly, as to duration, since the Old Testament had become antiquated and was destined to abide “only until the time of reformation” (Heb. 9:10; Jer. 31:31)—in fact, the cessation of the Israelite republic, the repeated destruction of the temple, and the dispersion and confusion of the tribes testify to the transitory character of the Old Testament dispensation. The New Testament, by contrast, is perpetual and immutable, enduring “until the consummation of the ages.” Moreover, the New Testament enjoys a perfection of administration, for additional revelation is not needed or required, and a different priesthood and sacrifice cannot be added to Christ’s finished work of satisfaction. This is why the gospel is called “everlasting” (Rev. 14:6; also see Heb. 7:16).

In summary Turretin’s depiction of the differences between the Old and New Testament (broadly considered) may be depicted by way of a chart:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Old Testament</th>
<th>New Testament</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Time</strong></td>
<td>Precedes and predicts Christ</td>
<td>Follows and exhibits Christ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Clarity</strong></td>
<td>Obscure and shadowy</td>
<td>Clear and open</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Easiness</strong></td>
<td>Burdensome</td>
<td>Easy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sweetness</strong></td>
<td>Emphasis on obedience</td>
<td>Emphasis on grace</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Perfection</strong></td>
<td>Essential, but not accidental</td>
<td>Essential and accidental</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Freedom</strong></td>
<td>Infancy and minority</td>
<td>Maturity and adulthood</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Amplitude</strong></td>
<td>Jews alone</td>
<td>Jew and Gentile alike</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Duration</strong></td>
<td>Until Christ came</td>
<td>Everlasting</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

---

Turretin demonstrates that the unity and diversity between the testaments is critical for understanding rightly the nature of the covenant of grace in its twofold economy. To jettison the idea of the unity of the covenant first compromises and finally subverts the singular way of salvation for fallen humans who find themselves under the negative sanction of the covenant of works. However, to forfeit the diversity and difference which exist within that twofold economy, or to wrongly define it, imperils and ultimately sabotes either the distinction between law and gospel in their strict consideration or the distinction between the Old Testament in its strict legal relation (σχέσις) and its broad evangelical relation (σχέσις). Either way, the unity of the covenant of grace is endangered, for the Old Testament is disregarded or inappropriately set in opposition to the New Testament, and the way of salvation through Christ, the Mediator and Surety of the covenant, no longer extends to those living prior to his appearing in the flesh. Turretin, along with all the Reformed orthodox, was forced to walk a kind of theological tight-rope in explaining the unity and diversity of the two testaments—a tight-rope they believed was set forth in Scripture. For, as the Reformed sized up the matter, nothing less than the integrity of the evangelical covenant was at stake in the debate. Therefore, for Turretin, as Wallace observes, “there is no place for the Arminian (or Lutheran) rejection of the Old Testament…” Meanwhile, Turretin simultaneously argues that “there are crucial, though accidental, differences which are essential for our understanding” the difference between the Old and New Testaments.159

E. Intra-Reformed Debates concerning Christ’s Suretyship in the Covenant of Grace

Under the ninth and tenth questions of this topic, Turretin discusses the features, and relative strengths and weaknesses, of the opposing views among the Reformed orthodox concerning the nature of Christ’s suretyship, especially the nature of divine forgiveness for those living prior to Christ’s work of atonement. This topic considers a debate that raged in the Netherlands among followers of Gisbertus Voetius (1587-1676) and Johannes Cocceius

(1603-1669) during the latter half of the seventeenth century.\footnote{The disputes between Voetians and Cocceians, bringing much division and rancor among seventeenth-century Dutch Calvinists, are ably set forth by J. Reitsma, \textit{Geschiedenis van de Hervorming en de Hervormde Kerk van Nederland}, vijftiende, herziene druk bezoord door J. Lindeboom (s-Gravenhage: Martinus Nijhoff, 1949), 324-327, also see the literature cited there, as well as J. Kuiper, \textit{Geschiedenis van het Godsdienstig en Kerkelijk Leven van het Nederlandische Volk} (Utrecht: A. H. Ten Bokkel Huinink, 1900), 201-208; D. H. Kromminga, \textit{The Christian Reformed Tradition: from the Reformation to the Present} (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1943), 50-54; and F. G. M. Broeze and E. G. E. van der Wall, editors, \textit{Een richtingstreid in de Geformeerde Kerk: voetianen en coccejansen (1650-1750)} (Zoetermeer: Uitgeverij Boekencentrum, 1994). For an extended exposition and analysis of this debate, see Willem J. van Asselt, \textit{"Voetius en Coccejus over de rechvaarding,"} in J. van Oort, et al., eds., \textit{De onbekende Voetius. Voordrachten Wetenschappelijk Symposium 1989} (J. H. Kok: Kampen, 1989), 32-47; idem, \textit{Expromissio or Fiducia? A Seventeenth-Century Theological Debate between Voetians and Cocceians about the Nature of Christ's Suretyship in Salvation History,} \textit{Mid-America Journal of Theology} 14 (2003): 37-57; also Philip Benedict, \textit{Christ's Churches Purly Reformed: A Social History of Calvinism} (New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 2002), 338-341. On Voetius's theology, see, for example, W. J. van Asselt and E. Dekker, eds., \textit{De scholastieke Voetius: Een luisterfeesten aan de band van Voetius' Disputationes Selectae} (Zoetermeer, 1995); J. Van Oort, C. Graafland, et al., editors, \textit{De Onbekende Voetius} (Kampen: Uitgeversmaatschappij J.H. Kok, 1989); and for a treatment of J. Cocceius's federal theology see Willem J. van Asselt, \textit{The Federal Theology of Johannes Cocceius (1603-1669)}; idem, \textit{Johannes Cocceius: Portret van een zeventiende-eeuwse theoloog op oude en nieuwe wegen}, 68-70, 203-227; and Brian J. Lee, \textit{Biblical Exegesis, Federal Theology, and Johannes Cocceius}; and the literature cited in van Asselt and Lee.}\footnote{For a discussion of these Voetian and Coccean traits and their implications for Dutch public life, see Jonathan I. Israel, \textit{The Dutch Republic: Its Rise, Greatness, and Fall 1477-1806} (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995), 660-669; van Asselt, \textit{Johannes Cocceius}, 270-274.} As an intramural debate it proved to be quite contentious and heated (as intramural debates often are), for it came to have both moral-social and political overtones in the Netherlands, but it did not produce an ecclesiastical schism in the Dutch church as the Arminian debate had done at the beginning of the seventeenth century.\footnote{Heppe, \textit{Reformed Dogmatics}, 380-382, cites only Cocceius, van Mastricht, and Heidegger on this matter.} In any case, although the debate was centered among the Dutch churches, it also created controversy in other parts of Europe. Turretin, for his part, functions as a more neutral party in the disputation and seeks to find a remedy that is in keeping with Scripture and true to the nature of Christ's redemptive work.

1. The Nature of Christ’s Sponsion or Suretyship under the Old Testament

Under the ninth question Turretin takes up the manner of Christ’s sponsion or suretyship (sponsio) under the Old Testament. As noted before, Turretin emphasizes the necessity of Christ’s mediatorial role in the covenant of grace, for it is at the heart of his office as Surety (Sponsor). Christ fulfills not only the divine promises of the covenant, he also fulfills for us the conditions, “which being performed, the inheritance according to the testament will come to us (most especially as to the fullest satisfaction to be given to divine justice for our sins).”\(^\text{163}\) While the orthodox were united in their opposition to the Socinian notion of Christ’s work of atonement, they found themselves in disagreement concerning the state of believers living under the old covenant dispensation—that is, believers living prior to Christ’s accomplishment of redemption. Specifically the debate centered on the nature of Christ’s suretyship for those living before Christ’s death on the cross as a sacrifice of atonement. Was he a Surety for the fathers of the old covenant dispensation? Or to ask the question differently, were they freed from the debt of sin prior to Christ’s atoning work on the cross? If not, did they remain subject to divine punishment until Christ should make atonement for their sins?\(^\text{164}\)

Willem J. van Asselt has observed that Cocceius distinguished between “the forgiveness of sins (παρέσοις) under the old covenant (Old Testament) and forgiveness (δεσοις) under the new covenant (New Testament).”\(^\text{165}\) This sort of distinction was unacceptable to Voetius and his followers, for, as they saw it, if the pious of the Old

\(^{163}\) Turretin, *Institutio theologiae ecleasticae*, XII.ix.2.


Testament did not experience the full remission of their sins, such as to be released from the debt of sin and divine wrath, then the Cocceian formulation had the makings of the Roman doctrine of purgatory. Voetius and Cocceius came to different conclusions regarding the implications of πάσες and ἡφεσις, in part a difference between reading these terms as part of ordo salutis versus reading them as explaining the economy of redemption in the way of historia salutis. Van Asselt contrasts Cocceius’s theological assessment of these terms versus that of Voetius:

Cocceius did not see any significance for the order of salvation in the different New Testament terms for forgiveness—πάσες in Romans 3:25 and ἡφεσις in Hebrews 10:18—, unlike his Utrecht colleague Voetius, who saw this distinction as relating to the period before and after the conversion of the individual. Cocceius used these terms to refer to clearly demarcated economies of salvation within the covenant of grace. In Voetius’s judgment, this distinction implied that the believers of the Old Testament had not received any actual forgiveness, and had therefore not been fully saved. True and full forgiveness could then only be received after death.  

Turretin offers his own assessment as well. In giving focus to the nature and mode of Christ’s suretyship, especially as it applied to the Old Testament, Turretin addresses the distinction that came to define the debate itself, namely whether Christ’s sponsorship was that of a fideiusor or that of an expromissor. The distinction itself is rooted in Roman jurisprudence—such that in civil law a fideiusor is one who is obliged to pay the debt for another, but the other person remains under obligation as well, subject to sanction, until the fideiusor renders payment; an expromissor, on the other hand, is one who takes upon himself the obligation of another, so that the other is released from all obligation and set free from the guilt of debt.  

---

166 Van Asselt, “Expromissio or Fideiusor? A Seventeenth-Century Theological Debate,” 39; he references Gisbertus Voetius, Selectarum Disputationum Pars Quinta: In qua præcipue tractantur questiones ad primam theologiam partem spectantes (Utrecht, 1669), 277-382; idem, Disputationes selectae, V, 321, and he remarks that the Voetian minister Henricus Brink was also of this opinion as set forth in his polemical treatise Tost-steen der waarheid en der dualingen ofte klaare en beknopte verhandelingen van de occceaansche en cartesiansche verschillen (Amsterdam, 1685), 355.

167 Turretin, Institutio theologiae elencticæ, XII.ix.3. Turretin cites Justinian, Institutes, 3.20. See Muller’s definitions under “fideiusor” and “sponsio” in Dictionary of Latin and Greek Theological Terms; also van Asselt’s exposition of Cocceius’ position, The Federal Theology of Johannes Cocceius, 236-247.
The consensus among the Reformed orthodox was in line with the idea that, given these distinct senses of a Surety, Christ’s sponson bore the marks not only of a *fidejussor* but also of an *expromissor*, and as a consequence “the fathers were truly freed from the punishments due to them.” Turretin shares this view, but notes that even among legal scholars the terms are not always used with precision or with the kind of differentiation noted above, and so it should not be surprising that theologians use the terms interchangeably. Turretin also urges caution, for it is not proper for Christ’s suretyship to be explained according to “legal formulas.” Moreover, God’s tribunal must be distinguished from human tribunals, for there is not an insignificant difference between “pecuniary debt” before human judges and “penal debt” before God, the sovereign judge of all the world. Christ, too, is no ordinary man who acts on behalf of others, but he is the extraordinary one, the θεονομος (the God-man), “who, as a giver of his own life (*antipyschos*), substituted himself in our place and took upon himself the punishment due to us”—and as Turretin rightly observes, that sort of Surety is one that “the civil laws do not describe.” For Turretin, then, both terms, fidejussion (*fidejussio*) and expromission (*expromissio*), as defined by human judicatures, come up short of explaining or adequately elucidating Christ’s sponson, for the perfection of his suretyship is superior to both of these notions. Nonetheless, since no other terms are available to us, the suretyship of Christ “comes nearer to *expromissio* than to *fidejussio*, as it comprehends eminently and most perfectly whatever perfection and efficacy *expromissio* has.”

Turretin lays down four reasons for his position. First, from the nature of Christ’s suretyship itself; second, from the nature of the kind of sponson God’s justice demands;

---

168 Turretin, *Institutio theologiae eleccionis*, XII. ix. 4. Van Asselt (“*Expromissio* or *Fideiussio*? A Seventeenth-Century Theological Debate,” 51) states it this way: “Turrettini did not regard the terms *fideiussio* and *expromissio* as suitable for a discussion of Christ’s suretyship, because the matter at stake could not be compared to the procedures of civil law. However, given that the question had been raised at this level, the Genevan professor felt that preference had to be given to the concept of *expromissor*, since it more closely approximated the sufficiency and power of the suretyship.”
third, from the nature of the kind of sponsion that the elect require; and last, from the absoluteness and immutability contained in Christ's suretyship.

Christ's suretyship is according to his own "perfectly absolute" and "immutable" will to offer himself as substitute for the elect, making satisfaction for their sins. Thus the necessary implication is that there is a "real transference of debts to him," bringing "full deliverance and immunity" to those for whom he offers himself. The idea of fideiussio is inadequate here, for Christ, more in keeping with the idea of expromissio, takes the obligation of the elect upon himself, so that the payment of the guilt and penalty of sin could not be demanded from them; instead, the payment and penalty of sin is demanded from him alone. "The elect, who were the original debtors, were freed from all personal obligation and on that account no longer bound, so that if they should wish to pay for themselves, they would deservedly incur the crime of despisers of the Messiah, endeavoring to establish their own righteousness in addition to the acquired righteousness of God." Such is the crime of the Jews who despised Christ (Rom. 9:31, 32; 10:3).169

In support of this argument, Turretin refers to Isaiah 53:5, 6 ("But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all" – AV), noting that the notion of Christ taking the sins of his people is unreasonable unless there is a genuine transference of debt upon him and a liberation of debt for the guilty. For the sins of the elect are exacted of Christ unto the suffering of punishment and death inasmuch as they were imputed to him as Surety according to God's eternal counsel. Psalm 40:7, 8 ("Then said I, Lo, I come: in the volume of the book it is written of me, I delight to do thy will, O my God: yea, thy law is within my heart" – AV) stands in support of this idea as well, for Christ's office is to do his father's will unto his substitutionary death on the cross, the definitive

169 Turretin, Institutio theologiae celestiae, XII.ix.5.
suffering and sacrifice, wholly acceptable to God. In coming to do his will, Christ comes to
do God’s eternal and immutable will, the divine will wherein he is the constituted Surety and
acting in that capacity he alone makes satisfaction for sins, as it is written in “the volume
of the book,” that is, the Scriptures. This eternal (versus a mere temporal) understanding of
Christ’s suretyship is confirmed from Revelation 13:8, for he is “the Lamb slain from the
foundation of the world.” Says Turretin, this refers to both the “efficacy” and the “certainty”
of his “sponsio.” “Thus a sacrifice to be made only after many ages is considered as already
offered.”

Second, if consideration is given to the nature of the thing itself, then the inescapable
conclusion is that Christ’s suretyship bears the marks of suretyship as expromission. This is
evident in relation to God, in relation to the elect, and in relation to Christ. The sponsio is
made to God, for his justice demands payment after the manner of an expromissor rather than
of a fidejussor. Since humans are incapable of atoning for their sins, what is requisite is “the
absolute sponsio of the Son.” Since God foreknew Christ’s sure payment for sins, he does
not demand payment of sin’s penalty from the ones for whom Christ dies. “Yea, since the
works of God are known to him from eternity (Acts 15:18) by the light of omniscience that
sponsio was observed by God not only as future, but even as present, yea, as actually
performed; and its efficacy gave the same benefits to the fathers which we enjoy, which a
mere fidejussio could not have conferred.” What is more, the perfection of Christ’s
suretyship, as one who from eternity offers himself to the Father and stands in the place of
sinners, and from eternity is ordained to come into the world in the fullness of time and
make satisfaction for sin, is accomplished in the way of a Sponsor who functions as an

170 Turretin, Institutione theologiae clementiae, XII.ix.6-7.
18, per lumen omniscientiae Sponsio ista non modo ut futura, sed jam ut præsens, mo ut peracta Deo
observabatur, et efficacia sua eadem beneficia Patribus dabat, quibus fruimur, quod mens fidejussio praestare
non potuisset.” Also see Turretin’s discussion of whether it is legitimate to speak of eternal justification for
God’s elect (XVI.vii-viii.).
expromissor and not merely as a fidejussor. “Hence such was the efficacy and effect of that sponson that in virtue of it the fathers were wholly freed from all punishments [they fully merited] so that the payment could no longer be demanded of them”—something Cocceius and his followers cannot deny.\footnote{172}

Third, as is evident from the kind of sponson the elect require, Christ’s suretyship must follow in the way of expromissio, not merely of fidejussio. A fidejussor can assure a creditor that he or she will receive payment, but a fidejussor cannot assure a creditor that the payment will actually be made by the fidejussor himself, for the payment could finally come from the one on behalf of whom the fidejussor promises to act. But this cannot be said concerning the elect; nor can it be said concerning the Sponsor of God’s elect, for God does not expect a payment from the elect but from their Surety, according to the intratrinitarian pactum and his eternal decree. “On this account,” says Turretin, “the surety was bound to take the payment absolutely upon himself and thus actually to bear the relation of expromissor.” An expromissor, in acting on behalf of those under his care, fully and completely delivers them from their debt; and so he is their security. Christ acts in this way for his people, for their salvation isn’t a mere provision secured by him in the event other avenues are unsuccessful—a kind of safety net to catch them if they fail to meet the requirements themselves. Not at all. Instead, Christ acts as an expromissor, so that they are freed and under no further obligation. “Otherwise it would be said that . . . they were esteemed just before God and yet were always under guilt (which is absurd [asystaton]).”\footnote{173}

\footnote{172} Turretin, \textit{Institutio theologiae eleisonis}, XII.ix.9. “Unde talis fuit efficacia et effectus istius sponsonis, ut ejus virtute Patres plane ab omnibus penis, ab ipsis committeris sint liberati, ut soluto ab ipsis amplius exigi non potuerit.” Turretin refers to Cocceius’s comments in \textit{Summa Theologicae ex Scripturis repetita} (Geneva, 1665), 35.2 in \textit{Opera omnia} (1701-1706), 7:239.

\footnote{173} Turretin, \textit{Institutio theologiae eleisonis}, XII.ix.10. “Ideo Sponsor debuit absolute solutionem in se recipere, adeoque rationem Expromissoris reipso habere. Denique cum non tantum salvandi fuerint per Christum, sed reipso salvati sint, et in coelem recepti per vim Sponsionis Christi; non sufficit Christum fuisset Fidejussorem, qui post se non trahit primariorum debitorum personalem liberationem, sed necessario rationem Expromissoris debuit habere, qui omninomad liberationem acquirit is pro quibus spondet. Alias dicendum foret, eos . . . justos habitos fuisset coram Deo, et tamen fuisset semper sub reatu, quod est \textit{asystaton}.”
Fourth and lastly, that Christ’s suretyship bears the marks of expromission is evident from the absoluteness and immutability contained in it. In fact, Christ’s role as the *expromissor* of God’s elect is the supreme and perfect depiction of expromission. Given that in human courts the surety alone is obliged to make payment (the original debtor being wholly delivered from all obligation), which means that the debt is demanded from the surety alone and he alone bears the expectation of payment, the idea of suretyship in God’s court ought not to be diminished in any way. For consider this: Christ’s sponson likewise frees his people, the elect, from all personal obligation and payment for their sins inasmuch as Christ pledged himself absolutely to the payment of their penalty; and from him alone may payment be expected or exacted. “This is further confirmed,” says Turretin, “by the end of the sponson itself (which was no other than the absolute deliverance of the elect) and since this could not fail to take place, it ought necessarily to put on the nature of an expromission and not only of a fidejussion.”\(^{174}\)

We pause here a moment to make a few observations. First, while van Asselt’s remarks regarding Turretin’s critique of Cocceianism are accurate, they perhaps slightly understate the Genevan professor’s sharp critique of *fidejussor*, for while it is true that Turretin judges both terms to be inadequate, he nonetheless robustly rejects *fidejussor* and by comparison stoutly defends the idea of *expromissor*. Second, it should be observed that Turretin’s argument at this juncture is largely theological. Since the matter in question concerns Christ’s atoning work as the guarantor of the *covenant of grace*, with the efficacy of his sacrifice directed to God’s elect, Turretin draws out the implications of the doctrine of election for Christ’s work as Surety. This is not to suggest, as one line of scholarship maintains, that Turretin deduces his doctrine of the covenant from his doctrine of election. He does, however, show how particular doctrines of Scripture, in this case divine election and Christ’s sponson, relate to one another and shape theological formulation. It should also be noted,

---

\(^{174}\) Turretin, *Institutio theologiae elencticae*, XII.ix.11.
thirdly, how Christology plays a pivotal role in Turretin’s treatment of this question, for Christ’s work of satisfaction involves pacifying divine justice, and that perfectly.\textsuperscript{175}

In this connection, it seems that absolute payment, relative to Old Testament believers while they lived, stands opposed to the Cocceian position. Van Asselt demonstrates how Wilhelms Momma (1642-1677), a disciple of Cocceius, argued against the notion that Christ, as the Sponsor of believers of the Old Testament, delivered them from guilt “in an absolute sense.”

After all, if Christ had taken the debt upon himself from all eternity, then the historical datum of his death on the cross at Golgotha would no longer have any significance. At most, then, that death would have significance for Christ himself, by relieving him of his suretyship.\textsuperscript{176}

Under “sources of solution” Turretin considers further arguments that opponents set forth in opposition to his staked out position; in doing so, he offers his counter-arguments in defense of the idea that the sponse of Christ, since it was “absolute” according to God’s immutable decree, could not be set aside—as if God exacts the payment for sin from the elect themselves.

With the intervention of a sponsor, Turretin avers, the original debtor is relieved of all responsibility, and the creditor may exact payment only from the surety. If this were not the case, the legitimacy of a sponse would be overthrown and the honesty of the sponsor compromised.

So here, because Christ by his sponse took upon himself the burden of paying for sinners, God by that very thing laid aside the will of exacting the debt from them. This neither the divine equity could endure (that two should remain bound), when content with the satisfaction of one and in absolute obligation to it, he had fully acquiesced in it. Nor could his wisdom and truth endure that the debt should be demanded from those for

\textsuperscript{175} Turretin treats these matters under questions 10, 11, and 12 under Topic XIV.

\textsuperscript{176} Van Asselt, “Expromissio or Fideissio? A Seventeenth-Century Theological Debate,” 47. Van Asselt’s reference and footnote is as follows: “See W. Momma, De varia conditione et statu ecclesiae sub tripliis economia: patriarcharum, ac Testamenti Veteris et denique Novi libri tres, 2 (sic) vols. (Amsterdam, 1673-1675). Momma discussed the sponio Christi extensively in vol. 3, 15f. The Dutch translation of Abraham Poot entitled Drie boeken van de verschillende gelegenheit en staat der kerke Gods onder de drieelijde buisbouding der patriarchen, des Ouden en eindeelij de Nieuwen Testaments (Amsterdam, 1675-1677) dealt with the issue on pp. 40ff.” Turretin rejects the notion of justification from eternity, see Topic XVIiz.3-6.
whom (by an absolute decree) a sponsor had been constituted and in whom they are justified and exempted from all punishment. Nor could his goodness and mercy endure, holding as guilty and debtors those for whose deliverance he placed himself as sponsor at the bar of God.\textsuperscript{177}

To be sure, in the way of fidejussio, a creditor may mistrust the surety and if his spousion proves unreliable or false, the creditor retains the rights to exact payment of the debt from the original debtor. But this is hardly a legitimate way to conceive of Christ’s spousion for sinners. “How could his absolute promise made in the eternal decree of God and after it in the oracles of the Old Testament . . . be recalled without by that very thing the immutable decree of God being rescinded and election to salvation being changed or being consistent with the punishment of the elect?” This is an entirely impossible and an absurd line of thinking.\textsuperscript{178}

While it is true that, for those living under the Old Testament administration, the payment for sin had not yet been made by Christ, it is not true to say that the Old Testament fathers were still bound to make payment themselves or that God could still demand payment from them. “The payment was to be made only by the sponsor, from whom alone it must be sought and expected, according to God’s eternal decree and covenant.”\textsuperscript{179} But Turretin wishes to examine this issue from another angle—namely from the perspective of the believer’s union with Christ. For “on account of the union subsisting between us and

\textsuperscript{177} Turretin, \textit{Institutio theologiae elencticar.}, XII.ix.12. “Ita hic quia Christus sponsione sua recepto in se omus pro peccatoribus solvendi, Deus eo ipso depositum voluntatem exigendi ab ipsis debitum; hoc enim nec \textit{Æquitas} divina ferre posset, ut duo obligati maneant, cum unius satisfactione, et absoluta ad illam obligatione contenta, in ea plene acqueverint; nec \textit{Sapientia et Veritas}, ut exigatur debitum ab illis pro quibus absoluto decreto Sponsor constitutus est, et in quo justificati sunt et ab omni poena exempti; nec \textit{Bontias et Misericorsa}, ut habeat pro reis et debitoribus, pro quibus liberandis sponsor sese stulti Dei judicio.”

\textsuperscript{178} Turretin, \textit{Institutio theologiae elencticar.}, XII.ix.13. “Quomodo promissio ejus absoluta in aeterno Dei decreto, et ex eo in Oraculis Veteris Testamenti facta . . . potuit revocari, quin eo ipso immutabile Dei decretum rescinderetur, et electio ad salutem mutaretur, vel consideraret cum punitone Electorum?”

\textsuperscript{179} Turretin, \textit{Institutio theologiae elencticar.}, XII.ix.14. “Quia solutio danda fuit tantum a Sponsore, a quo solo reptenda et expectanda fuit, juxta decretum aeternum et fœdus Dei.”
Christ (while Christ has satisfied for us) it is just the same as if we ourselves had made satisfaction by him (2 Cor. 5:15, 21).  

Turretin also observes that given what is said about Christ "in time," namely that he was the one who became "sin" who knew no sin and that he became a "curse" who was God’s beloved Son, "so it is not repugnant that from eternity he was bound to the actual endurance of that curse in the nature to be assumed (which is to take upon himself the vicarious guilt of the elect)."

But Turretin is also careful to explain in what sense our sins are laid upon Christ. As van Asselt asserts (expositing Turretin’s views):

If the issue at stake is one of criminal guilt rather than monetary debt, then the former is not in all respects transferable to the one who stands as surety. In the case of criminal guilt, however, a distinction can be made between the obligation to bear a concrete punishment (obligatio poenali) on the one hand, and moral guilt (obligatio personali) on the other. Whereas the former is transferable to Christ as the one who stands as surety, our moral guilt cannot be transferred to Christ; by grace, it is, however, annulled in Christ.

Or in Turretin’s own words, "Hence although our sins may be called Christ’s, as to the imputation of guilt, they do not cease to be ours as to ownership and commission." Thus Christ paid for our sins in our place and in our name, and this is "a vicarious payment by a gracious acceptance."

---

180 Turretin, *Institutio theologiae elencticae*, XII.ix.14. "Quamvis vero propter unionem, quae nobis intercedit cum Christo, dum Christus pro nobis satisfecit, tantundem est ac si nosmet per ipsum satisfecissemus, 2 Cor. v. 15, 21."

181 Turretin, *Institutio theologiae elencticae*, XII.Ix.15. "Ut Christo θεατρού non est injuriam dici peccatum et maledictionem in tempore; sic non repugnat ab aterno ad actualem illius maledictionis perpersionem in natura assumenda obligari, quod est reatum vicarium electorum in se suscipere."


183 Turretin, *Institutio theologiae elencticae*, XII.ix.16. "Non eadem est ratio translationis debiti pecuniarii in Sponsorem, et debiti poenalis. Ila potest esse absoluta et plena quoad omnem rationem debiti, quia non attenditur quis solvat, sed tantum quod solvatur, non persona, sed pecunia. Sed in criminalibus ubi resIpicitur persona, et non tantum poena, obligatio nequit quoad omnes partes transferri in Sponsorem, sed tantum quod aliquid, minium quod certam peinam Vadi infligendam loco Rei, non vero quoad obligationem personalem, seu peinam in propria persona ferendum. Peccata nostra dicuntur in Christum transfita ratione prioris, non vero posterioris; nec personalis nostra obligatio est in Christum transfita, sed gratioso dissoluta. Unde licet peccata nostra possint dici Christi, ratione imputationis reatus, non desinunt esse nostra ratione proprietatis, et commissionis. Et ut in locum nostrum se substituit; Ita quicquid solvit, pro nobis et nomine nostro solvisse.
In this connection, van Asselt correctly observes that these remarks demonstrate why Christ’s sponsio could not be represented by expromissio in every sense, which also demonstrates how Turretin was seeking to reckon with the Cocceian critique of Christ’s suretyship as expromission. 184 Although Turretin wages a vigorous polemic in support of Christ as an expromissor versus a mere fidejussor, he has not forgotten his earlier remarks concerning the inadequacy of these judicial concepts for describing Christ’s suretyship and work of redemption, involving as it does “vicarious punishment.” For he asserts that in calling Christ an expromissor, he does not thereby think that Christ was a “mere expromissor” or that Christ’s work of atonement was merely a “judicial transference.”

Actually Turretin argues that a judicial expromissio differs from Christ’s sponsio in at least three ways. First, in a judicial expromissio the obligation of debt, which is the responsibility of the original debtor, can become another’s as to all its parts, for “pecuniary debts” are wholly transferable to another. Second, in a judicial expromissio it isn’t necessary that the payment of such debts “should be said to be made in the place of another,” for where criminal actions are involved no sort of expromissio applies. Third, in a judicial expromissio, although the original debtor’s obligation is transferred to the expromissor, so that the sponsor or “delegated debtor” now is bound for the payment, that doesn’t mean that remission is made, for there still remains the obligation to the payment of the same thing—that is, it is still due. 185

This is not the case in this business where a vicarious punishment only and not a proper and personal punishment is paid for us. But this only we urge in order to explain the perfection and efficacy of Christ’s suretyship (which cannot be sufficiently understood by fidejussion alone), so that here the suretyship of Christ is always to be considered as far more perfect and excellent than any civil expromission. 186

185 Turretin, Instituto theologicae eleceticae, XII.ix.17.
186 Turretin, Instituto theologicae eleceticae, XII.ix.17. “... quod in hoc negotio non occurrit, ubi pena vicaria tantum pro nobis, non vero propria et personalis luitur. Sed hoc tantum urgemus, ut perfectionem et efficaciam Sponsionis Christi explicemus, quae per solam fidejussionem non potest sufficienter intelligi, ut hic semper Sponsio Christi longe perfectior et praestantior dicenda sit quavis expromissione civilis.”
Turretin’s bigger concern is to expose the inadequacy of fidejussion, taken by itself. For when Christ is called the “Surety” in Hebrews 7:22 (“By so much was Jesus made a Surety of a better testament” — AV),¹⁸⁷ his suretyship may not be confined to the notion of fidejussion, especially since this dimension of Christ’s work is applied just as much to the New Testament era (when no one disputes that he acted as an expromissor) as to the Old Testament era. What is more, the word ἐγγυός “denotes not only a mere fidejussor, but also an expromissor.”¹⁸⁸

Turretin also points out that the animals sacrificed according to the levitical legislation (“the legal and irrational (a logos) victims”) are not like Christ (“the heavenly and divine victim”) in various important respects; and pertaining to the issue at hand they differ in regard to the manner of the transference of sin. For whereas the transfer of guilt unto the expiation of sin came upon the sacrificial animals by a ceremonial act of the sinner (according to God’s appointment), the transfer of guilt could come upon Christ before his actual sacrifice on the cross, “since he voluntarily undertook that office by the decree of God.” In fact, “it was necessary that his voluntary promise and sponson should precede the oblation that the fruit of it might flow out to the Old Testament believers, who by faith should apply to themselves the power of Christ’s merit, even then effectual for their deliverance.”¹⁸⁹

Turretin offers this elaboration:

¹⁸⁷ NIV — “Because of this oath, Jesus has become the guarantee of a better covenant.” NA — κατὰ τοῦτο [καὶ] κρείττονος διαθήκης γέγονεν ἐγγυός Θεοῦ. The Textus Receptus omits the bracketed καὶ.

¹⁸⁸ Turretin (Institutio theologiae eleccticae, XII.ix.18) cites various lexicons and commentators in support: “Engys, anadiochos, but anadecloushai is the proper act of an expromissor (Hesychius Alexandrius Lexicon [1860], 2:6); who receives upon himself and acknowledges as his own a debt, according to Budascus (“Commentar. linguae Graecae,” Opera omnia [1557/1969], 4:3); cf. Martinius in his Lexicon Phiologicum (1697), p. 24 on the words engy, sponso, expromissio, anadoche.”

¹⁸⁹ Turretin, Institutio theologiae eleccticae, XII.ix.19. “Sed nihil obstat translatiorem factam esse in Christum, antequam actu offerretur, quem munus illud sponte susceperit ex Dei decreto. Imo necesse fuit ejus promissionem et sponsonem voluntarium antecedere oblationem, ut fructus ejus manaret ad fideles V. T. qui per fidem sibi applicare debuerent vim meriti Christi, jam tum efficacis ad sui liberationem.”
Although the ceremonial law with its sacrifices in its legal relation (σχέσει) was like a handwriting which inculcated the right of the violated covenant of works, on that account however it did not intimate that the suretyship of Christ was a mere fidejussio and that believers still remained bound under guilt. In its evangelical relation (σχέσει) (insomuch as it was a type of Christ), it shadowed forth the deliverance from guilt and the justification given in Christ, the surety. Hence circumcision is called the seal of the righteousness of faith (Rom. 4:11) and the Rock was Christ (1 Cor. 10:4).190

Although Turretin does not directly quote an important “Cocceian” passage at this juncture, he does allude to it, specifically Colossians 2:14 (“Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross”).191 As van Asselt has shown, the Cocceians viewed this passage as undermining the notion of expromission.

If an absolute transfer of debt had taken place, then it would have been “improper” to demand “debenture” (record of debt) from the believers under the Old Testament. This [debenture] χειρόγραφου mentioned in Col. 2:14, was “demanded” of the believers under the Old Testament until such time as Christ had actually settled the debt. According to Momma, this text could not be accounted for in the case of a surety in the sense of expromissio.192

Van Asselt also points out how the Cocceians detected a redemptive historical problem with Christ’s sponsio understood as expromission.

[Colossians 2:14] presupposes that a χειρόγραφος (debenture) could be demanded of believers under the Old Testament. Yet, by designating Christ an expromissor, the Old and New Testament dispensations are made to coincide. The distinction between the Old and New Testament is thus erased. The “better” (Heb. 7:22), which God has provided for believers under the New Testament, is thus darkened. Thus no justice is done to “the blood of the cross,” and the gratitude owed to God by the believers in the New Testament is removed.193

190 Turretin, Instituta theologiae elencticæ, XII.i.20. “Licut Lex ceremonialis eam cum? Sacrificiis in σχέσει sua Legis fuerit instar chirographi, quod inculcavit iuris violati fides Operum; non ideo tamen importavit Sponsorum Christi fuisse meram fidejussionem, ut fideles manere adhuc obligatos sub reatu; Quia in σχέσει sua Evangelica, quatenus erat typus Christi, adumbrabat liberationem a reatu, et justificationem in Christo Sponsore datum. Unde Circumcisionis dictitur sigillum justitiae fidei, Rom. iv. 11, et Petra Christus, 1 Cor. x.4.”

191 NA27 – ἔξελείψες τὸ καθ’ ἡμῖν χειρόγραφον τοῖς δόγμασιν ὡς ἤπειραντό ἡμῖν, καὶ αὐτὸ ἢκεν ἐκ τοῦ μέσου τροπολογίας αὐτὸ τὰ στεφάνα; the Textus Receptus is the same except for punctuation. NIV – “having canceled the written code, with its regulations, that was against us and that stood opposed to us; he took it away, nailing it to the cross”; NASB – “having canceled out the certificate of debt consisting of decrees against us, which was hostile to us; and He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross.” The key term, χειρόγραφος, refers to a record of owing a debt or the record of one indebted.


Here, under this *quuestio*, Turretin's presents a portion of his response to such arguments (in the *quuestio* that follows he deals with the matter at greater length). At this point in his exposition, Turretin is careful to distinguish the ceremonial law in its "legal relation," including its prescriptions concerning the sacrifice for sin (which presupposes the imposition of the negative sanction of the covenant of nature—that is, the "handwriting of ordinances" or the "written code of debt"), and in its "evangelical relation," where it functions typologically in anticipation of Christ's subsequent and definitive sacrifice within the history of salvation. Thus the ceremonial law (involving the entire levitical sacrificial system) in its legal relation announced human guilt; but in its evangelical relation, pointing as it did to Christ, it could rightly foreshadow the verdict of forgiveness and justification in Christ. That it "foreshadows" or "shadows forth" such graces does not mean genuine forgiveness and justification could not or did not come to Old Testament believers; rather, precisely because the ceremonial law in its evangelical relation functioned in this way, shadowing forth Christ, there could be forgiveness and justification for the pious of the Old Testament. This does not negate or otherwise render superfluous the work of Christ in the history of redemption. On the contrary, it makes Christ's work a kind of necessity—but rooted in God's freedom—, for without it the covenant of grace would be negated and God's promises in Christ would be unfulfilled, making God untrue to his word.

Thus it is not true that the differences between the Old and New Testaments are obliterated or otherwise diminished. Turretin's point is that it is possible to maintain the necessity of Christ's atoning work within redemptive history, a necessity according to God's decree as the sole remedy for human guilt, while applying that remedy to (Old Testament) believers prior to its actual occurrence. Scripture does this in calling circumcision the seal of righteousness by faith (Rom. 4:11) and in identifying the Rock as Christ (1 Cor. 10:4). Although Turretin does not say it explicitly, his reply to the Cocceian argument regarding the
“debenture” of Colossians 2:14 is that this refers to the law in its legal denouncement, not its evangelical foreshadowing of the atoning work of Christ.\textsuperscript{194}

Once more it should be observed that although Turretin wants to be circumspect in how he treats this matter, his sympathies are clearly allied with the Voetian side of the debate, for he concludes his discussion by commending Melchoir Leydekker’s work, saying that he engages the subject “fully and solidly.”\textsuperscript{195}

2. The Debate Surrounding the Greeks Words ἀφεσις and πέρεσις

Meanwhile, the query that follows is directly related to the former one. For Turretin formulates the tenth quastio as follows: “Whether the fathers under the Old Testament can be said to have been still under the wrath of God and the curse of the law, and to have remained under the guilt of sin even until the death of Christ; nor had apheσις [ἀφεσις] or a full and properly so-called remission of sins been made, but only a paresis [πέρεσις].” Turretin, typical of his desire to avoid unnecessary controversy, works toward a resolution of this controversy with his guarded reply: “\textit{We make distinctions.”}\textsuperscript{196}

In seeking to clarify the question, Turretin observes that all parties are agreed that under the New Testament Christ made the sacrifice for sin that issues forth unto the remission of sin and the actual obtainment of reconciliation with God. The matter in dispute

\textsuperscript{194} The Cocceians’ appeal to Colossians 2:14 is a bit odd in any case, since the interest of that letter is to address Gentile converts to Christianity, not Jews who had long stood under the promises of redemption. Thus the debenture referred to in this text has to do with the transition of Gentile believers from a former state of unbelief and alienation from God, where they stood under the sentence of death, to their present state of peace with God, being circumcised with a circumcision made without hands, being baptized in Christ and made alive with him, having all their transgressions forgiven, for God did this by canceling the record of debt that stood against them with its legal demands. Cf. Col. 2:6-15.

\textsuperscript{195} Turretin, \textit{Institutio theologicae elencticae}, XII.ix.20. Turretin specifically recommends Leydekker’s \textit{Vis Veritatis, sive disquisitionum ad nonnullas controversias, quae bodie in Belgio positumum movener de testamentis et economia foederum Dei habri V} (Utrecht, 1679), Book 2, Cont. 1 & 2, pp. 72-120. Additional sources of Leydekker include \textit{Synopsis controversiarum de Foedere et Testamento Dei} (Utrecht, 1679); \textit{Filius Dei Sponsor. Of de Loff en Eere Jesu Christi, onse Vredaworst en Borge} (Amsterdam: J. van Hardenberg, 1708). Van Asselt points out that, for his part, Leydekker (a Voetian) appealed to Turretin, a Reformed theologian with an international reputation, in opposition to Cocceians, demonstrating that Turretin did not subscribe to the notion of Christ’s suretyship as fidiusius.

\textsuperscript{196} Turretin, \textit{Institutio theologicae elencticae}, XII, Quastio X. “\textit{An Patres sub Vet. Test. Dicat possentuisse adhibe sub ira Dei, et maledictione Legis, et permississe in reatu peccati, ursque ad mortem Christi; Nec habuisse ἀφεσιν, seu plenam et propriam remissionem pecatorum, sed tantum πέρεσιν? D.”}
has to do with "the moral application" of Christ's payment for sin so that believers cannot be regarded as indebted to God inasmuch as they enjoy the full remission of all their sins. The issue, then, is whether Old Testament believers, prior to Christ's work of atonement, knew forgiveness and were reckoned as forgiven in this sense.\textsuperscript{197} Turretin likewise explains that all parties are agreed that the law lacks the power and efficacy in itself to effect justification, for the law is weak and wholly incompetent in this respect (Turretin cites Heb. 7:18, 19; 10:1-3). And this means that believers, considered in themselves and under the law, are under guilt—their own consciences testifying to their sin. Thus the question has to do with the power and efficacy of divine grace, especially of the sacrifice of Christ prefigured in the sacrifices of the levitical legislation, whether these sacrifices "obtained in the internal dispensation of the covenant of grace a full remission of all sins in virtue of the future death of Christ."\textsuperscript{198}

While all parties also agree that the believer's sense of divine forgiveness, along with the peace and comfort that accompany it, varies in degree from the Old Testament period to the New—with a greater or fuller sense of consolation coming with the new covenant, the point contested is whether the fathers were still guilty before God and under the curse of the law, such that they did not possess "a true taking away (aphein) of sins or a full remission of them, but only a letting-go (parein) and passing by (in which they could be still bound to the handwriting and to the payment of the debt)."\textsuperscript{199} Stated a bit differently, it is not disputed that New Testament believers enjoyed a peculiar privilege that the Old Testament fathers did not, namely the remission of their sins and justification before God as the result of Christ's actual payment for sins, so that they were absolutely free from the law's verdict of condemnation (the "handwriting")—this being blotted out on the cross. Rather, what is at

\textsuperscript{197} Turretin, \textit{Institutio theologiae elencticae}, XII.x.2.

\textsuperscript{198} Turretin, \textit{Institutio theologiae elencticae}, XII.x.3.

\textsuperscript{199} Turretin, \textit{Institutio theologiae elencticae}, XII.x.4.
issue, says Turretin, is whether the privilege of justification enjoyed by New Testament believers is the only legitimate name for the remission (ἀφέσις) of sins or whether the fathers did not also know the remission of sins in anticipation of Christ’s future payment. Turretin argues that the latter is indeed a legitimate instance of divine forgiveness.\(^{200}\)

Therefore, the question returns to this—whether under the Old Testament the sins of the fathers were so translated to Christ, the surety, that in virtue of the payment to be made in his own time, they obtained a true and full remission of all their sins and from a sense of it (if not full and perfect, still true and real), they could have a tranquillized conscience and enjoy solid consolation. Or whether (notwithstanding the suretyship of Christ) the fathers still remained under the curse of the law and the conscience of sin and were accused of it and the payment could always be demanded from them. And if any remission was granted to them, it had the relation of a passing by (παρέσυροι) [παρέσκευα] rather than of removal (ἀφέσις) [ἀφέσωσαν]. The former we assert; the latter, however, the learned men with whom we deal assert.\(^{201}\)

Because the Cocceians held that Christ was only a fideiussor, they maintained that the Old Testament fathers were liable, and that the payment of the sins was not yet accomplished but merely overlooked until Christ should come and finally accomplish for them what could not be accomplished in the foreshadowing of the levitical stipulations. Thus the fathers were still under guilt and subject to God’s wrath, and “remained . . . under the malediction of the law and the conscience of sin” until Christ should make satisfaction for them. They lived under a παρέσκευα, a “pretermission” rather than under ἀφεσις, that is, a full and complete “remission” of all their sins. Remission belongs to the latter times, to the New Testament period forward, and that justification is attained for believers of the Old Testament upon the completion of Christ’s atoning work.\(^{202}\)

---

\(^{200}\) Turretin, Instauratio theologiae electricae, XII.x.5.


\(^{202}\) Turretin, Instauratio theologiae electricae, XII.x.7. For an analysis of Cocceius’s defense of this distinction, see Lee, “Biblical Exegesis, Federal Theology, and Johannes Cocceius,” 190-193, 205-216.
Turretin recognizes the validity and importance of distinguishing between the Old Testament and the New Testament, and the distinct state of believers under each dispensation. He likens it as the difference between “infants and minors,” who require tutors and the discipline of schoolmasters, and “adults and the emancipated,” who are allowed to use their goods responsibly. Turretin likewise does not deny that under the Old Testament economy the threatenings of the law “terrified the consciences of sinners and held them under a slavish yoke.” But he does not believe that divine forgiveness was forestalled, divine wrath being held in abeyance until Christ should accomplish his sacrificial work. Thus it is false to say the fathers were still under the guilt of sin and God’s wrath, and that they “could not have a tranquilized conscience from a full remission of sins.”

To demonstrate that the fathers were not under guilt, Turretin argues that the opposing view is repugnant to a variety of other theological ideas, and this in at least seven respects. (1) The position of the Cocceians is repugnant to the suretyship of Christ. Being the Sponsor of his people means that their sins are transferred to him; but Christ is their guarantor from eternity, or as Turretin had earlier argued, Christ is the one slain from the foundation of the world (Rev. 13:8). Thus the believers of the Old Testament could not be under the guilt of their sins if Christ bears them as Surety.

(2) According to Turretin, the Cocceian view is repugnant to the nature of the covenant of grace under which the fathers lived. For this covenant implies communion with God; however, communion with God is impossible for those who are yet under the guilt of sin and divine wrath. A person who is yet under sin’s guilt and condemnation cannot be in God’s favor and fellowship. “Otherwise,” says Turretin, “reconciliation can consist with wrath, blessing with cursing and a state of justification with the guilt of sin. . . .,” which is absurd (ἀσώστατος) in the highest degree. But it isn’t absurd to say that although the curse of

---

203 Turretin, Institutio theologicae eclestiae, XII.x.8.

204 Turretin, Institutio theologicae eclestiae, XII.x.9.
the law (*maledictio Legis*) still uttered its threatenings to the ancient fathers, deliverance from those threatenings was immediately obtainable for them inasmuch as the threatenings of the law was designed that the remedy of God's grace in Christ should be found. For Christ, in the way of his sponson and by the power of his "future death," delivered the ancient fathers from the curse of the law. As Bernard said about Christ's death, "it profited before it took place."\(^{205}\)

(3) This view is repugnant to the guilt of sin, which can refer to personal punishment (*penam personalem*) to be endured by the offender himself or to a punishment due to sin in general (*penam in genere peccato debitam*) in which they participate. But neither applies to the ancient fathers. For the fathers could not be under personal guilt and obligation if they were redeemed, that is, set free from all personal punishment. And while it is true that their guilt was not "transferred properly to the surety because it was a personal and proper punishment (which cannot be transferred to another) still it was so relaxed and dissolved by the sponson of Christ that it cannot bind believers anymore." Likewise, they were not under the guilt of sin in general, for that too was laid upon Christ as the guarantor, and his vicarious payment for sin brought "full immunity" (*plena immunitas*) for them.\(^{206}\)

(4) The Cocceian view is repugnant to the justification and salvation of the fathers, "for if they were justified, how could they still remain under the slightest possibility of condamnation?"\(^{207}\) Here Turretin musters an arsenal of biblical texts and points to the examples of Abraham, David, Daniel and others as contravening the Cocceian contention.\(^{208}\) Moreover, Psalms like Psalms 32, 51, and 103 have reference to believers living under the old covenant dispensation, for David applies them to himself. Turretin also challenges the

---

\(^{205}\) Turretin, *Institutio theologiae elencticarum*, XII.x.10.

\(^{206}\) Turretin, *Institutio theologiae elencticarum*, XII.x.11.


\(^{208}\) Turretin (*Institutio theologiae elencticarum*, XII.x.12) cites Exod. 34:7; Psa. 32:1; 51:3, 4; 65:3; 85:2, 3; 103:3; 130:4; Isa. 1:18; 44:22; Mic. 7:18, 19.
evasion that states that although justification was granted to the fathers, it was not justification in the way of a payment actually made. Turretin’s reply is pointed: “No one denies that such an absolution was reserved for the New Testament.” If that is what the Cocceians wish to maintain, then the controversy can easily be resolved. But in fact they do not understand the justification of the fathers in its proper sense, denying as they do the plenary remission (ἀφεσις) of the fathers’ sins and advocating instead the mere “pretermission” (παρεσιως) of them. 209

(5) The position of the Cocceians is repugnant to the nature of the justifying faith that the fathers possessed. Such faith consists “especially in the fiducial apprehension and application of the righteousness of Christ and his most perfect satisfaction (whether as already made or as infallibly to be made).” The consequence of the same is peace with God, so that believers can approach God’s throne of grace with boldness and be comforted in life and death. For Turretin, it is inconceivable how a person who possesses justifying faith can still be under the divine sentence of guilt and the curse of the law. Again he points to the examples of Abraham, Jacob, Job, David, Hezekiah, and others as displaying confidence in God and the consolation that flows from peace with God—so much so that their confidence and comfort is commended to believers in the New Testament. 210 To be sure, the “degree” (gradum) of confidence enjoyed by the Old Testament fathers is less than that of the New Testament believer; nonetheless, their faith is the same as to “species” (species), “with the effects inseparable from it.” 211

(6) The Cocceian position is repugnant to the sanctification of the fathers, which involves deliverance from the dominion of sin (a dominio peccati). For if Christ’s death works retroactively to bring deliverance from sin’s corruption, then it ought also to work to bring

209 Turretin, Instituta theologicae elencticar, XII.x.12.

210 Turretin (Instituto theologiae elencticar, XII.x.13) references the following texts: Rom. 4:3-5; Gal. 3:6; Heb. 11:2; 2 Cor. 4:13.

211 Turretin, Institua theologicae elencticar, XII.x.13.
deliverance from sin's guilt (reatus). It is false to divide or separate the efficacy of Christ's suretyship between the power of sin and the guilt of sin inasmuch as they mutually follow each other. "For as no one can be freed from guilt by justification without being immediately freed from its dominion by sanctification (which necessarily follows justification and cannot be torn asunder from it), thus he who is freed from its dominion ought first to have been freed from guilt, the cause of dominion."²¹²

(7) Finally the Cocceian distinction between πάρεοιν under the Old Testament and ἀφέοιν under the New Testament cannot, on exegetical grounds, be sustained. Here Turretin sets forth his argument in four parts. First, both words are used of the remission of sins.²¹³ Second, ἀφεος is everywhere applied to the fathers of the Old Testament, "for the verb ἀφίηναι and the noun ἀφεος answer to the verbs ἄφην, ἁλομ, εἰ, and the nouns ἄφην, ἀλομ, ἁ, by which the remission granted to them is expressed."²¹⁴ Third, if this distinction were valid, then John the Baptist could not have baptized unto the remission of sins (εἰς ἀφεον ἀμαρτῶν) (Mark 1:4); nor could Christ say to the paralytic and to the sinful woman, "Your sins are forgiven" (ἀφέωνται σοι αἱ ἁμαρτίαι) (Luke 5:20; 7:47), or tell his disciples to pray for ἀφέοι of their sins (Matt. 6:12, 14). Likewise, the apostle Paul should not have ascribed ἀφεον to the justification of the pious of the Old Testament, which he does in Romans 4. If the alleged difference between ἀφεον and πάρεοιν actually existed, then this pivotal passage ought to have indicated the dissimilarity, demonstrating that the fathers had to wait for the remission of sins. On the contrary, the apostle is so far from doing this that he describes

²¹² Turretin, Institutio theologicae clausicae, XII.1.4. "Nam ut nemo potest liberari a reatu per justificationem, quin statim libertur ab ejus dominio per sanctificationem, quae justificationem necessario sequitur, et ab ea divelli nequit: Ita qui libertur ab ejus dominio debet prius liberatus esse a reatu, qui est causa dominii."


²¹⁴ Turretin, Institutio theologicae clausicae, XII.1.5. Here Turretin either quotes or references the following texts: Psa. 32:1, 5; 85:2, Isa. 55:7; Exod. 34:7; Psa. 65:3; 130:3; 103:3; Mic. 7:18, 19.
their justification by the very same words as that of New Testament believers. Fourth, the fathers enjoyed what is understood by the remission of sins, for they were partakers of salvation. The heart of remission is that a person is granted liberation “from all punishment on account of the payment, whether made or still to be made”—that is, there is remission from every obligation, penal and personal, a pardoning and not punishing, a freedom from being brought to trial or suffering condemnation. “For although a real expiation cannot be made except by a payment actually made, nothing hinders remission (its fruit) from being granted to the believer in virtue of a payment still future, which before God (on account of its certainty) is considered as made.”

Turretin proceeds to explore these issues in more detail under “fontes solutionum,” for he examines in painstaking detail the propriety of drawing out theological distinctions between πάρεσις under the Old Testament and ἀφεσις under the New Testament.

Advocates of the Cocceian position put forward Romans 3:25, 26a (“Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation [i.e., Christ] through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God”—AV) in support of distinguishing πάρεσις and ἀφεσις. Turretin argues that whether the preposition διὰ (diā), in the phrase εἰς ἐνδείξιν τῆς δικαιοσύνης αὐτοῦ διὰ τὴν πάρεσιν τῶν προγεγομένων ἄμαρτματων is taken causally, signifying “on account of” (propter), being indicative of “the impulsive cause” of the propitiation instituted by God, so that paresis refers to the appointed time of God’s forbearance (ἀνοχῆ); or it is taken to have the same meaning as εἰς, “unto” (ad), so that paresis signifies “the end” (finis) for which Christ is put forward as a propitiation; or that διὰ τὴν πάρεσιν expresses διὰ τῆς παρέσεως (per remissionem), “through the

---

215 Turretin, Institutio theologiae eclecticæ, XII.x.16.
216 Turretin, Institutio theologiae eclecticæ, XII.x.17. “Licet enim expiatio realis non possit fieri nisi per solutionem actu præstiram; Nihil obstat remissionem quæ est ejus fructus, dari fidei in virutte solutionis adhuc futura, que coram Deo propter certitudinem pro factu habetur.”
217 ΝΑ27 — ἐν προεξείν ὁ θεὸς ἑαυτῆριν διὰ τῆς πίστεως ἐν τῷ αὐτοῦ ἀληθείᾳ ἐλέεις ἐνδείξιν τῆς δικαιοσύνης αὐτοῦ διὰ τὴν πάρεσιν τῶν προγεγομένων ἄμαρτματων ἐν τῇ ἀνοχῇ τοῦ θεοῦ.
remission,” none of these exegetical options serve the point the Cocceians wish to make.

Turretin begins with the latter option:

If we follow this latter sense (which is the more common and more in accordance with the words and scope of Paul), *parxis* will be the same as *apheis*; as if you said a relaxation, the metaphor being taken from the bonds by which sins, as it were, have bound us under the power of Satan, should be unloosed by the propitiation of Christ.\(^{218}\)

What is more, this is how most versions take it—French, Dutch, English, Italian—and how orthodox interpreters understand it—Calvin, Martyr, Bullinger, Piscator, Pareus, and others—namely, that God put forward Christ as the propitiation through faith in his blood for this purpose: “to declare his righteousness by or on account of the remission of preceding sins (i.e., which had been committed before under the Old Testament in the time of the patience of God).” Christ’s atoning work is efficacious not only for the expiation of present or future sins, but also for past sins. And since it is easier to grasp how Christ’s work of satisfaction applies to present sins (the greater difficulty being a comprehension of how his work applies to the sins of those who preceded him and are already deceased), these verses demonstrate the power of cross, by God’s appointment, to remit the sins of the fathers. As Turretin observes, it might have “seemed almost incredible that the effect of remission existed before the cause (*effectum remissionis extitisse ante causam ejus*) and that sins were remitted before they were expiated” (*et peccata remittis antequam expiarentur*). Thus apostle makes it clear that Christ’s atoning work, as the propitiation for sin, extends backwards. Hebrews 9:15 confirms this, for Christ is “the mediator of a new covenant, that by means of death he might expiate the transgressions that were done under the first testament.” And “[a]lthough Christ is said to have been set forth as a propitiation for the remission of

\(^{218}\) Turretin, *Institutio theologica elenctica*, XII.x.18. “Si posteriorem hunc sensum sequinur, qui communior est, et verbis ac scopo Pauli accommodation, ἀφεσις idem erit quod ἀφοσία, quasi dicas relaxationem, metaphoraducta a vinculis, quibus nos quasi constrinxerunt peccata sub potestate Satani, quæ per Christi propitiationem laxari oportuit.”
preceding sins, it does not follow that they were not as yet remitted to the believers of that time because although it was only then obtained, it could be applied before.”

Next Turretin considers the former option—taking διὰ (dia) in a causal sense. When διὰ is understood in this way, then πάρεσις (paresis) does denote “a passing by and a dissimulation of sins.” This means that God did not desire to punish the sins of the fathers under the Old Testament, but waited until Christ appeared in the flesh and performed his work of satisfaction on the cross. Meanwhile, God, in the way of forbearance (ἐν τῇ ἀνοχῇ τοῦ θεοῦ), overlooked (ὑπεριδὼν, Acts 17:30) or “winked at” (AV) their sins, bearing with them.

But what does that actually mean? For Turretin, the forbearance and passing by of the sins of the fathers actually has reference to Christ as the Sponsor, so that God did not will to require him to undergo the punishment for the sins of the fathers “from the beginning”; instead, it was God’s will to leave “unpunished the sins laid upon him until the fulness of time.” Because this is so, the fathers of the Old Testament could rejoice in the remission of their sins, “in virtue of the future expiation.” Thus, if διὰ (dia) is taken in a causal sense, Romans 3:25b-26a could be translated as follows: “... his was to demonstrate His righteousness, because in the forbearance of God He passed over the sins previously committed. ... (NASB).” This would mean that God passed by and deferred the punishment of preceding sins (such sins being committed in the time of divine forbearance), waiting to punish them in the time he chooses, which he has now done in Christ, who is the propitiation for sins. Moreover, in this way, God’s righteousness against sins is clearly evident, for the sins, previously passed over, are now punished. Turretin concedes that that is a defensible understanding of the verse—but actually beside the point. For the deferral

---

219 Turretin, *Institutio theologiae helveticae*, XII.x.18. “Quamvis vero propositus dicatur Christus in placamentum ad remissionem peccatorum precedentium; non sequitur fideibus illius temporis nondum remissauisse, quia licet impetrata tunc tantum fuerit, potuit jam ante applicari.”
described here has to do with Christ—when he makes payment for sin; the deferral is not referring to when the fathers might experience the remission of sins.\textsuperscript{220}

Meanwhile the promises of the new covenant, as depicted for example in Jeremiah 31:33, 34 (a text that seems to reinforce the Cocceian scheme) are to be understood, says Turretin, "relatively and comparatively," not "absolutely and simply." For it is not the case that the promises made there were entirely lacking in the Old Testament—such as, that God will be the God of Israel or would forgive their sins—for the covenant of grace was not denied to the fathers of the old covenant. Rather, with the new covenant these blessings are "far more clearly and efficaciously set forth," which refers not to "substance" but to "mode" and "degree." Turretin delineates this difference in four ways:

[1] Since remission was given under the Old Testament through Christ about to die, now it is given through him dead (i.e., the actual expiation having been made) (2) Remission under the Old Testament was dispensed through sacraments and sacrifices (which designated an expiation still to be made), but now under the New Testament, sacrifices having been abrogated, it is sealed by the sacraments as having been made. (3) It was formerly given ordinarily with less consolation, joy and certainty than now under the New Testament, on account of the clearness of the gospel, the removal of the legal yoke and the power and abundance of the consoling and joy-inspiring Spirit poured out after the exaltation of Christ. (4) Formerly it was given more sparingly and to fewer persons, but now it is more copiously dispensed and poured out indiscriminately upon all of every nation and rank.

This brings the Genevan pastor-professor to a conclusion:

Thus far therefore this blessing is rightly promised, as peculiar to the New Testament. But the argument is badly drawn from the distinction of economy and manner of dispensation to an essential and intrinsic diversity, such as is here made between \textit{paresin} and \textit{apheisin}.\textsuperscript{221}

\textsuperscript{220} Turretin, \textit{Institutio theologiae elencticae}, XII.x.19.

\textsuperscript{221} Turretin, \textit{Institutio theologiae elencticae}, XII.x.20. "Quippe remissio sub Vet. Test. cabatur per Christum mortitum, Nunc vero datur per mortuum, id. facta actuali expiatione. 2. Remissio sub Vetrici Testamento dispensabatur per Sacramenta et Sacrifica, quae expiationem faciendam adhuc designabant; Sed jam sub Novo Testamento abrogatis sacrificiis, per Sacramenta ut facta obsignatur. 3. Olim dabatur ordinari minori cum consolatione, latent et certitudine, quam nunc sub Novo Testamento propter claritatem Evangelii, ablacionem jugi Legalis, et vim ac copiam Spiritus consolantis et laetificantis post Christum exaltatum effusi. 4. Olim parcus et pauciorbus concedebatur: Sed jam uberioris dispensatur, et diffunditur indiscriminatione ad omnes cujuscumque gentis et ordinis. Hactenus ergo recte promittitur hoc beneficium, ut proprium Nov. Test. Sed male a distinctione \textit{economiae}, et dispensationis modo, argumentum ducitur ad diversitatem essentialem et intrinsecam, quals statuitur hic inter \textit{paresin} et \textit{apheisin}."
We see, then, that Turretin refuses to follow the Cocceian doctrine of the abrogation of the covenant of works, which argues that there is a movement from the increasing obsolescence of the covenant of works and its penalty to a growing manifestation of the covenant of grace and its blessings—that is, the more the covenant of works is diminished, the more the covenant of grace is realized; and this has reference not only to the "mode" and "degree" but also to the "substance" of the covenant of grace.\footnote{222} This schema compromises the covenant of grace in its old covenant dispensation, threatens the essential unity of the evangelical covenant, and in this way endangers the theology of grace that is at the heart of the gospel.

Thus in opposition to this idea Turretin argues for the essential and radical break between the legal covenant (that is, the covenant of works) and the evangelical covenant (the covenant of grace). Therefore it is untrue that Old Testament believers, coming under the covenant of grace, did not enjoy the remission of sins and justification in the eyes of God, for to acknowledge that Christ alone is the way of justification (versus the impotence of the law) is different from saying that justification was at length conferred only under the New Testament. Acts 13:39 ("And by him all that believe are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses" — \textit{AV}) is an example of this, for there is no opposition between the Old Testament ("taken widely") and the New Testament; rather, the opposition is between the ceremonies of the law (as a letter that kills, as the handwriting of curse) and the internal communion of Christ, "partakers of which the ancients were, beyond controversy" (cf. also Col. 2:17).\footnote{223}

\footnote{222 On the Cocceian doctrine of the abrogation of the covenant of works, see Willem J. van Asselt, "The Doctrine of the Abrogations in the Federal Theology of Johannes Cocceius (1603-1669)," \textit{Calvin Theological Journal} 29 (1994): 101-116; idem, \textit{The Federal Theology of Johannes Cocceius (1603-1669)}, 271-287. The primary literature is Cocceius' \textit{Summa doctrinarum de foedere et testamento Dei}, chapters 3, 4, 10, 15, 16, treating, respectively, the first through fifth abrogations of the covenant.}

\footnote{223 Turretin, \textit{Institutio theologicae eloquentiae}, XII.x.21.}
Another key passage that proponents of the Cocceian scheme put forward is Hebrews 10:18 ("Now where remission of these is, there is no more offering for sin"). Turretin asserts that it is rightly argued from this text that Christ's sacrifice alone secures the remission of sins, and so excludes all other sacrifices. However, it is an error to argue from this text that the remission of sins was not granted to the pious of the Old Testament, being postponed while they practiced the prescribed sacrifices of the levitical code, until Christ should come. For the repeated sacrifices, while testifying in their repetition as to their impotence to secure the remission of sins, also testified to the necessity of Christ's oblation, so that prior to the "actual existence" of Christ making satisfaction for sins, the moral efficacy of his atoning work is already manifest. "Again, aphasis can be taken metonymically for its foundation or meritorious cause (to wit, the actual expiation through the blood of Christ) since (this having been made), the sacrifices of the Old Testament (shadowing it) ought really to have ceased (as also all other expiatory sacrifices of that kind, which are incompatible [ayystata] with the sacrifice of Christ)."

Turretin does not deny that until Christ offered himself on the cross for the satisfaction of sins the payment for sin had not yet been made, and so sin had not yet been sealed up, iniquity had not yet been actually expiated, and the righteousness of the ages was still to come. But these things do not in any way subtract from the reality of the Old Testament fathers standing justified before God. Since the Surety of the covenant of grace, in accordance with God's decree, was certainly to make the payment for the remission of sins, God could grant that which was infallibly to take place before its actual fulfillment. Turretin likens it to "moral causes," which "are accustomed to act before they are actualized." Thus, "Christ was bound to take away sins meritoriously by a satisfaction, but

---

224 NA27—αὐτοὶ δὲ ἥψεσιν τούτων, σύκετι προσφορὰ περὶ ἁμαρτίας.

225 Turretin, Institutio theologiae scholasticae, XII.x.22. "Deinde ἥψεσι potest metonymice sumi pro ejus fundamento, seu causa meritoria, expatone nimimum actualis per sanguinem Christi. Hac quippe prestita, Sacrificio Veteris Testamenti eam adubrantia, revera cessare debuerunt, ut et alia omnia id genus sacrificia expiatoria, que abhorrea sunt Sacrificio Christi."
God had already taken them away efficaciously from the believers of the Old Testament by remission.\textsuperscript{226}

Turretin argues that the law, inclusive of the entire levitical sacrifice prescription, and that considered under the legal aspect, was impotent to bring perfection or offer the remission of sins (cf. Heb. 10:1). But that doesn’t mean that the Old Testament fathers did not participate in the grace and merit of Christ. For in its legal form the ceremonial law, with its repeated sacrifices, taught us our penalty and what we, as violators of the covenant of works, deserve. However, in its evangelical form the ceremonial law it shadows forth Christ’s oblation and future expiation of our sins, sealing our justification in him. In the right observance of the Old Testament sacrifices believers they had an answer to the “handwriting” against them. In this way, the ceremonial law functioned in two ways: it rebuked sinners in their guilt and threatened them with death; and it shadowed forth Christ as the Mediator, by whose death God’s grace is sealed to believers unto the consolation of the pious. It them their sin, and the remedy of sin—in Christ to come.\textsuperscript{227}

The “conscience of sins” spoken of in Hebrews 10:2 (that is, the sense of guilt that the fathers experienced) doesn’t refer to sins yet resting upon them, keeping them from fellowship with God; rather, it refers to the awareness of sins that had not been expiated through the performance of the legal sacrifices—the repetition of these sacrifices bearing testimony to their inadequacy and inability to remit sins themselves. But what the law could not do for them, Christ did on their behalf. For the remission of their sins is through Christ’s spansion and “future sacrifice.” They share in the same covenant of grace with believers in the New Testament; however, living as they did prior to the advent of Christ, and living under the ceremonial law (in its legal relation) the fathers did not have the same tranquility of conscience as believers who live subsequent to Christ’s advent and have been

\textsuperscript{226} Turretin, \textit{Institutio theologiae eclestiea}, XII.x.23. “Christus auferre debuit meritorie peccata per satisfactionem, sed Deus ea jam abstulerat officiasiter a fidelibus Vet. Test. Per remissione.”

\textsuperscript{227} Turretin, \textit{Institutio theologiae eclestiea}, XII.x.24-25.
freed from the ceremonial law. For the latter experience a tranquility of conscience arising “from the ransom (λυτρω) fully paid by the surety” and the testimony of Christ’s resurrection. The former, however, did have “as much as was sufficient to tranquilize the conscience in the suretyship of Christ received by faith.” For in this way they could know genuine assurance. The fathers (or pious) of the Old Testament, in looking to their Sponsor by faith, were set free from all personal obligation and debt inasmuch as their Surety is altogether sufficient for them before God’s tribunal, “whether the ransom (λυτρωι) is still to be paid by the surety or has already been paid.”

Turretin comes to the heart of the matter with these words:

The actual expiation of sin is not necessary to its remission. It suffices that it be promised and will certainly be accomplished. I confess that where we treat of the proper and personal payment of pecuniary debt, there is not a cancelling of the debt, unless the payment is made. But it is different with a vicarious satisfaction in a penal debt, in which the sponson alone (provided it be infallible) is sufficient for the liberation of the accused.

As he explains:

It is one thing for sin not to have been expiated as yet under the Old Testament; another for believers to have been still under the guilt of it. Sin indeed was as yet unexpiated and was to be expiated. But believers nevertheless were not under guilt, which had been transferred to Christ.

This means that although guilt was still to be expiated, it no longer rested on the fathers, being remitted to Christ by God’s appointment. For his part Christ freely takes their

---


229 Turretin, *Institutio theologicae elencticæ*, XII.x.27. “Ad peccati remissionem non necessaria est ejus actualis expiatio; sufficit ut sit promissa et certo futura. Patet ut agitur de solutione propria et personali debiti pecuniarii, non dari debiti expunctionem, nisi præstita solutione. Sed alia ratio est satisfactionis vicaria in debito penali, in quo sponso sola, modo sit infallibilis, sufficit ad liberationem Rei.”

sins upon himself, setting them free from all guilt and obligation, and in the fullness of time their guilt still unexpiated is expiated in Christ.\textsuperscript{231}

Here we come to Turretin’s answer regarding the significance and indispensability of Christ’s incarnation and work on the cross in the history of redemption. For it is not at all the case, as alleged by Cocceian antagonists, that inasmuch as Christ, as the Surety of the covenant of grace, had taken upon himself from eternity the guilt of the Old Testament fathers (and all believers) that the historical datum of his crucifixion and death was either no longer requisite or lacked any significance. Likewise it is not the case, as alleged, that the alternative portrait renders Christ’s death as significant only for himself, by releasing him from the duties of his suretyship. This is to separate the believer’s bond to Christ, according to the promise of the covenant of grace. Christ’s work of satisfaction is essential for the believer (including Old Testament believers), for deliverance from sins is not accomplished except in this way, as God ordained and in keeping with the intratrinitarian \textit{pactum}. As Turretin elaborates, “The obtaining of deliverance from the curse of the law took place only by Christ, who redeems us from the curse of the law, being himself made a curse (\textit{kataraka}, Gal. 3:13). But the fruit and application had already been granted to the fathers in virtue of his future death.”\textsuperscript{232}

Turretin’s point is uncomplicated: the fruit or effect of something can be bestowed and enjoyed prior to but in virtue of the future accomplishment of it, making that fruit possible, and this according to God’s appointment. This is exactly what \textit{expromissio} expresses—a person can be delivered from all debt and penalty of debt prior to the payment of that debt by his or her \textit{expromissor}. However, it doesn’t follow that the \textit{expromissor} may just

\textsuperscript{231} Turretin, \textit{Institutio theologiae eleutaricae}, XII.x.28. “Vixerunt ergo sub reatu adhuc extante, sed non sub reatu ipsis incumbente, sed in Christum translato ex Dei destinatione, et ab ipso in se suscepto, a quo proinde pii liberati fueri. Et ut reatus non amplius texit fidèles, Ita nec maledictio reatum consequeret.”

\textsuperscript{232} Turretin, \textit{Institutio theologiae eleutaricae}, XII.x.28. “Impetratio liberationis a maledictone Legis tantum contigit per Christum, qui nos redemit ab execratione Legis, factus ipse \textit{kataraka}, Gal. iii. 13; Sed fructus et applicatio jam concessa fuit Patribus virtute mortis future.”
as well not pay the debt, or that actual payment is significant for the sponsor only, for as this applies to Christ the guarantor or sponsor of the covenant of grace and to those for whom he acts, there is an inseparable bond—as Turretin earlier argued.\textsuperscript{233}

Turretin bids readers to remember that there is a great difference between living under the “legal economy” (\textit{economia Legali}) of the covenant of grace and living under the “legal covenant” (\textit{Jedus legale}) or “from the works of the law” (\textit{ex operibus Legis}). The fathers lived under the legal economy, to be sure; but they still lived under grace. And it is an error to equate living under the legal economy with living “under law as under a covenant” (\textit{sub Lege ut sub fide}) for the attainment of righteousness and life. For to be under law is to be “under curse” (\textit{sub execratione}) (Gal. 3:10)—a state untrue of believers.\textsuperscript{234}

Do Turretin’s remarks overemphasize the continuity between the testaments, failing to reckon with their differences and discontinuity? For his part, he wishes to acknowledge that while Scripture calls the New Testament era “a time of favor” and “a year of favor” (Isa. 49:8; 61:2), this is not meant absolutely or without qualification, as if the fathers were under God’s wrath and knew nothing of divine kindliness, for they too “lived under the same covenant of grace and were saved by the same grace of Christ with us.” Thus the “favor” that defines the New Testament dispensation is a comparative term, referring to the “clearer, fuller and more efficacious manifestation of grace” inasmuch as the “legal pedagogy” was repealed, as well as the “intolerable yoke” of ceremonies. As a consequence, believers now experience God’s grace and benevolence in Christ “far more excellently” than was possible under the legal economy.\textsuperscript{235}

\textsuperscript{233} See \textit{Instituto theologiae eleceticae}, XII.ix.14, and Turretin’s comments in connection with 2 Cor. 5:15, 21. Cf. Westminster Larger Catechism, Q/A 34. The Fathers, says the Catechism, in the way of faith in Christ, “then had full remission of sin, and eternal salvation.”

\textsuperscript{234} Turretin, \textit{Instituto theologiae eleceticae}, XII.x.29.

\textsuperscript{235} Turretin, \textit{Instituto theologiae eleceticae}, XII.x.30.
The fathers, however, were not under the power of the devil (sub potestate Diaboli), for the devil's power over man is through the guilt of sin by accusing him before God, the dominion of sin by tempting him, and the punishments of sin by afflicted him. But the fathers received justification (answering to guilt), sanctification (which breaks sin's dominion), and Christ's work of redemption (so that the punishments of sin are taken away from them). Turretin appeals to Zechariah 3:1, 2 ("And he shewed me Joshua the high priest standing before the angel of the Lord, and Satan standing at his right hand to resist him. And the Lord said unto Satan, The Lord rebuke thee, O Satan; even the Lord that hath chosen Jerusalem rebuke thee: is not this a brand plucked out of the fire?" — AV) as confirming this position. Christ intercedes on behalf of Joshua and pleads his cause against the evil accuser, who has no right to make accusation against him, for God has delivered him not only from the Babylonian captivity but also from the "infernal"—the captivity being a kind of prefiguration of eternal punishment.

Here we see, then, a potent intercession from the Father and the Son on behalf of a believer against Satan, and that under the Old Testament dispensation. Thus even the Old Testament fathers could look to the promised redeemer as their Surety and hope, from whom they could know complete deliverance from their sins.236

Turretin's extended defense of expromissio, with precautions, is finally a defense of the covenant of grace itself—certainly it is a defense of the integrity of the covenant of grace. For what Turretin is jealous to safeguard is that there never was (and never could be) a middle road between the covenant of nature and the covenant of grace. The fathers of the Old Testament are "sons," which means that they are partakers of the same covenant of grace that New Testament believers come under, participating in all the benefits and blessings of salvation. To be sure, they were sons "still in their minority" (Gal. 4:2), under the guardianship of the law. Consequently, under that bondage their state differs from ours, not

---

236 Turretin, *Institutio theologicae elencticae*, XII.x.31.
in regard to "the thing itself" (rem ipsam) or "the essence of saving doctrine" (doctrinae salutaris essentiam), but in regard to "degree" (gradam) and "the different mode of dispensation" (diversum dispensationis modum). Turretin believes that with these simple distinctions he has resolved the matter, and bids opponents (which are brothers under the Reformed orthodox umbrella) to acquiesce in this, for to pursue less necessary questions does not edify. Instead, the discord it causes serves only to give "great offense to the pious," injuring their faith.237

F. A Dispute with the Papists—State of the Fathers after Death

Somewhat in line with certain issues in dispute with Cocceian proponents, specifically the sort and degree of blessings the pious of the Old Testament fathers could expect in anticipation of Christ's advent, Turretin next treats a dispute between the Reformed and Roman Catholics pertaining to the state of the Old Testament fathers after death, namely whether the souls of the fathers, upon death, were ushered into heaven or cast into limbo. The Reformed argued for the former position, while the Roman Catholics maintained the latter.238

After treating the Roman Catholic doctrine of a fourfold hell, Turretin argues that the souls of the fathers were immediately received into heaven after death, and so they are partakers in the eternal felicity promised to those in glory. The reason for this position is rooted first and foremost in the nature of the covenant of grace, for the promised contained in it is that God is their God for eternity, even as he is the God of the living, not the dead, and therefore they live before God and enjoy life in his presence. It is absurd to say that the

237 Turretin, Institutio theologicae clementiae, XII.x.32. Again, Turretin commends to readers Leydekker's book Vis veritatis (1679), stating that that most learned author handles the whole controversy "distinctly" and "solidly."

238 Turretin, Institutio theologicae clementiae, XII.xi.1.
pious of the Old Testament live in God, yet are thrust in a layer of hell, without a vision of God and do not enjoy his fellowship.\textsuperscript{239}

To bolster this position, Turretin appeals to the example of Lazarus (Luke 16:22, 23), for it is nonsense to maintain that the bosom of Abraham refers to a limbo. Moreover, the thief on the cross is admitted to paradise upon his death according to Christ’s own promise, not ushered into a limbo (Luke 23:43). Paradise, after all, is located in heaven as a place of bliss and everlasting joy (2 Cor. 12:2, 4; Rev. 2:7). This is consistent with what we learn from the Old Testament concerning Enoch and Elijah as well, for both were translated to heaven (Heb. 11:5; 2 Kings 2:11). And in fact the Old Testament believers waited for the heavenly city (Heb. 11:10), which brought them consolation and hope in the face of death. Surely, if a layer of hell is contemplated instead, it is hard to see how the Old Testament fathers looked to the Lord with confidence and optimism. Turretin bids us to consider the demeanor of Stephen in the face of his martyrdom (Acts 7:59).\textsuperscript{240}

Turretin refutes various objections raised against the Reformed orthodox position, finally appealing to Hebrews 9:8, which suggests that the Old Testament fathers were received into heaven on account of Christ in whom they believed. And inasmuch as Christ is said to be the first who entered into heaven, this refers not to time but to causality because he is the reason that the fathers could enter into heaven and that New Testament believers can also be ushered to glory. We must also bear in mind, says Turretin, that sometimes the promise of blessing denotes Christ’s first advent, while at other times this has reference to his second advent. Thus the contrast between Old and New Testament believers must be understood in this way. Whereas New Testament believers have participated in the blessings of the first advent, something the fathers did not receive (namely Christ’s incarnation), both Old and New Testament believers together will participate in the second advent, awaiting

\textsuperscript{239} Turretin, \textit{Institutio theologicae eleuthericae}, XII.xi.2-4.

\textsuperscript{240} Turretin, \textit{Institutio theologicae eleuthericae}, XII.xi.5-9.
something better—the vindication of the people of God and the perfection of Christ’s kingdom.²⁴¹

Although Turretin does not explicitly state it, the principal burden of this quæstio is not merely to refute the Roman Catholic doctrine of limbo; rather, the chief burden is to defend the integrity of the covenant of grace in its diverse dispensations. For the promise of eternal life through Christ, the center and Surety of that covenant, applies as much to believers in the Old Testament as to believers in the New Testament.

G. Further Polemics against the Amyraldians—Is there a Third Covenant?

Turretin, as a representative of the seventeenth-century Reformed orthodox position regarding the covenant of grace with its twofold economy, squares off against opponents within the Reformed churches who sought wholly to divide the Law and Gospel from one another by positing a third covenant along side the covenant of works and the covenant of grace, namely a covenant of the law. The advocates of this view, Moïse Amyraut and those identified with the Academy in Saumur, believed that a distinct “legal covenant,” juxtaposed to the covenant of grace and distinct from the covenant of works, better captured the biblical materials on the nature of the covenants and the relationship between the testaments.²⁴²

²⁴¹ Turretin, Instituti theologiae elencticae, XII.xi.10-17. On Turretin’s treatment of the nature and blessings of the second advent of Christ, see especially Instituti theologiae elencticae, XX.viii-xiii.

Turretin formulates the issue in debate with this *quastio*: "Whether the Sinaitic legal covenant, made by Moses with the people of Israel on Mount Sinai, was a certain third covenant distinct in species from the covenant of nature and the covenant of grace." To which he replies, "We deny."²⁴³

Observing the variety of opinion on this topic—that some view the Sinaitic covenant as a strict reduplication of the covenant of works, others view it as a "mixture" of the covenant of works and the covenant of grace, and that still others view it an altogether different "species" of covenant, distinct from the other two, instituted to subservie the covenant of grace—Turretin is determined to defend a fourth view, the consensus opinion of the Reformed, namely that the Sinaitic covenant is a covenant of grace. This view, which Turretin earlier articulated and championed, is jealous to assert that the Sinaitic covenant is part of the evangelical covenant. At the same time it acknowledges that since this gracious covenant came under the law, and was also promulgated by the law, it brought terror and servitude—though this was in keeping with the state and age of the church at that time.²⁴⁴

1. **The Salmurian View**

The view that Turretin is concerned to expose to error and defeat is the third of these—the Amyraldian position that was gaining support among the French Reformed churches, and finding increasing sympathy among some in Geneva and elsewhere. Turretin first explains that Amyraut's ideas go back to his teacher John Cameron (1580-1625), the Scotsman, who was the first to propose the idea of a threefold covenant.²⁴⁵ Amyraut, for his part, adopted and refined Cameron's position. Turretin thus observes that in seeking to prove and rigorously defend Cameron's and Amyraut's doctrine, their followers likewise

---


²⁴⁵ Turretin references Cameron's work, "De triplici Dei cum homine foedere theses," in Joannis Camerounis Scotiae Britanni Theologi Eximii Vita Opera partim ab auctore ipso edita, partim post eum obitum subgta, partim nasquam hactenus publicitate, vel in Gallico idomate nunc primum in Latinum inquam translata, ed. F. Spanheim (Geneva, 1642), pp. 544-51, which can be found in English translation in Samuel Bolton, *The True Bounds of Christian Freedom, Or a Treatise wherein the Rights of the Law are vindicated, the Liberties of Grace maintained; and the several late Opinions against the Law are examined and confuted... whereunto is annexed a Discourse of the Learned John Camerons, touching the three-fold Covenant of God with Man, faithfully Translated* (London, 1656), pp. 351-401.
affirm a trifolc covenant formula: “the first natural, made with innocent Adam in the earthly paradise; the second, of grace, entered into with fallen men in the gospel; the third, the legal covenant, confirmed through Moses with the Israelites on Mount Sinai.”

The last mentioned of these, the legal covenant, plays a subservient role inasmuch as God established it with a twofold purpose. First, God used it in preparing the Israelites for the covenant of grace—that is, to “inflame them with the desire of the promise” of the gospel covenant; and second, God used it in restraining the Israelites from falling away into wickedness until he should send the Spirit of adoption upon them and rule then “by the law of liberty.”

The Cameronians (or Amyrldians) viewed the Mosaic or Sinaitic covenant, though distinct from the covenant of nature and the covenant of grace, as both agreeing and differing with each of these covenants in various respects.

Quoting from Cameron’s work, Turretin says that in regard to the covenant of nature the agreement is manifest in three ways:

(1) The contracting parties (partes contrabentes) are the same in both, namely God and man.

(2) The stipulation annexed (stipulatio) to both is the same.

(3) The promise (promissio) is the same in kind in both, though distinct in content.

The differences between the Sinaitic covenant and the covenant of nature are exhibited in six ways:

(1) The object (objectum) in each covenant is different—in the covenant of nature God entered into the covenant with all humans in a state of innocence, but God established the Sinaitic or legal covenant with the Israelites alone, fallen people under the negative sanction of the covenant of nature.

(2) The content of the promise (promissio) differs in each covenant, in the one instance the promise of happy life to be passed in the earthly paradise, in the other a happy life to be lived in Canaan.

---

246 Turretin, *Institutio theologiae elencticae*, XII.xii.2. “Primum Naturale, contractum cum Adamo integro in Paradiso terrestri; Secundum Gratiae cum hominibus lapsis in Evangelio patefactum; Tertium fudus Legale, quod cum Israelitis in monte Sinai per Mosem sanctum est. . . .”

247 Turretin, *Institutio theologiae elencticae*, XII.xii.2.
(3) The stipulations (stipulatio) differ in some respects, for the covenant of nature stipulates the law of nature, whereas the legal covenant stipulates "ceremonies" as well.

(4) The foundation (fundamentum) of each covenant are distinct, for the foundation of the covenant of nature rests upon creation and general conservation, but the foundation for this Sinaitic or legal covenant rests on Israel's special election as God's people and the deliverance from Egypt.

(5) The end (finis) of each covenant differs inasmuch as the end of the covenant of works is the exaction of duty from man, whereas the Sinaitic covenant has as its end the preparation of sinners for Christ by exposing to them their weakness.

(6) The Mediator (Mediator) of these two covenants also differs, for the covenant of works is without a Mediator, while the Sinaitic covenant is mediated through Moses.²⁴⁸

As for the covenant of grace, the Sinaitic covenant finds agreement with this gospel covenant in four respects:

(1) The author (Author) is the same in both covenants, namely God.

(2) The object (Objectum) of these covenants is the same, namely man.

(3) The same Mediator (Mediator) is found in both covenants.

(4) The end or purpose (Finis) is the same in both covenants, that is, to show sin and to lead to Christ.

Despite these areas of agreement, there are also at least five areas of difference, for the Sinaitic covenant differs from the covenant of grace as follows:

(1) The relation of the author (συνέχεια Authoris) is different in each covenant, for in the legal covenant (the Cameronian-Amyraldian nomenclature for the Sinaitic covenant) God simply rebukes sin and approves of righteousness, but in the covenant of grace God pardons sin and restores humans to righteousness or restores righteousness in fallen people.

(2) The stipulations (stipulations) differ in each covenant, since in the Sinaitic covenant stipulates obedience ("Do this and live"), whereas the covenant of grace stipulates faith ("Believe and thou shalt be saved").

(3) The mediator (Mediator) in each covenant also differs, Moses in the one, Christ, the God-man (theanthropos), in the other.

²⁴⁸ Turretin, Institutiones theologicae elencticæ, XII.xii.3.
(4) The object (objectum) differs in the two covenants, for in the Sinaitic covenant “man stupefied by sin” is the object, but in the covenant of grace the object is man “terrified by sin.”

(5) The effects (effectus) of each covenant is likewise different since the Sinaitic covenant “gendered to bondage,” leading to Christ indirectly, while the covenant of grace gendered “to liberty,” leading to Christ directly; even as the former functioned as a handwriting against us, while the latter was a “disburder” (seisachtbeid). 249

The following schema, taken from Wallace and adapted from Armstrong, shows the general framework of Amyraut’s covenantal thinking, and serves as a synopsis: 250

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Extent</th>
<th>foedus naturae</th>
<th>foedus legale</th>
<th>foedus gratiae</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>one man (Adam)</td>
<td>Israel</td>
<td>mankind</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Condition</th>
<th>Perfect obedience to the natural law</th>
<th>Perfect obedience to natural law clarified by Mosaic Law</th>
<th>faith alone</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Promise</th>
<th>Eden</th>
<th>Canaan</th>
<th>Eternal Life</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mediator</th>
<th>None</th>
<th>Moses</th>
<th>Christ</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Efficacy</th>
<th>None, apart from perfect obedience</th>
<th>Restraining evil, and pointing to man’s need</th>
<th>Inclination to good</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Foundation</th>
<th>Creation</th>
<th>Exodus</th>
<th>Christ</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

2. The Consensus View among the Reformed

Over against this view, Turretin argues that the consensus opinion among the Reformed orthodox recognizes but two covenants “mutually distinct in species”—that is, the covenant of works and the covenant of grace. The former promises life to the doer, the latter promises salvation to believers. Turretin explains why the Sinaitic covenant is not a distinct covenant in species:

249 Turretin, Institutio theologiae elencticae, XII.xii.4. Turretin cites Cameron’s “De Tripici Dei cum homine fodere theses,” Opera (1642), 544-551.

Although we confess that the Sinaitic covenant as to mode of dispensation was different from both [the covenant of works and the covenant of grace], still as to substance and species we deny that it is constituted a third covenant and hold that it was nothing else than a new economy of the covenant of grace. It was really the same with the covenant made with Abraham, but different as to accidents and circumstances (to wit, clothed as to external dispensation with the form of a covenant of works through the harsh promulgation of the law; not indeed with that design, so that a covenant of works might again be demanded with the sinner (for this was impossible), but that a daily recollection and reproaching of the violated covenant of works might be made; thus the Israelites felt their sin and the curse of God besides hanging over them and acknowledged the impossibility of a legal righteousness; driven away from that hope, they so much the more ardently thirsted for the righteousness of redemption and were led along by the hand to Christ). Hence in it there was a mixture of the law and the gospel: the former to strike terror into sinners and press upon the neck of the stiff-necked (σκληροστριγίλως) people; the latter to lift up and console the conscience contrite and overpowered by a sense of sin.\footnote{Turretin, \textit{Institutio theologiae elenctica}, XII.xi.5. \textit{Et quamvis fateamur foedus Sinaicum quodam modum dispensationis diversum fuisse ab uteroque, quoad substantiam tamen et speciem tertium foedus constituuisse negamus, nihilque alius fuisset pertendiumus, quam novam foedem gratie oeconomicam, ut idem sit recta cum fudere cum Abrahano inito, sed diversum quoad accidentia et circumstantias, vestimenta scilicet quoad externam dispensacionem forma foedis operum, per duram Legis promulgationem, non quidem ita: eum finem, ut cum peccatore foedus Operum denuò exigeretur; hoc enim impossible fuit; sed ut fudis operum violati recordatio, et quotidiana exprobratio fieret, adeoque Israelitae peccatum suum et maledictionem Dei sibi propterea imminentem sentirent, et Legalis justitiae impossibilitatem agnoscerent, et ab ista spe depulsi, tanto ardentius Redemptionis justitiam sitirent, et ad Christum manuaducerentur. Unde in eo mixtura fuit Legis et Evangeli, Illa ut terrorem incuteret peccatoribus et durum populi ῥξηποταμιετου cervicem premeret, Istud ut conscientias contritas et peccati sensus attonitas erigeret et solarentur.} I have added the material in square brackets [ ], while the material in accent brackets { } are part of the original.
This is made evident in how Turretin clarifies the matter in question. For the issue is not whether the Amyraldians posited two ways of salvation—one way under the Old Testament and another way under the New Testament; all agree that salvation is through Christ alone under both economies, even as all agree that there is an evident diversity as to economy between certain particular stipulations of the Mosaic law and the covenant of grace. Rather, the issue is whether this diversity mounts up to the establishment of a covenant distinct in species from the covenant of works and the covenant of grace respectively.\textsuperscript{252} Turretin sees multiple reasons to reject this entire schema, first and foremost because Scripture mentions only two covenants. Among the most pivotal passages that contrast the covenants, Galatians 4:24 and Hebrews 8 (in relation to Jeremiah 31), the comparison is between two, not three, covenants—the legal versus the evangelical or the old covenant which was transgressed and rendered void versus the new covenant which is everlasting and immutable. “Thereupon the apostle institutes an antithesis between the law of works and the law of faith; the letter that killeth and the Spirit that maketh alive (which he could not have done with sufficient accuracy, if there was a certain third covenant distinct from both).”\textsuperscript{253}

This is further confirmed from the distinct ways or modes of obtaining and enjoying communion with God, for the diverse covenant arrangements each have this aim in view, and concerning these there are only two:

\begin{itemize}
  \item either by personal and inherent or by imputed obedience; either by works or by faith. The former by the law, whose formula is “Do this and live”; the latter by the gospel, whose voice says, “Believe and thou shalt be saved.” Nor can there be any middle way of happiness. Therefore in vain is a third covenant feigned which belongs neither to works nor to faith.\textsuperscript{254}
\end{itemize}

\textsuperscript{252} Turretin, \textit{Institutio theologiae elencticae}, XII.xii.6.

\textsuperscript{253} Turretin, \textit{Institutio theologiae elencticae}, XII.xii.7.

\textsuperscript{254} Turretin, \textit{Institutio theologiae elencticae}, XII.xii.8. “Ar duo sunt tantum tales modi, vel per obedientiam proprium et inherentem, vel per imputatam, vel per Opera, vel per Fidem. Prior per Legem, cujus clausula est, \textit{Fac hoc et vives}, posterior per Evangelium, cujus est vox, \textit{Credo et servabitis}, nec ulla media dan potest felicitatis via. Ergo frustra fingitur tertium fœdus, quod nec ad opera, nec ad fides pertineat.”
The reason there can be no “middle way” or third covenant is because, if such were the case, there would be a third way of salvation; or in other words, there would be a way of salvation apart from faith in Christ, who is the center of the covenant of grace and its Surety.

The options therefore are two: either (1) the Mosaic or Sinaitic covenant is *in substance* an extension of the covenant of works, in which case it does not contain the promise of Christ, or (2) *in substance* it is an expression of the covenant of grace, and being such it points to and promises Christ as the way of salvation. That in fact the Sinaitic covenant is part of the evangelical covenant is seen from Deuteronomy 7:11, 12 and 29:10-13, for both passages demonstrate that the Sinaitic covenant is not a different covenant than the one established with Abraham; on the contrary, this covenant confirms the preceding one.\(^{255}\)

Meanwhile a consideration of the contracting parties of the Sinaitic covenant proves that what pertains to and defines the covenant of grace applies to the Sinaitic covenant as well. In other words, God reveals himself in that covenant as *their God* which, as already demonstrated, sums up the substance of the covenant of grace. Thus as *their God* he is their redeemer and sanctifier, the faithful husband to his bride, the kindly father to his children, the gracious king to his subjects, who establishes his sanctuary in their midst in order to “hold communion with them” (see, e.g., Exod. 3:6; 20:2; Deut. 30:6, 8; Ezek. 16:8, 9; Hos. 2:20; Deut. 32:6, 8-10; Lev. 26:11, 12). And as Turretin observes, “Now since so many and so great blessings could not be obtained from God except in virtue of a covenant of grace, the Sinaitic covenant (in which he so exhibited himself) can be no other than a covenant of grace."\(^{256}\)

As for the Israelites, the other party to the Sinaitic covenant, they did not relate to God except on his gracious terms—and this applies to them both antecedently, where they are

---

\(^{255}\) Turretin, *Institutio theologiae elencticar*, XII.xii.9.

\(^{256}\) Turretin, *Institutio theologiae elencticar*, XII.xii.10. “Cum vero tot et tanta bona a Deo non possint obtinere nisi vi fœderis gratiae, fœdus Sinaiticum, in quo talem se exhibuit, non alius fuisse a fœdere gratiae necesse est.”
considered in themselves as sinners and subject to eternal death, and consequently, where they are considered “from grace, as ‘the seed of Abraham’ to whom the promises in Christ were made (Gal. 3:16)—as ‘the people of God’ who obtained mercy (Hos. 2:1; Rom. 9:25; 1 Pet. 2:10). . .”257 What is more, the Israelites, as a party to the Sinaitic covenant, are already under the Abraham covenant, which is to say, they are already under the evangelical covenant. “By it, they were saved in Christ.” And if that is so, it is impossible for them to be under “a legal covenant.”

For no one can be at the same time under two covenants distinct in their whole species. Nor is it of any account to say that the legal subserved the covenant of grace, because it could do this by reason of economy, but not by reason of the covenant because it is opposed to and incompatible (αντιστατο) with grace.258

The Sinaitic covenant is further proved to be a covenant of grace from “the circumstances of the covenant.”

There are very many circumstances in that giving of the law (nomothetia) which are purely evangelical—as that Moses having read the book of the covenant took the blood of the victims with which he sprinkled the people saying, “Behold the blood of the covenant which the Lord hath made with you” (Ex. 24:8). The apostle teaches this was not free from mystery (Heb. 9:20), to denote the blood of sprinkling (Heb. 12:24) and the sprinkling of the blood of Christ (both upon the altar for the satisfaction of justice and the expiation of sin; and upon the people for the application of his merit, the remission of sin and justification). An indubitable proof of this was the approach of the elders (who represented the whole people) to God (Ex. 24:10, 11), whom they not only “saw,” but “did eat and drink before” (i.e., were admitted into communion with him [which had before been so strictly forbidden them] and enjoyed his good things). This could not have been done by the legal covenant (which keeps the sinner off), but must necessarily have been done by the gospel in virtue of the blood of Christ. And further, the twofold manner of legislation (which God wished to enter upon) must here be especially observed: the first terrible, related to Ex. 19, where barriers were placed around the mountain and Moses alone permitted to approach God; the other sweet, in which the covenant is made with the blood of victims and the elders with Moses are called up the mount that they may enjoy the sight and communion of God (Ex. 24:10, 11). The former has a legal relation (seisin); the latter an evangelical. These two relations (seisaei) are always conjoined in that dispensation. The latter is the more important and principal; the former accessory and ministerial.259

257 Turretin, Institutio theologiae eleucticae, XII. xii.11.

258 Turretin, Institutio theologiae eleucticae, XII.xii.12. “Nemo enim simul potest duobus fæderibus tota specie distinctis subsesse. Nec juvat quod dictur Legale subserviisse fæderi Gratiae, quia hoc potuit prestare ratione economie sed non ratione fæderis, quod oppositum est et αντιστατο cum gratia.”

259 Turretin, Institutio theologiae eleucticae, XII.xii.13. “Quia plurimae sunt circumstantiae in ista νομοθετηκε mere Evangelice, ut quod Moses praælecto libro fæderis sanguinem victimarum sumpsit, quo populum
Turretin demonstrates that the giving of the law is not without grace but is in fact altogether couched within it, for God gives himself in fellowship with his people in giving the law as an expression of his grace and in virtue of Christ’s sacrifice. As Turretin has repeatedly observed, and now observes again, the twofold relation of the law—in its legal and evangelical status—must be understood; otherwise, error is nearby. Turretin also asserts that the evangelical relation is principal, which means that the legal relation is accessory, serving the evangelical covenant in pointing to the center of that covenant—Christ the Surety.

Turretin also examines Romans 10:6-8 [“But the righteousness that comes from faith says, “Do not say in your heart, ‘Who will ascend into heaven?’ ” (that is, to bring Christ down) “or ‘Who will descend into the abyss?’ ” (that is, to bring Christ up from the dead). But what does it say? “The word is near you, on your lips and in your heart” (that is, the word of faith that we proclaim) – NRSV]. What is noteworthy here is that the apostle alludes to Deuteronomy 30:11-14 in order to demonstrate that the law of Moses itself testifies of the righteousness that is by faith. For in calling to mind the words of Deuteronomy, Paul is showing how they have reference to Christ in the way of the righteousness of faith. In fact, Christ has come down from heaven in the incarnation for the fulfilment of human redemption, and that by sheer grace, just as he also has emerged triumphant over the grave in his resurrection, also by grace. Salvation, then, according to the law, is not a matter of

\[
\text{conspersit additis his verbis, “hic est sanguis fraternis, quod Deus fecit vobiscum,” Exod. xxiv. 8, quod mysterio non carisse docet Apostolus, Heb. ix. 20, ad designationem sanguinem aspersionis, Heb. xii. 24, et aspersionem sanguinis Christi, tum supra altare ad satisfactionem justitie, et expiationem peccati, tum supra populum ad applicationem ejus meriti, remissionem peccati et justificationem. Cujus indubitatum argumentum fuit accessus Seniorum, qui totum populum representabant, ad Deum, Exod. xxiv., quem non solum siderunt, sed et eum eo spectavit sunt, id. ad ejus communionem, quem ipsis antea interdicta fuerat tam severe, admissi fuerint, et ejus bonis fruiti sint, quod non potuit fieri per fides legale, quod peccatorum accet, sed necessario debuit fieri per Evangelium in virtute sanguinis Christi. Atque hic apnime observanda duplex Legislations ratio, quam Deus intire voluit; Prima terribilis, que Exod. xix. referetur, ubi cancelli ponuntur circa montem, et soli Mosi patet accessus ad Deum; Alters suavis, in qua sanctitum fides sanguine victimarum, et Seniores cum Mose in montem vocantur, ut conspectu et communique Dei fruiuntur, v. 10, 11. Ila οφείλω habet legalem, Ista Evangelicam, que duæ οφείλει in ista dispensatione semper conjunguntur; posterior potior est et principalis, prior vero accessoria et ministerialis.”}
\]
human initiative or good works that might induce God to act; on the contrary, God seeks faith alone; and God alone provides the faith he seeks. Therefore the law itself testifies to salvation by faith according to grace, which excludes human boasting in one's own power and might or one's own merit or achievement. In the law itself God was ever near to his people, for it pointed them to the divine gift—that is, to Christ himself, the substance and innermost meaning of the law. Hence Turretin's rhetorical question: "Now how could Paul have said this unless he had recognized that covenant [that is, the Sinaitic covenant], by virtue of which such promises were given, to be not so much legal as evangelical?"  

Next Turretin argues his case from the ceremonial law, for this law, being part of the Sinaitic covenant, testifies that everything in this covenant was "mystical, typical, representative and symbolical of the covenant of grace and of all its parts," all such being "contained under them, as the truth under figures, Col. 2:17)." Of course, the focus here is upon the sacrificial system of the ceremonial law inasmuch as those sacrifices were "types of the sacrifices of Christ" unto the expiation of sins (see Lev. 1:9, 13, 17; Heb. 9:9, 10). Likewise in the ceremonies of that law Old Testament believers perceived what the apostle ascribes to them at a later point in the history of redemption, namely, that they partook of Christ (see 1 Cor. 10:2-4).  

What is more, the two sacraments of the evangelical covenant, that is, circumcision and the Passover, being conjoined to the Sinaitic covenant, served as seals of the covenant of grace until the advent of Christ (see John 7:22, 23; Deut. 16:1, 2). However, if the legal covenant of Sinai is understood to be a third covenant entirely distinct in species from the evangelical covenant, then it seems "absurd to add the sacraments of the covenant of grace

---


261 Turretin, *Institutio theologiae eleonicae*, XII.xii.15.
to a certain different covenant, whether it be called one of works or subservient."

Similarly, it is a step backwards if God, having established the covenant of grace with Abraham, now introduces a legal covenant, for this derogates from what was earlier promised in the way of faith. Besides, how can the Abrahamic covenant be everlasting if it is set aside? Turretin argues that the Sinaitic covenant, rather than derogating from the Abrahamic covenant, instead confirms it. For the law, given four hundred years after the promise to Abraham, did not nullify that covenant; rather, it was added on account of transgressions, with the intention that the recipients of this covenant should come to Christ (Gal. 3:17, 19). Says Turretin, "This proves that the law pointed away to Christ as the end to which it looked; if not by itself and in its own nature, at least in the intention and design of the lawgiver." And therefore (and this constitutes a severe blow to the Cameron-Amyraut position):

To say that this covenant subserved the covenant of grace is really to say that it was not a covenant, but only a dispensation. A covenant properly so called has the power of binding by itself the contracting parties, nor is it directed to another. If therefore that dispensation had respect to another (as it really did), it is a proof that it was not a different covenant in species, but only a different mode of economy, adapted to the time, place and state of the persons.

3. Further Defense of the Consensus View

Under fontes solutionum Turretin offers his positive defense of the consensus opinion among the Reformed orthodox regarding the Mosaic covenant. Per usual, Turretin asserts that this covenant can be viewed in a bifurcated way: the first way, which is also the proper

---

262 Turretin, Instituta theologiae eleisonicae, XII.xii.16.

263 Turretin, Instituta theologiae eleisonicae, XII.xii.17. "quod evincit Legem amandasse ad Christum, tantum finem quem respiciebat, si non per se et natura sua, saltem in intentione et consilio Legislatoris. Dicere fœdus hoc subservissse fœderi gratiae, est revera dicere non fuisset fœdus, sed tantum dispensacionem: nam fœdus proprié dictum habet vim obligandi per se partes contrahentes, nec alio dirigitur. Si ergo alio respiciebat ista dispensatio, ut revera respetit argumentum est non fuisset fœdus diversum specie, sed tantum modum econonie diversum, tempori, loco, et statui personarum accommodatum." Cf. Francis Roberts, Mysterium & Medulla Bibliorum, p. 734, where he offers a similar assessment and resolution of this issue, for he argues that "God gave the Law by Moses to Israel from Mount Sinai, as a covenant: and that not as a covenant of works, nor as a mixt Covenant of Works and Grace, nor as a Covenant subservient to the Covenant of grace, but as a covenant of faith."
and principal way, is to view this covenant according to God's own intention and design, namely as leading to Christ; the second way is to view this covenant as separate from Christ and abstracted from him. When viewed in this second way, the Sinaitic covenant is distinct from the evangelical covenant “because it coincides with the covenant of works and in this sense is called the letter that killeth and the ministration of condemnation” (2 Cor. 3:6, 7). But this isn’t how the Sinaitic covenant is properly considered, for the divine intention is what is most decisive, not an abstraction; and that intention wasn’t that “man might have life from the law” or that humans as sinners “might be simply condemned”; rather, the divine intention was that fallen persons, from a sense of their own misery and weakness, “might fly for refuge to Christ.”

Having said that, however, it might appear that Turretin has over-argued his case, and has diminished the (adversative) contrast that exists between the Sinaitic covenant and the new covenant of Jeremiah 31. Turretin asserts that this opposition does not pertain to essence but to accidents or diversity of economy (just as a man can be opposed to himself with respect to standing and sitting). The promises of the new covenant “are not to be understood absolutely and simply,” as if the Old Testament fathers did not possess the remission of their sins or did not know God as their God; rather, they are to be understood “relatively and comparatively with regard to greater clearness and efficacy.”

Meanwhile, it may not be maintained that the Mosaic covenant was without Christ, and that for six reasons:

(1) Moses testified of him (Jn. 5:45, 46; Lk. 24:44; Acts 3:22, 23; 26:22, 23); (2) he is contained implicitly under the promise of a peculiar treasure, royal priesthood and holy nation (Ex. 19:5, 6 compared with 1 Pet. 2:9, 10)—for without Christ, sinners cannot obtain these privileges (as was said before); (3) in the preface to the decalogue, God is set forth as the God of the people and the deliverer from Egypt (which could be done only through Christ); (4) the ratification of the covenant by the blood of victims typified the blood of Christ; (5) the legal types and shadows chiefly pointed to no other than Christ; (6)


the principal scope and spirit of the law was Christ, without whom it is nothing else than a corpse and a letter that kills (Rom. 10:4; Gal. 3:24).\textsuperscript{266}

That the law is taken as a letter that kills refers to its strict designation, abstracted from the promises of grace and apart from faith (Gal. 3:12); for its broad designation refers to the Mosaic economy as such, which is inclusive of the gracious promises and by faith. In fact, that the way of faith was taught in the Sinaitic covenant is evident from various considerations. First, the object of faith, Christ, is also taught in that covenant (as just argued above). Second, it is impossible to worship God according to the stipulation of the first commandment except by faith, “which purifies the heart, works through love and makes us acceptable to God (Acts 15:9; Heb. 11:6). Third, the law drives sinners to despair of themselves and to seek Christ by faith (Gal. 3:22, 24). Fourth, “Paul describes the righteousness of faith (Rom. 10:6, 7) in the same words as Moses declared the precepts of the law (Dt. 30:11-13), to teach that they are not simply legal, but also evangelical.” To be sure, by way of comparison faith is more clearly manifest in the New Testament than in the Old; but faith is “revealed absolutely” under the old covenant.\textsuperscript{267}

Turretin further polemics against the Cameron-Amryaut position (or that of the Salmurian school) by explaining the relationship between law and gospel under the covenant of grace. He observes that the specific distinction (\textit{discriminum specificum}) between law and gospel in the covenant of grace does not make for a strict twofold conditionality—that of law requiring perfect obedience and that of gospel requiring faith; or stated differently, what is expressed by law and gospel in the evangelical covenant does not constitute two distinct

\textsuperscript{266} Turretin, \textit{Institutio theologiae exegeticae}, XII.xii.20. “Fœdus Sinaiticum non fuit sine Christo, quia 1. Moses de eo testatus est, Joh. v. 45, 46, Luc. xxiv. 44, Act. iii. 22, 23, et xxvi. 22, 23; 2. Continetur implicitè sub promissione pecullii, regalis Sacertotii, et nationis sanctæ, Exod. xix. 5, 6, collat. cum 1 Pet. ii. 9, 10, quia sine Christo peccatores non possunt ista privilegia obtinere, ut anteæ dictum; 3. In Prefatione Decalogi, ubi Deus proponitur, ut Deus populi, et Liberator ex Ægypto, quod nonnisi per Christum fieri potuit; 4. In sanctione fœdert per sanguinem victimarum, sanguinem Christi adumbrantem; 5. In typis et umbris Legibus, quæ non alio praecipue, quam ad Christum dirigebantur; 6. Quia scopus praecipus et anima Legis fuit Christus, sine quo, nihil aliud est quam cadaver et litera occidentis, Rom. x. 4, Gal. iii. 24.”

\textsuperscript{267} Turretin, \textit{Institutio theologiae exegeticae}, XII.xii.21.
conditions in the absolute sense. For the stipulations of "perfect obedience" and of "faith" are not demanded in the same way (eodem modo) or for the same end (undem in finem). "For faith in Christ is demanded primarily and intended chiefly, but perfect obedience (under punishment of death and the curse) only subordinately and relatively to faith and the righteousness of faith." To be sure, if each of these conditions were taken absolutely as expressions of law and gospel respectively, it would then seem necessary to propose two covenants in distinction from one another—a legal covenant over against a gospel covenant. But the stipulation of perfect obedience is relative to the righteousness of faith, being subordinate to what is primary and principal, namely faith in Christ. These distinct conditions, then, do not each function absolutely in the covenant of grace. But if that is the case, how are they related to one another? Turretin explains that the fulfillment of both conditions is necessary for the salvation of sinners. However, it is critical to understand rightly how these conditions are fulfilled, as well as in whom and by whom.

Again, these two conditions are proposed because they are necessary to the salvation of the sinner: perfect obedience in Christ to fulfill the righteousness of the law (to dikaiosma tou moun), without which the justice of God did not permit life to be given to us; faith however in us that the perfect obedience and satisfaction of Christ might be applied to us and become ours by imputation. Thus what was demanded of us in the covenant of works is fulfilled by Christ in the covenant of grace. Nor is it absurd that in this way justification takes place by works and by faith—by the works of Christ and by our faith. And thus in sweet harmony the law and the gospel meet together in this covenant. The law is not administered without the gospel, nor the gospel without the law. So that it is as it were a legal-gospel and an evangelical-law; a gospel full of obedience and a law full of faith. So the gospel does not destroy the law, but establishes it (Rom. 3:31) by giving us Christ, who perfectly fulfilled it. And the law is not against the gospel, since it refers and leads us to it as its end.

268 Turretin, *Institutio theologiae elencticae*, XII.xii.22. "fides enim in Christum postulabatur primario, et precise intendebatur; Sed obedientia perfecta sub pena mortis et maledictionis tantum subordine et relate ad fidem et justificant fidei."

269 Turretin, *Institutio theologiae elencticae*, XII.xii.22. "Deinde dux iste conditiones proponuntur, quia necessaria sunt ad peccatorum salutem; perfecta obedientia in Christo ad impleendum to dikaiosma tov vemu, sine qua non patiebatur justitia Dei vitam nobis dari; fides vero in nobis, ut perfecta obedientia et satisfactio Christi nobis applicaretur, et nostra fieret per imputationem; atque ita quod exigebatur a nobis in fide operum, impletur per Christum in fide et gratia. Nec absurdum est hoc pacto justificationem fieri per opera et per fidem, per opera Christi, et per fidem nostram. Atque ita suavi harmonia Lex et Evangelium simul concurrunt in hoc fide; Lex non administratur sine Evangelio, nec Evangelium sine Lege, ut sit veluti Legale Evangelium, et Lex Evangelica Evangelium plenum obedientia, et Lex plena fide. Sic Evangelium non destruit
Consistent with what Turretin has stated time and again, here he reasserts that the conditionality of the covenant of grace must be rightly construed. For salvation is not apart from works, nor is the way of blessing as stipulated in the covenant of nature and restipulated in the law of Moses, namely perfect obedience, short-circuited or yielded in the covenant of grace. What is critical for Turretin, and for sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Reformed federalism in general, is how the stipulation for perfect obedience is fulfilled, and by whom. As Turretin clearly demonstrates, obedience is “in Christ” and “by Christ.” Divine justice is not forfeited for the sake of grace; rather, grace provides the way for the satisfaction of God’s justice and the maintenance of his righteous law. Faith is requisite, not as a work performed as a reward, but as God’s own work in sinners and by means of which they obtain Christ and all his benefits—including his perfect obedience. For Christ fulfills the demands of the natural covenant; or stated differently, the evangelical covenant provides the way for the fulfillment of the covenant of nature. In no wise, however, are the requirements of the original covenant between God and humans set aside. Christ does all that is required, even enduring the negative sanction of the natural covenant, in order to rescue sinners under that sanction. Inasmuch as God works faith in the hearts of those incapable of coming to faith of themselves, faith too, like the gift of Christ as Surety, is a divine operation and therefore an unmerited, wholly gracious, bequest from God. The conditions of faith and obedience, then, are fulfilled by divine grace alone—the former worked in the hearts of sinners by God, the latter fulfilled by Christ on the behalf of sinners; and Christ is himself a gift of God’s benevolence and kindness. Thus law and gospel converge in the covenant of grace, and more particularly in Christ himself, the center of the covenant. The “legal-gospel” Turretin mentions, as well as his locution “evangelical-law,” does not mean that law and gospel are interchangeable terms, or that gospel is somehow law..

Legem, sed eam stabilit, Rom. iii. 31, dando nobis Christum, qui perfecte eam implevit. Et Lex non est contra Evangelium, cum ad illud ut ad finem suum respiciat et nos manuducat.”
and law is somehow gospel. Rather, his purpose in using such terms is to point out and accent how Christ fulfills the covenant of works in the covenant of grace. For the gospel establishes or upholds the law in giving Christ who fulfills the law completely, and the law, as to its goal, does not oppose the gospel inasmuch as it leads sinners to Christ, whose perfect obedience and satisfaction is theirs by imputation.

Turretin also rebuts the Cameron-Amyraut schema by arguing that the mediatorship of Moses in the Sinaitic covenant does not displace Christ’s mediatorship in the covenant of grace, or even compete with it, such that a covenant distinct in species from the evangelical covenant is requisite. On the contrary, Moses is a mediator externally and as a type, not properly or truly. It certainly is not the case that his spansion had some sort of efficacy or power in itself or apart from Christ, especially given the fact that Christ alone is the “peacemaker” (εἰρενόποιος). Similarly, the promise of the land of Canaan is not principal in the Sinaitic covenant, but functions as type of the heavenly Canaan and to which the fathers looked (see Heb. 4:11:15, 16). The Salmurian doctrine falsely creates a distinct and divergent covenant, that is the legal or Sinaitic covenant, from the covenant called the covenant of grace, for it confuses a diversity of dispensation with a diversity of covenants.270

Again, lest there be misunderstanding, Turretin does not deny, but affirms, that the law in itself takes on the form of a covenant of works, and as such does not have as its goal the making alive but instead the convicting of sinners of their transgressions. In this way it functioned as a handwriting against sinners, ministering condemnation and death to them (2 Cor. 3:9; Col. 2:14). However, the Sinaitic covenant as such cannot be construed in that way, for this covenant had the living oracles (λόγια ζωντα, Acts 7:38), even as it contained the saving promises of God’s grace in Christ.271

270 Turretin, Institutio theologiae elencticae, XII.xii.23-24. Similarly, Heidegger’s comments as recorded in Heppe, Reformed Dogmatics, 398.

271 Turretin, Institutio theologiae elencticae, XII.xii.25.
In light of Turretin’s extended disputation against the Salmurian view, Beardslee’s assessment of this controversy misses the mark when he asserts that Turretin’s contention with Cameron and Amyraut over a triple covenant schema is “almost purely a matter of words.” Beardslee judges the Salmurian separation of the Mosaic covenant from the New Testament as not particularly significant, and concludes that it is “probably as ‘Biblical’ as F. Turretin’s teaching.”272 This hardly fits with the assessment of the parties involved. Neither does it fit with Armstrong’s analysis. Armstrong argues that Amyraut regarded his triple covenant schema as a vehicle for building bridges of unity with the Lutherans. He further argues that Amyraut’s covenant theology is the key to his whole theological project, a “device” that rescues orthodox Calvinism from the rigors of divine predestination and limited atonement, solves the “thorny problem” of the relationship between God’s mercy and justice, and steers Calvinism away from its legalistic orientation, particularly in Amyraut’s idea of a hypothetical covenant (fœdus hypotheticum) over against an absolute covenant (fœdus absolutum)—an idea Turretin does not at this point address.273

Perhaps even more decisive is the how the Amyraldian position was assessed by the Swiss Reformed churches in the Formula Consensus Helvetica, for it specifically rejects the three-covenant scheme.

We disapprove therefore of the doctrine of those who fabricate for us three Covenants, the Natural, the Legal, and the Gospel, different in their entire nature and essence; and in explaining these and assigning their differences, so intricately entangle themselves that they greatly obscure and even impair the nucleus of solid truth and piety. Nor do they hesitate at all, with regard to the necessity, under the OT dispensation, of knowledge of Christ and faith in him and his satisfaction and in the whole sacred Trinity, to speculate much too loosely and dangerously.274

With the Formula, Turretin rejects the Amyraldian scheme, for it blurs, if not obliterates, the gospel and grace present in the law. It also compromises the third use of the law as

273 Armstrong, Calvinism and the Amyraut Heresy, 124-125, 140, 142-143; also his remarks on pages 222-224.
274 Helvetic Formula Consensus, Canon XXV.
understood by the Reformed since the law, for Amyraut, is a covenant altogether distinct from the covenant of grace. Amyraut's scheme, finally, satisfied neither the Lutherans nor the Reformed, for it does not bear the marks of consistency.

Summary and Conclusion

Without attempting to summarize every facet of the preceding analysis, it is possible to outline briefly the most prominent features of Turretin's discussion from this chapter.

We saw that Turretin argues for the unity of the covenant of grace, which represents something of the genius of federal theology, for, as Turretin has argued, Christ is the center of this covenant and functions as its Mediator in both the old and new testaments, just as he is the object of faith in both testaments. Against Socinian, Arminian, and Anabaptist opponents, Turretin asserts that the covenant of grace is one (and the same) in substance in its diverse dispensations. The way of salvation is singular throughout the history of redemption, and that is through Christ alone. Thus the Abrahamic covenant is confirmed in Christ, even as the proto-evangelium of Genesis 3 finds its fulfillment in the promised Messiah. Moreover, the condition of faith is stipulated in both testaments, specifically, faith in Christ, while the same spiritual promises are likewise given in the two testaments. In addition, even the Mosaic law, including its ceremonial prescriptions, served both to prepare and call the fathers of the Old Testament to embrace the way of salvation in God's Christ—the one in whom there is genuine expiation and pardon for sins. Consequently, the term "gospel" as used in Scripture is both that which is promised to come and also that which is fulfilled and has come. And while it is true that the gospel is under a veil in the Old Testament, being set forth obscurely, it is nonetheless set forth truly, and therefore the way of salvation through Christ is already proclaimed by Moses and the prophets. This means that the gospel is perpetually present in the law. In this way the efficacy of the gospel, particularly Christ's atoning death, may be affirmed as operative for and applicatory unto the pious of the Old Testament, which is possible through the efficacy of Christ's divinity. The importance of the
unity here affirmed is rooted in what is central to the gospel message itself, namely, that salvation is in Christ and according to the gift of divine grace from first to last. The covenant of grace displaces the covenant of works, which means that those in the covenant of grace enjoy peace and fellowship with God.

Perhaps one of the most significant aspects of Turretin’s discussion in this chapter was his examination of the scope or particularity of the covenant of grace. It is especially important that we carefully reflect on Turretin’s examination of this topic inasmuch as his analysis demonstrates where the doctrine of the covenant and the doctrine of election intersect; and since this feature of covenant theology is much debated within the secondary literature, we do well to comprehend the inter-relationship between these two doctrines.

We saw that, for Turretin, it is possible to participate in the covenant of grace in an external versus an internal manner. This fits with the distinction between external versus internal calling, and in turn with the difference between non-election (or reprobation) and election. It also fits in part with the distinction between the church in its visible manifestation and its invisible character—the latter known only to God, for hypocrites are intermingled in the church as visible (see Belgic Confession, art. 29). The difference between an external versus an internal participation in the covenant is the difference between not participating in Christ versus participating in him. To participate in Christ is to receive all the benefits of the covenant; it is to commune with Christ, which means God fulfills in those united to Christ every blessing, such that the requisite conditions stipulated for the human parties of the covenant are likewise bestowed and worked in them. Salvation itself—indeed, everything of which salvation consists—including Christ’s work of satisfaction and his merits, as well as faith and regeneration, justification and sanctification, also glorification, each and all are conferred to them. The participants and recipients of these blessings are none other than God’s elect. Meanwhile, the reprobate, while they enjoy certain external privileges of covenant membership and are called (externally) to fulfill the stipulations of the
covenant in the way of faith in Christ and dependence upon him, do not commune with Christ and so do not receive the salvific blessing of the covenant—neither is such blessing graciously worked in them. This means that their participation in the covenant is external only; they do not possess Christ. But they do participate in the visible church and the covenant’s outward administration. Thus, the reprobate do not participate in the saving essence of the covenantal promise, for God has not chosen them to eternal life; as such, they do not receive the gift of faith—the very condition that must be fulfilled in order to receive Christ and enjoy the forgiveness of sins. Indeed, if the reprobate did receive the gift of faith and were united to Christ, they would not be reprobate (which is nonsense).

As evident from his earlier discussion, Turretin demonstrated how the testamentary nature of the covenant of grace forms the center of divine salvation. For Turretin, as for all Reformed theologians of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, salvation is God’s project—and that according to grace. This is exhibited in that God provides the singular way of redemption in Christ; and in doing that he safeguards his holiness while displaying his mercy. As Surety, Christ bears the penalty bringing redemption, and that infallibly. The covenant of grace, then, finds its target of application and fulfillment in the elect alone, for the Surety’s work is testamentary in character. He purchases redemption’s price, which is to say, he performs the work of satisfaction, and purchases every other blessing unto the salvation of the elect—those chosen to eternal life. In short, the Guarantor guarantees salvation.

This portrait of salvation can hardly be charged as graceless, unless one wishes to contest the idea of divine predestination itself. But, then, if the doctrine of predestination is to be regarded as poisoning federal theology, that poison has infected much theology that is not uniquely covenantal. Within a portion of the secondary literature the question has been raised whether the doctrine of predestination subverts or undermines the doctrine of the covenant. It is difficult to see how this charge has validity unless some form of synergism is
proposed as the litmus test of a new (undefined) orthodoxy or, alternatively, some form of
universalism becomes the mark of a valid or properly Christian theology. In other words, if
either synergism or universalism are judged to be the hallmark of a theology of grace, then,
by that test, federalism fails indeed—but then so does much Christian theology; certainly on
those terms the Augustinian tradition in general and the Reformed tradition in particular do
not qualify as a theology of grace.

In fact, however, as we saw, the particularity of the covenant of grace, for Turretin, is
not at all at odds with the doctrine of predestination, since the promised blessings of this
covenant are nothing less than salvation and eternal life. Inasmuch as salvation is what God
grants in this covenant, and inasmuch as Christ is the Surety who procures salvation for
sinners through penal substitution, the promises of the covenant are not conditional but
absolute—and these promises concern not only the end but also the means and conditions
themselves. Here, again, we see the testamentary character of the covenant come to
expression. God confers blessing; salvation is his work, and therefore salvation is wholly
gracious.

What this means practically is that if God had chosen to save all fallen human beings,
the scope or amplitude of the evangelical covenant would have been universal (but even
then it would still be particular—a particular determination to save all). However, since
salvation isn’t determined according to human motivations and actions (if that were so no
one would be saved), God must intervene, and in doing so, according to his mercy and love,
he chooses to rescue whom he chooses to rescue, and that efficaciously. The non-elect,
therefore, do not partake of the essence of the covenant, which is Christ himself and all his
saving benefits, including the remission of sins and new life. They remain part of the seed of
the serpent who stand opposed to the seed of the woman. It hardly makes sense to regard
federal theology as compromised because it doesn’t jettison the doctrine of election or
otherwise transform it into a doctrine of universal salvation. On the contrary, the doctrine of
the covenant demonstrates how divine election plays out within the history of salvation, or more specifically, how salvation plays out in the lives of individual human beings. The covenant is the mechanism of God’s agency among fallen people, inclusive of Christ’s work of satisfaction; and in the concrete application of covenant stipulations in the proclamation of the gospel, with promises and warnings, assurances and exhortations, the Spirit of Christ is operative, bringing God’s eternal purpose in Christ to fruition in the lives of his people.\footnote{A powerful example of how covenant and predestination interrelate and interpenetrate one another is seen in Turretin’s sermons. For example, in his sermon \textit{La Perseverance en la Foy} (from Hebrews 10:23), Turretin combines potent exhortation to persevere in faith (rooted in the believer’s security in Christ’s work of satisfaction) with steadfast and confident assurance of God’s work of grace. Thus believers are to have unwavering hope, for God is faithful to his promises. See Turretin, “La Perseverance en la Foy,” in \textit{Recueil de Sermons sur divers textes de l’Ecriture Sainte} (Geneva, 1686), especially pages 600, 604, 609, 614, 618, 634, 637-38, 641-43, 653-54, 664-66, 670; likewise, see sermon five, “Vastigheid van het Fondament Gods,” pp. 190-236, in the Dutch translation of his first volume of published sermons, \textit{Predicatien oever verscheide texten der H. Schriftuur gedaan door Francois Turrettin} (1678); this is translated from \textit{Sermons sur divers passages de l’Ecriture Sainte} (Geneva, 1676). Also see his seventh sermon “De l’Affermissement de la Vocation et de l’Election du Fidele,” in \textit{Sermons sur divers passages de l’Ecriture Sainte} (Geneva, 1676), 435-494.} As we saw, Turretin reminds us that this is plainly evident, for, as Calvin observed, it is undeniable that the gospel has not been promulgated to all, and all are not saved. Meanwhile Turretin shows us, in the way of the \textit{syllogismus practicus}, that inasmuch as persons believe and trust in Christ, they may be assured of their salvation, and likewise of their election.

Next, as we observed, Turretin treated the twofold economy of the covenant of grace. It would take us too far afield to rehearse all the contours of this discussion, so our summary remarks will be brief. Having argued for the substantial unity of the evangelical covenant, Turretin expounded upon the diversity within this covenant. In explaining the progression and development of the history of redemption within the Old Testament, Turretin argued that the old dispensation is part of the covenant of grace. It is neither a different covenant from the new covenant in Christ’s blood, nor the same covenant as the covenant of nature. Already in the first gospel promise from Genesis 3:15, God’s abounding mercy shines forth, casting a shadow of hope across all the pages of Scripture, for it contains the promise of a deliverer, reaching fulfillment in Christ—the seed of the woman. The whole covenant of
grace is contained in it, states Turretin, as in a compendium. This is then manifest in the succeeding ages of this covenant: from Adam to Abraham, from Abraham to Moses, and from Moses to Christ.

Similarly, the oath God swore to Abraham, to be his God and to his seed after him, likewise encapsulates the covenant of grace. Under the Mosaic economy the law of God also forms part of the covenant of grace. As Turretin reminded his readers, the God of creation and paradise is also the God of mercy and grace, as he is the God who prescribes the Mosaic law, comprised in the decalogue. Natural law, then, conforms to the law of Moses, and vice versa; and both reflect the nature of God—for God is a God of righteousness and holiness, even as he is a God of love and goodness.

As we observed, Turretin demonstrated how the law of God reflects God’s justice, calling humans to obedience before him (as in the Edenic situation), promising blessing in the way of obedience, and death for those who are transgressors of the law. Does this threat compromise the covenant of grace? Not as such, for the covenant of grace itself is founded on God’s good pleasure, whereby he fulfills the demands of the law on behalf of sinners in order to redeem them. Moreover, the evangelical covenant grants what it demands, unlike the law, which is wholly powerless to give what it requires. What is more, faith is from divine mercy, not from the law, for the object of faith is Christ, the Surety, the first and last word of the covenant of grace. Thus the law has a double relation to the covenant of grace: it is the antithesis of grace when applied to a false end (as if it could give life), but it is in service of grace (it is even an expression of God’s grace) when functioning as schoolmaster, leading sinners to Christ and showing them God’s good and perfect will. In its function as schoolmaster, Turretin explained that the law has a twofold role: in its legal role it republishes the covenant of works, showing sinful humans what they owe God and the penalty for failing to obey him; in its gospel role, however, it points sinners to Christ as the divine remedy to their bleak and despairing inability to keep the law.
The first role reflects the Old Testament in its external economy of legal teaching. It is marked by the promise of the Messiah to come, as it is also marked by obscurity, bondage, severity, and external purity, along with weakness, mutability, and splendor (for what it does reveal). The second role reflects the Old Testament in its internal economy of gospel promise, for the promise of the gospel, latent under the law, contained Christ himself, with the spiritual blessings he gives, including the remission of sins and justification, adoption, sanctification, the gift of the Spirit, the resurrection, and eternal life.

As for the New Testament, as we saw, its “newness” has nothing to do with the substance of the covenant; rather, as Turrettin demonstrated, its newness pertains to circumstances and mode (without the severity and veil of the law), excellence and glory (being extended to all humankind), and perpetual duration (for it is immutable). It is principally marked by the Messiah having come; and so with him it is also marked by the abrogation of the former economy in its legal role, as well as the effusion of the Spirit, the calling of the nations, adoption without the dread of the law, liberty, greater sanctification, and eternal life. In that light, Turrettin argued that it is wrongheaded and harmful to posit a dichotomy between the law and the covenant grace without proper care to define their proper and improper relation.

Since the twofold economy of the covenant of grace is essentially an affirmation of the unity of the covenant—albeit a diversity within unity—Turrettin also considered the difference between the old and new covenant. Since he already argued that the difference is not one of substance, Turrettin considered whether the distinguishing traits are merely “accidental.” To address this issue he looked at the old and new covenants broadly conceived and strictly conceived. Broadly understood, the Old Testament, even with its old doctrine, outmoded worship, and external polity still announced salvation by grace. Strictly understood, however, it denoted the covenant of works as given in the law of Moses, which is not its proper end, however, for salvation is not by works of the law. This also serves as an
answer to certain Reformed writers and to the Lutherans, with their division between the testaments.

At stake in Turretin’s carefully nuanced understanding of the relation between the testaments, which is basically the traditional Reformed position, is once more a concern to protect the singular way of salvation in Christ—the way of salvation for both believers in the Old Testament and the New Testament. This isn’t a matter of placing a hermeneutical grid over the question in order to arrive at a predetermined answer; instead, it reflects a commitment to the unity of divine revelation, such that in doing the work of exegesis Turretin discerns that the biblical materials announce variation within unity; or more particularly, a diversity of dispensations within the single path of divine redemption in Christ. We discover, then, that Turretin, being representative of the wide consensus among federal theologians, labors to protect even the Old Testament economy from the charge of legalism, for salvation is by divine grace in the way of the guarantee of God’s promise—the promise that is the seed of the woman, the Surety, Jesus, the Christ of God.

In coming to Turretin’s treatment of the intra-Reformed dispute concerning Christ’s sponsion we discovered that the unity of the covenant of grace is the controlling issue behind it. Quite apart from which side gets the better of the debate (though it may be observed that Turretin’s case is formidable), the more important question is what the debate represented for Turretin himself. What threat did he perceive in this matter? Not surprisingly, as we have seen before, Turretin viewed the priority and centrality of divine grace at stake in this debate, which alone explains his extended polemics against kindred Reformed writers on this rather intricate point of doctrine. For in his assessment, the theology of grace is compromised if the fathers of the Old Testament, while they lived, were not truly freed from the punishments due unto them for their sins. While neither of the judicial concepts regarding suretyship (that is, neither fideiussio nor expressissio) completely apply to Christ’s suretyship, Turretin argued that Christ’s role as Surety uniquely extends and
embellishes the idea of *expromissio*. In other words, his suretyship (*expromissio*) expands beyond the idea of pecuniary debt and applies to penal debt. Under the Cocceian scheme, however, with its doctrine of the gradual and progressive abrogation of the covenant of works, the covenant of grace is seriously compromised, and so the singular way of salvation throughout the history of redemption is likewise threatened. As became clear in our exposition of Turretin's view, he regards Christ's suretyship as essential to the covenant of grace, encapsulating God's mercy to sinners. Consequently, it is critical not to dilute or otherwise attenuate its significance for the evangelical covenant—in all of its dispensations and economies.

The Old Testament fathers, therefore, did not merely enjoy a postponement of punishment, which was subsequently removed with Christ's atoning death. On the contrary, as Turretin argues, they enjoyed genuine remission of guilt, bringing with it reconciliation and peace with God, for they were freed from the wrath of God. They therefore experienced peace of conscience, at least to some degree, because their sins were remitted for Christ's sake.

In his extended and careful consideration of biblical texts, we also saw Turretin's exegetical skills on display, even as he evinced theological finesse in relating biblical doctrines to one another. The purpose of his polemics, however, was to protect divine grace from diminishment in either dispensation of the covenant of grace—old or new. This requires, conversely, that the essential and radical break between the covenant of works and the covenant of grace be affirmed. Without this fundamental division, Christ's sponsorship within the evangelical economy is weakened, for it means that the pious of the Old Testament could not serve God with confidence under Christ suretyship—that is, as something already applied to them. Instead, they lived under the threat of penalty of their sins until Christ should come in the flesh and remit their guilt. Thus, as we observed, Turretin polemicizes against the Cocceian position regarding the state of the fathers in the Old Testament in
order to safeguard the way of salvation throughout the gospel dispensation. If Christ’s suretyship is defined in a way that leaves the fathers of the Old Testament under the penalty of their sins until Christ appears in the flesh, then, strictly speaking, while they lived, they stood under guilt and the verdict of condemnation.

It should also be observed that not every seventeenth-century federal theologian, in employing the key terms for suretyship and Surety, especially the words fidejussio and fidejussor, used them with the technical precision given to them by Voetian and Cocceian proponents, particularly among English federal theologians this ambiguity seems evident. In any case, within the Continental debates, there is little room for doubt that fidejussio and expromissio were theological lines drawn in the sand, bringing various shades of division within the church.

Finally, in this chapter we saw how Turretin musters his arguments against the Amyraldian notion of a third covenant. Amyraut posited a triple covenant formula, specifically a covenant of law separate from the covenant of works and the covenant of grace. Turretin regarded this middle way as opening the door to another path of salvation, and since that saviorific path was not according to the covenant of grace, it could not be by the Mediator of that covenant, Christ as Surety. This subverts the evangelical covenant and wrongly abolishes the unity between the testaments. Thus Turretin reiterates that believers—even Old Testament believers—live under the covenant of grace; otherwise they are under the sanction of death according to the stipulation of the covenant of works. Moreover, believers live by faith, not by works; and in the way of faith they receive life in Christ’s mediatorship, not the mediatorship of Moses (for Moses’ mediatorship served but never displaced Christ’s).

Given the singular path of salvation in the covenant of grace, which is in and through Christ, the Salmurian position is mistaken in asserting a twofold conditionality in the distinction between law and gospel, as if God proposed perfect obedience without the
stipulation of the righteousness of faith. For the latter is primary and principal inasmuch as it is nothing less than the righteousness of Christ. As Turretin explained, perfect obedience is necessary for salvation. And Christ obeys perfectly, fulfilling all righteousness for the elect. Faith is also necessary for salvation, for by faith the perfect obedience and satisfaction of Christ is applied to believers. The demands of the covenant of works are fulfilled by Christ in the covenant of grace—fulfilled for and in the elect. Three things, then, are certain: salvation is not apart from works in the salvation of sinners; God does not subvert his own justice in saving sinners; and obedience to God is not ignored in the work of redemption. In each case, however, Christ the Surety performs the requisite action and duty on behalf of sinners, fulfilling the law of God, not destroying it. Moreover, the law serves the gospel and comes to its end by leading sinners to the only remedy and hope for redemption—Christ, who fulfills all righteousness.

This completes our examination of Turretin’s doctrine of the covenant of grace, including his defense of this doctrine against a variety of opponents. Given this, and in light of the criticisms and interpretations of federal theology surveyed in the first chapter, all that remains is to summarize the conclusions to be drawn from this study and to consider how Turretin’s position brings resolution to certain perceived problems within federal theology—all of which we shall take up in the next chapter.
CHAPTER FIVE

CHRIST AND THE COVENANT:
ASSESSING TURRETIN AND THE ASSESSMENTS OF
FEDERAL THEOLOGY

Introduction

In this study we have argued that Francis Turretin’s federal theology is a defense of the
doctrine of grace. In doing so we have considered federal theology in its mature expression,
exposed by a pinnacle Reformed theologian of the latter half of the seventeenth century. In
the first chapter we carefully surveyed the scholarship surrounding the federal movement—a
movement that first emerged among the Reformed in the sixteenth century but did not
come to full expression until the seventeenth century. From that survey we determined that
there are several prominent strains of interpretation regarding the origin, motivating force,
and import of the doctrine of the twofold covenant. In three successive chapters we
examined Turretin’s doctrine of the twofold covenant in an effort to weigh and evaluate the
accuracy of these several assessments of the federal scheme, especially vis-à-vis its mature,
seventeenth-century development. Our thesis, as already summarized in the introduction to
this study, maintained that in Turretin’s theology, the covenant of grace is epitomized by
Christ, who is God’s supreme and benevolent gift to fallen sinners. In the course of this
study we saw that the covenant of grace bears a potent testamentary character, so much so
that it may be called a “covenant by testament” or a “testamentary covenant.” In expositing
the doctrine of the covenant of nature and the covenant of grace we also saw how Turretin
labors to defend the doctrine of grace, which, for him, is nothing less than a defense of the
gospel itself. In fact, we have shown that Turretin’s federal theology is a defense of a
theology of grace.
Now that this analysis has reached completion, we are in a position to draw together the conclusions that may legitimately be drawn from our previous analysis of Turretin’s thought.

A. Affirmations regarding Turretin’s Federal Theology

Turretin’s exposition of the twofold covenant paints a portrait of federal theology that is concerned to present and defend the gospel of salvation in Christ. Turretin’s theological method likewise fits this portrait—that is, his methodology serves both a positive expositional and a polemical purpose. We offer our summary observations under eight theses.

1. Federal theology, positing a twofold covenant, develops the “representation motif” in Scripture. Federal theology, as Turretin expounded it, represents a development within the Reformed movement in which the “representation motif” pertaining to Adam and Christ, expounded by the apostle in Romans 5 in particular, is thought through and integrated into the Reformed system of topics. Within the paradisal situation, Adam is conceived as the federal head of humanity—being a public person—and with his fall all humanity is plunged into ruin. Christ, however, is depicted as the second Adam, the redeemer of humanity, and all those in him are reconciled to God and become part of his renewed people. Corresponding to this twofold representation of the human race is the twofold covenant—the covenant of works and the covenant of grace. The twofold covenant idea, then, is grounded in the role assigned to Adam as the representative head of humanity, and that in contrast to Christ’s representative role according to the covenant of redemption.

The covenant of works, with Adam as the representative head of humankind, therefore defends what was implicit in Augustinian theology in general, namely that humans owe obedience to God as creatures created in his image, and blessing comes along that path. In short, God is good to humans in imposing his law upon them, for fellowship with God is along the path of holiness, not sinfulness; disobedience brings judgment. All of which means
that the representation motif and the twofold covenant are correlative. Turretin’s exposition of the twofold covenant, in keeping with the consensus among federal theologians in the seventeenth century, also represents a further elaboration of the relation between the testaments found in earlier codifications of Reformed theology, with development coming in the way of an extensive explication of Christ’s suretyship which is rooted in the pactum salutis or covenant of redemption. Besides this, the development of the twofold covenant is rooted in the eschatological motif relative to the sacramental trees of Genesis and their symbolism portrayed in the book of Revelation. In short, the prelapsarian covenant posited an eschatological outcome which came to actual fruition in the covenant of grace through Christ’s redemptive work as surety. But in back of this stands the representative motif as primary.

2. Federal theology maintains the perpetuity of divine law in God’s relationship with humans. In Turretin’s exposition of federal theology, as for federal theologians in general, the doctrine of the twofold covenant demonstrates that God’s standard of righteousness and holiness abides unaltered in both the original, paradisal covenant arrangement and in the work of redemption in the covenant of grace. God, being who he is according to the panoply of his attributes, engages his human moral creatures according to the integrity of his justice and goodness. Inasmuch as God created humans as moral creatures who bear his image, they must render to him all that is his due. Moreover, inasmuch as God enters into a covenant with human beings in paradise, he is prepared to bless them beyond the mutable state in which they find themselves. This is according to his goodness and kindly favor or grace. Thus God manifests himself in the way of righteousness and goodness, holiness and mercy. Since God is holy, righteous, and good, he engages humans to respond to him in the same way, that is, to love, honor, and worship him, for in fellowship with God, according to his law, humans find the way of blessing and eternal happiness. In short, God binds himself to Adam and his posterity and calls them to live with
him in the way of obedience and righteousness. Such obedience God gratuitously promised to reward by ushering Adam into a state of immutable happiness.

For Turrein, and for federal theologians in general, this is not a matter of strict merit but of *ex pacto* merit, for God is not obliged to reward human obedience inasmuch as such obedience is due him without the covenant. By entering into a covenant with Adam and his progeny, God enters into an arrangement for man’s blessing, and he pursues that path of blessing for human beings even after the fall into sin. God does this by means of the covenant of grace, for in that covenant God secures the path of salvation, bringing eternal, immutable happiness through the surety he provides. Christ, the surety, brings salvation by fulfilling all the obligations of the original, prelapsarian covenant, even enduring its negative sanction. Thus salvation is wholly unmerited and fully gracious inasmuch as Christ has satisfied divine justice and *fulfilled God’s law* on behalf of the elect, such that he merits human redemption in his satisfaction for sins. In this way the covenant of works and the covenant of grace meet in Christ. He suffers the negative sanctions of the covenant of works on behalf of sinners, and so he meets what is required for fulfilling the covenant of grace. In other words, salvation is *not apart from* the satisfaction of God’s justice and obedience to God. According to the stipulations of the covenant of redemption, Christ offers himself as the vicarious sacrifice for sinners, being the head of the new humanity, acting as the guarantor of the covenant of grace. Thus the covenant of grace is rooted in the intratrinitarian agreement to effect the salvation of those elect in Christ according to the eternal plan of God. Christ stands in the sinner’s place, walks the path of obedience from which they strayed, suffers the penalty due them, and conquers the curse and penalty of eternal death imposed on them. Once more, in this way God’s mercy and justice converge in Christ—for he is God’s gift of mercy for salvation in the way of undergoing God’s justice against human transgression. All which testifies to the perpetuity of God’s law in the twofold covenant.
3. The doctrine of the *pactum salutis* and Christ's suretyship secures the plan of salvation. For Turretin, as for many federal writers, the doctrine of the *pactum salutis* undergirds and secures the plan of salvation. As surety, Christ guarantees the covenant of grace, and so his work of redemption (both in undergoing the negative sanction of the covenant of works on behalf of his people, including the terrible curse of death, and in fulfilling the positive requirements of the law), stands opposed to every human effort to obtained salvation in the way of works. This further demonstrates that a merely contractual notion of the covenant, wherein God and humans each do their share, cannot exist—as if some sort of parity functioned between God and his human creatures. Quite the opposite is the true portrait. Divine goodness and grace are not earned, for human obedience does not merit God's love and blessing. Rather, God's love and blessing are the foundation of his covenant relationship with his people, rooted in the eternal *pactum*, and from God's provision—entirely of grace—the elect are brought into the blessings of eternal fellowship and friendship with God. All of which illustrates that the covenant theology of the seventeenth century, Turretin serving as an illustrious example, is a theology that accents divine grace fully as much as the first codification of Reformed theology in the sixteenth century.

4. In affirming the conditional nature of the twofold covenant, federal theology verifies the dipleuric character of the covenant relationship without forfeiting its monopleuric character. Turretin, unlike certain federal theologians, easily resolves the issue of conditionality in the covenant. On the one hand, the covenant is an agreement between two parties, which indicates that it is a dipleuric relationship; there are mutual obligations and conditions to be fulfilled according to the stipulations of the covenant. On the other hand, that a covenant even exists between God and humans is due solely to God's sovereign and gracious initiative. This applies both to the covenant of nature and the covenant of grace, and in that sense both of these covenants are monopleuric. Thus the attempt to play
predestinarian mono-lateralism against covenantal bilateralism within federal theology or a sinister Bezan-type decretal theology against a kindly Cocceian-style covenant theology is wholly off the mark. Covenant by its very nature involves a certain mutuality of obligation between the parties. But, as Turretin points out, the "covenant" relationship between God and humans is not between equal parties (and in that sense it isn't a covenant or a contract at all). That God condescends to bless humans in the way of "covenant" is an act of grace, and, inasmuch as it is God establishing the covenant, humans can hardly refuse to enter into covenant with God without sinning. What is more, in the covenant of grace God provides Christ as surety, a monopleuric act, yet Christ comes to fulfill the conditions stipulated in the covenant on behalf of sinners. Again, both the covenant of nature and the covenant of grace are established at God's initiative and according to his love and favor—and so the covenant is monolateral. Yet the evangelical covenant, in being a covenant, is genuinely bilateral. The stipulated conditions however are never met without God's provision and operation. All of which means that the bilateral (or dipleuric) character of the covenant of grace may not be construed as a form of synergism—as if in divine election God chooses whom to save but in the way of the covenant humans decide their salvation apart from God's operations upon them. Federal theologians were not Remonstrants.

5. **Federal theology is a theology of grace opposed to legalism.** Federal theology, for Turretin, stands in direct opposition to any form of legalism. This not to say, however, that the law of God has no role within the divine/human relationship. On the contrary, God's law defines and circumscribes that relationship, for God's law is a blessing to human beings, depicting his goodness and holiness and the way of a living fellowship with God. Disobedience to God, which is the violation of law, does not bring forth life and blessing but death and eternal penalty. We see, then, for Turretin, God, according to his goodness, stipulates the way of obedience and holiness. Again, that God enters into a covenant relationship with human beings, showing them the way to heavenly felicity, does not reduce
that relationship to a bare contract, as if the covenant relationship was devoid of love and grace, nor does it amount to a *quid pro quo* relationship, wherein blessing is achieved for an obedience rendered. Instead, the entire covenant arrangement is an act of divine favor and kindness, for humans as created are without rights before God. In other words, humans owe God all obedience apart from any stipulated reward—which means the reward is wholly gratuitous. Nothing is merited in the strict sense since nothing is merited apart from the covenant relationship itself. Thus neither a merit of condignity nor a merit of congruity is present in the covenant of nature; instead, merit is strictly *ex pacto*.

What is true of the prelapsarian situation carries over into the covenant of grace. Humans do not merit their way into God's fellowship, nor do they earn a reward by their faith or the working of faith. Rather, God works his grace in the lives of sinners. He opens the dead heart and awakens the dead spirit; he bestows the gift of faith whereby the benefits of Christ may be received. Even prior to that he bestows the gift of Christ himself, who as surety fulfills all righteousness for sinners. However, inasmuch as righteousness *must* be fulfilled that necessity *presupposes* the righteousness of God's law with its original stipulations and provisions. In other words, God doesn't deny or disregard his justice in order to save sinners, neither does he lay aside his holiness in order to welcome back wayward human beings. Instead, according to his mercy, he provides Christ who satisfies his justice. This means that although the works of fallen human are excluded, Christ's works are altogether necessary (he even sanctifies and justifies the works of believers). Divine love does not stand opposed to divine justice, nor is the mercy of God at odds with the holiness of God. Instead, harmony prevails. God in the way of love and mercy provides the way of redemption in keeping with his holiness and justice. Salvation is therefore a free gift bestowed to sinners. It is not free however with respect to God himself, for the price of redemption is Christ himself. The conditions of the paradisal covenant, rooted in the unity of God's perfections of holiness and love (and depicted in his law as the way of fellowship
with him), find their fulfillment in Christ's work of salvation. This hardly adds up to legalism, though it admits a place for God's law in his relationship with humans, both before and after the fall into sin. For Turretin, as for all Reformed theologians, creation and law are not opposites; rather, creation is under law, and so his human creation is under law. Similarly, love and law are not opposites, but reflect and reveal God's nature. Therefore law doesn't oppose love; neither does love oppose justice; and so the way of salvation is not a simple declaration of love—with justice yielded; rather, salvation comes by way of Christ's sacrificial work—with justice satisfied. All of which means that the insistence upon law, meeting justice, and fulfilling conditions is not to advocate a legalism, as though salvation is by works; it is to affirm the integrity of God's perfections, which include his goodness and grace, showing us his righteousness in the law, and providing the way of fulfillment of the law in Christ the surety.

6. Federal theology integrates and includes the doctrine of predestination in its formulation of the covenant of grace, without compromising the covenant scheme. For Turretin, the salvation of fallen humans manifests itself in the history of salvation through the interplay of the gospel calling persons to repentance and their response to that call. In other words, salvation comes to fruition in the lives of fallen people through the administration of God's Word according to the Spirit's sovereign operations, including a continual call for believers to live by faith in the way of perseverance. These concrete operations of God's grace, established according to his gracious covenant, are all grounded in Christ's work of satisfaction, which itself is a manifestation of the covenant of grace in its application. Christ, then, is the center of the gospel covenant; as such, he forms the center of Turretin's entire soteriology. With this synopsis of the operations of God's grace we see that Turretin does not serve up a decretal system of theology, predestination functioning as a controlling idea. On the contrary, Turretin, like all Reformed theologians, attempts to account for and correlate the principal motifs or doctrinal topics that are given in
Scripture—that is, he seeks to trace out the various facets of the doctrine of salvation as depicted in the Scriptures in order to faithfully explicate the teachings of the Bible for instruction in the church. Thus he expounds upon a spectrum of doctrines and a complex of biblical topics. Since he affirms the unity of divine revelation, he works to exhibit the interrelationship of these different topics or doctrines as set forth in Scripture.

In treating the doctrine of the covenant of grace, then, Turretin presents Christ as the central focus of this covenant since he is its mediator and surety; that is, the evangelical covenant is all about Christ and his work on behalf of sinners. Since the Scripture likewise relates the doctrine of election to Christ (for election is election in Christ), Turretin correlates this doctrine with the biblical idea that Christ is the sponsor of his people for their salvation. It certainly is not unnatural, nor is it speculative, to seek to correlate these ideas with one another. Thus, for Turretin and federal theologians in general, the covenant doesn’t stand in isolation from the doctrine of predestination, for both covenant and predestination have a Christological and soteriological focus.

That interrelationship, however, does not produce some sort of synergism relative to the doctrine of the covenant, while monergism prevails relative to the doctrine of predestination. This would amount to a kind of theological schizophrenia. If nothing else, such duplicity would entail a hopeless contradiction and amounts to an absurdity. In fact, according to the federal scheme, covenant and election converge in Christ, for both doctrines describe God’s determination to rescue sinners and exercise his mercy toward them. The covenant of grace, then, which is about the salvation of sinners, is not apart from Christ but in and through him. Similarly, election is not apart from Christ; rather, the elect are elect in Christ. Consequently, salvation is achieved in Christ and through Christ. What is more, that achievement is effectuated in the historical dispensations of God’s work of redemption, inclusive of its distinct economies, for every blessing is grounded in Christ’s work of satisfaction, which comes by way of God’s provision of Christ as surety. Thus in
Christ covenant and election intertwine and interpenetrate one another. This is not surprising inasmuch as the redemption of human beings is God’s project from first to last, accomplished by way of Christ’s sponsio.

7. Turretin’s federal theology robustly upholds the unity of the covenant of grace in defense of a theology of grace. Against opponents without and within the Reformed camp, Turretin unremittingly defends the essential unity of the covenant of grace, arguing the identity of substance throughout its dispensations and economies since Christ is the sole object of faith in both the old and new testaments. Thus the way of salvation is singular throughout the entirety of redemptive history. There is only one way of salvation, and that is through Jesus as God’s Messiah, the surety, who guarantees the covenant of grace in the way of a testament. He bestows the gift of salvation upon his people, for he fulfilled all the obligations and conditions of the covenant of grace, including suffering the negative sanction of the covenant of works, and he likewise grants to them what is requisite that they may appropriate all his benefits—that is, he grants them faith. Indeed, in the way of faith they are joined to Christ himself, and in union with him all the promised blessings of the covenant are applied to them. Therefore the work of salvation is by grace from first to last; and it is by grace both in the old dispensation and the new dispensation. Moreover, not only is God gracious in entering into a covenant with humans in the Edenic situation, providing the way of fellowship with him by honoring his law, he is also and most supremely gracious in providing a remedy to the curse that came upon humans after the fall into sin. That grace is most manifest in sending Christ to meet all the requirements of the evangelical covenant, including bearing the penalties of the covenant of nature. God is likewise gracious in working these blessings in the hearts of his people in both the Old Testament and in the New Testament; and his grace continues in preserving or keeping them in his blessing unto eternal glory. But in back of all of God’s salvific actions throughout the history of redemption lies his own intratrinitarian pactum—that is, the pactum salutis—wherein God
provides the only solution to the enigma of human sinfulness and depravity—the God-man (theanthropos), so that the answer to the question *Why the God-man?* is likewise the grace of God.

8. **Turrettin’s federal theology confirms the validity of the trajectory of scholarship which affirms continuity with Calvin and other early codifiers of Reformed theology regarding the doctrine of grace.** Finally, our consideration of Turrettin’s doctrine of the covenant confirms the validity of a growing body of scholarship that posits a fundamental continuity between the early codification of Reformed theology and its subsequent codification in the middle to late seventeenth century with respect to the doctrine of grace, represented by the Westminster Confession of Faith (1647) and the *Formula Consensus Helveticus* (1675). The key to this continuity is Christ, for in all Reformed theology, from its Calvinian-Genevan expression, to its Bullingerian-Zurichian formulation, to its subsequent federal articulation on the Continent and the British Isles, salvation is by grace alone, which means it is in Christ alone, resting in his work as surety, appropriated through faith as the sole instrument, and that only by the Spirit’s efficacious operations—all in keeping with God’s sovereign and gracious election. This theme of the priority and triumph of divine grace is easily traced in the Reformed confessions of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. The doctrine of the twofold covenant does not, then, constitute a declension or devolution from an earlier codification of Reformed doctrine, certainly not

---

with respect to the doctrine of grace; on the contrary, it further explicates and defends the doctrine of grace, even as it further explicates and defends the fundamental unity between the testaments, with the singular way of salvation in Christ expounded and guarded.

B. Affirmations regarding Interpretations of Federal Theology

Having offered our general observations regarding Turretin’s federal theology as a defense of a theology of grace, next we offer our summary assessment of certain trajectories of scholarship pertaining to federal theology.

Perhaps the most prominent feature resulting from this study is that the portrait of covenant theology as characterized by several trajectories of scholarship over the last century or more needs to be radically modified or altogether abandoned. Insofar as Turretin’s federal theology is representative of the wide consensus that prevailed among Reformed theologians in the mid- to late-seventeenth century, the following theses may be offered by way of summary in response to certain features of this scholarship.

1. Federal Theology is not a Ramist Invention. Federal theology, with its distinction between the covenant of works and the covenant of grace, is not a Ramist innovation. Contrary to the analysis of Jürgen Moltmann, Jens G. Møller, Michael McGiffert, Robert Letham, and Daniel N. J. Poole the doctrine of the covenant of works is a formulation derived from a combination of scriptural givens, including the representation motif depicted in the New Testament, the eschatological dimensions of salvific glory portrayed throughout the Scripture, the meaning and significance of the sacramental trees as depicted in the apocalypse, as well as other specific features of the Genesis narrative that lend support to the idea of a covenant of nature or paradisal covenant. The idea of employing a Ramist logic

---

with the intention of (haphazardly) bifurcating and positing a covenant of nature in order to fabricate a covenant distinct from the covenant of grace is not even remotely evident in Turrettin’s theology or that of his federalist contemporaries. At the very least, the Ramist charge finds no support in the mature expression of federal theology, represented by Turrettin.

2. Federal theology is not a “device” designed to solve tensions in Reformed theology. Against the views of McGiffert and David Weir, federal theology, especially the covenant of works, is not a “device” conjured up to solve the problems of predestination, nor is the covenant of works “designed” to function as a kind of theodicy vis-à-vis Adam’s fall in paradise. Inasmuch as Turrettin argued that even in paradise Adam needed divine grace in order to persevere in a state of innocence and sinlessness (hence his words that the fulfillment of the covenant of nature is dependent upon “the most free good pleasure [εὐδοκιμία] of God”), the doctrine of the covenant of works hardly ameliorates (or softens) or otherwise eases the tension with respect to the allegation of divine culpability for Adam’s fall. Moreover, if the idea of a twofold covenant is supposed to render Adam more responsible for his demise or to render all human beings more culpable for their own depravity, thereby weakening what some regard as divine capriciousness in relation to the doctrine of predestination, it fails in that purpose. In fact, that is not the intention of the twofold covenant; and such a depiction of it is untenable. As evident from an examination of Turrettin’s federal theology, his doctrine of predestination (which is no different than the Dortian formulation) does not rest on a shelf, bearing no relation to the doctrine of the covenant. Nor is it circumvented, subverted, or weakened by the doctrine of the covenant. On the contrary, covenant and election work in tandem—for the recipients of the salvific promise, the ones for whom Christ offers himself as surety, and in whose hearts the Spirit’s

---

powerful operations are effectual unto salvation, are none other than those chosen for eternal life. Therefore federal theology is not a doctrine developed with the purpose of ameliorating (what some regard as) the harsh features of the divine decree and the doctrine of predestination.

3. Federal theology is not a species of legalism. In opposition to a wide body of scholarship—specifically such writers as Karl Barth, F. W. Dillison, D. J. Bruggink, J. B. Torrance, H. Rolston III, R. T. Kendall, D. Poole, Nico T. Bakker, and W. W. Benton Jr., and to a lesser degree Møller and Weir⁴—federal theology does not succumb to legalism, compromising the more gospel-oriented codification of Reformed theology under Zwingli, Calvin, and/or Bullinger. On the contrary, federal theology, as represented by Turretin, is a more fully developed expression of the gospel of grace, and arguably a more consistent defense of the centrality of Christ in the way of salvation, evidenced in the testamentary character of the covenant of grace and the pactum salutis. The allegation that federal theology amounted to a raw contract religion or a conditional quid pro quo relationship between God and human beings misses completely the testamentary character of the covenant of grace, as this allegation also ignores within federalism the work of divine grace through Christ’s spongion unto the salvation of sinners—a work of grace in sinners and for sinners. It also

misses the remarkable point that a covenant relationship itself, including the covenant of works, is, strictly speaking, an impossibility between God and human beings, for the inequality between Creator and creature is too radical for a genuine covenant to exist. God, however, in order to bless human beings and interact with them in ways they could understand, made use of the covenant idea—both accommodating himself to the concept and accommodating the concept to his relationship with human beings. This means that any covenant relationship that humans have with God is by divine grace. Moreover, the gracious or benevolent character of the covenant relationship that God establishes with humans is further accentuated in that the blessings promised in the covenant are according to divine grace as well, for they are not at all commensurate with the works performed in keeping with the conditions stipulated. In short, the twofold covenant schema clarifies the graciousness of grace, for it clarifies humanity’s original standing before God, just as it more starkly exhibits the nature of human sin and rebellion against God, and therefore better illumines Christ’s redemptive work as a divine gift. This is not legalism, not by the standards of Reformed theology, but purified and refined Augustinianism. It is not a subversion or a perversion of an earlier codification of Reformed theology, whether originating from Zürich or Geneva; instead, it is both a defense and a more robust articulation of that codification. Thus the allegation that federal theology succumbs to some sort of legalism is wholly untenable and must be rejected.

4. Federal theology is not shaped by predestination as the “central dogma.” Federal theology is not entrapped within or entangled by the “central dogma” of predestination, such that the idea of conditionality within the covenant is thwarted or altogether overthrown. In fact, in opposition to the “central dogma” thesis of writers like H. Heppe, J. A. Dorner, F. C. Lincoln, D. Wallace, P. Toon, W. Klemper, and C. Graafland, we

---

discovered that in Turrettin the covenant relationship, inclusive of promises and demands, is not subverted by the doctrine of predestination. Instead, the covenant is something to which God graciously and condescendingly accommodates himself in a twofold way: first, in order to stipulate the way of righteousness for human beings in the covenant of nature; and, later, in order to fulfill his work of redemption in them via the covenant of grace. Divine election, then, does not swallow up the idea of the covenant; rather, divine election is fulfilled or achieved in the way of the covenant of grace. The center of that covenant is Christ himself, and he altogether fulfills what is required, meets every condition, and accomplishes every stipulation, both the negative penalties and the positive requirements of the law. The failure of the “central dogma” thesis, both as an interpretation of Reformed theology in general and of Reformed federalism in particular, is that it isolates and divorces the doctrine of predestination within the Reformed system from anthropology, Christology, and soteriology, even eschatology. It is simply untrue that the doctrine of predestination is the central dogma of Reformed dogmatics, no more than it is the central dogma of the Reformed confessions. Rather, it is one of many important or principal doctrines, and inasmuch as sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Reformed theology affirmed the unity of God’s revelation and divine truth, they did not shy away from demonstrating how biblical teachings may interrelate and correlate with one another, nor did they shy away from exploring how one doctrine impinges upon another doctrine, demonstrating how distinctive teachings of Scripture may legitimately be integrated with one another. Thus, to some degree, Turrettin and other

covenant theologians explored the logical relationship between doctrines, for that is part of
the theological enterprise. But this was still circumscribed by biblical exegesis and restrained
by scriptural precedent. Each of these traits are at work in Turretin’s theology, but that is
hardly unique to his thought; rather, such traits are characteristic of virtually all Reformed
theology in its initial and subsequent codifications during the sixteenth and seventeenth
centuries.

5. Federal theology is not one of “two traditions” within Reformed theology.
Federal theology is not a distinct tradition within Reformed theology, representing
something contrary to or different than a so-called predestinarian tradition within the
Reformed movement. The widely shared affirmation of the “two traditions” thesis
advocated by such divergent authors as Perry Miller, Leonard J. Trinterud, Richard L.
Greaves, and J. Wayne Baker, does not stand up under close analysis. The key to Reformed
theology is the doctrine of grace; and in both its initial and subsequent codifications, the
doctrine of grace is always at the center of Reformed soteriology—which of course
presupposes certain theological conclusions relative to theological anthropology and human
depravity. In fact, Turretin’s theology is nothing other than a sustained polemic aimed
against every aberration from or challenge to the centrality of divine grace in the work of
salvation. This means that the primacy of God’s goodness and grace is featured already in

6 Perry Miller, New England Mind, 366-389; idem, Errand into the Wilderness, 54-73; Trinterud, “The
Thought in the Seventeenth Century,” Church History 36 (June 1967): 151-169; idem, “The Origins and Early
Development of English Covenant Thought,” The Historian 31 (1968): 21-35; idem, “John Knox and the
Covenant: The Other Reformed Tradition (Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Press, 1980); idem, “Heinrich Bullinger,
Charles S. McCoy and J. Wayne Baker, editors, Fountainhead of Federalism: Heinrich Bullinger and the Covenantal
Tradition, with a translation of De testamento seu foedore Dei unico et aeterno (1534) by Heinrich Bullinger (Louisville,
Protestants, 1520-1553 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1964); and Weir, Origins of the Federal Theology, 153-
158. In opposition to the “two traditions” thesis, see among others Bierna, “Federal Theology in the Sixteenth
Century: Two Traditions?”, 309-21; idem, “The Role of Covenant Theology in Early Reformed Orthodoxy,”
75-100; also see his article, “Perkin’s A Golden Chain,” 69-81.
the original paradise covenant, and then explicitly in a redemptive sense in the formation and formulation of the covenant of grace itself. God's grace as primary similarly holds center place for understanding the doctrine of predestination, which is grounded altogether in God's eternal love and goodness in Christ, and also for understanding the role and function of the law throughout the history of redemption, for even the law, in its proper function, brings sinners to Christ. It is therefore quite mistaken to pit predestination against covenant, and vice versa.

Although in one sense the covenant is a more inclusive concept than election, for the non-elect can belong externally to the covenant arrangement in the economy of redemption, corresponding to the visible church (which includes the non-elect and those who abide in unbelief), nonetheless, in its salvific scope, according to the essence of God's promise coming to fruition and fulfillment in Christ, the covenant corresponds to God's sovereign election, for those saved in the way of the covenant of grace are none other than those God ordained to eternal life in Christ according to his good pleasure. In this way, contrary to Heppe, Brown, Barth, Miller, Trinterud, Greaves, Baker, N. Diemer, and others, covenant and predestination correspond to one another. Federal theology, then, is not an alternative doctrine or an alternative theology to that of predestinarian Calvinism; instead, predestination comes to manifestation and reality through the redemptive-historical mechanism of covenant and human responsibility. The divine decree does not function monergistically while the covenant of grace functions synergistically; nor does the divine decree testify to a unilateral covenant that undermines the possibility or reality of a bilateral relationship between God and humans. Predestination and covenant are not in competition with one another, not in Turretin's theology or Reformed federalism in general, for the entire drama of redemptive history is only possible by God's decree and providential governance. The doctrine of the covenant doesn't somehow remodel and amend the Reformed doctrine of predestination so that that doctrine ceases to be Augustinian,
Calvinian, or Dortian. Rather, for Turretin, it is the vehicle by which God enters into a living relationship with humankind; and in terms of the covenant of grace it is how God brings the salvation of sinners to manifestation and accomplishment. In this way, the federal scheme enabled Turretin, and federal theologians in general, to answer probably the most pivotal and perplexing question of Christian theology, namely *Cur Deus homo?*

In summary, as it is a misreading of Reformed federalism to pit the doctrine of predestination against the idea of the covenant, so it is also a misunderstanding to argue that the doctrine of predestination functions as a kind of grid through which covenental ideas passed and were made to conform. Likewise it is mistaken to treat the contractual character of the covenant as a kind of synergism or a “remedy” to the doctrine of predestination; and therefore it is dubious and wrongheaded to posit two distinct Reformed traditions, one flowing from the Rhenish Reformers and the other issuing from Geneva, the former producing a federal theology that views the covenant of grace as dipleuric, the latter producing a predestinarian theology that treats the evangelical covenant as monopleuric.

For Turretin, federal theology is not accurately traced out unless the doctrine of grace is featured as its hallmark; the centerpiece of God’s grace is Christ. If scholars are rightly to understand federal theology, they must reckon with the centrality of God’s grace in the surety of the covenant, for this theology never conceives of the covenant without focusing upon Christ—its focus is upon Christ and testament, for its focus is upon Christ and the covenant.
APPENDIX

THEOLOGICAL THESSES FOR PUBLIC DEFENSE

Theses Pertaining to Ph.D. Course Work

1. The rudiments of a conception of a general or common grace of God can be found in the theology of Calvin and some of his Reformed theological contemporaries, such as Heinrich Bullinger and Wolfgang Musculus.

2. At numerous places within his literary corpus, Calvin focuses attention on the nature of the call or offer of the gospel, and in that connection links this discussion to God’s general favor or grace toward all people—that is, in treating the offer of the gospel to the non-elect, he does not refrain from speaking of God’s mercy, fatherly favor, paternal love, maternal kindness, goodness, and grace as being directed toward all people.

3. Hendrik Stoker’s critique of Cornelius Van Til’s theory of knowledge—which distinguishes between the “Plan of the Architect” or vertical approach (which Van Til uses) and the “Plan according to the Contents” or horizontal approach (which Van Til leaves unexplored)—enables one to appropriate features of Van Til’s apologetics while likewise affirming the philosophical enterprise of Alvin Plantinga in the new Reformed epistemology.

4. Robert Jenson’s proposed doctrine of the Trinity, the one event God of three identities, transforms Rahner’s maxim, “The economic Trinity is the immanent Trinity, and vice-versa,” into “the economic Trinity is eschatologically God himself,” or “God is himself—an immanent Trinity—only eschatologically,” which leads to a radically historicized and temporalized conception of God’s relatedness to the world and appears to dissolve the reality of God into the process of the world.

5. In offering a philosophical defense of a classic Reformed doctrine of original sin, Jonathan Edwards’s doctrine of identity shows certain affinities with seventeenth-century Reformed understanding of divine providence and continua creatio.

6. Emil Brunner’s contest with propositional truth is mistaken in affirming that “I-Thou” truth is inevitably personal whereas “I-it” truth is inevitably impersonal; while faith requires a real relationship with God, propositional revelation does not reduce God to an object or constitute a static conception of revelation divorced from God himself; rather, it affirms that God speaks as divine Subject.

Theses Pertaining to Turretin and Federal Theology

7. Federal theology, in positing a twofold covenant, develops the “representation motif” in Scripture, and demonstrates how a paradisal eschatology, an idea found already in Calvin, secures the unity between God’s covenant of nature and covenant of grace.

8. The doctrine of the pactum salutis and Christ’s sponsio forms, for Turretin, the center of God’s plan of salvation and demonstrates the perpetuity of divine law throughout history and God’s way with humans.
9. In affirming the conditional nature of the twofold covenant, Turretin's federal theology verifies the dipleuric character of the covenant relationship without forfeiting its monopleuric character.

10. Turretin's elenctic theology in general, and his federal theology in particular, demonstrates that his polemics, in being directed against various opponents, are most concerned to defend a Reformed theology of grace.

11. Turretin's federal theology integrates and includes the doctrine of predestination in its formulation of the covenant of grace, without compromising the covenant scheme itself or the Dordtian formulation of the doctrine of predestination.

12. Federal theology is not a "device" designed to solve tensions in Reformed theology relative to God's sovereign predestination and/or the problem of the human fall and human responsibility and divine culpability for sin.

13. Federal theology is not one of "two traditions" within Reformed theology, whether the alleged traditions be Bullinger (covenantal view) versus Calvin (predestinarian view), or Calvin (covenantal view) versus Beza (predestinarian view), or German Reformed theology (covenantal view) versus Calvin and Beza (predestinarian view).

14. It is rightly said, "Qui bene distinguat bene docet," and so with Turretin, theologians do well in matters of controversy to consider "status questionis."

Miscellaneous Theses

15. While justification and sanctification are corollary benefits of the believer's union with Christ, the Belgic Confession (1561/1619) rightly maintains the logical precedence of justification by faith alone when it says, article 24, "These works, proceeding from the good root of faith, are good and acceptable to God, since they are all sanctified by his grace. Yet they do not count toward our justification—for by faith in Christ we are justified, even before we do good works. Otherwise they could not be good, any more than the fruit of a tree could be good if the tree is not good in the first place." This serves as an antidote to certain contemporary criticisms against the confessional and Reformed doctrine of justification wherein the instrumental role of faith in justification is made to include "faith working through love" and amounts to a confusion of justification and sanctification.

16. Samuel Volbeda (1881-1953) sets forth a valuable critique of the doctrine of the covenant proposed by William Heyns (1856-1933), offering a better response than his predecessor at Calvin Theological Seminary to the enigma of covenantal apostasy by proposing the use of a priori and a posteriori categories vis-à-vis the recipients of the signs and seals of the covenant of grace.

17. In contemporary debates among Protestants regarding the legitimacy of the baptism of infants, distinct and differing doctrines of original sin often shape how both proponents and opponents of pedobaptism set up this question in regard to its necessity and scriptural permissibility.
BIBLIOGRAPHY

A. Primary Sources

1. Works by Francis Turretin

Editions of the *Institutio*


Two Major Disputations


The ten adjoined miscellaneous disputations are listed below.

Ten Miscellaneous Disputations


10. “De Serpente Aeneo.”

All of the above disputations can be found in the third edition of his Opera, tome IV. Utrecht and Leyden, 1696 and 1701; and the nineteenth-century Edinburgh edition, vol. 4, 1848.

Published Sermons


Turrettini, Franciscus. Predication over versusheide texten der H. Schriftuur gedaan door Francois Turrettin. 1678.

———. Vier uitsgelezen predicatien over verschiedene texten der H. Schriftuur, wegens den staat van Gods Kerke. 1696.

Other Translated English Publications


2. Other Sixteenth- and Seventeenth-Century Works

________. The Christian's Reasonable Service in which the Divine Truths concerning the Covenant of Grace are expounded, defended against Opposing parties, and their practice advocated as well as the Administration of this Covenant in the Old and New Testaments. Translated by Bartel Elshout, with a biographical sketch by W. Fieret and an essay on the “Dutch Second Reformation” by Joel Beeke. 4 vols. Ligonier, PA: Soli Deo Gloria Publications, 1992-95.


Allen, William. A Discourse on the Nature, Ends and Difference of the two Covenants: evincing in special, that Faith as Justifying is not opposed to Works of Evangelical Obedience. London, 1673. This work was published anonymously.


Annotations upon all the Books of the Old and New Testaments, wherein the Text is Explained, Doubts Resolved, Scriptures Paralleled, and Various Readings observed. By the Joynt-Labour of certain Learned Divines. London: John Legatt and John Raworth, 1645.

Anonymous. The Covenant of grace, not absolute, but conditional, modestly asserted: and the preachers thereof vindicated from the unjust aspersions of Arminianism and popery, so liberally bestowed upon them, by the maintainers of Dr. Crisp's, and other Antinomian doctrine: wherein is given a brief view of the 1. papists, 2. Socinians, 3. Arminians, 4. Antinomians, 5. and of the Protestants . . . opinion on this subject. London, 1692.

Anonymous. Truth vindicated, in several branches thereof: and many objection: fairly and soberly answered: to which is annexed a little treatise of the covenants, containing a description of the covenant of grace, and several marks of description by which it appears that the covenant that was made with Abraham and his natural seed, considered as such, was not the covenant of works, nor yet the covenant of grace, but a peculiar covenant. London, 1695.


________. Opera theologica. Leiden, 1629.

________. Examen thesii D. Francisci Gomari de praedestinatione. Amsterdam, 1645.


______. *A Treatise of Faith, divided into two parts, the first showing the nature, and the second the life, of faith.* London, 1630.


Barret, John. *God's Love to Man, and Man's Duty towards God: manifested in several Discourses on the Covenants of Works and Grace.* London, 1678. This is identical to the work cited below.

______. *Good Will toward Men, or A Treatise of the Covenants, viz. of Works and of Grace—Old & New.* London, 1675. “To the Reader” is signed J. B., known to be John Barret.

Bastingius, Jeremias. *An Exposition or Commentarie upon the Catechism of Christian religion, which is taught in the Schooles and Churches both of the Low Countries and the Dominions of the Countie Palatine.* London, 1614.


______. *A Confession of Faith, made by common consent of divers reformed churches beyond the seas; with an exhortation to the reformation of the church.* London, 1571.

______. *A Little Catechism.* London, 1579.

______. *Confessio christianae fidei, et eiusdem collatio cum Papistis haeresibus.* London, 1575.


Blake, Thomas. *Vindicatio foederis: or, A treatise of the covenant of God entered with man-kinde: in the several kindes and degrees of it, in which the agreement and respective differences of the covenant of works and the covenant of grace, of the old and new covenant are discust*. London, 1653.

Bolton, Samuel. *The True Bounds of Christian Freedome, Or a Treatise wherein the Rights of the Law are vindicated, the Liberties of Grace maintained; and the several late Opinions against the Law are examined and confuted . . . whereunto is annexed a Discourse of the Learned John Camerons, touching the three-fold Covenant of God with Man, faithfully Translated*. London, 1656.

Braunius, Johannes. *Doctrica foederum sive Systema Theologiae didacticae et elenctiae*. Amsterdam, 1688.


_____. *Institutiones theologicae seu locorum communium christianae religionis*. Lausanne, 1602.

Bulkeley, Peter. *The Gospel-Covenant; or, The Covenant of Grace Opened*. Wherein are explained; 1. The differences betwixt the Covenant of grace and the Covenant of works. 2. The different administration of the Covenant before and since Christ. 3. The benefits and blessings of it. 4. The Condition. 5. The properties of it. London, 1646.


_____. *Compendium christianae religionis*. Zürich: Froschauer, 1556.

_____. *Fiftie Godly and Learned Sermons, divided into five decades, containing the chiefe and principall points of Christian religion*. Translated by H. I. London, 1584.

_____. *Sermonum decades quinque, de potissimis christianae religionis capitibus, in tres tome digestae*. London, n.d. [1549-1552].
_______. *Summa Christenlicher Religion*. Zürich: Froschauer, 1556.


_______. *Ioannis Calvini noviodunensis Opera omnia, in novem tomos digesta*. Amsterdam: Johann Jacob Schipper, 1667-1671.


_______. *Summa doctrinae de foedere et testamento Dei*. Amsterdam, 1648.

_______. *Summa theologiae ex Scriptura repetita*. Amsterdam, 1665.
Collier, Thomas. *A Discourse of the True Gospel Blessedness in the New Covenant, or The Distinction of the two Covenants, New and Old, First and Second.* London, 1659.

_____. *A generall epistle to the univerall church of the first born: whose names are written in heaven.* London, 1648.

_____. *A second generall epistle to all the saints: wherein is unfolded the covenant of grace.* London, 1649.


_____. *A treatise of the covenant of grace, as it is dispensed to the elect seed, effectually unto salvation: being the substance of divers sermons preached upon Acts 7, 8.* London, 1671.

Coverdale, Miles. *The Old Faith, or An evident probation out of the Holie Scriptures, that the Christian Faith (which is the right, true, olde, and undoubted faith) hath endured since the beginning of the world.* London, 1581.

Coxe, Nehemiah. *A Discourse of the Covenants that God made with Men before the Law.* London, 1681.

Craig, John. *A Short Sum of the Whole Catechisme, wherin the Question is Propounded and Answered in fewe words for the greater ease of the common people and children.* London, 1581.

Cross, Walter. *Kela’ le-dor: A compend of the covenant of grace as the most solid support under the most terrible conflicts of death, though arm’d with desertion, decay of grace, and sense of guilt.* London, 1693.


_____. *The Summe of Sacred Divinitie.* London, ca. 1630.


_____. *The Covenant of Grace.* Dublin, 1631.


________. *The Buckler of the Faith: or, A Defence of the Confession of Faith of the reformed Churches in France, against the Objections of M. Arnaud the Jesuit. Wherein all the principal controversies betwixt the reformed Churches and the Church of Rome are decided*. London, 1620.


Fox, George. *The second covenant, which doth manifestly make known the end of the first covenant & priesthood, which could not continue by reason of death, or, The new covenant of light, life, and peace*. London, 1657.


Gomarus, Franciscus. “Oratio de foedere Dei,” in *Opera Theologia Omnia.* Amsterdam, 1664.


Graile, John. *A Modest Vindication of the Doctrine of Conditions in the Covenant of Grace, and the defenders thereof, from the aspersions of Arminianism and Popery, which Mr. W. E. cast on them. Published with a Preface concerning the nature of the Covenant of Grace, wherein is a discovery of the judgment of Dr. Twisse in the point of justification, clearing him from antinomianism therein, by Constant Jessop.* London, 1654.

Guild, William. *Moses Unveiled: or, those Figures which served unto the Pattern and Shadow of Heavenly Things, pointing out the Messiah Christ Jesus.* London, 1658. [1626]

Haak, Theodore, trans. *The Dutch Annotations upon the Whole Bible: Or, All the holy canonical Scriptures of the Old and New Testament ... as ... appointed by the Synod of Dori, 1618, and published by authority, 1637.* 2 vols. London, 1657.

Hamilton, A. *A Short Catechism Concerning the Three Special Divine Covenants.* Edinburgh, 1714.


Hooker, Thomas. *The Covenant of Grace Opened; wherein these particulars are handled, viz. 1. What the Covenant of Grace is, 2. What the Seales of the Covenant are, 3. Who are the Parties and Subjects fit to receive these Seales.* London, 1649.


*———. Synopsis controversiarum de Foedere et Testamento Dei*. Utrecht, 1690.

*———. Vis Veritatis, sive disquisitionum ad nonnullas controversias, quae hodie in Belgio potissimum moventur de testamentis et oeconomico foederum Dei libri V*. Utrecht, 1679.


Menge, Francis. *Vindiciae Foederis, or, A Vindication of the Interest that Children of Believers, as such, have in the Covenant of Grace, with their Parents; under the Gospel-dispensation*. London, 1694.


Morton, Thomas. *A Treatise on the threefolde state of man, wherein is handled 1. his Created bolinesse in his innocence, 2. his Sinfulnesse since the fall of Adam, 3. his Renewed bolinesse in his regeneration*. London, 1596.


———. *Loci communes*. Basel, 1560; 1563; 1573.


———. *Syntagma Theologie Christianae*. Hanover, 1624.


——. *The New Covenant, or the Saints Portion.* London, 1629.


Roberts, Francis. *Mysterium & medulla Bibliorum: the mysterie and marrow of the Bible, viz. God's covenants with man in the first Adam before the fall: and in the last Adam, Jesus Christ, after the fall, from the beginning to the end of the world: unfolded & illustrated in positive aphorisms & their explanation.* London, 1657.


——. *Disputatio scholastica de divina providentia.* Edinburgh, 1650.

——. *Exercitationes apologeticae pro divina gratia.* Amsterdam, 1636.


Sedgwick, Obadiah. *The Bowels of Tender Mercy Sealed in the Everlasting Covenant; wherein is set forth the nature, conditions and excellencies of it, and how a sinner should do to enter into it, and the danger of refusing this covenant-relation.* London, 1661.


Spanheim, Friedrich. *Friderici Spanheimi Vindiciaeum pro exerictationibus suis, de gratia universali, partes duae posthumae: adversus specimen animadversionum Mosis Amyraldi, cum praefatione Andreae Riveti; accessit appendix Ezechielis Spanheimii ... ad criticon Salmarisem, & grammaticas tricas.* Amsterdam: apud Ludovicum Elzevirium, 1649.

Strong, William. *A discourse of the two covenants: Wherein the nature, differences, and effects of the covenant of works and of grace are ... discussed.* London, 1678.


———. *Scholastica et methodica locorum communium s. theologiae institution.* 1604.


Willard, Samuel. Covenant-keeping the Way to Blessedness, or, A Brief Discourse wherein is shewn the connexion which there is between the Promise, on God's part; and Duty, on our part, in the Covenant of Grace. Boston, 1682.

Williams, Daniel. Gospel-Truth Stated and Vindicated. 1692


Witsius, Herman. Conciliatory, or Irenical Animadversions, on the Controversies Agitated in Britain, under the unhappy names of Antinomians and Neonomians. Translated by Thomas Bell. Glasgow: W Lang, 1807.


. De Economia Foederum Dei cum Hominibus, Libri Quatuor. Leeuwarden: Jacobum Hagenaar, 1677.


**B. Secondary Sources**


Budé, Eugène de. *Vie de François Turrettini, théologien genevois (1623-1687).* Lausanne: Georges Bridel, 1871.


Diemer, N. Het Scheppingsverband met Adam (Het Verbond der Werken) bij de Theologen der 16e, 17e, en 18e Eeuw in Zwitserland, Duitschland, Nederland en Engeland, met voorbericht van Dr F. W. Grosheide. Kampen: Uitgave van J. H. Kok, 1932.


Emerson, Everett H. “Calvin and Covenant Theology.” Church History 25 (June 1956): 136-144.


Heinz, Johann. “Justification and Merit: The Interpretation and Evaluation of the Concept of Merit in Modern Catholic Theology in Relation to Luther’s Doctrine of Justification.” Th.D. diss., Andrews University, 1981.


Knappert, J., Geschiedenis der Nederlandsche Hervormde Kerke gedurende de 16e en 17e eeuw. Amsterdam: Meulens & Co, MCMXI.


Lang, August. Der Heidelberger Katechismus. Leipzig: Deichert, 1907.


Lindsay, T. M. "The Covenant Theology." The British and Foreign Evangelical Review (July 1879).

McGiffert, A. C. *Protestant Thought before Kant.* New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1926.


______. “Moyses Amyraut (1596-1664) and the Controversy on Universal Grace: First Phase (1634-1637).” Ph.D. diss., Harvard University, 1966.


