

Title: The Decree of Redemption Is In Effect a Covenant: David Dickson and the Covenant of Redemption

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## ABSTRACT

While a significant amount of study has been devoted to the twofold system of the covenants of works and grace, development of the threefold covenant system in Reformed theology of the seventeenth century that includes the *pactum salutis* has not been thoroughly researched. The doctrine of the intratrinitarian covenant between the Father and the Son concerning the whole work of redemption has been characterized in some secondary literature as speculative, unbiblical, the result of faulty exegesis, crassly contractual, a deviation from the pure teaching of the Reformers, and of dubious value. However, these claims of discontinuity and questionable origin of the *pactum salutis* have not been adequately considered, nor has the early development of federal theology after the Reformers and prior to the Westminster Confession of Faith and Johannes Cocceius been sufficiently investigated. Writers of the seventeenth century whose works would support grounds for arguing either continuity or discontinuity have not been examined in depth.

This dissertation examines the works of one of the under-investigated seventeenth-century theologians whose work illustrates development of the doctrine of the *pactum salutis*. Despite the prominence of David Dickson (1583-1662) in the history of the Scottish church and his contributions to the trajectory of federal theology, his work has not been adequately explored. Although discussion of the three covenants can be found in print before Dickson, he appears to be the first to precisely formulate the doctrine in the context that became accepted as orthodoxy. He is also a significant mover in arguing that God's gracious condescension to humanity in the prelapsarian state is evidenced by Scripture, and teaching the highly practical significance of the *pactum salutis* to healing sin-sick consciences.

To place Dickson's work in the context of ongoing dialog regarding federal theology, primary texts from the 1580s to 1695 by his near predecessors, contemporaries and successors in which divine covenants are mentioned have been considered, including catechisms, dictionaries, sermons, systems of divinity, commentaries and treatises on various subjects. This study focuses primarily on development of the *pactum salutis* in seventeenth-century British theology. However, because the development of federal theology involved the international Reformed community, a few prominent continental theologians whose works were in circulation in Britain during the seventeenth century are also included. The continental theologians are: Amandus Polanus, Jerome Zanchi, Gulielmus Bucanus, Lucas Trelcatius Jr., Johannes Wollebius, Jacob Arminius, John Cameron and Moyses Amyraut.