

Title: The *Pactum Salutis* in the Theologies of Witsius, Owen, Dickson, Goodwin, and Cocceius

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ABSTRACT

The doctrine of the *pactum salutis* (covenant of redemption) offers the idea of a covenant between the very persons of the Trinity for the redemption of humanity. The doctrine received most of its attention in seventeenth-century Reformed theology, but has been criticized and almost totally forgotten in dogmatics since the eighteenth century. Most of recent Reformed dogmatics, with very few exceptions, tends to ignore the doctrine or disparage it from biblical, trinitarian, christological, pneumatological, and soteriological perspectives—namely, the doctrine lacks scriptural basis, it is tritheistic, it leads to subordination of the Son, it omits the role of the Holy Spirit, and it applies a deterministic idea for the Christian life. The present study was designed not only to demonstrate the invalidity of these criticisms of the doctrine but also to point to its practical implications for theology and the church.

The theologies of Herman Witsius, John Owen, David Dickson, Thomas Goodwin, and Johannes Cocceius portray a very robust form of the doctrine. In his description of the doctrine, Witsius argues that the doctrine is firmly based on biblical exegesis that was passed on from the patristic era. His peculiar methodology of cross-referencing and collation of related scriptural texts for the doctrine can be very useful for modern interpretation of the Scriptures. The doctrine formulated by Owen endorses the doctrines of inseparable operations and *terminus operationis* so as to give a deep insight into the Trinity. Owen's doctrine of the *pactum*, in particular, provides a useful tool for the understanding of the relationship of the three Persons of the Trinity both in the *ad intra* and *ad extra* works.

In Dickson's doctrine of the *pactum salutis*, the Son's voluntary consent and obedience of the will of the Father are highly emphasized. This indicates that the doctrine does not lead to any subordination on the part of the Son; rather, it confirms the divinity of the Son in mediatorship and suretyship, which display his full divinity. Likewise, Goodwin's depiction of the Holy Spirit in the doctrine of the *pactum salutis* secures the divinity of the Spirit as well as his indispensable role for the transaction and accomplishment of the *pactum*. In Goodwin's *pactum* doctrine, both Christology and pneumatology are beautifully knit together for a more biblical soteriology. The doctrine of the *pactum salutis* in the theology of Cocceius sheds much light on the vibrant dynamic of the Christian life. He appropriates Reformed thought on freedom for the *pactum* doctrine and makes it very clear that the doctrine never leads to determinism. Christians regain true freedom in the fulfillment of the *pactum*, and the freedom increases in

accordance with the *ordo salutis*. The triune God concurs with Christians in the way of their sanctification. This concurrence not only provides a foundation for the contingency of human freedom but also protects the assurance of salvation. The doctrine of the *pactum salutis* of the five Reformed theologians clearly shows that the doctrine is both promised and promising for theology and the life of faith.