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Development: Predestination, Justification, Order of Salvation, and Love

Introduction

*T*he doctrine of the covenant of redemption lies at a significantly trafficked theological crossroads. Any study of the doctrine must collate numerous concepts to paint an accurate portrait. The previous chapter began a brief historical survey of several issues that pass through the busy intersection: exegesis, the question of placement (christological or trinitarian formulations), how the theologians maintain the unity and plurality of the godhead, and the relationship between the *pactum* and revelation. This chapter succinctly surveys four other issues to set the stage for the recovery of the doctrine: the relationship between predestination and the *pactum*, the timing of justification, connections to the *ordo salutis*, and the theme of God's love.

Unfortunately, many criticisms and half-truths surround these four issues. Is predestination a bald abstract choice devoid of Christ? On the contrary, the *pactum* is the glue that binds together predestination and christology, among other doctrines.

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What has the *pactum* to do with the timing of justification? If God appoints the Son as covenant surety and imputes His righteousness to the elect, then in what sense, if any, does God justify the elect in eternity? This question created debate and theologians offered different responses. The *ordo salutis* is another doctrine that has close connections to the *pactum*. Historically, advocates of the doctrine sought to preserve the priority of God's grace over human activity in redemption, and such concerns substantively present the *ordo salutis*. But theologians would later make explicit the connections between the *ordo* and *pactum*. In short, the *ordo salutis* follows the trinitarian processions and covenantally framed missions. The order of salvation reflects the very being and nature of God. And last, but certainly not least, critics have often unfairly characterized the *pactum* as a cold piece of business devoid of love and grace. In truth, love is one of the repeated refrains in numerous expositions of the doctrine. This chapter, therefore, briefly surveys these issues so that we have a better understanding of the historical development of the *pactum salutis*.

Predestination

Contemporary critics of Reformed theology have maintained that theologians historically posited a Christ-less decree of predestination. According to some, the decree of election was a bald abstract choice. Karl Barth (1886-1968), for example, believed that the Reformers foisted a false mythology upon the Scriptures when they argued that Paul spoke of the election and rejection of individuals in Romans 9.[1] For Barth, Christ was the first and last word in revelation, especially in the doctrine of

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1. Karl Barth, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 6th ed., trans Edwyn C. Hoskyns (1933; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1968), 347.

election. Christ is the elected and rejected man.[2] Others followed Barth's lead and criticized Reformed theologians for tinkering with John Calvin's (1509-64) pristine formulations in his *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, where he discussed election under his treatment of soteriology rather than theology (proper). Moving predestination under the doctrine of God distorted Calvin's doctrine and produced a number of negative side-effects, such as supralapsarianism, limited atonement, legalism, and the covenant of works.[3] Barth's observations spawned a historical-theological thesis: Calvin vs. the Calvinists.[4] Calvin was the garden and Reformed Orthodoxy was the fall. A number of historical-theological studies have overturned the now discredited Calvin vs. the Calvinists thesis.[5] Briefly stated, Calvin was never declared or established as the normative theologian for the tradition. Furthermore, seldom do critics carefully examine predestination in the various systems in which it appeared. Reformed theologians never presented predestination as a divine abstract choice. Rather, predestination was always enmeshed within a broader theological

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2. Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, 14 vols., eds. T. F. Torrance and G. W. Bromiley (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1936-77), II/2:54, 140, 158.

3. See, e.g., J. B. Torrance, 'Strengths and Weaknesses of the Westminster Theology,' in *The Westminster Confession in the Church Today*, ed. Alasdair I. C. Heron (Edinburgh: The Saint Andrew Press, 1982), 46-47; cf. idem, 'The Concept of Federal Theology— Was Calvin a Federal Theologian?' in *Calvinus Sacræ Scripturæ Professor: Calvin as Confessor of Holy Scripture*, ed. Wilhelm H. Neuser (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994), 18-20.

4. See, e.g., Basil Hall, 'Calvin Against the Calvinists,' in *John Calvin*, Courtenay Studies in Reformation Theology, vol. 1, ed. G. E. Duffield (Appleford: The Sutton Courtenay Press, 1966), 19-37.

5. See, e.g., Richard A. Muller, *Christ and the Decree: Christology and Predestination in Reformed Theology From Calvin to Perkins* (1986; Grand Rapids: Baker, 2008); idem, *After Calvin: Studies in the Development of a Theological Tradition* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 63-104.

context. In this case, the covenant of redemption was one of the means by which theologians bound together predestination, christology, and soteriology.

In common formulations of the *pactum*, theologians address the Son's appointment as covenant surety, which also functions as His election as head of the church. The Father chose the elect and united them to Christ in the decree of election. Examples of this arrangement appear, for example, in the Savoy Declaration (1657), the Congregational version of the Westminster Standards. The Declaration states that God predestinated a certain number of individuals unto everlasting life, and they were 'chosen in Christ' (III.iii, v). Christ redeems the elect (III.vi). Read in isolation from the rest of the confession, a person might conclude that predestination is an abstract choice, although he would have to ignore the specific statement that God chose the elect 'in Christ' to reach this conclusion. Nevertheless, the Declaration goes on to state:

> It pleased God, in his eternal purpose, to choose and ordain the Lord Jesus his only begotten Son, according to a covenant made between them both, to be the Mediator between God and man; the Prophet, Priest, and King, the Head and Saviour of his Church, the Heir of all things and Judge of the world; unto whom he did from all eternity give a people to be his seed, and to be by him in time redeemed, called, justified, sanctified, and glorified. (VIII.i)[6]

God both chooses His Son to serve as mediator between God and man and He gives the elect unto Christ, and this occurs within the context of the covenant of redemption.

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6. *A Declaration of the Faith and Order Owned and Practiced in the Congregational Churches in England* (London: John Field, 1659). All subsequent references and quotations to the Savoy Declaration come from this edition.

Theologians spoke of election in Christ and employed the nomenclature of predestination, choosing, or election, as might be expected.[7] But they also employed other terms to denote the close associations between election and the covenant of redemption. They spoke of union with Christ within the *pactum* by means of terms such as *federal union* or *decretal union*. Herman Witsius (1636-1708), for example, distinguishes between several different aspects of union with Christ: the union of the decree (*in aeterno Dei decreto*), the union of eternal consent (*unione confoederationis aeternae*), by which the Father constitutes Christ as federal head of the elect, and the true and real union (*vera et reali unione*), which occurs through regeneration and faith.[8] Charles Hodge (1797-1878) offers similar distinctions; in his commentary on Ephesians 1 he writes:

> It was in Christ, as their head and representative, they were chosen to holiness and eternal life, and, therefore, in virtue of what he was to do in their behalf. There is a federal union with Christ which is antecedent to all actual union, and is the source of it. God gave a people to his Son in the covenant of redemption. Those included in that covenant, and because they are included in it,—in other words, because they are in Christ as their head and representative,—receive in time the gift of the Holy Spirit, and all other benefits of redemption.[9]

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7. See, e.g., Francis Turretin and Johannes Heidegger, 'Formula Consensus Helvetica,' XIII, in A. A. Hodge, *Outlines of Theology* (1860; Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1991), Appendix II, 659; [David Dickson and James Durham], *The Summe of Saving Knowledge, With the Practical use Thereof* (Edinburgh: George Swintoun and Thomas Brown, n. d.), II.ii; Charles Hodge, *Ephesians* (1856; Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1991), 9.

8. Herman Witsius, *Animadversiones Irenicae* (Utrecht, 1696); idem, *Conciliatory or Irenical Animadversions on the Controversies Agitated in Britain, Under the Unhappy Names of Antinomians and Neonomians*, trans. Thomas Bell (Glasgow: W. Lang, 1807), VI.ii-iv (pp. 62, 68).

9. Hodge, *Ephesians*, 9.

God chooses the elect 'in Christ,' who is also their head and representative – He is their federal head, and hence they are in federal union with Christ in the covenant of redemption. The ultimate point of these distinctions was to recognize that theologians considered predestination alongside of several other doctrines, but especially in conjunction with christology. They united these different doctrines through the covenant of redemption.

Justification

The doctrine of justification was one of the issues that was bound with discussions on the *pactum*. Most adherents to the covenant of redemption agreed that God justified the elect the moment they professed faith in Christ. But since Christ was appointed as surety in the *pactum* they also recognized they had to account for the moment when Christ's obedience was imputed to the elect. The moment of imputation played a role in determining the timing of justification. And just because a theologian affirmed the covenant of redemption did not insure that he reached the same conclusions as others. A prime illustration of this point comes from John Gill (1697-1771) and Jonathan Edwards (1703-58). Gill was mildly critical of *pactum* formulations but held a version of the doctrine.[10] He maintained that God justified the elect in eternity. When the elect made a profession of faith they merely became aware of their justified status.[11] There was no sense in which they were not already justified. Conversely, Edwards believed that a person could not conclude his justification until the

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10. John Gill, *A Complete Body of Doctrinal and Practical Divinity: or A System of Evangelical Truths* (1809; Paris, AR: The Baptist Standard Bearer, Inc., 2007), II.vi-vii (pp. 211-17).

11. Gill, *Complete Body of Divinity*, II.iv-v (pp. 198-209).

final judgment – until he confirmed his justified status through the manifestation of good works.[12] Gill and Edwards represent the polar extremes of the timing of justification, whereas most Reformed theologians were somewhere in between.

One of the more usual ways theologians accounted for the timing of justification and Christ's imputed righteousness was to distinguish between *active* and *passive* justification. Active justification refers to God imputing Christ's righteousness to the elect in the *pactum salutis*. Passive justification refers to the time when the elect lay hold of Christ's righteousness by faith. Witsius, for example, differentiates between *right* to Christ's righteousness and *possession* of it, which parallels the active and passive justification distinction.[13] In other words, when God imputes the Son's righteousness to the elect they have legal right to it but do not yet possess it. The elect can only possess it once they profess faith in Christ. Other seventeenth-century Reformed theologians employed this distinction, and several in the contemporary period also embrace it, such as Geerhardus Vos (1862-1949), Herman Bavinck (1854-1921), and Louis Berkhof (1873-1957).[14] Others

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12. Jonathan Edwards, 'Miscellany 996: How We Are Justified by Works,' in *The Works of Jonathan Edwards: The 'Miscellanies' (Entry Nos. 833-1152)*, vol. 20, ed. Amy Plantinga Pauw (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002), 324-25.

13. Herman Witsius, *Economy of the Covenants Between God and Man* (Escondido: Den Dulk Foundation, 1992), II.vii.16.

14. On active and passive justification see Francis Turretin, *Institutes of Elenctic Theology*, ed. James T. Dennison, Jr., trans. George Musgrave Giger (Phillipsburg: P & R, 1992-97), XVI.ix.11; Leonard Rijssen, *Compendium Theologiae Didactico-Elencticae* (Amsterdam: 1695), XIV (pp. 145-46); Johannes Marckius, *Compendium Theologiae Christianae Didactico-Elencticum* (1716; Amsterdam: 1749), XXII.xxiii, XXIV.iii; Bartholomaus Keckerman, *Systema S. S. Theologiae* (Hanau: 1602), III.vii.3; Johannes Heidegger, *Corpus Theologiae Christianae* (Tiguri: ex Officina Heideggeriana, 1732), XXII.lxxviii; cf. Heinrich Heppe, *Reformed Dogmatics: Set Out and Illustrated from the Sources*, trans. G. T. Thomson, ed. Ernst Bizer (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1950), 555-59; Geerhardus Vos, *Dogmatiek*, 5 vols. (Grand Rapids: 1900), V.12

such as Abraham Kuyper (1837-1920) taught a view similar to Gill, justification from eternity.[15]

A similar issue regarding the nature and timing of justification was the question of whether Christ was a conditional (*fideiussor*) or an absolute (*expromissor*) surety. In other words, did Old Testament believers receive the full and unconditional forgiveness of their sins or merely a provisional forgiveness? The reason this question arose is because theologians recognized that the Father appointed the Son as covenant surety in the *pactum*, but Old Testament believers lived before the incarnation and work of Christ. How could they receive the full forgiveness if Christ had not yet executed His work as covenant surety? Johannes Cocceius (1603-69) argued that Christ was only a conditional surety; he came to this conclusion because of Paul's statement in Romans 3:25, namely, that God 'passed over former sins' rather than forgave them. Cocceius ignited debate and drew criticism from Gisbert Voetius (1589-1676), who contended that Christ was an absolute surety.[16] Cocceians leveled three objections against the Voetians, who believed that Christ was an absolute surety: (1) Christ could not be an absolute surety in the *pactum salutis* because this would make Him a debtor, which suggested that God Himself was guilty of sin; (2) if Christ were an absolute surety, then the incarnation and crucifixion were unnecessary; and (3)

(vol. IV, pp. 22-23); Herman Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 4 vols., trans. John Vriend, ed. John Bolt (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2005-09), IV:219-23; Louis Berkhof, *Systematic Theology: New Combined Edition* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996), 517.

15. Abraham Kuyper, *The Work of the Holy Spirit*, trans. Henri De Vries (1900; Chattanooga: AMG Publishers, 1995), 322, 389.

16. For an overview of the debate and relevant primary sources, see Willem J. van Asselt, '*Expromissio* or *Fideiussio*? A Seventeenth-Century Theological Debate Between Voetians and Cocceians about the Nature of Christ's Suretyship in Salvation History,' *MAJT* 14 (2003): 37-57.

the view could not account for Colossians 2:14, which states that God forgave sins by nailing them to the cross, an event that took place long after most Old Testament saints lived.[17] The debt of sin, therefore, was not actually canceled until the crucifixion, and not a moment sooner.

This debate largely unfolded in the Netherlands, though other theologians entered the fray. Francis Turretin (1623-87) objected to Cocceius's position and affirmed that Christ was an absolute surety. Turretin was critical of Cocceius on several points. First, he objected to the use of the terms – the distinction between *fideiussio* and *expromissio* originated in Roman law. He believed that Cocceius was unwarranted, therefore, in applying these terms to Christ's role as covenant surety.[18] Second, Turretin delved into the Greek terms that undergirded Cocceius's appeal to Romans 3:25. Yes, Paul stated that God 'passed over' sins (πάρεσιν), but the Septuagint employed this same term to denote the forgiveness of sins, not something less. Moreover, numerous texts affirmed that Old Testament believers received the full forgiveness of sins (Pss. 32:1; 85:2; Isa. 55:7; Exod. 34:7; Pss. 65:3; 130:3; 103:3; Mic. 7:18-19).[19] Turretin presented other reasons but, on the whole, he affirmed that Old Testament believers enjoyed the full forgiveness of their sins.

Turretin explained the relationship between Christ's appointment as surety and the execution of His office in time by use of several distinctions. Turretin writes: 'It is one thing to demand of Christ a debt for present payment; another to lay iniquities upon him, and impute them to him. A debt can be imputed to the

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17. Van Asselt, '*Expromissio* or *Fideiussio*,' 49.

18. Turretin, *Institutes*, XII.ix.4.

19. Turretin, *Institutes*, XII.x.15.

surety long before it is demanded for present payment.'[20] Turretin cites Isaiah 53:5, which states that God 'laid on him the iniquity of us all.' Turretin believed that God laid upon Christ the sins of the elect but did not immediately require payment for them. God imputed the debt to Christ but He did not execute payment until His earthly ministry. Turretin appeals to Revelation 13:8 to support his argument, which designates Christ as the lamb that was slain before the foundation of the world. Christ was designated the slain lamb even though His death did not occur for many ages.[21]

With pulling and tugging on both sides of this issue, theologians sought to explain the nexus between Christ's covenantal appointment as surety and its precise relationship to justification and imputation. The tradition largely settled on a mediating position, a view similar to Turretin's. In two different places the Westminster Confession, for example, explains that God's decision to decree to justify the elect is different from their actual justification in history: 'God did, from all eternity, decree to justify all the elect, and Christ did, in the fullness of time, die for their sins, and rise again for their justification: nevertheless, they are not justified, until the Holy Spirit doth, in due time, actually apply Christ unto them.'[22] The Savoy Declaration (1657) added a phrase to make this decree–execution distinction clear: 'God did from all eternity decree to justify all the elect, and Christ did in the fullness of time die for their sins, and rise again for their justification: nevertheless, *they are not justified personally*, until the Holy Spirit doth in due time actually apply Christ unto them.'[23]

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20. Turretin, *Institutes*, XII.ix.6.

21. Turretin, *Institutes*, XII.ix.7.

22. Westminster Confession, XI.iv; cf. VIII.i.

23. Savoy Declaration, XI.iv, emphasis.

Even with the confessional codification of the decree–execution principle, theologians still vary how they discuss the timing of justification and imputation. Thomas Goodwin (1600-80), a Westminster divine and one of the chief architects of the Savoy modifications, argued there were three moments of justification: (1) in the covenant of redemption, (2) at the resurrection of Christ, and (3) when the elect profess faith in Christ.[24] In the first moment the Father imputes the sins of the elect to Christ and Christ's righteousness to the elect. In the second moment God justifies the elect in Christ, because He is their federal representative, and His resurrection constitutes His justification. God therefore justifies the elect in the justification of their federal head (1 Tim. 3:16). In the third moment, God personally justifies the elect as they lay hold of the forgiveness of sins and Christ's righteousness by faith. Goodwin summarizes these points:

> From all eternity we were one with Christ by stipulation, he by a secret covenant undertaking for us; and answerably that act of God's justifying us was but as we were considered in his undertaking. When Christ died and rose again, we were in him by representation, as performing it for us, and no otherwise; but as so considered we were justified. But now when we come in our persons, by our own consent, to be made one with him actually, then we come in our persons through him to be *personally* and in ourselves justified, and receive the atonement by faith.[25]

Goodwin therefore located the fount of justification in the *pactum* but carefully explained that the elect were not *personally* justified

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24. Thomas Goodwin, *The Objects and Acts of Justifying Faith*, in *The Works of Thomas Goodwin* (1861-64; Eureka: Tanski Publications, 1996), I.xv (pp. 135-38).

25. Goodwin, *Justifying Faith*, I.xv (p. 139).

until they professed their faith in Christ; Goodwin echoes the language of the Savoy Declaration.

Other theologians were not persuaded of such arguments and instead maintained that the elect did not receive Christ's imputed righteousness until they actually professed faith in Christ. Hodge, for example, was likely aware of the earlier formulations regarding active and passive justification given his familiarity with the works of Turretin and Witsius.[26] Moreover, works of the period, such as that of colonial Congregationalist Samuel Willard (1640-1707), embraced something similar to Goodwin's three moments of justification.[27] Hodge's professor and mentor, Archibald Alexander (1772-1851), addressed these different views and argued that the elect cannot obtain the blessing of justification and imputed righteousness until they believe.[28] Hodge seems to have been satisfied with this conclusion and followed Alexander's lead, though he does not specifically address the different views. Hodge was satisfied simply to state that the elect do not receive the saving benefits of Christ until they are united to Him by a voluntary act of faith.[29] Hence, while opinions may vary regarding the nature and precise moment that the elect receive the imputed righteousness of Christ, theologians agree that only faith in Christ truly places the elect in actual possession of His righteousness.

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26. Cf. Charles Hodge, *Systematic Theology*, 3 vols. (rep.; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993), II:359; Turretin, *Institutes*, XVI.ix.11; Witsius, *Economy of the Covenants*, II.vii.16.

27. Samuel Willard, *A Brief Discourse of Justification* (Boston: Samuel Phillips, 1686), 69-71

28. Archibald Alexander, *A Treatise on Justification by Faith* (Philadelphia: Presbyterian Tract and Sunday School Society, 1837), 45-46.

29. Hodge, *Systematic Theology*, III:104.

Order of salvation

From the first explicit appearances of the doctrine, theologians were intent on prioritizing the sovereignty of God's grace in redemption. In his speech to the 1638 General Assembly of the Scottish Kirk, David Dickson (1583-1663) brought the *pactum* to bear against the claims of Remonstrant theology. Dickson did not specifically raise the *ordo salutis*, but his remarks substantively addressed the issue. What takes priority in a person's salvation, God's grace or human activity?[30] The same concerns and questions regarding priority appear in the debates over the timing of justification. Theologians were keen to prioritize God's activity over human actions and did so by means of the active–passive justification distinction: the Father's act of imputing the Son's righteousness to the elect in some sense takes priority to the human act of faith. It would take time to develop, but proponents of the *pactum* eventually made explicit connections between the *pactum* and *ordo salutis*.

Vos observed that the *ordo* found its origins in the *pactum*:

> The basis for this order lies in none other than in the covenant of salvation with Christ. In this covenant those chosen by the Father are given to Christ. In it he became the guarantor so that they would be planted into His body in order to live in the thought-world of grace through faith. As the application of salvation by Christ and by Christ's initiative is a fundamental principle of Reformed theology, this theology has correctly viewed this application as a covenantal requirement which fell to the Mediator for the fulfilling of which He became the guarantor.[31]

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30. David Dickson, 'Arminianism Discussed,' in *Records of the Kirk of Scotland, Containing the Acts and Proceedings of the General Assemblies, from the Year 1638 Downwards*, ed. Alexander Peterkin (Edinburgh: Peter Brown, 1845), 156-58.

31. Geerhardus Vos, 'The Covenant in Reformed Theology,' in *Redemptive History*

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Vos maintained that Christ's appointment as mediator took priority over other redemptive considerations, and hence he employed the distinction between active and passive justification.[32] But the *ordo salutis* was not simply a matter of prioritizing imputation over other redemptive benefits. Vos believed that the covenant of redemption was the pattern for the covenant of grace, indeed its effective cause, for later the covenant of grace followed the lines of the *pactum*.[33] Vos's greater point is that the *ordo salutis* ultimately traces the trinitarian processions and missions.[34] Vos argued that the eternal trinitarian relations (processions) were the basis for their respective work of redemption (missions), and the work of the triune God became manifest in the *ordo salutis*. In simpler terms, redemption resembles the triune God who planned and executes it.

The Son's mission as covenant surety, and imputation, takes priority over the Spirit's work, because His mission is logically (in the covenant of redemption) and historically (in the covenant of grace) prior to the Spirit's mission. There is no outpouring of the Spirit apart from the Son's completed work as surety. Hence, Vos prioritizes the forensic aspects of redemption over the transformative aspects. Vos writes: 'The justifying acts serve as the foundation upon which the regenerational acts of God rest. Although (for instance) justification follows the new birth in time, nevertheless, the former is the foundation for the latter.'[35]

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and Biblical Interpretation: The Shorter Writings of Geerhardus Vos, ed., Richard B. Gaffin, Jr. (Phillipsburg: P & R, 1980), 248.

32. Vos, *Dogmatiek*, V.12 (vol. IV, pp. 22-23).

33. Vos, 'Covenant in Reformed Theology,' 252.

34. See, e.g., Geerhardus Vos, *The Self-Disclosure of Jesus: The Modern Debate About the Messianic Consciousness*, 2nd ed., ed., J. G. Vos (1926; 1953; Phillipsburg: P & R, n. d.), 189-90.

35. Geerhardus Vos, *Systematische Theologie: Compendium* (Grand Rapids: 1900), 133: 'De rechterlijke daden sijn de grond waarop de herscheppende daden berusten. Al

Vos clearly gives priority to the forensic, in this case imputation and justifying acts, over the regenerational acts, or sanctification. Vos elsewhere writes:

> Paul consciously and consistently subordinated the mystical aspect of the relation to Christ to the forensic one. Paul's mind was to such an extent forensically oriented that he regarded the entire complex of subjective spiritual changes that take place in the believer and of the subjective spiritual blessings enjoyed by the believer as the direct outcome of the forensic work of Christ applied in justification. The mystical is based on the forensic, not the forensic on the mystical.[36]

Vos was not alone, as Bavinck affirms something quite similar. Bavinck argues that regeneration, faith, and conversion are not preparatory graces that come apart from Christ, nor are they pre-conditions that a person must meet. They are benefits that flow from the covenant of grace and union with Christ. 'Hence,' writes Bavinck, 'the imputation of Christ precedes the gift of the Spirit, and regeneration, faith, and conversion do not first lead us to Christ but are taken from Christ by the Holy Spirit and imparted to his own.'[37]

Whether in the substantive or explicit connections between the *pactum* and *ordo salutis*, these points open a new window upon the much-criticized *ordo*. Historians and theologians have often criticized proponents of the *ordo* because of its

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volgt b.v. de Rechtvaardigmaking in tijd op de wadergeboorte, toch is sij de rechtgrond voor den laatste.' I am grateful to my colleague, Derk Bergsma, who translated Vos's section on the *ordo salutis* for me.

36. Geerhardus Vos, 'The Alleged Legalism in Paul's Doctrine of Justification,' in *Redemptive History and Biblical Interpretation: The Shorter Writings of Geerhardus Vos*, ed., Richard B. Gaffin, Jr. (Phillipsburg: P & R, 1980), 384; cf. idem, *Biblical Theology: Old and New Testaments* (1948; Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1996), 394.

37. Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, IV:590.

supposedly thin exegetical basis.[38] According to the contemporary narrative, theologians squeezed the *ordo* from one Pauline text, Romans 8:29-30. As common as this criticism is, the *pactum–ordo* connection reveals that the *ordo* has broader exegetical and theological considerations. The *ordo* was not solely based upon Romans 8:29-30. Critics could remove Romans 8:29-30 from the equation and theologians like Vos would bring other passages and doctrines to bear to contend for the priority of the forensic over the transformative in the *ordo salutis*. For advocates of the *pactum*, placing justification before sanctification in the *ordo* ultimately occurs because of the order of the trinitarian processions and missions.

Love

One of the biggest criticisms against the *pactum* has been the notion that Reformed theologians were too indebted to mercantile imagery. A common line of criticism is that the doctrine of the covenant distorted God's grace and love for fallen sinners. J. B. Torrance, for example, has censured classic Reformed theology because it supposedly confuses the biblical category of covenant with contract. God makes covenants, not contracts. Covenants convey the idea of promises, whereas contracts imply obligations.[39] Others have suggested that the contractualism of the covenant of redemption makes redemption the product of debt and obligation rather than love.[40] The covenant of redemption, therefore,

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38. For a survey of criticisms and the relevant literature, see J. V. Fesko, 'Romans 8.29-30 and the Question of the *Ordo Salutis*,' *JRT* 8 (2014): 35-60, esp. 38-41.

39. J. B. Torrance, 'Covenant or Contract? A Study of the Theological Background of Worship in Seventeenth-Century Scotland,' *SJT* 23 (1970): 51-76.

40. David Wai-Sing Wong, 'The Covenant Theology of John Owen' (Ph.D. Diss., Westminster Theological Seminary, 1998), 372.

becomes a cold piece of business rather than an outflowing of love for sinners. There are three chief observations regarding these criticisms: (1) mercantile language, (2) the origins of mercantile language, and (3) the underappreciated theme of love in *pactum* formulations.

First, advocates of the covenant of redemption do employ contractual and mercantile language in their formulations. Proponents, for example, define a covenant as an agreement at its most fundamental level. Patrick Gillespie (1617-75) defines a covenant in this manner: 'Concord and agreement is the very foundation of all Contracts, where no agreement is betwixt parties, there is no Covenant, and if there be a Covenant, there is an agreement (Amos 3:3; 2 Cor. 6:14).'[41] Did Gillespie impose seventeenth-century legal arrangements upon biblical texts? Gillespie does employ the term *contract*, a smoking gun in the eyes of some. Gillespie's repeated term is, however, *agreement*, which is synonymous with *contract*. He did not arrive at this conclusion merely by imposing his cultural experience upon the biblical text but by a careful exegesis of Scripture. In his exposition of Psalm 2:7, for example, Gillespie explains that the Septuagint renders the Hebrew term *decree* as πρόσταγμα, which means *order* or *agreement*. He also consulted other biblical passages, but especially relevant is his citation of Isaiah 28:15: 'We have made a covenant with death, and with hell are we at agreement.' The prophet equates *covenant* and *agreement* by use of a synonymous parallelism.

Second, while proponents of the *pactum* do employ mercantile language, where does it originate? Does it arise from their cultural

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41. Patrick Gillespie, *Ark of the Covenant Opened: or, A Treatise of the Covenant of Redemption Between God and Christ, as the Foundation of the Covenant of Grace*, The Second Part (London: R. C. 1681), 49-51.

context or from the biblical text? It arguably arises from the biblical text. In numerous places the Bible employs commercial imagery in its discussion of redemption. Christ teaches His disciples to seek the forgiveness of their debts and to forgive their debtors (Matt. 6:12); and Paul speaks of God 'canceling the record of debt' by 'nailing it to the cross' (Col. 2:14). How can these theologians bear guilt for using mercantile language when they merely reflect ideas from the biblical text? If they used such language exclusively, then criticism would be warranted.

Third, there is an abundance of evidence that shows that proponents went far beyond mercantile language to explain the *pactum*. Love is a repeated refrain in expositions of the doctrine. The Son's obedience and voluntary submission to His Father was an expression of love according to Witsius.[42] Gillespie explains that one of the functions of the Spirit in the *pactum* is to spread the love of God in the hearts of the elect.[43] According to Rutherford, the Son's appointment as mediator was a 'vote of love,' which fell upon sinful humanity.[44] Gillespie argued that entire covenant of redemption was shot through with the love of God:

> His Service is commended from the largeness of his design of Love, through which he did drive the serving of this Service; that God, the Son of God, did drive this piece of Service through so deep, and broad, and long a design of transcendent love, from everlasting to everlasting; through so many decrees, which at last could produce nothing in the result, but this price, To have his poor people engaged to him by a Covenant.[45]

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42. Witsius, *Economy of the Covenants*, II.iii.3, 34.

43. Gillespie, *Ark of the Covenant*, 173.

44. Rutherford, *Covenant of Life*, II.vii (pp. 304-05).

45. Gillespie, *Ark of the Covenant*, 361.

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In short, theologians believed that the triune God shared an intra-trinitarian love among Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, which was the ultimate source of the covenant of redemption.[46] This triune manifestation of love overflowed and was poured out upon sinners so that they too might enjoy and know the love of God.[47] 'Love moved the Father,' writes à Brakel, 'and love moved the Lord Jesus. It is a covenant of love between those whose love proceeds within themselves, without there being any loveableness in the object of this love.'[48] Far from a cold piece of business, advocates believed the *pactum* was chiefly an expression of love.

Conclusion

This brief survey reveals that the covenant of redemption was a complex and detailed doctrine. To say that it is an intra-trinitarian agreement barely scratches the surface of the different issues involved. The doctrine's complexity naturally leads theologians to offer slightly different formulations. But in all of these formulations, the details frequently challenge the criticisms often leveled against the *pactum*. Predestination was never a bald choice but always a decision made within the context of Christ's covenantal appointment as mediator. God chose head and body and bound them together in a covenant in eternity that eventually became manifest in history. Christ's appointment as surety,

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46. See, e.g., Jonathan Edwards, 'Miscellany 1062: Economy of the Trinity and Covenant of Redemption,' in *The Works of Jonathan Edwards: The 'Miscellanies' (Entry Nos. 833-1152)*, vol. 20, ed. Amy Plantinga Pauw (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002), 443.

47. See, e.g., Stephen Charnock, *A Discourse Upon the Goodness of God*, in *Works of Stephen Charnock*, vol. 2 (Edinburgh: James Nichol, 1864), 284; Hodge, *Systematic Theology*, I:12, II:362; Vos, 'Covenant in Reformed Theology,' 252.

48. À Brakel, *Christian's Reasonable Service*, I:252.

moreover, meant that His obedience was the sole legal ground for the salvation of the elect. Theologians sometimes disagreed on precisely how to account for Christ's imputed righteousness, and Gill and Edwards's formulations are an exception to the general pattern. Some employed the distinction between active and passive justification while others chose to differentiate between the decree and its execution. Such considerations naturally impacted the nature of the *ordo salutis*, and gave priority to the forensic over the transformative aspects of redemption. But in the end, regardless of technical details, all proponents of the doctrine insisted that the *pactum* was an expression of intra-trinitarian love ultimately shared with the elect. God has first loved us that we might love and know His love.