

Brian J. Lee

Johannes Cocceius and the Exegetical Roots of Federal Theology

Reformation Developments in
the Interpretation of Hebrews 7–10

Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht



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Preface and Acknowledgments

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Christus via, veritas, et vita:

Quid igitur Christianus, nisi viator in veritate contendens ad vitam?

Beatus servus ille quem Dominus ipsius invenerit ita facientem.

— Francis Junius

1. Introduction

Διαθήκη — the Greek term for “covenant” or “testament” — appears seventeen times in the Epistle to the Hebrews, and only sixteen times in the rest of the New Testament. In noting this, Geerhardus Vos identified the necessity to explain both “the relative quiescence of the idea in the New Testament as a whole, no less than its sudden activity in Hebrews.”¹ A similar point might be made in connection with the doctrine of the covenant itself; only sporadically present in the history of Christian thought, it is particularly prominent in the Reformed theology of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Both aspects of this disparity must likewise be explained, pre-Reformation quiescence and Reformed activity. The historian of Christian thought asks why federal theology developed at this particular place and time; the federal theologian must provide some justification for why it did not develop before.

Too often, these historical questions about federal theology have been addressed with little or no reference to the exegesis behind the doctrine. This book proposes to address the historical-theological inquiry about the development of the doctrine of the covenant by way of the exegetical questions raised by its prominence in the Epistle to the Hebrews. It is a small first step toward exploring the history of exegesis behind Reformed federal theology.

1.1 Statement of the Thesis

The prominence of *diatheke* in the Epistle to the Hebrews made its interpretation crucial to the development of federal theology, and therefore Hebrews provides the natural starting point for an exegetical history of this topic. Since *either* producing merely a specimen of Hebrews exegesis *or* surveying sbroadly the exegesis in our period will raise more questions than it will answer, this project has been conceived in two parts. The first demonstrates the crucial role Hebrews exegesis played in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, providing necessary context. The second part explores in detail the Hebrews exegesis of

1 Geerhardus Vos, “Hebrews, the Epistle of *Diatheke*,” in *Redemptive History and Biblical Interpretation: The Shorter Writings of Geerhardus Vos*, ed. Richard B. Gaffin, Jr. (Phillipsburg, New Jersey: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Company, 1980), 161. Throughout this book I will transliterate διαθήκη as *diatheke*, unless quoting directly or otherwise necessary.

a particular federal theologian, Johannes Cocceius (1603–1669), who is generally regarded as a high-water mark in the development of this doctrine. These two parts together demonstrate that exegesis was crucial in the development of federal theology, and therefore is a necessary and oft-neglected avenue to understanding this doctrine and its development.

Where does this avenue take us? The history of exegesis shows that extant dogmatic explanations for the rise and import of covenant doctrine are at best insufficient, at worst wholly misleading. The development of federal theology is therefore not primarily indicative of disputes about predestination and theodicy, the rising influence of either Ramism or Aristotelianism, or the growing influence of scholasticism and/or legalism. It is rather the product of the confluence of two related theological *loci* in a common body of texts, and the attempt to clarify their relation. Namely, the traditional question about the relation of the testaments, raised anew by the Anabaptists and their heirs, and the soteriological issue of Law (works) vs. Gospel (grace). Both of these traditional questions were raised anew by the Reformation turn *ad fontes*, and federal theology is the primary structural form used by Reformed theologians to bring clarity to these discussions. It is a result of the unprecedented application of humanistic philological advances to theological formulation, in conjunction with a certain scholastic precision. In Johannes Cocceius, we observe the height of this development toward precision, reflected in his exacting use of terminology and willingness to engage in careful and complex distinctions within the history of Redemption.

1.2 Exegesis and the Sources of Covenant Doctrine

The goal of this analysis is to approach both Cocceius and the development of covenant theology from the standpoint of the history of exegesis, an approach which has generally been neglected. David A. Weir illustrates the prevailing tendency to emphasize dogmatic causes for this development when he concludes his study of the origins of federal theology thus:

The rise of the federal theology has nothing to do with sacramental theology, the theology of Church and State and their internal and external relationships, the threat of Pelagianism, or the morphology of conversion. Its rise came primarily as a result of questions about God, his nature, and his relationship to man and the universe. *It seems to stem from systematic, dogmatic thinking, not from exegetical study of Scripture.*²

2 David A. Weir, *The Origins of the Federal Theology in Sixteenth-Century Reformation Thought* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990), 158, emphasis mine. Weir's argumentation in support of this conclusion will receive a more full treatment in chapter 2.

While noting that federal theology did indeed have broader implications, nonetheless its “distinguishing characteristic — the prelapsarian covenant with Adam — had its origins in the predestinarian discussions which took place during the sixteenth century.”³

Weir’s sweeping negative conclusions are not only factually in error, but they belong to a pattern of scholarship which from the outset was almost entirely focused upon demonstrating dogmatic causality in an exegetical vacuum. Thus, a brief survey of the literature beyond Weir reveals many historical, dogmatic, and philosophical explanations for the doctrine of the covenants, and scant exegetical explorations.⁴ By way of example, J. Wayne Baker recognized that the origins of the prominence of the covenant theme among the Reformed is rightly found in Zwingli and Bullinger’s arguments for infant baptism against the Anabaptists, but he also pressed the issue in an exclusively dogmatic direction. By interpreting differences in covenant terminology as indicative of different doctrines of predestination, Baker drew a distinction between the “other Reformed tradition” of Zurich and the “testamentary” theology of Geneva.⁵ Appropriately, Melancthon’s influence has also been considered as a factor in this development, though once again the emphasis has been placed on the influence of his dogmatic views on natural law and predestination.⁶ In still other studies, the two-covenant dogma (works

3 Weir, *Origins*, 158.

4 Much of the twentieth-century scholarship in this field was inspired by Perry Miller, *The New England Mind: The Seventeenth Century* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1939). Miller mentions Cocceius as the founder of a school that took the covenant as its central doctrine, in “Appendix B: The Federal School of Theology,” 502–504. Lyle D. Bierma gives surveys Miller’s impact and the history of scholarship after him in “Federal Theology in the Sixteenth Century: Two Traditions?” *Westminster Theological Journal* 45 (1932): 304–321. While there is broad agreement on the cast of leading players, the story has been told many different ways. In addition to Miller’s early suggestions, see P. Y. De Jong *The Covenant Idea in New England Theology* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 1945); Leonard J. Trinterud, “The Origins of Puritanism,” *Church History* 20 (1951): 37–57; J. Wayne Baker, *Heinrich Bullinger and The Covenant: The Other Reformed Tradition* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 1980); Charles S. McCoy and J. Wayne Baker, *Fountainhead of Federalism* (Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1991); Steven Strehle, *Calvinism, Federalism, and the Covenant: A Study of the Reformed Doctrine of the Covenant* (Bern: Peter Lang, 1988); David A. Weir, *The Origins of the Federal Theology in Sixteenth-Century Reformation Thought* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990); Cornelis Graafland, *Van Calvijn tot Comrie*, 3 vol. (Zoetermeer: Boekencentrum, 1992–1996); Lyle Bierma, *German Calvinism in the Confessional Age* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Books, 1996). Willem J. van Asselt provides one of the best recent overviews of this literature, grouping various views together in *The Federal Theology of Johannes Cocceius (1603–1669)*, trans. Raymond A. Blacketer (Leiden: Brill, 2001), 325–32.

5 Baker, *Heinrich Bullinger and the Covenant*.

6 Peter Alan Lillback, “Ursinus’ Development of the Covenant of Creation: A Debt to Melancthon or Calvin?” *Westminster Theological Journal* 43 (1981): 247–88. Lillback, as well as Bierma (*German Calvinism*, 55–56) and van Asselt (*Federal Theology*, 326–327), locate the origin of this view primarily in Heinrich Heppes *Dogmatik des deutschen Protestantismus im sechzehnten*

and grace) has also been attributed to the influence of Ramism. Development has also been explained by such factors as growing legalism, attempts to “soften” harsh predestinarianism, and rising scholasticism — with the covenant alternatively being either a result or a reaction to the same.⁷

This focus on systematic and philosophical causality is largely the result of a failure in this literature to recognize the precise nature of the role of exegesis in the formation of dogma in our period. Thus, Weir based his conclusion on the fact that no sixteenth-century commentaries on Genesis 1–3 mention the prelapsarian covenant. But by drawing on a wide range of sources, including biblical translations, commentaries, and annotations, Richard A. Muller has shown that a prelapsarian covenant was commonly found in another text, Hosea 6:7.⁸ While the Hosea text was rarely used as a definitive argument for the prelapsarian covenant, it nevertheless informed doctrinal reflection upon such a covenant and condoned it by contributing to a complex of Scriptural imagery.

Indeed, Muller’s broader thesis concerning the development of Reformed Orthodoxy has shown that discontinuities between sixteenth- and seventeenth-century formulations have frequently been exaggerated due to a failure to grasp the high degree of interdependence between diverse genre produced in the period. Highly refined scholastic systems were intimately integrated with a vast amount of exegetica — often the product of the same author. Precisely because post-Reformation Reformed dogmaticians have been wrongly presumed to be abstract, deductive thinkers building upon unbiblical foundations, the *fontes* of their more distinctive doctrines — such as federal thought — have usually been sought outside the Scriptures.⁹

Jahrhundert (1: 139–204) and to a lesser extent, in Gottlob Schrenk’s *Gottesreich und Bund im alteren Protestantismus, vornehmlich bei Joh. Coccejus* (Gutersloh: Bertelsmann, 1923), 48–49.

7 Robert Letham is among those who have suggested the influence of Ramism, “The *Foedus Operum*: Some Factors Accounting for its Development,” *Sixteenth Century Journal* 14 (1983): 457–467; Michael McGiffert sees growing legalism in the development of the covenant of works, “From Moses to Adam: the Making of the Covenant of Works,” *Sixteenth Century Journal* 19 no. 2 (1988): 131–55; Richard A. Muller indicates the many others who do so in “The Covenant of Works and the Stability of Divine Law in Seventeenth-Century Reformed Orthodoxy: A Study in the Theology of Herman Witsius and Wilhelmus A Brakel,” *Calvin Theological Journal* 29 (1994): 79.

8 Muller traces the complex exegesis of Hos 6:7 to the development of federal thought in *Post-Reformation Reformed Dogmatics*, 2d ed., 4 vol. (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Books, 2003), 2:458–63, indicating how reference to this *locus* by historians of doctrine (including Weir, et al) has frequently overlooked the true contours of its development.

9 For Richard A. Muller’s thesis on Reformed Orthodoxy, see especially *Post-Reformation Reformed Dogmatics*; idem, “Calvin and the Calvinists: Assessing Continuities and Discontinuities between Reformation and Orthodoxy,” parts 1 and 2, *Calvin Theological Journal* 30 (1995): 345–75; 31 (1996): 125–60. For Muller’s work on the doctrine of the covenant in particular, see volume 2 of *PRRD* as well as the following articles: Muller, “The Covenant of Works and the Stability of Divine Law in Seventeenth-Century Reformed Orthodoxy”; idem, “Covenant and Conscience in English

This field of inquiry is therefore ripe for the application of the method of exegetical history. As other studies have already shown, the identification of exegetical commonplaces promises to identify areas of broad agreement, as well as demonstrate original contributions. The topics which made up the *loci communes* of the sixteenth century were gathered out of biblical commentaries, and therefore were usually deeply rooted in traditional exegetical problems.¹⁰ By observing carefully the nature of early discussion at these particular *loci*, the *raison d'être* for novel topics such as covenant can be discerned. One prominent example is provided by Bullinger's important treatise *De testamento sive foedere Dei unico et aeterno* (1534), which follows closely the outlines of his discussion of the same topic in his Hebrews commentary of 1532. While this relation between text and doctrine was taken for granted in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, it has been largely overlooked by modern historians.¹¹

Such an approach can serve as a corrective to the tendency to overemphasize the novelty of federal thought.¹² The concept of covenant itself was not new in the sixteenth century; rather, the novel aspect was the development of a new, distinct locus "*de foedere*" in the system, and over time, the further use of covenant as an ordering principle for the system itself.¹³ Thus, the history of exegesis enables us to more clearly formulate the state of the question which this book addresses. We are not seeking the origin of a novel doctrine, *per se*. Rather, the inquiry seeks the cause of the elevation of a traditional exegetical discussion to independent status, and its further

Reformed Theology," *Westminster Theological Journal* 42 (1980): 308–334; idem, "The Spirit and the Covenant: John Gill's Critique of the Pactum Salutis," *Foundations* 24 (1981): 4–14; idem, "The Federal Motif in Seventeenth Century Arminian Theology," *Nederlands Archief voor Kerkgeschiedenis* 62, no. 1 (1982): 102–122; idem, "Discourse and Doctrine: The Covenant Concept and Christian Iconography in the Middle Ages," response to Derk Visser, in *Calvin and the State: Papers and Responses presented at the Seventh and Eighth Colloquia on Calvin & Calvin Studies*, ed. Peter De Klerk, 15–19 (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Calvin Studies Society, 1993).

10 David Steinmetz, *Calvin in Context* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), vii; Richard A. Muller, *The Unaccommodated Calvin: Studies in the Foundation of a Theological Tradition* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), especially chapters 2 and 6; Robert Kolb, "Teaching the Text: The Commonplace Method in Sixteenth-Century Lutheran Biblical Commentary" *Bibliothèque d'Humanisme et Renaissance* 49 (1987): 571–585.

11 Notably, in treating with great detail the historical context of Bullinger's *De testamento*, McCoy and Baker entirely miss the connection between the monograph and Bullinger's earlier Hebrew's commentaries (*Fountainhead of Federalism*, 18–20). Ironically, in arguing for the importance of the covenant motif in Bullinger's thought, they do point out that *De testamento* was often appended to printed editions of Bullinger's commentaries, failing to note that it was, in fact, largely drawn from the very first of his New Testament commentaries. In doing so they effectually reverse the relation between text and doctrine.

12 Helm, "Calvin and the Covenant," 73.

13 Richard A. Muller, "Discourse and Doctrine: The Covenant Concept and Christian Iconography in the Middle Ages," 15–19.

development and use particularly among the Reformed. Further, what influenced the particular form which this discussion took in its more mature stages?

It is not necessary that such an exegetical inquiry reject out of hand the other factors which have been proposed as contributors to the development of federal thought. Rather, the history of exegesis is an essential first step to evaluating other proposals. We cannot hope to understand other factors in the development of doctrine if we do not grasp the exegetical trajectories that led to its formulation. All too often we have confused our own ignorance of the supporting exegetical framework for doctrine with the lack of the same.

1.3 The Current State of Cocceius Scholarship

When scholars have turned their eye to Cocceius, which is not all that frequently, they have almost always had in view larger questions related to the development of covenant theology. This has particularly been the case in English speaking lands, where the work of Perry Miller spurred much scholarship on the Puritan doctrine of the covenant.¹⁴ In this vein, covenant became a point of comparison between Calvin and Calvinistic Puritans, raising questions of continuity and development within the Reformed tradition.¹⁵ Miller himself identified Cocceius as a key figure in the development of the doctrine, and since that time its continental roots have been dutifully traced from early Swiss Reformers to the Rhineland, and finally to the height of its maturity in the Netherlands.¹⁶ Here it is that we have often met Johannes Cocceius, author of the *Summa doctrinae de foedere et testamento*, who built his entire system around the doctrine of the covenant.

Thus in the older scholarship Cocceius is a necessary landmark in the roadmap of covenant theology, his significance anchored bibliographically

14 Perry Miller, *The New England Mind: The Seventeenth Century* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1939). Miller mentions Cocceius as the founder of a school that took the covenant as its central doctrine, in "Appendix B: The Federal School of Theology," 502–504. Lyle D. Bierma surveys Miller's impact and the history of scholarship after him in "Federal Theology in the Sixteenth Century: Two Traditions?" *Westminster Theological Journal* 45 (1932): 304–321.

15 Richard A. Muller traces the complexity of the history of scholarship on this issue, and notes the existence of conflicting views on how the development of covenant perverted Calvinian commitments, "Calvin and the Calvinists: Assessing Continuities and Discontinuities between Reformation and Orthodoxy," parts 1 and 2; Lyle Bierma, "Law and Grace in Ursinus' Doctrine of the Natural Covenant: A Reappraisal," In *Protestant Scholasticism: Essays in Reassessment* (Carlisle: Paternoster Press, 1998), 109–110; Paul Helm, "Calvin and the Covenant: Unity and Continuity," *Evangelical Quarterly* 55 (1983): 71–77.

16 Miller, *The New England Mind: The Seventeenth Century*, 503.

by the *Summa doctrinae de foedere et testamento*.¹⁷ Like most landmarks, he has only rarely been a scholarly destination, more often than not being used to get somewhere else. Karl Barth chose him as the best representative of the movement in his excursus on covenant theology in *Church Dogmatics* IV.1, thereby introducing English readers to the outlines of Gottlob Schrenk's analysis.¹⁸ Shortly thereafter Charles S. McCoy wrote a dissertation on the theology of Johannes Cocceius which, until the recent appearance of W. J. van Asselt's work in translation, was the only monograph-length study in the English language.¹⁹ Faulenbach's treatment in 1973 was somewhat more nuanced than McCoy,²⁰ but it is van Asselt's current work that has most significantly increased our knowledge of him, providing a broader view on Cocceius's life and career than earlier studies and thereby opening up a context beyond the questions raised by his doctrine of the covenant.²¹

Van Asselt's scholarship promises to reverse a number of earlier trends in Cocceius studies. He has broadened our understanding of Cocceius's own significance in his own day, making it clear that covenant is one of many areas where he had a lasting impact. His treatment of the theological material examines not only the key dogmatic works, the aforementioned *Summa doctrinae* as well as the *Summa theologiae*, but also takes care to consider Cocceius's disputations and exegetical work, thereby painting a more nuanced picture. Van Asselt also reflects the recent reappraisal of Reformed Orthodoxy, which is generally more appreciative of scholasticism as a method, and he shows how Cocceius critically appropriated that method.²² In doing so, he has

17 Johannes Cocceius, *Summa doctrinae de foedere et testamento Dei*, 1648 (henceforth abbreviated SD), in *Opera omnia theologica, exegetica, didactica, polemica, philologica. Editio tertia, auctior & emendatio*. 12 vol. (Amsterdam, 1701–1706), 7:39–130.

18 Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics* IV.1, trans. G. W. Bromiley (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1956), 54–66; Schrenk, *Gottesreich und Bund im alteren Protestantismus*. Barth references Schrenk at many points in his treatment of Cocceius, and the outline of his analysis follows him closely.

19 Charles S. McCoy, "The Covenant Theology of Johannes Cocceius" (Ph.D. diss., Yale University, 1956).

20 H. Faulenbach, *Weg und Ziel der Erkenntnis Christi. Eine Untersuchung zur Theologie des Johannes Coccejus* (Neukirchen: Neukirchner Verlag, 1973). I rely heavily upon van Asselt's analysis of Faulenbach, Schrenk, et al., *Federal Theology*, 2–16.

21 W. J. van Asselt, *Johannes Coccejus: Portret van een zeventiende-eeuws theoloog op oude en nieuwe wegen* (Heerenveen: J. J. Groen en Zoon, 1997); idem, *The Federal Theology of Johannes Coccejus (1603–1669)* (Leiden: Brill, 2001).

22 A helpful introduction to the reappraisal and indication of its extent is provided by the collection of essays edited by Carl R. Trueman and R. S. Clark, *Protestant Scholasticism: Essays in Reassessment* (Carlisle: Paternoster Press, 1998); see also W. J. van Asselt, "Scholasticism Protestant and Catholic: Medieval Sources and Methods in Seventeenth-Century Reformed Thought," in *Religious Identity and the Problem of Historical Foundation. The Foundational Character of Authoritative Sources in the History of Christianity and Judaism* [Jewish and Christian Perspectives Series, VIII], ed. by Judith Frishman, Willemien Otten and Gerard Rouwhorst (Leiden: Brill, 2004), 457–470.

corrected the tendencies of earlier scholars, who sought to characterize Cocceius as an “anti-scholastic” forerunner of biblical theology.²³

Yet the irony remains that while Cocceius is widely characterized as a supremely “biblical” theologian, there has not been a sustained analysis of the details of his exegetical work. This project will provide such an analysis, comparing in detail his treatment of Hebrews 7:1–10:18 primarily with Reformed antecedents. The goal is not so much to identify specific influences, as to see the rootedness of Cocceius’s peculiar brand of federalism in a common set of difficulties posed by the text. Such a study promises to shed light on both distinctive and common aspects of his federal thought, perhaps suggesting the origin and purpose of some of his more unique positions.

Ultimately, such a study also hopes to contribute to the continuing reappraisal of Post-Reformation Reformed Orthodoxy. Most important in this regard is that we gain a deeper appreciation for the relation between exegesis and dogmatics in the seventeenth-century theological enterprise. It is unfortunate that the exegetical output from this era has received so little scholarly attention.²⁴

1.4 The Significance of Hebrews for Both Cocceius and Covenant

This book will address the development of covenant theology from the standpoint of the history of exegesis by undertaking a highly detailed reading of Cocceius’s exegesis of Hebrews 7:1–10:18, and setting it in the context of his antecedents and contemporaries. The focus on a single text is necessary to attain the desired detail and breadth of analysis. Initially, this text was selected because Cocceius used it to introduce his doctrine of the abrogations, one of the most interesting and contested aspects of his system. Furthermore, an initial survey of Cocceius’s *Epistolae ad Hebraeos explicatio* (1659) reveals significant material which sheds further light on his federal system, including an excursus into Old Testament covenant history.

Turning to sixteenth and seventeenth century Hebrews commentaries, it becomes clear that this text was a key *locus* for discussing the covenant, for at least two different reasons. First, Hebrews 9:16 raised a question of cove-

23 W. J. van Asselt, “Cocceius Anti-Scholasticus?” in *Reformation and Scholasticism*, ed. Eef Dekker and W. J. van Asselt (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Books, 2001), 227–252; Albertus van der Flier, *Specimen historico-theologicum de Johanne Coccejo, anti-scholastico* (Utrecht: Kemink et Filius, 1859).

24 One important exception is the recent doctoral dissertation by Henry M. Knapp, “Understanding the Mind of God: John Owen and Seventeenth-Century Exegetical Methodology” (Ph.D. diss., Calvin Theological Seminary, 2002).

nant terminology by using *diatheke* in a manner seeming inconsistent with its Old Testament referent, *berith*.²⁵ Additionally, the citation of Jeremiah 31:31 at Hebrews 8:6–13 proved to be a standard point to address the question of the agreement and differences between the Old and the New Testaments. There are clear linkages between the exegetical discussions in Hebrews and more systematic treatments elsewhere.²⁶

Hebrews is thus seen to be a key text both for Cocceius and the federal tradition in general. Our selection of the pericope 7:1–10:18 is a deferral to Cocceius's own structural analysis of the text, though he follows a broadly agreed upon view that the author presents herein an a series of arguments for the abrogation of the Old Testament by the New.

1.5 Methodology and Outline

Part 1 of this book, “Covenant and Exegesis,” provides a survey of exegetical issues relating to the development of covenant theology with special focus given to the role of the Epistle to the Hebrews. In chapter 2 we will survey the development of covenant terminology resulting from a reappraisal of the biblical terms בְּרִית (*berith*) and διαθήκη (*diatheke*). This development is more than a minor philological concern, as the terminology both reflected broader theological issues and contributed to the initiation of a greater focus on the topic. Chapter 3 turns more specifically to the interpretation of the Epistle to the Hebrews. Here we begin to see that the traditional question of the relation between the two testaments came under special consideration in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. In both of these chapters we will examine a cross-section of authors from different confessional backgrounds, but our primary attention will be given to developments within the Reformed tradition.²⁷

25 Weir, *Origins*, surveys this material, 51–58. Interestingly, in claiming Castellio's innovation in using *foedus* in his New Testament translation, he fails to note that Beza translates many of the texts in Hebrews in exactly the same manner.

26 We have already noted the relation between Bullinger's Hebrews commentary and his *De testamento sive foedere Dei unico et aeterno*. John Calvin explicitly refers the reader of his Hebrews commentary (1549) both to his treatment of the same topic in Galatians and a fuller discussion in the *Institutes*, see Calvin, *Commentarius ad Hebraeos*, CO 55:100 (CTS Hebrews, 185), and *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, 2 vol., ed. John T. McNeill, trans. Ford Lewis Battles (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1967), 2.10–11.

27 Further, we will make use of the auction catalog from the sale of Cocceius's library to determine what Hebrews commentaries he possessed in his personal library. *Catalogus instructissimae bibliothecae D. Johannis Coccei* (Leiden: Felicem Lopez de Haro, 1671). Promising texts have been identified and appear in a separate section of the appended bibliography.

The second part of the book turns to the *Epistolae ad Hebraeos explicatio* of Cocceius and its place in his thought. In chapter 4 we examine the immediate context which led to the publication of the Hebrews commentary, and the atmosphere at Leiden University that surrounded the disputations behind it. This chapter will also establish the purpose of the text and locate it in the context of Cocceius's *Opera*. Chapter 5 will be an extended reading of the relevant sections of the *Epistolae ad Hebraeos*, tracing the outlines of Cocceius's argument and illustrating his covenant system as he uses it to interpret the text. In chapter 6 we will address the important question of how Cocceius's Hebrews exegesis relates to his more dogmatic formulations in his more systematic works, the *Summa doctrinae de foedere et testamento Dei* and *Summa theologiae ex Scripturis repetita*. Our final chapter will seek to incorporate the results of both parts of this project and succinctly state what we have learned.

Part One: Covenant and Exegesis

2. Exegesis and the Development of Covenant Terminology

Διαθήκη is used by Christ and the Apostle in the sense of “Testament,” even if בְּרִית (which Διαθήκη translates) means “covenant.”¹

2.1 Introduction

Sixteenth-century exegesis of the Epistle to the Hebrews raised in its most compelling form the problem of the relation between the Hebrew term for covenant, בְּרִית (*berith*), and its Greek parallel, διαθήκη (*diatheke*).² Reformation era exegetes and philologists faced the difficulty that *berith* and *diatheke* were not precise synonyms, though the Septuagint and the New Testament always used *diatheke* to translate *berith*. While *berith* had the primary association of a pact or treaty between living persons, i.e., a *foedus*, *diatheke* was first and foremost understood as the legal disposition of a dead individual’s possessions to his heirs, a “last will and testament,” or *testamentum*. This generalization can be supported by Erasmus, Bullinger, and Beza, among others.³

1 Johannes Cocceius, *In epistolam ad Ephesios praefatio*, Synopsis capitum praefationis, prima pars 5:131, “Διαθήκη usurpatur a Christo & Apostolo in notione Testamenti. Etiamsi בְּרִית (quod Διαθήκη vertitur) notet *foedus*.”

2 Throughout this chapter I will generally transliterate בְּרִית and διαθήκη with *berith* and *diatheke*, except when directly quoting a primary source that preserves the original.

3 Cf. David A. Weir, *The Origins of the Federal Theology in Sixteenth-Century Reformation Thought* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), 51–59. Weir’s survey of the lexical data is helpful, if somewhat flawed by anachronism. His discussion of *diatheke* is almost entirely based upon twentieth-century theological dictionaries of the New Testament (e.g., *Theologisch Wörterbuch zum Neuen Testament*, *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, *Theologisches Begriffslexicon zum Neuen Testament*, *The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology*).

These different meanings were clearly reflected in the Latin text of the Vulgate Bible: *berith* was almost always translated with *foedus* or *pactum*; *diatheke* exclusively with *testamentum*.⁴ Vulgate interpreters had generally read *testamentum* in an improper sense for *foedus*, following Augustine.⁵ But this solution which was difficult to maintain at Hebrews 9:16, where the testamentary sense clearly prevailed. This exegetical problem was exacerbated by the turn *ad fontes* and the humanist penchant for precise use of language, and represents a fundamental decision faced by biblical humanists. Would the meaning of *diatheke* be determined primarily by its biblical context, i.e., the Old Testament cognate *berith*, or by the broader Hellenistic use of the language. Already in 1516 Erasmus raised this question by choosing the title *Novum Instrumentum* for his Greek and Latin New Testament.⁶

4 The greatest exception to this rule, the Psalter, in fact proves it, for the Vulgate Psalter derived from the Gallican Old Latin, which in fact was a translation of the Greek Septuagint text, which always translates *berith* with *diatheke*. Thus, Jerome rarely if ever translated *berith* with *testamentum*, but the Old Latin Psalter frequently uses *testamentum* due to the Greek. See “Covenant, n.7” in the *Oxford English Dictionary* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1971), 2:1101.

5 Augustine, on Gen 26:28 (*PL* 24:493): “Amant scripturae pro pacto ponere *testamentum* id est diatheken.” Peter A. Lillback cites this and other examples from Augustine in *The Binding of God* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker, 2001), including comments on Gen 21:27 (*PL* 34:491) and Josh 9:7 (*PL* 34:539). Erasmus refers to Augustine at Rom 11:27. Reference to Augustine’s dictum is common in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, including Erasmus and Johannes Drusius (*Parallela sacra*, 1588) at Heb 9:20.

6 Regarding the significance of the title *Novum Instrumentum*, around 1516 Erasmus began to speak of the Vulgate as the “*Novum ut vocant* (so-called) *Testamentum*,” a somewhat derogatory qualification he uses repeatedly in his writings. Erasmus wanted to make clear that the Scriptures are not primarily a testamentary disposition but a covenant between God and man (Screech, “Introduction” to *Annotations*, xv). *Instrumentum* thus refers to “documentary evidence” in support of any transaction or arrangement entered into by parties, not unlike an affidavit, often being notarized and placed in the public record (like the tablets of the Law in the Old Testament). J. H. Bentley on p. 121 in *Humanists and Holy Writ: New Testament Scholarship in the Renaissance* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1983) directs the reader to the fullest explanation of this title in Erasmus’s 1527 letter to Robert Aldridge in *Opus epistolarum Des. Erasmi Roterodami*, ed. P. S. Allen and H. M. Allen (Oxford: Clarendon, 1928), 7:140:

Audio quendam alium de nihilo gravem suscitasse tragoediam, quod pro Veteri Testamento scripserim Vetus Instrumentum, quod arbitror in meis scriptis ad summum bis inveniri. Hic metuunt ne posthac pereat e mundo Vetus ac *Novum Testamentum*. Nec intelligunt ad eum modum aliquoties loqui divum Hieronymum; nec legisse videntur Augustinum, qui docet aptius dici Instrumentum quam *Testamentum*. Idque verissimum est, quoties non de re sed de voluminibus verba fiunt. Nam *testamentum* esset, etiam si nullum extaret scriptum. Quum enim Dominis diceret, ‘Hic est calix Novi Testamenti,’ nullus erat liber Novi Testamenti proditus. Itidem *Testamentum* Vetus erat prius quam Moses conscriberet Pentateuchum. Porro, tabulas et codicillos in quibus pacta descripta sunt, instrumenta vocant. De quo si quis dubitat, legat Pandectarum librum 22. Illic inveniet titulum De fide instrumentorum. Nec tamen reprehendus qui codices appellat *testamentum*, videlicet per figuram synecdochen. Ne animadvertunt autem se, quum hic in me debacchantur, in Hieronymum et Augustinum, Ecclesiae columnas, debacchari.

This exegetical question served as a primary catalyst to a marked development in both covenant terminology *and thought* throughout the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. In this chapter I will explore the development of covenant terminology primarily in terms of exegesis, with a particular eye to the important text of Hebrews 9. This bears a two-fold relation to the larger aim of this project. First, as we shall see below, Cocceius makes use of a distinctive covenant terminology in his exegesis of the Epistle to the Hebrews. Insofar as that terminology has roots in sixteenth-century debates, we must briefly consider its development in order properly to situate Cocceius's in his exegetical context. But more importantly, the development of covenant terminology illustrates the broader relation between exegesis and federal thought which this work seeks to establish. Previous scholarship has tended to view the development of federal theology — and thus terminology — through a dogmatic grid, proposing purely dogmatic reasons for changes in the translation and interpretation of key covenantal texts.

This dogmatic approach has often associated *testamentum* and *foedus* with unilateral and mutual relations respectively, often discriminating between theologies of “testament” and “covenant” — as if the theologians and exegetes being examined had reduced their thought to one or another of these concepts.⁷ The result has been a somewhat anachronistic treatment of the subject, whereby twentieth-century concerns about covenant thought have overshadowed sixteenth-century developmental factors. Furthermore, dogmatic typologies have often failed to take into account diversity and development in the use of the Latin terms themselves. While David A. Weir advanced this discussion by identifying development in the New Testament translation of *diatheke*, he remained indebted to an older approach by speculating that dogmatic factors pertaining to divine sovereignty, theodicy, and predestination were the causes for this change.

7 Kenneth Hagen, “From Testament to Covenant in the Early Sixteenth Century,” *Sixteenth Century Journal* 3 (1972): 1–24; Hagen, *A Theology of Testament in the Young Luther: The Lectures on Hebrews* (Leiden: Brill, 1974); J. Wayne Baker, *Heinrich Bullinger and the Covenant: The Other Reformed Tradition* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 1980); Baker, “Heinrich Bullinger, the Covenant, and the Reformed Tradition in Retrospect,” *Sixteenth Century Journal* 29, no. 2 (1998): 359–76; Charles S. McCoy and J. Wayne Baker, *Fountainhead of Federalism: Heinrich Bullinger and the Covenantal Tradition* (Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1991); David A. Weir, *The Origins of the Federal Theology*; Heiko A. Oberman, “Wir sein pettler. Hoc est verum. Covenant and Grace in the Theology of the Middle Ages and Reformation,” in *The Reformation: Roots and Ramifications*, trans. Andrew Colin Gow (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 1994), 91–115; J. B. Torrance, “Covenant or Contract?” *Scottish Journal of Theology* 23 (1970): 51–76; David N. J. Poole, *The History of the Covenant Concept from the Bible to Johannes Cloppenburg: De foedere Dei* (San Francisco: Mellen Research University Press, 1992); Peter A. Lillback, *The Binding of God* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Academic, 2001). Oberman and Lillback are notable exceptions to this tendency to bifurcate via a modern theological grid.