

ROBERT ROLLOCK'S CATECHISM ON GOD'S COVENANTS

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Introduction

ROBERT ROLLOCK'S catechism on God's covenants, published in 1596, is a work which deserves more attention from historians of post-Reformation Reformed thought.¹ It is, of course, a work which *reflects* late sixteenth-century Reformed thinking on the covenants. And for this reason alone its translation and publication are desirable—so few late sixteenth-century Reformed works on the covenants are available in English. It is, moreover, a work which appears—when compared with both earlier and later Reformed writings on the covenants—to have positively *shaped* the direction of Reformed thinking on the subject it addresses. In other words, Rollock's doctrine of the covenants improved upon the thought of earlier Reformed authors in rather specific ways that would be imitated by later Reformed theologians. More, then, than just a mirror of his own theological times, his work would seem to be—or rather to have been—a theological oar in the water, directing the intellectual progress of the ecclesial tradition to which he belonged. In this brief introduction to his catechism, I will attempt to indicate something of the positive contribution which I believe Rollock's work made to Reformed thinking on the subject of God's covenants with humankind.

God's covenants with humankind are, of course, the subject matter of Rollock's catechism. Rollock introduces "God's covenant" in the singular (q. 1), but immediately notes that covenant's plural character (q. 2): "there is the covenant of nature or works, and the covenant of grace." Given the degree of *difference* which he subsequently posits between these covenants, one might question the sense of subsuming these respective administrations into one singular "covenant." Rollock, however, discovers commonality—or rather, unity—between these covenants in their *generic* identity as divine promises of some good "under some certain condition" (*sub conditione certa aliqua*), a condition which must be met by the human party to this arrangement (qs. 1, 3, 55).

¹ For biographical information on Rollock, see Henry Charteris's *Narratio vitae et obitus sanctissimi doctissimique viri D. Roberti Rollocki*, or the translation of the same by William Gunn, both in Robert Rollock, *Select Works*, ed. by William Gunn (Edinburgh, 1844), 1:xli-lvi; 1:lix-lxxxvii. My thanks to Nicholas Thompson, of the University of Aberdeen, who carefully reviewed this translation of Rollock's catechism and made invaluable criticisms and suggestions.

The subsequent structure of Rollock's catechism is determined by the *duplex* nature of God's covenant; he proceeds by exploring each covenant, that "of works" (qs. 3-30) and that "of grace" (qs. 31-102), in turn. Especially noteworthy in this process is the way in which Rollock permits the covenant of works—established with humankind "from the first moment of ... creation" (q. 15), violated by humankind soon after (qs. 25-26), and renewed with humankind after the fall (q. 18)—to illumine the nature of the covenant of grace by virtue of its sheer distinction and difference from the same. In other words, having identified, in the first section of his catechism, the essential features and characteristics of the covenant of works—its theoretical foundation (q. 6), its promise (q. 7), its threat (q. 4), its condition (q. 8), its mode of initial establishment (q. 16) and later repetition (q. 19), and its general purpose (*finum*) in God's historical dealings with humankind (q. 21)—Rollock consistently refers back to the same in the second section of his catechism, in order to highlight and clarify (by way of comparison and contrast) the essential features and characteristics of the covenant of grace. So, to note one example, he identifies the gracious covenant's condition as "faith in the mediator" (q. 62), and then observes, alluding to his earlier identification of the first covenant's condition (q. 8), that this "excludes, in and of itself, those good works ... which were posited as the condition of the covenant of works," since "Christ and God's mercy, which are the objects of faith, cannot—in the justification of man—coexist with the virtues of [man's] nature or the works which proceed from that nature" (q. 64).

I suggest that Rollock's positive and extensive use of the covenant of works as a theological foil to the covenant of grace constitutes his primary contribution to the intellectual development of Reformed covenant theology. The notion of a pre-fall covenant between God and humankind—a concept integral to the more mature covenant theologies of Reformed thinkers in the seventeenth century—was, in 1596, still relatively new. The doctrine was first *explicitly* articulated by the Heidelberg theologians Zacharias Ursinus (in his 1584 *Catechesis Major*) and Caspar Olevianus (in his 1585 *De substantia foederis gratuiti inter Deum et electos*).² The specific terminology of a "covenant of works" (*foedus operum*) was employed by Puritan theologians Dudley Fenner (in his 1585 *Sacra Theologia*) and William Perkins (in his 1591 *Golden Chain*).³ Continental theologians Amandus Polanus, Franciscus Gomarus, and Johannes Piscator each made mention of a pre-fall covenant with Adam in their works. However, these theologians did not discover quite the theological

² Ursinus's catechism is included in his *Opera theologica*, ed. by Quirinus Reuter (Heidelberg, 1612). It was possibly written as early as 1561, though it was not published until 1584. See the discussion in David Weir, *Origins of the Federal Theology in Sixteenth-Century Reformation Thought* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990), 99-114. See also Derk Visser, "The Covenant in Zacharias Ursinus," *Sixteenth Century Journal* 18, 4 (1987): 531-544. On Olevianus's references to a *foedus creationis* see Lyle Bierma, *German Calvinism in the Confessional Age: The Covenant Theology of Caspar Olevianus* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1996), 112-120.

³ For a description of these and other early references by Reformed theologians to a pre-fall covenant see Robert Letham, "The *Foedus Operum*: Some Factors Accounting for Its Development," *Sixteenth Century Journal*, 14, 4 (1983): 457-467; R. Sherman Isbell, "The Origin of the Concept of the Covenant of Works" (unpublished Master of Arts dissertation, Westminster Theological Seminary, 1976).

potential in that notion that Rollock did. Lyle Bierma's judgment regarding Olevianus's treatment of the pre-fall covenant is worth noting here. He writes: "Unlike Cocceius and the Puritan covenant theologians of the seventeenth century, Olevianus does not treat the covenant of creation as the biblical-historical or theological foil for the covenant of grace. Never once does he directly compare or contrast the two."⁴ This observation could be extended to each of those theologians who had, by the time that Rollock published his catechism, made reference to the pre-fall covenant. But in Rollock's work the practice of comparing and contrasting the covenants of works and grace is perfected. And thus, in Rollock's catechism, the twofold covenant scheme, barely developed by previous authors, assumes a structural significance that it lacks in earlier Reformed literature. It would be wrong, perhaps, to suggest that Rollock employs a twofold covenant scheme to structure his theology *in toto*—this catechism is, after all, specifically concerned with "God's covenant" (and thus with particular anthropological, christological, and soteriological points); it is not a catechetical *summa theologiae*. But certainly one might say, on the basis of this work, that Rollock utilizes the twofold covenant scheme to structure—in a way that is genuinely unique for his time—an holistic account of humankind's initial creation in God's image, fall through Adam's sin, redemption by virtue of Christ's saving work, and progress towards eternal life. In Rollock's catechism, then, the polarity between the covenant of works and covenant of grace serves, quite simply, to maintain and uphold very basic Protestant reformational distinctives—distinctives such as the singular role of grace, faith, and Christ in the economy of salvation (the Reformation "*solas*"), and the difference between law (God's promise of benefit to the individual contingent upon his/her obedience) and gospel (God's promise of benefit to the individual contingent upon Christ's obedience).

Rollock's significance as a Reformed covenant theologian has, of course, been noted previously. James Kirk identifies Rollock as "possibly the earliest exponent of covenant theology in Scotland."⁵ Robert Letham notes that "with the publication of his *Tractatus de vocatione efficaci* in 1597, the Scottish theologian and churchman Robert Rollock brought to a climax a crucial phase of development in early covenant theology. Rollock's treatise was significant for its mature treatment of the relatively new notion of the *foedus operum*."⁶ However, the precise manner in which Rollock's use of the *foedus operum* notion improves upon the practice of earlier theologians has not been sufficiently noted. Moreover, Rollock's catechism of 1596—as its translation and publication here should indicate—was just as "mature" as the later *Tractatus*, if not even more so, in its "treatment ... of the *foedus operum*." Letham's assertion should be modified accordingly. One might also question whether Rollock's work—given the peculiar theological usefulness he discovered in the *foedus ope-*

⁴ Bierma, *German Calvinism*, 118.

⁵ James Kirk, "Rollock, Robert (1555–1599)," *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004 [http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/24032, accessed 9 July 2008].

⁶ Letham, "*Foedus Operum*," 457.

rum notion—might more properly be described as *initiating* rather than *culminating* “a crucial phase of development” in Reformed covenant thought. His practice of expounding the covenant of grace in dialectical relation to the covenant of works would be imitated by successive generations of Reformed theologians.

Indeed, if the particular manner in which a theologian *employs* the notion of a pre-fall covenant of works is taken into consideration (in addition to the mere affirmation, by a theologian, of such a covenant), one might plausibly suggest Rollock to be, on the basis of this catechism, the first genuine covenant theologian in the Reformed tradition. Such a suggestion would, at least, serve to highlight the ways in which his covenantal thinking built upon the work of previous theologians, rather than simply reiterating it, and also anticipated the work of later Reformed thinkers. However, designations such as “first covenant theologian”—or equivalent titles such as “father/fountainhead of federalism/covenant theology”—are best avoided in light of certain misunderstandings which they tend to generate. Such designations easily serve, on one hand, to obscure the large degree of continuity between a theologian like Rollock and his Reformed predecessors; after all, Rollock did merely intend, with his catechism on God’s covenant, to maintain those soteriological distinctives of the Protestant Reformation previously noted. Such designations easily serve, on the other hand, to obscure theological developments which occur in the wake of a given thinker. To note but one example of subsequent development which occurred in Reformed covenantal thinking: Rollock flatly refuses to recognize “good works,” though they properly constitute the condition of the first covenant, as meritorious (qs. 12-13). Even Adam, whose nature was “good, holy, and upright” (q. 6) prior to the fall, could not genuinely *merit* the reward of life promised to him in the pre-fall expression of the covenant of works; his “works” constituted mere tokens of his gratitude towards God for all that he was given in creation. Later Reformed theologians, with an eye to the implications their comments regarding the meritorious character (or not) of Adam’s works might have for understanding the precise nature of the *second* Adam’s obedience, differed with Rollock on this point. So, for example, Johannes Braun and Salomon Van Til—late seventeenth century Reformed covenant theologians—would argue that Adam’s “works” in the first covenant *were* (or at least would have been) meritorious, simply by virtue of God’s covenantal commitment to reward the same (in other words, they were meritorious *ex pacto*).⁷

In any case, the historical-theological significance of Rollock’s catechism on God’s covenant should be clear. A few comments are in order regarding the translation offered here. Rollock’s original publication contains an additional series of questions and answers concerning the sacraments. I have omitted that latter portion of his work, in the interest both of producing a work of manageable size and that of focusing upon the aspect of his work which I believe is of primary historical interest. I

⁷ Johannes Braun, *Doctrina Foederum* (Amsterdam, 1691), 13; Salomon Van Til, *Theologiae utriusque Compendium cum Naturalis tum Revelatae* (Lyon, 1704), 87-88.

have attempted to maintain a balance between strict adherence to Rollock's own words and readability in translation. I believe that I have remained entirely faithful to Rollock's meaning throughout—where his meaning is at all doubtful, I have included the Latin text in a footnote. I have retained some Latin words in parentheses in the body of the text—these are generally words which I believe perform a rather crucial role in Rollock's argument, and as such might be of interest, to readers, in their original form. Rollock's catechism of 1596 hangs between two other publications in which Rollock developed his covenantal ideas. The 1597 *Tractatus de vocatione efficaci* is well-known; it was translated into English in 1603 by Henry Holland, and as such is included in the *Select Works of Robert Rollock*, edited by William Gunn in 1844. Chapters two and three of that work develop the themes of the covenant of works and the covenant of grace respectively; these themes are, moreover, woven into the fabric of many other chapters in the work, chapters which properly address other theological *loci*. In 1593, three years before the catechism, Rollock published a commentary on Romans, one of two works (the other on Ephesians) which prompted Theodore Beza to insist that he had “never read in this kind of interpretation any thing exceeding them in elegance and sound judgment united with brevity.”⁸ In that work, during the course of expositing Romans 8, Rollock offered a very brief excursus titled *De foedere Dei*.⁹ Therein *some* of the ideas expressed in his 1596 catechism and 1597 *Tractatus* regarding the covenants are included, though certainly not in the developed form in which they appear later. In the course of this present work, I have included, in the footnotes, full citations from Rollock's earlier work (given its relative inaccessibility) and simple references to Rollock's later work (given its relative accessibility), to the end that the reader might, if he or she so desires, pursue a particular point made by Rollock further in his own writings. I have avoided theological commentary on Rollock's teaching, but I have occasionally noted the significance which a particular assertion might have for certain historical questions or debates regarding the substance of early Reformed covenant theology.

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SOME QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS ABOUT GOD'S COVENANT

*First, regarding the Covenant of God in General; then, the
Covenant of Works*

1. Q: What is the covenant of God established with man?¹⁰

⁸ Quoted in Kirk, “Rollock.”

⁹ Robert Rollock, *Analysis dialectica Roberti Rolloci Scoti...in Pauli Apostoli Epistolam ad Romanos* (Edinburgh, 1593), 161-163. Below I reference this work according to the title of Rollock's excursus: *De foedere Dei*.

¹⁰ Literally “the covenant of God *struck* with man.” The Latin phrase *percutere foedus* mirrors Hebraic idiom; see Richard Muller, “The Covenant of Works and the Stability of Divine

- A: It is that by which God promises man something of good under some certain condition, and man, moreover, accepts that condition.¹¹
2. Q: How many fold is the covenant of God established with man?
- A: It is twofold: there is the covenant of nature or works, and the covenant of grace (Gal. 4:24).¹²
3. Q: What is the covenant of nature or works?
- A: It is the covenant of God in which he promises man eternal life under the condition of good works—works proceeding from the virtues of [man’s] nature (*vires naturae*)—and man, moreover, accepts that condition of good works (Lev. 18:5; Rom. 10:5; Gal. 3:12).¹³
4. Q: Has no grave threat been added to the promise of this covenant?
- A: One has been added.¹⁴
5. Q: In what form?
- A: Cursed is the one who will not persist in doing all things which have been written in the book of law, in order to do them (Gen. 2:17; Deut. 27:26; Gal. 3:10).¹⁵
6. Q: What is the basis (*fundamentum*) of the covenant of works?
- A: A good, holy, and upright nature, of the kind which was in man at creation. For if God had not made man, in the begin-

Law in Seventeenth-Century Reformed Orthodoxy: A Study in the Theology of Herman Witsius and Wilhelmus à Brakel,” *Calvin Theological Journal* 29 (1994), 83.

¹¹ *De foedere Dei*: “Foedus Dei in genere est promissio gratiae sub conditione certa aliqua” (161); see also *Select Works*, 1:34.

¹² See *Select Works*, 1:34.

¹³ *De foedere Dei*: “Foedus legale est, promissio vitae aeternae sub conditione operum legalium et nostrorum” (161); see also *Select Works*, 1:34.

¹⁴ See *Select Works*, 1:53.

¹⁵ In his *Tractatus*, Rollock identifies this same “threat” as the major premise of a syllogism which, in and of itself, contains the “whole doctrine of the Law.” He notes: “The whole doctrine of the Law may be reduced to this syllogism: Cursed is he that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of this law, to do them; but I have not continued in them; therefore I am accursed.” This stands in contrast to “the doctrine of the Gospel [which] may be comprehended in this [syllogistic] form: Whosoever believeth shall be justified and live; But I believe; therefore I shall be justified and live” (*Select Works*, 1:194-195). The correlation of “covenant of works” with “Law” and “covenant of grace” with “Gospel”—evident here and throughout Rollock’s catechism—and the fundamental distinction which he recognizes between those entities (covenant of works/law on one hand, and covenant of grace/gospel on the other) supports the argument of Michael Horton, who has noted that early Reformed theology’s twofold covenant scheme largely served to maintain the law/gospel distinction which was central to both Lutheran and Reformed expressions of the Protestant faith (see Michael Horton, “Law, Gospel, and Covenant: Reassessing Some Emerging Antitheses,” *Westminster Theological Journal* 64 [2002]: 279-287).

ning, according to his own image—that is, wise, holy, and just by nature—then he could not, surely, have established with man this covenant, which has for its condition holy, just, and perfect works proceeding from [man's] nature (Gen. 1:26, 27; Eph. 4:24; Col. 3:9).¹⁶

7. Q: What is promised in the covenant of works?
A: A blessed life which should endure forever (Rom. 10:5; Gal. 3:12).¹⁷
8. Q: What is the condition in the covenant of works?
A: The condition is good works, which ought to proceed from that good, holy, and upright nature upon which the covenant of works itself was based.¹⁸
9. Q: What things are excluded by this condition?
A: By this condition, first, faith in Christ, and second, works proceeding from grace and regeneration, are excluded from the covenant of works (Rom. 11:6).¹⁹
10. Q: Why are these things excluded?
A: Because the virtues of [man's] nature, and the works proceeding from those virtues, cannot coexist with the grace of Christ and works of grace.
11. Q: What are the principal divisions of this covenant's condition?
A: They are contained individually in the discrete commands of the Decalogue. Hence, the tables upon which the law was written were called "the tables of the covenant" (Ex. 19 and 20; 22:15; Heb. 9:4).
12. Q: Is this condition of works one of merit?²⁰
A: Not at all. Rather, it is one as of duties which bear witness to [man's] gratitude towards God the creator (Rom. 11:35; Luke 17:10).²¹

¹⁶ See *Select Works*, 1:34. "Holy, just, and perfect works proceeding from [man's] nature" is my translation of "opera naturae sancta, iusta, perfecta." I base my translation on the assumption that the relationship between "works" and "nature" indicated by the genitive construction *opera naturae* is that expressed more thoroughly in q. 3 as "operum bonorum ex viribus naturae proficiscentium" and in q. 8 as "[opera bona] quae ex natura bona, sancta, and integra...proficisci oportet." The phrase "opera gratiae et reperationis" in q. 9 ostensibly communicates a similar relation; I have translated it similarly below (q. 9). See, for example, *Select Works*, 1:36, where Rollock describes works which "proceed from the grace of regeneration."

¹⁷ See *Select Works*, 1:35.

¹⁸ See *Select Works*, 1:35.

¹⁹ See *Select Works*, 1:35-36.

²⁰ "An conditio operum est ut meritum?"

13. Q: But works proceeding from a holy and upright nature ought to be themselves perfectly holy and good.
- A: It does not follow from this that they should be merits. For the rule of merit (*ratio meriti*), properly speaking, is that when some unrequired work (*opus indebitum*) has been done, wages are due to that work according to the order of justice. As Romans 4:4 says: “To the one who works (*operatur*)”—in other words, to the one who merits (*meretur*)—“wages are reckoned out of debt (*ex debito*).”²²
14. Q: Why is it called the covenant of works?
- A: This name is taken from the condition of the covenant, which is one of works proceeding from a good and upright nature.²³
15. Q: When was this covenant established with man?
- A: It was established from the first moment of man’s creation (Gen. 1:27ff; Gen. 2:15ff).
16. Q: In what manner and order was it established?
- A: First, God engraved his law—that is, the principal divisions of his covenant’s condition—upon the heart of the man he had created; then God said, “Act and work according to the rule of my law (for it is written upon your heart), and you will live.” And man accepted the condition, and committed himself to keep it (Gen. 2:15ff).
17. Q: So you mean that the moral law was engraved upon man’s heart in creation, and that hence, the principal divisions of this covenant’s condition were known [to man] through nature itself?

²¹ “Minime: sed ut officiorum, quae gratitudinem in Deum Creatorem testentur.” See *Select Works*, 1:37-38. Rollock’s teaching here, at least, does not substantiate Holmes Rolston III’s description of Reformed theology’s concept of the covenant of works as a doctrine “concerned with the merit and ability of man.” In Rolston’s estimation, the doctrine communicated the idea that “a reward is promised to man, if he earns it by his own good works.” See Holmes Rolston III, “Responsible Man in Reformed Theology: Calvin versus the Westminster Confession,” *Scottish Journal of Theology* 23 (1970), 133. Rollock explicitly denies that any individual—even Adam—in the covenant of works could properly *earn* or *merit* the reward of life proffered to him.

²² The sense of *opus indebitum* (“unrequired work”) seems to be work which is not *owed* to the one for whom it is done. Works performed by man in the covenant of works cannot be understood as merits, properly, because man is *indebted* to God on account of God’s goodness to him in creation.

²³ It is apparently in this catechism that Rollock first employs the term “foedus operum,” which he equates with “foedus naturae.” In his *De foedere Dei* he speaks only of the “foedus legale” in distinction from the “foedus gratuitum” (161).

A: I do. And there is evidence of this in that surviving knowledge of the law (*notitia legis*) which still, after the fall, remains in [man's] corrupt nature (Rom. 1:19, 32; 2:14).

18. Q: Was this covenant of works renewed afterwards?

A: It was continually renewed right from the creation and fall of man up until the advent of Christ: first, it was delivered by word of mouth; then, it was engraved by God's own finger upon the tables of stone; afterwards, it was delivered and written by Moses; finally, it was repeated and written by the prophets, each in his own place and order, and so it is known [to us] from the Old Testament.²⁴

19. Q: In what manner and order was it renewed?

A: You have the order in Exodus 19 and 20. First, God says through Moses, "If you will observe my covenant (that is, my law), certainly you will be my own peculiar possession." Then, the people said together, "Whatever Jehovah says we will do." When Moses had reported the people's counter-obligation (*restipulatione*) to God, God promulgated his law—that is, the principal divisions of his covenant, which should be observed by the people—from Mount Sinai.²⁵

²⁴ See Rollock's questions and answers regarding "the means whereby God, from the beginning, hath revealed both his covenants unto mankind," which conclude his *Tractatus de vocatione efficaci* (*Select Works*, 1:274-288).

²⁵ Here and in q. 30 Rollock clearly identifies the Sinaitic covenant—or at least some aspect of the same—with the covenant of works. In the twentieth century, some disagreement has surfaced in confessionally Reformed ecclesiastical circles of North America regarding the precise nature and identity of the Sinaitic covenant in relation to the supposed overarching covenantal administrations of works and grace (Cf. O. Palmer Robertson, "Current Reformed Thinking on the Nature of the Divine Covenants," *Westminster Theological Journal* 40 [1977]: 63-76; Mark Karlberg, "Reformed Interpretation of the Mosaic Covenant," *Westminster Theological Journal* 43, 1 [1980]: 1-57). Meredith Kline has argued that the Sinaitic covenant represents, at least at some level, a *republication* of the Adamic covenant of works. John Murray, on the other hand, has argued that the Sinaitic covenant constitutes a pure administration of the covenant of grace (For Kline's and Murray's views compared, see Jeong Koo Jeon, *Covenant Theology: John Murray's and Meredith G. Kline's Response to the Historical Development of Federal Theology in Reformed Thought* [Lanham, Maryland: Rowman and Littlefield, 2004]). This theological disagreement has, of course, taken on a historical dimension—various authors (such as Karlberg and Koo Jeon) have examined historic Reformed teachings on the Sinaitic covenant in the interest, ostensibly, of adjudicating the more recent theological difference noted; at least one author has argued that Kline's position represents a departure from the historic, "confessional" Reformed understanding of the covenants (D. Patrick Ramsey, "In defense of Moses: a confessional critique of Kline and Karlberg," *Westminster Theological Journal* 66, 2 [2004]: 373-400). In recent response to Ramsey, see the collection of essays edited by Bryan Estelle, David VanDrunen, and J. Fesko which defend Kline's doctrine of the Sinaitic covenant from the perspective of the various theological disciplines (biblical, systematic, practical, and historical): *The Law Is not of Faith: Essays on Works and Grace in the Mosaic Covenant*, ed. Bryan D. Estelle, J. V. Fesko, and David VanDrunen (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, forthcoming). Rollock's teaching, in my judgment, provides rather unambiguous support (or perhaps better, Reformed historical warrant) for the doctrine that the Sinaitic covenant constitutes, at some level, an instance (repetition, renewal, republication, etc.) of that very covenant of works first established with Adam. As Rollock later explains, however, the covenant of grace was also established with the "ancient people" under Moses (see qs. 79-

20. Q: But have you not just said that the law comes first, and the covenant follows after?²⁶
- A: It is the same whether the words of the covenant (which words comprise the obligation and counter-obligation) precede the law—that is, the statement of the principal divisions of that condition which belongs to God’s covenant—or follow after it.
21. Q: To what end was the covenant of works renewed, after the fall of man, with the ancient Church and people, since, after the fall, the condition of good works proceeding from nature was impossible to man (Rom. 8:3)?²⁷
- A: It was not repeated chiefly with the end that men should, by means of it, be justified and live, but to the end that men, convicted in their consciences and overwhelmed by that impossible condition of good works proceeding from nature, might flee to the covenant of grace (Deut. 10:16; Rom. 3:19; 7:7ff).²⁸
22. Q: So you mean that the covenant of works was renewed with the ancient people chiefly with the end that they should be prepared for the covenant of grace?
- A: I do.
23. Q: But not all were prepared, neither did all flee to the covenant of grace.
- A: True. But the elect were prepared. The reprobate, indeed, were reduced at length to desperation (Rom. 11:7).²⁹
24. Q: Was the covenant of grace, then, also established with the ancient Church and people?
- A: It was, albeit there only obscure mention of it in the doctrine of the covenant of works and of the law (Gen. 3:5; 49:10; 22:18; 26:4).
25. Q: So did man fall away from that covenant of works?

84). In his understanding, then, both the covenant of works and the covenant of grace find expression in the Mosaic economy (very much, it must be said, as Kline has suggested), a reality which affords some ambiguity to the label “Old Testament” (qs. 83-84). The Decalogue—strictly considered—comprehends the covenant of works (q. 30), though it serves a purpose also in the covenant of grace, instructing believers in the proper means by which they might express gratitude towards God for their redemption (q. 101).

²⁶ This refers back to the “manner and order” in which the covenant of works was initially established with man (q. 16).

²⁷ This question assumes, of course, that humankind’s fall entailed some corruption of human nature; see *Select Works*, 1:166-178.

²⁸ See *Select Works*, 1:43, 46-47.

²⁹ See *Select Works*, 1:47.

- A: He did indeed fall away from it (Rom. 3:4).
26. Q: When did he first fall away from that covenant of works?
- A: Immediately after creation and the establishment of the covenant itself (Gen. 3:1ff; Rom. 5:12ff).
27. Q: Did man desert the covenant after that?
- A: Afterwards the covenant was renewed with the people, and they committed themselves to fulfill the condition of that covenant. But they did not stand firm in their promise; nor were they actually able to do so (Ex. 32:1ff).
28. Q: What followed from man's defection and violation of the covenant?
- A: Twofold death: the first of the body and the second of the body and soul. This was by virtue of the threat which was joined to the promise of the covenant (Gen. 2:17; 3:7ff; Rom. 5:12).
29. Q: But man did not immediately die when the covenant was violated and broken.
- A: Each kind of death—both bodily and spiritual—began nonetheless [when man broke the covenant], and will be completed in its own good time. Man's body was made susceptible to death, and his soul lost the image of God, that is, the life which he had from God, a life which was distinguished in holiness, righteousness, and wisdom (Gen. 3:7; I Cor. 15:42, 43; 2 Cor. 5:4; Eph. 2:1; Col. 2:13).
30. Q: In what place do you find the doctrine of this covenant of works?
- A: In the Old Testament; that is, it has been handed down at length in the writings of Moses and the Prophets (which to a large degree have been arranged to explain the law and covenant of works), but it is contained in summary in the Decalogue.

Regarding the Covenant of Grace

31. Q: Did man himself, prostrate and dead after the violation of the covenant of works, first consider his own liberation or redemption?
- A: He could not even imagine his own redemption (Gen. 3:8; 1 Cor. 11:14).

32. Q: How, then, was he liberated and redeemed from such a death?
- A: Only by God's prevenient grace and mercy, which was itself beyond and contrary to [man's] expectation, inasmuch as man was spiritually dead (Gen. 3:8; Eph. 2:1ff; Col. 2:13; Tit. 3:3ff).
33. Q: What was that prevenient grace of God?
- A: God gave to man a mediator, his Son Jesus Christ (Gen. 3:5; Rom. 8:3; Gal. 4:4, I John 4:9).
34. Q: But the Son of God was not manifested in the flesh immediately after the fall of man, when it had become necessary for there to be a mediator who was both God and man in one person.
- A: Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever, and Christ is the lamb who was slain from the foundation of the world; in other words, the virtue and efficacy of the incarnation and crucifixion of the Christ who, in his own time, would eventually come, existed right from the beginning (Heb. 13:8; Rev. 13:8; I Cor. 2:3-4).
35. Q: When was the Son of God finally manifested in our flesh?
- A: When the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman (Gal. 4:4; Eph. 1:10).³⁰
36. Q: What duties did the mediator, who was given by the Father, perform for the redemption of man?
- A: He transferred to himself the sin of man, the wrath of God, and each kind of death (bodily and spiritual) which man, by right, should have experienced (Deut. 21:23; Gal. 3:13).
37. Q: So our mediator Jesus Christ became subject to the covenant of works and the law for our sake?
- A: For our sake he became liable to the covenant of works and the law, in order that he might redeem those who were liable to the law (Gal. 4:4-5).³¹
38. Q: Has our mediator Christ, who came under the covenant of works and the law, fulfilled the covenant of works and the law on our behalf?
- A: He has fulfilled it. Indeed, he has done so in two ways.³²

³⁰ See *Select Works*, 1:53.

³¹ See *Select Works*, 1:52-53.

³² See *Select Works*, 1:53.

39. Q: What are these?

A: [He has fulfilled the covenant of works and the law] actively (*agendo*) as well as passively (*patiendo*) (Rom. 8:3-5; 1 Peter 2:22ff; Gal. 3:13).³³

40. Q: Would it not have been sufficient for him to have performed good and holy works, on our behalf, for his entire life, so not to have suffered death as well?

A: It would not have been sufficient. Indeed, even the entirety of his most holy and most righteous works would not have satisfied God's justice and God's wrath on account of our sin; much less should those works have earned us God's mercy—that is, reconciliation, righteousness, and eternal life (Heb. 9:22, 23).³⁴

41. Q: Why so?

A: Because God's justice necessarily required a penalty of eternal death for our violation of the covenant. This was in accordance with that threat which was, as noted above, joined to the promise of the covenant (Deut. 27:26).³⁵

42. Q: Even if I should grant to you that, given a single violation of the covenant of works, none of our deeds—even the most holy and righteous that one might imagine—could satisfy the divine justice and wrath, I still do not see why the works of the mediator, which were works not only of the holiest and most innocent man but also of God, could not satisfy the justice and wrath of God.

A: As our works would not have been able to satisfy the justice of God, neither could even the most holy works of the mediator between God and man. For once [God's justice] had been violated, it necessarily demanded death for the man who had sinned, or, indeed, that the mediator should die on his behalf. Only in this way could God remain both just and true (Heb. 9:22, 23; Rom. 3:26).³⁶

43. Q: I will grant to you that the mediator's passion and death satisfied God's justice and God's wrath on account of our sin. Grant to me in turn that the mediator merited God's mercy and new grace by his good and holy works.

³³ See *Select Works*, 1:53.

³⁴ See *Select Works*, 1:53-54.

³⁵ See q. 4.

³⁶ True, that is, to his promise that death should follow from any violation of the covenant (see q. 4 and q. 41).

- A: You seem to want Christ's merit and satisfaction to be divided between his works and his passion; thus, you say that he satisfied [God's] justice and wrath by his passion, but earned grace and reconciliation [for us], in truth, by his good and holy works. This I will not grant to you (1 John 1:7).³⁷
44. Q: Surely you must admit that the mediator's good and holy works constitute some part of either his satisfaction or his merit.
- A: I say that, properly speaking, his good and holy works do not constitute any part of his satisfaction or merit. Throughout scripture Christ's satisfaction [of God's justice and wrath] and merit [of grace and reconciliation] are ascribed to his passion and the cross, not to his actions (Rom. 3:25; 5:19).³⁸
45. Q: So you mean that the Mediator satisfied the divine justice and merited grace by his passion and death alone (*sola passione et morte*)?
- A: Yes, I mean that both satisfaction and merit are properly attributed to the mediator's passion and death alone (Rom. 3:25, 26; 5:19).³⁹
46. Q: I see, then, no use for the works—so many and so wonderful—of our mediator, those works which he performed throughout his whole life.
- A: That certainly does not follow [from what has been said].
47. Q: Then what was their use?
- A: The holiness of Christ's person—God and man—and the holiness of all that sacred person's works were the foundation (*fundamentum*) of his satisfaction and merit, which satisfaction and merit belong, properly, to his passion alone (1 Pet. 3:18; Heb. 7:26; 9:13, 14).⁴⁰
48. Q: Can you make this point a little more clearly?
- A: This is what I mean: the dignity of Christ's sacred person—and, likewise, the worth of those works accomplished by that sacred and divine person—were the reason that his passion had such virtue and efficacy. Thus, his suffering not only satisfied God's justice and wrath on account of our sin, but also merited new grace and mercy for us.

³⁷ See *Select Works*, 1:54.

³⁸ See *Select Works*, 1:54.

³⁹ *De foedere Dei*: "Christus, et ille quidem crucifixus, dicitur Mediator noster, quia cruce sua et morte intercedit quasi medius inter iram Dei et homines peccatores" (161-162).

⁴⁰ See *Select Works*, 1:54-55.

49. Q: I understand. You mean that Christ, by the holiness of his person as well as his works, was made a suitable, worthy, and effective sacrifice—a sacrifice which was, as you say, both satisfactory and meritorious?
- A: I do. For such a high priest was fitting for us, one who was holy, innocent, undefiled, set apart from sinners, and exalted above the heavens.
50. Q: How many fold, then, is the effect of Christ the mediator's death?
- A: It is twofold: first, he satisfied God's wrath on account of man's sin; and second, he merited new grace and mercy [for man] (Rom. 3:25; 4:23).⁴¹
51. Q: Why did Christ's death have such great efficacy?
- A: Primarily, because of the dignity of his person (he is both God and most holy man); and further, because of the severity of the sufferings and death which he, at that time, endured to the full.
52. Q: Which grace is foremost of all those that Christ earned for man by his death?
- A: The grace of reconciliation with God (Rom. 5:10).
53. Q: How was reconciliation with God made?
- A: Reconciliation was made by a new covenant established with man (Jer. 31:33; Heb. 8:8).
54. Q: What was that new covenant?
- A: It was that which is generally called "the covenant of grace" (*foedus gratiae*), or "the gratuitous covenant" (*gratuitum*).
55. Q: What is the covenant of grace?
- A: It is that by which God promises man righteousness and eternal life under condition of faith in Christ the mediator; and man accepts that condition, and commits himself to believe (Hab. 2:4; Joel 1:31; Rom. 9:10; Mark 16:16).⁴²
56. Q: What is the foundation of this gratuitous covenant?

⁴¹ *De foedere Dei*: "Intercedens autem Christus sua morte, et pacat iram, et promeretur gratiam, propter tantam personae crucifixae dignitatem" (162); see also *Select Works*, 1:38.

⁴² "Est quo Deus promittit homini iustitiam et vitam aeternam, sub conditione fidei in Christum Mediatorem: Homo autem conditionem accipit, et recipit se crediturum." *De foedere Dei*: "Foedus gratuitum est promissio, tam iustitiae, quae per lapsum amissa est, quam vitae aeternae, sub conditione satisfactionis, non nostrae ipsorum, sed Christi Mediatoris, fide tamen nostra apprehendendae" (161).

- A: It is, first, the satisfactory and meritorious death of Christ; and second, the mercy of God which Christ's death has merited. From this more proximate foundation—God's mercy—the covenant of grace arises (Rom. 3:24).⁴³
57. Q: So the foundation of the covenant of grace differs from the foundation of the covenant of works?
- A: Indeed, the foundations of these two covenants greatly conflict with one another (*pugnant*). They are as mutually antithetical as nature and grace, which can in no way cohere in the work of redemption (Rom. 11:6).
58. Q: What things are promised in the covenant of grace?
- A: Righteousness and eternal life (Rom. 5:21).⁴⁴
59. Q: Describe the righteousness which is promised.
- A: It is not an inherent righteousness (of the kind which was lost at first in Adam). It is, rather, the righteousness of God—a righteousness, that is, which God imputes [to man] through faith, a righteousness which is as much more excellent than inherent righteousness as Christ is more excellent than Adam, a righteousness without which man cannot appear in God's presence and at his tribunal (Rom. 3:22; 5:12ff).⁴⁵
60. Q: Describe the life which is promised.
- A: It is the effect of Christ's imputed righteousness. It is initiated in this life by means of an indwelling holiness. It is, however, perfected after this life by means of glory (Rom. 5:21; 6:22; 8:30).
61. Q: What is the condition of the gratuitous covenant?
- A: The name of the gratuitous covenant itself signifies either that there is no condition (because when someone vows to give something freely [*gratis*], he properly requires no condition at all) or that the condition of the gratuitous covenant is

⁴³ See *Select Works*, 1:39.

⁴⁴ See *Select Works*, 1:39.

⁴⁵ The distinction between original, inherent righteousness and imputed righteousness is less clear in Rollock's *De foedere Dei*, where he identifies the "grace" promised in the gratuitous covenant as that "[justitia] quae per lapsum amissa est" (161), along with eternal life. However, see *Select Works*, 1:39, where Rollock very sharply contrasts "inherent righteousness"—that is, "original justice"—with "the righteousness of our Mediator Jesus Christ, which is ours by faith, and by the imputation of God."

itself free (*gratuita*); that is, the condition is [given to man] according to God's mere goodwill (Isaiah 55:1; Rom. 3:24).⁴⁶

62. Q: What is that condition which you call 'free'?

A: It is faith in the mediator (Rom. 10:6; Gal. 3:14).

63. Q: So faith is of grace (*ex gratia*)?

A: Indeed it is. It is entirely of grace; it does not proceed at all from the virtues of [man's] nature (Phil. 1:29).⁴⁷

64. Q: Then this condition of faith in Christ and God's mercy excludes, in and of itself (*in ipso*), those good works proceeding from [man's] nature which were posited as the condition of the covenant of works?

A: It clearly excludes them. For Christ and God's mercy, which are the objects of faith, cannot—in the justification of man—coexist with the virtues of [man's] nature or the works which proceed from that nature (Rom. 3:28; 11:6).⁴⁸

65. Q: Does faith also exclude works of regeneration or grace?

A: It excludes them as well. Works of regeneration cannot constitute even some part of the cause or merit for man's justification and salvation (Rom. 4:2, 3; Phil. 3:8).⁴⁹

66. Q: Then you mean that faith alone—that is, Christ alone apprehended by faith—constitutes the condition of the gratuitous covenant?

A: I do. That which is the condition in the gratuitous covenant is, at the same time, the reason for man's justification—the reason, that is, for [God's] fulfilment of the promise in the

⁴⁶ *De foedere Dei*: "In foedere Evangelico, justitia Dei requirit satisfactionem ob violatum primum illud foedus, non nostrum quidem, sed Christi, fide tamen nostra apprehendendam. Ex his sequitur Christi satisfactionem praecipuam esse conditionem novi foederis, sed non simpliciter consideratam, verum ut apprehendenda est fide nostra, quae quidem secundaria sit quaedam, et subserviens conditio" (161); see also *Select Works*, 1:39-40.

⁴⁷ See *Select Works*, 1:40. Rollock's identification of faith—that "condition" which the individual performs in the covenant of grace—as God's gift to the elect serves to illustrate the compatibility of covenant theology (with its inherent emphasis upon a certain *mutuality* in responsibilities between God and humankind) and the strongly predestinarian theology proper to the Reformed tradition from its very outset. Some historians of Reformed covenant theology have (wrongly) treated covenant thought as if it served as something of a seventeenth-century doctrinal counterweight to the predestinarian emphasis of sixteenth century Reformed teaching (Cf. Perry Miller, *Errand into the Wilderness* [Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1956], 43-98; J. Wayne Baker, *Heinrich Bullinger and the Covenant* [Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Press, 1980], 199-200, 205-207). Against the misguided notion that covenant theology and traditional Reformed predestinarian thought existed in tension if not simple contradiction, see Muller, "Covenant of Works," 87.

⁴⁸ See *Select Works*, 1:39-40.

⁴⁹ See *Select Works*, 1:41.

covenant of grace. But faith alone—that is, Christ alone apprehended by faith—justifies. Therefore faith alone is the condition of the gratuitous covenant (Rom. 4:13ff).

67. Q: So you mean that the condition of the gratuitous covenant is itself the same as the reason that God should fulfil the promise of the gratuitous covenant—the reason, that is, that he should actually justify us, according to the terms of the covenant itself?
- A: I do. These three things are truly the same in this covenant: the foundation of the gratuitous covenant; the condition of the covenant; and the reason that God should fulfil for us the promise of the covenant. Christ crucified is the foundation of the gratuitous covenant, the condition of the covenant, and the reason for the fulfilment of the things promised in the covenant (Gal. 3:8, 9; 2 Cor. 1:20).⁵⁰
68. Q: Is there no difference among these three things?
- A: They only differ in reckoning: for as the foundation of the covenant, Christ crucified is considered absolutely; as the condition of the covenant, he is considered as one who must be apprehended by faith (for a condition has regard to something future, something yet to be fulfilled); as, finally, the reason that God should fulfil the promise of the covenant, he is considered as already apprehended by faith in time past (Rom. 3:24, 28).⁵¹
69. Q: Then apart from his merit, there is nothing in the gratuitous covenant?
- A: Nothing. For the covenant itself is founded in merit, and the promise of the covenant is made under the condition of merit, and the reason, finally, that the promise should be fulfilled has been merited (Heb. 9:15ff; 2 Cor. 1:20; Gal. 3:17; Rom. 4:13; 10:9, 10).
70. Q: Then how can you call the covenant gratuitous, since grace and merit greatly disagree?
- A: Because the merit exists entirely with regard to Christ the mediator; the covenant is entirely free with regard to us. The name 'gratuitous covenant' is assigned to this covenant with regard to us, not to Christ (Rom. 3:24; 4:16).

⁵⁰ *De foedere Dei*: "Quare videmus eundem Christum, qui procuravit nobis novum foedus, eundem, inquam, esse novi huius foederis conditionem primariam" (162); see also *Select Works*, 1:40-41.

⁵¹ See *Select Works*, 1:40-41.

71. Q: So what is the use of works of regeneration, if they constitute neither some part of the gratuitous covenant's condition nor some part of the cause of our justification and salvation?
- A: They exist in order that we might thank God for our calling—which exists through the gratuitous covenant established with us—and for our justification (2 Cor. 5:15; Eph. 4:1).
72. Q: But you will discover, here and there in scripture, the reward of eternal life promised [to man] under the condition of works of sanctification. Are these not promises which belong to the gratuitous covenant? And if they are, does it not follow that works proceeding from regeneration constitute at least some part of the gratuitous covenant's condition?
- A: These promises do not belong to the gratuitous covenant; neither do they belong to the covenant of works.⁵²
73. Q: Why is this?
- A: Because after the fall the promise of the covenant of works was renewed with the man not yet justified and reborn, as was also the promise of the gratuitous covenant. These promises are made to the man already justified and reborn (Rom. 3:23, 24; 1 Tim. 4:8).
74. Q: To what end are these promises made to those already justified and reborn?
- A: To the end that, when the reward of eternal life was displayed, men already justified and reborn might be incited towards works of regeneration (1 Tim. 4:8; Gal. 6:9).
75. Q: So you mean that three distinct kinds of promise are found in sacred scripture, especially in the New Testament?
- A: I do.⁵³
76. Q: What are these?
- A: The first kind of promise belongs to the covenant of works; the second kind belongs to the gratuitous covenant; the third kind belongs to a category of promises made to men already called, justified, and renewed. By these such men are incited to services of gratitude towards God the redeemer—services which are indicated [to man] throughout the evangelical doctrine, in that part which concerns holiness of life and good morals. You generally, then, discover this third kind of prom-

⁵² See *Select Works*, 1:41.

⁵³ See *Select Works*, 1:41-43.

ise sprinkled among those precepts which have been delivered regarding a holy life.

77. Q: So what are the principal divisions of the condition which belongs to this gratuitous covenant?

A: Those things which we ought to believe (which, indeed, we can call the principal divisions of the condition) regarding God, Christ the mediator, and the benefits of that mediator. These things are broadly explicated in the gospel, and are comprehended in a few words in the Apostles' Creed.

78. Q: Why is the covenant called "gratuitous"?

A: Because the condition of the covenant is either nothing, or is truly and entirely free.

79. Q: When was this gratuitous covenant first established with man?

A: It was established immediately after the fall of man (Gen. 3:5).

80. Q: Was it, at that time, established in explicit words?

A: No. Rather, a certain obscure promise regarding the seed of the woman—that is, Christ—and his benefits was made in the beginning (Gen. 3:5).

81. Q: Was this gratuitous covenant renewed afterwards?

A: It was perpetually repeated from the fall of man up until the manifestation of Christ, at which time it began, at last, to be expressed most clearly and openly; for at that time it began to be said: 'Whoever will believe in Christ crucified will be justified and will live' (John 3:18; Rom. 10:9, 10).⁵⁴

82. Q: Then the substance of that covenant of grace established with the ancient people is the same as that covenant of grace which was established at the advent of Christ with his Church?

A: It is the very same both in reality and substance (*re et substantia*), but different in its circumstances (*accidente*). By reason of the difference in circumstances one is called the old covenant or Old Testament, but the other is called the new covenant or New Testament (Heb. 8:8ff).

83. Q: Then by the name 'Old Testament' you understand the covenant of grace?

⁵⁴ See above, n. 18.

- A: The broader title 'Old Testament' extends equally to the law, or covenant of works, and to the covenant of grace which was joined to the law. The Apostle to the Hebrews teaches that the title 'Old Testament' should be accepted in this way (Heb. 8 & 9).
84. Q: Therefore the covenant of grace established with that ancient people is also called the Old Testament?
- A: It is.
85. Q: What order did the Apostles observe in promulgating this gratuitous covenant after the manifestation of Christ and his ascension into heaven?
- A: First they evangelized—that is, they preached, first of all, Christ's humiliation, and then they proclaimed his glory, and third and finally they taught the benefits which flow from his death and glory. Then they concluded their Gospel with this promise: 'Whoever will believe in this Christ—first humiliated so, then glorified—will share in Christ and all of his benefits.' In these words we have the gratuitous covenant (Acts 2:14ff).
86. Q: Was this gratuitous covenant not clearly and expressly proposed and expounded at any time prior to Christ's manifestation in the flesh?
- A: It was never so clearly proposed before Christ's advent as it was promulgated after his advent. Yet, it cannot be denied that, long before Christ's advent, this covenant was indicated quite clearly by the Patriarchs and Prophets, and the last Prophets spoke of all things regarding the covenant with utmost clarity (Heb. 1:1; 1 John 1:18; 2 Peter 1:19).
87. Q: Which of the Prophets finally spoke of the covenant most clearly?
- A: Paul quotes what is stated by the Prophet Habakkuk, 'The just will live by faith,' in Rom. 1:17. And again, he quotes from the Prophet Joel, 'Whoever believes in him will not be made ashamed,' in Rom. 10:11. With these words, to be sure, we have the outline of the gratuitous covenant. According to Paul's witness, then, these two Prophets spoke of the gratuitous covenant most clearly.
88. Q: To what end was the covenant of grace renewed?
- A: To the same end for which it was first established with man immediately after the fall; to the end that man should be justified through faith and should live (Jer. 31:33; Heb. 8:8).

89. Q: So you wish to say that this gratuitous covenant's renewal differs in logic from the renewal of the covenant of works?
- A: I do. For as we have seen above, the covenant of works was not repeated with the same particular end for which it was first established.
90. Q: What if man, after the breaking of that covenant of works, had never received the condition of this gratuitous covenant?
- A: Then, indeed, he would never have been justified and saved (John 3:18; Mark 16:16).
91. Q: Did the first man believe, according to the condition of the gratuitous covenant, both for himself and his posterity?
- A: The covenant was certainly established with Adam and his posterity or seed. However, faith and grace in Christ are not propagated to posterity in the way that some goods or evils are derived to them from their nature (Gen. 5:3; 17:7. Rom. 5:12; Phil. 1:20).
92. Q: What if someone should falter and fall away from God after he has already committed himself to believe, and has begun to believe, and has begun to be illumined in mind, and has begun to taste in his heart the good word of God and the powers of the age to come?
- A: He cannot be renewed again unto repentance, nor will some third covenant be established with him (Heb. 6:6; 12:17).
93. Q: Then the one who breaks this gratuitous covenant is worse off, in condition and place, than man was after the breaking of that first covenant of works. For in breaking the covenant of works there was room for recovery and God's mercy in Christ; but if the covenant of grace is broken, there will be, you say, no room for recovery.
- A: It is true that one who breaks the gratuitous covenant enters a worse state. His sin is unpardonable, because it is a sin against the Holy Spirit. His sin is of such a quality that, because he has sinned against the Holy Spirit, he is punished by God with ultimate blindness, so that he is unable to seriously and sincerely repent from his sin (Matt. 12:31).⁵⁵
94. Q: You say, then, that no third covenant can be established with man when that second covenant, which is called gratuitous, has been violated?

⁵⁵ See *Select Works*, 1:190-192.

A: Yes, that is what I say. For if we continue sinning after receiving the knowledge of the truth, there is no further sacrifice for our sins. There is, rather, a dreadful expectation of judgment and the heat of the fire which will devour God's adversaries (Heb. 10:26, 27).

95. Q: Is it the case that a covenant cannot be renewed without a sacrifice?

A: God cannot be reconciled to a sinner and covenant-breaker without some sacrifice by which his justice and wrath are satisfied. The first covenant did not require a Mediator and sacrifice, because man was not a sinner at the time that the covenant of works was first established with him. When that covenant of works was repeated with the people of Israel, it was not established immediately by God himself, but through the ministry of the mediator Moses. This was evidence of God's differences with the people on account of their sin (Gal. 3:19). The second covenant—that which we call gratuitous—had need of both a Mediator and a Sacrifice, because man had sinned, and sin is not atoned for without a sacrifice: 'For without the shedding of blood there is no remission of sin' (Heb. 9:22). Now if man falls from this second covenant, there will be no remission of his sin, nor should a third covenant be sought, because a [further] sacrifice cannot be found.

96. Q: If some one falls from the covenant of grace (for you appear to affirm that someone can fall from it), does it not follow that faith in Christ and the grace of the Holy Spirit once received can be lost? For the Apostle says that the gifts of God in Christ are such that one cannot repent of them (Rom. 11:29).

A: For the purposes of the present instruction we posit two kinds of faith: one is what they call temporary and hypocritical; the other perpetual, which is called *anypokryton* [ἀνυπόκριτος]—that is, unfeigned. Temporary and hypocritical faith, because it is only superficial and is not deeply rooted in the heart, can be entirely lost. But perpetual and unfeigned faith, because it is not superficial, but is deeply rooted in the heart, can never be thoroughly extirpated and removed from the heart. Therefore, the one who receives the gift of real faith cannot utterly fall from God's covenant, nor can he fall into that sin which they call the sin against the Holy Spirit (John 3:9; Luke 19:26, John 10:28).⁵⁶

⁵⁶ See *Select Works*, 1:195.

97. Q: Has the covenant of works been abolished for those who are under the covenant of grace?

A: It has been abolished insofar as it serves as a means to justification or condemnation; it has, however, some use still to believers, as a means to conversion, faith, regeneration, and the mortification of the flesh (Gal. 3:13; 4:5; Rom. 3:31; 6:15; 7:4ff).⁵⁷

98. Q: Explain what you mean.

A: First of all, those who are in Christ are justified and saved by faith in Christ alone, not by works of the law (Rom. 3:28). Neither is there any condemnation for those who believe in Christ, for Christ was made a curse for them (Gal. 3:13). Secondly, those who are in Christ, since they do not perfectly believe and are not perfectly converted and renewed (Rom. 7:18), have perpetual need of the covenant of works, to the end that, by its terrors, their hearts might be incited to make continual progress in faith, conversion, and sanctification.

99. Q: When the covenant of works was abolished, was that moral law which contained the principal divisions of that condition required by the covenant of works also abrogated?

A: Inasmuch as the moral law served the interests of the covenant of works, the same reasoning applies to it as to the covenant of works: it is abolished to the extent that the covenant of works is abolished, it continues to the extent that the covenant of works continues.

100. Q: Can the moral law be considered in any way that does not have regard to the covenant of works—regard, that is, to the reality that it contains the principal divisions of the condition of the covenant of works?

A: It can.

101. Q: In what way?

A: After Christ's advent the moral law began to serve the interests of the covenant of grace and comprise the divisions and rules of Christian duties—that is, works which would no longer proceed from [man's] nature but from grace and regeneration. Therefore the moral law continues, since it, in a certain manner, serves the interests of, and attends to, the covenant of grace itself; it continues, I say, not as inscribed upon tables of stone, but as inscribed upon hearts of flesh (Jer. 31:33; Rom. 3:31; 2 Cor. 3:2).

⁵⁷ See *Select Works*, 1:47-51.

102. Q: Where, finally, is this doctrine of that covenant which you call gratuitous found?

A: In each Testament, both Old and New, although it is delivered more clearly and broadly in the New Testament and Apostolic writings. Moreover, a brief summary of the doctrine of this covenant is comprehended in that which is popularly called the Apostles' Creed.