

THE DOCTRINE OF THE ABROGATIONS IN THE FEDERAL THEOLOGY OF JOHANNES  
COCCEIUS (1603-1669)

W.J. Van Asselt

*Calvin Theological Journal* 29 (1994) 101-116

### I. A Description of the Doctrine of the Abrogations

One of the most peculiar constructions in the theological system of Johannes Cocceius certainly is the doctrine of the so-called abrogations. This doctrine, which is closely connected with the doctrine of the covenant of works and the covenant of grace, occurs in both systematic main works of Cocceius: in the *Summa Doctrinae de Foedere et Testamento Dei* of 1648 (§58) and in the *Summa Theologiae ex scripturis repetita* of 1662 (cap. 31 §1). Briefly formulated, this doctrine describes some five degrees (*gradus*) by which God leads man into eternal life and by which the consequences of the violation of the covenant of works through the Fall are gradually abrogated.

In the *Summa Doctrinae* this doctrine is dealt with after an extensive discussion of the covenant of works; the notion of abrogations dominates the whole further progress of the argument. The covenant of grace, too, is described from the point of view of the abrogations of the covenant of works.<sup>1</sup>

**/102/** In the *Summa Theologiae* this doctrine occupies a somewhat different, more local place. In locus 13, titled *De effectu peccati in primo homine et in posteris*, the

---

<sup>1</sup> Johannes Cocceius, *Summa Doctrinae de Foedere et Testamento Dei*, 1648, §58: Abolitio autem legis sive foederis operum hisce gradibus procedit: antiquatur

a. quoad possibilitatem vivificandi, per peccatum

b. quoad damnationem, per Christum in promissione propositum et fide apprehensum

c. quoad terrorem sive efficientiam foederis novi, facta peccati expiatione. Qua facta, ii, qui redempti sunt, sunt sub lege Redemptoris. Ita ut eadem lex in Redemptore abolita ut lex peccati, fiat lex Servatoris et iustitiam addicit iis, qui sunt ipsius, Gal. 2:9; Rom. 7:4; 2 Cor. 5:15, 21.

d. quoad luctam cum peccato, per mortem corporis.

e. quoad effecta omnia, per resurrectionem ex mortuis.

doctrine of the abrogations is spoken of in cap. 31 under the heading: *foederis operum evacuatio prima et legis impotentia*, following on the doctrine of sin and before soteriology.<sup>2</sup>

The key-text for Cocceius's description of the doctrine of abrogations is Hebrews 8:13: "As it was said by the apostle in Hebrews 8:13, the covenant of works approaches its disappearance by a gradual obsolescence." This abrogation is fivefold: by sin (1), by the establishment of the covenant of grace (2), by the promulgation of the New Testament (3), by the death of the body (4), and by the resurrection of the body (5).

Cocceius begins his analysis of the first abrogation by pointing out that the covenant that God made with man in creation is rendered ineffectual by sin so far as attaining eternal life through it is concerned. The promise required obedience. Man's unfaithfulness releases God from the obligation to grant eternal life. In bondage to sin and death, man can no longer hope to attain "eternal life and felicity" through the covenant of works (*foedus operum*). Instead, man is placed "under the sentence of damnation and death, Romans 7:10.

The second abrogation takes place when, after the Fall, the covenant of grace is established. Through this covenant of grace God offers friendship and communion with Himself, not through works as before but through faith in Christ. Man enters into this covenant by penitent trust in the Savior, and receives freedom, justification, and eternal life.

With respect to the anxiety and terror associated with the bondage to sin and death incurred by man's unfaithfulness, the third abrogation of the covenant of works takes place by the promulgation of the New Testament. The fourth stage in the abrogation of the covenant of works /103/ is through the death of the body, by which the strife of sin is annihilated. The completion of the process of regeneration, by which we become new creatures, of reconciliation, by which we are brought again into friendship with God, and of justification, by which we are made righteous through faith, is not possible without

---

<sup>2</sup> Johannes Cocceius, *Summa Theologiae ex scripturis repetita*, 1662, Locus 13, cap. 31 §1: Id igitur pactum quinque gradibus videtur aboleri et abrogari  
a. quoad possibilitatem justificandi et vivificandi  
b. quoad damnationem  
c. quoad terrorem  
d. quoad luctam cum reliquis carnis  
e. quoad effecta omnia.

sanctification. So long as we live in the flesh, we are the battleground of good and evil. Temptation and misery remain as tests of faith and to kindle our longing for eternal life. In the final abrogation of the covenant of works, the last effects of man's disobedience are removed and man is made free to eternal life and happiness. The process of sanctification is completed, and this through the intervention and obedience of Christ, the Guarantor of the covenant of grace.

## II. The Debate about Cocceius's Abrogations

In the literature about Cocceius's theology, heated discussions have arisen about the correct interpretation of this doctrine of abrogations. A number of issues have been debated: Should the abrogations be taken as moments on a historical time-line or are they absolute moments in terms of the order of salvation, "vertical strikes" from above? Is it a question of a chronology or of coordination? Is it a question of an objective salvational datum in history, or does it have something to do with the way in which salvation is subjectively known and experienced? And are not the abrogations in that case a description of the process of salvation in the believer, in whose knowledge of salvation a development is to be observed?

Thus, L. Diestel sees the five *modi* of the *abrogatio* as only notionally (logically) distinct moments that occur simultaneously beside one another,<sup>3</sup> while G. Schrenk takes the abrogations as phases succeeding one another chronologically on a salvation-historical line of development.<sup>4</sup> In a quite different way, H. Faulenbach explains the doctrine of abrogation in the context of Christology ("*Rede aus der Christuserkenntnis.*") They are acts of grace by God, again and again, new breakthroughs of Transcendence in the field of historic reality, not results of a development but always newly created realities given with the order of the eternal /104/ decree.<sup>5</sup> In general, we can sum up the

---

<sup>3</sup> L. Diestel, "Studien zur Föderaltheologie," in: *Jahrbücher für deutsche Theologie*, Bd. X (Gotha, 1865), 233.

<sup>4</sup> G. Schrenk, *Gottesreich und Bund im älteren Protestantismus, vornehmlich bei Joh. Coccejus* (Gütersloh, 1923), 134.

<sup>5</sup> H. Faulenbach, *Weg und Ziel der Erkenntnis Christi. Eine Untersuchung zur Theologie des Johannes Coccejus* (Neukirchen, 1973), 154.

various interpretations of the doctrine of abrogation in three models: the salvation-historical model, the *ordo salutis* model and the Christological model.

#### *A. The Salvation-Historical Model*

In this model set forth especially by Schrenk, the abrogations are taken as a *series historica*, that is to say: a succession of certain phases in salvation history, which unfolds linearly and historically. Thus, in the framework of covenant of works — covenant of grace there appears room for a development with a negative and a positive aspect. As the abrogation of the covenant of works progresses, more room appears for the covenant of grace until in the eschaton every effect of the covenant of works has been nullified. Seen in this way, the doctrine of abrogation gives to salvation history especially a negative aspect: Salvation History being demolished ("*Heilsgeschichte im Abbau*").

#### *B. The Ordo Salutis Model*

This interpretation sees the five abrogations not so much as phases in objective salvation history but takes them as moments and phases in the subjective experience of faith. They are states and conditions in the faithful subject who, having fallen from the state of righteousness into the state of sin, is transposed into the state of rebirth until he or she enters into the state of glory. Thus the abrogations come to be a process of biographically describable faith in the believer.

W. Gasz, who has his own objections to the whole idea of abrogations, thus considers them as an indication of the "development of biblical religion" (*Entwicklung der biblischen Religion*).<sup>6</sup>

#### *C. The Christological Model*

---

<sup>6</sup> W. Gasz, *Geschichte der protestantischen Dogmatik in ihrem Zusammenhange mit der Theologie überhaupt*, Band 2 (Berlin, 1857), 267-74.

This model, found chiefly in H. Faulenbach, has as its starting point the conviction that in Cocceius there is no question of a historically developing salvation history. Cocceius thinks "from the center" — from God's acting in Jesus Christ. The doctrine of the covenant of works and the doctrine of abrogations are ways of speaking from the knowledge of Christ. The covenant of works, therefore, is not so much a phase on /105/ a linear historical line but rather a theological construction with a contrast function; it only illustrates the situation of man outside Christ. The abrogations in this view are not salvation-historical data but have a noetic function by which God's action arising from the salvational will in the divine decree, embracing time and eternity, can be traced retrospectively. Faulenbach emphatically rejects Schrenk's vision that salvation history in Cocceius starts with the covenant of works and its abrogation. What matters for Cocceius, according to Faulenbach, is the knowledge of how God realizes His salvation in Christ to man.

This survey of the older and more recent scholarship suggests that the problem this doctrine of abrogations raises especially concentrates on the following questions:

1. Should the abrogations be taken as logical or as chronological categories, and if chronological, do they concern salvation-historical categories or categories in terms of the order of salvation?
2. How do the abrogations relate to each other?
3. Do the abrogations have universal or particular validity?

Before considering these questions, however we will examine the terminology Cocceius uses in his description of the procedure of abrogation.

### **III. Cocceius's Terminology**

Cocceius uses various concepts to indicate the procedure of abrogation. The concept of *abrogatio* is most frequently used.

We see that man created in God's image, was under the law of works, and as the promise of life was necessarily connected with this law, the way to the covenant, the friendship and the communion with God was opened up to him.

By transgression man, however, has made this covenant invalid. (...) So when we speak of the abrogation and antiquation (*abrogatio et antiquatio*) of the covenant, we understand by this covenant the pact concerning the works (*pactum de operibus*) as a condition for the life which cannot but be accepted and approved of by man living in the original state.<sup>7</sup>

/106/ Besides this he uses the terms *abolitio*, *amotio* and *evacuatio*. They are the expressions suggesting something definitive, which seems to exclude any form of gradualness or development. Yet in addition to these Cocceius uses terms that do indeed point to a certain graduality. The abrogation proceeds along degrees by which gradually (*paulatim*) and more and more (*magis magisque*), salvation materializes to the believer.

This abrogation did not happen on the strength of the law itself, but in such a way that the intervention of the Sponsor and Redeemer has eventually made this possible for the law. So that we gradually die to sin not without the force of the law, and start living for God more and more. Anyway, the first evacuation of the covenant of works, by which it has become useless, makes the covenant of grace necessary.<sup>8</sup>

This suggests a process of liberation in which one leaves one moment behind and proceeds to the next. Then, as to content, this process of liberation allows itself to be described on the basis of the scheme covenant of works — covenant of grace, in which, as regards the situation of the covenant of works, there is development (negative) from more to less and less, whereas regarding the situation of the covenant of grace one may speak of a proceeding from less to more and more (positive).

---

<sup>7</sup> Johannes Cocceius, *Summa Theologiae* cap. 31 §1: (...) Vidimus, hominem, conditum ad imaginem Dei, constitutum fuisse sub lege operum, et, quia ei legi annexa necessario est promissio vitae, aditum ei patefactum fuisse ad foedus cum Deo et amicitiam ac communionem eius. Per transgressionem homo id foedus irritum fecit (...). Et nos quidem, quando de foederis operum abrogatione et antiquatione loquimur, intelligimus pactum de operibus, ut conditione vitae, quod ab homine recto non potuit non accipi et approbari; et, quum mandatum Dei ipsi proponeretur, acceptum est et approbatum.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid. Non, quoad virtute legis per se solam id fieri potuerit, sed, quoad interventus Sponsoris et Redemptoris demum id legi fecerit possibile. Ut ita non sine legis potentia moriamur peccato paulatim, et Deo magis magisque vivamus. Gal. 2:9. Caeterum prima foederis operum evacuatio qua factum inutile, facit necessitatem foederis gratiae.

#### **IV. Salvation-Historical Gradation or Gradation in Terms of the Order of Salvation?**

In interpreting the doctrine of abrogations, the decisive point is the question where one chooses one's starting-point. Does one read the abrogations front to back or back to front? In the first case, the situation of the covenant of works is the main thing and determines the structure of the covenant of grace (the position of Schrenk). In the second case, the situation of the covenant of grace is the main thing, and then this determines the structure of the covenant of works (the position of Faulenbach). Considering the "Anliegen" of the Reformed tradition, Reformed theologians read Scripture linearly-historically as a history progressing from the beginning to the end. So we propose to take the moment of abrogation in Cocceius's theology in such a way that in salvation-history there is room for development. Not in the sense that a datum, already germinally present, is further developed but in the sense of a "comparative" (*Steigerung*). It is true, again and again a new element is added, but in it the old is taken up, taken along and transformed, so that one may speak of a *progressio* in salvation history. Cocceius's theology is not so much directed to fixed states as to motions. It is true, this progression also implies a value judgement, a moment of evaluation: a surplus value is added to the next phase compared with the preceding one. This surplus value does not annihilate the preceding value but transforms it. The crux of the whole argument of Cocceius in this question is that the atonement has not yet taken place *realiter*. The plus of history brings about the distinction.<sup>9</sup>

A key question for the interpretation of Cocceius's doctrine of abrogations is also the question what Cocceius means by these steps or degrees in the doctrine of abrogations and how they relate to one another. Do they only relate to certain phases in history or do they only tell something about a state of affairs in the faithful? Formulated differently: Are we concerned with a developing history, an objectively horizontal datum or are we concerned with moments in the knowledge of the believer, a subjectively vertical

---

<sup>9</sup> Evidens autem est, ubi non potest dici, justitiam adductam esse, ibi non posse dici, peccatum totius Terrae deletum et abolitum esse. *Summa Theologiae* cap. 51 §7.

moment? Now it is quite striking that in the *Summa Doctrinae* each of the five abrogations consists of two parts. One part beginning with "*quoad*" (as regards) and one part beginning with "*per*" (by, by means of):

The covenant of works is near its disappearance by a gradual obsolescence. The abrogation of the law of the covenant of works progresses along the following degrees. It becomes obsolete:

1. As regards (*quoad*) the possibility to make alive, by (*per*) sin.
2. As far as (*quoad*) the curse is concerned, by (*per*) Christ, who is represented in the form of the promise, and who is accepted by faith.
3. As regards (*quoad*) the fear or the bringing about of the dread of death or servitude, by (*per*) the promulgation of the new covenant, after the atonement for sin has been brought about, through which the redeemed are under the law of the Redeemer. In such manner that the same law which has been nullified by /108/ the Redeemer as a law of sin, now becomes a law of the Saviour, granting righteousness to those who are His (Gal. 2:19; Rom. 7:4; 2 Cor. 5:15 and 21).
4. As regards (*quoad*) the strife against sin, the covenant of works or the law becomes antiquated by (*per*) the death of the body.
5. As regards (*quoad*) all consequences and effects the covenant of works ceases by (*per*) the resurrection from the dead."<sup>10</sup>

The "*quoad*" parts give the impression of referring to the moment of knowledge of the believer and the condition or state of the believers connected with it: damnation, fear, servitude, and struggle between flesh and Spirit. The "*per*" parts, on the other hand, seem to refer to moments in salvation history: the Fall, the protevangelium, the appearance of Christ, the Resurrection, eschaton. The curious thing is that the "per sentences" are lacking in the *Summa Theologiae*, at least in the point-by-point enumeration. In the sequel to the argument, however, they do come up for discussion again. However, a difficulty in this interpretation is the fourth abrogation: the abolition of the struggle

---

<sup>10</sup> See note 1 for the Latin quotation.

between flesh and Spirit by the death of the body. This does not seem to be a salvation-historical category. When we realize, however, that this struggle belongs to the situation of the believer under the New Testament, the salvation-historical aspect is implicitly indicated: It is one phase further than in preceding abrogations.

A second difficulty is constituted by the second abrogation: the establishment of the covenant of grace. Here Cocceius fully discusses the eternal pact between the Father and the Son (*pactum salutis*). One would expect an event in history as a second phase here. However, Cocceius thinks in an infralapsarian way: The Fall as a historical fact calls for salvation. But because salvation is founded in eternity, this abrogation is fed back to an event in eternity, which, however, is revealed and announced after the Fall in the primordial promise.<sup>11</sup>

#### **/109/ V. Combination of the Salvation-Historical Moment and the Moment in Terms of the Order of Salvation**

If this analysis is correct, this means that each salvation-historical phase corresponds with a certain state or condition of the believers, both under the Old Testament and under the New Testament dispensation, which condition can be described as progress from less to more. The Fall is the starting point. Before the Fall one may speak of the original state of man, having received the promise of eternal life. After the Fall there is the state of sin bringing condemnation and death. These are abrogated, however, by the proclamation of the testament decided on in eternity as an outcome of the pact between the Father and the Son, which is revealed at once after the Fall in time in the form of the covenant of grace and in the way of the promise of Christ's coming.

Under the Old Testament dispensation of this covenant of grace, the after-effect of the covenant of works, however, remains, which by its violation, it is true, is abrogated, but

---

<sup>11</sup> G. Schrenk, op. cit., 135, solves this problem by speaking of a logical incorrectness "dasz in der Reihe der zeitlich sich vollziehenden Abschaffungen eines geschichtlich gewordenen Naturbundes an zweiter Stelle ein überzeitlicher Faktor eingereicht wird." According to Schrenk the place of the *pactum salutis* does illustrate the infralapsarian position of Cocceius and the predestinarian foundation of salvation history: "Hinter dem ganzen Heilsverlauf steht Ewigkeitsgeschichte." So, according to Schrenk, Cocceius does not begin with the *decretum* in heaven but with the history of man on earth. At the decisive point, however, Christ's work as sponsor in history becomes transparent, making eternity visible.

then only in the sense that the pact (as a way of salvation) has been nullified. The obligation of the covenant of works remains.

Therefore: As long as Christ has not appeared "*realiter*" in time, the covenant of works continues to make its demands and in spite of the promise made of Christ's coming it goes on sowing unrest: It keeps the believers under the Old Testament dispensation in fear and servitude. Not until Christ has really appeared in the flesh is there freedom and joy, because what had been promised really happens and now becomes history.

But even then the covenant of works has not yet finished playing its part. The demands of the law, set up in the covenant of works and ratified in the Decalogue, continue to remain urgent in the sanctification of the New Testament believer, which finds expression in the struggle between flesh and Spirit (Rom. 7). Not until death and resurrection in the eschaton have all the effects of the violation of the covenant of works been abrogated. The order of these abrogations is irreversible. Besides, each next abrogation exceeds all the preceding abrogations; with each new abrogation the sphere of influence of the covenant of works on history and on the existence of man is diminished and the sphere of influence of salvation and of the covenant of grace is increased. So a chronological interpretation, as Schrenk suggested, is justified. Step-by-step, the covenant of works and its effects are, as it were, pushed aside, and there comes more and more room for the covenant of grace and its benefits. The believers under the Old Testament dispensation, therefore, /110/ received temporal benefits as a shadow of spiritual benefits. This also explains the distinction that Cocceius makes between remission of sin as *parensis*, under the Old Testament dispensation and remission as *aphesis* in the New Testament dispensation.

Justification, Cocceius argues, is in both the Old and New Testament justification by faith in Christ. Yet there is a difference in exactly what is secured under the economies. Justification under the Old Testament was only *parensis*, a passing over of sin, a remission of wrath. In the New Testament, there is justification in the fullest sense: *aphesis*, full remission of sin and adoption through Christ as sons and heirs.

Cocceius uses an illuminating image to make clear the distinction between *aphesis* and *parensis*, viz., the image of a creditor: the person to whom one owes can be so minded that he does not claim the sum owed. He can let the person who has to pay the debt off,

without pressing him for payment (*sine compellatione*). Then one cannot say that he has remitted the debt except when he tears up the IOU (*chirographum*) handing it to the creditor with the words: I have received. I shall not ask for a pledge ("*Accipi, non pignerabo*"). When he has done so, however, he no longer has right to press for payment.<sup>12</sup>

The overall impression that one derives from Cocceius's treatment of the abrogations is that the historical and the existential moments are combined. Therefore, I propose an interpretation of this doctrine, which combines the salvation-historical aspect and the aspect in terms of the *ordo salutis*. On the one hand, the abrogations should be taken linearly-historically. Thus Cocceius read Scripture, from the beginning to the end: a *series historica*, the covenant of works with Adam not being a theological constructum but a salvation-historical datum just as the Fall. On the other hand, the phases in this series historica give to the order of salvation a shape of its own. Each period in salvation history is coordinated with a corresponding state or condition of the believers.

All this does not form a stagnant, fixed whole, but there is movement in it. The various degrees in the abrogations are moments in a movement, in which a cumulative element lies hidden: It is a movement from less to more. This movement should not be taken as an autonomous /111/ immanent process of development but as a proceeding (*procedere*) of God's acting in time corresponding with the progress in the knowledge of the believer. What matters is "progression" (*Fortschritt*) of God's acting, not "evolution" (*Entwicklung*) of a germ that is present in history itself. The view of Faulenbach, pointing out that the phases of the abrogations are expressions of God's universal and beneficial exercise of will<sup>13</sup> and therefore fixed moments excluding every idea of a development from less to more and thus of change, is self-contradictory. As a matter of fact, the effects of God's eternal exercise of will are always temporal and therefore subject to change. They are also history themselves. That does not mean that God is subjected to change and

---

<sup>12</sup> This illuminating passage about this distinction is to be found in the *Summa Doctrinae* §339 and the *Summa Theologiae* cap. 51 §11. In the first part, Cocceius also points out the fact that he himself is not the inventor of this distinction. For his view of the *paresis* he appeals to Beza and Cloppenburg: "Sed quoad vocem paresis attinet, eius hanc vim apud Apostolum ante D. Cloppenburgium animadvertit etiam Beza, qui legendus in extrema editione ad Rom. 3:25, ubi antecedentes editiones corrigat."

<sup>13</sup> H. Faulenbach, op. cit., 163, "Dieser Fortschrittsgedanke entspricht dem *ordo decretorum*, er ist geschichtslos gefasst."

development but only that change and development takes place in that to which God bears a relation: history and the believer.

Finally we would also like to go into the question whether the abrogations have universal or particular validity. For whom do the abrogations have validity? In this question we again run up against a difference between the first abrogation and the other abrogations: The first abrogation (the Fall) applies to all men and is therefore universal. The other abrogations only apply to the righteous i.e., the believers (*justi*). This comes to the fore most explicitly in the second abrogation, when Cocceius discusses the eternal pact and Christ's work as sponsor for the benefit of the believers. The fourth abrogation, too, is not a universal category: The bodily death puts an end to the struggle against sin, but that is a struggle only the reborn know. At the fifth abrogation — the raising from the dead — all the effects of the covenant of works in the righteous cease. So the abrogations cannot be explained as universally historical categories apart from Cocceius's doctrine of election.

In most interpretations of the doctrine of abrogations it is taken for granted that salvation history and universal history are identical. Most authors found this idea on the (unproved) thesis, that the covenant of grace has a universal character for Cocceius. Thus H. Heppe,<sup>14</sup> thinks that the covenant of grace has for Cocceius a "wesentlich universalistische Grundlage." We find this view again in J. W. Baker.<sup>15</sup> The basis /112/ of the covenant of grace for Cocceius, however, is not universal. Against a universalistic interpretation of Cocceius's doctrine of the covenant of grace, the fact argues that Cocceius was not attacked on this point. H. Witsius was one of the few spiritual friends of Voetius, who really did know Cocceius's writings. He would undoubtedly have opposed Cocceius if the latter had had a view on this point different from that of Witsius.

## VI. The Historical Context as Test Case

---

<sup>14</sup> H. Heppe, *Die Dogmatik der evangelisch-reformierten Kirche. Dargestellt und aus den Quellen belegt* (1861), ed. Ernst Bizer (Neukirchen, 1957), 302.

<sup>15</sup> J. W. Baker, *Heinrich Bullinger and the Covenant: The Other Reformed Tradition* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 1980), 200.

It is very curious that neither before nor after Cocceius this doctrine of abrogations occurs in this form. In Johannes Cloppenburg, Cocceius's colleague at Franeker, we find a first start perhaps, but with the exception of Fr. Burman, all the later federalists have abandoned this doctrine of abrogations with its five degrees.<sup>16</sup> Did they see in it a threat to the unity of the Old and the New Testament?

Indeed, the doctrine of abrogations must have sounded quite revolutionary in the age of orthodoxy. To all appearances Cocceius travels a middle course between eternity thinking (for example, G. Voetius) and purely historical thinking (for example, H. Grotius); In that framework, Cocceius's doctrine of abrogation might be taken as an antischolastic auxiliary line for the introduction of the historical and dynamic moment into his theology. This hypothesis can be tested by looking first at the orthodox reactions to this doctrine of abrogations. We are thinking of the disputations of Gisbertus Voetius contra Cocceius's distinction between *paresis* and *aphesis*.<sup>17</sup>

/113/ In the summer of 1665, Gisbertus Voetius brought up Cocceius's theses concerning the *paresis* and *aphesis* at his weekly disputations (on Saturday), dealing with the doctrine of justification. A Hungarian student, Stephanus Eszeki, then acted as *respondens*. Without mentioning Cocceius by name, Voetius made the *respondens* begin the debate by defending the thesis that the believers under the old and the new dispensation fully shared in divine pardon and grace.

---

<sup>16</sup> Johannes Cloppenburg (1592-1652) studied at Leiden University; he was minister of the Reformed Church at Aalburg (1618), at Heusden (1619), and in Amsterdam (1621). Because of a quarrel with the Amsterdam burgomasters about an Arminian merchant he had to flee from the city. In 1626 he received a call to the Reformed Church of Den Briel, and in 1644 he became a professor of theology at the university of Franeker. Cocceius speaks with respect about his colleague at Franeker: "cuius memoriam semper colam." Schrenk, op. cit., 75-81, gives a good summary of his theology. *Franciscus Burman* (1628-1679) was an outspoken pupil of Cocceius. He was the first Cocceian professor of theology in Utrecht (1662). He was a son-in-law of Abraham Heidanus (1597-1678), Cocceius's friend and colleague in Leiden. See for his doctrine of abrogation his *Synopsis Theologiae et speciatim foederum Dei ab initiis seculorum usque ad consummationem eorum* (1671). Book II, cap. 12 §1ff.

<sup>17</sup> Gisbertus Voetius, *Disputationes Selectae* (1648-1669), Tomus V (1669), 303. Cocceius reacted to Voetius's criticism with a treatise *Moreh Nebochim. Utilitas distinctionis duorum vocabulorum paresis et aphasis* (1665). Voetius is not mentioned by name in this piece of writing, but he nevertheless understood that Cocceius meant him by the "teacher of doubters." Thereupon Voetius wrote his *Problemata de justificatione* (1666-1667) and accused Cocceius of Remonstratism and Socinianism. In a letter of 19 July 1667 to Fr. Burman, Cocceius wrote that he has read Voetius's theses on justification. However, he does not understand what Voetius is driving at: "Disputationes Voetii de Psalm 103 inspexi. Nondum tamen totas legi. Nec enim vacat. Nescio quid bonus vir sibi velit. Indignatur, quod non volo ipsius esse Opponents: et me Opponentem facit argumentis a se fabricatis. Quid mihi cum ipso rei? Et quid ipsi mecum? Quia mea non legit et rem, quam tractat, minime intelligit. Videtur eum studium rixandi eis manian periagein." Epistola 385, in *Opera Anecdota* II.

Even more interesting are the remarks that Antonius Hulsius (1615-1685) made about Cocceius's doctrine of abrogations.

Hulsius (1615-1685) was trustee of the State College at Leiden, later professor for Hebrew there, and from 1676 till 1685, professor of theology. He was one of the most important representatives of the orthodox polemics against Cocceius and leader of the anti-Cartesian campaign. Hulsius had an important share in the realization of the resolution of 1675 of the Leiden governors of the University, according to which not only the philosophy of Descartes was not allowed to be taught, but also certain themes from the Cocceian theology (notably the state of the believers under the OT and the relation between OT and NT) were not allowed to be dealt with in any way, directly or indirectly. Abraham Heidanus, a friend and colleague of Cocceius, protested vehemently against this resolution and was discharged.

Hulsius rejected the doctrine of abrogations forcibly as a *monstruosum dogma* in theology. He declared that the distinction of stages within the economy of the covenant of grace implied a full negation of the eternal decree and pact. He argued that the decree presupposes that the position of both parties in the covenant of grace is always and everywhere the same. Cocceius's vital error consisted, according to Hulsius, in that he interfered with the unity of salvation and exchanged the *gratia* in the covenant of grace for the *administratio* of the *gratia*.<sup>18</sup> Thereby Cocceius /114/ introduced a distinction in the one divine willing and acting attached to the divine decree. In Hulsius's opinion Cocceius's doctrine of the *gradata antiquatio foederis operum* introduced a historicizing moment, which was experienced as a threat to and a relativization of God's acting.

This teaching indeed implied a different view of the relation between Old and New Testament, the relation between Law and Gospel, and of the relation between natural and revealed knowledge of God. However, in this relation there is no question of a

---

<sup>18</sup> See A. Hulsius, *Nucleus prophetiae* (1683), in which a treatise is incorporated on Daniel 12. Cocceius is also brought up here. *Mantissa ad Dan. XII*. Lugd. Bat. (1683). Of the doctrine of abrogation Hulsius says: "Gradibus distingui omnes fideles in genere certum est, sed gradibus distingui fideles Veteris a fidelibus NT, quoad ipsum fidem et effecta propria, monstruosum est dogma in theologiae." (*Mantissa*, 82). And: "in toto hoc ratiocinatione videmus in sua sede collocatam confusionem foederis gratiae cum foederis ministerio." (*Ibid.*, 62). Hulsius's opinion about Cocceius is very hard: "Cocceium haeticum nemo dixit, sed eius theologiam et agendi modum sternere viam ad haeresin, ego dixi et etiam nunc dico." (*Ibid.*, 13). Hulsius's remarks meanwhile throw a curious light on Faulenbach's view of Cocceius's theology. The structure Faulenbach thinks he can point out in Cocceius, is precisely that of Cocceius's opponents. So it is not very surprising that Faulenbach does not pay any attention to these polemics.

degradation but of a transformation; a new element is added (revealed knowledge of God, Gospel, New Testament) in which that which precedes (natural knowledge of God, Law, Old Testament) is assimilated and transformed. Thus, Cocceius declares, for example, in the beginning of his *Summa Theologiae*, the "the knowledge of God, which is from Nature, is by no means darkened and deprived of its force by Scripture. Rather it is confirmed by Scripture, thinking is stimulated by it, our argumentation is guided and led by it, not being confused by useless trains of thought."<sup>19</sup> The doctrine of abrogations introduced to relations mentioned a comparative structure, in which more and more intensively a movement was made in salvation history, from the beginning to the end, from creation up to the eschaton.

## VII. Pneumatological Model

Finally, some attention should also be paid to the question in which context the traditional doctrine of the order of salvation is raised by Cocceius. By this we understand the description of the whole of the work of the Holy Spirit in the individual believer, its principal moments being vocation, conversion, justification, sanctification, and glorification. /115/ Cocceius deals with this *ordo salutis* in the *Summa Theologiae* from two points of view. The primary thing is the salvation-historical point of view. What is striking is the distinction Cocceius makes between the sanctification in a broader sense — that is to say, sanctification as an indication of the *totum beneficium* of redemption, and sanctification in a stricter sense — that is to say, sanctification as a separate moment within the order of salvation. So, on the one hand, sanctification is an indication of the objective side of the work of redemption, whereby every stress is laid on the *totum opus salutis*.<sup>20</sup>

But sanctification can also be understood subjectively, regarding man's condition, as a description of the process of renewal in man that knows of a beginning — a progress and a consummation. If we now try to relate the doctrine of the abrogations to traditional doctrine of sanctification by the Holy Spirit, it is possible to see in the doctrine of the

---

<sup>19</sup> Cocceius, *Summa Theologiae* cap. 31 §1.

<sup>20</sup> Cocceius, *Summa Theologiae* cap. 44 §1: "Meretur vero redemptio praecipue appellari sanctificatio, quia sine ea non datur foedus cum Deo et communicatio cum ipso."

abrogations the means by which Cocceius wants to give expression to both the positive and the negative aspect of the work of the Spirit in the progress of the economy of salvation. Differently formulated: The doctrine of abrogation is the federal translation of the traditional doctrine of sanctification.<sup>21</sup>

In the doctrine of sanctification, taken as a description of the work of the Holy Spirit in the individual believer, one may speak of a process with a negative aspect (*mortificatio*) and an positive aspect (*vivificatio*). In the same way, the doctrine of abrogations indicates a process with a negative aspect (*abrogatio* of the covenant of works) and a positive aspect (*progressio* of the covenant of grace). By means of the abrogations, Cocceius gives this doctrine of sanctification a place within the history of the covenants. He brings about an involvement of sanctification and salvation history with each other. Without this sanctification, Cocceius argues, no covenant with God and communion with Him is possible.

These remarks of Cocceius induce us to place his doctrine of abrogations in a pneumatological framework: The doctrine of abrogations is at its deepest level a history of sanctification as the work of the Spirit, in which an analogy or coordination can be discerned between the /116/ process of salvation history and the process of the *ordo salutis*.<sup>22</sup> This coordination, characteristic for Cocceius's system, disappeared in later Cocceian theology. Later Cocceian theologians stressed either the salvation history scheme (the "Green" Cocceians) or the *ordo salutis* scheme (the "Earnest" Cocceians). Thus the doctrine of abrogations as a means of coordination of salvation history and *ordo salutis* broke down, it became obsolete and so disappeared in Cocceian theology.<sup>23</sup>

---

<sup>21</sup> The connection between the doctrine of sanctification and the doctrine of abrogation notably comes to the fore in the *Summa Doctrinae* §§539-41, where, in the framework of the fourth and fifth abrogation, Cocceius speaks of the *necessitas sanctificationis*, and in §§545-608, where Cocceius deals with the struggle between flesh and Spirit.

<sup>22</sup> See for this thesis: W.J. van Asselt, *Amicitia Dei. Een onderzoek naar de structuur van de theologie van Johannes Coccejus (1603-1669)* (Ph.D. diss., University of Utrecht).

<sup>23</sup> Van Asselt, op cit., 137-42.