

# AMICITIA DEI AS ULTIMATE REALITY: AN OUTLINE OF THE COVENANT THEOLOGY OF JOHANNES COCCEIUS (1603-1669)

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## **I. Life and Works of Cocceius**

Johannes Cocceius (1603-1669) was a prominent, seventeenth century, Reformed theologian from the Netherlands, whose fame extended far beyond the boundaries of this country, not only into Europe but also to North America. Although he spent most of his life in the low countries, he was German by birth (For Cocceius 's biography, see the *Praefatio* by his son Johann Heinrich in Cocceius 1673-75, and Heidanus, 1670. For his theology, see Schrenk 1923; McCoy 1957; Faulenbach 1973, and 1982, and van Asselt 1988). He was born at Bremen in 1603. His name originally was Coch or Cock, but, as most scholars did in those days, he Latinized his name: so Voet became Voetius; Wits became Witsius and Coch became Cocceius. Because Calvinism was the public religion in Bremen at the beginning of the seventeenth century, the Reformed faith was the background of his theological education. He studied in Bremen under Matthias Martini (1572-1630) and Ludwig Crocius (1586-1655) and in Franeker (1626-1629) under Sixtinus Amama (1593-1629) and William Ames (1576-1633). He became an expert in the study of oriental languages and rabbinical literature and was soon so well versed in these subjects that he surpassed most of his teachers.

In 1636 he was appointed professor of Hebrew and oriental languages at the University of Franeker. Seven years later, he also became professor of theology there. His colleagues were Johannes Maccovius (1588-1644) and Johannes Cloppenburg (1592-1652). It seems that Cloppenburg had already developed some of the basic ideas of federal theology which Cocceius then systematized. Cloppenburg *in nuce* developed the conception of natural law as a basic element in the doctrine of the covenant of works and

the distinction in the doctrine of justification between different *modi* of remission of sins. *Páresis*, or no imputation of sin, belonged to the Old Testament dispensation and *áphesis* or removal of the guilt of sin to the New Testament dispensation (van Asselt 1988, pp. 12,169).

In 1650 Cocceius became professor of theology at the famous University of Leyden where he lived until his death in 1669. At this international centre of Reformed theology in the seventeenth century his colleagues were Abraham Heidanus (1597-1678), Jacobus Trigland (1583-1654) and, from 1654 onwards, Johannes Hoornbeeck (1617-1666), **/36/** a pupil of Gisbertus Voetius (1589-1676), the foremost Reformed systematic theologian at the University of Utrecht. Voetius was the leading supporter of the Dutch 'Second Reformation' (in Dutch: *Nadere Reformatie*), a proto-pietist movement that stressed spiritual discipline and purity of life. Voetius was the *pater orthodoxiae* in Holland or, as his enemies called him, *papa Ultrajectinus*, the Pope of Utrecht (van Oort 1989, van Asselt and Dekker 1995).

### *1.1 Publications*

Cocceius was a prolific author. His writings include commentaries on all the biblical books, a Hebrew lexicon, works on philology, dogmatics, ethics and volumes on biblical theology, including his famous *Summa Doctrinae de Foedere et Testamento Dei* (Doctrine of the Covenant and Testament of God). This was edited three times, in 1648, 1653 and 1660. In 1679 it was translated into Dutch by Johannes van der Waeyen (van Sluis 1994, pp. 95-103). A second edition of this translation entitled *De Leere van het Verbond en Testament Gods, kort en grondig verklaart en uit het Latijn overgeset* appeared in Amsterdam in 1689. This is a clear indication of the popularity of Cocceius' ideas at the second half of the seventeenth century: the *Summa Doctrinae* became the 'classic' of Dutch federal theology (Cocceius 1648). In 1662 Cocceius published another systematic work: *Summa theologiae ex Scripturis repetita*. The form of this work resembles the standard Reformed dogmatic treatises of the era. The contents of this work did not fall short of the promise implied in its title: it based theology upon exegesis and expounded Cocceius's covenant theology in a systematic form (Antonides 1696).

## *1.2 Personal Qualities*

Cocceius was a man of deep personal faith and piety. His students observed this and one of them wrote: 'His hearers noted that his eyes would fill with tears when, in giving an exposition of Scripture, he praised the richness of God's grace' (Sepp 1874, p.66; Schrenk 1923, p. 8). He was also a peace-loving man. His peaceful character, which even opponents such as Voetius and Samuel Maresius (1599-1673) duly acknowledged, made an agreeable impression in that age of vociferous disputes (Schrenk 1923, p. 10).

## *1.3 Disputes with Voetius and the Voetians*

Cocceius unwillingly became involved in several conflicts with Voetian theologians, who confronted him with some practical consequences of his exegesis of the Old Testament. At first this controversy centered on the status of the Old Testament believers in the *ordo salutis* and especially upon the interpretation of the Fourth Commandment. According to Cocceius the Sabbath as a day of rest was a ceremony, not a universal and moral institution. It was instituted for the people of Israel in the desert on Mount Sinai. Therefore, this Commandment is not perpetually binding and should not be interpreted literally as a complete abstention from work and recreation. For Christians the Sabbath is a prophetic similitude or sign of the advent of the kingdom of God and His merciful deliverance (Cocceius 1673-75, VII, 5-22, 40-55). Unlike his Voetian opponents, Cocceius /37/ maintained that the life entered upon by the Christian believer was not characterized by a strict observance of rules; rather the Christian life was an existence in freedom secured by the saving work of Christ in fulfillment of the Old Testament promise of a divine rest for the people of God. Cocceius' rejection of Sabbatarianism was in fact a protest against the influence of Puritan doctrine in the Dutch Reformed Church (Heppe 1879, pp. 205-40; Visser 1939; Steenblok 1941).

Moreover, this conflict with the Voetians did not only concern this particular point of the Sabbath rest. The main issue was a different interpretation of the continuity and discontinuity of redemptive history in the Old and New Testaments. Whereas the

Voetians stressed the substantial uniformity of salvation for believers in the Old and New Testament dispensations, Cocceius underlined the progression of salvation in history and, therefore, the different status of the Old and New Testament believers.

At the same time, Cocceius' idea of progression in redemptive history in the Old and New Testaments was a basic motive for distinguishing God's treatment of sin. In the Old Testament, Cocceius argued, there was only a 'passing over' or a tolerance of the guilt of sin, while in the New Testament this guilt was completely taken away. Only when Christ died would it be possible to say that 'he blotted out the handwriting of the ordinances that were against us, nailing it to his cross' (Colossians 2:14). For this distinction Cocceius not only referred to his colleague Cloppenburg but also to Romans 3:25 and Hebrews 10: 18 in which texts two different words are used for the remission of sins: *páresis* and *áphesis* (Cocceius 1665, 1673-75, VII). It gave rise to another conflict between Voetius and Cocceius and their disciples, which continued long after the death of both great personalities in the history of Dutch Reformed Protestantism in the seventeenth century.

#### *1.4 Death*

Cocceius died in 1669. He was one of the many victims of the plague, which afflicted Leyden at that time. He was buried in the Pieterskerk, where the present day visitor can still admire the memorial erected in honor of this 'Light of The Netherlands' as he had been called in a poem. When in 1940 the Nazis tried to take over Leyden University, the curators prevented this by hiding the symbols of the University such as the scepters, seals, keys and the register of students, which were necessary for graduation ceremonies in Cocceius' tomb. In this way, nearly three hundred years after his death, Cocceius was still a defender of academic freedom and the Reformed tradition.

## **2. Hermeneutics of Cocceius**

### *2.1 Covenant Theology*

Cocceius is known for his federal or covenant theology. Covenant theology is an elastic term admitting various definitions (Lillback 1994, pp. 42-74). It can be defined in terms of the number of covenants present in the system or in terms of a presentation of a progressive revelation. It is also possible to make a distinction between a covenant theology in which the concept of covenant is primarily used in the realm of the *ordo salutis* and a theology in which the concept of the covenant is used to denote the continuity /38/ and discontinuity of salvation history in the Old and New Testaments. In the first instance, covenant theology is principally a description of the various stages of faith in the believer. In the second instance, the accent is on the historical time line or *ordo temporum* in salvation history.

In my opinion, the covenant theology of Cocceius can be best described as a theology in which the covenant is a key element in hermeneutics. Cocceius maintained that in order to understand Holy Scripture, we must read it in the light of the covenant of God. His basic hermeneutical principle was expressed in the following, often misquoted, maxim:

Meaning has to be taken not from the power of single words, but from the whole context of God's word ... The words [in Scripture] therefore mean, what they can mean in the context of the whole discourse in such a way that they altogether harmonize and that it becomes clear that God has spoken in a way which is wise and suited for being taught (Cocceius 1665, 1673-75, IV).

Scripture was seen by Cocceius as a harmonious system or a symphony, in which the leading melody was the history of God's covenants with humankind. An important second theme in this symphony was the history of God's kingdom. With the help of these two concepts, Cocceius discovered the same structure everywhere in Scripture — especially in the prophecies of the Old and New Testaments — and developed a theology of history or — in his own words — 'a prophetic theology'. He tried to formulate general rules for explaining the prophecies and wrote lengthy theoretical and methodological expositions on this topic. For this purpose he used typology, allegory and emblematic theology (Faulenbach 1973, pp. 66-79). Cocceius considered himself to be an orthodox

Reformed theologian and a conscientious biblical interpreter who wanted to stimulate new developments in his specialty: the study of biblical prophecies.

In the following sections of this paper I will attend to two basic components of his theological system: the *ordo temporum* or the salvation history scheme and the *ordo salutis* scheme or the methodical description of the work of God the Holy Spirit in the individual believer. Regarding the first component, I will first discuss his covenant conception in its broad sense and then focus on his theology of history with a short reference to his view on the relationship of theology and philosophy. The second component of his theology refers to his pneumatology. Here we will briefly point to the spiritual, ecclesiological and ethical perspectives in his theology. For this purpose I will discuss the concept of *amicitia Dei* which Cocceius frequently used when he described the pneumatological and ethical dimensions of his theology. This is important because *amicitia Dei* can now be treated as his own understanding of 'ultimacy'. It is that state of affairs which ultimately (i.e. at the end of a long historical process) reflects God's will for the whole of His creation.

### **3. The *ordo temporum*. Cocceius' Conception of Covenant History.**

Cocceius defined the covenant as 'nothing other than a divine declaration of the way /39/ (*ratio*) of perceiving the love of God and of obtaining union and communion or friendship with Him' (Cocceius 1648,5). This is the ultimate goal of salvation history. Like earlier Reformed theologians, he distinguished two fundamental forms of God's covenant in salvation history: the covenant of works *ante lapsum* and the covenant of grace *post lapsum*. The former was a description of the situation of man in Paradise before the Fall, the second was promulgated immediately after the Fall (Gen. 3: 15), when the covenant of works was violated by the disobedience of Adam. The covenant of grace he held to be effective in two successive periods: *ante Christum natum* and *post Christum natum*.

This covenant of grace was not simply an incident caused by the Fall, but rested ultimately upon a

free disposition by God the Saviour concerning his goods by his heir, to be possessed in accordance with voluntary generation and nomination beyond all danger of alienation (Cocceius 1648, 86).

This free disposition of God Cocceius called *testamentum* or 'testament' thereby indicating God's 'ultimate will' for those who will be saved. Furthermore, this testament was the result of a pact within the Godhead. It was not a pact with fallen man but between the eternal Father and the Mediator, i.e. Christ. This pact, on which the solidity of the testament rested, Cocceius called *pactum salutis* or 'counsel of peace' (referring to Zech. 6: 13, Ps. 2 and Ps. 40). Whereas the covenant of works was only a covenant and not a testament, the covenant of grace was simultaneously a covenant and a testament. It was unilateral or monopleuric in origin but, once established, it was bilateral or dipleuric.

This conception of a testament and its relation to the covenant of grace was contested by many orthodox theologians, for example by Petrus van Mastricht (1630-1706) in his *Theoretico-practica theologia* (Mastricht 1725, VII, I, 7). He rejected the Cocceian proposal to base the testamentary character of the covenant of grace not upon the eternal decree but upon the death of the Mediator.

From this topic of Cocceius's theology, in combination with the criticism on his doctrine of *páresis* and *áphesis*, arose another controversy in Dutch Reformed theology in the second half of the seventeenth century. This concerned Christ's role as *sponsor*, or surety, of the covenant of grace in the *pactum salutis*. According to Cocceius, Christ's bail bond or *sponsio* in the Old Testament was not an *expromissio* but a *fidejussio*. These terms come from Roman law. *Fideiussio* is 'to be released on a promised (but not yet paid) bailbond' and *expromissio* on a 'paid bail'. Christ's *sponsio*, considered as an *expromissio*, included the idea that already in the eternal pact the guilt of sin was simply transferred from the elect to the Son. This conception Cocceius rejected. Rather, the *sponsio* was a *fideiussio*, or promise to pay the bailbond, a guarantee which was already effective in the Old Testament dispensations, but in such away that the faithful of the Old Testament were liable right up to the actual satisfaction of Christ. The Voetians and other Reformed theologians in Europe such as F. Turretinus (1623-1687) insisted that the *sponsio* of Christ was absolute and that in the eternal pact He /40/ had taken upon himself

once and for all the complete case of the elect sinner both in the New and Old Testament dispensation (Turretinus 1701, Locus XII, Questio IX, 10). According to their Voetian opponents, Cocceius and his pupils had introduced an historical component into the doctrines of Trinity, Predestination and Atonement by developing the conception of Christ's *sponsio* as a *fideiussio*. Melchior Leydekker (1642-1721), a pupil of Voetius and his successor at the University of Utrecht, held that the *fideiussio* concept implied that God's decrees of election and reprobation were mutable (Leydekker 1708, p. 83; Heppe 1861, pp. 297,307-8; Loonstra 1990, pp. 132-36).

This historical dynamic also found expression in one of the most peculiar constructions in Cocceius' theological system, viz. the doctrine of the abrogations. For a proper evaluation of his theology attention must certainly be paid to this doctrine (van Asselt 1994A, 101-16). Briefly formulated, the doctrine of the abrogations describes five stages or degrees by which God ultimately brings salvation history and His faithful into His kingdom. It indicates a process by which the consequences of the violation of the covenant of works through the Fall are gradually abrogated. The establishment of the covenant of grace, Cocceius argued, did not imply that the unsuccessful covenant in Paradise had already ceased to operate. The disastrous effects of its violation — such as damnation, fear of death, struggle against sin and the death of the body — continued to affect salvation history. Step by step, however, these effects are, as it were, superseded by the powerful progression of the covenant of grace in history: until the ultimate state of grace is finally attained.

In addition, Cocceius interpreted this abrogation process in salvation history as a structural analogy of the process of sanctification in the *ordo salutis* or order of salvation. In the doctrine of sanctification, taken as a description of the work of the Holy Spirit in the individual believer, Cocceius could speak of a process with a negative aspect (*mortificatio*) and a positive aspect (*vivificatio*). In the same way, he used the doctrine of abrogations to indicate a process in salvation history with a negative aspect (*abrogatio* of the covenant of works) and a positive aspect (*progressio* of the covenant of grace; van Asselt 1988, pp. 120-23). It is clear that by means of these abrogations Cocceius introduced a strong, dynamic and eschatological element into his covenant theology. In effect, this is how Cocceius believed that 'ultimacy' can be attained.

#### 4. Theology of History

The dynamic and eschatological perspective was elaborated by Cocceius in his so-called 'prophetic theology' or *studium propheticum* (Möller 1931, pp. 393-440; van Asselt 1994B, pp. 146-64). Since scripture was seen by Cocceius as a harmonious system, he interpreted the Bible as a prolonged prophecy of the Christian Church until the eschaton. Prophecy and world history were closely linked in this prophetic theology.

Thus, in concert with his covenant theology, Cocceius developed a dynamic theology of the kingdom of God. Christ and his rule gradually came to be revealed in the course of history. Here he also emphasized the continuous progression of the kingdom of God in its struggle against the kingdom of the Antichrist — in his view the pope — until the end of history. In his opinion prophetic theology was so important because it bore witness to God's providence in history and so to His existence. This 'theologia prophetica' was intended as an instrument of apologetics to show unbelievers that there is a God who rules history. At the same time, the prophetic evidence showed that the Bible was of divine origin.

History was divided into seven periods — the number seven being the most important number in biblical prophecy according to Cocceius — and he believed that the seventh and ultimate period of the *progressio regni Dei* was imminent. Chapters 2 and 3 of Revelation and the last six chapters of Deuteronomy were interpreted as a prophecy of these seven periods in the history of God's kingdom here on earth. He rejected the notion of a millennium at the end of history, because 'the thousand years' of Revelation 20 represented, in his opinion, a period in the history of the Church which was already over. It had lasted for over ten centuries, from the Emperor Constantine the Great in the third century till the Bavarian King Ludwig (1314-1347) in the fourteenth century, the last monarch in Europe who had tried to resist the worldly power of the pope. The ultimate, or seventh, period of God's kingdom Cocceius thought to be imminent: *Ultimum tempus nobis imminet*. Before Christ's second coming, however, Cocceius expected what he called 'a blessed state of the (Reformed) Church' ('*een heerlijke staat der kerk*'). Through the preaching of the Gospel all over the world Christ will soon establish his rule and

convert the nations. The Antichrist — the pope — and his kingdom will then be destroyed, the full number of the Gentiles will come in and all Israel will be saved (Rom. 11:25). From the prophecy in Zecharia 14: 16 he concluded that Christians and Jews together will celebrate the Feast of Tabernacles in Jerusalem as a sign of Christ's approaching return (van Asselt 1990, pp. 227-36).

Whereas prophetic theology soon became very popular in Cocceian circles, most Voetians rejected it, because they thought of it as a deductive way of reasoning that reminded them too much of the Cartesian method. Cocceian theologians, they argued, used the same terminology as the Cartesians did. Their books on prophecy included terms such as 'order', 'clue' or 'thread', 'coherence' and 'chain'. The Voetian arguments against prophetic theology, however, were more suggestive than well-grounded. Nevertheless, until the end of the eighteenth century, prophetic theology was a beloved apologetic weapon in Cocceian hands for the refutation of sceptics and atheists of the (early) Enlightenment.

## **5. Theology and Philosophy**

Cocceius certainly wanted to be a purely biblical theologian. Unlike his colleague from Utrecht, Gisbertus Voetius, he renounced the use of scholastic method in theology. However, his departure from scholasticism was not as absolute as suggested by most of the secondary literature. In some parts of his doctrine of God and also in his elaboration of the covenant concept in the *Summa Theologiae*, he sometimes (critically) used the technique of scholastic argumentation (van Asselt 1988, pp. 59-75). The biblical character of his theology, therefore, should not be exaggerated. Nevertheless, he maintained that theology and philosophy each had their own field and that we should not read Scripture with philosophical concepts in mind: 'For someone who starts to study Scripture, /42/ it is necessary not to have a prejudice or opinion entailed by his philosophy: he must enter the study of Scripture as a child' (Cocceius 1669, *Praefatio*, 7). Yet, among his followers, many felt themselves attracted to philosophical studies, in particular to the novel philosophy of Rene Descartes (1596-1650). Some of them such as Abraham Heidanus (1597-1678) in Leiden, Franciscus Burman (1628-1679) in Utrecht,

Johannes Braun (1628-1709) in Groningen and Christophorus Wittichius (1625-1687) in Duisburg in Germany, developed a kind of Cartesio-Cocceian theology, which in combination with their prophetic theology, would give rise to vehement quarrels in the Dutch Reformed Church at the end of the seventeenth century.

In the light of the stance which Cocceius himself adopted towards Cartesianism, it is quite surprising to discover that an alliance was so quickly forged between Cocceian theology and Cartesian philosophy. How is this surprising development best explained (Cramer 1889, p. 5; MacGahagan 1976, pp. 366-68)? In my opinion the connection between Cocceianism and Cartesianism must be attributed to external factors for the simple reason that both groups had to fight the same battle against the Reformed orthodox theologians. It was this which ultimately drove them into each other's arms.

## **6. The *ordo salutis*: the Concept of *Amicitia* in Cocceius' Theology**

After this account of the distinctive features of Cocceius's view on (salvation) history, I will now concentrate on the specific character of his spirituality. I do not intend to enter here into the debate on the relationship between his concepts of covenant and kingdom, nor to embark upon an evaluation of his prophetic theology of history. My point now is to pay attention to questions such as: What does it mean for people to live in God's covenant? What did Cocceius think of when he described the ultimate form of the Christian life as an existence in the covenant of God? In what way did it shape his conception of the Church and his ethics?

To contextualize the discussion the starting point should be the Cocceius's expression of his preference for the concept of 'friendship' as the *telos* of living in God's covenant. In several passages in Cocceius' main systematic works, the *Summa Doctrinae* and the *Summa Theologiae*, he used the term 'friendship with God' (*amicitia Dei*) in order to conceptualize the ultimate covenantal relationship with God (Cocceius 1662, cap. 22, 18 and 19; Cocceius 1648, 5, 10, 12, 48). First, when he defines the concept of 'covenant' in general terms, Cocceius introduces the notion of friendship:

The Covenant of God is none other than God's declaration of the way in which the divine love can be obtained and communion and fellowship with Him can be established. If a man walks in this way, he is in God's friendship (Cocceius 1648, No.5).

According to Cocceius, the 'covenant' in its most pregnant sense is a *pactum de amicitia consummatum*.

Second, when he defines the covenant of works Cocceius uses precisely the same kind of terminology. It is 'an agreement which entails friendship with God on the basis of the righteousness which accrues from works to those who have faith' (*Ibid*, 12).

/43/ Third, when we examine his definition of the covenant of grace, we find that the concept of *amicitia* is used again: 'The covenant of grace is an agreement between God and sinful man which entails peace and friendship' (*Ibid*, No.76). In other words, 'friendship' appears to be a dominant metaphor in the theology of Cocceius (Moltmann 1959, pp. 343-61). My suggestion is to interpret the concept of friendship in Cocceian thought as the pneumatological dimension of his covenant theology. According to Cocceius, it is God the Holy Spirit who ultimately enables us to love God as a friend. But to love God as friend is to love a God who always loves us first. It is God's movement towards us in love and friendship that allows us to move towards God in friendship. The friendship of God is a friendship which certainly presupposes God's initiative and choice (Cocceius 1662, 22, 17).

## **7. Stages in the History of God's Friendship**

When studying the passages in Cocceius's work on friendship we can discover a kind of history of God's friendship. It unfolds alongside the history of the covenants and the history of God's kingdom. In the covenant of works with Adam before the Fall, the possibility of divine friendship was offered to humankind on the basis of obedience to the law (*Ibid*, 19).

It was the violation of covenant of works by sin, however, which brought about a radical termination of that relationship. Man fell out of God's friendship (Cocceius 1648,

63). Nevertheless, the covenant of grace established and promulgated after the Fall (Gen. 3: 15) implied that friendship between God and man would be restored. In the Old Testament dispensation of the covenant of grace this friendship was still (as it were) in its infancy. In the New Testament dispensation, however, Christ appeared in the flesh in order to introduce the full reality of atonement (Cocceius 1648, 353). For Cocceius, Good Friday was the turning point in the history of God's friendship with his fallen creatures. In his words: the atonement was 'the total work of union of alienated man with God in friendship' (*totum negotium conjunctionis hominis alienati cum Deo in amicitia*). It implied that a radical transformation had taken place from a human condition characterized by hate and enmity towards God, into a new status characterized by friendship and blessing (Cocceius 1645, 11,64). According to Cocceius, the experience of this blessing and friendship was brought about by the operation of the Holy Spirit in the congregation of true believers and in their hearts (Cocceius 1662, 13, 53).

However, this work of the Holy Spirit and thereby one's participation in the covenant of grace, was not a universal reality. Not everyone in this world can be called a friend of God. Therefore, Cocceius argued, one cannot say that Christ died for the whole of mankind (Cocceius 1648, 108). He only died for those who were promised to the Son as *sponsor* by the Father in the eternal pact, the prologue in Heaven (*Ibid*, 539).

Moreover, Cocceius's accent on the personal character of the atoning sacrifice of Christ was also the reason why he labelled the sacraments of the covenant of grace as the 'testimonies of God's friendship' (*testimonia amicitiae*) par excellence (*Ibid* 201; cf. Cocceius 1662, 53, 1). The sacraments are the means by which this intimate friendship with God is experienced. The Lord's Supper is especially the portrayal or acting out of /44/ the whole Christian life (Cocceius 1670, 15, 34). Even the covenant of works before the Fall had its sacraments: paradise and the tree of life. They not only signified the eternal life and 'that country in which righteousness and glory dwell', they also sealed God's gift of friendship as a reward of man's obedience to His law (Cocceius 1648, 32).

But man can also enjoy friendship with God in prayer. In prayer, Cocceius argued, God and His human creatures enjoy each other's company 'as a friend enjoys his friend and shares everything which is good with him'. In prayer God and man can converse with each other in an intimate relationship (Cocceius 1644, 29, 16). The analogy between

*foedus* and *amicitia* emphasizes the subjective, relational, and personal rather than the purely legalistic character of Cocceius's theology. In other words, the personal warmth and intimacy of Cocceius' language bears witness to the pietistic character of his spirituality.

## **8. Ethics of Friendship**

The concept of friendship also plays a prominent part in Cocceius' ethics. Actually, friendship as a model for moral life has long been used throughout the whole Christian tradition. It even has its roots in classical culture. H. van Oyen has pointed out that the classical world did not know just one definition for friendship. Human existence in relation to God, one's fellowmen, self and world was involved in it. All these accents of classical culture recurred in the Christian tradition. We meet with the religious element in Irenaeus, Augustine, the Franciscans and Thomas Aquinas (by whom the social interpretation of friendship was emphasized), and in Protestant pietism. According to Moltmann there is a line to be drawn through the whole Christian tradition, in which Christian love can be described as friendship (van Oyen 1958, pp. 1128-31; Egenter 1928, pp. 263 & ff; van der Leeuw 1938; Moltmann 1975, pp. 134, 343 & ff.).

Although Cocceius also used friendship as a model for the moral life, his *amicitia* concept must be clearly marked off from the classical concepts. Because he links the concept of friendship with the concept of covenant and election, friendship gets a perspective of its own. The charge that friendship cannot be a model for the Christian moral life, because preferential relationships within friendship are at odds with the universal love of Christian agape, would have been countered by Cocceius with the assertion that this claim only holds true if the friendship thus envisaged is not Christian. In the covenant with God friendship does not oppose Christian love, but becomes the ultimate relationship in which that love is learned (Cocceius 1673-75, II, *Annotationes in proverbias Salomonis*, cap. 18, 15).

## **9. The Church**

It is not surprising that this understanding of covenantal friendship also plays a prominent part in Cocceius's ecclesiology. In his exposition of John 15: 15 ('I have called you friends, for all that I have heard from my Father I have made known to you. You did not choose me, but I chose you'), Cocceius proceeds to eulogize this intimate friendship between Christ and His Church. The friendship of Christ does not mean that He simply /45/ subjects others unto Himself in order to enjoy them, but rather that He gives Himself freely to others so that they can enjoy communion with Him. All things can now be shared including joy and sorrow. Friendship such as this is not only durable, but also triumphs over all enmity. Anyone who repudiates it takes the sunlight out of the world. The Church, as Cocceius conceives it, is ultimately constituted by this relation of friendship with Christ. Those who are of Christ must be in the covenant and those who are in the covenant must be His friends. The friendship of the believers reflects none other than the friendship and the love of God Himself (Cocceius 1670, 15,65).

In the *Praefatio*, preceding his commentary on the book of the Twelve Prophets, we can hear him singing a triumphal paeon in praise of the divine friendship (Cocceius 1673-75, III, introduction preceding his *Commentarius in Prophetas Duodecim Minores*), the echoes of which can now resound through the rest of this section:

To be called a Christian is the most beautiful thing that can happen, a magnificent thing are the rights and duties entailed by this name. For a Christian is ultimately ... a friend of Christ.

## 10. Conclusion

The relevance of the perspectives of Cocceius' theology to our own time can perhaps be best summarized by the following observations. First, Cocceius primarily invoked the concept of friendship in order to denote the Christian life in a fully-consummated covenant relationship with God. It also enabled him to emphasize precisely those elements of reciprocity, growth, progress, and maturity which he discovered in the history of the covenant relation with God. One could say that for Cocceius the relation between God and man in the covenant of grace takes the form of an ellipse in which each

one is the centre for the other. Therefore, the concept of 'friendship', as Cocceius himself understood it, denotes the reciprocity of those actions which take place within the covenant relationship itself (Cocceius 1673-75, VI, Epistola 148).

Second, if we want to locate the concept of friendship in its right place in the theology of Cocceius, then my arguments suggest that that place must be found at the cutting edge of his pneumatology. According to Cocceius, both man's experience of God's friendship and his response to it were brought about by the operation of the Holy Spirit in the covenanted communion of believers and in their mutual love and caring.

Finally, the theology of Cocceius embodies an integration of what can be called the horizontal and vertical dimensions in theology, viz. the objective salvation history scheme and the subjective *ordo salutis* scheme. God who time and again acts in history by means of establishing His covenant and kingdom ('*verbondsvoortgang*'), and our personal existence in this covenant ('*verbondsomgang*') are both essential ingredients of his theology. Later Cocceian (and other Reformed) theologians stressed either the salvation history scheme or the *ordo salutis* scheme. Whereas the theologians who stressed the salvation history scheme developed a theology of the history of religion, the *ordo salutis* theologians developed a form of Pietism resembling Voetian Pietism.

In my opinion both components, viz. the horizontal and vertical aspect, which were /46/ held in balance in Cocceius' theology, should also be distinctive features of a living Reformed theology today. It is not to be claimed that we could or should hold them together in precisely the same way in which Cocceius did. But a theology in which they were held together in such a thoroughgoing manner is one to which we ought to be more ready to listen with care and attention. In short, friendship with God and fellowship with others in the communion of faith (i.e. the Church) is the ultimate human relationship as Cocceius conceived it. This relationship is ultimately constituted by faithfulness to the promises entailed by the divine covenants.

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