

Casey B. Carmichael

# **A Continental View: Johannes Cocceius's Federal Theology of the Sabbath**



# Reformed Historical Theology

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## Preface

The history of the Sabbath in Reformed Orthodoxy has remained a puzzle to scholars. While the English Sabbath has attracted a fair amount of scholarly attention, continental views have been unduly neglected. This book does not intend to exhaust the discussion, but it does provide one piece of the puzzle—hence the title “a continental view” rather than “the continental view.” While Cocceius is by no means representative of every theologian on the European continent, he did nevertheless articulate a very different theology of the Sabbath within the Reformed Orthodox tradition from that of the English Puritans. What set Cocceius’s theology of the Sabbath apart was its relationship to his federal theology, the most distinctive feature of his thought. In fact, the chief argument of this book is that Cocceius’s theology of the Sabbath serves as a window into his federal theology.

Cocceius heavily engaged in the Leiden Sabbath Controversies from 1655 to 1659, which facilitated the fracture of the Reformed Dutch Republic into two socio-political blocs—Cocceians and Voetians. I shed light on this neglected yet significant period of Cocceius’s theological career by looking at his writings produced in relationship to it. I examine first the evolution of the problem of the Sabbath in Cocceius’s theological tradition—Reformed Orthodoxy—in Chapters 2–4 and second the development of Cocceius’s doctrine of the Sabbath, structured around the Leiden Sabbath Controversies, in Chapters 5–8.

The publication of this book on Cocceius’s theology of the Sabbath results in rest from my long work on the project, which several people facilitated. I now want to thank those individuals and institutions. Herman Selderhuis and the co-editors of the Reformed Historical Theology series kindly accepted the manuscript, which is an adaptation of the doctoral dissertation that I wrote at the University of Geneva. I am grateful that Irena Backus welcomed and supervised my research on Cocceius from the outset. When she went on medical leave, Maria-Cristina Pitassi helped me during the time of transition. Michel Grandjean and Randall Zachman were very kind to stand in as co-directors and guide me until the end of the project. Ueli Zahnd and Pierre-Olivier Léchet served as



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members of the jury, over which Christophe Chalamet presided. I profited from discussions with scholars outside of Geneva, especially Kenneth Parker, Charles H. Parker, R. Scott Clark, Herman Selderhuis, Matthias Mangold, and Timios Cook. I also would like to thank those who helped fund my research, including my parents, Nick and Kim Carmichael, the Leibniz Institute of European History in Mainz, and Michael Mayberry. Finally, I want to thank my wife, Amy Alexander Carmichael, for her patient and loving support.

## Abbreviations

- CO *Ioannis Calvinii Opera Quae Supersunt Omnia*. Edited by Wilhelm Baum, E. Cunitz, and E. Reuss. 59 vols. Brunswick: A. Schwetschke, 1863–1897.
- NT New Testament
- OT Old Testament
- SD Johannes Cocceius. *Summa Doctrinae de Foedere et Testamento Dei*. Leiden, 1660.
- ST Johannes Cocceius. *Summa Theologiae ex Scripturis Repetita*. Leiden, 1662.
- WA Martin Luther. *Luthers Werke. Kritische Gesamtausgabe*. 66 vols. Weimar: H. Böhlau, 1883–1993.



## 1. Introduction

For centuries Christian theologians and churches have disagreed about the relevance of the Sabbath commandment, delivered in the Ten Commandments to the ancient Israelites.<sup>1</sup> Was the Sabbath merely a Jewish type and shadow of the reality to come with the advent of Christ and therefore abolished in the New Testament? Or was it part of universal law that applies to all human beings everywhere and in all times, like other prohibitions of the Ten Commandments, such as “You shall not murder” and “You shall not steal” (Exod. 20:13; 15)? This question divided Reformed theologians and churches in the early modern era, especially in the Dutch Republic. Significant division occurred there in the middle of the seventeenth century, which surrounded the controversial teaching of the federal theologian, Johannes Cocceius. This book argues that Johannes Cocceius’s theology of the Sabbath is a window into his federal theology as a whole; the uniqueness of his theology of the Sabbath, which he rooted in the covenant of grace, showcases the broader uniqueness of his federal theology. Since he wrote so much about the subject, the Sabbath was perhaps the most visible manifestation of his covenant theology. This means that we need to consider both his theology of the Sabbath specifically and his federal theology generally, to assess the relationship of the part to the whole. As I set Cocceius—the federal theologian—against the backdrop of the theological interpretations of his contemporaries on the Sabbath, we will see in a tangible way the innovative and polarizing nature of his federal theology.

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1 Exodus 20:8–11: “<sup>8</sup>Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy. <sup>9</sup>Six days you shall labor, and do all your work; <sup>10</sup>but the seventh day is a sabbath to the LORD your God; in it you shall not do any work, you, or your son, or your daughter, your manservant, or your maidservant, or your cattle, or the sojourner who is within your gates; <sup>11</sup>for in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested the seventh day; therefore the LORD blessed the sabbath day and hallowed it.” Taken from the Revised Standard Version (RSV). Unless otherwise noted, subsequent scriptural quotations are taken from the RSV. Cf. Deuteronomy 5:12–15. Reformed theologians enumerate the Sabbath commandment as the Fourth Commandment of the Decalogue.

## 1.1 Cocceius

Before we look at a very specific teaching of Cocceius, a brief reminder of his life and works is in order. Johannes Cocceius lived from 1603 to 1669; he was born in Bremen, Germany and died in Leiden, the Netherlands.<sup>2</sup> Cocceius began his education in Bremen, where he became proficient in Hebrew, Aramaic, Syriac, and Arabic. In 1626 he moved to Franeker to further his expertise in oriental philology; there he studied with the famous scholar Sixtinus Amama (1593–1629). After teaching sacred philology in Bremen (1630–1635) and Franeker (1636–1642), he served as a professor of theology at Franeker (1643–1650) and Leiden (1650–1669).

It was at Leiden that Cocceius was called into the painful controversy over the interpretation of the Sabbath, shortly after Johannes Hoornbeek (1617–1666) joined the faculty in 1654; he attacked the friend and colleague of Cocceius, Abraham Heidanus (1597–1678), who had argued that the Sabbath commandment does not bind Christians. The famous Leiden Sabbath debates (1655–1659) brought Cocceius into the spotlight. Throughout the Sabbath debates, Cocceius and his followers provided an alternative to the more puritanical Dutch Further Reformation (*Nadere Reformatie*), which Gisbertus Voetius and his followers represented at that time.<sup>3</sup>

2 For a chapter-length treatment of the life of Cocceius, see Willem J. van Asselt, *The Federal Theology of Johannes Cocceius* (1603–1669), trans. Raymond A. Blacketer, *Studies in the History of Christian Thought*, vol. C, ed. Robert J. Bast (Boston: Brill, 2001), 23–33. Most of the biographical material recorded here is drawn from that source.

3 The Further Reformation (*Nadere Reformatie*) was a movement in the Dutch Republic that imported ideals from the British Puritans. It began around the turn of the seventeenth century and sought a total reformation of culture and a very intense form of piety, including strict observance of Sunday as the Christian Sabbath. Cf. Jonathan Israel, *The Dutch Republic: Its Rise, Greatness, and Fall, 1477–1806* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995), 474–477; 690–699; Philip Benedict, *Christ's Churches Purely Reformed: A Social History of Calvinism* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002), 360–363; 523–524. The Cocceians and Voetians divided over two issues: the interpretation of the Sabbath and of the mode of justification in the Old Testament. Whereas the Voetians maintained a stronger sense of continuity between the Sabbath and the mode of justification among the Old and New Testaments, the Cocceians emphasized the discontinuity between the testaments on these issues. Cocceius not only rejected the Puritan doctrine of the Sabbath, but he also rejected the idea that the Israelites were justified in the same mode as Christians. He claimed that the Old Testament believers merely had their sins passed over (*paresis*), whereas the New Testament believers had them fully remitted (*aphesis*). Cocceius wrote a monograph on the *paresis/aphesis* distinction: *Moreh nebochim: utilitas distinctionis duorum vocabulorum scripturae, πάρεσις et ἀφεσις, ad illustrationem doctrinae de justificatione et reducendos ab errore Judaeos, Socinianos, Pontificios* (Leiden, 1666). Cf. van Asselt, *The Federal Theology of Johannes Cocceius*, 30; Brian J. Lee, *Johannes Cocceius and the Exegetical Roots of Federal Theology: Reformation Developments in the Interpretation of Hebrews 7–10*, Vol. 7, *Reformed Historical Theology*, ed. Herman J. Selderhuis (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht), 156–158; W.J. van Asselt, “Voetius en Cocceius over de re-

In addition to leading a long teaching career of almost 40 years, Cocceius was a prolific author. His complete writings consist of ten massive folio volumes, the *Opera Omnia Theologica, Exegetica, Didactica, Polemica, Philologica* (1673–1675) and two other enormous volumes, the *Opera Anecdota* (1706).<sup>4</sup> Cocceius not only wrote a vast quantity of books but ones that spanned many different genres. He made scholarly contributions to Hebrew lexicography and grammar, Islamic and Rabbinic studies, and he wrote commentaries on every biblical book, a monograph on covenant theology, a systematic theology, and polemical treatises against Socinians, Roman Catholics, and others. Cocceius has been hailed as “perhaps the most prominent Dutch Calvinist theologian of the seventeenth century.”<sup>5</sup>

## 1.2 Cocceius Scholarship

It will be helpful first to look at the Cocceius scholarship from a bird’s eye view, to get a sense of the basic trends of modern scholars.<sup>6</sup> In the last few decades, with the work of Richard A. Muller in particular, a new phase of scholarship on Reformed Orthodoxy has arisen. We will therefore look at recent strides in the secondary scholarship which have followed on the heels of broader developments in the study of Reformed Orthodoxy.<sup>7</sup>

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chtvaardiging,” in *De Onbekende Voetius* (Kampen: J.H. Kok, 1989), 32–47; idem, “*Expromissio or Fideiussio? A Seventeenth-Century Theological Debate Between Voetians and Coccejans about the Nature of Christ’s Suretyship in Salvation History*,” *Mid-America Journal of Theology* 14 (2003): 37–57.

4 For a complete list of the contents of the *Opera Omnia Theologica, Exegetica, Didactica, Polemica, Philologica* and the *Opera Anecdota*, see Lee, *Johannes Cocceius and the Exegetical Roots of Federal Theology*, 190–195. Cocceius’s son, J.H. Cocceius, compiled and published the *Opera Omnia* and *Opera Anecdota*. The *Opera Omnia* was published three times: 1) 1673–1675, 2) 1689, and 3) 1701.

5 Adina M. Yoffie, “Cocceius and the Jewish Commentators,” *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 65 (July 2004) 3: 384.

6 For recent treatments of the Cocceius scholarship, see van Asselt, *The Federal Theology of Johannes Cocceius*, 2–16; Lee, *Johannes Cocceius and the Exegetical Roots of Federal Theology*, 18–20, and Adina M. Yoffie, “Biblical Literalism and Scholarship in Protestant Northern Europe, 1630–1700,” Unpublished PhD dissertation (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University, 2009), 330–356.

7 In the recent scholarship the terms “Reformed Orthodoxy” and “Reformed Scholasticism” are often used interchangeably, but they do have slightly different nuances. “Orthodoxy” tends to refer to correct doctrine and therefore theological content, whereas “Scholasticism” refers to the academic or scholarly approach to theology and therefore theological method. For general overviews of these terms, see Richard A. Muller, *Post-Reformation Reformed Dogmatics*, 2nd edn., 4 vols. (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2003), 1:27–84; idem, *After Calvin: Studies in the Development of a Theological Tradition* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 25–46; Herman J. Selderhuis, ed., *A Companion to Reformed Orthodoxy*, Companions to the Christian

In the 1850s two dissertations appeared that focused on Cocceius as an opponent of scholasticism.<sup>8</sup> This set the “trajectory” for the modern scholarship on Cocceius, as scholars have since claimed him as an anti-scholastic or attempted to recuse him from such a charge.<sup>9</sup> This led to the older twentieth-century scholarship, in which writers tended to present Cocceius as a rare humanist, who was neither orthodox nor scholastic. According to these scholars, Cocceius’s central doctrine, which distinguished him from Reformed scholasticism and Reformed orthodoxy, was the covenant. Charles McCoy, for instance, who wrote his 1956 Yale University dissertation on Cocceius, had deemed him “an opponent of the scholasticism which had gained strength in certain of the Reformed churches of the seventeenth century.”<sup>10</sup> Moreover, he was castigated by some of his Dutch

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Tradition 40 (Leiden: Brill, 2013), 1–7; Willem J. van Asselt, *Introduction to Reformed Scholasticism*, with contributions by T. Theo J. Pleizier, Pieter L. Rouwendal, and Maarten Wisse, trans. Albert Gootjes (Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage Books, 2011), 1–9.

Brill’s *Companion to Reformed Orthodoxy* (p. 2) defines “Reformed Orthodoxy” in the following way: “Reformed is understood as the tradition of Reformers such as Zwingli, Bucer, Calvin, and Bullinger, but also Luther, Melancthon, Vermigli, and Cranmer. This means that ‘Reformed’ is broader than what often is called ‘Calvinistic,’ although in the period after Calvin much of what is defined as Reformed finds its [sic] basis in Calvin’s theology. Theologically, ‘Reformed’ is also not limited to what is defined in the Reformed confessions, since not all Reformed conceptions were included in these confessions. Furthermore, the Reformed tradition has a wider variety than these confessions were meant to describe. Besides, in some cases also those against whom confessions were written saw themselves as standing in the Reformed tradition. ‘Reformed’ therefore stands for each and every movement, standpoint, or theologian that considers itself Reformed.

Orthodoxy is understood as the process and period in which the theology of the Reformers was systematized, summarized, and elaborated upon in theological handbooks, confessions, tracts, sermons, and so forth. This means also that works such as Calvin’s *Institutes* and Melancthon’s *Loci* can be included. [...] Orthodoxy therefore includes Scholasticism, where the latter is a more narrow term in that it is reserved for academic theology. The period runs from the middle of the sixteenth century to the early eighteenth century. Orthodoxy is used in a neutral sense, meaning that the term itself does not have any negative or positive connotations.”

8 Gerardus van Gorkom, *Specimen theologicum inaugurale de Joanne Coccejo, sacri codicis interprete* (Utrecht, 1856); A. van der Flier, *Specimen historico-theologicum de Johanne Coccejo antischolastico* (Utrecht, 1859); for an overview of this school of scholarship, see W.J. van Asselt, “Cocceius Anti-Scholasticus?” in *Reformation and Scholasticism: An Ecumenical Enterprise*, ed. Willem J. van Asselt and Eef Dekker (Texts and Studies in Reformation and Post-Reformation Thought, ed. Richard A. Muller) (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2001), 227–251.

9 Van Asselt, *Cocceius Anti-Scholasticus?*, 228; cf. Yoffie, “Biblical Literalism,” 340–345.

10 Charles S. McCoy, “History, Humanity, and Federalism in the Theology and Ethics of Johannes Cocceius,” in *The Covenant Connection: From Federal Theology to Modern Federalism*, ed. Daniel J. Elazar and John Kincaid (New York: Lexington Books, 2000), 60; cf. idem, “The Covenant Theology of Johannes Cocceius,” Unpublished PhD dissertation (New Haven: Yale University, 1956); idem, “Johannes Cocceius: Federal Theologian,” *Scottish Journal of Theology* 16 (1963): 352–370.

Reformed brethren as advocating novel teachings, on the scale of his contemporary (rationalist philosopher) René Descartes (1596–1650).<sup>11</sup>

Scholars such as McCoy, Gottlob Schrenk,<sup>12</sup> and Heiner Faulenbach<sup>13</sup> all assumed the “central dogma” theory of historical theology, which claimed that each school of theology could be embodied in a central theological doctrine—e.g., justification for Luther, predestination for Calvin, covenant for Cocceius, etc.<sup>14</sup> They were also limited in their access to Reformed orthodox writers, which were largely mediated to them by compendia of theology, arranged according to *loci* of systematic theology, compiled by Alexander Schweitzer and Heinrich Heppe.<sup>15</sup> Unfortunately, the enterprise of the “central dogma” theorists suffered from anachronism, as they “simply read their own method and their own dogmatic proclivities back into the Protestant tradition.”<sup>16</sup>

Yet since the 1980s scholars have reevaluated such historiography. Perhaps the first seminal book to do so appeared in print in 1987—*Post-Reformation Reformed Dogmatics* by Richard A. Muller.<sup>17</sup> Another volume that argued along the same lines was *Protestant Scholasticism: Essays in Reassessment*.<sup>18</sup> These new works sought to reexamine the scholarship by moving “away from the traditional

11 See Benedict, *Christ's Churches Purely Reformed*, 329–341. In *ibid.*, 340–341, Benedict writes, “To a certain extent, the Voetian-Cocceian divisions of post-1655 represented a continuation of the struggles around Cartesianism, insofar as both Cartesianism and Cocceianism challenged literal readings of the Bible and appealed to those traditions in Dutch political culture allergic to excessive clerical assertiveness. [...] there was no necessary connection between the Cocceians and Cartesians, even if many Voetians lumped them together in a broader crusade against ‘shameful novelties.’”

12 Gottlob Schrenk, *Gottesreich und Bund im älteren Protestantismus vornehmlich bei Johannes Coccejus: Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte des Pietismus und der heilsgeschichtlichen Theologie* (Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlagshaus Mohn, 1923).

13 Heiner Faulenbach, *Weg und Ziel der Erkenntnis Christi: Eine Untersuchung zur Theologie des Johannes Coccejus* (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1973).

14 For a recent critical analysis of the “central dogma” theory, see Muller, *Post-Reformation Reformed Dogmatics*, vol. 1, 123–132. The “central dogma” theory can be traced back to Alexander Schweizer, *Die protestantischen Centraldogmen in ihrer Entwicklung innerhalb der reformierten Kirche*, 2 vols. (Zurich: Orell, Füssli und Comp., 1854–56).

15 Alexander Schweizer, *Die Glaubenslehre der evangelisch-reformierten Kirche, dargestellt und aus den Quellen belegt*, 2 vols. (Zurich, Orell, Füssli und Comp., 1844–1847). Heinrich Heppe, *Geschichte des deutschen Protestantismus*, 4 vols. (Marburg: N.G. Elwert, 1852–59); *idem*, *Die Dogmatik der evangelisch-reformierten Kirche, dargestellt und aus den Quellen belegt* (Elberfeld, 1861).

16 Muller, *Post-Reformation Reformed Dogmatics*, vol. 1, 126; cf. Yoffie, “Biblical Literalism,” 343–353.

17 Richard A. Muller, *Post-Reformation Reformed Dogmatics* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1987).

18 Carl R. Trueman and R. Scott Clark, eds. *Protestant Scholasticism: Essays in Reassessment*, Studies in Christian History and Thought (Waynesboro, GA: Paternoster, 2005); the book was first published by Paternoster in 1999.



models whereby Protestant scholasticism was judged by the standards of later theology,” and to approach it on its own terms.<sup>19</sup>

In the last twenty years scholars have appeared who have offered contributions that reveal Cocceius's complicated relationship to Reformed Orthodoxy, exposing older approaches as overly simplistic. Richard A. Muller pointed out that the bifurcation between “biblical theology” and “contemporary dogmatics,” which most scholars, who set Cocceius forth as an outlier of Reformed orthodoxy, presupposed, is anachronistic; for the distinction did not appear until Johann Gabler (1753–1826).<sup>20</sup> The leading Cocceius scholar, W.J. van Asselt, wrote about the dogmatics of Cocceius, bringing to light the Leiden theologian's monograph on systematic theology; he did this in his 1988 doctoral dissertation at the University of Utrecht, which he adapted into book form and published in 2001.<sup>21</sup> Shortly after van Asselt completed his dissertation and before he made several seminal historical-theological contributions to the Cocceius scholarship, he published a modern Dutch translation of Cocceius's monograph on covenant theology, *Summa Doctrinae de Foedere et Testamento Dei* (1648, 1654, 1660).<sup>22</sup>

In 2009 two doctoral dissertations appeared which uncovered Cocceius's polemical endeavors amid his exegetical writings: at Harvard University Adina Yoffie wrote on his interpretation of Genesis 1–3,<sup>23</sup> and at Calvin Theological Seminary Brian Lee examined his exegesis of Hebrews 7–10.<sup>24</sup> In 2004 Yoffie had published an article that highlighted Cocceius's appropriation of the writings of

19 Trueman and Clark, “Introduction,” in *ibid.*, xviii.

20 Richard A. Muller, *Post-Reformation Reformed Dogmatics*, vol. 2, 122; cf. Yoffie, “Biblical Literalism,” 343–344.

21 Van Asselt, *The Federal Theology of Johannes Cocceius*. For other discussion of Cocceius's dogmatics by the same author, see e. g. *idem*, “The Doctrine of the Abrogations in the Federal Theology of Johannes Cocceius (1603–1669),” *Calvin Theological Journal*, 29 (1994): 101–116; *idem*, *Johannes Cocceius: Portret van een zeventiende-eeuws theoloog op oude en nieuwe wegen* (Heerenveen: J.J. Groen en Zoon, 1997); *idem*, “Amicitia Dei as Ultimate Reality: An Outline of the Covenant Theology of Johannes Cocceius (1603–1669),” *Ultimate Reality and Meaning. Interdisciplinary Studies in the Philosophy of Understanding* 21, no.1 (1998): 35–47; *idem*, “Structural Elements in the Eschatology of Johannes Cocceius,” *Calvin Theological Journal*, 34 (1999): 76–104; *idem*, “Cocceius Anti-Scholasticus?,” 227–51.

22 Johannes Cocceius, *De Leer van het Verbond en het Testament van God*, trans. W.J. van Asselt and H.G. Renger (Kampen: De Groot Goudriaan, 1990). An earlier Dutch translation had appeared in 1677, according to *ibid.*, 5. The standard abbreviation for the *Summa Doctrinae de Foedere et Testamento Dei* is *SD*.

23 Adina Yoffie, “Biblical Literalism and Scholarship in Protestant Northern Europe, 1630–1700,” Unpublished PhD Dissertation (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University, 2009). Yoffie compares the biblical exegesis of Cocceius with that of the Lutheran theologian, Abraham Calov.

24 An adaptation of this dissertation has been published as Brian J. Lee, *Johannes Cocceius and the Exegetical Roots of Federal Theology: Reformation Developments in the Interpretation of Hebrews 7–10*, Reformed Historical Theology, ed. Herman J. Selderhuis (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2009).

rabbinic scholars, shedding more light on his biblical exegesis.<sup>25</sup> In 2003 an article by Brian Lee appeared in which the author described the Latin terminology which Cocceius employed in his covenant theology, revealing Cocceius's philological sensitivity in his biblical exegesis.<sup>26</sup> Most recently, in 2011, Willem J. van Asselt wrote an article related to the apocalyptic exegesis of Cocceius.<sup>27</sup> A first-ever English translation of the *SD* very recently appeared in 2016.<sup>28</sup>

Now scholars are beginning to look more broadly at Cocceius, including different theological genres in which he wrote. But there still seems to be a bifurcation between theologians who look at the Leiden theologian's covenant theology, who do not engage other aspects of his thought or consider his social and political context, and social historians,<sup>29</sup> who recognize the importance of Cocceius in the social life of the Dutch Republic but who do not carefully assess the nature of his theology. This division between theologians and social historians inevitably isolates narrow dimensions of Cocceius scholarship. Yet this brilliant covenant theologian spent a notable portion of his life engaging in the vicious Leiden Sabbath Controversies from 1655 to 1659, which played a key role in the split of the Reformed Dutch Republic into two socio-political blocs—Cocceians and Voetians. So far scholars have tended to overlook this critical phase in Cocceius's theological development. I shed light on it by looking at the theological texts that Cocceius wrote that absorbed his attention during this long, significant, and even life-threatening period of his career as a professor at the University of Leiden. I hope, on the one hand, to take my cue from the social historians, who see the significance of the Sabbath debates in the political and social life of the Dutch Republic, and on the other hand, to listen to the theologians who have focused on the federal theology of Johannes Cocceius. This approach can help both social historians and theologians to see more clearly the interconnection between Cocceius's federal theology and political and social context in the particular manifestation of his theology of the Sabbath.

25 Adina M. Yoffie, "Cocceius and the Jewish Commentators," *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 65 (July 2004) 3:383–398.

26 Brian J. Lee, "The Covenant Terminology of Johannes Cocceius: The Use of *Foedus*, *Pactum*, and *Testamentum* in a Mature Federal Theologian," *Mid-America Theological Journal*, 14 (2003): 11–36.

27 Willem J. van Asselt, "'Quid est homo quod memor es ipsius?' Calvin and Cocceius (1603–1669) on Psalm 8," *Church History and Religious Culture*, 91.1–2 (2011): 135–147.

28 Johannes Cocceius, *The Doctrine of the Covenant and Testament of God*, trans. Casey Carmichael, vol. 3 in *Classic Reformed Theology*, ed. R. Scott Clark (Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage Books, 2016).

29 See, for example, Benedict, *Christ's Churches Purely Reformed*; Israel, *The Dutch Republic*.

### 1.3 The Question

I began studying Johannes Cocceius's theology of the Sabbath, because I wanted to find out how he arrived at it, and I discovered that it helps scholars understand his covenant theology better. If we don't know how Cocceius's theology of the Sabbath relates to his covenant theology, we will not understand the breadth and application of his covenant theology in particular doctrines (Cocceius's theology of the Sabbath is his covenant theology in action), which consumed so much of his time and writing for almost a decade. If we don't understand fully the nature of Cocceius's covenant theology, we will not understand federal theology fully, the tradition in which he plays such a vital role, and its uniqueness among other theological traditions. And if we don't understand federal theology, we will not understand Reformed theology or Calvinism more broadly, as the two are so closely related; not to mention, Calvinism had a tremendous impact on Europe and North America in the early modern era, one that stretched across the entire social and cultural spectrum.

So far historians have given scant attention to Cocceius's theology of the Sabbath, often addressing it cursorily. But the great Leiden theologian's theology is far more complex on that topic about which he wrote so much. H.B. Visser's doctoral dissertation, *De Geschiedenis van den Sabbatstrijd onder de Gereformeerden in de zeventiende Eeuw*,<sup>30</sup> touches on Cocceius's theology of the Sabbath in a helpful way. However, Visser's purpose is to provide an account of all the conflicts over the Sabbath in the Dutch Republic in the entire seventeenth century, so he paints with a broad brush. He focuses more on the course of events in the controversies than thorough explication and analysis of the ideas debated.<sup>31</sup> I will appropriate Visser's ecclesiastical-historical treatment of Cocceius, to set the broader context for my intensive historical-theological analysis. I do not view these approaches as mutually exclusive but merely as two different perspectives, which can mutually inform and enhance one another.

Social historians have attested to the significance of the Sabbath controversy that surrounded Cocceius's views. The theological division spanned many spheres of life for more than a century. Jonathan Israel observes that the "rift became fundamental not only in the church and academic spheres but in the

30 H.B. Visser, *De Geschiedenis van den Sabbatstrijd onder de Gereformeerden in de Zeventiende Eeuw* (The History of the Sabbath Conflict among the Reformed in the Seventeenth Century) (Utrecht: Kemink en Zoon N.V., 1939). In *ibid.*, 115–149, Visser intermittently discusses Cocceius within the context of the Leiden Sabbath debates and the events that resulted from them; he cites most of the Leiden theologian's writings on the Sabbath but never quotes from them.

31 In this way Visser's dissertation, which is quite insightful, contributes more to ecclesiastical history than to historical theology.

body politic and the whole edifice of Dutch Golden Age culture.”<sup>32</sup> Compared to the Arminian conflict, the divide between the Cocceians and Voetians, “which infused Dutch Reformed theology, politics, and culture down to the middle of the eighteenth century, pervaded the Dutch scene for considerably longer.”<sup>33</sup> So the absence of a monograph on Cocceius’s Sabbath doctrine is conspicuous, as Philip Benedict attests:

For a battle that endured for more than a half century, the Voetian-Cocceian struggle has been remarkably little studied and remains obscure on many points. Controversy began over the issue of the Sabbath, with a volley of published treatises between 1655 and 1658. Positions rapidly polarized. The more extreme Cocceians urged their auditors to resume their normal daily activities when they got home from Sunday worship. The strictest precisians condemned even sitting on one’s front stoop on the Sabbath. The synods of Holland and Friesland grew so bitterly divided that the States had to forbid all discussion of the Sabbath question. New bouts between Voetians and Cocceians took place irregularly throughout the succeeding decades, often obliging the secular authorities to step in.<sup>34</sup>

Moreover, it is evident that Cocceius’s teaching on the Sabbath is widely misunderstood, as even Richard Muller, a leading scholar on Reformed orthodoxy, misrepresents it, claiming that “Cocceius’s approach to the distinction of the testaments became an object of controversy when he argued that the Decalogue could not be used as a basis for commanding Sabbath worship, granting that the Decalogue here stood as part of the covenant of works.”<sup>35</sup> For proof of this point, Muller cites Cocceius’s 1658 *Indagatio naturae Sabbati et quietis Novi Testamenti*, vi–x (in *Opera*, VII). But Cocceius argued that the Decalogue was part of the covenant of grace rather than the covenant of works. As such, although he believed that the Decalogue, including its Fourth Commandment on the Sabbath, had perpetual moral force—obliging all people to set aside time for the worship of God—he nevertheless believed that it could also contain something ceremonial in it. It was the ceremonial aspect of the Fourth Commandment—forbidding the Israelites to work—that was abolished in the New Testament. Hence Muller oversimplifies when he asserts, “Unlike Cocceius, who had viewed the Decalogue, particularly in its ‘law of the Sabbath,’ as accommodated to the circumstances of Israel, Witsius fully excepted from this generalization the immutable moral law revealed in the Old Testament.”<sup>36</sup> For Cocceius affirmed that

32 Israel, *The Dutch Republic*, 664.

33 Israel, *The Dutch Republic*, 664. Cf. Benedict, *Christ’s Churches Purely Reformed*, 340–341, who says that “squabbling between the parties did not fully die down until the 1730s.”

34 Benedict, *Christ’s Churches Purely Reformed*, 341.

35 Muller, *Post-Reformation Reformed Dogmatics*, vol. 2, 363.

36 Muller, *Post-Reformation Reformed Dogmatics*, vol. 2, 363.

the Decalogue both had been accommodated to the Israelites and contained immutable moral law.

Brian Lee sheds some light on the relationship of Cocceius's involvement in controversies over the Sabbath to his commentary on Hebrews, *Epistolae ad Hebraeos explicatio et veritatis eius demonstratio* (1659),<sup>37</sup> but he does not discuss in any detail the Leiden theologian's articulation of that doctrine.<sup>38</sup> He suggests that it "may be the case that lecturing on Hebrews provided a subtle opportunity to indirectly address opponents on that contested issue [i. e., the Sabbath]."<sup>39</sup> W.J. van Asselt provides an excellent overview of the Leiden Sabbath conflict but does not devote much attention to Cocceius's theology of the Sabbath.<sup>40</sup> Adina Yoffie discusses Cocceius's exegesis of Genesis 2:1–3, which correlates Cocceius's view of the Sabbath with his understanding of the seventh day of creation;<sup>41</sup> her contribution is helpful, but it only addresses one small aspect of Cocceius's theology of the Sabbath.

Gottlob Schrenck provides the longest theological analysis (seven pages) of Cocceius's theology of the Sabbath.<sup>42</sup> He addresses it as one of the polemical applications of the Leiden theologian's unique federal theology, considering Cocceius on the Sabbath of Creation, the Mosaic Sabbath, the New Testament Sabbath, the Celebration of the Lord's Day, and the relationship of his view to those of Luther and Calvin.<sup>43</sup> Schrenck observes that the question was not merely one of ecclesiastical polity but was theological and served as a vehicle for understanding Cocceius's covenant theology: "The central issue of the movement is at bottom the question of the validity of the Old Testament and the law. His doctrine of the Sabbath also illuminates the main tenets of his covenant theology at a vital point."<sup>44</sup> Unfortunately, Schrenck fails to unpack the relationship be-

37 Lee, *Johannes Cocceius and the Exegetical Roots of Federal Theology*, 102–104.

38 For Lee's overview of the Leiden Sabbath Debates, see *Johannes Cocceius and the Exegetical Roots of Federal Theology*, 109–110.

39 Lee, *Johannes Cocceius and the Exegetical Roots of Federal Theology*, 103. He bases this claim on a 1657 letter in which Cocceius writes, "My students requested theses from me concerning the Sabbath, which I denied, because I was not free to descend into controversy with whomever I wished. Nevertheless, it was necessary for me to take up this argument in the fourth chapter of Hebrews." This letter, translated by Lee in *ibid.*, 103, is cited as *Epistolae in Opera omnia*, no. 48 (11 December, 1657, Cocceius to Caspar Stresso): *Petiverunt a me studiosi theses de Sabbato, quibus id negavi: causatus, me non libenter in controversiam cum quoquam descendere; sed tamen in cap. 4. ad Hebraeos mihi de eo argumento esse necessario agendum.*

40 Van Asselt, *Johannes Coccejus: Portret van een zeventiende-eeuws Theoloog op oude en nieuwe Wegen*, 52–57.

41 Yoffie, "Biblical Literalism," 301–310.

42 Schrenck, *Gottesreich und Bund*, 116–123.

43 Schrenck, *Gottesreich und Bund*, 116–123.

44 Schrenck, *Gottesreich und Bund*, 116: *Der Angelpunkt der Bewegung ist im Grunde die Frage*

tween Cocceius's theology of the Sabbath and his covenant theology. His analysis also suffers from lack of detail; simply citing a long list of references after a proposition he makes, he does not provide any direct quotations or demonstrate sensitive interaction with any primary texts.

Positively, Adina Yoffie and Gottlob Schrenck have identified a correlation between Cocceius's theology of the Sabbath and his federal theology. However, neither of them unpacked the precise nature of his theology of the Sabbath and how he arrived at it. Yoffie's primary purpose is to show Cocceius's understanding of the "literal sense" in Genesis 1–3, and Schrenck's is more of a systematic elaboration of Cocceius's theology, which does not elaborate on its interconnections. Neither scholar has shown how representative Cocceius's theology of the Sabbath is of his federal theology as a whole or how the former was the primary particular manifestation of the latter during Cocceius's academic career in Leiden.

## 1.4 Method and Outline

Unlike Schrenck's very short, synchronic account of Cocceius's theology of the Sabbath, I offer an in-depth, diachronic explication. Since Cocceius developed his theology of the Sabbath throughout controversies during many years of his stay in Leiden, I approach the doctrine on its own terms, allowing for doctrinal evolution and refinement in the Leiden theologian's teaching on the Sabbath. Such an approach will allow us to see more clearly how Cocceius arrived at his conclusions. It will also enable us to see the diverse ways he handled the doctrine in different theological genres. I think that this method is more historically sensitive than a purely synchronic account. After all, Cocceius did not write his viewpoints in a vacuum, devoid of time and space, from which we can systematically arrange them according to our modern theological categories, completely ignoring their context and the question of development.

In the midst of this chronological approach, I uniquely look at a broad array of genres of Cocceius's writings. We will see the interpenetration of biblical exegesis, covenant, systematic, and polemical theology in the doctrine of the Sabbath, in particular looking at his Commentary on Hebrews—*Epistolae ad Hebraeos explicatio et veritatis eius demonstratio* (1659), his polemical treatises—*Indagatio naturae sabbati et quietis Novi Testamenti* (1658), *Typus concordiae amicorum circum honorem Dominicae* (1659), and *Indignatio adversus personatum Nathanael Johnson* (1659), covenant theology—*Summa Doctrinae de Foedere et*

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*nach der Geltung des Alten Testaments und des Gesetzes. Darum erhellt auch die Sabbatlehre Hauptpositionen der Föderallehre an einem wesentlichen Punkte.*

*Testamento Dei* (1648, 1654, 1660), and systematic theology—*Summa Theologiae ex Scripturis repetita* (1662).

Hence, while I attempt to give attention to the social and political context in which Cocceius articulated his theology, particularly the Leiden Sabbath controversies, I take a text-based approach that has a focus on intellectual history, or more specifically, historical theology. I attempt, so far as possible, to see things the way that Cocceius did. When I began this project under the supervision of historical theologian Irena Backus, I set out to analyze Cocceius's theology, while remaining sensitive to the context in which he articulated it.

Perhaps the best way to assess Cocceius's theology, of course, is to analyze the texts that he wrote. This is truly the most effective way for “seeing things their way”<sup>45</sup>—to understand Cocceius's theology as he and his contemporaries understood it. So far as possible, I try to let Cocceius speak for himself in his own texts. Hence, I take an empirical approach, which draws broader conclusions about the content and rationale of Cocceius's theology on the basis of what is verifiable—the sources that are available to scholars.

Given that my approach is that of intellectual history, the context on which I focus is intellectual. Hence I provide the varying theological perspectives that faced Cocceius and that he engaged. As Richard Muller points out, intellectual context is the most important context for the intellectual historian.<sup>46</sup> Thus I provide the main Reformed theological viewpoints on the Sabbath. While I do make references to Cocceius's milieu in the seventeenth-century Dutch Republic, at the University of Leiden, and among the broad cultural divisions between the Voetians and Cocceians, I limit myself primarily to Cocceius's theological context.

Furthermore, as I try to understand Cocceius on his own terms and focus on his theological texts, I am not thereby endorsing his ideas. As Brad S. Gregory has observed, while the intellectual historian should attempt to understand an au-

45 This phrase is taken from Quentin Skinner, “Introduction: Seeing Things Their Way,” in *Visions of Politics*, vol. 1, *Regarding Method* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 1–8 and 47; for Skinner's approach I am indebted to Alistair Chapman, John Coffey, and Brad S. Gregory, *Seeing Things Their Way: Intellectual History and the Return of Religion* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2009), esp. 1–23.

46 Richard A. Muller, “Reflections on Persistent Whiggism and its Antidotes in the Study of Sixteenth- and Seventeenth-century Intellectual History,” in *Seeing Things Their Way*, ed. Chapman, Coffey, and Gregory, 134–153, here 150: “In short, our burden is to avoid the enormous pitfalls of a decontextualized or badly contextualized intellectual history (which, in fact, is not history at all, but some sort of dogma) and find not the social, economic, political, or (why not?) agricultural meaning of what purported to be a theological or philosophical idea, nor indeed the ultimate meaning of a theological statement as determined by the language and norms of modern dogmatians. We must seek instead the suitable *intellectual context*, for the statements of living, breathing, eating, drinking, buying, selling, religiously expressive, *thinking* people in a past era.” Emphasis in original.

thor's ideas in the way in which the author himself or herself would endorse them, it does not follow that they are true or false or are adopted by the historian.<sup>47</sup> Therefore, I hope to present Cocceius as fairly as possible and let the reader judge the merits of his arguments.

Since I focus on the theology of Johannes Cocceius in his theological context, I divide the thesis into two parts: first, I present the theological articulations of the Sabbath by Reformed theologians until and contemporary with Cocceius; second, I discuss Cocceius's theology of the Sabbath. Chapter 2 focuses on Calvin and Bullinger, Chapter 3 on the English Puritans, and Chapter 4 on the Dutch Reformed. In Chapter 5 I turn to Cocceius, comparing and contrasting his earliest writing on the Sabbath (1648/1654) with his Dutch colleagues Abraham Heidanus and Andreas Essenius. Chapters 6 and 7 examine Cocceius's exegetical and polemical writings from the Leiden Sabbath debates (1655–1659), and Chapter 8 the final edition of his monograph on covenant theology (1660) and his full-scale systematic theology (1662).

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47 Brad S. Gregory, "Can We 'See Things Their Way?' Should We Try?" in *Seeing Things Their Way*, ed. Chapman, Coffey, and Gregory, 24–45, here 25: "Such an understanding of religious people on their own terms, past or present, should not be confused with the adoption, approval, or endorsement of the views that we seek to understand. If it is possible to see things as the members of a religious tradition see them, this does not imply that we thereby appropriate or condone their beliefs or ideas. Otherwise, seeing things their way would lead ineluctably either to conversion or to advocacy of the positions that one has grasped, which is not the case. Nor does such an approach imply anything, one way or the other, about the truth or falsity of the views that one seeks to understand." Gregory reveals what he is countering in the following: "Yet since the nineteenth century and the heyday of philosophical positivism, the denunciation of revealed religion as superstition, and the creation of grand, explanatory theories of religion à la Feuerbach and Marx, and later Weber, Durkheim, Freud, and others, the secularization of Western intellectual life has led to the widespread view—sometimes explicit, but more often, especially in recent decades, simply assumed—that religion is not something that can or ought to be understood on its own terms. Indeed, according to this view, precisely the point of studying religion is to show that it is not what its protagonists claim that it is; Durkheim, for example, asserted that no religious believers should be consulted for an account of religious ideas, even their own. A wide variety of reductionistic theories of religion derived from sociology, anthropology, and other disciplines are today available to scholars, which share in one way or another in this basic assumption." (ibid., 26–27). This equally applies to the question of the Sabbath, as one sees in Christopher Hill's *Society and Puritanism in Pre-Revolutionary England* (London, 1964), which tried to explain the rise of the English Sabbath in socio-economic terms; cf. Kenneth Parker, *The English Sabbath: A study of doctrine and discipline from the Reformation to the Civil War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 4; André Biéler, *La Pensée Économique et Sociale de Calvin* (Genève: Librairie de L'Université, 1959), 393–397. For an account of the Weber thesis in regard to Calvinism more generally, see Philip Benedict, "The Historiography of Continental Calvinism," in *Weber's Protestant Ethic: Origins, Evidence, Contexts*, eds. Hartmut Lehmann and Guenther Roth (Washington, D.C.: German Historical Institute, Cambridge University Press, 1993), 305–325.