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Why heaven kissed earth : the christology of Thomas Goodwin (1600-1680)

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PROPOSITIONS (Stellingen)

- I. The *pactum salutis*, understood as the eternal intra-trinitarian covenant of salvation, has far-reaching implications for Thomas Goodwin's theology, particularly his Christology.
- II. For Goodwin, to conceive of Christology purely in terms of Christ's person and not his work causes a serious imbalance.
- III. Both Goodwin's Christology and Soteriology are not only intimately related to the *pactum salutis*, but reveal the trinitarian nature of salvation.
- IV. The Reformed orthodox had many disagreements between themselves in the area of Christology, which proves that Reformed orthodoxy was far from monolithic. Goodwin's own theology confirms this point. (*Anselmic argument regarding active obedience of Christ; role of the Spirit versus the role of Christ's divine nature as the immediate operator of all miracles*)
- V. The term 'Puritan' to describe, for example, Thomas Goodwin's and John Owen's theology is as problematic as it is helpful. Puritanism is simply far too diverse to be of any strict theological use.
(see Carl Trueman, *The Claims of Truth: John Owen's Trinitarian Theology*. Carlisle: Paternoster Press, 1998, p. 9).
Richard Baxter, who defies classification, John Goodwin, an Arminian, John Milton, a possible Arian, John Bunyan, a Baptist, and John Eaton, an Antinomian.
- VI. The maxim '*finitum non capax infiniti*' (the finite is not capable of the infinite) highlights the major Christological divide between Reformed and Lutheran theologians.
Lord's Supper; communicatio idiomatum; Lutheran's can't account for meaningful role of Spirit; Christ doesn't experience development or growth on Lutheran schema.
- VII. A unique Reformed Christology developed among some Puritans concerning the role of the Spirit in relation to the person of Christ. The emphasis on the Spirit enabled them to bring coherence to the Chalcedonian Creed (451 A.D.).
(see S. Holmes, 'Reformed Varieties of the Communicatio Idiomatum', in Rae, Murray, and Stephen R. Holmes, eds., *The Person of Christ*. London: T & T Clark International, 2005, pp. 70ff.).

- VIII. The Christology of the Dutch theologian Herman Bavinck closely reflects the Christology of the seventeenth-century Reformed orthodox more so than the sixteenth-century Reformers.

Terminology: pactum salutis; Spirit's role on Christ; note: Bavinck for instance found the theology of Francis Turretin a mere reproduction lacking productive power. H. Bavinck, .Fr. Turretinus: Review of G. Keizer, François Turretini, sa vie et sesoeuvres et le consensus, Lausanne 1900,. in De Bazuin 48 (1900), 11.

- IX. Jacob Arminius' own claim to be Reformed cannot be sustained. His reading of the Heidelberg Catechism and of the Belgic Confession was defensive; it went against the plain sense of the words and, in the case of the Belgic Confession, was tendentious.

Arminius' remarks about the reception Calvin's commentaries and the Institutes could have been uttered by any of the Reformed theologians of the era of orthodoxy — a high regard especially for the commentaries and an element of reserve in receiving Calvin's work as authoritative. But the context of Arminius' remark was not a situation in which he was either defending Calvin or actually recommending the use of Calvin's writings. Rather the context was Arminius' defense of his own theology as Reformed after he had been accused not only of disparaging Calvin, Beza, and Zanchi, but, in the same breath, of recommending Aquinas, Suarez, and Molina. Just so, juxtaposition of Arminius' reading of the Heidelberg Catechism with Ursinus' commentary (and Bastingius' commentary as well) is not a matter of claiming that Ursinus posthumously controlled the meaning of the document in and for the Dutch Church, but rather a matter of establishing some background for Arminius' reading. In context, Arminius' reading of the Heidelberg Catechism and of the Belgic Confession was defensive — his was a reading that went against the plain sense of the words and, in the case of the Belgic Confession, was quite tendentious. It certainly shows the direction in which he hoped the documents might be revised. What Ursinus' commentary provides is a reading of the Catechism, by one of its authors, that was accessible to Arminius and that, taken in the context of other Reformed readings of the document, as well as the opinions of several of the synods in which the Catechism and Confession were ratified, identifies Arminius' interpretation of the documents as highly unconvincing in their own time.

It is also simplistic to root Arminius' difficulty with Calvin and Reformed theology generally in the problem of the authorship of sin: this hardly scratches the surface of Arminius' objections in his Declaratio sententiae, which extend to such issues as the self-limitation of God by reason of the act of creation and which examined other issues like grace, providence, and free choice. Further, Arminius' Reformed contemporaries did not simply understand free choice as spontaneity, as den Boer indicates, but argued, as had Vermigli, liberty of contradiction and liberty of contrariety as intrinsic to human freedom. Moreover, as Eef Dekker well demonstrated, one of the engines that ran Arminius' theology was his commitment to a Molinist scientia media and to a way of

understanding God as responding to hypothetical human willing prior to and apart from any providential concursus. Certainly Arminius taught that grace alone can save, but his Molinism offered him a way of combining that affirmation with a very subtle form of synergism — a synergism that is clear in Arminius’ interpretation of the language of facientibus quod in se est, much in the fashion of Gabriel Biel. Arminius grounded election in foreknowledge of faith. Together with this, other issues, notably providence, christology and covenant, indicate a far broader dissent on Arminius part and, indeed, the unlikelihood that there is a single root or center to Arminius’ thought. That is not, I think, a “dogmatic” but a historical and textual reading of the issues.

- X. Herman Bavinck was wrong to suggest that the East’s opposition to the *filioque* was [should be: opposition to the *filioque* led to a split between theology and piety] symptomatic of a split between theology and piety.

(see Herman Bavinck, *The Doctrine of God*. Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1977, p. 317; idem, *Reformed Dogmatics*. Grand Rapids: Baker, II.317-18.).

*It seems from RD, II, 317-18, that the split Bavinck sees in Eastern Orthodoxy between doctrine and piety is itself symptomatic of an inadequate doctrine of the Trinity, not vice-versa. In other words, the lingering subordinationism (i.e., denial of the filioque) *produces* the split between doctrine and life. Your proposition makes it sound as though Bavinck thought the split *produces* the denial of filioque. I suspect you’ve got it backwards here.*

East maintains emphasis on union with Christ on all levels, which reflects Trinitarian union. This encourages a more vital connection between theology and piety. Bavinck argued that the East’s opposition to the filioque meant that the East cut adrift doctrine and ideas from life, emotion, and mysticism. Bavinck was dependent upon Adolf von Harnack for this position.

East free from concerns raised by the enlightenment. One can pick up a book by an Eastern theologian and plunge straight into discussion related to prayer, worship, and discipleship. West has had pressing need to answer critics.

- XI. The Reformed tradition has no single founder and no single dominant theologian. Therefore, the term ‘Calvinism’ can be especially misleading.

- XII. In seventeenth-century England all theology was political.