# Chapter 2 McGowan's Analysis of the Covenant and Proposal of Headship Theology

In this section, we will examine McGowan's understanding of the law and the covenant, law and grace, and his headship theology and how it solves the issue of law-grace dichotomy as claimed.

2.1 The Covenant and the Law from Biblical Covenants

We shall go through McGowan's analysis on Adam and the law, Noahic Covenant, Abrahamic, and Mosaic Covenant to examine how McGowan develops his understanding of the relationship between the law and the covenant.

## 2.1.1 Adam and the Law

McGowan knows clearly that the doctrine of the covenant of works strongly emphasizes the law as a covenant to be kept by Adam. While it is said in a traditional way that Adam had the 'law written in his heart' based on Romans 2:15, according to McGowan, Genesis did not quite say so. <sup>66</sup> According to McGowan, the key to understanding Adam and the law lies in examining what Adam lost in Genesis 3.<sup>67</sup> He mentions three problems related to Adam's fall: self-centeredness, the human mind, and the knowledge of good and evil.<sup>68</sup>

## a. <u>The Problem of Self-Centeredness</u>

McGowan's exposition of Adam's fall is very much developed from Van Til and Murray's argument. He agrees with Van Til that the fall took place even before taking the forbidden fruit when Adam decided to 'put themselves rather than God at the centre of the universe.'<sup>69</sup> 'Putting oneself rather than God' means being self-centered and

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>66</sup> A. T. B. McGowan, *Adam, Christ and Covenant: Exploring Headship Theology* (London: Apollos, imprint of Inter-Varsity Press, 2016), 156.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>67</sup> *Ibid*,.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>68</sup> Ibid,.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>69</sup> *Ibid*, 157 see also: Cornelius Van Til, *The Defense of the Faith* (The Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Company: Philadelphia, 1955), 64.

interpreting things without God as the absolute reference, and McGowan regards this as the essence of sin.<sup>70</sup>

#### b. The Problem of Fallen Human Mind

McGowan focuses on the effect of sin on the human mind to balance off the general conceptions of sin's effect on the will and moral choices but not on the mind.<sup>71</sup> He lists out several passages (Romans 8:5-8, 2 Corinthians 4:4, 1 Corinthians 2:14) to prove the effect of sin on the mind that the fallen mankind is spiritually blind and sees things self-centeredly.<sup>72</sup> He then refers to Romans 12:2 and emphasizes that as Christians, we need to have our minds renewed to have a God-centered worldview.<sup>73</sup>

### c. <u>The Knowledge of Good and Evil</u>

McGowan's interpretation of the fall of Adam focuses on the noetic effect of sins: the shift from God-centered to self-centered. Among the several explanations of the desire to take the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, McGowan opts for the 'human desire for autonomy', that is, to be like God 'deciding for themselves what was good and evil.'<sup>74</sup> Having said so, McGowan does not regard the knowledge of good and evil received by Adam before the fall as the law of God. He tries to separate the law and the will of God in the pre-fall epoch:

Adam before the Fall had true freedom. He *did not*, however, possess 'by nature' the law, the knowledge of good and evil. What Adam possessed 'by nature' was a knowledge of God and of the will of God. Consequently, the choice he made in relation to the forbidden fruit was not a choice between a good act and an evil act but the choice between obedience to the will of God and disobedience to that will. The root of the sin was a belief that human beings were capable of standing apart from God as autonomous beings able to decide what was good and what was evil.<sup>75</sup>

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*, 158

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>71</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>72</sup> Ibid.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>73</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*, 161

<sup>75</sup> Ibid.

What McGowan means is that Adam at pre-fall state, is 'like Christ, was whole without sin and knew only the will of God'; he does not have the law (the knowledge of good and evil from God).<sup>76</sup> Since Adam is sinless and knows the will of God, he does not need the law as the rule for living a God-centered life.<sup>77</sup> Hence, in McGowan's *In Defence of Headship Theology*, he claims, 'Adam was not under law but under grace, and law comes after the fall.'<sup>78</sup> In Defence of Headship Theology, McGowan states briefly that 'the knowledge of good and evil was not the possession of Adam before the fall by nature, but was the possession of Adam only after the fall.'<sup>79</sup> McGowan quotes Bonhoeffer *Ethics*:

The Pharisee is that extremely admirable man who subordinates his entire life to his knowledge of good and evil and is as severe a judge of himself as of his neighbour to the honour of God, whom he humbly thanks for his knowledge. For the Pharisee, every moment of life becomes a situation of conflict in which he has to choose between good and evil. For the sake of avoiding any lapse his entire thought is strenuously devoted night and day to the anticipation of the whole immense range of possible conflicts, to the reaching of a decision in these conflicts, and to the determination of his own choice.<sup>80</sup>

The people, though having a conscience after the fall, no longer ask what the will of God is but instead ask about the choice between good and evil. Hence, 'the law comes after the fall', meaning that Adam's knowledge of God's will is reduced to the knowledge of good and evil or conscience without God as the reference.

McGowan carefully chooses the term in describing Adam's fall. First, he chooses 'disobedience' rather than 'transgression', to be consistent with his agreement with Murray that Hosea 6:7 ('But like Adam they transgressed the covenant') can be interpreted otherwise. Second, he states that it is 'disobedient' to the will rather the law

 <sup>&</sup>lt;sup>76</sup> A. T. B. McGowan, 'In Defence of Headship Theology' in Alistair I. Wilson and Jamie A. Grant, *The God of Covenant: Biblical, Theological and Contemporary Perspectives* Leicester: Apollos, 2005, 197.
<sup>77</sup> Ibid., 197.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>78</sup> Ibid.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>79</sup> Ibid., 194. Compares with footnote 75, 'Adam before the Fall had true freedom. He *did not*, however, possess "by nature" the law...

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>80</sup> Ibid., 196 quoted from

D. Bonhoeffer, Ethics (ed. E. Bethge; London: SCM, 1978), 12.

of God, as he attempts to separate the will and the law of God. By this separation, he is consistent with his argument against the law-grace dichotomy in the covenant of works (i.e. grace is prior to law). Based on McGowan's argument, it was the commandment given to Adam, not the law. Adam's disobedience (not a transgression) was not against the law but the will of God; it is a desire to be autonomous (i.e. the desire to be self-centered rather than God-centered) which is the essence of sin.<sup>81</sup>

While it is true that the essence of Adam's sin was being autonomous, it does not wipe out the fact that it was also a transgression of the law, the very commandment of God. It is the commandments of God that constituted the whole Torah (law).<sup>82</sup> The Scripture speaks of the law and the will of God together; the law expresses the will of God.<sup>83</sup>

According to McGowan, explicit law was given in the context of a covenant.<sup>84</sup>

Hence, we will explore McGowan's explanations of the biblical covenants to study the relationship between the covenant and the law.

# 2.1.2 Noahic Covenant

McGowan agrees with Murray that since the term 'covenant' does not appear in Genesis 1-3, we should not force the reading of covenant in the relationship of Adam

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>81</sup> A. T. B. McGowan, *Adam, Christ and Covenant: Exploring Headship Theology* (London: Apollos, imprint of Inter-Varsity Press, 2016), 158.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>82</sup> Gen. 2:16 'And the LORD God commanded...' This is the first divine command אינה in the Bible. אינה is common in the O.T, especially the Pentateuch law (over half of all occurrence) where 'where Israel, "commanded" by God through Moses, received the "commandments" (*miswôt*) of the Lord for their way of life' (NAC, 1996).

See K. A. Mathews, *Genesis 1-11:26*, vol. 1A, The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1996), 210.

Willem VanGemeren, ed., in *New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology & Exegesis* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1997), 776.

For symonimaties of commandments (miswôt) and law (torah) see:

Timothy A. Gabrielson, "Law," in *Lexham Theological Wordbook*, ed. Douglas Mangum et al., Lexham Bible Reference Series (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2014).

 <sup>&</sup>lt;sup>83</sup> Donald K. McKim, *The Westminster Dictionary of Theological Terms*, Second Edition, Revised and Expanded. (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2014), 180, see also Ps. 119, and Ps 40:8
<sup>84</sup> A. T. B. McGowan, *Adam, Christ and Covenant: Exploring Headship Theology* (London: Apollos, imprint of Inter-Varsity Press, 2016), 130.

and God; instead, we are to view the covenants as how the Scripture describes and understand their relationship to one another.<sup>85</sup>

Because of this, McGowan interprets the Noahic covenant as the first covenant established, although the cultural mandate in Genesis 1-3 is re-established.<sup>86</sup> McGowan refers to Genesis 9:9-11 and comments that the Noahic Covenant differs from other covenants as it is not limited to the elect but universal (extended to all living creatures).<sup>87</sup> He concludes that the Noahic covenant is universal, unilateral (not contractual between two parties but instituted by the sovereign God), unconditional, a covenant of promise, and everlasting.<sup>88</sup> On its theological significance, he comments that this covenant gives us a basic understanding of (1) God's gracious relationship with His whole creation (not just the elect), (2) the basis for human society and government, and (3) common grace.<sup>89</sup> Based on God's promise of preservation in the Noahic covenant, McGowan states that God blesses not only the believers but also the non-believers through common grace.

# 2.1.3 Abrahamic and Mosaic Covenant

McGowan contrasts the Noahic Covenant and the Abrahamic Covenant as one founded on 'common grace' to all creatures, but the latter involves 'special grace' with the elect.<sup>90</sup> It is also unilateral, with promise, but faith and obedience are required as a response.<sup>91</sup> McGowan notes that the theme of faith and covenant are intertwined in the Scripture. The Lord made a covenant with Abraham, and because of his faith, 'it was counted to him as righteousness' (Genesis 15:6).<sup>92</sup> McGowan comments that

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>85</sup> Ibid., 120

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>86</sup> Ibid., 120-121

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>87</sup> Ibid., 121

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>88</sup> Ibid.

 <sup>&</sup>lt;sup>89</sup> Ibid., 121-123
<sup>90</sup> Ibid., 123

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>91</sup> Ibid., 12

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>92</sup> Ibid., 125

Abraham's relationship with God is not simply based on covenant but on faith; faith is the key to the covenant.<sup>93</sup> In the Abrahamic covenant, trusting the covenant sign of circumcision and keeping God's law demonstrates one's faith.<sup>94</sup>

McGowan sees our relationship with God as consisting of faith and covenant. God may have a covenant with people. Nevertheless, it is a thing to be a covenantal people; it is another thing to have a spiritual relationship with God through faith. He relates the Abrahamic covenant to the New-covenant believers today where: just like not all circumcised are true Jews, not all baptized, so-called covenantal people of God have a relationship with God, but those who have faith and perform the work of faith.<sup>95</sup> This is slightly different from our position. McGowan separates covenant from true Israelite, whereas our position is to differentiate the true covenantal people from the covenantal people.

McGowan views the Mosaic Covenant as a continuation and a reestablishment of the Abrahamic covenant; the promise to Abraham has been fulfilled, and now the Mosaic covenant governs them as a nation who worship the LORD.<sup>96</sup> The Mosaic covenant again is unilateral and gracious as it was re-established after the deliverance from Egypt as a nation set apart (holy) for God.<sup>97</sup> Thus, holiness and obedience are required to respond to God's love, grace and faithfulness.<sup>98</sup>

<sup>93</sup> Ibid., 126

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>94</sup> Ibid.

<sup>95</sup> Ibid., 126-127

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>96</sup> Ibid., 128 McGowan quotes from Gen. 15 that in the covenant with Abraham, he was told that his descendants would be slaves for four hundred years before being liberated and given their own land, and in Ex. 2:23-25, God remembered His covenant with Abraham.

<sup>97</sup> Ibid., 129.

<sup>98</sup> Ibid., 129.

#### 2.1.4 Davidic Covenant

For Davidic covenant, although 'covenant' is not mentioned, 2 Samuel 7:12-16, Psalm 89:1-4 and 2 Samuel 23:5 refer it as a covenant.<sup>99</sup> This covenant has similar nature (unilateral, gracious, continue from previous covenant) to other redemptive covenants but emphasizes the everlasting notion as it points to the 'coming of Christ as the Son of David and as the King'.<sup>100</sup> The establishment of king David foreshadows Christocracy and finds its culmination in Christ.

## 2.1.5 The Covenant and the Law

- a. The Covenant
- i. Definition

From McGowan's expositions on various covenants, covenant means 'the description of God's unilateral and gracious relationship with His people, not a description of those who are saved.'<sup>101</sup> Although in the Noahic covenant, God relates not only to the elect but to the entire creation, the stability brought out through the Noahic covenant set the stage for the following covenant story of redemption.<sup>102</sup>

#### ii. Relationship of Various Biblical Covenants and the Common Elements

McGowan argues that the reading of covenant as how the Scripture reveals without the underpinning of the covenant of works will help us to see the relationship between biblical covenants.<sup>103</sup> This continuation is perceived as follows: the Noahic Covenant set the stable foundation for the subsequent covenants that are related to God's redemption, the Abrahamic Covenant is where God chose His people by choosing

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>99</sup> Ibid., 137.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>100</sup> Ibid., 138.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>101</sup> *Ibid.*, 180. The exact saying of McGowan: 'the covenant function as the description of God's relationship with His people, rather than as a description of those who are saved.'

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>102</sup> Aaron Chalmers, "The Importance of the Noahic Covenant to Biblical Theology," ed. P. J. Williams, *Tyndale Bulletin* 60, no. 2 (2008): 209–210.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>103</sup> A. T. B. McGowan, *Adam, Christ and Covenant: Exploring Headship Theology* (London: Apollos, imprint of Inter-Varsity Press, 2016), 120.

Abraham and his offspring where they are to come to Him by faith, Mosaic Covenant continues from Abrahamic Covenant where the Law is given, and His people need to keep the law by faith, Davidic Covenant comes when God's people have come to a new stage as a kingdom and the notion of the everlasting kingdom points toward Christ and His kingdom.

McGowan concludes 5 points from the exposition of these covenants: <sup>104</sup> (1) covenants are not contracts between God and humans but are sovereignly established by God (unilateral, not bilateral), (2) each covenant contains promises, (3) there is a connection between the covenants, building up to the new covenant in Christ, (4) there are responsibilities of God's people in the covenantal relationship, (5) covenants are always gracious.

Among these five points, unilateral and grace are emphasized throughout McGowan's writing.

#### b. <u>The Law</u>

McGowan points out that:

God's law was not given simply as a set of rules and regulations. Torah in its most complete sense is a worldview, with God at the centre. Its purpose is to act as a guide for the life of the covenant community. That is to say, the law represents a way of looking at everything from a God-centred perspective.<sup>105</sup>

In other words, the law is rules given to the covenantal people as a guide to walk with a God-centered worldview. This argument is biblically sound; the first commandment of the Decalogue in the Mosaic covenant means the sole 'allegiance' to the LORD and is the foundation for the other commandments in the Decalogue.<sup>106</sup> At plain, this seems to contradict McGowan's exposition in Adam and the Law, where he claims Adam does

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>104</sup> Ibid.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>105</sup> Ibid., 130

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>106</sup> T. Desmond Alexander, "Exodus," in *New Bible Commentary: 21st Century Edition*, ed. D. A. Carson et al., 4th ed. (Leicester, England; Downers Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity Press, 1994), 107.

not have in nature the law, yet he has been living a God-centered life. What McGowan means is that since Adam in the pre-fall period was sinless and knew only the will of God, thus the law was not needed to act as a guide to look at everything in a God-centered way. On the other hand, the people of God were sinners but were now chosen as a covenantal community. Hence, they now need a law different from the 'law written on men's hearts', which serves merely a conscience without God as the reference, to guide them to live a God-centered life.

McGowan recognizes that the law given at Sinai 'was a temporary provision until Messiah came.'<sup>107</sup> He affirms three aspects of the law in traditional Reformed theology: moral, civil, and ceremonial law.<sup>108</sup> According to McGowan, moral law reflects God's holiness, justice, and righteousness; civil and ceremonial law, though applied temporarily, the underlying principles are still applicable.<sup>109</sup> He refers to the WCF 19.4 about the civil law given to Israel and highlights the key expression, 'general equity'.<sup>110</sup> As for ceremonial law, the book of Hebrews makes it clear that 'this aspect of the law, part of the covenant with Moses, was fulfilled in Christ.'<sup>111</sup>

#### c. <u>The Relationship between the Covenant and the Law</u>

McGowan cites Exodus 24:4-8 to our attention that 'after all the laws and statutes by which the people were governed' were written down, it became the Book of Covenant, Moses then read it all before the people and sprinkled the blood of the covenant on the people.<sup>112</sup> This shows that the law was given in a covenantal context.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>107</sup> A. T. B. McGowan, *Adam, Christ and Covenant: Exploring Headship Theology* (London: Apollos, imprint of Inter-Varsity Press, 2016), 155.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>108</sup> *Ibid.*, 130.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>109</sup> Ibid.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>110</sup> *Ibid.* McGowan refers to WCF 19.4 'To them also, as a body politic. He gave sundry judicial laws, which expired together with the state of that people, not obliging any other now, further than the general equity thereof may require.'

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>111</sup> Ibid., 131.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>112</sup> Ibid., 130. This blood of covenant refers to the blood of Jesus in Matthew 26:26-28

Contra to the view that the law serves as the republication of the covenant of works,

McGowan comments:

The law was not some throwback to a primitive Adamic covenant of works but, as Paul spells out in Galatians, a continuation and spelling out of the obligations of the promise-covenant made with Abraham.<sup>113</sup>

As McGowan compares Abrahamic and Mosaic covenants, he comments that

as faith was at the heart of the Abrahamic Covenant, the law is to be seen as the heart

of the Mosaic Covenant.<sup>114</sup> He argues from Galatians 3 that:

The law given through Moses did not cancel the covenant made with Abraham; rather it was a continuation of it, a spelling out of the relationship between God and his people and of the obligations that came with this relationship. In other words, the proper way to interpret Galatians 3 is to view the covenant at Sinai as a spelling out of the obligations of the covenant with Abraham rather than as a republication of a covenant of works. We might put it like this: God says to Abraham, 'I will be your God and you will be my people', then through Moses he says, 'Since you are my people, this is how you should live.<sup>115</sup>

McGowan further says that Paul was addressing the Jews who generally viewed 'Mosaic law as an entity in itself' and 'believe salvation is to be obtained by observing the law' rather than seeing the law and obedience in the context of Abrahamic Covenant (i.e. in the context of faith). <sup>116</sup> McGowan further claims that seeing the Mosaic covenant is re-establishing the Abrahamic covenant.<sup>117</sup> The law was ultimately given in the context of promise in the Abrahamic covenant will enable us to deal with faith and works.<sup>118</sup> Works have to be understood in the context of faith, and we keep the law because we have faith in God and hold to His promise. This is similar to James 2:22 says 'faith is completed by one's work'.

After receiving God's promise in the Abrahamic covenant, God's covenant people were obliged to keep the law in the Mosaic covenant by faith. According to

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>113</sup> *Ibid.*, 162.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>114</sup> Ibid.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>115</sup> Ibid., 134.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>116</sup> Ibid.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>117</sup> Ibid., 135.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>118</sup> Ibid., 135.

McGowan, the key to obedience is the fear of the Lord. To demonstrate this, he quotes Deuteronomy 28 on the blessing and curses of God upon obedience and disobedience and Exodus 20:18-20, 'Do not be afraid. God has come to test you so that the fear of God will be with you to keep you from sinning' in the context of thunder and mountain in smoke.<sup>119</sup>

Besides the obligation, the covenantal people ought to keep the law out of gratitude since after God rescued them from slavery, He gave them the Torah.<sup>120</sup> McGowan quotes Wright's *Justification* for support:<sup>121</sup>

God gave Israel the Torah as the way of life for the people with whom he had already entered into covenant, and whom he had now rescued from slavery. The Torah was itself the covenant charter, setting Israel apart from all the other nations: Which other country, Israel was to ask itself, has laws like these? All the 'obedience' that the law then required would fall under the rubric of 'response to God's saving grace', even when this was not explicitly mentioned.<sup>122</sup>

Hence the law is not meant for God's people to earn merit but a response to His gracious covenant.

#### 2.1.6 Evaluation and Summary

In McGowan's study of the law and the covenant, it can be perceived that his hermeneutical approach strictly follows the terms used in the context. Since the term 'law' and 'covenant' are not used in Genesis 1-3, he asserts that Adam did not by nature possess the law, and his disobedience (not a transgression) was against the will, not the law of God. He also asserts that since the term 'covenant' is not used in Genesis 1-3, we should not refer to God's dealing with Adam as a covenant. Although Hosea 6:7 says: 'But like Adam they transgressed the covenant; there they dealt faithlessly with me.' McGowan does not explain this verse but quotes Murray's statement that Hosea 6.7 can

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>119</sup> *Ibid.*, 132.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>120</sup> *Ibid.*, 156

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>121</sup> Ibid.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>122</sup> Tom Wright, *Justification: God's Plan and Paul's Vision* (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 2009), 53–54.

be interpreted otherwise and 'does not provide the basis for such a construction of the Adamic economy'.<sup>123</sup>

In reviewing various covenants, McGowan notes that God is always gracious and deals unilaterally with His people in covenant. He also notes the continuity of the covenants, especially the Mosaic-Abrahamic covenant, and relates the law and the covenant from Mosaic-Abrahamic continuity. Schreiner likewise says:

The Abrahamic covenant focuses on God's work (and hence the promise is guaranteed), whereas the Mosaic covenant requires obedience to the law (and the inheritance is not realized because of human inability).<sup>124</sup>

Though Schreiner's statement seems similar to McGowan's explanation on Mosaic-Abrahamic continuity and the law in the context of covenant, what sets Schreiner and McGowan apart is how Schreiner sees the human inability to keep the law. McGowan does not explain the law in its pedagogical use (i.e. the use of the law to convict people of their sins, to show their inability to keep the law, and to lead them to repentance in Christ). McGowan does explain the judgment upon disobedience,<sup>125</sup> but his approach is very different from the proponents of the covenant of works. The proponents regarded the principle of 'do this and live.....those who do abominations will be cut off from the (covenantal) people' in Leviticus 18 as a republication of the covenant of works, in which we sinners in the post-fall epoch are unable to keep.<sup>126</sup>

In sum, according to McGowan, the covenant describes God's unilateral and gracious relationship with His people (consisting of the elect and the non-elect). It is not a description of those who are saved, and the law given to God's covenantal people

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>123</sup> A. T. B. McGowan, *Adam, Christ and Covenant: Exploring Headship Theology* (London: Apollos, imprint of Inter-Varsity Press, 2016), 62 quotes Murray, *Collected Writings, vol. 2, 49* 

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>124</sup> Thomas R. Schreiner, 40 Questions about Christians and Biblical Law, ed. Benjamin L. Merkle, 40 Questions Series (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Academic & Professional, 2010), 68.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>125</sup> See section 2.1.5 part c

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>126</sup> J. Nicholas Reid, "The Mosaic Covenant," in *Covenant Theology: Biblical, Theological, and Historical Perspectives*, ed. Guy Prentiss Waters, J. Nicholas Reid, and John R. Muether (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2020), 167.

guides them to live a God-centered life which they are obliged to keep by faith with gratitude for God's covenant.

In section 2.2, we shall review McGowan's understanding of the law and grace in the covenant that leads to his rejection of the covenant of works.

# 2.2 The Law and Grace

### 2.2.1 The Law and Grace in the Covenant

McGowan does not define grace explicitly, but from the use of grace in his books, he does not restrict the term 'grace' within the context of redemption, but a general view of God's goodness bestowed.<sup>127</sup>

According to McGowan, there has been a tendency to 'discontinuity between faith and works, rather than their integral connection.'<sup>128</sup> In other words, the tendency to see the law and grace as detached. Nevertheless, he claims that if we see the Mosaic covenant as a continuation of the Abrahamic covenant, we can find no contradiction between faith and works, grace and law.<sup>129</sup> In other words, just as the Abrahamic covenant (promise covenant) is before the Mosaic covenant (a covenant where the Law was given), faith is before works, and grace is prior to the law. McGowan says:

To Abraham God says, 'I will be your God and you will be my people.' Through Moses he says, 'Since you are my people, this is how you should live.' The law, then, is given to the people of God, who are under grace, as a guide for the life of the covenant community.<sup>130</sup>

McGowan is not the first who relates Mosaic-Abrahamic continuation with the relationship of the law and grace. Many biblical scholars observe that the Decalogue begins with a prologue with the covenantal LORD and His gracious act of redemption

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>127</sup> McGowan applies the term 'grace' to God's people, people in general (common grace) even to the fallen angels that they fell from grace of God, see: A. T. B. McGowan, *Cdhp: Person and Work of Christ* (Crownhill, Milton Keynes: Paternoster, 2012), section 11.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>128</sup> A. T. B. McGowan, *Adam, Christ and Covenant: Exploring Headship Theology* (London: Apollos, imprint of Inter-Varsity Press, 2016), 161.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>129</sup> Ibid.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>130</sup> Ibid., 162