

## Covenant Theology

### Contact Information

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### Course Description

This course will systematically present biblical teaching on covenant theology as understood and taught within the Reformed tradition, demonstrating that these formulations (1) represent the proper understanding of Scripture, (2) inherit and carry forward the best of the ancient teachings of the Church, and (3) provide the people of God the doctrine needed in order to thrive as disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ in the twenty-first century.

### Course Objectives

1. To see how a robust theology of the covenant emerges from God's full revelation in Scripture.
2. To examine the role of covenant in God's redemptive purposes, giving attention to both the interrelationship and the development of the various covenants found in Scripture.
3. To enable the student to better grasp issues that have arisen in covenantal thought and the centrality of covenant theology in some areas of contemporary debate.
4. To consider the influence of God's covenant and of covenant theology on the life of the Church today, placing particular emphasis on how covenant theology is a rich resource for preaching, teaching, and counseling God's people.

## Meeting Information

18 hours of synchronous class meetings via Zoom  
(FOR OTHER DUE DATES AND ASYNCHRONOUS LECTURES SEE FULL SCHEDULE BELOW):

Week 1:

Monday: June 8, 2020 (10-12 EST)  
Wednesday: June 10, 2020 (10-12 EST)  
Friday: June 12, 2020 (10-12 EST)

Week 2:

Monday: June 15, 2020 (10-12 EST)  
Wednesday: June 17, 2020 (10-12 EST)  
Friday: June 19, 2020 (10-12 EST)

Week 3:

Monday: June 22, 2020 (10-12 EST)  
Wednesday: June 24, 2020 (10-12 EST)  
Friday: June 26, 2020 (10-12 EST)

## Texts and Abbreviations

*Summary (required)*

Jonty Rhodes, *Covenants Made Simple: Understanding God's Unfolding Promises to His People*

OR

Richard Belcher Jr., *The Fulfillment of the Promises of God: an Explanation of Covenant Theology*

ALSO

Herman Witsius, *The Economy of the Covenants Between God and Man* (2 vols. – students will read 400pp. out of this)

*Confession (required)*

WCF: *The Westminster Confession of Faith* (chapters 7-8, and 19)

*Supplemental Readings (required – available on Canvas)*

- SR: Ligon Duncan, "Recent Objections to Covenant Theology: A Description, Evaluation, and Response," in *The Westminster Confession in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, Volume 3*, ed. Ligon Duncan (Mentor, 2009), 467-500.
- Michael J. Glodo, "Dispensationalism," in *Covenant Theology*, eds. John Muether, Miles Van Pelt, and Guy Waters (to be published by Crossway later in 2020)
- Mark Jones, "The 'Old' Covenant," in *Drawn into Controversie: Reformed Theological Diversity and Debates Within Seventeenth-Century British Puritanism*, ed. Michael A. G. Haykin and Mark Jones (Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2011), 183-203.
- Donald Macleod, "Covenant Theology," in *Dictionary of Scottish Church History and Theology*, ed. Nigel M. de S. Cameron (Edinburgh, 1993), 214-218.
- Nicholas Reid, "Background: ANE Treaties and Covenant," in *Covenant Theology*, eds. John Muether, Miles Van Pelt, and Guy Waters (to be published by Crossway later in 2020)
- D. Blair Smith, "Post-Reformation Developments," in *Covenant Theology*, eds. John Muether, Miles Van Pelt, and Guy Waters (to be published later in 2020).
- Scott R. Swain, "Covenant of Redemption," in *Christian Dogmatics: Reformed Theology for the Church Catholic*, eds. Michael Allen and Scott R. Swain (Grand Rapids, MI: BakerAcademic, 2016), 107-125.
- "New Covenant Theologies," in *Covenant Theology*, eds. John Muether, Miles Van Pelt, and Guy Waters (to be published by Crossway later in 2020)
- Cornelis P. Venema, "The Mosaic Covenant: A 'Republication' of the Covenant of Works?" *Mid-America Journal of Theology* 21 (2010): 35-101.
- Geerhardus Vos, "The Doctrine of the Covenant in Reformed Theology," in *Redemptive History and Biblical Interpretation: The Shorter Writings of Geerhardus Vos*, ed. Richard B. Gaffin, Jr. (P & R, 1980), 234-67.

## Requirements

1. Reading report (20%)  
When the student turns in his or her paper a reading report will be given stating the percentage of the assigned readings that have been read with reasonable care over the course of the semester.
2. Topical Discussions and Student to Student Interactions (20%)  
The student will complete all modules for Professor to Student Interactions and Student to Student Interactions on Canvas

3. Précis (30%)

The student will write three précis on the topics of: (1) the covenant of redemption, (2) the covenant of works, and (3) the covenant of grace. Each précis is worth 10% of the term grade. \*See sample précis and written description on canvas.

4. Term Paper (30%)

Students will write an 8-12 page term paper (typed and double-spaced, with appropriate Turabian style footnoting and bibliography). Make sure you (1) present a clear thesis; (2) have a proper introduction and conclusion and a clear structure for your essay; (3) deal with the relevant information competently and fairly to all sides; (4) where necessary, engage primary sources; (5) offer critical analysis (and not merely summary) of the positions and views you engage; (6) where relevant, consider the implications and significance of your investigation for the life of the church; and (7) use at least 8 scholarly sources. If it would be helpful, please consult with the professor on initial bibliography. Your paper should be on one of the following topics:

- a. The Covenant of Works: Is the doctrine of the Covenant of Works a biblical doctrine? What objections have been brought against the validity of this covenant? Who have been its significant supports and detractors? What are its broader theological implications? What role does its validity play in contemporary theological discussions?
- b. The Covenant of Redemption: Is the doctrine of the *pactum salutis* a biblical doctrine? Is it distinct from the covenant of grace? What Biblical support is there for the covenant and for its relationship with the covenant of grace? What impact does the covenant of redemption have on broader theological issues?
- c. Are the various postlapsarian covenants (e.g., Abrahamic, Mosaic, Davidic, New) administrations of one Covenant of Grace?
- d. In what sense (if any) is the Covenant of Grace “conditional”?
- e. Discuss the relationship between the Mosaic covenant and the Covenant of Grace. How does the former fit into the development of the latter? What are some of the competing views?
- f. Discuss the prophetic literature’s development of the New Covenant. How was it related to the prior covenants? What was “new” about it?
- g. Discuss the use and development of the “New Covenant” in chapters 8-10 of the book of Hebrews.
- h. How should Reformed theology respond to Gentry and Wellum’s *Kingdom through Covenant*?
- i. What is the relationship between the moral law and the covenants according to the *Westminster Confession of Faith*?
- j. Students may also choose to write a historical theological paper devoted to a major theme in covenant theology as developed in the thought of a major Reformed theologian.
- k. Other topics/questions may be chosen in consultation with the professor.

## Schedule, Reading Schedule, and Assignments

### Class 1 - Monday, June 8

#### **Topic: *Introduction to Covenant Theology***

For each class students should read the relevant chapter(s) out of either Rhodes or Belcher as well as pace him themselves in their reading of Witsius so that they will have read 400 pages by the end of the course.

SR: Donald MacLeod, "Covenant Theology," in *Dictionary of Scottish Church History and Theology*, ed. Nigel M. de S. Cameron (Edinburgh, 1993), pp. 214-218.

Geerhardus Vos, "The Doctrine of the Covenant in Reformed Theology," in *Redemptive History and Biblical Interpretation: The Shorter Writings of Geerhardus Vos*, ed. Richard B. Gaffin, Jr. (P & R, 1980), pp. 234-67.

"Introduction: On Covenant Theology" by J. I. Packer, pp. 1:27-43 in Witsius WCF: Chapters 7-8, 19

**\*These should be read before the first day of class.**

### June 9, 2020

#### **Topic: *History of and Objections to Covenant Theology***

##### **Pre-recorded Ligon Duncan Lectures**

History of Covenant Theology (43 minutes)

Objections to Covenant Theology (50 minutes)

SR: Ligon Duncan, "Recent Objections to Covenant Theology: A Description, Evaluation, and Response," in *The Westminster Confession in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, Volume 3*, ed. Ligon Duncan (Mentor, 2009), 467-500.

D. Blair Smith, "Post-Reformation Developments," in *Covenant Theology*, eds. John Muether, Miles Van Pelt, and Guy Waters (to be published by Crossway later in 2020)

### Class 2 - Wednesday, June 10

#### **Topic: *Terminology and The Covenant of Works***

SR: Nicholas Reid, "Background: ANE Treaties and Covenant," in *Covenant Theology*, eds. John Muether, Miles Van Pelt, and Guy Waters (to be published by Crossway later in 2020)

### June 11, 2020

#### **Topic: *The Noahic Covenant***

##### **Pre-recorded Ligon Duncan Lectures**

Noah (31 minutes)

Sons of God (61 minutes)

Sign of Noah (31 minutes)

**Class 3 – Friday, June 12**

**Topic: *The Covenant of Works***

SR: Mark Jones, “The ‘Old’ Covenant,” in *Drawn into Controversie: Reformed Theological Diversity and Debates Within Seventeenth-Century British Puritanism*, ed. Michael A. G. Haykin and Mark Jones (Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2011), pp. 183-203.

**\*June 13, 2020 – Précis 1: Covenant of Works (Due 11:59 pm)**

**Class 4 – Monday, June 15**

**Topic: *The Abrahamic Covenant***

**Class 5 – Wednesday, June 17**

**Topic: *The Mosaic Covenant 1***

**Class 6 – Friday, June 19**

**Topic: *The Mosaic Covenant 2***

SR: Cornelis P. Venema, “The Mosaic Covenant: A ‘Republication’ of the Covenant of Works?” *Mid-America Journal of Theology* 21 (2010): 35-101

**\*June 20, 2020 – Topical Discussion 1; Student to Student Interaction 1**

**Class 7 – Monday, June 22**

**Topic: *The Davidic Covenant***

**June 23, 2020**

**Topic: *Dispensationalism and Covenant Theology***

***Pre-recorded Ligon Duncan Lectures***

Dispensationalism (53 minutes)

Dispensationalism and Covenant Theology (54 minutes)

SR: Michael J. Glodo, “Dispensationalism,” in *Covenant Theology*, eds. John Muether, Miles Van Pelt, and Guy Waters (to be published by Crossway later in 2020)

Scott R. Swain, “New Covenant Theologies,” in *Covenant Theology*, eds. John Muether, Miles Van Pelt, and Guy Waters (to be published by Crossway later in 2020)

**Class 8 – Wednesday, June 24**

**Topic: *The New Covenant***

**\*Topical Discussion 2**

**June 25, 2020**

**Topic: *Covenant and Sacraments***

***Pre-recorded Ligon Duncan Lectures***

Circumcision and Baptism (44 minutes)

Lord's Supper (49 minutes)

**Class 9 – Friday, June 26**

**Topic: *Covenant of Redemption***

SR: Scott R. Swain, "Covenant of Redemption," in *Christian Dogmatics: Reformed Theology for the Church Catholic*, eds. Michael Allen and Scott R. Swain (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2016), pp. 107-125.

**\*June 29, 2020 – Topical Discussion 3; Student to Student Interaction 2**

**\*July 1, 2020 – Topical Discussion 4**

**\*July 3, 2020 – Précis 2: Covenant of Grace (Due 11:59 pm Eastern)**

**\*July 6, 2020 – Topical Discussion 5; Student to Student Interaction 3**

**\*July 8, 2020 – Topical Discussion 6**

**\*July 10, 2020 – Précis 3: Covenant of Redemption (Due 11:59 pm Eastern)**

**\*July 13, 2020 – Due Topical Discussion 7; Student to Student Interaction 4**

**\*July 15, 2020 – Due Topical Discussion 8**

**\*July 17, 2020 – Due Topical Discussion 9; Student to Student Interaction 5**

**\*July 20, 2020 – Due Topical Discussion 10**

**\*July 22, 2020 – Due Topical Discussion 11**

**\*July 24, 2020 – Due: Completion of All Reading and Final Paper (Due 11:59 pm Eastern)**

*For Further Reading*

In addition to systematic theological works that would be helpful to consult, such as those by Bavinck, Calvin, Turretin, Hodge, Berkhof, Frame, and Bray, the following books will assist further study of the doctrinal topics discussed in this course.

J. Mark Beach, *Christ and the Covenant: Francis Turretin's Federal Theology as a Defense of the Doctrine of Grace* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2007).

\_\_\_\_\_. "The Doctrine of the Pactum Salutis in the Covenant Theology of Herman Witsius," *MJT* 13 (2002): 101-142.

Joel Beeke and Mark Jones, *A Puritan Theology* (Grand Rapids: Reformed Heritage Books, 2012).

Lyle Bierma, *German Calvinism in the Confessional Age: The Covenant Theology of Caspar Olevianus* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1997).

Lyle Bierma et al., *An Introduction to the Heidelberg Catechism: Sources, History, and Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2005).

- Heinrich Bullinger, "A Brief Exposition of the One and Eternal Testament or Covenant of God," in Charles McCoy and J. Wayne Baker, *Fountainhead of Federalism: Heinrich Bullinger and the Covenantal Tradition* (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 1991).
- Pierre Courthial, *A New Day of Small Beginnings*, trans. Matthew S. Miller (Tallahassee, FL: Zurich Publishing, 2018).
- J. Ligon Duncan III, *The Covenant Idea in Ante-Nicene Theology* (Ph.D. Thesis): available from professor
- Brian Estelle, John Fesko, and David VanDrunen, ed., *The Law is Not of Faith: Essays on Works and Grace in the Mosaic Covenant* (Phillipsburg: Presbyterian and Reformed, 2009).
- Peter Gentry and Stephen Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant: A Biblical-Theological Understanding of the Covenants* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2012).
- David Gibson, *Prelapsarian Federalism and the Shape of Reformed Theology: A Response to James B. Torrance and Holmes Rolston III* (M.A. Thesis): <http://beginningwithmoses.org/filestore/downloads/prelapsefederalism.pdf>
- Michael Horton, *God of Promise: Introducing Covenant Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2006).
- Meredith Kline, *By Oath Consigned* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1968).
- Peter A. Lillback, *The Binding of God: Calvin's Role in the Development of Covenant Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2001).
- Richard A. Muller, "Scripture and the Westminster Confession," in Richard A. Muller and Rowland S. Ward, *Scripture and Worship: Biblical Interpretation and the Directory for Public Worship*, 3-82, (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2007).
- \_\_\_\_\_. "Divine Covenants, Absolute and Conditional: John Cameron and the Early Orthodox Development of Reformed Covenant Theology," *MJT* 17 (2006): 11-56.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "The Covenant of Works and the Stability of Divine Law in Seventeenth-Century Reformed Orthodoxy: A Study in the Theology of Herman Witsius and Wilhelmus à Brakel," *Calvin Theological Journal* 29 (1994): 75-101.
- John Murray, *The Covenant of Grace: A Biblico-Theological Study* (Biblical & Theological Studies; Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R Publishing, 1987).
- Vern S. Poythress, *Understanding Dispensationalists* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 1987).
- O. Palmer Robertson, *The Christ of the Covenants* (Phillipsburg: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1980).
- Robert Rollock, "Robert Rollock's Catechism on God's Covenants," translated and introduced by Aaron C. Denlinger, *MJT* 20 (2009): 105-29.
- James B. Torrance, "Contribution of McLeod Campbell to Scottish Theology," *Scottish Journal of Theology* 26 (1973): 295-311.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "Covenant or Contract: A Study of the Theological Background of Worship in Seventeenth-Century Scotland," *Scottish Journal of Theology* 23 (1970): 51-76.



- \_\_\_\_\_. "Strengths and Weaknesses of the Westminster Theology," in *The Westminster Confession in the Church Today: Papers Prepared for the Church of Scotland Panel on Doctrine*, ed. Alasdair I. C. Heron, 40-54 (Edinburgh: Saint Andrew Press, 1982).
- \_\_\_\_\_. "The Concept of Federal Theology – Was Calvin a Federal Theologian," in *Calvinus sacrae scripturae professor*, 15-40 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994).
- \_\_\_\_\_. "The Covenant Concept in Scottish Theology and Politics and Its Legacy," *Scottish Journal of Theology* 34 (1981): 225-243.
- Thomas F. Torrance, *Scottish Theology: from John Knox to John McLeod Campbell* (T & T Clark International, 2000).
- Carl Trueman, "From Calvin to Gillespie on Covenant: Mythological Excess or an Exercise in Doctrinal Development?" *International Journal of Systematic Theology* 11 (2009): 378-397.
- Cornelis P. Venema, "Recent Criticisms of the 'Covenant of Works' in the Westminster Confession of Faith," *MJT* 9 (1993): 165-198.
- Willem van Asselt, "The Doctrine of the Abrogations in the Federal Theology of Johannes Cocceius (1603-1669)," *Calvin Theological Journal* 29 (1994): 101-116.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *The Federal Theology of Johannes Cocceius: (1603-1669)* (Leiden: Brill, 2001).
- Rowland Ward, *God and Adam: Reformed Theology and the Creation Covenant* (New Melbourne Press, 2003).
- Paul R. Williamson, *Sealed with an Oath: Covenant in God's Unfolding Purpose* (Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2007).
- Andrew A. Woolsey, *Unity and Continuity in Covenantal Thought: A Study in the Reformed Tradition to the Westminster Assembly* (Grand Rapids: Reformed Heritage Books, 2012).

**Course Objectives Related to MDiv Student Learning Outcomes  
With Mini-Justification**

Course: ST5300  
 Professor: D. Blair Smith  
 Campus: Charlotte – Remote Residential  
 Date: Summer 2020

<b><u>MDiv Student Learning Outcomes</u></b>		<b><u>Rubric</u></b>	<b><u>Mini-Justification</u></b>
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Strong</li> <li>➤ Moderate</li> <li>➤ Minimal</li> <li>➤ None</li> </ul>	
<b>Articulation (oral &amp; written)</b>	Broadly understands and articulates knowledge, both oral and written, of essential biblical, theological, historical, and cultural/global information, including details, concepts, and frameworks.	Strong	Emphasis on learning and articulating foundational truths about covenant theology in the exam and research paper
<b>Scripture</b>	Significant knowledge of the original meaning of Scripture. Also, the concepts for and skill to research further into the original meaning of Scripture and to apply Scripture to a variety of modern circumstances. (Includes appropriate use of original languages and hermeneutics; and integrates theological, historical, and cultural/global perspectives.)	Strong	Focus on redemptive historical hermeneutics, and the unity and diversity of Scripture
<b>Reformed Theology</b>	Significant knowledge of Reformed theology and practice, with emphasis on the Westminster Standards.	Strong	Covenant theology is a central, unifying theme in Reformed systematic theology and has played a significant role in the historical development of Reformed theology.
<b>Sanctification</b>	Demonstrates a love for the Triune God that aids the student's sanctification.	Moderate	Covenant theology entails an interpersonal dimension that informs the application of biblical teaching for spiritual growth and renewal.
<b>Worldview</b>	Burning desire to conform all of life to the Word of God. Includes ability to interact within a denominational context, within the broader worldwide church, and with significant public issues.	Moderate	A unified understanding of biblical theology is essential to the formation of a Christian worldview.
<b>Winsomely Reformed</b>	Embraces a winsomely Reformed ethos. (Includes an appropriate ecumenical spirit with other Christians, especially Evangelicals; a concern to present the Gospel in a God-honoring manner to non-Christians; and a truth-in-love attitude in disagreements.)	Strong	While other views are considered, engaged, and expounded, this course focuses on Reformed Theology without alienating those who disagree.
<b>Pastoral Ministry</b>	Ability to minister the Word of God to hearts and lives of both church and unchurched, to include preaching, teaching, leading in worship, leading and shepherding the local congregation, aiding in spiritual maturity, concern for non-Christians.	Moderate	The content of this class will help students to better exegete the Word, and gives them a framework in which to understand it, making them stronger preachers and ministers of theological truth.