

REFORMED THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY (Orlando, Florida)
02DM8330 Covenant Theology and Ministry * Winter Semester, 2026 * Ligon Duncan

Course Description

Covenant Theology and Ministry. An examination of covenant theology from exegetical and historical perspectives. Consideration is given to such issues as the relation of the Old and New Testaments, the significance of the covenants for sacramental theology, and the hermeneutics of Dispensationalism and Theonomy. Emphasis is placed on the role of the biblical doctrine of the covenants in preaching and pastoral ministry.

Course Objectives

To assist pastors in mastering covenant theology for preaching and discipleship, by gaining a confident outline of the covenantal structure of redemptive history and grasping the manifold implications of the Biblical doctrine of the covenants (for soteriology and especially the atonement, sacraments, evangelism, family life, ecclesiology, and more). The course will also aim to equip the student with a working knowledge of the history of Covenant Theology and some of the more important objections to Covenant Theology from its theological critics.

Contact Information

Ligon Duncan, PhD – *John E. Richards Professor of Systematic and Historical Theology, Chancellor of RTS*

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Executive Assistant Jan Hyde: jhyde@rts.edu

Assisting me to facilitate this course will be my TAs, **William Skinner**-email: wskinner@fpcjackson.org and **George Herndon**-email: georgeh@fpcjackson.org

All assignments must be submitted via Canvas in pdf format. William and George are available to answer questions for you about logistical matters related to the course.

Course Requirements

Required Texts:

Earnest Kevan, *Moral Law* 978-0875522999

Sinclair Ferguson, *The Whole Christ* 978-1433548000

Louis Berkhof, *Systematic Theology* [211-218; 262-301]; 978-0802838209

Vern Poythress, *Understanding Dispensationalists*; 978-0875523743

O. Palmer Robertson, *Christ of the Covenants*; 978-0875524184

Geerhardus Vos, *Biblical Theology* [3-182, 185-342] 978-0851514581

J. Ligon Duncan III, *Covenant Theology* 978-1-938435-21-8 (iBook)

Syllabus Articles (**located on Canvas**):

Heinrich Heppe, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 281-319, 371-409

Donald Macleod, *Covenant Theology* in *DSCH&T*, 214-218

Donald Macleod, *Covenant: 2* in *Banner of Truth [BoT]* 141:22-28

Donald Macleod, *Federal Theology -- An Oppressive Legalism?* in *BoT* 125:21-28

Donald Macleod, *The Lord's Supper as a Means of Grace* in *BoT* 64:16-22

Donald Macleod, *Qualifications for Communion* in *BoT* 65:14-20

Donald Macleod, *The Real Presence* in *BoT* 66:13-16

Westminster Confession of Faith 7: Of God's Covenant with Man

Larger Catechism Questions 20-22, and 30-36

Shorter Catechism Questions 12, 16, and 20

****Students who wish to substitute reading for books they have already read may inquire of the professor****

Online Lectures

There will be online lectures available to the student. These are located here:

<https://subsplash.com/reformedtheologicalsemin/media/ms/+nn7h827>

Class Attendance

Given the huge amount of material we have to cover and the relative scarcity of classroom hours, attendance will be at a premium and, of course, to the benefit of the student. If you need to miss a class or to leave early or to arrive late, let me know (via my TAs, my EA, or myself). Failure to attend class, or to engage while in the class, will be noted. No unexplained absences.

Academic Integrity

All work submitted must be the student's own. Group-produced work is not permitted. Plagiarism and copying of old assignments are all considered cheating. Students who do not fulfill assignments with requisite academic integrity will be referred to the Academic Dean with a recommendation for discipline (the student should also consult pp. 33-34 in the Handbook for further details).

Course Evaluation

Term Paper or Sermon Project The term paper will be a 25-30 page paper on a course-related topic approved by the professor. The sermon project must be approved by the professor. An example might be: (1) a detailed proposal for a sermon series on covenant theology, with an outline of the series, and three sample sermon manuscripts, (2) a detailed proposal for the exposition of a Bible book or group of books, highlighting the covenantal material therein, and three sample sermon manuscripts. **Due April 30, 2026**

About the Teacher

For inquiring minds who want to know, I taught full-time at RTS from June 1990- July 1996 and then became the Minister of the historic First Presbyterian Church (1837), Jackson, Mississippi in August of 1996. In 2013, I was called to serve as the Chancellor and CEO of Reformed Theological Seminary. Ten years ago, I fully transitioned from First Presbyterian Church, to lead and teach at RTS.

I am a native of Greenville, South Carolina, and was born and reared in a Christian home (a ninth generation Southern Presbyterian to be precise!). I am a graduate of Furman University, Greenville, SC (BA); Covenant Theological Seminary, St. Louis (MDiv, MA); and the University of Edinburgh, Scotland (PhD). I have lived in Jackson, MS for over 33 years now.

My wife, Anne (who is a graduate of Furman University, BA; Gordon-Conwell Seminary, MRE; and Reformed Theological Seminary, MA [MFT]) is an accomplished Christian Educator in her own right and is the loving mother of our adult children. We have a daughter, Sarah Kennedy, and son, Jennings, who is an MDiv student at RTS Jackson and intern at First Pres., Jackson.

Course Outline and Assignment Schedule

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Listed below are the dates and topics and suggested reading schedule for our course.

Please factor these into your term calendar now!

Mon, Jan 12 (PM) Introduction to Covenant Theology

Syllabus/Reading/Assignment Review

What is Covenant Theology? What is a Covenant?

Why study it? Covenant Theology (History and Objections)

Covenant of Works (or Creation)

Tues, Jan 13 (AM)

Covenant of Grace (Adam)

Tues, Jan 13 (PM)

Covenant of Grace (Noah)

Wed, Jan 14 (AM)

Covenant of Grace (Abraham)

Wed, Jan 14 (PM)

Covenant of Grace (Moses)

Thurs, Jan 15 (AM)

Covenant of Grace (David)

Thurs, Jan 15 (PM)

Dispensationalism

Fri, Jan 16

Covenant of Grace (Jeremiah-New) [*Last Day of Class*]

Suggested Reading Schedule

(I am assuming that you will have read some or all of these books before. The more reading you have completed before the class dates, the more beneficial it will be to you. We will work over reading in class. If there are other good books that you prefer to read, you can contact me.)

Jan. 21

Ernest Kevan, *Moral Law* Chapters 1-2

Louis Berkhof, *Systematic Theology*, 211-218.

Donald Macleod, *Covenant Theology*.

O. Palmer Robertson, *Christ of the Covenants*, 3-63.

Jan 28

Ernest Kevan, *Moral Law* Chapter 3-4

O. Palmer Robertson, *Christ of the Covenants*, 67-87.

Macleod, *Covenant: 2 & Federal Theology-An Oppressive Legalism?*

Heinrich Heppe, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 281-319.

Feb 4

Ernest Kevan, *Moral Law* Chapters 5-6

O. Palmer Robertson, *Christ of the Covenants*, 91-107.

Louis Berkhof, *Systematic Theology* [262-301].

Heinrich Heppe, *Reformed Dogmatics* [371-409]

Feb 11

Ernest Kevan, *Moral Law* Chapters 7-8
O. Palmer Robertson, *Christ of the Covenants*, 109-125.
Sinclair Ferguson, *The Whole Christ* Chapter 1
Ernest Kevan, *Moral Law* Chapters 9-10
O. Palmer Robertson, *Christ of the Covenants*, 127-146.

Feb 18

Sinclair Ferguson, *The Whole Christ* Chapters 2-3
Ernest Kevan, *Moral Law* Chapters 11-12
O. Palmer Robertson, *Christ of the Covenants*, 147-166.
Donald Macleod, *The Lord's Supper as a Means of Grace* (all),
Qualifications for Communion (all), and *The Real Presence* (all).

Feb 25

Sinclair Ferguson, *The Whole Christ* Chapters 4-5
Ernest Kevan, *Moral Law* Chapters 13-14
O. Palmer Robertson, *Christ of the Covenants*, 167-199.
Vern Poythress, *Understanding Dispensationalists* (all).
O. Palmer Robertson, *Christ of the Covenants*, 201-227.

Mar 4

Sinclair Ferguson, *The Whole Christ* Chapters 6-7
O. Palmer Robertson, *Christ of the Covenants*, 229-269.

Mar 11

Sinclair Ferguson, *The Whole Christ* Chapters 8-9
O. Palmer Robertson, *Christ of the Covenants*, 271-300.
Vos, *Biblical Theology*, 3-182.

Mar 18

Sinclair Ferguson, *The Whole Christ* Chapters 10-11
Vos, *Biblical Theology*, 185-342.

Term Paper: April 30, 2026



Course Objectives Related to SLOs Chart

Course: 02DM8330 Covenant Theology
 Professor: Dr. J. Ligon Duncan III
 Campus: Orlando
 Date: Winter 2026

<u>DMin* Student Learning Outcomes</u> <i>In order to measure the success of the DMin curriculum, RTS has defined the following as the intended outcomes of the student learning process. Each course contributes to these overall outcomes. This rubric shows the contribution of this course to the DMin outcomes.</i> <u>NOTE:</u> DMin Emphases are: 1. Reformed Expository Preaching (REP), and 2. Reformed Theology and Ministry (RTM)		<u>Rubric</u> ➤ Strong ➤ Moderate ➤ Minimal ➤ None	<u>Mini-Justification</u>
Biblical/Theological Foundations:	Significant knowledge of biblical and theological foundations for pastoral ministry. (This includes interaction with Biblical texts, as well as awareness of Reformed Theology.) <i>For meets: REP= Significant For meets: RTM= Significant</i>	Strong	<i>The student will understand and be able to explain clearly to laity how God has dealt with man in terms of covenants throughout the history of redemption. He will also master the Systematic categories of Covenant Theology and be able to explain them clearly to laity.</i>
Historical/Contemporary Practices:	Significant knowledge of historical and contemporary practices of pastoral ministry. <i>For meets: REP= Minimal For meets: RTM= Significant</i>	Moderate	<i>The student will learn about historical and contemporary ramifications of Covenant Theology for pastoral ministry, and be able to deploy that knowledge for the well-being of the flock.</i>
Integration:	Ability to reflect upon and integrate theology and practice, as well as implementation in a contemporary pastoral setting.	Moderate	<i>Because Covenant Theology uniquely blends Systematic and Biblical theology in the service of pastoral ministry, it is a fruitful proving ground for healthful theology put in to practice.</i>
Sanctification:	Demonstrates a love for the Triune God that aids in the student's sanctification.	Moderate	<i>The study of Covenant Theology should promote the personal piety of the student and better equip the student to aid the flock in sanctification.</i>
Hermeneutical/Homiletical Analysis	Demonstrates ability to interpret a text and apply homiletical principles to the text. <i>For meets: REP= Significant For meets: RTM= Minimal</i>	Strong	<i>The student will find that a Scripture united by covenants provides fertile ground for harvesting preaching texts, topics, and applications.</i>