Covenant Theology
ST 601
Reformed Theological Seminary – Charlotte
Spring 2014

Professor:
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Office Hours:
Mondays 12:00-1:00 PM

Required Texts:
The Bible
The Westminster Confession of Faith
Other brief readings may be recommended at various points in the course.

*We will be reading only a portion of Gentry & Wellum, which will be on reserve in the RTS library.

Note that the four covenant theology texts all differ on certain issues. Do not be surprised to find some disagreement and even some differences in terminology! If you begin your reading prior to the course and need any clarification or explanation, please feel free to contact me using the contact information above.

Course Structure and Objectives:
In this course, we will 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. Attention will be given to issues that have arisen within covenantal thought and to the centrality of covenant theology in some areas of contemporary debate. At each point, we will 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 to be preached for the glory of God and the good of His people.

Course Requirements:
Assigned Reading: All assigned reading (relevant Biblical passages; sections of the Westminster Confession; and assigned texts) must be completed prior to the final exam.
There will be a question on the final exam asking how much of the assigned reading you have completed.

**Exam:** There will be a final exam covering all material discussed in class. The exam will consist of short answer and essay questions intended to test an overall command of the history, structure, implications, and applications of covenant theology. The exam will be given during the seminary exam period and will account for 1/3 of the final grade.

**Essay:** Each student will submit a 10-12 page (double-spaced, excluding bibliography) essay, due by the seminary term paper deadline (May 15). Each student may determine the topic of his essay, but each essay topic must be approved by the professor no later than April 21. Some suggested/potential essay topics are as follows:

- Discuss the covenant of works. What Biblical support is there for such a covenant? 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?
- Discuss the covenant of redemption. 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?
- Can a coherent case be made for an overarching Covenant of Grace? What are the Biblical foundations for such a concept? Are there problems with the concept? What is the importance of an overarching Covenant of Grace?
- 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?
- Discuss the prophetic literature’s development of the New Covenant. How was it related to the prior covenants? What was “new” about it?
- How does the Exile fit into the unity of the covenant of grace? How did the Scriptures anticipate the Exile? How did the Scriptures interpret the Exile both during the Exile and after the Exile?
- Discuss the use and development of the “New Covenant” in chapters 8-10 of the book of Hebrews.
- Both in the history of covenant theology and in contemporary discussion, the interaction of “covenant” and “election” has been very important. Discuss the views that have been forwarded and how they have shaped both the development of covenant theology and the state of contemporary discourse. What is the proper Biblical understanding of the relationship between these two concepts?
- Choose a topic of contemporary theological discussion and explain both the role that covenant theology plays in that discussion and what further light covenant theology could shed on the issues at hand.
- Choose two or more of the authors we have read in this course and offer an analysis of their respective covenant theologies. What are the similarities?
What are the differences? What are the relative strengths and weaknesses of each system? Which system makes the best sense of the Biblical data? Proper footnote citation throughout the essay and a complete bibliography are required. The essay will account for 1/3 of the final grade.

**Sermon Manuscript:** It can be all too easy to leave covenant theology in the classroom – or, at best, in the background of our own minds – and never allow it openly to enter the pulpit and be used for the instruction and edification of God’s people. As an exercise in *preaching* covenant theology, each student will submit the full manuscript of a sermon on a relevant Biblical passage. The manuscript will be 8-10 pages (double-spaced, excluding bibliography) and should attempt both to bring out and to *apply* the covenantal implications of the passage. Each student may choose the Biblical text for his manuscript, but each text must be approved by the professor no later than April 21. The manuscript will be due in class on April 28. Some suggested/potential texts are:

- Foundational passages for the various covenants (these will become clear in the lectures and reading)
- Isaiah 42.1-9
- Ezekiel 37.1-14
- Romans 5.12-21
- II Corinthians 3.7-18
- Galatians 3.19-29

A bibliography of sources used is required. The manuscript will account for 1/3 of the final grade.

**Policy on Late Assignments:**
All late assignments will be assessed a 10 point deduction per day that the due date is exceeded.

**Policy on Class Absences:**
Attendance at lectures is mandatory. Unexcused absences will be penalized.

**Tentative Lecture Schedule:**
As the name implies, this schedule is subject to change, allowing for either more or less time to be given to various topics as needed. The assigned readings indicate the portion of the readings most relevant for each topic.

February 10 – Introduction; Terminology and history of covenant theology
- *Westminster Confession* VII.1-2
- Gentry & Wellum, pages 591-611
- Horton, chapters 1-2
- Murray, pages 1-12
- Robertson, chapters 1-2
February 17 – Foundational principles; Covenant of Works
- Genesis 1-3
- *Westminster Confession* IV; VI; VII.1-2
- Gentry & Wellum, pages 611-628
- Horton, chapters 3-4; pages 83-104
- Robertson, chapters 3-5

February 24 – Covenant of Redemption / Council of Peace
- Horton, pages 77-82

March 3 – Covenant of Grace; Character and first announcement of the covenant
- *Westminster Confession* VII.3-5; VIII
- Horton, pages 104-110
- Robertson, chapter 6

March 10 – Noahic Covenant
- Genesis 6-9
- Gentry & Wellum, pages 628-629
- Horton, chapter 6
- Murray, pages 12-16
- Robertson, chapter 7

March 17 – No Class; Spring Break

March 24 – Abrahamic Covenant
- Genesis 12, 15, 17
- Gentry & Wellum, pages 630-635
- Murray, pages 16-20
- Robertson, chapter 8

March 31 – Mosaic Covenant
- Exodus 19-20, 24
- *Westminster Confession* XVI; XIX-XX
- Gentry & Wellum, 635-640
- Murray, pages 20-22
- Robertson, chapter 10

April 7 – Davidic Covenant
- II Samuel 1-7
- Gentry & Wellum, pages 640-644
- Murray, pages 22-25
- Robertson, chapter 12
April 14 – The “New Covenant” in the prophetic literature
  - Jeremiah 31.31-40
  - Gentry & Wellum, pages 644-652
  - Robertson, chapter 13

April 21 – Covenant in the New Testament
  - Galatians 3.19-4.7; Hebrews 8-10
  - Murray, pages 25-32
  - **Deadline for approval of essay and sermon topics**

April 28 – Covenant and ecclesiology
  - *Westminster Confession* VII.6; XXV-XXIX
  - Gentry & Wellum, pages 683-703
  - Horton, chapters 7-8
  - Robertson, chapter 9
  - **Sermon manuscript due in class**

May 5 – Covenant and contemporary theological issues
  - Horton, chapter 9
  - Robertson, chapter 11

May 12 – Review

May 15 – **Essay Due**