Covenant Theology

Reformed Theological Seminary
Washington D.C.

06ST601 (2 Credits)
Winter 2015
January 28-31, Wednesday through Saturday, 8:30AM-3PM

Dr. Howard Griffith
Associate Professor of Systematic Theology
hgriffith@rts.edu
703/408-3157

NB: If you have not taken the ST course on Christology (called “ST2” in Washington), please read the article by Richard B. Gaffin, “Pentecost: Before and After” (found on the course homepage) before the first class meeting.

All Students: before the first class, please read as much as possible, but definitely have read

- Geerhardus Vos, “The Doctrine of the Covenant in Reformed Theology” (see below)
- J.I. Packer, “Introduction: On Covenant Theology” in Herman Witsius, The Economy of the Covenants (on the course homepage),

Office Hours: make an appointment—I enjoy getting to know everyone I can. Lunches are a good time, but I am around school most of the time.

Course Description:

As the bond of loving fellowship God establishes with humanity, both before and after the fall, “covenant” is central to the entire message of Holy Scripture. It is especially important in understanding the atonement of Christ, and so forms an indispensable foundation for preaching and pastoral ministry.

We will survey the successive biblical covenants from a redemptive historical perspective as well as examine the bi-covenantal structure of creation and redemption. We will reflect on issues such as the implications of the covenant for Reformed hermeneutics, the character of the Mosaic covenant, and the relation of the Old and New Testaments. We will also consider the significance of the covenants for evangelism, for church and family life.

Required Texts:

- Vern S. Poythress, Understanding Dispensationalists; 978-0875523743
- O. Palmer Robertson, The Christ of the Covenants; 978-0875524184
- Geerhardus Vos, Biblical Theology; 978-0851514581

Articles (these will be on the course homepage):
• Richard B. Gaffin, Jr., “The Last Adam, the Life-Giving Spirit” (on the homepage as “Gaffin_Last Adam.pdf”).

Also:

• *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.

**Course Outline**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Required Reading</th>
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<tr>
<td>Introduction; history; objections; the complex: “Covenants of ‘works/ redemption/grace’”, controversies.</td>
<td>Macleod, “Covenant Theology”; Robertson, <em>Christ of the Covenants</em>, 3-63; WCF 7; <em>LC Questions</em> 20-22, 30-36; and <em>SC Questions</em> 12,16, &amp; 20.</td>
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<tr>
<td>The Covenant of Redemption/Pactum Salutis</td>
<td>Vos, “The Doctrine of the Covenant in Reformed Theology.”</td>
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<td>The Covenant of Grace—Abraham (Isaac, Jacob, Joseph)</td>
<td><em>Christ of the Covenants</em>, 127-166.</td>
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<tr>
<td>The Covenant of Grace—David</td>
<td><em>Christ of the Covenants</em>, 229-269.</td>
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<tr>
<td>The Covenant of Grace and the Family</td>
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</table>
Other Requirements:

1. Class attendance is required of all students.
2. Completed reading, 20%. I will ask about this on the final exam.
3. Study notes, 30%.

Study Notes (typed, double-spaced, twelve point font), consisting of:

2. Answer Questions for Robertson’s Christ of the Covenants. This will be on the course homepage.

The Study Notes are due emailed to me by midnight on **February 21st, 2015**. I do not accept late submissions except in the case of emergency.

4. Final Exam, 50%.

This 3-hour exam will cover the readings and lectures. It will be posted on the course homepage. It will be due, emailed to me by midnight, **March 14th, 2015**. The exam is to be proctored by a minister or elder. I do not accept late submissions except in the case of emergency.

Term Paper Option

You may prefer to write a research paper in lieu of the exam: In 10-12 pages (double spaced, 12 point font) discuss a topic in the area of the Covenants. This can be an exegetical, historical or dogmatic paper. Let your interests lead you to a topic. Consult the Bibliography on the course homepage, and discuss the topic with me.

The paper is due, emailed to me by midnight, **March 14th, 2015**. I do not accept late papers except in the case of emergency. Also, please include a statement of what percent of the required reading you completed.

See Dr. Swain’s “Research Paper Guidelines” on the course homepage, which gives excellent directions.

- The paper must have a thesis statement—it must assert something. (Make this clear somehow near the beginning.)
- Then develop an argument that proves your thesis. In other words, there must be accurate description, but also more than description, namely evaluation according to the Bible.
- I want you to understand the classic Reformed theology on the subject, even if you have a different view. So, include exposition of the teaching of the Westminster Standards or the Three Forms of Unity on the subject you are dealing with.
- All M.Div. students are expected to make significant use of the original languages of Scripture. Here I am not looking for a few proof texts, but for real interaction with a central passage (or passages) of Scripture in context. (This means you will use commentaries.) Bad: “Baptism is an ordinance of Christ meant to be continued in his church until he returns (Matthew 28:18-20).” Good:
“Baptism is an ordinance of Christ meant to be repeated in his church until he returns, because…”—thesis statement follows—then there are paragraphs which explain the Scripture in its context in Matthew. Other theological points may now be mentioned and evaluated, showing how Moltmann, or Horton, for example, agree or how far they might agree, but what has been left unsaid, for example. Bad: “Roger Nicole is a credo-baptist, while Meredith G. Kline is a paedo-baptist.” Good: “In denying infant baptism Beasley-Murray takes a position that proves unbiblical, because he says the New Testament teaches that baptism saves. It is true that a number of passages of the New Testament indicate that God does signify salvation with water baptism, but a number also indicate that not all the water-baptized are saved”—Scripture exposition follows, showing what you mean by “signifies” and what scriptures indicate this—Then further elaboration: “Beasley-Murray answers this point about this text by saying ‘No!’ because he…”—then you reply, “However, what he fails to state, or notice, is…” At the end of the paper, you should sum up what you have found.

• You should be familiar with the readings assigned for the course, and go beyond them in the paper. You must use at least fifteen good (solid-scholarly, not popular-theological, no magazines like Christianity Today or Modern Reformation), non-internet, sources (of course you may find articles on the internet, but in no case may you cite a blog), including the Westminster Standards. You may not use a study Bible as a source. A good source is the kind a theologian would cite. (The Matthew Henry Commentary is not a good source. You may not use a study Bible as a source.) The point of good sources is your use of them—how do they stimulate your interest, challenge your position, enhance your argument, etc.?

Formal Term Paper Standards

I expect you to use standard paper conventions found in Kate Turabian, A Manual for Writers of Term Papers, Theses, and Dissertations. There is a quick version at http://www.press.uchicago.edu/books/turabian/turabian_citationguide.html. Failure to follow these conventions will reduce your grade. Please include a title page with your name, but omit headers or footers that include your name. Also, include a bibliography. You may collect your graded paper at the RTS office.¹

¹ Grading System for Papers:

A: Good grasp of basic issues, plus something extraordinary, worthy of publication in a technical or a popular publication. That special excellence may be of various kinds: formulation, illustration, comprehensiveness, subtlety/nuance, creativity, argument, insight, correlations with other issues, historical perspective, philosophical sophistication, and research beyond the requirements of the assignment. One of these will be enough! M.Div. students, and MAR students who have studied Greek or Hebrew, must make relevant use of the meaning of Scripture in the original languages to receive the grade “A.” This may require extra work.

A−: An A paper, except that it requires some minor improvement before an editor should finally accept it for publication.

B+: Good grasp of basic issues but without the special excellences noted above. A few minor glitches.

B: The average grade for graduate study. Good grasp of basic issues, but can be significantly improved.
A Glossary and a Bibliography of covenant theology are on the course homepage.

Covenant Theology
Lecture Outline

1. Introduction
   a. Course requirements
   b. Preliminary remarks.
      i. Unity of Scripture.
      ii. Historia salutis/Ordo salutis distinction.
      iii. Calvinist vs. Arminian covenant theology.
      iv. BT definition of covenant.
      v. Terminology of covenant theology.
      vi. Summary definition of covenant theology.
   c. History of Covenant Theology
      i. Pre-Reformation
      ii. Calvin
      iii. Post-Reformation.
      iv. The Complex “Covenants of ‘Works/Redemption/Grace’”
      v. Barthian Objections
   d. Controversies
      i. How is the OC related to NC?

Abbreviations for Comments on Papers: A – awkward; Amb – ambiguous; Arg - more argument needed; C – compress; Circle (drawn around some text)- usually refers to misspelling or other obvious mistake; D – define; E - expand, elaborate, explain; EA - emphasis argument; F - too figurative for context; G - grammatical error; III – illegible; Illus - illustrate, give example; Int – interesting; M - misleading in context; O - overstated, overgeneralized; PS- problem in paragraph structure; R – redundant; Ref- reference (of pronoun, etc.); Rel- irrelevant, or relevance unclear; Rep – repetitious; Resp - not responsive; S - summary needed; Scr - needs more scripture support; Simp – oversimplified; SM - straw man (a view nobody holds); SS - problem in sentence structure; St - style inappropriate; T - transition needed; U – unclear; V – vague; W - questionable word-choice; Wk - weak writing (too many passives, King James English, etc.); WO - word order; WV - whose view? yours? another author?
1. Monocovenantalism
2. Law and Gospel in Antithesis.
3. Indicative and Imperative in positive relationship. (Paul’s antitheses are *Historia Salutis* statements. The *Historia Salutis* indicative as the basis of the imperative.)

ii. Two strands of covenant theology.

2. The Covenant of Works
   a. Scripture
      i. Rom 5:12-21 (1 Cor 15:21-22)
      ii. 1 Cor 15:45-49
      iii. Heb 4:3-5
   b. Summary
   c. Doctrinal importance

3. The *Pactum Salutis* (Covenant of Redemption)
   a. Scripture
   b. Summary (including Pentecost)
   c. Doctrinal importance

4. The Covenant of Grace
   a. Adam
   c. Abraham (Isaac, Jacob, Joseph).
   d. Moses. “Covenant of Law.”
      i. Geerhardus Vos and Dr. Robertson, “an externalized expression of God’s will” for his people.
      ii. Dr. Meredith G. Kline: the Mosaic covenant was a covenant of works on the typological level.
         2. Response: Paul’s description of the OC as condemning, 2 Cor 3.
         3. Response: The meaning of the exile of Israel.
         4. Response: The warnings against apostasy in the NC.
         5. Merit?
   e. Dispensationalism
   f. David. Covenant of the Kingdom.
   g. Jeremiah 31.
   h. New Covenant
      i. Covenant concepts in the NT.
      ii. Continuity with Old Covenant in *ordo salutis*.
      iii. Discontinuity in *historia salutis*.
      iv. The “inheritance” in the NT.
      Central principle and goal.
   j. Doctrinal importance of the Covenant of Grace.
      i. Covenant and election.
      ii. Federal Vision.
      iii. Law and Gospel.
      iv. Promises. Personal, active redeeming.
      vi. The Church.

5. The Covenant of Grace and the Family.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>MDiv Student Learning Outcomes</th>
<th>Rubric</th>
<th>Mini-Justification</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>06ST601</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Washington</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Winter 2015</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Dr. Griffith</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Articulation (oral &amp; written)</strong></td>
<td>Strong</td>
<td>Preparation of outlines, summaries and exam questions. Optional research paper.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Broadly understands and articulates knowledge, both oral and written, of essential biblical, theological, historical, and cultural/global information, including details, concepts, and frameworks.</td>
<td>Strong</td>
<td>Biblical theological emphasis on progressive realization of covenants.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Scripture</strong></td>
<td>Strong</td>
<td>Reiterates the basics and reinforces God’s sovereign grace in each epoch of redemptive history.</td>
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<tr>
<td>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.)</td>
<td>Moderate</td>
<td>Relevance to the Christian life and Christian family life is stressed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Reformed Theology</strong></td>
<td>Strong</td>
<td>Reiterates the basics and reinforces God’s sovereign grace in each epoch of redemptive history.</td>
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<td>Significant knowledge of Reformed theology and practice, with emphasis on the Westminster Standards.</td>
<td>Moderate</td>
<td>Relevance to the Christian life and Christian family life is stressed.</td>
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<td><strong>Sanctification</strong></td>
<td>Strong</td>
<td>The covenant structures the entire life of the Christian. That is central content in the course.</td>
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<td>Demonstrates a love for the Triune God that aids the student’s sanctification.</td>
<td>Moderate</td>
<td>Relevance to the Christian life and Christian family life is stressed.</td>
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<td><strong>Desire for Worldview</strong></td>
<td>Strong</td>
<td>Emphasis on the relation of the offer of grace in the covenant to evangelism.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Burning desire to conform all of life to the Word of God.</td>
<td>Moderate</td>
<td>Relevance to the Christian life and Christian family life is stressed.</td>
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<td><strong>Winsomely Reformed/ Evangelistic</strong></td>
<td>Moderate</td>
<td>Emphasis on the relation of the offer of grace in the covenant to evangelism.</td>
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<td>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.)</td>
<td>Moderate</td>
<td>Emphasis on the relation of the offer of grace in the covenant to evangelism.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Preach</strong></td>
<td>Moderate</td>
<td>Much on proper interpretation for preaching.</td>
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<td>Ability to preach and teach the meaning of Scripture to both heart and mind with clarity and enthusiasm.</td>
<td>Moderate</td>
<td>Much on proper interpretation for preaching.</td>
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<td><strong>Worship</strong></td>
<td>None</td>
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<td>Knowledgeable of historic and modern Christian-worship forms; and ability to construct and skill to lead a worship service.</td>
<td>None</td>
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<td><strong>Shepherd</strong></td>
<td>None</td>
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<td>Ability to shepherd the local congregation: aiding in spiritual maturity; promoting use of gifts and callings; and encouraging a concern for non-Christians, both in America and worldwide.</td>
<td>None</td>
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<td><strong>Church/World</strong></td>
<td>Minimal</td>
<td>Distinctives of Reformed theology, related to that of other Protestants.</td>
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<td>Ability to interact within a denominational context, within the broader worldwide church, and with significant public issues.</td>
<td>Minimal</td>
<td>Distinctives of Reformed theology, related to that of other Protestants.</td>
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