

　　聖約神學是以上帝和祂子民相通的永恆計劃（聖約神學家稱之為「救贖之約 covenant of redemption」）為背景來闡釋福音的一種神學觀，而這個永恆計劃在歷史上的具體呈現，就是行為之約和恩典之約。

　　傳統的聖約神學，把救贖歷史劃分為主要的兩種聖約關係：行為之約（covenant of works）和恩典之約（covenant of grace）。聖經雖然沒有出現這兩個詞，但這種通過歸納經文得出的結論，可以具體反映出聖經信息的統一性，如同「三位一體」這個詞雖然沒有出現在聖經中，卻總括了聖經中關於上帝的重要真理一樣。藉著這兩個約（以及恩典之約在歷史上漸進的展開），聖約神學解釋了基督死亡的意義，幫助我們明白聖禮的本質，並為我們的得救確據提供了最堅實的解釋。

換一種方式來說，聖約神學是聖經所用的方式，來向我們解釋、並幫助我們更深刻地認識：

(1) 什麼是代贖（基督死亡的意義）；

(2) 什麼是得救的確據（我們根據什麼可以與上帝相交、享受祂的應許？）；

(3) 什麼是聖禮（聖約的記號與印記——它們是什麼，有什麼功效）；以及

(4) 救贖歷史的連續性（上帝救恩計劃的統一性）。

聖約神學也是一種釋經學，一種認識聖經的方法——一種本乎聖經來解釋聖經啟示統一性的進路。

　　當耶穌向祂的門徒解說祂死亡的意義時，祂是用「約」的觀念來解釋的（見太廿六章；可十四章；路廿二章；林前十一章）。當上帝向亞伯拉罕保證祂應許的話必定會實現，也是用約來表達的（創十二、十五、十七）。當上帝把祂的百姓分別出來，將祂的工作深植在他們心中，用一種可見的形式來表達祂的愛和憐憫，並確認他們未來的產業時，祂就賜下約的記號（創十七；出十二、十七、卅一；太廿八；徒二；路廿二）。當路加想要告訴早期的基督徒，耶穌的一生和事工，是上帝對祂的選民長久以來之應許的應驗，他也訴諸聖約，並引用了撒迦利亞的預言。如此，我們看到，早期基督徒是用上帝成全、應驗了祂與亞伯拉罕的約，來認識耶穌基督彌賽亞的工作的（路一72-73）。詩篇的詩人和希伯來書的作者，也是用聖約來顯明上帝的救贖計劃是如何安排的，以及如何在歷史中展開的（詩七十八，八十九；來六～十章）。

　　聖約神學不是對時代論（dispensationalism）的一種回應。典型的時代論在十九世紀形成之際，聖約神學早已存在。聖約神學也不是要作為嬰兒洗禮的藉口，以合理化一種特別的聖禮（例如現代的嬰兒領聖餐禮，和「洗禮重生論」）。聖約神學更不是狹隘的宗派觀念，而是普世教會認識聖經的方法；它雖然是在宗教改革時期發展出來的，但它的根源可以追溯到早期的大公教會，在歷史上也被宗教改革後的各個群體（浸信會，公理會，獨立教會，長老會，聖公會等）所欣賞。聖約神學不能被簡化為只是對聖約兒童的一種特殊看法（聖約繼承論covenant successionism）背書，或合理化某種特定的末世論，或特殊的教育哲學（無論是基督徒在家教育或基督徒學校，或典型的學校）。聖約神學遠遠大於此，比這些都更為重要。

　　「聖約的教導是所有真正神學的根基。有人說過，如果你真正明白行為之約和恩典之約的分別，你才真正明白神學。我確信，幾乎所有人所犯的有關聖經教訓的錯誤，都是對律法之約與恩典之約，有根本上的錯誤認識造成的。願上帝現在給我們能力來教導，並賜你恩典，來領受這個重要的主題。」這是誰說的呢？司布真——偉大的英國浸信會佈道家！這可以解除我們的疑慮，以為這只是一種偏狹的解釋聖禮的觀念而已。

　　聖約神學的源頭是三位一體上帝的生命和工作。上帝與人立約，與我們團契相通，是以三位一體之間的關係為模型的，也反映出祂們之間的關係。三位一體之間共享的生命，是上帝與祂的選民之間所立的恩典之約的藍圖。上帝永恆的救贖之約，就這樣藉著恩典之約，實現在歷史的時空之內。

https://yimawusi.net/2021/01/29/what-is-covenant-theology-ligon-duncan/

What is Covenant Theology by Ligon Duncan

By GOL　Covenant Theology

Covenant theology is the Gospel set in the context of God’s eternal plan of communion with his people, and its historical outworking in the covenants of works and grace (as well as in the various progressive stages of the covenant of grace). Covenant theology explains the meaning of the death of Christ in light of the fullness of the biblical teaching on the divine covenants, undergirds our understanding of the nature and use of the sacraments, and provides the fullest possible explanation of the grounds of our assurance.

To put it another way, Covenant theology is the Bible’s way of explaining and deepening our understanding of:

(1) the atonement [the meaning of the death of Christ];

(2) assurance [the basis of our confidence of communion with God and enjoyment of his promises];

(3) the sacraments [signs and seals of God’s covenant promises — what they are and how they work]; and

(4) the continuity of redemptive history [the unified plan of God’s salvation].

Covenant theology is also an hermeneutic, an approach to understanding the Scripture — an approach that attempts to biblically explain the unity of biblical revelation.

When Jesus wanted to explain the significance of His death to His disciples, He went to the doctrine of the covenants (see Matthew 26, Mark 14, Luke 22, 1 Corinthians 11). When God wanted to assure Abraham of the certainty of His word of promise, He went to the covenant (Genesis 12, 15, and 17). When God wanted to set apart His people, ingrain His work in their minds, tangibly reveal Himself in love and mercy, and confirm their future inheritance, He gave the covenant signs (Genesis 17, Exodus 12, 17, and 31, Matthew 28, Acts 2, Luke 22). When Luke wanted to show early Christians that Jesus’ life and ministry were the fulfillment of God’s ancient purposes for His chosen people, he went to the covenants and quoted Zacharias’ prophecy which shows that believers in the very earliest days of ‘the Jesus movement’ understood Jesus and His messianic work as a fulfillment (not a ‘Plan B’) of God’s covenant with Abraham (Luke 1:72-73). When the Psalmist and the author of Hebrews want to show how God’s redemptive plan is ordered and on what basis it unfolds in history, they went to the covenants (see Psalm 78, 89, Hebrews 6-10).

Covenant theology is not a response to dispensationalism. It existed long before the rudiments of classical dispensationalism were brought together in the nineteenth century. Covenant theology is not an excuse for baptizing children, nor merely a convention to justify a particular approach to the sacraments (modern paedocommunionism and baptismal regenerationism). Covenant theology is not sectarian, but an ecumenical Reformed approach to understanding the Bible, developed in the wake of the magisterial Reformation, but with roots stretching back to the earliest days of catholic Christianity and historically appreciated in all the various branches of the Reformed community (Baptist, Congregationalist, Independent, Presbyterian, Anglican, and Reformed). Covenant theology cannot be reduced to serving merely as the justification for some particular view of children in the covenant (covenant successionism), or for a certain kind of eschatology, or for a specific philosophy of education (whether it be homeschooling or Christian schools or classical schools). Covenant theology is bigger than that. It is more important than that.

“The doctrine of the covenant lies at the root of all true theology. It has been said that he who well understands the distinction between the covenant of works and the covenant of grace, is a master of divinity. I am persuaded that most of the mistakes which men make concerning the doctrines of Scripture, are based upon fundamental errors with regard to the covenant of law and of grace. May God grant us now the power to instruct, and you the grace to receive instruction on this vital subject.” Who said this? C.H. Spurgeon — the great English Baptist preacher! Certainly a man beyond our suspicion of secretly purveying a Presbyterian view of the sacraments to the unsuspecting evangelical masses.

Covenant theology flows from the trinitarian life and work of God. God’s covenant communion with us is modeled on and a reflection of the intra-trinitarian relationships. The shared life, the fellowship of the persons of the Holy Trinity, what theologians call perichoresis or circumincessio, is the archetype of the relationship the gracious covenant God shares with His elect and redeemed people. God’s commitments in the eternal covenant of redemptive find space-time realization in the covenant of grace.

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