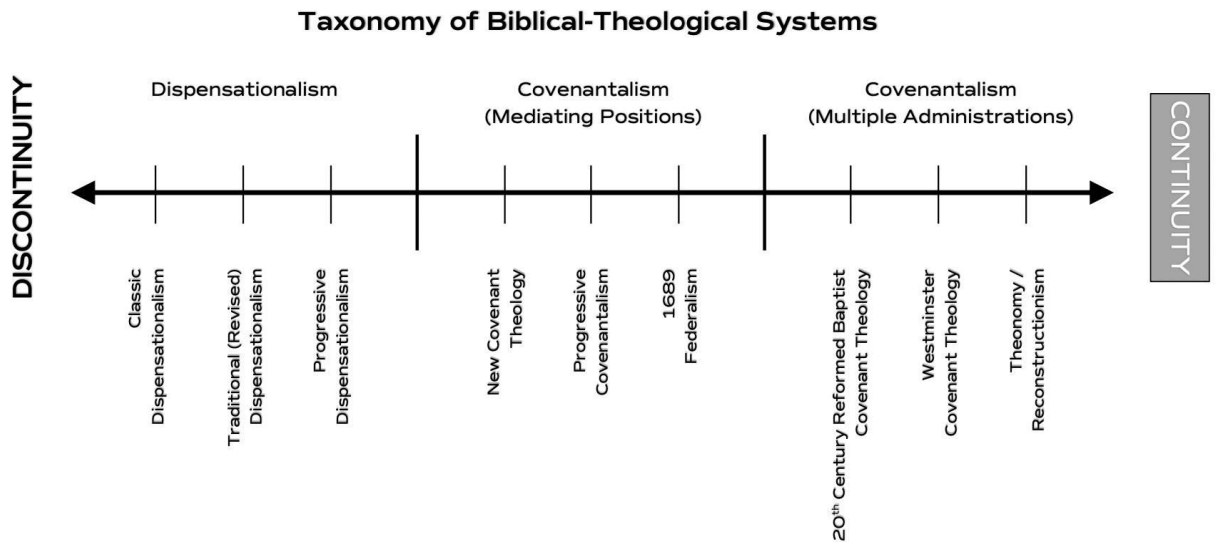


Continuing with Theological Systems (from last week):

[Diagram below by Matthew DelValle, mod. from Ben Merkle’s diagram in *Discontinuity to Continuity*]



Some follow-up items from last week:

1. Why do dispensationalists use the dispensations instead of the covenants? Because that is how they believe God has divided His word – into dispensations. Some teach that 2 Tim. 2:15—“rightly dividing the Word of truth”—instructs us to divide God’s Word into these dispensations. But the disp. systems are most defined by the Israel/church distinction.
2. Example of why these theological systems matter: if national Israel today has a special place in God’s plan, then how we politically treat the political nation of Israel has implications for how God will deal with us. (Gen 12:3 – “I will bless those who bless you.”)

Covenant Theology

Roots in the Reformation – ably represented in the WCF (1643-49) and other Reformed Confessions [some names: John Calvin, John Owen, Michael Horton, John Frame – could list hundreds more]

Hermeneutic: OT must be interpreted in light of NT

All God’s relations to humans are understood in terms of two covenants:

- “Covenant of works” – made with Adam in the garden before the Fall
- “Covenant of grace” – made through Christ with all who are to believe (the elect)

Underlying these covenants is another: the Covenant of Redemption – intra-trinitarian (Titus 1:2)

CT sees significant continuity between Israel and the church, not only in promise-fulfillment, but also in their experience of God

- One plan for His one people
- Israel and Church are highly linked:
 - o Church is a racially mixed and non-national Israel
 - o Church is a more knowledgeable version of the old covenant people of God (Heb 11:13-16)
 - o Church began with Adam

Key Feature of CT: Multiple Administrations of *the* Covenant of Grace, beginning in Gen. 3:15 (*protoevangelium*) and proceeding through Noahic, Abrahamic, Mosaic, Davidic, to the NC

Different covenant signs (Noahic: rainbow; Abrahamic: circumcision; Mosaic: sabbath; Davidic: a son on the throne; NC: baptism)

- Extreme continuity in the spiritual significance of the covenant signs from era to era

In CT, the newness of the NC is in terms of a *renewal*

The church is the direct fulfillment of Israel; i.e., the church experiences the direct fulfillment of God's promises to Israel.

The structure of the church is thus like the structure of Israel (mixed believers and non-believers)

- "Visible church" vs. "invisible church" in CT
 - o "You and your children" (see Acts 2:39 – but read entire verse!)
- This is why the covenant sign (baptism) is applied to infant children, as circumcision was
 - o "genealogical principle"; taken directly from the seed promise of the Abrahamic Cov.
 - o Abrahamic covenant takes on incredible practical significance (as it also does in DT)
 - o Note: Disp. and CT make a surprisingly similar error, lifting a specific promise out of the Abrahamic covenant (Disp: land; CT: seed) and carrying it forward without any regard for the fulfillment and newness that come through Christ).

CT sees a tripartite division of the Mosaic law into moral, civil, ceremonial components

- Civil and ceremonial are abrogated today; moral remains (see 10 Commandments as summary of God’s eternal moral law); includes the idea of an official Christian Sabbath (under different formulations, however)

20th Century Reformed Baptist Covenant Theology

Some would say this is poorly named—that many 17th-c Reformed Baptists held this very position.

Much the same as above (still multiple administrations of one CoG), but credobaptist (thus, regenerate church membership).

Still tend to see tripartite division of the Mosaic law, with 10 comm. as summary of God’s eternal moral law). Identify closely with 1689 LBCF.

Quote: Jim Renihan (1689 Federalist), speaking about the wide availability of CT works published even still today: “We have read our theology through paedobaptist works and tried to adjust those paedobaptist works into a Baptist framework and ended up with ‘many-headed monsters.’”

Leads to...

1689 Federalism [Jim Renihan, Sam Renihan, Richard Barcellos]

Identify the CoG with the NC. The CoG is presented only in types and shadows earlier on. This group also identifies closely with the 1689 LBCF.

Still tend to see tripartite division of the Mosaic law, with 10 comm. as summary of God’s eternal moral law).

New Covenant Theology [John G. Reisinger, Fred Zaspel, Tom Wells, Geoff Volker, Steve Lehrer]

- Tend to see their position in contrast to both dispensationalism and covenant theology
- Do not see a covenant in the garden
- No imputation of the active obedience of Christ (no need, since no creation covenant)
- Largely a grassroots, pastoral movement → umbrella term that encompasses a wide variety of beliefs; less influence at the scholarly level

- Hermeneutic: NT has complete precedence / Mosaic Law is completely fulfilled and no longer relates to NT church, except for historical understanding
 - o Sabbath – completely abrogated
 - o If the NT doesn't address it, it's not binding for Christians in the Church Age.
 - E.g., incest; but what about other things?? (e.g. bestiality)

Suggested Reading:

Merkle, Benjamin L. *Discontinuity to Continuity*

Brent Parker and Richard Lucas, eds. *Covenantal and Dispensational Theologies: Four Views on the Continuity of Scripture*

Horton, Michael. *Introducing Covenant Theology*