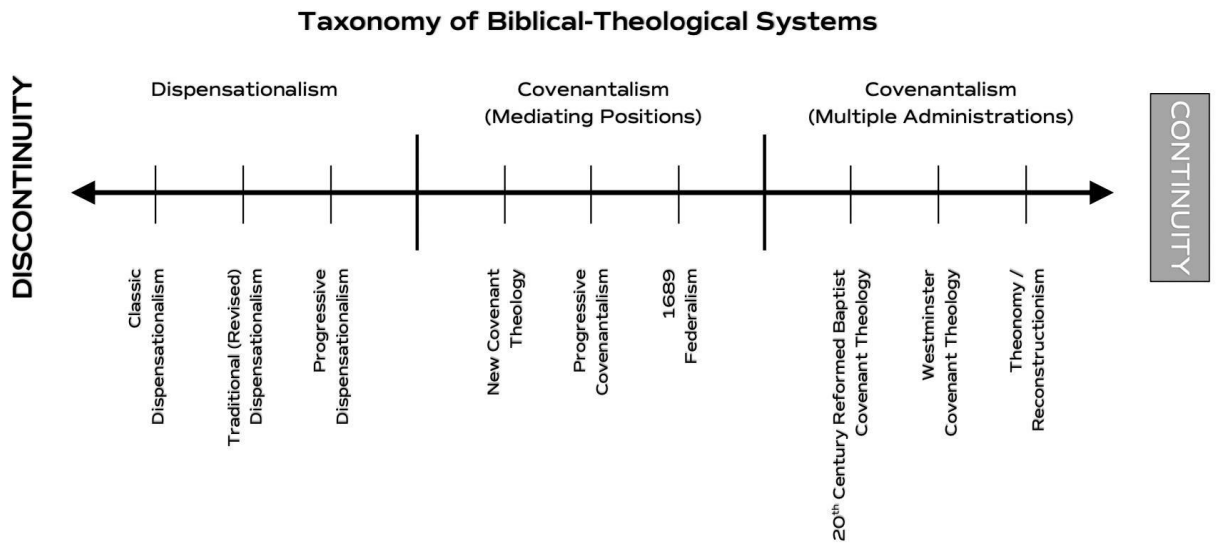


Continuing with Theological Systems (from last two weeks):

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



Progressive Covenantalism (PC)

Should not be equated with NCT

- even though that’s what many CT adherents claim about PC
- even though many who considered themselves advocates of NCT now follow PC
- PC is an independent position that has been worked out from its Biblical-Theological roots, in hopes of addressing issues found within the other systems
- PC is receiving excellent scholarly treatment [Peter Gentry, Steve Wellum, Tom Schreiner, John Meade, Brent Parker, Richard Lucas] as well as a simultaneous push within churches today [Ardel Caneday, Levi Secord, Jason DeRouchie]

1 plan of God, 1 people of God

All God’s promises are fulfilled in Christ (cf. 2 Cor 1:20); the church, as the bride of Christ, in union with Him, receives all the blessings of the New Covenant.

Wellum: “...the Bible presents a *plurality* of covenants that *progressively* reveal our triune God’s *one* redemptive plan for his *one* people, which reach their fulfillment, *telos*, and terminus in Christ and the new covenant.”

The Covenant of Grace: might be equated with God’s one unified redemptive plan

Hermeneutic: every passage must be interpreted in light of the covenant era it falls under and in relation to what precedes and follows it.

Remember that Biblical Theology is a hermeneutical discipline: “theological hermeneutics”

Three Horizons of Context (“Context, context, context”)

- *immediate*: grammatical-historical exegesis, authorial intent
- e.g. Mark 6:45-52
 - o Immediate - revelation of who Jesus is (climax of episode)
- *epochal*: every passage of Scripture must be understood within its own epoch (covenantal era), and each covenant must be understood in its own unique context.
 - o e.g. Paul’s argument in Rom. 4:9-12 is epochal
 - o Mark 6 - Whole gospel / Epochal – entire gospel leads up to “What manner of man is this?” “You are the Christ, the son of the living God.”
- *canonical*: every Scripture must be interpreted in light of its relation to the entirety of Scripture; b/c of Scripture’s dual authorship, a canonical reading is necessary to discover God’s ultimate intent
 - o Mark 6 - Whole Bible / canonical –
 - new Exodus (feeding in the wilderness and crossing of water)
 - Connection to Yahweh in Exodus and in Job (“He meant to *pass by* them”)
 - o OT authors did not exhaustively understand the meaning, implications, and possible applications of all they wrote (Wellum quoting G. Beale). Expansion of meaning b/c of later passages does not contravene the integrity of earlier texts. The later biblical author develops them in a way consistent with how God interacts with his people.

Typology

- A function of divine revelation (not an interpretive method) rooted in history and the text; involves an organic relationship b/t persons, events, and institutions in one epoch (“type”) and their counterparts in later epochs (“antitype”).
- Prophetic and predictive: indirect prophecy, which thus requires careful exegesis
 - o A type may not be recognized as such until later biblical authors pick up the pattern. (e.g., Gal 4:24, 1 Cor 10:11)

- How does it work?
 - o Repetition: allows us to discover a pattern; ultimately the types reach their fulfillment first in Christ and then in his people.
 - Adam: a type, and other people take on his headship role (Noah, Abraham, Israel, David). None fulfill his role, but they predict the last Adam to come, Christ.
 - Israel: a type: (God's Son – Ex. 4:22), takes Adam's role, but also anticipates the coming of the true Son/servant/vine (Isa. 5:1-7→John 15; Hos. 11:1→Matt 2:15). Christ is the "true Israel." The church receives fulfillments, not directly, but through its relationship with and union with Christ. → "adopted sons" (Eph 1:5, Gal 4:5-7)
 - o Lesser to greater: escalation as types are picked up, developed, and then find their fulfillment in Christ. Not linear: full escalation occurs with Christ's coming.
 - o Develops through covenantal progression: to follow a type through Scripture is often to walk through the covenants

Covenantal Features and Covenantal Progression

- Every covenant has aspects of unilateral/bilateral
 - o "God himself—our covenant-maker and keeper—must *unilaterally* act to keep his own promise by the provision of an *obedient* covenant partner." (Wellum)
- No covenant is unrelated to what preceded it
- No covenant makes sense apart from its fulfillment in Christ

Out-workings:

- Israel and the church are linked through Christ. Christ is the true Israel, the true Son; the church receives their blessings not as direct replacements of Israel, but as adopted sons grafted into the true vine, Christ.
- "land" promise (*contra* DT): the land itself is a type – we see escalation because the promised land eventually expands to the entire new creation (Ps 37:11→Matt 5:5; Ps 25:12-13 via Ps. 1 & 2 and Gal. 3:16). Mitigates against a dispensational view of political Israel being restored by God in the exact earthly plot of land promised to Abraham.

- “genealogical principle” (*contra* CT): Christ is the true seed of Abraham. The church becomes adopted sons of Abraham *by faith*; thus, the covenant sign is only properly applied to those who profess faith in Christ → mitigates against infant baptism
- Christians are not under any of the prior covenants *as covenants*. Think of Hebrews:
 - o Ch. 8 –
 - v.6 - New covenant is a better covenant, made the Mosaic obsolete - v.13
 - v.6 - Christ is a better mediator than Moses
 - vv. 1-6 - Christ is a better high priest than the Levitical priestly system
 - o Ch. 10 – esp. vv. 12-14 - Christ is a better sacrifice than the blood of bulls and goats
- Christians must obey all of Scripture in light of the fulfillment in Christ and the new covenant we live under (1 Cor 9:19-21)
 - o PC does not see a categorical tripartite division of the Mosaic law (the Mosaic Law was always presented, in both testaments, as one unit – see James 2:10), and thus does not see the “moral” components of the Mosaic Law as *the* standard nor as the explicit codification of God’s abiding moral law
 - o Requires us to note how Christ fulfills/fulfilled all of the promises of God (2 Cor 1:20) and to carefully examine how all of Scripture relates to us through Christ
 - Matthew 22:34-40 – double love command (context, context, context)
 - o We may often (though not always) arrive at the same conclusions as CT, but sometimes for very different reasons (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*

Peter Gentry and Stephen Wellum. *Kingdom Through Covenant*, 2nd ed.

Stephen Wellum and Brent Parker, eds. *Progressive Covenantalism*

Michael Hill. *The How and the Why of Love: An Introduction to Evangelical Ethics*