

# From Biblical Coherence to Systematic Theology: A Critical Reinterpretation of Covenant Theology

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## **Abstract**

This dissertation critically reinterprets classic covenant theology by appropriating Yong Ki Park's theology as a new paradigm of covenant theology. The structural unity of the entire Bible is understood through the Adamic Kingdom Covenant (Gen 1:28), something which has been overlooked by classic covenant theology. This dissertation examines recent approaches to systematic and biblical theology that present critical alternatives to the two-covenant scheme. By evaluating the advantages and shortcomings of these views, this dissertation proposes a covenant theology structured around the motif of the kingdom. This research argues that the covenant is a means for God's self-revelation by criticizing the classic covenant theological claim that the covenant is primarily a means of human redemption.

## **Keywords**

kingdom covenant, kingdom, temple, unity of the Bible, God's glory

## 1. Introduction

Within Reformed theology, the idea of the covenant has served as the most important hermeneutical key to understanding the Bible. The origins of “covenant theology” proper can be traced back to the Protestant Reformers Ulrich Zwingli, Heinrich Bullinger, and John Calvin. It then flourished in the middle of the seventeenth century through the efforts of theologians such as Johannes Coccejus (1609–1669), John Owen (1616–1683), and Francis Turretin (1623–1687). After the rise of classic covenant theology in the seventeenth century, covenant theologians have insisted that after Adam broke the “covenant of works,” all post-lapsarian covenants between God and humans are underpinned and held together by a “covenant of grace” (Williamson 2007, 30). This became the origin of the two-covenant scheme which was officially formulated through the Westminster Confession of Faith.

The two-covenant scheme receives theological and historical legitimacy within classic covenant theology. However, this scheme is not without its shortcomings. It has received much criticism based on some significant arguments in biblical theology presupposing a kingdom motif to demonstrate God’s glory as broader than the redemption motif. In developing the kingdom covenant scheme, this dissertation brings into question the ascendancy of the two-covenant scheme which has been accepted as a biblical doctrine in Reformed covenant theology since the seventeenth century.

I have attempted to critically review the contributions and problems of classic covenant theology and propose an alternative view of reading the whole Bible from a kingdom covenant perspective. For this purpose, Park’s (1995–2014) theology, which suggests a new paradigm of covenant theology, was critically employed. Park critically reinterpreted the covenant concept that was maintained by classic covenant theology.

This dissertation provides a critical reinterpretation of classic covenant theology but with the unity of the Bible in mind. Classic covenant theology has a systematic theological understanding of what is called a two-covenant scheme. In contrast, I appraised the two-covenant scheme as limited in its attempts at revealing the covenantal unity of the entire Bible. This made it necessary to first offer a biblical theology approach that emphasizes the unity of the Bible.

The unity of the Bible as referred to in this discussion is of great importance in biblical theology studies. Biblical theology studies each book of the Bible in pursuit of the unity of the whole Bible. That is to say, the sixty-six books of the Bible were written by different authors in different historical contexts, but together are to be considered the work of one God, essentially the Holy Spirit. Thus, the entire Bible is considered to have one story, one coherent message. To this end, I used Park's biblical theology approach, which strongly argued for the covenantal unity of the Bible.

In addition, I aimed for a systematic theological approach that offers a thematic way of reading the whole Bible. Systematic theology is known to approach themes, but keeps the message of the whole Bible in mind. I intended to conceptualize kingdom covenant theology in precisely this way. I considered a concept of the covenant that classic covenant theology emphasized as the core that covers the whole Bible. Moreover, my goal was to highlight the structural unity of the entire Bible by using the new concept of "kingdom covenant."

In short, this dissertation argues and demonstrates that the kingdom covenant already exists in Genesis 1:28 before the covenant of works in Genesis 2:16–17, against the claim of classic covenant theology. In this sense, this dissertation attempts to provide a critical reinterpretation of classic covenant theology.

## 2. Methodology: Canonical and Retrieval Approach

This dissertation employed a covenantal-canonical methodology called “The Bible Theology” proposed by Park (1997, 21–55). “The Bible Theology”<sup>1</sup> approach respects the uniqueness and context of each book of the Bible, but suggests that this uniqueness should be viewed in light of the coherence and covenantal structure of the whole Bible. Park strongly maintains that without a holistic view of the Bible there is a tendency toward a fragmented construal of its message. Therefore, the notion of the unitary meaning of the whole Bible is something never to be given up for the construction of authentic theology that is attempting to grasp not a part but the whole of the Bible (Park 1997, 97–98).

This dissertation is also an example of a theology of retrieval, that is, a work of constructive systematic theology that examines past theological contributions as a means of furnishing contemporary theology with a greater range of dogmatic options. Hence, Park’s work has been critically appraised and brought into dialogue with covenant theology in order to present a renewed and refined covenant theology for today. John Webster summarizes this retrieval approach as:

Retrieval, then, is a mode of theology, an attitude of mind and a way of approaching theological tasks which is present with greater or lesser prominence in a range of different thinkers, not all of them self-consciously ‘conservative’ or ‘orthodox’.... For such theologies, immersion in the texts and habits of thought of earlier (especially pre-modern) theology opens up a wide view

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1 Park’s theology has been called “The Bible Theology.” However, in English this is grammatically awkward. So, in this dissertation, Park’s theology is characterized as “kingdom covenant theology” or “covenant-oriented biblical theology.”

of the object of Christian theological reflection, setting before its contemporary practitioners descriptions of the faith unharassed by current anxieties, and enabling a certain liberty in relation to the present. (Webster 2007, 584–85).

Oliver D. Crisp also speaks of this methodology of retrieval. This illustrates the nature of the methodology this dissertation intends to employ:

This volume attempts to follow Machiavelli's example, and engage theologians of the past in conversation in order to bring their ideas to the table of contemporary theological reflection. What is envisaged here is the retrieval of their ideas for the purposes of constructive dogmatics. (Crisp 2010, viii)

Following this retrieval approach, I have first attempted to critically analyze the literature containing various claims about the two-covenant scheme. Then I provided the rationale for the need to retrieve the theological contribution of interpretation and key arguments of Park's theology. In short, this dissertation attempted to incorporate Park's covenantal-canonical approach to seek biblical unity, through a critical-constructive retrieval in systematic theology.

### **3. Main Arguments of This Dissertation**

In the second chapter, this study examined the common misconceptions and less than satisfying interpretations of Genesis 1:28 and proceeded to echo the central argument of Park that Genesis 1:28 should be reinterpreted from a covenant point of view. Furthermore, this study confirmed that Genesis 1–2 supports the kingdom covenant. I first argued that Genesis 1:28 has been overlooked or misunderstood in two respects.

The first point is that Genesis 1:28 has been overlooked in classic covenant theology. Classic covenant theology is characterized as a “two-covenant scheme” comprising of the so-called covenant of works (Gen 2:16–17) and a covenant of grace. Adam, who disobeyed the covenant of works as given in Genesis 2, fell into sin. To the sinful Adam, God promised salvation through the so-called original gospel that the seed of the woman will crush the head of the serpent (Gen 3:15). This is seen as the first covenant of grace. The covenant of grace is a covenant that penetrates the whole of the OT and NT and appears in the OT as the Abrahamic covenant, the Sinai covenant, the David covenant, and the new covenant. They are all regarded as future covenants of grace to be fulfilled in Christ.

According to this understanding of classic covenant theology, the covenant of works that appears in Genesis 2 is regarded as the first covenant. I have argued that it fails to notice the covenantal concept that appears in Genesis 1:28. The classic claim has the following problems. First, it is a problem of the priority of the covenant of works. After the covenant of works is given first and Adam breaks it, God gives the grace of redemption through the covenant of grace. I argued, however, that God established a kingdom covenant as a covenant of grace (Gen 1:28) before the covenant of works, and has protected humankind, even after Adam disobeyed the covenant of works, according to the covenant of grace. Second, the two-covenant scheme that prioritizes the covenant of works has a redemption-oriented concept of covenant, with a historical framework of redemptive history. According to this view, a covenant is introduced after the fall, and thus became a means of redemption. My argument, however, regarded the covenant not as a means of redemption but as a revelatory means for the existence and attributes of God. Third, in the two-covenant scheme, God’s kingdom, a more comprehensive theme than redemption, is overlooked.

Hence, this study considered the kingdom motif to be more proactive and inclusive than the redemption motif. It follows that the motif of redemption is contained in the framework of the kingdom of God.

The second is that Genesis 1:28 was misunderstood as a cultural mandate (Schilder 1977, 37–41). This is a hermeneutical error. The Bible basically serves the purpose of God's self-revelation as a covenantal concept. More so, Schilder, who first employed the term cultural mandate, interpreted Genesis 1:28 as content for cultural development. This is a kind of hermeneutical error (eisegesis) that rejects the biblical covenant context for God's revelation and injects the concept of culture into theology.

One of Park's key arguments that this study has emphasized is his interpretation of Genesis 1:28 as the threefold covenant that pertains to the kingdom covenant. As argued, Park points out that Genesis 1:28 shares structural similarity with the Abrahamic covenant. The Abraham covenant contains three elements of the kingdom of God: the covenant of descendant, the covenant of land, and the covenant of dominion. This is the same as the three contents of the blessing God has revealed to Adam, as shown in Genesis 1:28. Therefore, Genesis 1:28 can be regarded as the kingdom covenant. Second, I have shown that Genesis 1–2, the context of Genesis 1:28, can be interpreted from the perspective of the kingdom of God (hence, covenant). First, I provided a new interpretation of God's image in Genesis 1:26–27. In the traditional view, God's image has been understood as the mental and spiritual qualities that humans share with the Creator God. However, I argued that it is appropriate to interpret the image of God as "king of the kingdom of God." I also proposed a new understanding of God's rest that appears in Genesis 2:1–3. Rest is the most obvious sign of God's kingdom in which the sovereign rule of God takes place. The last is the marriage of Adam and Eve in Genesis 2:18–25. The marriage of Adam

and Eve is a covenant revelation showing the reality of the kingdom of God, which subsequently shows the future unity of Christ and the church. In this way, this study can confirm that Genesis 1:28 is a kingdom covenant through the broader context of Genesis 1–2.

Chapter three critically examined the recent claims of systematic theologians of the two-covenant scheme. There are two camps consisting of those who defend classic covenant theology and those who try to critically review it. The former are Louis Berkhof (1939, 211), Robert Reymond (1998, 430), and Michael Horton (2006, 93). They advocate for the two-covenant scheme of classic covenant theology. Berkhof and Reymond firmly assert the two-covenant scheme. Horton embraces the two-covenant scheme but prefers the covenant of creation over the term covenant of works. The common point between all of them is that the covenant of grace is established after the fall. Horton, under the influence of Kline, argues that the first relationship between God and Adam is a legal one. Grace seems to be given after humans broke the covenant of works as a criminal act against God’s law. However, this dissertation suggested that God’s kingdom covenant as a covenant of grace precedes the covenant of works, which is a legal relationship with God. Therefore, the first relationship between God and the covenant people is not a legal relationship but an unconditional relationship of grace.

Within the critical camp for classic covenant theology are John Murray and Andrew G. B. McGowan. Murray (1997, 50) points out the problem of the term “covenant of works” and suggests an alternative called the Adamic administration. Murray claims that all the covenants of the Bible are covenants of grace. This is called grace covenant monism. McGowan inherited Murray’s claim and presented a new proposal. McGowan (2016, 111) calls his claim “headship theology,” in place of the two-covenant scheme.

However, McGowan's attempt to interpret the relationship between Adam and Christ as merely a headship rather than a covenantal view is also limited. I argued that if the blessing given to the first Adam is interpreted as a kingdom covenant, then the ministry of last Adam (i.e., Christ) can be legitimately understood as the accomplishment of the kingdom of God. Therefore, they have a parallel relationship. In this way, the perspective of kingdom covenant theology can reveal the true meaning of the headship of the first Adam and the last Adam, through which the unified interpretive framework encompassing the whole Bible can be identified.

In chapter four, this study reviewed the critical debate about classic covenant theology in recent biblical theology. The key issue is whether there can be a covenantal concept before the covenant of works. The discussion is again divided into two main camps. The first camp is an attempt to make new claims on the basis of accepting the two-covenant scheme of classic covenant theology. Meredith G. Kline and G. K. Beale are representative scholars. Kline (2006, 19–20) makes an innovative claim that creation itself has a covenant character because of the concept of the kingdom of God from creation. This obviously goes beyond classic covenant theology. Beale (2011, 29–38) accepts the two-covenant scheme of classic covenant theology. But Beale considers that the image of God in Genesis 1:26–27 has a royal meaning. Beale provides the important observation that Genesis 1:28 has the character of a commission with a promise, which is repeated throughout the OT. Beale's position also goes beyond classic covenant theology. Nevertheless, both have the limitation of not seeing Genesis 1:28 as a kingdom covenant.

Yet another position criticizes the covenant concept of classic covenant theology and presents the concept of the creation covenant as an alternative. The representative scholars are William J. Dumbrell, Peter

Gentry and Stephen J. Wellum. They hold the position that there may be a concept of covenant before the second chapter of the book of Genesis. Dumbrell (1984, 44–46) argues for a concept of the creation covenant in Genesis 1–3 and criticizes the concept of the covenant of works in this respect.<sup>2</sup> Based on the covenant of creation, he understands the whole Bible as a frame of creation and new creation. Dumbrell claims that the theme of creation rather than sin and redemption is the leitmotif of the entire Bible. According to Dumbrell, redemption is seen in the process of creation being undermined and restored, but the primary purpose of the Bible is to reveal God’s work of creation and new creation.

Gentry and Wellum also argue for the creation covenant. Gentry and Wellum not only emphasize the primacy of the creation covenant, but also seek to reveal the unity and connection between the covenants. In other words, the Bible is made up of a system of covenants and understanding the relationship and structure of those covenants is a crucial way of understanding the true meaning of the Bible. Such an interpretive attempt does not appear in classic covenant theology. According to Gentry and Wellum, the covenant is the means of building the kingdom of God. Redemption is necessary in the process of establishing the kingdom of God. Thus, Gentry and Wellum see the kingdom of God as a larger theme than redemption. This is an important observation that opens up a new horizon of covenant theology. But the concept of the creation covenant proposed by Dumbrell, Gentry and Wellum is vague. In a covenant, there is

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2 In the first edition of his book, Dumbrell begins with his treatment of the creation covenant in relation to the covenant given to Noah. However, in the revised edition (2013), the title of the chapter was changed to “The Creation Covenant.” In Chapter 1, the covenant of Noah is discussed within the category of the creation covenant. Through this, it can be seen that Dumbrell’s covenant theology gradually progresses to emphasize the importance and priority of the creation covenant.

always a subject of the covenant, the content of the covenant, and the sign of the covenant. Gentry and Wellum do not mention these in detail in their proposal.

The critical review of systematic theology and biblical theology of classic covenant theology that has been discussed so far can be narrowed down to the following key issue: the concept of the kingdom covenant exists before the covenant of works appearing in Genesis 2. This study focused on this point and utilized Park's theology to overcome the limits of classic covenant theology.

In the fifth chapter of this dissertation, Park's theology was defined as kingdom covenant theology and this study attempted a reinterpretation of Park's theology as a whole. Park's kingdom covenant theology is a very important attempt to understand the entire Bible within a covenant structure. It is especially important that Park (1997, 134–140) interprets Genesis 1:28 as the threefold covenant, that is, the kingdom covenant. Park argues that Genesis 1:28 is the most important passage in revealing the structural unity of the Bible as a whole. Genesis 1:28 as God's kingdom covenant has structural continuity with the Abrahamic covenant through the Noahic covenant. The covenant of descendants, the covenant of land, and the covenant of dominion are precisely the three elements of the kingdom of God. The history of the OT shows the fulfillment of the Abrahamic covenant as a kingdom covenant with three elements (Park 1997, 148–164). According to Park, in Genesis 1–36, God shows covenantal providence through the covenant made with Adam, the forefather of humankind, and with the fathers of the chosen people. The covenant of descendants is subsequently fulfilled from Genesis 37 to Numbers 30, the covenant of land in Numbers 31 to the book of Judges, and the final covenant of dominion in Ruth to Esther. According to Park (1997, 167–210),

the poetic books reveal God's great attributes in the history of fulfillment of the covenant of the OT by way of praise. The prophetic books reveal the glory of God's grace, by which the fallen kingdom of David, corrupted by sin as according to the prophecy of the Mosaic covenant, is restored by God's faithfulness to the covenant and his love (Park 1997, 213–259).

According to Park, even in the NT the kingdom covenant is fulfilled through Christ. Christ proclaims the kingdom of God as king of the kingdom of God. In other words, the whole NT is organized into a structure that fulfills the kingdom of God. The four Gospels state that Christ, the fulfiller of the kingdom covenant of the OT, witnesses to the kingdom of God. In Acts the Holy Spirit comes according to the promise of Jesus. This marks the establishment of the NT church. That is to say, from the book of Acts to the book of Revelation, the Holy Spirit shows us that the NT church has been established and will grow and finally succeed in victory. This leads to the fulfillment of the OT kingdom covenant, and ultimately reveals the glory of God. Hence, I demonstrated that Park's theology revealed the covenant structure of the entire Bible on the basis of the kingdom covenant in Genesis 1:28. Park's work holds great theological significance.

Chapter six of this study showed how the temple motif must be included in kingdom covenant theology. There have been some convincing arguments made that the Garden of Eden is the archetype of the temple, for example, Alexander (2018), Beale (2003, 617-622; 2004), Fesko (2007, 175-182), Hess and Tsumura (1994, 399–404), Kline (2006), Levenson (1985), Longman (2017), Niehaus (2014, 74–76), Walton (2006), Wenham (1987). Nevertheless, this study stressed that the temple motif in Genesis 2 should be interpreted within the framework of the kingdom covenant in Genesis 1. The temple is a visible symbol of the rule of the kingdom of God, the pinnacle of self-revelation in which God dwells and where his name is kept. Therefore, both

the kingdom of God and the temple are interrelated as means of revealing God's attributes.

In the discussion of the temple, Genesis 1–3 is very important. Genesis 1–3 shows the paradigm for interpreting the entire Bible. The motifs of God's kingdom and the temple that first appear in Genesis 1–3 make their way through the Bible all the way to Revelation, where they are fully fulfilled in the new heavens and the new earth of Revelation 21–22. The relationship between the kingdom and the temple in Genesis 1–3 appears repeatedly in OT history and in Christ's ministry in the NT. The kingdom of God in OT history is typologically established through the Abrahamic covenant. And after that, the temple appears as a typological model through the Mosaic covenant. The nation of Israel, which is a typology of the kingdom of God, is a kingdom of priests that centers on the law and temple sacrifices. This is the identity of the nation of Israel, which is a holy nation through the temple system of the Mosaic covenant. This clearly shows that the motifs of the kingdom and the temple are inseparable.

In the OT, the kingdom motif and temple motif are eventually fulfilled through Christ. Jesus is the true Messiah (Christ) who came according to the OT covenant, and he not only comes as the realization of the kingdom of God, but also is resurrected as the true temple. Thus, Christ is the substantial fulfillment of the Davidic kingdom of the OT and the temple of Solomon. The motifs of the kingdom of God and the temple accomplished through Christ are spiritually fulfilled in the church by the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit accomplishes in a spiritual way the kingdom covenant which was first revealed through Adam. God the Holy Spirit fulfills the new covenant by making the NT apostles understand the gospel of the kingdom of God. Through this, God the Holy Spirit builds a church, which is the kingdom and temple on earth.

Finally, in the new heavens and new earth, the kingdom of God and the temple are fulfilled through Christ the Lamb. In the new heavens and new earth there is no temple building. God the Almighty and Christ the Lamb are the temple (Rev 21:22). There, the saints will become kings and priests, and will praise and serve God forever (Rev 1:5–6). This is the final fulfillment of the OT kingdom covenant. It reveals forever the being and glory of God. The revelation of the glory of God is the ultimate goal of kingdom covenant theology.

This study then employed the recent assertion that the Bible has a dramatic character to construct a kingdom covenant theology, a covenantal metanarrative of the whole Bible with eight acts, which has been claimed in this research. The reason for employing dramatic biblical understanding is that it is seen as the model that most realistically confirms the covenantal unity and the revelatory meaning of kingdom covenant theology. Recently, scholars who support dramatic theology view the entire Bible as a “drama of redemption” (Vanhoozer 2005, 2014; Horton 2002b, 2011). They see God as working for the purpose of redeeming fallen humanity as a dramatic revelation. I, however, regarded the Bible as a “drama of revelation” that dramatically reveals the being and attributes of God through covenants and fulfillment. Redemption is the revelatory means in which the covenant is accomplished.

God uses covenant and its fulfillment to reveal his eternal being and attributes in history, but always in a situation impossible with human strength and wisdom, and in a dramatic way. Through this, the people of the covenant realize and praise God’s power and faithfulness. The highest peak of this drama is the event of the cross and resurrection of Jesus Christ. The drama of the reversal of death by the resurrection occurred. Thus, the dramatic understanding of the Bible better reveals the revelatory meaning

that is intended by the Bible than any other model.<sup>3</sup> Furthermore, understanding the Bible as a revelatory drama presents a very important point of view in reading a unified story with dramatic consistency while respecting the diverse contents of the Bible as a whole. Thus, the dramatic approach allows us to better understand the diversity and unity of the Bible than any previous model.

#### **4. Findings and Theological Significance of This Research**

This study has evaluated Park's interpretive attempt as having important theological significance. However, this study also critically evaluated Park's theology to provide a clearer understanding of the "rich and balanced theology of the kingdom covenant." Although this study appropriated Park's theological viewpoint and key claims, the following points are differentiated.

First, this study argued that the threefold covenant, the core concept of Park's theology, is inadequate as a theological concept for encompassing the entire Bible. In order to clarify God's revelatory intention centered on the rule of God's kingdom, this dissertation intended to reconceptualize the threefold covenant as "kingdom covenant."

Second, Genesis 1–3 can be interpreted from the perspective of the kingdom covenant. This study focused on Genesis 1–3 as a paradigm for interpreting the entire Bible as a covenantal text. Park does not provide enough explanation about this point. Genesis 1–3 can be reinterpreted from the perspective of the kingdom of God, especially the image of God in Genesis 1:26–27, the rest in Genesis 2:1–3, the marriage of Adam and Eve

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3 See Myk Habets, "The Dogma is the Drama: Dramatic Developments in Biblical Theology," *Stimulus* 16.4 (2008): 1–2.

in Genesis 2:18–25, and the fall and redemption covenant in Genesis 3. This reinterpretation provides a means for understanding the entire Bible on the basis of kingdom covenant theology.

Third, this study emphasized that there is always a temple (redemption) motif within the framework of the kingdom covenant theology. Through this, God's revelatory attributes are revealed as a whole. This is proved not only in Genesis 1–3, but in the relation of the Abrahamic covenant to the Mosaic covenant, and in the event of Christ. Park emphasized the threefold covenant, the kingdom covenant, and focused on proving the structural unity of the Bible. However, Park has not fully noticed that the temple motif always appears in the process of fulfillment of the kingdom covenant throughout the Bible. In this dissertation, the temple motif in kingdom covenant theology is proven to have a revelatory purpose which includes the idea of redemption emphasized by classic covenant theology.

Fourth, this study emphasized the overarching unity of the Bible by utilizing dramatic biblical understanding, but emphasized the variety of literary genres, differences of historical context, and diversity and continuity of contents. This is because the Bible's dramatic understanding is that the Bible has various components, but through the continuity of the dramatic plot, they most realistically reveal the glory of God, the ultimate-unitary theme of the Bible. Furthermore, the dramatic understanding of the Bible emphasizes that the truth of the Bible reveals not only the theoretical dimension but also the practical and pastoral dimension of the church. This study emphasized the theological significance of this dramatic understanding of the Bible.

As described above, this dissertation revealed that Park's theology, which has an innovative perspective beyond classical covenant theology, also needs a critical review. Through this work, the theological significance of this dissertation is as follows.

First, this dissertation has been an attempt to identify the covenantal unity of the Bible. To hold the unity that encompasses the entire Bible has traditionally been a central task and ideal of theology which has been pursued in systematic and biblical studies. Classic covenant theology has discussed the unity of the whole Bible with the covenant of grace. However, the two-covenant scheme in which the covenant of works appears first is dualistic, which is a problem in understanding the Bible as a whole. There has been an ongoing attempt to understand the unity of the Bible in the light of Biblical theology. They are: the Bible's unity with Christ as the center, the unity of the narrative, and the covenantal unity.

Park's theology, which is emphasized in this discussion, seems to have made meaningful attempts to unify the Bible in a new dimension, that is, viewing Genesis 1:28 as the key passage that lends the whole OT a structurally united understanding. Based on this, Park clearly states that the OT and the NT are complementary covenant structures through the inner logic and evidence of the Bible itself. Through this, God's faithfulness to the covenant and the glory of God have been revealed. This study attempted to reveal the covenantal and structural unity of the Bible that Park's theology tries to assert, centering on the key claims of his important works.

The second theological significance of this study pertains to the revelation of God's glory through the concept of the revelation-centered covenant, the work of confirming the existence and the attributes of God. In other words, my proposal reaffirmed the ultimate purpose of theology, that is, the glory of God, which classic covenant theology has pursued. Classic covenant theology, which inherits the spirit of the sixteenth century Reformation, is valid in that it at least emphasizes the glory of God (*Soli Deo Gloria*) as the ultimate purpose of theology. The classic view reveals God's existence, attributes, and glory. The result has indeed been doxological.

Nevertheless, the classic view remains limited so long as it maintains the concept of the redemptive historical covenant. The theology of the redemption history based on classic covenant theology asserts that the core of the Bible is the redemption of the sinner by the covenant of grace that is given after the fall. Rightly considered as the redemption-oriented covenant, it is seen mainly as a way of redeeming fallen human beings. Hence, the theme that emerges is the glory of God through redemption.

My argument, like redemptive historical theology, makes the glory of God the ultimate goal of theology, but with a different approach. This study viewed Genesis 1:28 as the kingdom covenant. The covenant here is a revelation-oriented covenant that reveals God's existence and attributes. God reveals his eternal glory through the principles of covenant and fulfillment in history. To this end, God creates Adam as the image of God and makes a kingdom covenant with him. After that, despite Adam's sin, the kingdom covenant is typologically fulfilled through OT history, and finally through Christ, the last Adam. This line of argument confirms the end of the covenant, that is, the glory of God.<sup>4</sup> In this respect, this study is clearly distinguished from the claims of classic covenant theology, that is, the concept of the redemption-oriented covenant that centers on human salvation.

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4 Hebrews 1:1-3 reveals the ultimate revelatory meaning that the OT covenant is fulfilled in Christ, the Son of God: "In the past God spoke to our ancestors through the prophets at many times and in various ways, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, and through whom also he made the universe. The Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being, sustaining all things by his powerful word. After he had provided purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty in heaven" (NIV).

This is plausible in light of the dramatic understanding of the Bible, or say, covenantal discourse as drama, which this study proposed. The revelatory drama of the Bible has a single purpose. It uses various acts, scenes, and characters to reveal the existence and great glory of God. God is a dramatist, and Jesus Christ is the leading actor of the kingdom of God. The Holy Spirit is the director. This study concluded that the revelatory drama of the Bible dramatically fulfills the kingdom covenant on earth for the revelation of God's glory.

Third, this dissertation has demonstrated that the kingdom covenant theology contains the motif of the temple. The main recent argument for the temple motif in Genesis 2–3 is that the Garden of Eden has archetypal features of later tabernacle or temple. Furthermore, this motif will be fulfilled in the new heavens and new earth as it appears in Revelation 21–22. These temple motifs basically include the idea of atonement (or redemption) to forgive a sinful people. But I further argued that the temple motif has a revelation-oriented idea that not only includes the motif of redemption but also reveals the glory of God. In other words, the temple is the center of the kingdom of God. Not only is the character of a priestly kingdom, which atones for a sinful people by ritual sacrifice, shown, but also the presence and dwelling of God with his people. Consequently, it serves as a symbol of concrete revelation of God's eternal being.

Moreover, as argued, the recent study of Eden as a temple clearly opens a new horizon that goes beyond the redemptive understanding of Genesis 2–3, which has been argued for in classic covenant theology. Nevertheless, from the standpoint of this study, the temple motifs appearing in Genesis 2 should be discussed in relation to the kingdom covenant in Genesis 1:28 because the theme of the kingdom of God precedes the theme of the temple. Therefore, this dissertation argues that the kingdom motif and

temple motif have an inalienable theological relationship and completely reveal the attributes of God. What is important here is that the central theme of the Bible is repeated and gradually disclosed. The kingdom motif and temple motif also appear to be fulfilled archetypally in Genesis 1–3, typologically in the history of Israel, and substantially in the NT through Christ and the Holy Spirit. Ultimately, it will be accomplished in the new heavens and new earth. In this sense, the temple motif in the kingdom covenant theology has a very important significance in constructing revelation-oriented theology.

## **5. Conclusion**

This dissertation critically reinterpreted classic covenant theology by critically appropriating Yong Ki Park's theology as a new paradigm of covenant theology. To this end, this dissertation examined recent approaches to systematic and biblical theology that present critical alternatives to the two-covenant scheme. By evaluating the advantages and shortcomings of these views, this dissertation proposed a covenant theology structured around the motif of the kingdom. This research argued that the covenant is a means for God's self-revelation by criticizing the classic covenant theological claim that the covenant is primarily a means of human redemption. The whole Bible is thought of as a covenantal metanarrative containing one theme with dramatic continuity. Aside from employing and reformulating the theology of Park, the dissertation made the following original points.

First, Genesis 1-3, which has been emphasized as a paradigm for interpreting the entire Bible, can be reinterpreted from the perspective of the kingdom covenant. Second, the frame of the kingdom covenant always contains a temple motif. This ensures that God's attributes are

fully revealed. Third, not only the structural unity of the Bible but also the various literary genres, differences of historical context, and continuity of the whole biblical narrative are emphasized. Through this, my dissertation revealed that the dramatic model of biblical understanding may best clarify the ultimate goal of Scripture to be God's glory, that is, the existence and attributes of God.

In short, this dissertation clarified the theological significance of Park's theology, which is seen as an alternative to classic covenant theology, and offered a more balanced understanding of it by redefining Park's work as kingdom covenant theology. Hence, the intention of this dissertation has been to present a new direction for Reformed covenant theology that is centered on the kingdom and God's existence and work towards that which is taught throughout Scripture and should work its way into all areas of theological thought.

Ultimately, the Reformation tenets of sola Scriptura and tota Scriptura are illuminated through the framework of kingdom covenant theology, and, as such, both bring to the fore the ultimate purpose of theology which is, as emphasized, Soli Deo gloria.

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