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What is the scope of christian ethics

Today, we look inside Hak Joon Lee's forthcoming book Christian Ethics. This book presents a renewed vision of Christian life centered on grace, justice, and peace—applied to the most urgent and controversial social issues of the twenty-first century. Christian Ethics is available for pre-order at Eerdmans.com, Barnes & Noble, ChristianBook.com, and Amazon.com. - Chapter 1 - A Brief Survey of the Old Testament Covenants The covenant is the goal of creation and creation is the way to the covenant. —Karl Barth, Church Dogmatics III/1 If creation was the external basis of the covenant, [the covenant] is the internal basis of [creation]. —Karl Barth, Church Dogmatics III/1 This chapter and the next establish covenant as the root metaphor and the di-vine drama of Scripture. Through a brief survey of the major covenants in the OT (with creation/Adam, Noah, Abraham, Israel, and David), this chapter shows how the biblical story line moves through various covenants, anticipating its climax in Jesus Christ. This survey of the OT covenants is important to understand the full meaning and implication of the new covenant of Jesus Christ because it is the consummation of the preceding covenants. Furthermore, the patterns and types of the OT covenants are crucial to understand the moral nature of God and God's interactions with humanity and other creatures. The survey of the biblical covenants in this chapter is far from exhaustive; it is only representative. Even the study of each covenant focuses only on its basic moral contours and characteristics. Special attention will be given to the patterns and types of God's work in covenant—how God continuously uses covenant to organize God's community and what patterns and types are discernible in the process. Let us now examine the major covenants in the Bible, starting with the covenant with creation. Covenant with Creation The Westminster Confession, a major theological document in the Reformed tradition, reads: "The first covenant made with man was a covenant of works, wherein life was promised to Adam, and in him to his posterity, upon condition of perfect and personal obedience." Despite Reformed theology's creative application of the idea of covenant to Adam, called the covenant of works, there is still considerable dispute among scholars on whether God's relationship with creation and Adam could be defined as covenantal. One major reservation centers on the fact that the term "covenant" does not appear in the creation story (Gen. 1-3). Despite the absence of the term in Genesis 1-3, I claim that the overall ethos—the theological and ethical premises of the creation story—is covenantal in nature. A covenantal interpretation offers more plausibility and explanatory power for the text than other interpretations. Any reasonable reader of Scripture recognizes that certain key motifs and ideas, such as covenant or God's reign, are assumed in many places of the text without explicit reference. This happens because biblical writers communicate to a faith community that already shares certain core theological and moral assumptions. This practice applies to covenant: there are several plausible reasons to consider God's relationship with creation and the first humans in covenantal terms. William J. Dumbrell offers a sensible explanation for why God's relationship with creation should be understood as a covenant. According to him, the term "covenant" first appears in the OT in Genesis 6:18. Interestingly, in describing God's covenant with Noah, the author of Genesis chose the verb heqim ("to establish a covenant") rather than the verb krt ("to cut a covenant"), which is typically employed to portray the initiation of a covenant (cf. Gen. 15:18; 21:27, 32; Exod. 23:32, etc.). He claims this verb choice is not incidental; it implies that God's covenant with Noah (Gen. 6:18) is not a newly initiated covenant³ but a reestablishment of the old covenant, which had already existed, namely, God's covenant with creation.4 His claim is substantiated in the other uses of heqim in Genesis 17:7, 21; Exodus 6:4; Deuteronomy 8:18; etc. Several passages in Scripture directly refer to creation as a covenantal event. For example, Job 5:19-22 directly refers to the covenant with creation. Additionally, the prophet Hosea mentions God's covenant when he says, "I will make for you a covenant on that day with the wild animals, the birds of the air, and the creeping things of the ground" (Hos. 2:18),5 reminding about the creation story and Noah's covenant. Like-wise, Psalms 9:9-22 and 89:19-37 compare the firmness of God's covenant with David and Levitical priests to God's "covenant with the day and night." Similarly, Jeremiah 31:35-36 states that the sincerity of God's promise to Israel is as firm as his sustenance of the natural order of creation. All these references show that creation is God's covenantal work and that God maintains its order through God's covenantal fidelity. The ordering of the universe in Genesis 1 signifies a covenantal underpinning of creation. The creation story reveals the patterns and motifs that typically characterize the covenant: ordering or righting of things through separating and binding. The first three days of God's creation consist in the repeated ordering acts of God that set up the boundaries among different entities, forces, and structures, while the last three days fill it with all kinds of creatures. An orderly and harmonious creation emerges step-by-step as God rules over chaotic and disorderly forces. Through differentiation and binding, God is ordering by putting all things right. God assigns and fills each realm with living creatures and distributes dominion (including rights and responsibilities). The assignment and distribution of spaces become the pre-condition for the survival and flourishing of all creatures. God's orderly work has the effect of turning a disordered chaos into a harmonious cosmos. Establishing the order through differentiating and fettering is a typical covenantal motif. Despite the mystery and virility, Genesis 1 is really about order. Chaos is untangled into light and darkness, inchoate ground is divided into water and land, and a firmament is erected to hold the rainstoms above at safe distance from the ground water below. Most of the language is about separating and dividing, like the task of one doing laundry. It takes three days to create earth's spaces and three days to fill them with correlating animate and inanimate creatures. Every day fits the scheme. And poetic repetition of phrases like, "It was good" infuse Genesis 1's spatial proportion with a moral aesthetic. The rhythm, constancy, and regularity of the natural order are the result of God's covenant with creation. Likewise, in correlation with the physical order, Genesis 1 implies that a certain moral order is embedded in God's creation, testifying to the integrity and moral coherence of God's creation. Mary Douglas comments, "Being moral would mean being in alignment with the universe, working with the laws of creation, which manifest the mind of God." This motif of the covenantal ordering of creation appears in wisdom literature and in the prophets as well. This order serves as the stabilizing force and the moral reference point of human activities. As the opening story of the Bible, the creation covenant has a profound ethical meaning and profound implications. It is more than cosmogony (the birth of the world), as it touches nature, humans, family, and economy in their intersections. Importantly, the creation covenant has profound ecological implications for our global society and the planet today, which faces looming threats from global warming, pollution, and water shortage—all human-made ecological disasters based on a myopic anthropocentric worldview of the West. It counters this worldview by presenting creation as the default, antecedent community for all creatures and all human com-munities. As Isaiah's eschatological vision of shalom portrays (Isa. 11:6-9), creation constitutes a single moral community under God in which every living creature is a member with certain rights. The covenantal character of creation becomes even clearer with God's covenant with Adam. Covenantal patterns and motifs are pervasive in Genesis 1-2, which discloses the typical covenantal pattern (differentiating and fettering), premises (unity in diversity), and motifs (sonship, moral obligations, and rest). Genesis 2 depicts Adam as the archetypal representative of humanity, namely, God's covenantal partner. Made in the image of God (which indicates sonship), Adam is endowed both with the power to represent God to the rest of creation and the responsibility to care for creation. Although God is the ruler of creation, God yields and grants space for humanity as partners in God's ongoing organizing of creation. In a pattern similar to the differentiation of the spaces and dominions of the cosmos in the first three days, God sets the moral boundary for human freedom/power and responsibility by placing a structure on human behavior. The tree of knowledge symbolizes the boundary of human power in relation to God (the specific term of relationship between God and humanity), while the tree of life (eternal life) points toward the future promise of blessings and reward for Adam's covenantal faithfulness. Violation of the stipulation leads to death, while obedience leads to eternal life and Sabbath—peace and harmony in creation (Gen. 1:26). Even more importantly, Hosea 6:7 offers a direct reference to Adam's covenant ("Like Adam they transgressed the covenant, / there they dealt faithlessly with me"), which compares the apostasy of Israel to Adam's disobedience in Eden and speaks of both incidents in terms of a breach of covenant. Furthermore, Genesis portrays the relationship between Adam and Eve in a typically covenantal framework. God created them as differentiated persons (male and female) in unity, whose relationship was characterized by freedom, equality, reciprocity, and union (Gen. 2:23)—unity in diversity and diversity in unity, reflecting the true life of God. God's covenant with Adam becomes further evident in light of the close typological continuity and parallel pattern between the creation story and Noah's story. The creation mandate reappears in Noah's covenant (Gen. 9:6-7):12 typical covenantal motifs (such as kingship, rest, and obligations) are found in the creation story (Gen. 2:16-17) and then repeated in Noah's story. Genesis 1-3 serves as a classic, covenantally oriented typology of salvation his-tory. As much as the positive metaphors of covenant, such as sonship and blessings, are present, the negative metaphors of the covenant—temptation, disobedience, broken relationship, and, finally, expulsion from the garden—are also found there. These are repeated throughout the OT in the apostasy, disobedience, disloyalty, and exile of Israel. All these observations show that the idea of God's covenant with creation/Adam is not far-fetched at all; it is consistent with the other covenants in the Bible in pattern, logic, and moral characteristics. As we will discuss in chapter 3, the patterns of gift-task, reciprocity, and remembrance-hope are notable here. The covenant with creation/Adam is foundational and normative for the subsequent covenants, as it sets the plot and the typological pattern and gives impetus for the rest of salvation history. The subsequent biblical covenants, in the final analysis, take the creation covenant as their reference point: the restoration of the covenant of creation/Adam. In other words, the subsequent covenants are God's rescue operations to fix the negative consequences caused by human disobedience. The linking of covenant and creation runs deep throughout the entirety of Scripture, rendering a universalistic scope and impetus as well as a transcendental moral ground to its narratives and moral teachings. This cosmic covenant is the default mode of human existence. Every human social arrangement and structure in history is circumscribed by this cosmic (universal) covenant of creation. Human society cannot override or contravene this covenant. There is no redemption without the redemption of creation; for redemption is creation restored. Covenant with Noah Genesis 6 describes the human moral condition after the Fall. Corruption and violence reached their peaks as humans constantly threatened God's order to the extent that the integrity of creation was compromised (Gen. 6:5, 11-12). The flood was God's intervention to save humanity from self-destruction as well as God's judgment against sin. God ordered Noah to build the ark, and he responded in obedience. After the flood receded, God established a covenant with Noah, his family, other creatures, and the earth itself. Noah's covenant is closely tied with the creation covenant. Like the creation covenant, Noah's covenant is a universal covenant of God that concerns all creatures and creation; it is explicitly ecological in nature, thus checking the anthropocentrism and ethnocentrism often associated with other covenants in the OT. Several crucial creation motifs are reiterated in Noah's story: Noah represents the head of humanity, as Adam did; he was given the same creation mandate (Gen. 8:17); and God commanded Noah to steward all species, which is reminiscent of Adam's task in the garden (Gen. 9:1-7). As Noah was the symbol of humanity, the ark was a microcosmic symbol of Eden—a carrier of God's promise and blessings and hope for the creation. God's covenant with Noah was intended to restore the basic order of creation (threatened by human sin). What is notable and ecologically important is that God specified nonhuman creatures and the earth as God's covenant partners, reiterating this reality four times (Gen. 9:15-17). God promised to protect Noah and his dependents (i.e., future humanity), other creatures, and the earth from the instability of the natural order. To ease the fear and anxiety Noah, God gave a rainbow as a sign of God's fidelity. Through the covenant with Noah, creation and humanity received another chance, and the goodness of creation and creation ethics, as well as God's firm commitment to its well-being were reaffirmed. A Brief Survey of the Old Testament Covenants In terms of its moral intention and nature, Noah's covenant is often called the covenant of preservation. It preserved the earth and humanity from the raging torrents of the flood and the surging sea; it protected humanity from self-destruction due to violence and corruption; and it preserved animals from human aggression. Herman Bavnick is helpful in elaborating the ethos of preservation in Noah's covenant: "It limits the curse on the earth; it checks nature and curbs its destructive power; the awesome violence of water is reined in; a regular alternation of season is introduced. The whole of the irrational world of nature is subjected to ordinances that are anchored in God's covenant." Noah's covenant lays out more clearly circumscribed moral parameters for hu-mans in relating to others and animals, with a new focus on violence. Noah's covenant also reveals God's adjustment to a changed human condition (violent passion and temperament) following the Fall (Gen. 8:21, "the inclination of the human heart is evil from youth"). Humans had become a serious threat both to fellow humans and to animals (Gen. 9:2). One example of a moral adjustment is God permitting human consumption of animal flesh, but with a clear restriction on the consumption of blood (9:3-4). God reemphasizes the sanctity of human life by warning of retribution against anyone who violates it (9:5-6). However, the message of Noah's covenant should not be interpreted as anthropocentric. The event of the ark (hosting all living creatures there) and God's reiteration of a covenantal relationship with animals had the effect of reminding Noah and his offspring (who have now be-come a threat to other species) of the sanctity of all living creatures and the earth by saying that they too live in a covenantal relationship with God. Noah's covenant delicately balances the reality of sin with God's original intention for creation. It adjusts God's laws to a new situation of human rebellion and sinfulness. The basic sanctity of both creation (including nonhuman creatures) and human life (the image Dei) was assured again, despite the changed condition of life after the Fall and God's judgment. Although it often receives less attention than the covenant in Scripture, Noah's covenant is extremely important for Christian social ethics. It offers a theological ground for common grace, which God makes available to all human beings despite sin. God's common grace operates to preserve the basic natural order of creation (e.g., seasonal rhythms and stability, seedtime and harvest), the basic rights of humanity, and the life of animals from further deterioration, violence, and abuse. Until the final consummation of creation in the eschaton, "Noah's covenant is the pivot around" which God's preserving work of justice revolves. As an eternal covenant, it still has a binding moral power over all of humanity, including Christians. As we will discuss later, technically speaking, Christians live simultaneously under the binding authorities of the Noachian covenant and the new covenant of Jesus, and this doubling-binding nature is crucial to properly understand the scope and parameters of Christian social ethics (chap. 11). Covenant with Abraham God made covenants with Abraham twice, in Genesis 15:18 and in 17:2-18. If Noah's covenant is a kind of a safety-net covenant that intended to preserve creation from further deterioration, then Abraham's covenant indicates God's initiative of redemption that counters human depravity and sin in order to restore the brokenness of creation. God's response to the global plight of sin at the tower of Babel was the global blessing of Abraham for all of humanity:19 Abraham's covenant is multidimensional in its meaning and quite comprehensive in its scope. It encompasses a nation (Israel), ecology (the land), and the global community (blessing to the nations). Abraham's story also has some resonance with the creation story. Just as chaos, darkness, confusion, corruption, and violence were in the background of the creation covenant, the chaos and confusion following the collapse of the tower of Babel (Gen. 11) serve as the context for Abraham's election and calling. Instead of punishing humanity in a catastrophic way as he did in Noah's time, God calls Abraham, another Adamic figure (type), to do something new. God's blessings and promises to Abraham included flourishing (both descendants and fame), the gift of the land (as opposed to the expulsion from Eden), and the restoration of a peoples (as opposed to their scattering after Babel). Creation mandates are repeated in this covenant. As Adam was given the garden to tend, Abraham was promised a new garden (Canaan) where he would fulfill God's initial blessings for humanity: land, seed, a blessing to be fruitful and multiply, and a blessing to the nations by undoing the curses of Adam in Genesis 3—tool of labor, pain of childbirth, and physical death. As Adam had been created in the barren soil and placed into the garden of Eden (Gen. 2:4-15), so too was Abraham sent from his native land to Canaan. Now Canaan is God's new Eden, just as Abraham is God's new Adam. Overall, Abraham remained faithful to God's covenant, despite his occasional mistakes and weaknesses. Accordingly, Abraham was later presented as a universal example of faith and obedience for future believers. God's redemptive plan for humanity and God's covenant continue across generations, from Abraham to Isaac, to Jacob, and later to Israel through Moses. Covenant with Israel: The Sinai Covenant Among all the biblical covenants, the Sinai covenant occupies a special place. It provides the most detailed ritualistic and ethical instructions and directives. It is at the heart of the Torah (the first five books of the Bible), a collection of stories leading to the Sinai covenant, and its expositions and commentaries. Compared to other biblical covenants, the Sinai covenant offers the most systematic explication of covenant and its requirements through clearly delineated stipulations (the Ten Commandments and covenantal codes, statutes, and ordinances) and elaborate rituals binding Israel as God's covenantal partner in every realm of its life. In this covenant, God promises to make Israel his special possession among the peoples—a kingdom of priests and a holy nation to the world. This covenant indicates a partial fulfillment of God's covenant with Abraham (a great nation) and continues Abraham's calling (to be a blessing to the nations) through Israel on a far more extensive and broader scale, namely, as a covenanted people and nation. Like Abraham, Israel represents a restored humanity. Israel was called to be a paradigmatic model of a new community for other nations that embodies God's compassion, righteousness, and justice in the entirety of its social practices (in worship). At the same time, their moral sanctification is a crucial barometer of the state of the people's internal (spiritual) relationship with God. That is, all who love God and worship him genuinely are to live uprightly and justly. Through their worship and moral life, their covenant with God was renewed and reactivated in everyday life. The Ten Commandments teach what the pious, righteous, and just life should be—piety toward God and justice toward other human beings. Both piety and justice are indispensable for the building of a community. In Israel's life, the Sinai covenant operated as a comprehensive moral framework within which the Ten Commandments served as the summary of the moral law and the constitution of Israel as a unified political body. Detailed moral demands were stipulated through numerous other statutes and ordinances. Covenant regulated and guided every aspect of Israel's life from worship to family, from economics to agriculture, and from tribal politics to international relationships. Every member of the community believed that he or she was individually covenanted with God; thus no activity was exempt from the obligations specified by the covenant. Covenantal spirituality was expressed in rituals and spiritual practices as well as in laws and commandments. In the Torah, Leviticus details the spiritual practices that covenant requires. Israelites were required to exercise covenantal faithfulness in every domain and every aspect of their lives—in their eating (selecting proper animals that are properly slaughtered), in their treatment of strangers, in their relationships to the land and to neighbors, and in their ordering of time (Sabbath). Torah offers numerous stipulations that guide and regulate sacrificial rituals (Lev. 24:3-8), covenantal meals (Lev. 24:9-11), the erection of the tabernacle (Exod. 25-27; 35-40), and the consecration of Aaron and his sons as priests (Exod. 28-29).25 The Covenant Code is an application of the fundamental principles of the Ten Commandments to specific matters of daily conduct. The Covenant Code seeks to make the principle of the Ten Commandments practical by distinguishing various moral situations in which the principle is applied. It illustrates in detail what the way of life under God's covenant should look like. Such extensive application indicates the seriousness with which Israel took the covenant. Throughout the rest of the OT, the exodus story and the Sinai covenant consistently serve as a key metaphor and a central moral reference point for Israel by which Israel's religious and social practices are inspired and critically examined. The Ten Commandments and the Covenant Code serve as a plumb line not only for Israel's moral actions but also for the behavior of other nations. For example, the prophets relied on the Mosaic covenant in their social criticism in parallel with the Torah law, a connection reminiscent of Deuteronomy (cf. Deut. 31:26). Specifically, the prophets charged the people's sins and apostasy by referring back to the Mosaic laws, especially the Ten Commandments. They passionately pointed out the repeated human failures to live up to their promises. Amos, Hosea, Isaiah, and Jeremiah presented stinging indictments against the people of Israel for their breach of covenant with God. The list of violations included idolatry, sexual promiscuity, oppression of the poor, and violence. They alerted the people that neither the temple and its rituals nor biological lineage would protect Israel, but only their covenant fidelity to God and God's order. The prophets warned their contemporaries about the moral complacency and self-righteousness through which they distorted God's election into an unconditional guarantee of their security and protection while ignoring their obligations and loyalty to God's law—especially the violation of the rights of the poor, the orphans, and the widows. They called them to return to the Lord from idolatry and follow the ways of justice and righteousness stipulated by the covenant. Their rhetoric frequently employed the "lawsuit pattern" in which God calls Israel into a kind of legal tribunal (Hos. 4:1-3 and Mic. 6:1-5). The prophets used the Sinai covenant as the moral frame of reference for their criticism, assessing major historical events in terms of moral cause and effect. In light of the covenant, they warned that apostasy, idolatry, injustice, and social exploitation would invite God's punishment. For example, Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel claimed that the figure is provided that pleases God's heart and thus allows the covenantal relationship to continue. God promised him and his descendants that they will participate in God's blessings on the basis of God's promise to David. Unfortunately, the history of covenant under David's offspring, the kings of Judah, was not a happy one either. The covenant did not prevent the collapse of Judah. Consequently, David's covenant underwent further theological modifications in the exilic and postexilic periods, which we examine below. The New Covenant in Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel With the destruction of Judah in 587 BC and the subsequent exile, the biblical drama of covenant faced another turning point: it shifted from a national covenant (Israel) to a universal covenant with a strong eschatological tone. The exile was a shocking, traumatic event for Israel in every aspect—politically, economically, culturally, and theologically. The exile forced them to undergo a deep soul-searching, asking of their faith fundamental questions: How were they to understand the covenant between God and Israel in the exile when the covenant seemed utterly broken and when the temple, Jerusalem, and the land—the most eminent covenantal symbols—were all gone? A radical theological recalibration was necessary if the idea of covenant were to remain relevant for understanding Israel's identity as the people of God. A shared recognition emerged that since Israel had broken the covenant, God would have to decide whether the covenant continued or not. In addition, there was a deep awareness of the indescribable depth of human depravity—idolatry, injustice, and violence—that made human covenantal partnership with God no longer conceivable. Prophets searched for new theological options to address the depth of human sinfulness. Subsequent theological responses were to reimagine the covenant in radically different terms by shifting the focus of the covenant toward God's side— God's unconditional love, mercy, and faithfulness that transcend human depravity. Israelites now put their entire hope in God's unfailing love out of their belief that God would not desert God's people despite their sinfulness and disobedience, and that God would grant the Israelites a new beginning after the judgment. This rude awakening led to the reimagining of covenant itself. The prophets dreamed of a future time when the covenant would no longer be broken and defiled by disobedience. They put their hope completely in God's new initiative and fidelity in forming a new covenant that would transcend human failure. This new theological reconstruction was most evident in the prophetic ministry of Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and Isaiah. They carefully studied and knitted together previous covenants (especially the Abrahamic, Sinai, and Davidic covenants) and developed a new idea of the covenant. These prophets revised and reconstructed biblical motifs and themes such as the new exodus, restoration, creation, the call to address spiritual concerns, and the needs of the community in exile. For example, they reinterpreted the Davidic covenant because David was the ideal, morally paradigmatic figure in Israel's history. He was understood as a type (prefiguration) of the Messiah—the symbol of a high political hope for Israel, who would fulfill the covenantal obligations on behalf of humanity. Israel in the exile believed that "on the foundation of the Davidic house, the new community of the return [would] take shape." Jeremiah and Ezekiel introduced a radically novel understanding of the covenant—"the new covenant."³⁹ The new covenant has at least two unparalleled characteristics. First, it has a supreme efficacy on human life, as the metaphor "circumcision of the hearts" indicates. God's law is no longer external to the people but is written on the heart of each individual, thus guaranteeing an intimate, harmonious moral relationship between God and each person. This implies that human obedience is voluntary, motivated through God's intimate personal presence, and for the first time in history, humans are able to fulfill their covenantal responsibilities. Second, the new covenant is eschatological; its application moves beyond the boundary of Israel, anticipating universal peace, justice, and rest in a manner that is consistent with the original creational order (Jer. 31:35-37). The new covenant is the "everlasting covenant." It does not fail, and the reign of God will finally be completed through it. It is encompassing because the knowledge of God will be universal, and through this covenant creation, Israel, and gentiles will form one covenantal community. In addition, it anticipates the advent of shalom: "The new covenant] will usher in the period that will be characterized by the absence of divine wrath. The peace aspect of this covenant is more than just the absence of war or hostility; it also has the connotation of the sum total of covenant blessing." Despite its eschatological nature, the new covenant is neither ahistorical nor suprahistorical; it is historically achieved through God's faithfulness in history while representing a comprehensive solution to the human predicament. Covenant in the Wisdom Literature One may wonder how the idea of covenant is associated with wisdom literature in the Bible, because the term "covenant" is found there the least among biblical genres. Proverbs, Job, and Ecclesiastes do not mention Israel's election, covenant rituals or rules, the land of Israel, or even the individual names of people or places associated with the covenant. However, the concept and premises of covenant are assumed and continue to operate in this literature in a subtle way, forming its back-ground worldview. Jamie Grant claims: "Literary interaction is often much more subtle than the simple repetition of a word or words. Covenant may not be the focus of attention in the [wisdom literature], but the concept of covenant subtly influences the didactic thrust of the Wisdom books and if we are unaware of this interaction then we skew the message of these books." A few examples will suffice. Among the wisdom literature, the book of Proverbs relies on Solomon. David's son, as its major source of moral authority. This reveals an awareness of God's covenant with David and his lineage. Likewise, the book of Job is rich with covenantal themes and motifs that are essential to its moral message. Specifically, the book depicts the relationship between God and Job in covenantal terms: "the description of Job's 'blamelessness,' along with the blessings and curses which he experiences produce a plausible case for viewing the bond between Job and Yahweh as a covenantal one." The book is plotted as a grand test on the covenantal fidelity of Job. Satan questions the very nature of the relationship between God and Job, and he is allowed to test how far Job's relationship with God can go despite Job's calamities and misfortunes. Job defends his integrity against his friends' false accusations of his unfaithfulness. "The root of Job's 'complaint' then is that he views himself as one who apparently has not been treated fairly by God, according to the terms of the covenant." Job's lamentation and protest toward God are typical characteristics of a covenantal relationship built upon communicative action (see chap. 3 below). The covenantal nature of the wisdom literature becomes more evident when we examine these books in light of the covenants with creation/Adam and Noah. Although creation stories in these works (e.g., Prov. 8) are different from those of Genesis, they address the same themes: creation, order, fidelity, wisdom, and humanity's place in creation. The wisdom books stress the stability of the cosmos, the basic integrity of creation, and the predictability of the natural order as signs of God's fidelity to the creation. That is, a certain cosmic moral order is embedded in the regularity of nature, which is critical for human well-being. The above observation demonstrates that wisdom is a vehicle for grasping this order, and it does not have to come directly through God's supernatural revelation but is universally available for careful human observation and thoughtful reflection. There is no contradiction between "the cosmic and social order of justice set forth by the creator and sustainer of reality, which serves as the basis of the shared communal life. All human beings participate in the cosmic social order." While the emphases of the wisdom literature and the covenantal texts are often contrasted (such as the election of Israel versus universal humanity, and special revelation versus general revelation), the two genres share the same premises: first, that God is the creator, establisher, and preserver of the universal order; and second, that though this creational order is inscrutable, it is not automatically given but is sustained by God's faithfulness because God is covenantally committed to it. Duane Garrett nicely sums up the relationship: "The fear of God, the rejection of temptations to easy gratification, and the acknowledgment that the world is God's creation are the foundations. The theological presuppositions in wisdom are the same as those of the covenantal texts. Covenant and wisdom are therefore in theological agreement but belong to different genres and have distinct purposes." Moreover, these literatures share the same moral messages with the Sinai covenant: the fear of God, humanity's dependence on God, and the emphasis on social justice. Many passages in the Bible link Israel with the rest of creation. For example, Deuteronomy 4:6 connects the law and proverbs. Hosea and Jeremiah also remind Israel of the permanence of God's hesed in reference to the natural order. While the Sinai covenant focuses on the particularity of Israel, it never loses the purpose and mission of Israel for the rest of humanity. It reminds Israel (and the church) that God is not a parochial God but is the maker of heaven and earth and the maker of all lives. In other words, despite their different emphases, in an important way, wisdom literature complements covenantal literature. By doing so, it vastly expands the horizon and applicability of covenant. Importantly for our project, by adding a cosmic scope, public relevance, and transcultural pertinence, the covenantal themes found in the wisdom literature offer important moral resources for Christian public theology and social ethics (see chaps. 4, 11, 12). Summary Our brief survey shows how covenant is central to the biblical drama of the OT, constituting its plot and story line. Its scope is quite comprehensive, as it is found across diverse genres of the OT, not only in the revelatory documents of Israel, but also in wisdom literature in general. We also see how its key patterns and motifs are repeated across different covenants and their related stories: the use of covenant as God's organizing mechanism, God's ongoing initiative despite human failures, consistent patterns of differentiation binding, rule making in covenants, and emphasis on human moral response and fidelity. Having surveyed major covenants in the OT, we now turn our focus to the new covenant of Jesus. The next chapter will discuss how the NT also unfolds under the same divine drama set off in the OT but expands and intensifies its patterns and types in the eschatological context of God's reign in Jesus Christ. Christian Ethics is available for pre-order at Eerdmans.com, Barnes & Noble, ChristianBook.com, and Amazon.com.

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