

4ST524 ECCLESIOLOGY & SACRAMENTS

Spring 2010

Instructor: John Hardie

john@gracenorthatlanta.org

770-331-1010

COURSE DESCRIPTION

The church has fallen on hard times in our culture. Suspicion and cynicism has replaced respectability and trust in many people's perception and not without good reason. So what a challenging but also an exciting time to re-consider what we believe the Scriptures teach about the church and what she is called to be in the world. Taking a cue from Dietrich Bonhoeffer's famous title *Life Together*, our calling as future leaders in Christ's church is to ask, "What *does* and what *should* 'life together' look like for the church?" This course attempts to answer that question. We will explore the biblical teaching on the church (*ecclesiology*) and sacraments, examining the vision for the church we find in the Scriptures and what it will mean for us if we are trusting God to bring that vision into reality in our post-Christendom context. While every church leader must take seriously the church's concrete praxis, this course will challenge students to think about the church in a *theologically-driven* rather than *pragmatically-driven* manner. Just what *is* the church? What is her calling in the world? What concrete social practices does the church need to embody the gospel? What role does Christ, as head of the church, play in shaping people to be his followers in the world?

AIM OF THE COURSE

One primary thesis to be developed throughout the course is that just as the covenant community in the Old Testament was structured by the roles of prophets, priests and kings in Israel's life, our theology of the church should begin with Christ's prophetic, priestly and kingly ministry (WSC Q23) in the midst of the church through Word, sacraments and pastoral care. We will explore and develop the idea that *'good ecclesiology is nothing more than Christology applied.'* A concrete model of the church will be presented for understanding the confessional, sacramental and missional aspects of the church's calling in the world. Church leaders will always be tempted to use alien criteria for evaluating the 'success' or effectiveness of a church. Rather than the typical criteria of 'buildings, bodies and bucks' this course will give future leaders of Christ's church *biblical* criteria for evaluating the confessional, sacramental and missional aspects of the church's calling in the world. The ultimate goal or *telos* of this course is to engender within students a greater love and willingness to serve Christ's church. If we imagine the kingdom of God as a spear intersecting the world, the church is the very tip of the point of that spear. In that light, arguably this is one of, if not *the*, most important courses future church leaders will take in seminary.

ABOUT THE INSTRUCTOR

John Hardie is a Ph.D. candidate in Systematic Theology at Princeton Seminary, did a Master of Sacred Theology at Yale Divinity School and a Master of Divinity and M.A. at Reformed Theological Seminary, Orlando. John has been married to Adrienne for 18 years with three children ages 15, 12, and 10 and spent 15 years leading campus ministries at Yale University, Auburn University and Charles University in Prague, Czechoslovakia. He was ordained in 2002 at Christ Presbyterian Church (PCA) in New Haven, CT, served as the senior minister of Independent Presbyterian Church in Memphis, TN and currently serves as the lead pastor of a church plant Grace North Atlanta www.gracenorthatlanta.org

GOALS FOR THE COURSE

1. Character: To *engender* within students a deeper love for Christ's bride the church.

Further Explanation: This course will be a waste of time if students do not have a greater love for and desire to serve Christ's church at the end of the course. May we never forget to 'live out' the story of B.B. Warfield & Annie Kinkaid (to be described in 1st lecture). Since the task of RTS is to *prepare* pastors and leaders for Christ's church in the 21st century, I will be praying that all us can join in the great hymn "I Love Thy Kingdom, Lord" written by Timothy Dwight, president of Yale and grandson of Jonathan Edwards, which voices a minister's love for the church:

*For her my tears shall fall,
For her my prayers ascend,
For her my toils and cares be given
Til toils and cares shall end*

2. Confessional Understanding of Church & Sacraments: To *train* students to think in a theologically-driven (rather than pragmatically-driven or politically-driven) way about the church and sacraments, convincing students of the beauty of ecclesiology and sacramental theology in the Reformed tradition.

Further Explanation: The late brilliant historian of doctrine, Jaroslav Pelikan, once distinguished *traditionalism* from *tradition*. Traditionalism, according to Pelikan, is 'the dead faith of the living.' Tradition on the other hand, is 'the living faith of the dead.' We have the privilege of learning from the theological treasures bequeathed to us by those who have gone before us in the faith. What we will find in Calvin and the Reformed confessions is 'the living faith of the dead.'

To help train students in Reformed confessional theology we will

- 1) read Book IV of John Calvin's Institutes
- 2) work through the sections on church and sacraments in Arthur Cochrane's edited volume, *Reformed Confessions of the 16th Century* which contains 12 brief texts written by Reformed pastors at the early stage of the Reformation: Geneva Confession, Heidelberg, Scots Confession, 1st & 2nd Helvetic Confession, etc...
- 3) work through pertinent chapters of the *Westminster Confession of Faith*.

As students are *exposed* to this content, hopefully students will be *convinced* that the biblical teaching on the church and sacraments as summarized in Reformed confessions like Westminster leads to a model of spirituality that produces healthy, gospel-driven churches.

3. Competency in Articulating Convictions: As a result of this course, students should be able to *clearly articulate* what they believe about the church and why by citing Scripture and classic theological texts in support of their own personal view.

Further Explanation: Students will be introduced to key thinkers on the church and sacraments from within Reformed confessional theology *as well as* significant theologians outside our Reformed-Evangelical ecclesial tradition who have contributed to contemporary discussions on ecclesiology and sacramental theology. We will stimulate students to ask anew: what does it mean to be Reformed today? And what role should confessional writings play in determining the answer to these questions? Through lectures and readings students will be challenged to learn from (*as well as disagree with!*) theologians who have contributed to contemporary theological discussions on the church and sacraments in the 20th century: Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Karl Barth, Martin Luther King, Jr., Lesslie Newbigin, Thomas Torrance, Colin Gunton, Stanley Hauerwas, Michael Horton, Douglas Farrow, Jeff Stout, Cornel West, George Hunsinger, Miroslav Volf.

4. Concrete Model of the Church: To *explore* a concrete model of the church that emphasizes Christ’s continuing work in the church, re-presenting the Reformed tradition’s emphasis on the three ‘marks of the church’ coordinated with the three offices of Christ to see more clearly the confessional, sacramental and missional calling of the church.

Further Explanation: While every heuristic model is an oversimplification of reality, such models can be extremely helpful for young leaders in training. In fact, models are necessary. We will develop a ‘Christological ecclesiology’ as a concrete model for understanding the biblical teaching on the church. In other words, the doctrine of the church is the doctrine of Christ applied. This is why good ecclesiology honors Christ himself keeping his continuing ministry as prophet, priest and king at the very center of the covenant community called ‘church’. This model of the church as covenant community emphasizes Christ’s continuing his ascended ministry as our prophet, priest and king by the agency or power of the Holy Spirit through concrete practices in the church – or what has traditionally been called the ‘three marks’ of the church: Word, sacrament and church govt/pastoral care. The course will focus upon the church as *the* community in which Christ continues His prophetic, priestly and kingly ministry by taking up our human actions as witness to his work as he fulfills the confessional, sacramental and missional aspects of the church.

“Christ as our Redeemer, executes the offices of a prophet, a priest, and of a king, both in his estate of humiliation and exaltation.” -WSC, Q.23

<u>Christology</u> (via Holy Spirit)		<u>Ecclesiology</u>		<u>Church’s Calling</u>
<i>‘three offices of Christ’</i>		<i>‘three marks’ of the church</i>		<i>‘three dimensions of calling’</i>
Christ as Prophet	→	Preaching of the Word	→	Confessional
Christ as Priest	→	Sacraments	→	Sacramental
Christ as King	→	Pastoral care/mercy/ch.govt	→	Missional

COURSE READINGS

Readings for this course aim at achieving two goals. First, readings will focus on significant confessional statements on ecclesiology and the sacraments in classic Reformation theology. This depth of engagement with classic Reformed confessional theology will *train* a student's sensibilities in what it means to be 'Reformed' when it comes to church and the sacraments. Secondly, through lectures and some readings students will be exposed to contemporary constructive theology of the church and sacraments (Horton, Hunsinger, Leslie Newbigin, Miroslav Volf, Stanley Hauerwas) so that they are familiar with both classic and contemporary reflection on the church's calling.

I. Classic Confessional Texts

- (1) John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion* – Book IV only

Hopefully the *Institutes* will be purchased at some point in the process of theological training. Scholarly consensus is that Battles' translation is preferred over Beveridge's translation due to Battles' being more precise than Beveridge's more expressive translation. The instructor will use Battles' translation in lectures but either translation *if already purchased* should serve students well. What is of more importance is that each student give oneself to the logic and theology of Calvin's *Institutes*. Calvin's *Institutes* can be downloaded from:

<http://www.ccel.org/ccel/calvin/institutes.html>

- (2) Arthur C. Cochrane, ed., *Reformed Confessions of the Sixteenth Century*. Westminster JK Press, 2003. Church leaders will benefit immensely by having several Reformed confessions 'close to hand.' Cochrane's volume is the best source I have found for the price. The assignment is to work through *only* the church and sacraments sections of these texts asking two basic questions, "When it comes to the church and sacraments, what are the early Reformed confessions primarily *affirming* by way of emphasis and primarily *rejecting* by distinction?"

- (3) *Westminster Confession of Faith & Catechisms with Proof Texts*

As the statement of faith used by Reformed Theological Seminary, we will spend time working through WCF chapters I, VIII, XX-XXXI and germane catechism questions only. Please bring a copy of the Westminster Standards with you to class. WCF & catechisms with proof texts can be downloaded from: <http://www.opc.org/confessions.html>

II. Contemporary Theological Texts

- (1) Michael S. Horton, *People & Place: A Covenant Ecclesiology*. Westminster John Knox Press, 2008.

- (2) George Hunsinger, *The Eucharist and Ecumenism*. Cambridge University Press, 2008.

- (3) Select Readings: McGrath's *Reader*, Leslie Newbigin, Miroslav Volf, S.Hauerwas & Cornel West
These readings will be downloaded from RTS Self-Service website.

N. B. – A working assumption for each of the texts above is that we read one book to *believe* (the Bible); we read all others to *consider*. In other words, critical reading and critical thinking are indispensable skills that must be developed for a minister or leader in Christ's church.

PASTOR-THEOLOGIAN MODEL

Reason for Theological Education and Background to Philosophy of Grading

Most folks in the Reformed-Evangelical community believe in a ‘learned pastorate.’ By that we mean that we expect our pastors to be a ‘cut-above’ in their ability to handle the Holy Scriptures, their ability to teach and preach them effectively, and also in their ability to relate the teachings of Scripture to the cultural thought forms of the day. Most of us realize that the ideal of a ‘Pastor-Scholar’ (after the model of say, Jonathan Edwards, who studied some 10-14 hours a day) is *unrealistic* in light of the contemporary demands placed upon most pastors. However, the model of the ‘Pastor-Theologian’ is not. By pastor-theologian I mean a pastor who may not be publishing scholarly works (i.e. the pastor-scholar ideal), but nevertheless is a very good critical thinker, adept at (1) exegeting the Scriptures, (2) exegeting culture and (3) exegeting the human heart – the three challenges of every pastor and church leader.

In my mind, the ‘pastor-theologian’ is someone committed to *theologically-driven* rather than *pragmatically-driven* ministry methods, strategies and goals. We need pastor-theologians who take seriously the need for careful, substantial teaching of Holy Scripture in sermons as well as subjecting all of the church’s ministry to careful critique under the Word of God. Certainly the church needs pragmatic structures for fulfilling her prophetic, priestly and kingly ministries – every theory entails praxis and every praxis entails theory. So theologically-driven ministry is practical, but it is led and developed by pastor-theologians with the ability to think more critically about the church’s ministry than simply ‘running a church.’ A pastor-theologian model stands in stark contrast to a Pastor-CEO model or a Pastor-Manager model or even a Pastor-Evangelist model. Certainly pastors must be many things – preachers, shepherds, leaders, evangelists, counselors, strategists, etc... But what characterizes a pastor-theologian is the seriousness with which all of the pastor’s roles, responsibilities, and relationships are filtered through *theologically-driven* criteria rather than merely pragmatically-driven criteria.

The theological is always pragmatic, but the pragmatic is not always theological. I believe deeply that pastor-theologians are desperately needed for the church to be confessional, sacramental and missional.

All other factors considered equal, a minister without theological training will not be as useful and effective in communicating the Gospel and the teachings of Holy Scripture as the minister with theological training. The ‘vernacular’ principle esteemed by the Westminster Divines requires a standard of theological training in order to faithfully contextualize gospel ministry in the 21st century. The ‘vernacular’ principle is not simply the desire to be relevant and entertaining. Those who have paid the dues of hard study in deeply imbibing the theological tradition while still soaking in the Scriptures, those persons will ultimately communicate the Gospel and the Scriptures in a much more ‘relevant’ manner – more substantial and more penetrating – than those who in the absence of that learning, in effect ‘dumb down’ their preaching and teaching of the Word of God for the sake of pandering to our sound-bite, entertainment culture. *There is a relevancy that is not ultimately relevant.* The rich heritage and tradition in which RTS stands is one which places value on the wedding of piety and learning as indicated in the ‘Founding Design’ of Princeton Theological Seminary in 1812:

to unite in those who shall sustain the ministerial office, religion and literature; that piety of the heart, which is the fruit only of the renewing and sanctifying grace of God, with solid learning; believing that religion without learning, or learning without religion, in the ministers of the gospel, must ultimately prove injurious to the church.

ASSIGNMENTS & PROCEDURES

'The Grade vs. Learning'

Do not expend energy worrying about what grade you will get in this course. Do not allow 'a grade' to inhibit the learning process. My encouragement: do your work heartily as unto the Lord and think about those whom you will one day serve with your learning. That should be your focus in your reading and writing assignments not simply a grade.

30% Reading Assignments & In-class Interaction with Material

- (1) Assigned readings are to be completed before lectures and indicated by percentage % on a note card turned in at the beginning of each class session.
- (2) Preparing a summary paragraph or page of notes prior to the class meeting is highly recommended but not required.
- (3) Subsequently, during lectures and in-class discussion, students will be asked to interact with reading material with thoughtful and informed criticism and appreciation. The instructor will assign a grade to each student for their in-class interaction with the reading assignments throughout the semester.
- (4) Absence from class lectures precludes a student from earning credit for that session's readings and in-class interaction with material for that particular class session. In the event that a student is providentially hindered from attending a class session, a student must communicate with the instructor prior to the class and indicate the student wants to utilize one of the two allowed 'passes.'
- (5) You are responsible for keeping up with what you have read in order to put the total down on your final exam that you will send to me via email.
- (6) Because I realize 'life happens' and many RTS students are not full-time students, every student has the option of utilizing two 'passes' in the event they have *not* completed the assigned readings prior to class. These 'passes' must be turned into me on a note card prior to the start of class. This means is that if a student does 100% of 10 of the 12 readings prior to class then you will earn 30 points for this part of your class grade. You certainly do not have to take two 'passes' – in fact, I hope you will not take any. This part of the course is *not* meant to 'punish' you but *motivate* you to do your reading ahead of time.
- (7) Students who do not utilize any 'passes' in the course of the semester will earn 5 points extra credit on your final grade for doing 100% of all 12 assigned readings ahead of time.
- (8) There is a 'Final Option' which I strongly encourage you *not* to take: You may make up missed reading assignments and still earn up to 50% of points. For instance, if you do zero readings prior to class but complete 10 of 12 readings before the final exam is due then you will have the chance to earn a maximum of 15 points for this part of your course grade. The reason I discourage you from this option is clear: most importantly it will not help you in the learning process and at best you would be able to earn a grade of 85 for this course.

35% Written Assignments

Pace yourself – you should be working on the first two throughout lectures – essentially two weeks for other assignments. In other words, you will be creating these documents during our lectures and conversation together.

Send all written assignments to: john@gracenorthatlanta.org

I will send you a reply when I receive it. If you do not hear from me that I have received your assignment, please re-send until you hear from me. You should hear a reply from me within 24 hours. We will use the time and date of your sending the assignment to me.

1. Reformed Confessions Trace – Church, Sacraments, Baptism & Lord's Supper (4 points)

For (1) church, (2) sacraments, (3) baptism and (4) Lord's Supper, read through and take notes of brief phrases, lines, significant words, emphases from the confessions contained in Arthur Cochrane's edited volume, include anything from Calvin or any other readings. Only one page required for each of the four (4 pgs total) but this assignment can be as long as you want – as long as it is *helpful* to you.

2. Statement of Questions & Exceptions to Westminster (4 points)

Read all of the pertinent sections (Church, Sacraments, Baptism & Lord's Supper) of the Westminster Confession of Faith, Larger Catechism and Shorter Catechism, noting briefly:

- 1) your questions for further study and reflection – i.e. 'I'm not sure I understand this well enough to come to a settled conclusion'
- 2) your 'exceptions' if you have developed any at this stage of your studies.
- 3) For exceptions, make sure you distinguish between exceptions where you actually differ with the *substance* of the point in question (substantive exceptions to be submitted in writing before presbytery for presbytery to judge) and *semantic* differences in which you merely think some other choice of language would be wiser and better.

3. Reading Response to Michael Horton's *People & Place: A Covenant Ecclesiology*

Evaluation, appreciation and critique in 5 pp. double-spaced, 12 point font (10 points)

4. Response to George Hunsinger, *Eucharist and Ecumenism: Let Us Keep the Feast*

Evaluation, appreciation and critique in 5 pp. double-spaced, 12 point font (10 points)

5. Visual Presentation Teaching (4 points)

Prepare a teaching session using a visual presentation on *one* of the following:

- (1) the concrete model of the church discussed in class lectures
- (2) your view of baptism
- (3) your view of the Lord's Supper

6. Church Statement on 'Mission, Vision, Values' (3 points)

Answer this question: What kind of church community are we aiming to be? (1 page max)

10% Personal Journal: Reflection, Self-Awareness & Sense of Calling – due next to last class

This assignment is aimed at increasing self-awareness and honest evaluation of one's natural proclivities and need for God to shape our desires and loves. (Recall Calvin's connection of God-knowledge and self-knowledge at opening of *Institutes*).

- (1) Reflect carefully upon the ordination vows from the PCA BCO. What strikes you? What scares you? What do you need to take more seriously than you have before?
- (2) Read through the entire letter of 2 Corinthians asking the question, "If I follow God's call into vocational ministry, what expectations should I have of serving in Christian ministry?"
- (3) After this exercise, in reflecting upon your intention to serve Christ, write out a one paragraph 'mission statement' of why you are pursuing the ministry and what you want your life to be about. Do this exercise while sitting in a grave yard.
- (4) After all of the above, write a one paragraph epitaph of what you want someone to be able to say of you truly at your funeral.
- (5) Pursuit of Self-Awareness – Ask two persons who know you well: Can I work with others? What makes it hard for you to work with me? What weaknesses do you detect in my character that could be exploited in the future in the church? What are my strengths in terms of gifts, abilities, talents? What honestly do you see as potential red-flags in my interpersonal interactions?
- (6) Write out any prayers of love for Christ and His bride, the church.

25% Final Exam

A final exam will be taken and sent via email following the last class meeting. Students will be given a study guide to ensure adequate preparation prior to taking the exam, primarily in order to increase the learning process. In other words, the study guide will be designed to help students learn the material we've covered in lectures. The exam will not be designed to test students' ability at guessing what might be included on the exam – but to ensure that they have devoted time to actually learning.

The '3M' Section on the Exam – Commit to memory the Maxims, Models & Meanings which we've used repeatedly in class. *Maxims* are the aphorisms included in your lecture notes and constantly referred to in class. *Models* are the 'triangle' and Christological ecclesiology model that we will talk about a great deal. *Meanings* will include important concepts and distinctions we discuss during lectures. For instance, here are examples of key *Meanings*: (1) the difference between ST and BT; (2) the difference between the gospel and religion; (3) the meaning of 'missional church' as well as 'confessional church;' (4) the meaning of a Reformed view of the Lord's Supper; (5) the meaning of a covenantal view of baptism; (6) the meaning of 'believer's baptism.' I will not try to surprise you or trick you. I will ask you to show your ability to use the Maxims, Models & Meanings that we have talked about throughout the course. Remember, theology is a *verb* – so I will ask you to do theology in your responses to the questions.

SCHEDULE OF READING & ASSIGNMENTS

February 2nd INTRODUCTION – *Theology is a ‘Verb’ & Done Best in Community*

Preparation: *Read syllabus prior to class*

February 9th INTRODUCTION – *Theology is a ‘Verb’ & Done Best in Community*

1st Reading:

- (1) Calvin, *Institutes* Bk IV, pp.
- (2) Cochrane,
- (3) Calvin, ‘On the Necessity of Reforming the Church’
- (4) Clowney, “The Biblical Theology of the Church”

February 16th INTRODUCTION – *Theology is a ‘Verb’ & Done Best in Community*

2nd Reading:

- (1) Calvin, *Institutes* Bk IV, pp.
- (2) Cochrane,
- (3) Horton, *People & Place: A Covenant Ecclesiology*, ch. 1-3, pp. 1-98
- (4) Cyprian, “On the Unity of the Church”

February 23rd CONFSSIONAL ECCLESIOLOGY – *A Community Speaking with a Prophetic Voice*

3rd Reading:

- (1) Calvin, *Institutes* Bk IV, pp.
- (2) Cochrane,
- (3) Horton, *People & Place: A Covenant Ecclesiology*, ch. 4 & 5, pp.99-190
- (4) Vos, “The Doctrine of the Covenant in Reformed Theology”

March 2nd CONFSSIONAL ECCLESIOLOGY – *A Community Speaking with a Prophetic Voice*

4th Reading:

- (1) Calvin, *Institutes* Bk IV, pp.
- (2) Cochrane,
- (3) Horton, *People & Place: A Covenant Ecclesiology*, ch. 7, pp. 190-220
- (4)

Due: Reading Response to People & Place

March 9th CONFSSIONAL ECCLESIOLOGY – *A Community Speaking with a Prophetic Voice*

5th Reading:

- (1) Calvin, *Institutes* Bk IV, pp.
- (2) Horton, *People & Place: A Covenant Ecclesiology*, ch. 8-10, pp.221-307
- (3)
- (4)

March 16th Spring Break – *no class* – *start reading George Hunsinger, *The Eucharist and Ecumenism*

March 23rd SACRAMENTAL ECCLESIOLOGY – *A Community Experiencing Christ's Presence*

6th Reading:

- (1) Calvin, *Institutes* Bk IV, pp.
- (2) Hunsinger, *The Eucharist and Ecumenism*
- (3)
- (4)

March 30th SACRAMENTAL ECCLESIOLOGY – *A Community Experiencing Christ's Presence*

7th Reading:

- (1) Calvin, *Institutes* Bk IV, pp.
- (2) Hunsinger, *The Eucharist and Ecumenism*
- (3)
- (4)

April 6th Discussion Group Session – *to be explained first class*

Finish reading George Hunsinger's *The Eucharist and Ecumenism* before discussion session

April 13th SACRAMENTAL ECCLESIOLOGY – *A Community Experiencing Christ's Presence*

8th Reading:

- (1) Calvin, *Institutes* Bk IV, pp.
- (2)
- (3)
- (4)

Due. Reading Response to Hunsinger's *The Eucharist and Ecumenism*

April 20th MISSIONAL ECCLESIOLOGY – *A Community Sent to Love the World*

9th Reading:

- (1) Calvin, *Institutes* Bk IV, pp.
- (2)
- (3)
- (4)

April 27th MISSIONAL ECCLESIOLOGY – *A Community Sent to Love the World*

10th Reading:

(1) Calvin, *Institutes* Bk IV, pp.

(2)

(3)

(4)

Due: Statement on ‘Mission, Vision, Values’ of the Church

May 4th MISSIONAL ECCLESIOLOGY – *A Community Sent to Love the World*

11th Reading:

(1) Calvin, *Institutes* Bk IV, pp.

(2)

(3)

(4)

Due: Visual Presentations on Model of Church, Lord’s Supper, Baptism

May 11th COURSE WRAP-UP: *So Who Will Lead & Love Christ’s Bride?*

12th Reading:

(1) Calvin, *Institutes* Bk IV, pp.

(2)

(3)

(4)

COURSE OVERVIEW

PART 1: INTRODUCTION – *Theology is a ‘Verb’ & Done Best in Community*

PART 2: CONFSSIONAL ECCLESIOLOGY – *A Community Speaking with a Prophetic Voice*

PART 3: SACRAMENTAL ECCLESIOLOGY – *A Community Experiencing Christ’s Presence*

PART 4: MISSIONAL ECCLESIOLOGY – *A Community Sent to Love the World*

PART 1: INTRODUCTION: THEOLOGY IS A ‘VERB’ & DONE BEST IN COMMUNITY

- The Authority & Use of Holy Scripture in Theological Method & in the Church
- Contemporary Expressions of Theological Method – Frei’s *Types of Theology*
- Cornelius Van Til’s Triad: Standard – Motive – Goal
- John Frame’s Tri-perspectivalism: Normative – Situational – Existential
- Hermeneutical Triangle (deference construct)
- Why Church? Word – Worship – Witness
- Hans Urs von Balthasar’s Triology/Transcendentals: Truth – Beauty – Goodness
- Theologically-driven vs. Pragmatically-driven?
- An Introduction to Reformed Theology – the Five *Solas* in Theological Context
- The Pastor-Theologian Model of the Pastorate vs. other competing models
- The Need for “Reformed – Evangelical – Presbyterian” Churches
- The Church as an Essential Element of the Gospel
- Ecclesiology as “Reformed Christology Applied” – The Three Marks of Church
- Confessional *and* Missional – not either/or!
- “Confessional – Sacramental – Missional” Church
- A Reformed Model of Spirituality – Spirit’s work by means of Word & Sacrament
- Pastoral Theology by Biography – From Geneva to Princeton to Safenwil to Birmingham: Sketch of Calvin & Bucer, Miller & B.B. Warfield, Bonhoeffer & Barth, Martin Luther King, Jr.

Ecclesiology & ‘Enabling Traditions’

We do not read Holy Scripture in a vacuum. We necessarily read the Bible from within a ‘tradition’ whether that tradition is consciously recognized or not. Many American evangelicals do not realize the ecclesial ‘tradition’ in which they read the Bible. Hans-Georg Gadamer once highlighted the Enlightenment’s disdain for tradition as ‘prejudice against prejudices.’ Jaroslav Pelikan similarly noted the helpful distinction between tradition and traditionalism: the latter is the ‘dead faith of the living’ whereas tradition is the ‘living faith of the dead.’ Certainly any unqualified, uncritical allegiance to a tradition regardless of criticism is to be discouraged. But the question of ‘Bible vs. tradition’ presents a false dilemma. Tradition also serves to enable and ‘capacitate’ one’s understanding of Scripture, not to mention engendering positive ‘prejudices’ within one even before that person is old enough to think critically about the issues. We should ‘allow the dead’ to have their say in our reading of Holy Scripture. We are never the church without those who have gone before us. Students should but by exploring and evaluating three overlapping traditions.

(1) Our Reformed-Evangelical Confessional Tradition

Since RTS stands within a broadly Reformed-Evangelical tradition by virtue of its commitment to the Westminster Standards as its doctrinal confession, we will consider ecclesiology and sacraments from within this tradition. Students will engage extensively with the Reformed confessional tradition. That ‘tradition’ will be carried into the 20th century through lectures and in-class conversations on the work of Herman Bavinck, Louis Berkhof, John Murray, Edmund Clowney, etc.

2) The Great Tradition Pre-Calvin: Irenaeus, Augustine, Aquinas, Luther

Heaven help the pastors and shepherds called to lead Christ’s church in the 21st century who do not have some familiarity with those ‘gifts of God’ to the Church who have preceded our contemporary era. ‘Standing on the shoulders of giants’ may sound cliché, but it is still very much part and parcel of the task of shaping the character of the church today. Consequently this section of the course introduces the ‘great tradition’ of theological reflection on ecclesiology and sacraments through very brief snippets of readings gathered in Alister McGrath’s, *A Christian Theology Reader*.

3) 20th Century Contemporary Theology of the Church & Sacraments

A by-product of inter-traditional engagement and learning is the clarification of the distinctiveness of one’s own tradition, not to mention enrichment and supplementation of one’s theological tradition at appropriate points. The goal of this exposure to those outside our Reformed-Evangelical tradition is to appreciate and distinguish our own tradition while simultaneously discerning potentially fruitful insights for our own constructive theological task of re-presenting the Scriptures and the Reformed tradition in our contemporary context. A great lesson of doctrinal debates in the history of the church is that we often times we can learn more from reading those with whom we may disagree than by simply reading those with whom we already agree. This is the value of inter-traditional theological education. RTS prides itself as being something akin to ‘Old Princeton Seminary’ in this regard – but remember that Hodge sat in on Schleiermacher and Hegel’s lectures during his time of study at the University of Berlin, B.B. Warfield was one of the most learned of New Testament scholars in the early 20th century. This emphasis within the Reformed tradition of a learned pastorate and the pastor-theologian is best exemplified in Calvin’s extensive engagement with his rival Roman Catholic contemporaries as well as the patristic theologians available to him in his time.¹

¹ On Calvin’s use of patristic theologians, see Anthony N.S. Lane, *John Calvin: Student of the Church Fathers* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1999).

PART 2: CONFSSIONAL ECCLESIOLOGY – *A Community Speaking with a Prophetic Voice*

- Introduction to the Confessions of the Reformed Theological Tradition
- Westminster Confession of Faith & Catechisms
- Ecclesiology
- *Creature Verbi – The Word*
- Holy Spirit as the *Agent* of Grace
- Sacraments
- Baptism
- Lord's Supper
- The Missional Dimension of the Sacraments
- Missional Aspect of Confessional: Prophetic Voice
- Prophetic Witness of the Church via the Sacraments
- The German Church Conflict – Karl Barth & the Barmen Declaration (1934)
- Dietrich Bonhoeffer & the Confessing Church

PART 3. SACRAMENTAL ECCLESIOLOGY – *A Community Experiencing Christ's Presence*

Sacraments in General: Sacramental Theology, Communal Social Practices & Ritual Theory

Sacraments in Redemptive History: From the Garden to the City

Baptism as Sign of God's Promise

Baptism as Sign of Entrance into the Visible Covenant Community

'Big Box, Little Box' – Romans 2:28

Lord's Supper: Question of Christ's Presence

Lord's Supper: Covenant Renewal

Readings from Horton: Reformed Eucharistic Theology

Hunsinger: What role *could* and *should* the Eucharist play in the organic unity of the church?

PART 4. MISSIONAL ECCLESIOLOGY – A Community ‘Sent’ to Love the World

- Introduction to *Missio Dei*
- Introduction to the Development of the ‘Missional Church’
- Missions vs. Missional
- Christendom & Post-christendom: What is at stake in both?
- Why is the Emergent/Emerging Church *Both* Right and Wrong?

- **‘Mission as Mother of Theology’ & ‘Theology as the Mother of Mission’**

After surveying the first few centuries of the Christian Church’s attempt to clarify her Christological and Trinitarian faith, Martin Kähler made what has now come to be an often referenced observation – ‘mission is the mother of theology.’ (i.e. contextualizing the gospel - requires communicating what we believe in changing contexts). As important as Kähler’s observation is for understanding the missionary nature of theology, the converse should also be affirmed; i.e. theology is the mother of mission. Or at least, theology rightly construed should always give impulse to and further ground the missionary task of the Church. Missional theology is a development within the last few decades which emphasizes the *missio Dei* – i.e. that God is missionary in nature – and consequently understands the Church as missionary or missional in nature. Missional theology works from an understanding of the triune God as a **sending God** – both in terms of God’s eternal inner-trinitarian relations and in terms of redemptive history – the Father sends the Son, the Son & Father send the Spirit, the Spirit sends the Church. Therefore ‘sentness’ is not just an activity of the church but the Church’s very essence. The Church is the Church only as the Church is ‘on the move’ faithful to her calling to be missional.

- Praxis – oriented
- Leslie Newbigin’s Missional Ecclesiology
- Miroslav Volf, “Theological Reflections on the Relation Between Church and Culture in 1 Peter”
- Miroslav Volf, “Trinity as Our Social Program?”
- Cornel West – ‘prophetic pragmatism’ & *Race Matters*
- *Are we failing if we do not see our theology permeating and being embodied in another culture than our own?*
- Jeff Stout on the neo-traditionalists
- Stanley Hauerwas on post-christendom

Maxims

“Traditionalism is the dead faith of the living; tradition is the living faith of the dead.”
-Jaroslav Pelikan

“The only thing worse than a church not having a confession is having one and not using it.”

“Because the deck of life is constantly moving, balance is nothing more than momentary synchronicity.” (Pratt)

“If you make your living by your faith you’ll be tempted to lose one or the other.”

“To represent the Reformed tradition is to re-present the Reformed tradition.” (Pratt)

“The longer you’re in ministry you will either become more cynical or more worshipful. Why? Because cynicism will overwhelm you as you see the sin of church leaders or more worshipful because God can use such people anyway.”

"A dog barks when his master is attacked. I would be a coward if I saw that God's truth is attacked and yet would remain silent."
-John Calvin

Timothy Dwight’s line in ‘I Love Thy Kingdom, Lord’

Models

Cornelius Van Til’s Standard-Motive-Goal

Frame’s Triperspectivalism: Normative-Existential-Situational

Pratt’s Deference Construct:

Interpretation of Scripture – Interaction in Community – Individual Christian Living

Church Triangle:

Word – Worship – Witness

Scripture – Sacrament – Sent

Confessional – Sacramental – Missional

Von Balthasar’s Transcendentals:

Truth – Beauty – Goodness

Christological Ecclesiology:

“Christ as our Redeemer, executes the offices of a prophet, a priest, and of a king, both in his estate of humiliation and exaltation.” -WSC, Q.23

<u>Christology</u> <i>(via Holy Spirit)</i>	<u>Ecclesiology</u>	<u>Church’s Calling</u>
<i>‘three offices of Christ’</i>	<i>‘three marks’ of the church</i>	<i>‘three dimensions of calling’</i>
Christ as Prophet →	Preaching of the Word →	Confessional
Christ as Priest →	Sacraments →	Sacramental
Christ as King →	Pastoral Care/Govt →	Missional

WHY CHURCH?

Why do we need a theology of the church in a post-Christendom context that explicitly questions and rejects the value of the institutional church?

Imagine a friend saying to you:

“I enjoy my personal relationship with Jesus but really am not sure I’m interested in the church. I’m not really into institutional religion, especially since the traditional church has always seemed authoritarian, dogmatic and judgmental. In fact, if I am honest, I don’t think I need the church to be spiritual.”

Not hard to imagine, is it? Probably most of us, if not *all* of us, have heard such sentiments. Clearly the church as an institution has fallen on hard times. Unlike previous generations of Americans which assumed the respectability of the church, our cultural milieu is marked by suspicion and cynicism towards the church. And those dubious of the value of the church are not simply non-Christians but even many Christians have come to such conclusions. While Jesus still maintains tremendous respectability even among non-Christians in our culture, the maligned reputation of the church has resulted in many opting to do an ‘end-run around’ the church in their pursuit of spirituality.

Precisely because of this confused cultural status and questionable perceived value of the church in contemporary consciousness, future leaders of the church must re-engage and develop a theology of the church.

We must (1) rediscover the beauty of Christ’s church, (2) re-commit to the centrality of the church and sacraments in our model of spirituality, and (3) be fully prepared to open the Scriptures and give a winsome *apologia* for the church even, as mentioned earlier, to convince *Christians* of the significance of the church.

While there are multiple pressing concerns for Christians in the world today – evangelism, mission, worship, social justice, etc...I wonder if there is anything as close to the heart of Jesus than for those called by Him to lead His bride in being the church He has called her to be.

So how would you respond to your friend above? Could you make an informed and compelling argument as to why the church is an *essential* element of the gospel? Could you open your Bible and teach someone why the church and the sacraments are vital to a Christian’s growth and maturity?

To take it one step further, could you make an argument for why a theology of the church and sacraments *must* be recovered by our contemporary American church if we are to multiply missional communities committed to loving the world with the gospel?

In other words, the current practice and philosophy of ministry in many of our American evangelical churches is precisely what needs to be debunked if we are to be more *relevant* and *effective* in our post-Christendom culture.

The ‘Scandal of the *Disembodied Church*’
 ...or Why the *Visible* Embodiment of the Gospel in Ecclesial Structures is
 an *Essential* Element of the Gospel

“...‘the structure of the church is itself an expression of the Gospel’...if any idea is to have an impact in history it must take on an institutionally embodied form....the idea of a structure-less Christianity is a pure illusion.”²

This resonates with me particularly because some in the Scottish-American Presbyterian tradition have insisted that the church is “an essential element of the Gospel.” Note that this ‘embodiment’ is both part of the ‘task’ of the mission of the church as well as essential to the gospel itself.

A recovery of ecclesial structures and the necessity of the gospel being **embodied** visibly in social, ecclesial practices is terribly significant and timely for our cultural moment in which the Church in the U.S. is frequently so shaped by the values of individualism, disdain for anything ‘establishment,’ etc. that the church has become what Richard Lints has called “the Parachurch Church.”³

This emphasis on concrete, embodied ecclesial structures is especially timely for American evangelicalism (however you define that nebulous beast ‘evangelical’) that has misappropriated in my opinion the Reformers’ notion of the ‘invisible church’ has often demonstrated a tendency towards a ‘disembodiment’ of the gospel both in its nature and effects; i.e. regarding the nature of the gospel, church/ecclesial structures are marginalized and not seen as essential to the gospel; and regarding the gospel’s effects, it is primarily about the salvation of individual souls.

Evangelism, under such an understanding of a disembodied gospel, takes on more of the character of ‘dissemination of information’ rather than the concrete formation of visible communities as a foretaste of the kingdom. So the loss of visible, ecclesial structures and ecclesial authority is what Lints has in view and Goheen acknowledges as well when he observes that “evangelicals in general have a weak ecclesiology”(p. 222). [cf. also Newbigin, p. 277 on individualistic conceptions of salvation tending to undermine the visible Church and p. 328 for his insistence that agencies be connected to the church as the church “loses its missionary self-understanding as its task is overtaken by a specialized body”(p.329)].

² For instance, Stuart Robinson (1814-1881), a prominent Presbyterian pastor in Louisville, KY, published a great deal on his views of the nature and mission of the church. See particularly his *The Church of God as an Essential Element of the Gospel, and the Idea, Structure and Functions Thereof. A Discourse in Four Parts, With an Appendix, Containing the more important symbols of Presbyterian Church Government* (Philadelphia: Joseph M. Wilson, 1858). Consider Leslie Newbigin’s claim that it is “a false spirituality, divorced from the whole teaching of the Bible, which regards this visible and continuing Church as of subordinate importance for the life in Christ”(Goheen, p.207).

³ Richard Lints, *The Fabric of Theology: A Prolegomenon to Evangelical Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1993), p. 93-95.

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<http://www.reformed.org/documents/index.html>
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Reformed_Christian_confessions_of_faith
<http://www.wscal.edu/clark/confessions.php>
<http://www.creeds.net/>
<http://www.gracenorthatlanta.org>
<http://cpcnewhaven.org/cms/index.php?page=reformed-ecclesiology>

Highly Recommended for Future Reference & Reading:

Edmund P. Clowney, *The Church*. InterVarsity Press, 1995 – very good basic introduction

James Bannerman, *The Church of Christ*, 2 volumes – 19th century Scottish theologian
This is one of the finest works ever written on the nature and exercise of church power.

Herman Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, volume 4 – classic Dutch Reformed theologian

Louis Berkhof, *Systematic Theology* – mid-1900s American Presbyterian theologian

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The First Helvetic Confession, Articles 20-21

The Geneva Confession, Articles 14-15

The French Confession, Articles XXXIV-XXXV

The Scots Confession, Chapter XXI-XXII

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