

## DOCTRINE OF THE TRINITY – ST610

*Reformed Theological Seminary – Orlando*

Keith E. Johnson, Ph.D.

Spring 2009

Tuesday, 6:00 – 8:00 p.m.

Course Syllabus

### Course Description

Trinitarian faith is vital to the life and health of the church. In this course we will explore the biblical/theological foundations, historical development and contemporary approaches to the doctrine of the Trinity. After surveying the twentieth century trinitarian revival, we will carefully trace the historical development of trinitarian doctrine from the second through fifth centuries. We will also explore recent attempts to relate trinitarian doctrine to the church (its worship, identity and mission), human personhood, salvation and interreligious dialogue.

### Course Objectives

1. That students would be persuaded that trinitarian faith is vital to the life and health of the Church.
2. That students would gain a deeper understanding of the historical development of this doctrine through an engagement with key primary texts (especially from the mid-second to early-fifth centuries).
3. That students would better understand the biblical foundations for trinitarian doctrine.
4. That students would become familiar with contemporary approaches to the Trinity.
5. That students would reflect methodologically on the proper “use” of this doctrine in the life of the church.
6. That students would better understand the integrative nature of this doctrine and relate it to other key doctrines including anthropology, soteriology, ecclesiology, etc.

### Required Texts

- Augustine, Saint. *The Trinity*. Translated by Edmund Hill, O.P. Brooklyn: New City Press, 1991. (ISBN: 0911782966)
- Basil, Saint. *On the Holy Spirit*. New York: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press: 2001. (ISBN: 0913836745)
- Dünzl, Franz. *A Brief History of the Doctrine of the Trinity in the Early Church*. New York: T&T Clark, 2007. (ISBN: 0567031934)
- Hardy, Edward R., ed. *Christology of the Later Fathers*, Library of Christian Classics. Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1954. (ISBN: 0664241522)
- Kostenberger, Andreas J. and Scott R. Swain, *Father, Son and Holy Spirit: The Trinity and John’s Gospel*, New Studies in Biblical Theology Series. Downers Grove: Intervarsity Academic, 2008. (ISBN: 0830826254)
- Letham, Robert. *The Holy Trinity: In Scripture, History, Theology and Worship*. Phillipsburg: P&R Publishing, 2004. (ISBN: 0875520006)

## Recommended Texts

- Fortman, Edmund J. *The Triune God: A Historical Study of the Doctrine of the Trinity*. Philadelphia: Westminster, 1972.
- Grenz, Stanley J. *Rediscovering the Triune God: the Trinity in Contemporary Theology*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2004.
- Thompson, John. *Modern Trinitarian Perspectives*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1994.
- Wainwright, Arthur. *The Trinity in the New Testament*. London: SPCK, 1962. [available as reprint through Wipf and Stock]

## Course Requirements

1. **Class Participation:** Class participation includes the following:
  - a. Attendance of all class sessions. (If you must miss a class session, please send me an email prior to class letting me know you will be absent.)
  - b. Active participation in course discussion.
2. **Readings:** Accomplishment of scheduled readings *before* their treatment in class. All readings not found in the required texts will be available electronically. Students will complete a reading report to be turned in the last day of class.
3. **Weekly Response Questions:** To aid engagement with course readings, students will write a response not exceeding 150 words to a question related to the reading for that week to be turned in during class.
4. **Theological Analysis of a Trinitarian Hymn:** Because trinitarian faith is expressed most clearly in the corporate worship of Father, Son and Spirit in the church, students will offer a theological analysis of a trinitarian hymn. The hymn analysis should be 5-6 pages in length (double-spaced, 12 pt font, 1” margins) and include the following three sections: (1) introduction (historical background on the hymn and observations about the structure of the hymn—especially with regard to its trinitarian “syntax”), (2) analysis of each verse (summarizing the main themes, identifying biblical echoes/allusions, discussing the trinitarian theology), (3) overall evaluation of the trinitarian theology presented in the hymn (what are the strengths and weaknesses of this hymn?) Be sure to include a copy of the hymn along with your analysis.
5. **Theological Paper:** Students will compose a 12 page essay (double-spaced, 12 pt font, 1” margins) on “trinitarian” topic to be determined in conversation with the instructor. The instructor will post sample paper topics. The paper should (1) present a clear thesis, (2) reflect thoughtful and sympathetic engagement with the course texts, (3) offer critical analysis (and not merely summary) of the positions and views you engage and (4) consider the implications and significance of your investigation for the life of the church. **DUE: Friday, May 15 by noon.**

## Course Grade

Participation	10%
Weekly Response Questions	20%
Hymn Analysis	25%
Theological Paper	<u>45%</u>
	100%

## Course Schedule

### February 3

**Topic: *The Contemporary Trinitarian Revival***

Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics I/1, The Doctrine of the Word of God*, 295-333 (Online)

Karl Rahner, *The Trinity*, 9-24 (Online)

Letham, *The Holy Trinity*, 1-13, 271-90

### February 10

**Topic: *Biblical Witness to the Triune God***

David S. Yeago, "The New Testament and the Nicene Dogma" (Online).

C. Kavin Rowe, "Biblical Pressure and Trinitarian Hermeneutics" (Online).

Letham, *The Holy Trinity*, 17-85

Response Question: *In his essay, "The New Testament and Nicene Dogma," David Yeago makes an important distinction between "concepts" and "judgments." What is the difference between these two terms? What role does a distinction between these two terms play in his constructive proposal? How does this distinction help build a bridge between Nicea and the New Testament?*

### February 17

**Topic: *Pre-Nicene Trinitarian Theology***

Tertullian, *Against Praxeas*, (Online)

Origen, *On First Principles*, Preface, Book I (Online)

Letham, *The Holy Trinity*, 89-107

Response Question: *In order to safeguard the unity of God Praxeas believed it was necessary to affirm that Father, Son and Holy Spirit are one person. Summarize the trinitarian doctrine that Tertullian presents in response to Praxeas in "Against Praxeas." How does Tertullian ground the unity of God? By what means and on what basis does he distinguish the persons?*

### February 24 (Instructor out of town)

**Topic: *Pre-Nicene Trinitarian Theology***

Letham, *The Holy Trinity*, 89-126

Dünzl, *A Brief History of the Doctrine of the Trinity in the Early Church*, 11-48

Alister Heron, "Logos, Image, Son," in *Creation, Christ, and Culture: Studies in Honour of T. F. Torrance*, ed. Richard W. A. McKinney (Edinburgh : Clark, 1976), 43-62. (Online)

Response Question: *According to Heron, what were the strengths and limitations of the "Logos" paradigm?*

### March 3

**Topic: *The Arian Crisis, Nicaea and Athanasius***

Letham, *The Holy Trinity*, 127-45

Dünzl, *A Brief History of the Doctrine of the Trinity in the Early Church*, 49-59

Athanasius, "On the Incarnation" in Hardy, 55-110

Response Question: *Why, for Athanasius, is it necessary to affirm that Christ is fully "God"?*

### March 10

**Topic: Trinitarian Theology of the Cappadocians and the Council of Constantinople**

Basil of Caesarea, *On the Holy Spirit*, 15-79 (chapters 1-18)

Gregory of Nazianzus, Third and Fifth “Theological Orations” (Hardy), 160-176 and 194-214

Letham, *The Holy Trinity*, 146-83.

Response Question: *Does Basil believe the Holy Spirit is God? Why or why not?*

### March 17

**Topic: Trinitarian Theology of Augustine**

Augustine, Sermon 52 “On the Baptism of Jesus” (Online)

Augustine, *De Trinitate*, Books I-IV (Hill’s translation, pp.65-177).

Lewis Ayres, “The Fundamental Grammar of Augustine’s Trinitarian Theology.” (Online)

Response Question: *In Books II to IV of De Trinitate Augustine discusses the “missions” of the Son and the Spirit in order to show that the Son and the Spirit are not “less” than the Father by virtue of being sent. In the process of arguing this point, Augustine makes an important distinction between “mission” and “procession.” How, in Book IV, does Augustine relate the “missions” of the Son and Spirit to their eternal “processions”? In what sense are they distinct?*

### March 24

**Spring Break**

### March 31

**Topic: Trinitarian Theology of Augustine**

Augustine, *De Trinitate*, Books V-VII, XV (Hill’s translation, pp. 186-232, 395-437).

Letham, *The Holy Trinity*, 184-200

Response Question: *How would you summarize Augustine’s teaching on the person and work of the Holy Spirit in Books V-VII and XV?*

### April 7

**Topic: Trinitarian Theology of Thomas Aquinas**

Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae, Prima Pars*, QQ. 27-38, 43 (Online)

Giles Emery, *Trinity in Aquinas* (Ypsilanti, Mich.: Sapientia Press, 2003), 121-64. (Online)

Response Question: *On the one hand, Thomas Aquinas receives the trinitarian teaching of Augustine. On the other hand, his trinitarian teaching does not merely reproduce the teaching of Augustine. Important developments occur. What similarities and differences exist between Aquinas and Augustine in terms of the content and presentation of their trinitarian doctrine?*

### April 14

**Topic: Trinity and Worship**

Geoffrey Wainwright, “Trinitarian Worship” in *Worship with One Accord: Where Liturgy and Ecumenism Embrace* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 237-50 (Online)

Robin Parry, “Singing the Trinity” in *Worshipping Trinity*, 122-46 (online)

Basil of Caesarea, *On the Holy Spirit*, 15-79 (chapters 1-18) [review this]

Article TBD

Letham, *The Holy Trinity*, 407-24

Response Question: *Why is it important that the church use the names “Father,” “Son” and “Holy Spirit” in public worship rather than alternatives like “Creator,” “Redeemer” and “Sustainer”?*

April 21

**Topic: Trinitarian Hermeneutics: The Trinity and the Gospel of John**

Augustine, *Tractates on the Gospel of John*, (online)

Kostenberger and Swain, *Father, Son and Spirit*, 19-24, 111-48, 165-90.

Keith E. Johnson, "Augustine's 'Ruled' Reading of John 5: A Model for the 'Theological' Interpretation of Scripture?" *Evangelical Theological Society* (November 19, 2008). (Online)

Response Question: *What role does the "rule of faith" play in K/S's account of the Trinity in John's gospel?*

April 28

**Topic: Trinity and Salvation**

Paul F. Knitter, "A New Pentecost? A Pneumatological Theology of Religions," *Current Dialogue* 19 (1991): 32-41. (Online)

Gavin D'Costa, "Christ, the Trinity and Religious Plurality," in *Christian Uniqueness Reconsidered: The Myth of a Pluralistic Theology of Religions*, ed. Gavin D'Costa (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1990), 16-29. (Online)

Amos Yong, "Discerning the Spirit(s) in the World Religions: Toward a Pneumatological Theology of Religions" in *No Other Gods before Me? Evangelicals and the Challenge of World Religions*, ed. John G. Stackhouse, Jr. (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2001), 37-61. (Online)

S. Mark Heim, "God's Diversity: A Trinitarian View of Religious Pluralism," *Christian Century* 118 (January 24 2001): 14-18. (Online)

Keith E. Johnson, "Does the Doctrine of the Trinity Hold the Key to a Christian Theology of Religions? An Evaluation of Three Recent Proposals," *The Southern Baptist Journal of Theology* 10 (2006): 24-47 (online)

Response Question: *What methodological problems arise from attempts to employ a doctrine of the Trinity as basis for a Christian theology of religions?*

**Hymn analysis due at the beginning of class**

May 5

**Topic: Trinity, Church and Human Personhood**

Colin E. Gunton, *The Promise of Trinitarian Theology* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1991), chapters 4-5 (Online)

Thomas J. Scirghi, "The Trinity: A Model for Belonging in Contemporary Society," *Ecumenical Review* 54 (2002): 333-42. (Online)

Miroslav Volf *After Our Likeness: The Church as the Image of the Trinity* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 191-220. (Online)

John Behr, "Trinitarian Being of the Church," *St. Vladimir's Theological Quarterly* 48 (2004): 67-88. (Online)

Karen Kilby, "Perichoresis and Projection: Problems with Social Doctrines of the Trinity," *New Blackfriars* 81 (2000): 432-445. (Online)

Keith E. Johnson, "Rethinking the 'Relevance' of the Trinity: Augustinian Reflections on the Proper Use of Trinitarian Doctrine." (Online)

Response Question: *In "The Trinitarian Being of the Church," John Behr reflects on the relationship between "Trinity" and "Church." According to Behr, what is wrong from a methodological perspective with the way John Zizioulas attempts to relate Trinity and Church? How, in Behr's judgment, should one approach the relationship between Trinity and Church?*

May 12

**Topic: *Trinity and Mission***

Kostenberger and Swain, *Father, Son and Spirit: The Trinity and John's Gospel*, 149-64.

Stephen Holmes, "Trinitarian Missiology: Towards a Theology of God as Missionary," *International Journal of Systematic Theology* 8 (2006): 72-90. (Online)

Edward W. Poitras, "St. Augustine and the *Missio Dei*: A Reflection on Mission at the Close of the Twentieth Century," *Mission Studies* 32 (1999): 28-46 (Online)

David Bjork, "Toward a Trinitarian Understanding of Mission in Post-Christendom Lands." *Missiology* 27 (1999): 231-244 (Online)

Response Question: *Stephen Holmes argues that it is important not merely to affirm that God "has" a mission but also that "missionary" may, in some way, be predicated as a perfection of the immanent life of the triune God. What "trinitarian" justification does he offer for this claim?*