Reformed Theological Seminary, Orlando  
Epistles of John  
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D. A. Carson (847-317-8081; em: mrogers@trin.edu)  

SYLLABUS

General Description:

The prime focus of this course is on the content of 1, 2, and 3 John. Nevertheless this focus is maintained against three backgrounds: (1) the nature of the Gnostic heresy at the end of the first century, and the answers, theoretical and practical, that the apostle John advances in response to it; (2) the problems of syncretism and contextualization in contemporary culture—for after all that is the sort of thing that John was facing, however unique his circumstances; (3) the bearing of the content of these epistles on a variety of strands of biblical theology.

Course Objectives:

By the end of this course the student will have gained:

1. a detailed knowledge of the Epistles of John and their applicability to a fair range of pastoral situations;

2. the ability to relate the dilemma of the church’s early and profound confrontation with various forms of proto-Gnosticism to modern problems of transcultural evangelization;

3. the capacity to probe to some extent just what is involved in “essential” Christianity—i.e. elements of Christianity that are non-negotiable, without which there is no Christianity;


Commentaries


Pre-Course Work

(1) From the list of the commentaries in the preceding section, choose one to read right through. If you are a complete beginner in biblical studies, opt for Stott or Burge. If you are a middle-level M.Div. student, choose Kruse (or if you want something slightly older, Marshall or Kistemaker). If you are more advanced, read Brown, Schnackenburg, Smalley, Strecker, or Yarbrough (by preference, the latter). Write an evaluative report of your reading of the commentary—not more than four pages, double-spaced. This is to be handed in the first day of the course. 20%

(2) During the week of the course, familiarize yourself with three or four other commentaries on the Johannine Epistles.

Post-Course Work

Write a paper of not more than fifteen pages, double-spaced, on one of the following two topics:

1. Expound some significant passage in 1 John – a long paragraph or two – in enough detail to display your grasp of the text, and its theological relevance.

2. Choose one of the themes of 1 John, and write a careful essay on it, explaining not only what John says about it, but what it contributes to New Testament theology.

80%