

REFORMED THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY, Baltimore/Washington,DC
ST1 God and Scripture
Dr Robert Letham
Fall 2005

COURSE OVERVIEW AND SYLLABUS

PURPOSE

This course is designed to help the student appreciate the nature and significance of the doctrine of God for theology and life. It will also place the doctrine of Scripture in the context of the salvation the triune God has given us and in relation to the church. It will include critical interaction with views that differ from Reformed orthodoxy. We shall combine an exegetical, historical and theological approach. Our aim is to help the student establish depth and resources for ministry today.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Assigned reading

Herman Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics: God and Creation: Volume 2* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2004).

John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1960), Battles translation: selected passages.

Paul Helm, *The Divine Revelation: The Basic Issues* (Vancouver: Regent College Publications, 2004).

B.B. Warfield, *The Inspiration and Authority of Scripture* (Philadelphia: Presbyterian & Reformed, 1970), two articles.

I expect all students taking the course for credit, barring illness or other major emergency, to complete the above reading assignments.

Supplementary reading

Samples of additional reading may be helpful for writing your paper or for exploring a particular topic further.

Seminars

In an intensive course of this nature there is a grave danger that we may become semi-comatose. To add variety we shall split into groups during the afternoons to discuss a related theological or practical issue.

A **paper** must be submitted, postmarked no later than 9 December. It should be between 12-15 pages double-spaced. Further details will be provided during the week.

An **examination** will be handed out at the end of classes. You will have three hours to complete it, at your leisure. It must be returned, postmarked no later than 11 November.

Grading policy

Grades will be determined as follows: paper 50%, examination 50%: useful class participation will be taken into consideration in borderline cases.

CALENDAR

10 October

1 THE DOCTRINE OF GOD

Before this class please read Bavinck, 27-255.

1.1 The existence of God

Pantheism, panentheism, polytheism, monotheism, deism
 Christian trinitarianism
 Arguments for the existence of God

Required reading

Bavinck, 27-91

1.2 Biblical descriptions of God

Names of God
 Imagery for God: anthropomorphisms
 Feminist theology and reimagining God

Required reading

Bavinck, 95-147

1.3 The nature and attributes of God

Goodness, love and grace
 Righteousness and wrath
 Knowledge, power and will: open theism
 Infinity, eternity, immutability
 Can God suffer? Aseity
 Spirituality, glory

Required reading

Bavinck, 148-255

Supplementary

John M. Frame, *No Other God: A Response to Open Theism* (Phillipsburg, New Jersey: Presbyterian & Reformed, 2001).

Thomas G. Weinandy, *Does God Suffer?* (Notre Dame, Illinois: University of Notre Dame Press, 2000).

11 October

1.4 The trinity

Biblical basis for the doctrine of the trinity
 Development of the doctrine in the history of the church
 Essential elements of trinitarian doctrine
 Economic and immanent trinity
 Eternal generation, eternal procession
 Trinitarian analogies?

Required reading

Bavinck, 256-334
 Calvin, *Institutes*, 1:13:T.

Supplementary reading

Robert Letham, *The Holy Trinity: In Scripture, History, Theology and Worship* (Phillipsburg, New Jersey: Presbyterian & Reformed, 2004).

12 October

1.5 Creation

Creation and redemption
 Creation *ex nihilo*
 The creation of angels, and man
 Creation days and the age of the earth

Required reading

Bavinck, 406-529

Supplementary reading

Alan Hayward, *Creation and Evolution: The Facts and the Fallacies* (London: SPCK, 1985).

1.6 Providence

Government, preservation, concurrence
 Angelic agency, miracles
 Human freedom and responsibility
 The problem of evil
 The decrees of God

Required reading

Bavinck, 591-619

Supplementary reading

Paul Helm, *The Providence of God* (Leicester / Downers Grove, Illinois: Inter-Varsity Press / InterVarsity Press, 1994)

13-14 October

2 THE DOCTRINE OF SCRIPTURE

2.1 General revelation

The question of natural theology
 The nature and scope of general revelation
 Christ and creation
 Is general revelation infallible?
 The relation between science and Scripture

2.2 Special revelation

The inspiration, authority, necessity, sufficiency of Scripture
 The perspicuity and interpretation of Scripture
 The canon of Scripture
 The diversity and unity of Scripture
 Scripture as the word of God and as a human document

Required reading

Helm, *The Revelation of God*

Warfield, "The Biblical Idea of Inspiration," "'It says': 'Scripture says': 'God says,' in *The Inspiration and Authority of the Bible*.

Additional reading

Roger Beckwith, *The Old Testament Canon of the New Testament Church* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1985).

D.A. Carson & J.D. Woodbridge (eds.), *Hermeneutics, Authority, and Canon* (Leicester: InterVarsity Press, 1986)..

Peter Jensen, *The Revelation of God* (Leicester / Downers Grove, Illinois: Inter-Varsity Press / InterVarsity Press, 2002).