

**6ST510/02 Systematic Theology 1: The Doctrine of God and
the Doctrine of Scripture**

(3 Cr)

RTS Washington

Spring 2007

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Baltimore, Maryland
March 9-10, 30-31,
April 20-21, May 11-12
Friday 7:30 – 10PM, Saturday 9AM -3 PM

Purpose of the Course

This course is designed to help the student **1)** establish Holy Scripture as the *source and norm* of theology, **2)** master the basic principles God's self-revelation as the foundation of all gospel ministry, and most important, **3)** grow in knowledge of the triune God.

Reading List¹

Herman Bavinck, "Herman Bavinck's 'Common Grace' A Translation by Raymond C. Van Leeuwen," *Calvin Theological Journal* 24 (April 1989), 35-65 (photocopy).

John M. Frame, *The Doctrine of God*, A Theology of Lordship (Phillipsburg: Presbyterian and Reformed, 2002). You should use the "Study Guide to *Doctrine of God*" at <http://thirdmill.org/magazine/hof2006.asp/category/hof/site/iim#ST12006>

John M. Frame, "Open Theism" (photocopy).

Richard B. Gaffin, "What About Prophecy and Tongues Today?" found at http://www.opc.org/new_horizons/NH02/01d.html

John Murray, "The Attestation of Scripture" found at http://www.thirdmill.org/files/reformedperspectives/hall_of_frame/ST1_Attestation%20of%20Scripture%20Murray%20PDF.pdf (This may also be found in Ned B. Stonehouse, ed., *The Infallible Word*.)

James I. Packer, "*Fundamentalism*" and *the Word of God* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1958, or any edition).

¹ A helpful handbook for new students is Stanley J. Grenz, *Pocket Dictionary of Theological Terms* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1999). J.I. Packer's *Concise Theology* is also very good. These are not required.

Vern S. Poythress, "Why Scientists Must Believe in God: Attributes of Scientific Law," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 46/1 (March 2003) 111-23 (photocopy).
http://www.etsjets.org/jets/journal/46/46-1/46-1-pp111-123_JETS.pdf

Cornelius Van Til, "Nature and Scripture" found at
http://www.thirdmill.org/files/reformedperspectives/hall_of_frame/ST1_Nature%20And%20Scripture%20by%20Van%20Til.pdf (This may also be found in Ned B. Stonehouse, ed., *The Infallible Word*.)

The Westminster Confession of Faith.

Bruce K. Waltke, *Finding the Will of God: A Pagan Notion?* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002).

Assignments:

Read (in sequence): (Notice some of the items below include more than one reading.)

1. Packer, "Fundamentalism" and the Word of God, all.
2. Murray, "The Attestation of Scripture."
Westminster Confession of Faith, Chapter 1, sections 2-10.
3. Poythress, "Why Scientists Must Believe in God: Attributes of Scientific Law," 111-23.
4. Van Til, "Nature and Scripture."
Gaffin, "What About Prophecy and Tongues Today?"
Westminster Confession of Faith, Chapter 1, section 1.
5. Frame, *The Doctrine of God*, 1-240.
6. Frame, *The Doctrine of God*, 619-742.
7. Frame, *The Doctrine of God*, 343-618.
Westminster Confession of Faith, Chapter 2.
Bavinck, "Common Grace."
8. Frame, *The Doctrine of God*, 241-342.
Westminster Confession of Faith, Chapters 3-5.
Frame, "Open Theism."
Waltke, *Finding the Will of God*, all.

Memorize (any translation, and recite a partner): Exodus 34:5-7; Matthew 28:18-20; Romans 11:33-36.

Class attendance and participation are required.

Final Exam on lectures and readings, three hours, closed note and book. Include with the Final Exam a statement that you have memorized the Scripture passages above. Also, include a statement of the % of required reading completed. (Failure to memorize the Scripture passages or read all the material will lower your exam grade.) The Exam schedule will be announced. (Late exams are not accepted.)

Term Paper: 10-12 pages, double spaced, 12-point font,

either, an evaluative response to some aspect of the openness of God proposal: this must include a fair presentation of some theme or biblical exegesis offered by one of the authors of Pinnock, et al, *The Openness of God* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1994) and a critical response, including important pastoral implications of the position you critique and defend (you may wish to interact with John M. Frame, *No Other God: A Response to Open Theism* [Phillipsburg: P&R, 2001], or Bruce A. Ware, *God's Lesser Glory, The Diminished God of Open Theism* [Wheaton: Crossway, 2000]),

or, another topic approved by **March 12th**.

The paper's due date will be announced. . (Late papers are not accepted.) **Submit exams and term papers to Geoff Sackett at the RTS Office.**

Grades: Final Exam, 70 %
Paper, 30%

Grading Scale: The standard RTS grading scale will be used (page 44 of the catalog).

Policy on Late Papers and Exams:

Simply put, late papers and exams are **not** accepted based on the following rationale:

- a. The issue is not so much an inconvenience to the professor. If that were the primary issue, then he would grade late papers because it is fundamental to his Christian commitment to put the interests of others before his own.
- b. The issue concerns the apparent laxity with which extensions are often granted. This is not Christian education. Wisdom is living within boundaries. The cosmos exists because the Creator provided boundaries for air, water, land. Moreover, he provided temporal boundaries for seasons. Without boundaries, the cosmos would degenerate back into anarchy. It is the essence of Christian living that we live within boundaries. Liberals want no boundaries. They want freedom without form, liberty without law, lovemaking without marriage. This is a fundamental battle. It is distressing when Christians do not show respect for boundaries and when students do not respect temporal boundaries.
- c. Wisdom also entails knowing the goal and devising a strategy to achieve it. Students must be aware from the syllabus what is required of them and should be able to strategize a successful model to achieve it. Laxity and uncertainty with regard to deadlines actually confuse the students and militate against a good Christian education. Paradoxically, “grace” sounds Christian and pastoral and “law” sounds non-Christian; but, sometimes

so-called “grace” and “pastoral concerns” encourage libertarianism and in truth is non-Christian and non-pastoral. Consciously or unconsciously students realize that there is a fudge factor here, enabling them to rationalize their not turning in work on time.

d. The issue also pertains to spiritual life, a subject on which a seminary rightly prides itself. However, the spiritual life includes self-control, discipline, etc. Students reap good fruit from hard work.”²

Grading System for Papers:

A: Good grasp of basic issues, plus something extraordinary, worthy of publication in a technical or a popular publication. That special excellence may be of various kinds: formulation, illustration, comprehensiveness, subtlety/nuance, creativity, argument, insight, correlations with other issues, historical perspective, philosophical sophistication, and research beyond the requirements of the assignment. One of these will be enough!

A-: An A paper, except that it requires some minor improvement before an editor should finally accept it for publication.

B+: Good grasp of basic issues but without the special excellences noted above. A few minor glitches.

B: The average grade for graduate study. Good grasp of basic issues, but can be significantly improved.

B-: Shows an understanding of the issues, but marred by significant errors, unclarities (conceptual or linguistic), unpersuasive arguments, and/or shallow thinking.

C+: Raises suspicions that largely these terms and concepts are used appropriately. Does show serious study and preparation.

C: Uses ideas with some accuracy, but without mastery or insight; thus the paper is often confused.

C-: The student has a relatively poor, but barely competent, understanding of the subject.

D: I don't give D's on papers.

F: Failure to complete the assignment satisfactorily. Such performance would disqualify a candidate for ministry if it were part of a presbytery exam.

Most of my students get B's. I try to keep A's and C's to a relatively small number. F's are extremely rare.³

Supplemental Bibliography

1. The Doctrines of Revelation and Scripture

Bavinck, Herman. *The Philosophy of Revelation* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1979).

² Adapted from Professor Bruce K. Waltke.

³ Adapted from Professor John M. Frame.

- Berkouwer, G. C. *General Revelation*, Studies in Dogmatics (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1955).
- Carson, D. A. and John Woodbridge, eds. *Scripture and Truth* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1992).
- _____. *Hermeneutics, Authority and Canon* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1986).
- Conn, Harvey, ed. *Inerrancy and Hermeneutic: A Tradition, A Challenge, A Debate* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1988).
- Frame, John M. *The Doctrine of the Knowledge of God, A Theology of Lordship* (Phillipsburg: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1987).
- Frame, John M. *Perspectives on the Word of God, An Introduction to Christian Ethics* (Phillipsburg: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1990).
- Gaffin, Richard B. "Old Amsterdam and Inerrancy?" *Westminster Theological Journal* 44 (1982) 250-89, and the same article continued in 1983.
- Gaffin, Richard B. "Some Epistemological Reflections on 1 Cor. 2:6-16," *Westminster Theological Journal* 57 (1995) 103-24.
- Helm, Paul. *The Divine Revelation: The Basic Issues* (Vancouver: Regent College, 2004).
- Kistler, Don, ed. *Sola Scriptura! The Protestant Position on the Bible* (Morgan: Soli Deo Gloria, 1995).
- Kline, Meredith G. *The Structure of Biblical Authority*, Revised Edition (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1978).
- McCartney, Dan and Clayton, C. *Let the Reader Understand*
- Montgomery, John W., ed. *God's Inerrant Word: An International Symposium of the Trustworthiness of Scripture* (Minneapolis: Bethany Fellowship, 1973).
- Nicole, Roger R. *Standing Forth: Collected Writings of Roger Nicole* (Fearn: Mentor, 2002).
- Poythress, Vern S. *God-Centered Biblical Interpretation* (Phillipsburg: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1999).
- Ridderbos, Herman. *Redemptive History and the New Testament Scriptures*, Biblical and Theological Studies (Phillipsburg: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1988).
- Vanhoozer, Kevin. *First Theology: God, Scripture and Hermeneutics* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002).

Vos, Geerhardus. *Biblical Theology: Old and New Testaments* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1958).

Warfield, Benjamin B. *The Inspiration and Authority of the Bible* (Nutley: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1952).

2. The Doctrine of God: see the comprehensive bibliography in Frame.

3. The Doctrine of Creation

Bavinck, Herman. *In the Beginning, Foundations of Creation Theology*, trans. John Vriend (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1999).

Collins, C. John. *Science & Faith, Friends or Foes?* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2003).

Hagopian, David. *The Genesis Debate* (Mission Viejo: Crux, 2001).

Moreland, J. P. and Reynolds, John M. *Three Views on Creation and Evolution Counterpoints* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1999).

4. The Doctrine of Providence

Collins, C. John. *The God of Miracles: An Exegetical Examination of the Biblical Miracles* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2000).

Grudem, Wayne. *Are Miraculous Gifts for Today? Four Views, Counterpoints* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996).

Helm, Paul. *The Providence of God, Contours of Christian Theology*, ed. Gerald Bray (Downers Grove: Intervarsity, 1997).

Muow, Richard J. *He Shines in All That's Fair, Culture and Common Grace* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2001).