

REFORMED THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY
WASHINGTON, DC
6ST610/01 THE DOCTRINE OF THE TRINITY
Summer 2007

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11 - 13 June, 9:00 AM – 5:00 PM
McLean Presbyterian Church
McLean, Virginia

COURSE PURPOSE

The course is intended to enable the student to recognize the Biblical foundations of the doctrine of the trinity, to learn how the church – east and west – has developed its understanding, and to evaluate contemporary discussion of the doctrine. Inseparably related to this is that the student know God better, integrate doctrine with worship, and see the whole of life in connection with the creative, sustaining and redeeming action of the holy trinity.

COURSE ASSIGNMENTS

Required reading

St. Gregory of Nazianzus, *On God and Christ: The Five Theological Orations and Two Letters to Cledonius*. Trans., Frederick Williams and Lionel Wickham (Crestwood, New York: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2002).

Augustine: The Trinity. Introduction, translation and notes by Edmund Hill, O.P. (Hyde Park, New York: New City Press, 1991).

John Calvin, *Institutes*, 1:13.

Robert Letham, *The Holy Trinity: In Scripture, History, Theology, and Worship* (Phillipsburg: P&R, 2004), 201-251, 271-321

Vladimir Lossky, *The Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church* (Crestwood, New York: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1998), 23-90, 135-173

Paper

One term paper is required, not exceeding 12 pages, double-spaced, on a topic to be announced at the beginning of the week's classes. This paper must be received no later than 11 July.

Examination

One two hour examination, closed book, must be received no later than 25 July.

Assessment

The final grade will be set in accordance with the RTS grading scale. The essay will constitute 40%, the examination 60%.

COURSE DETAILS

1 Biblical foundations

The Old Testament: the unity of God and elements of plurality

The New Testament: the relation between Jesus and the Father, the deity of the Son, the Holy Spirit, Trinitarian questions

While we will survey the Biblical teaching as a whole, we will give particular attention to a number of NT texts in detail.

2 Classical development of the doctrine

Modalism and subordinationism in the early church

Arius and Eunomius

The fourth century crisis, the contributions of Athanasius and the Cappadocians

The Council of Constantinople (381 AD)

Augustine

Required reading

Gregory of Nazianzus

Augustine

Supplementary reading

R.P.C. Hanson, *The Search for the Christian Doctrine of God* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1988). This is a huge book, too large for a course like this. However, it is a mine of information and a major treatment of the fourth century crisis.

Lewis Ayres, *Nicaea and its Legacy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004)

C.R.M. Shapland (trans.), *The Letters of Saint Athanasius Concerning the Holy Spirit* (London: Epworth Press, 1951)

Basil the Great, *On the Holy Spirit*

3 Eastern and Western doctrines of the trinity

The *filioque* controversy

Divergent tendencies in the East and West, with particular attention to Thomas

Aquinas (West) and Gregory Palamas (East)

Calvin's doctrine of the trinity

Required reading

Calvin, *Institutes*, 1:13.

Letham, 201-251

Lossky, 23-90, 135-173

Supplementary reading

Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, Pt. 1a, Q. 27-43. Available online here

<http://www.ccel.org/ccel/aquinas/summa.toc.html> and here

<http://www.newadvent.org/summa/>

Gregory Palamas, *The Triads*, ed., John Meyendorff (New York: Paulist Press, 1983), Book 3

4 Modern debate

Karl Barth and the revival of Trinitarian theology in the West

A selection of modern Trinitarian theologies will be examined, from among Karl Rahner, Jürgen Moltmann, and Robert Jenson

Required reading

Letham, 271-321

Supplementary reading

Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics* I/1, 295-489.

Jürgen Moltmann, *The Trinity and the Kingdom: The Doctrine of God* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993)

Karl Rahner, *The Trinity*.

Thomas F. Torrance, *The Christian Doctrine of God: One Being, Three Persons* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1996).

Please note that these books are often difficult to read. You should be aware of them and you may want to refer to them when writing your paper but they are above and beyond the requirements of the course.