Reformed Theological Seminary  
Washington D.C.

McLean Presbyterian Church  
January 26-28, 2009  

6ST618, 2 Credits  
Dr. Howard Griffith  
Assistant Professor of Systematic Theology  
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Office Hours: make an appointment – I will be delighted to meet with you or grab a cup of coffee together.

Course Description:

An introductory reading and analysis of John Calvin’s *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, emphasizing Calvin's method and biblical-theological content. We will give attention to Calvin's doctrines of Christ, justification and adoption. The course will include lectures and seminar presentations. January 26-28, 2009. Monday 10-4:30, Tuesday 9-5, Wednesday 9-5.

Course Goals:

- To enjoy something of the Spiritual genius and power of John Calvin as a Christian believer and theologian.

- To learn Calvin’s presentation of the faith in his classic *Institutes*.

- To strengthen the student’s commitment to historic Christianity.

Assignments:
**Reading:**

*Before* the class meets in January:

- T. H. L. Parker, *John Calvin, A Biography*.

  - 1/1, 6, 13
  - 2/2, 3, 10-11 and 15-16
  - 3/1-2, 10-18 and 24
  - 4/20, and


*Before* submitting your research paper (3/7/09)

- One entire book (Book 1-4) of *The Institutes* and

- the other chapters of Hall and Lillback that correspond to your chosen Book of the *Institutes*.

Please submit a reading report with your research paper stating the percent of total assigned reading you completed.

**Seminar Presentation:**

Wednesday, January 28th will be devoted to student presentations of Calvin’s theology. The presentations will be 30-40 minutes (including discussion). The presentation should include an exposition of Calvin’s teaching on your subject along with your thoughts about his teaching. Please give the class an outline of your remarks on Tuesday, January 27th.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Possible Presentation Topic “Calvin’s theology of:”</th>
<th>Possible Research Paper Topic (presentation developed into “Calvin and … on …”)</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“God in himself” and “God for us”</td>
<td>Calvin and T. F. Torrance</td>
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<tr>
<td>The Trinity</td>
<td>Calvin and (Augustine or …)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Scripture</td>
<td>Calvin and Luther (or Barth, or …)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Providence</td>
<td>Calvin and …</td>
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<td>Providence and evil</td>
<td>Calvin and Open Theism</td>
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<td>Predestination</td>
<td>Calvin and Turretin</td>
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<td>The Mosaic Covenant</td>
<td>Calvin and Herman Bavinck, or Meredith G. Kline</td>
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<td>The Sabbath</td>
<td>Calvin and the Puritans</td>
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Research Paper:

A major paper (20 pages), due March 7, 2009. The paper should be hard copy (not electronic), handed to me, or mailed to my home address (if mailed, postmarked\(^1\) no later than March 7\(^{th}\)).

- It may (probably will) develop the subject of the seminar presentation.
- It must include serious research, biblical exegesis and argument. You must relate your topic to Calvin’s exegesis as found in his commentaries, and if possible, to his sermons. I will be happy to help you with bibliography.

I expect you to use standard paper conventions found in Kate Turabian, *A Manual for Writers of Term Papers, Theses, and Dissertations*. There is a quick version at http://www.press.uchicago.edu/books/turabian/turabian_citationguide.html. Failure to follow these conventions will reduce your grade. Please include a title page with your name, but omit headers or footers that include your name. Also, include a thesis statement, formal outline (major headings and sub-headings) and bibliography. Please mark with an asterisk the items in the bibliography most used. You may collect your graded paper at the RTS office or include a self-addressed stamped envelope.

**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.

\(^1\) There is no need to express mail (or spend extra cash).
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 whether 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.

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.

Abbreviations for Comments on Papers

Policy on Late Papers: simply put, late papers are not accepted.

I base this 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.” Adapted from Professor Bruce K. Waltke.
Grades: Completed reading 20%
Presentation 30%
Research Paper 50%

The standard RTS grading scale will be used (Catalog, p. 45).

Brief Bibliography

See the excellent bibliography the Battles edition of the Institutes as well as Hall and Lillback.

These books will be available in the RTS office for reference:


Oberman, Heiko A. The Harvest of Medieval Theology, Gabriel Biel and Late Medieval Nominalism (Grand Rapids, Mi.: Baker, 2000).