

ST 1, The Doctrines of God and Scripture



Revised
Reformed Theological Seminary
Washington D.C.

6ST510 (3 Credits)

McLean Presbyterian Church

Fall 2010

Monday 7:30 PM — 10:00 PM, August 30th-December 13th (no classes September 6th, 20th and November 22nd)

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Office Hours: make an appointment – I enjoy getting to know everyone I can.

Goals¹

1. To give reasons for confidence in the absolute authority of Scripture as God's Word.
2. To show that disbelief and disobedience to Scripture are inconsistent with faith in Jesus Christ.
3. To present God as covenant Lord and ways of speaking about him consistent with his Lordship as revealed in Scripture.
4. To elicit a greater love for our Triune God and his revelation.

Texts

Herman Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics, Volume 2: God and Creation* (HB 2).

John M. Frame, "Does the Bible Affirm Open Theism?" (on the course homepage).

John M. Frame, *The Doctrine of the Word of God (DWG)* found at

<http://reformedperspectives.org/hof2010.asp/category/hof/site/#ST12010>

¹ Taking the systematic theology courses in sequence—though not required—will improve your ability in theology and your grades. However, first-time students may like to look at S. Grenz, *Pocket Dictionary of Theological Terms*, and J. van Genderen and W.H. Velema, *Concise Reformed Dogmatics*. They are not assigned, but "ConRefDog" is quite compatible with Bavinck.

Mark D. Futato, “Because It Had Rained,” found at

http://faculty.gordon.edu/hu/bi/Ted_Hildebrandt/OTeSources/01-Genesis/Text/Articles-Books/Futato_RainGen2_WTJ.pdf. This is also available

other places on the web.

Richard B. Gaffin, “The New Testament as Canon” (on the course homepage).

Richard B. Gaffin, “What About Tongues and Prophecy Today?” (on the course homepage).

Michael S. Horton, *Lord and Servant: a Covenant Christology*.

Herman Ridderbos, *Redemptive History and the New Testament Scriptures*.

Bruce K. Waltke, *Finding the Will of God, a Pagan Notion?*

Nicholas T. Wright, *The Last Word: Scripture and the Authority of God – Getting Beyond the Bible Wars*. (optional)

The *Westminster Confession of Faith (WC)*.

Assignments

1. Class attendance is required.
2. You are asked to complete all reading assignments on the dates indicated below. Completed reading will be worth 20% of your final grade. I will ask about it on the final exam.

Weekly Assignments

| Date | Lecture Topic | Required Reading |
|-------------------------------|----------------------------------|--|
| August 30 | Introduction | HB 2, Editor’s Introduction, Chapters 1-2; <i>DWG</i> , Chapters 1-7; WC 1.1 |
| September 13 | God’s Names | HB 2, Chapter 3; WC 2.1-2 |
| September 27 | Incommunicable Attributes | HB 2, Chapter 4, Frame, “Open Theism”; <i>Lord and Servant</i> , Chapter 2; WC 2.1-2 |
| October 4 | Communicable Attributes | HB 2, Chapter 5 |
| October 11 | Trinity | HB 2, Chapter 6; WC 2.3 |
| October 18 | Decree | HB 2, Chapter 7; WC 3 |
| October 25 Midterm due | Creation | HB 2, Chapters 8-10; “Because It Had Rained;” WC 4 |
| November 1 | Providence | HB 2, Chapter 14; WC 5 |
| November 8 | Special Revelation and Scripture | <i>DWG</i> , Chapters 12-15; Gaffin, “What About Tongues and Prophecy?” WC 1.1 |

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| November 15 | Canon | <i>DWG</i> , Chapters 16-22; Gaffin, “NT as Canon”; Ridderbos, <i>Redemptive History</i> ; <i>WC</i> 1.2-5 |
| November 29 | Inspiration | <i>DWG</i> , Chapters 23-25. |
| December 6 Paper due | Inerrancy | <i>DWG</i> , Chapters 26-28. |
| December 13 | Authority, Necessity, Clarity, Sufficiency | <i>DWG</i> , Chapters 29-34 and 39-46; <i>WC</i> 1.6-10 |

3. Midterm Exam on the Doctrine of God (everything we have covered to that point). This 3-hour exam will be on the course homepage, and you may take it any time from Tuesday, October 19th until Monday, October 25th. However, you must have a minister or elder proctor the exam. The exam is due at the beginning of class on Monday, October 25th. I do not accept late exams. This exam will be worth 30% of your final grade.

4. Final Exam, only on material covered since the midterm. This 2-hour exam will be on the course home page. It is due by midnight on December 17th, uploaded to the Self-service course homepage. **You must have a minister or elder proctor the exam.** No late exams will be accepted. The exam will be worth 20% of your final grade.

5. Term paper: In 10-15 pages (double spaced, 12-point font) write an essay as described below. The options will be discussed the first day of class. The paper *must* have a thesis statement, and biblical and theological argument of your thesis. In other words, there must be accurate description, but also more than description, namely evaluation *according to the Bible*. Here I am not looking for a few proof texts, but for real interaction with a passage or passages of Scripture in their context. (This means you will use commentaries.) Bad: “Frame has a good doctrine of Scripture (2 Tim 3:16-17)” but “Frame’s doctrine of Scripture gives an excellent account of 2 Timothy 3:16-17, because ...”—thesis statement follows—then there are paragraphs which explain the Scripture, and show how Frame agrees, or how far he agrees, but what he has left unsaid, for example. Bad: “Karl Barth has a neo-orthodox doctrine of Scripture, while John Frame’s is evangelical.” Good: “Karl Barth does not have a biblical/evangelical doctrine of Scripture, because he is mistaken when he considers words to be too human to carry God’s revelation. A number of passages of Scripture indicate that God does communicate personally with people in human words. —Scripture exposition follows—Then further elaboration: “Barth answers my point about this text by saying ‘*Nein!*’ because he ...”—then you reply, “However, what Barth fails to state, (or see in the passage, etc.) is...” At the end of the paper, you should sum up what you have found.

You must use at least eight good (solid scholarly, not popular theological), non-internet, sources, including the Westminster Standards.

The paper is due in hard copy (not electronic) typed, 12-point font, double-spaced, at the beginning of class on December 6th. I do not accept late papers. The paper is worth 30% of your final grade.

Essay Options:

- Discuss the doctrines of Scripture held respectively by John M. Frame and N. T. Wright in his *The Last Word* (10 Digit ISBN: 0060872616). The paper should demonstrate a solid grasp of the assigned reading and lectures and should address issues related to: the

meaning of inspiration, the nature of biblical authority, and the nature of inerrancy. It *must* evaluate based on the teaching of passages of Holy Scripture.

Or,

- Discuss the doctrines of guidance (“How does God guide the believer today?”) held respectively by John M. Frame in *DWG*, Chapter 32 and Bruce K. Waltke in his book *Finding the Will of God, a Pagan Notion?* (ISBN-13: 978-0802839749). The paper should demonstrate a solid grasp of the assigned reading and lectures and should address issues related to: the sufficiency and clarity of Scripture and the biblical meanings of the phrase “the will of God.”

N.B.: When referring to *DWG*, footnotes must include the chapter number as well as page number. So, for example, John M. Frame, *Doctrine of the Word of God*, Chapter 32, page ___. References to Wright and Waltke should follow normal footnote style. See below for further required paper standards.

Term Paper Standards

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**. You may collect your graded paper at the RTS office.

Also, note the serious problem of plagiarism. See “RTS Student Handbook,” p. 12 for discussion. Note http://www.nytimes.com/2010/07/13/opinion/13tue4.html?_r=1.

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. M.Div. students, and MAR students who have taken Greek or Hebrew, must make significant use of the original language(s) of Scripture to earn an “A.”

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: Shows effort, but absolutely nothing more.

F: Failure to complete the assignment satisfactorily. Such performance would disqualify a candidate for ministry if it were part of a presbytery exam. ²

6. Memorize, any translation, and recite Exodus 34:5-7, Matthew 28:18-20, and Romans 11:33-36. I will ask about this on the Final Exam.

Approximate Time Investment

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| Lectures | 39 hours |
| Reading (includes reading for the paper) | 64 hours (@ 20 pages/hour) |
| Midterm Exam (3 hours, plus preparation) | 12 hours |
| Memorization | 2 hours |
| Paper | 15 hours |
| Final exam (2 hours, plus preparation) | 11 hours |
| Total | 143 hours |

Appendix

Policy on Late Assignments

Simply put, late exams and papers are **not** accepted based on the following rationale:³

² Abbreviations for Comments on Papers: A - awkward; Amb - ambiguous; Arg - more argument needed; C - compress; Circle (drawn around some text)- usually refers to misspelling or other obvious mistake; D - define; E - expand, elaborate, explain; EA - emphasis argument; F - too figurative for context; G - grammatical error; Ill - illegible; Illus - illustrate, give example; Int - interesting; M - misleading in context; O - overstated, over-generalized; PS- problem in paragraph structure; R - redundant; Ref- reference (of pronoun, etc.); Rel- irrelevant, or relevance unclear; Rep - repetitious; Resp - not responsive (In a dialogue: one party raises a good question to which the other does not respond.); S - summary needed; Scr - needs more scripture support; Simp - oversimplified; SM - straw man (a view nobody holds); SS - problem in sentence structure; St - style inappropriate; T - transition needed; U - unclear; V - vague; W - questionable word-choice; Wk - weak writing (too many passives, King James English, etc.); WO - word order; WV - whose view? yours? another author?

³ Adapted from Professor Bruce K. Waltke.

- 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.”

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

Course Objectives Related to MDiv* Student Learning Outcomes

Course: 6ST510, The Doctrines of God and Scripture

Professor: Howard Griffith

Campus: Washington DC

Date: Fall 2010

| <u>MDiv* Student Learning Outcomes</u> | <u>Rubric</u> | <u>Mini-Justification</u> |
|---|---|----------------------------------|
| <p><i>In order to measure the success of the MDiv curriculum, RTS has defined the following as the intended outcomes of the student learning process. Each course contributes to these overall outcomes. This rubric shows the contribution of this course to the MDiv outcomes.</i></p> <p><i>*As the MDiv is the core degree at RTS, the MDiv</i></p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Strong ➤ Moderate ➤ Minimal ➤ None | |

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| <i>rubric will be used in this syllabus.</i> | | | |
| Articulation (oral & written) | Broadly understands and articulates knowledge, both oral and written, of essential biblical, theological, historical, and cultural/global information, including details, concepts, and frameworks. | Strong | Exams and a paper on doctrinal matters vitally related to everything. |
| Scripture | Significant knowledge of the original meaning of Scripture. Also, the concepts for and skill to research further into the original meaning of Scripture and to apply Scripture to a variety of modern circumstances. (Includes appropriate use of original languages and hermeneutics; and integrates theological, historical, and cultural/global perspectives.) | Strong | Not an exegesis class, but we read and lecture on both systematic and biblical-theological aspects of each doctrine. Scripture memory. |
| Reformed Theology | Significant knowledge of Reformed theology and practice, with emphasis on the Westminster Standards. | Strong | These are the issues basic to all Christian and Reformed doctrine. |
| Sanctification | Demonstrates a love for the Triune God that aids the student's sanctification. | Strong | The study of God himself leads to glorious praise. |
| Desire for Worldview | Burning desire to conform all of life to the Word of God. | Moderate | Stresses the importance of God's will in all of life. |
| Winsomely Reformed | Embraces a winsomely Reformed ethos. (Includes an appropriate ecumenical spirit with other Christians, especially Evangelicals; a concern to present the Gospel in a God-honoring manner to non-Christians; and a truth-in-love attitude in disagreements.) | Strong | I will seek to show the value of Reformed theology for the benefit of all Christians. |
| Preach | Ability to preach and teach the meaning of Scripture to both heart and mind with clarity and enthusiasm. | Moderate | I urge these, but do not require the students to do preaching. |

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| Worship | Knowledgeable of historic and modern Christian-worship forms; and ability to construct and skill to lead a worship service. | None | |
| Shepherd | Ability to shepherd the local congregation: aiding in spiritual maturity; promoting use of gifts and callings; and encouraging a concern for non-Christians, both in America and worldwide. | Strong | Stress on the importance of these issues as people deal with life. |
| Church/World | Ability to interact within a denominational context, within the broader worldwide church, and with significant public issues. | Moderate | We do consider common grace—thus the value of God’s mercy expressed beyond the elect. |