Course Description

A study of Christology, giving particular emphasis to both the Person and Work of Jesus Christ. The course will attempt to survey the material from an exegetical, biblical-theological, historical and creedal basis, giving particular attention to points of interest and debate in our own time.

"…the battle cry of 'Exegesis, exegesis, exegesis!' that I hear coming from some sections of the evangelical world has its shortcomings here as well. Of course, exegesis is a basic element of all sound theology; but, like the foundations or frame of a house, if that's all there is, you're going to get wet, very wet, when it rains. It can lead to a fragmentary approach to the Bible which never sees the whole picture, or the priorities which exist within the overall witness of scripture. It can be profoundly anti-intellectual, eschewing all questions that a superficial reading of the text does not raise. Its frequent failure to rise to theological and ethical synthesis, and to engage modestly and thoughtfully with the priorities of the creedal and confessional trajectories of the church, leaves it inadequate to deal with really big issues in any kind of historical, social or ecclesiastical perspective. Exegesis is important; but it needs to stand in relation to other theological and ethical tasks if it is not to prove itself the basis for a highly unstable, selective and inconsistent church policy. Preachers, as well as believers, have their pick-'n-mix priorities, against which the testimony of the centuries, embodied in the creeds and confessions, can go some way to help. Nobody, therefore, should be allowed within a million miles of a pulpit who does not have a proper respect for biblical theology in terms of the overall story of redemptive history, a firm grasp of the importance of systematic theology, creeds and confessions, and a critical handle on contemporary culture. Only then can he begin to deal with the latest big thing in any kind of biblical, theological and historical perspective."

Carl Trueman
The Wages of Spin
Mentor, 2005

Course Objectives

The principal aim of the Systematic courses (1ST508, 1ST512, and 1ST518) is to provide students with a comprehensive understanding of the main doctrines of Christianity. The course aims at introducing the student to the discipline of systematic theology, in particular, to Theological Prolegomena, and the doctrines of Scripture, God and man. Students should have a competent grasp of the issues involved and a facility to communicate them with some fluency. Some memorization is essential in this process. Theology is both exegetical and historical, sociological and ecclesiastical, biblical and systematic. Tensions often arise when one aspect is stressed at the expense of another. This is a course in systematic theology—concerned with the answer to a series of inter-related questions: What does the entire Bible teach on a specific issue? How have theologians of the past and present formulated this issue? Answers to these questions are often expressed confessionally, and many branches of the church require of their ordained clergy (teaching elders) a commitment to these doctrines in a more or less strict sense.

Students ought to be able to handle themselves well in the modern debate over controversial issues. Many students...
will be examined on these doctrines in church courts and this objective will also be maintained. Additionally, all good theology should be doxological. Obedience in worship will be the chief objective of this course.

Note should be taken of the following quotations:

"Theology seems often to the outsider just so much word-spinning air-borne discourse which never touches down except disastrously." [Ian Ramsey, Models for Divine Activity (London: SCM Press, 1973), 1.]

"There are theologians in the bottom of hell who are more interested in their own thoughts about God than in God himself." [C. S. Lewis]

"Theology is the science of living blessedly for ever" [William Perkins, The Golden Chaine (1590), 1]

Students should achieve the following:

1. A basic familiarity with the traditional loci of Christian theology
2. Acquaintance with the history of Christian thought, particularly its Patristic, Protestant, Puritan (Westminsterian) and Modern phases.
3. Awareness of contemporary challenges to Christian orthodoxy and an ability to assess their strengths and weaknesses
4. Critical awareness of current trends in Christian theology
5. Familiarity with the tools and resources available for study of theological issues; and an ability to use these tools for independent research and analysis
6. A sense of theological proportion, enabling the student to distinguish between what is primary and what is secondary in Christian doctrine
7. The development of a respect for traditional theological formulations together with an ability to critically evaluate them

Theological Standpoint

The course will be taught from the standpoint of a personal commitment to the Westminster Confession of Faith (full disclosure of presuppositional bias!). In particular, it reflects the theology of sixteenth and seventeenth century theologians (students advocating separation rather than continuity in theological expression here need to read the 4-volumed work of Richard Muller, Post-Reformation Reformed Dogmatics 4 vols. (Baker, 2003), before challenging the professor about it!). In particular, students will detect a penchant for puritan theologians of the caliber of Owen, Manton, Sibbes and Charnock. Scottish sympathies abound, especially for William Cunningham (his view of Calvin on the Supper notwithstanding). Additional input will be evidenced from the Princetonians (Warfield and Hodge), the wisdom of John Murray (his four-volume set of "complete writings" ought to be in every student's library). As the professor gets older, greater recognition of theology's Patristic roots are taking shape.

Teaching/Class Methodology

Lectures will cover all the major topics, but there will not be uniformity. Some topics are more important than others. Some topics are covered adequately in the reading material (when this is the case, it will be pointed out in class). Due to the mixed nature of the classroom, questions will be limited, but welcome. Special seminars will be arranged on a voluntary basis for students who wish to ask questions of a "I don't understand this" nature. It is all too easy to slow things down to a snail's pace if this is not adhered to. All lectures are given via Powerpoint.
Course Requirements

I. READING

Careful reading is required of the following materials:

- John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion* 2.12-17 (1:464-528) 64 pp
- Herman Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics* Volume 3: 233-482 250pp
- Donald MacLeod, *The Person of Christ* 300pp
- Ovey, Sachs, Jeffery: *Pierced for our Transgressions* 336 pp
- John Owen, *Death of Death in the Death of Christ* 300pp

II. Class Attendance

Class attendance will be imperative for successful completion of this course. Students are expected to bring their copies of the *Westminster Confession of Faith* (Free Presbyterian), and the Bible to class every day.

III. Evaluation

The course will be divided into three unequal parts: Quizzes (20%), précis requirements (20%), and a final examination (60%).

a. Quizzes (40%)

There will be ten quizzes based on the scheduled reading assignments. Quizzes will be available from December 13, 2010 to January 28, 2011 and must be taken in the order of the reading. Please contact my TA for more information.

b. Final Exam (60%)

The examination will cover the entire material, including the reading material, and will test the student's competence to integrate it into his overall theological skills. You may expect the examination to be lengthy, requiring detailed knowledge.

c. Procedure

Given the nature of a January term course, your reading, quizzes and the exam will take place outside of class time. See Ryan Biese for details.

All work must be completed by 5.00 pm Friday, February 17, 2012.
Reading Schedule

1. Calvin Institutes Book II, Chapter XII 464-474
   Bavinck Reformed Dogmatics Person of Christ 223-319

2. Calvin Institutes Book II, Chapter XIII 474-481
   Bavinck Reformed Dogmatics Christ's Humiliation 323-417

3. Calvin Institutes Book II, Chapter XIV 482-493
   Bavinck Reformed Dogmatics Christ's Exaltation 418-482

4. Calvin Institutes Book II, Chapter XV 494-503
   MacLeod Person of Christ Intro, Part One 15-152

5. Calvin Institutes Book II, Chapter XVI 503-528
   MacLeod Person of Christ Part Two, Epilogue 155-264

6. Calvin Institutes Book II, Chapter XVII 528-534

7. Owen Death of Death Intro, Book I, Book II 1-123

8. Owen Death of Death Book III, Book IV 124-312

9. Ovey/Sachs Pierced for our Transgression Part One 13-203

10. Ovey/Sachs Pierced for our Transgression Part Two 205-333