

**2DM802LA ELECTIVE
LIGONIER ACADEMY, LAKE MARY, FL
THE DOCTRINE OF THE TRINITY
9-13 JULY 2012
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PURPOSE

This module aims to provide a thorough knowledge of the Biblical basis for the doctrine of the trinity, its outworking in history, and consequently its strategically central importance for the worship, life and witness of the church.

To that end we shall read and discuss a range of primary sources, all of which are available online as well as in hard copy. Additionally, a number of significant secondary sources address the details of the trinitarian crisis of the fourth century, about which it is essential to have a working knowledge.

Underlying this module is the conviction that if we love God we will want to know more about him. It was an axiom of such key figures as Augustine and Anselm that faith seeks understanding.

Moreover, we will need to ask ourselves how far our own and our churches' worship and practice reflects the nature of the triune God.

ADVANCE READING

The following texts, both immediately below in the next section and those listed in the separate units of the module, should all be read in advance of the class discussions.

Scholarly discussions of the trinity

Lewis Ayres. *Nicaea and its Legacy: An Approach to Fourth-Century Trinitarian Theology*. Oxford University Press, 2004, 11-429.

Ayres is a detailed but quite readable account of the intricacies of the crisis of the fourth century. He includes Augustine and argues, contrary to the prevalent scholarship of the twentieth century, that he was in basic agreement with the Greek theologians.

John Behr. *The Nicene Faith: Part Two: One of the Holy Trinity. (The Formation of Christian Theology Volume 2)*. Crestwood, New York: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2004, 263-481.

This is an exposition of the trinitarian theology of the Cappadocians (Basil, Gregory of Nyssa, and Gregory of Nazianzus) who were largely responsible for the definitive trinitarian settlement at the first council of Constantinople in 381.

Robert Letham. *The Holy Trinity: In Scripture, History, Theology and Worship*. Phillipsburg, New Jersey: Presbyterian & Reformed, 2004, 1-478.

This is a more global treatment of the Biblical foundations of the doctrine of the trinity (latent in the OT, implicit in the NT) and its unfolding in the history of the church. It also addresses areas where the life and mission of the church.

Primary sources

These are all available online at Christian Classics Ethereal Library: www.ccel.org Click on "browse" and, when you have found the particular author, click on "Read Online free." The readings from the Fathers are taken from *The Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church: Second Series* (NPNF), with the exception of Augustine, which is in the *First Series* and Athanasius *Letters to Serapion*. The English edition of Calvin's *Institutes* is the Beveridge translation from the nineteenth century; I would prefer if you referred to the Battles translation (Westminster Press). However, ccel does have the Latin text of the *Institutes*. Where there are more recent translations I will indicate them.

1. BIBLICAL FOUNDATIONS

Reading: Letham, 17-85.

If you have the opportunity and the time, Wainwright, *The Trinity in the New Testament* (London: SPCK, 1963) is well worth the effort to read but I do not expect it. We shall discuss the question of how to preach the trinity from the Biblical text.

2. ATHANASIUS (295-373)

Athanasius was renowned for his defiance of the deity of Christ and his work was essential for the ultimate exposition of trinitarian doctrine.

Reading:

On the Incarnation of the Word, available in NPNF, 4.

Letters to Serapion on the Holy Spirit, 1:16-33. Available in the only viable English translation at www.archive.org - click on texts and enter "Athanasius Letters to Serapion on the Holy Spirit" for a photocopy of Shapland's translation and notes.

De Decretis, 11-12, 17-22.

Tomus ad Antiochenos, 5-8

Orationes contra Arianos, 1:14-21, 27-28; 2:2-4, 57-58, 70

These are available in NPNF, 4.

3. BASIL (330-379)

Apart from Athanasius' *Letters to Serapion on the Holy Spirit*, Basil's treatise was the first specifically on the Holy Spirit. By the 360s the main controversy surrounded the nature of the Spirit. It was in the context of the liturgy that the dispute arose.

Reading:

De Spiritu Sancto 3-7, 13-20, 24-26, 30, 37-40, 45-47, 59-64

Letters 7, 9:3, 214:4, 234, 236:6

These are available in NPNF, 8.

4. GREGORY OF NYSSA (c335/340-c394/400)

Gregory was Basil's brother and, if anything, a more brilliant theologian, although Basil was a more active churchman, organizer and ascetic.

Reading:

Basil, *Letters* 38:4 (this is now recognized as composed by Gregory)

Against Eunomius 1:25, 33-39, 2:6-9, 12

On the Holy Spirit against the Followers of Macedonius

On the Holy Trinity and the Godhead of the Holy Spirit
On "Not Three Gods" These are available in NPNF, 5.

5. GREGORY OF NAZIANZUS (c330-391)

Gregory has been given the title "The Theologian" by the Greek church. His Theological Orations are among the greatest works of theology in the history of the Christian church. Gregory was a pre-eminent preacher; hence his extant writings are all in the form of sermons. His theology underlay the settlement of the trinitarian crisis at the Council of Constantinople.

Reading:

The Five Theological Orations (Orations 27-31).

Oration on Holy Baptism, 41-43 (Oration 40).

These are located in ccel under NPNF2-07.

They are available in NPNF, 7.

The *Theological Orations* are also in an excellent translation in Frederick Williams and Lionel Wickham (tr.). *St. Gregory of Nazianzus: On God and Christ*. Crestwood, New York: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2002)

Optional

As an introduction to the Cappadocians, see Robert Letham. The Three Cappadocians. In Bradley G. Green, ed. *Shapers of Christian Orthodoxy: Engaging with Early and Medieval Theologians*. Nottingham: Apollos, 2010, 190-234.

6. AUGUSTINE (354-430)

Indisputably the most seminal influence on the Latin church, including Protestantism, Augustine's magisterial treatise on the trinity had provoked discussion and disagreement, particularly in sections 8-15, the last part of the work. However, in the earlier section there is some rich reflection on Scripture and its implications. The other examples here are at least equally significant.

Reading:

Letter 11 to Nebridius

Letter 169 to Evodius The letters are in volume 1 of NPNF First Series.

On the Holy Trinity This is in volume 3 of NPNF First Series.

Tractate 20 on the Gospel of John (in volume 7 of NPNF First Series, on John 5:19)

Optional

A modern, but to my thinking at times problematic, translation of *De trinitate* is by Edmund Hill, published by New City Press, 1991.

Lewis Ayres has recently produced *Augustine and the Trinity*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010.

7. JOHN OF DAMASCUS (675-749)

John spent most of his career as a leading figure in government service in Syria, under Moslem rule. Later he became a monk. He was a major seminal figure in Eastern theology. The chapters we are to read are dense and brilliant.

Reading:

On the Orthodox Faith, 1:1-8. Also available in NPNF 9:2:1-17 (it's in the second part of the volume, the first being devoted to Hilary of Poitiers).

8. JOHN CALVIN (1509-1564)

Calvin should need little introduction. His articulation of the trinity has aroused conflicting responses. Largely he was conservative in his formulation of the doctrine but had the ability to express it in terms that reached a wide audience.

Reading:

Institutes of the Christian Religion, 1:13; Commentaries on Acts 13:33, Colossians 1:15.

9. JOHN OWEN (1616-1683)

Owen was perhaps the greatest ever English speaking theologian. At times difficult to read, for he wrote his English as if it were Latin, the treatise we will examine is probably without parallel.

Reading:

Of Communion with God the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.

This occupies volume 2 of Owens's *Works*, 1-274. It is published by The Banner of Truth Trust.

10. THE TRINITY AND CHURCH WORSHIP

Sample church bulletins will be provided in which an explicit trinitarian structure shapes the worship. We shall consider how the trinity should affect preaching, public prayer, hymnology, and the sacraments.

Reading:

Letham, 407-424.

11. THE TRINITY AND MISSIONS

The trinity has been seen as something abstruse and so to be avoided as much as possible in evangelism and missionary activity. Recent developments in Bible translation and in the emergence of insider movements underline this theme; the focus is increasingly on alleged common ground between Christianity and other religions. What are we to think and do in such situations?

Reading:

Letham, 425-457.

12. THE TRINITY AND GENDER RELATIONS

Many who press for egalitarian relationships between men and women, husbands and wives, tend to dismiss references to an order between the persons of the trinity. In response, some complementarians have spoken of the "eternal subordination of the Son" to the Father. Are either of these positions tenable? Is it dangerous to apply trinitarian relations to human relationships and, if so, to what extent?

Reading:

Letham, 489-496.

Note my continuing interaction with Kevin Giles in *The Christian Research Journal* 31 (2008) and *Evangelical Quarterly* 80 (2009).

THE SEMINARS

Seminars will be student-led. We do not require a paper to be produced. It will consist in proposing questions for discussion on the material of each class. At our first class session we will assign leadership responsibilities. Depending on the numbers enrolled for the class we may have team leadership. The task of the seminar leaders will be to ensure that the class discusses the most crucial points; this is best served by clear questions.

COURSE ASSESSMENT

A paper will be assigned early in the week the class meets. The due date for its submission will be 1 December 2012.

Course Objectives Related to D.Min. Student Learning Outcomes

Course: The Doctrine of the Trinity; Professor: Dr. Robert Letham;

Campus: Orlando/Ligonier Academy; Date: July 9-13, 2012

<u>DMin Student Learning Outcomes</u>		<u>Rubric</u>	<u>Mini-Justification</u>
<i>In order to measure the success of the DMin 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 DMin outcomes.</i>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Strong ➤ Moderate ➤ Minimal ➤ None 	
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	Students are given opportunity to guide seminar discussions with classmates. This requires familiarity with the material.
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	Both the Old and New Testaments are covered as pertains to the doctrine of the Trinity.
Reformed Theology	Significant knowledge of Reformed theology and practice, with emphasis on the Westminster Standards.	Moderate	As the doctrine of the Trinity is a catholic doctrine, course material can be considered Reformed, but not distinctively so.
Sanctification	Demonstrates a love for the Triune God that aids the student's sanctification.	Minimal	Discussion of the Trinity will give students the raw material to apply toward their own sanctification.
Desire for Worldview	Burning desire to conform all of life to the Word of God.	Moderate	The doctrine of the Trinity will naturally have a large impact on a Christian worldview.
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.)	Moderate	Attention is given to the early formation of the doctrine of the Trinity. The discussion is therefore catholic in scope.
Preach	Ability to preach and teach the meaning of Scripture to both heart and mind with clarity and enthusiasm.	None	Preaching method is not directly addressed in this course.
Worship	Knowledgeable of historic and modern Christian-worship forms; and ability to construct and skill to lead a worship service.	Minimal	Some course readings address the impact of the doctrine of the Trinity on worship.
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.	None	Congregational care is not directly addressed in this course.
Church/World	Ability to interact within a denominational context, within the broader worldwide church, and with significant public issues.	None	Church/World issues are not directly addressed in this course.