

ST 1, The Doctrines of God and Scripture



Reformed Theological Seminary
Washington D.C.

6ST510 (3 Credits)

Fall 2011

Wednesday 7:30 PM — 10:00 PM, August 31-December 14 (no class November 9, 16, 23)

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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.

Texts²

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)

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.

² There is an abridged version of Bavinck's *Reformed Dogmatics*. You may benefit from reading it, but you may not substitute it for the required reading (the assigned pages) in the full *Reformed Dogmatics*.

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

[http://faculty.gordon.edu/hu/bi/Ted_Hildebrandt/OTeSources/01-](http://faculty.gordon.edu/hu/bi/Ted_Hildebrandt/OTeSources/01-Genesis/Text/Articles-Books/Futato_RainGen2_WTJ.pdf)

[Genesis/Text/Articles-Books/Futato_RainGen2_WTJ.pdf](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).

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

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. In class I will ask questions about the readings and expect you to keep up. 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 31	Introduction	HB 2, Editor’s Introduction, Chapters 1-2; <i>DWG</i> , Chapters 1-7; WC 1.1
September 7	God’s Names	HB 2, Chapter 3; WC 2.1-2
September 14	Incommunicable Attributes	HB 2, Chapter 4, Frame, “Open Theism”; WC 2.1-2
September 21	Communicable Attributes	HB 2, Chapter 5
September 28	Trinity	HB 2, Chapter 6; WC 2.3
October 5	Decree	HB 2, Chapter 7; WC 3
October 12	Creation	HB 2, Chapters 8-10; “Because It Had Rained;” WC 4
October 19	Providence	HB 2, Chapter 14; WC 5
October 26 Midterm due	Special Revelation and Scripture	<i>DWG</i> , Chapters 12-15; Gaffin, “What About Tongues and Prophecy?” WC 1.1
November 2	Canon	<i>DWG</i> , Chapters 16-22; Gaffin, “NT as Canon”; Ridderbos,

		<i>Redemptive History; WC 1.2-5</i>
November 30	Inspiration	<i>DWG, Chapters 23-25.</i>
December 7 Paper due	Inerrancy, Authority, Necessity, Clarity, Sufficiency	<i>DWG, Chapters 26-34 and 39-46; WC 1.6-10</i>
December 14	Final Exam (in class)	

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 Thursday, October 20th until Wednesday, October 26th. However, you must have a minister or elder proctor the exam. The exam is due at the beginning of class on Wednesday, October 26th. I do not accept late exams. It will be worth 30% of your final grade.

4. Final Exam, only on material covered since the midterm. This 2-hour exam will be given in class on December 14th. It will be worth 20% of your final grade.

5. Term paper: In 10 pages (no more, no less, double spaced, 12-point font) write an essay as described below. 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*. (See the options for thesis statements below.) 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 should be familiar with the readings assigned for the course, and go beyond them in the paper. You must use at least eight good, non-internet, sources (of course you may find articles on the internet, but in no case may you cite a blog), including the Westminster Standards. A good source is one that a theologian would cite. It is solid-scholarly, not popular-theological. (The Matthew Henry commentary would not be a good source.) You should not cite magazines like *Christianity Today* or *Modern Reformation*. You may not use a study Bible as a source.

The point of good sources is your use of them—do they stimulate your interest, challenge your position, enhance your argument, etc.?

The paper is due in hard copy (not electronic) at the beginning of class on December 7th. 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. Thesis statement for this essay: “Frame’s doctrine of Scripture is _____ in relation to Wright’s. This can be seen with respect to the following subjects: _____.”

Or,

- A topic approved by the professor.

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.

You must follow these conventions, so that the reader may consult your sources. This is especially true for internet citations. 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, unclarity (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.³

The paper will be worth 30% of your final grade.

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

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:⁴

“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

³ 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?

⁴ Adapted from Professor Bruce K. Waltke.

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 2011

<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 rubric will be used in this syllabus.</i></p>		<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,	Strong	Exams and a paper on doctrinal matters vitally related to everything.

	concepts, and frameworks.		
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.
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.