Course Description

A study of soteriology (the application of Christ’s work of redemption: union with Christ, calling, regeneration, conversion, faith, repentance, justification, adoption, sanctification and perseverance), ecclesiology (the doctrine of the church), sacraments (baptism, Lord’s Supper) and eschatology (death, intermediate state, the return of Christ, resurrection and final judgment), with continual reference to historical theology. All along we will remember the crucial nexus between faith and life, doctrine and practice, and thus endeavor to stress the importance of these doctrines for Christian thought, life, and ministry.

Prerequisites

GENERAL:

Students in this class are expected already to have completed some theological studies. For most students, this requirement is met by the course ST502 (“Theological Foundations”), 1ST601 (“Covenant Theology”), 1ST508 (“Systematic Theology I”), or 1ST512 (“Systematic Theology II”).

SPECIFIC:

MFT students are asked to pre-read Louis Berkhof’s Manual of Christian Doctrine (Eerdmans, 2002 [1933]).

MDiv Students who are wondering as to the value of Systematic Theology to preaching should consult the following:


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. This course aims at introducing the student to the last three of the loci of systematic theology: soteriology, ecclesiology, and eschatology. 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:


“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 class-room, questions will be limited. 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.
Course Requirements

I. Required Texts

John Calvin, *The Institutes of the Christian Religion* (ICR), 684-1008; 1276-1428 (476 pages)
Paul Engle & Steven Cowan, *Who Runs the Church: Four Views on Church Government* (WRC) 7-310 (303 pages)
A. Hoekema, *The Bible and the Future* (BF), 1-287 (287 pages)
Robert Reymond, *A New Systematic Theology* (NST), 895-910; 1067-1093 (41 pages)
The Westminster Confession of Faith (WCF), chs 10-33

II. Supplemental Texts (on reserve in the library)

James Bannerman, *Church of Christ*, Volume II, (CC), 1-41 (40 pages)
Louis Berkhof, *Systematic Theology* (ST), 415-422; 644-657; 661-667 (26 pages)
James I. Packer, “Justification in Protestant Theology,” *Here We Stand: Justification by Faith Today* (HWS), 84-102 (18 pages)

Total Pages [1632 pages]

III. Required Reading schedule (Please note that there will be weekly reading quizzes)

**Weekly Reading Quizes:** At the 1.00 pm hour of the Monday class session there will be a weekly quiz based on the previous week’s reading assignment (which is given below). The first quiz will fall on **Monday, February 7** and the last on **Monday, May 9**. These will last less than 5 minutes each and therefore will not be unduly taxing. The quiz will cover an issue of major focus in the readings (something that can be discerned without detailed reading of the material). They are designed to ensure that you keep up with these readings. Note that these quizzes cover 10% of your final grade. The readings highlighted in **bold** are to be read with greater detail; however, the student is expected to be familiar with the basic content and argumentation for all the readings.

(Feb 14) **ICR**, pp. 725-762; **RAA**, pp. 79-131; **HWS**, pp. 84-102; **WCF**, chs 12-13
IV. Class Attendance

Class attendance will be imperative for successful completion of this course.

_The Instructor respectfully requests that students do not engage in private use of the online Internet facility during class hours._

Students are expected to bring their copies of the _Westminster Confession of Faith_ (Free Presbyterian), and the Bible to class every day.

V. Evaluation

The course will be divided into four unequal parts: reading quizzes, précis (see below), a paper (note the earlier due date for this paper), a final examination.

A. **Reading Quiz** (10%)

See above.

B. **Précis requirement** (20%)

A précis is a concise abridgement of a larger treatment, or summary of a particular topic. In this exercise, the student will prepare a (no more than) one page précis of his views and understanding of 5 major doctrinal topics: _Union with Christ; Justification; Sanctification; Baptism; and The Lord’s Supper._

1. Union with Christ by February 21
2. Justification by March 7
3. Sanctification by March 28
4. Baptism by April 18
5. The Lord’s Supper by May 2

*Each précis is due by 5.00pm on the due date*

These précis' should be typed.
Students may not work together on this assignment.

A sample précis is given in the appendices section at the end of this syllabus.
J. I. Packer does a great job of providing a précis for most doctrines in his book *Concise Theology*. Refrain from merely duplicating his material! The professor has *two* copies of this book already!

C. **Final Exam (30%)**

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. **NB: A question will be asked on the final exam asking for the percentage of reading you accomplished throughout the course of the semester.**

D. **Paper (40%)**

A paper is required. A full bibliography will be issued separately from this syllabus (possibly available for download from my website!). Suggested topics will be given early in the semester.

The paper should be 10 pages in length, 12 pt Times Roman font, double spaced. In *addition*, it should include a summary statement of the paper’s thesis, as well as an adequate bibliography. Please comply with *The Chicago Manual of Style, 14th edition*.

A word of caution: the professor is dubious of using the internet in research papers. Sites arise without the approval of ‘the communion of the saints’—a team of competent theological examiners which those who publish books with recognized publishers must satisfy. Any ‘hack’ may pontificate on the Internet to his or her heart’s content and be about as orthodox as Attilah the Hun! Some of the errors currently infecting the church (e.g. paedo-communion, new covenant theology) have arisen largely through this medium.

**Do not use the internet as a reference in your research paper!**

VI. **Extra Credit**

This will NOT guarantee an A in this course, but it could help towards a better grade. A 5 point make-up paper may be submitted. Students wishing to ensure a better grade may write an additional 7-page *summary* paper evaluating one of the following works:

John Owen Volume 16 *The Church and the Bible*
Martyn Lloyd-Jones *Romans 3:20-43:25 Atonement and Justification*
Recommended Books for your library (!)

In addition to the required texts, the following books are highly recommended for your reference during the course and purchase for your personal library. Married students who need me to give my lecture entitled, “Make sure you marry a wife who loves books more than she loves you!” should write me a personal note and include some suitable remuneration. Those who have already made their life-choice without taking into consideration this matter should perhaps reflect on their folly and, in penance, become adept at purchasing on [This is a work in progress and further books will be cited during the course of the semester. These make wonderful anniversary gifts!].

**Systematic Theology**
- Louis Berkhof *Systematic Theology*
- Francis Turretin, *Institutes of Elenctic Theology* (3 vols.)
- John Owen, *Collected Works* (16 vols.)
- Charles Hodge, *Systematic Theology* (3 vols.)
- Robert L. Dabney, *Systematic Theology*
- B.B. Warfield, *Collected Works* (10 vols.)
- John Murray, *Collected Writings* (4 vols.)
- Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology*
- Donald Macleod, *A Faith to Live By*

**Soteriology**

**Ecclesiology**

**Sacraments**

**Eschatology**

Unsure of a certain term? These should help you.

For the ‘advanced’ student who wants to learn some Latin!

Some ‘Barthian’ leanings here, so be careful.
From the ‘old school’

The $7 ‘save my bacon’ variety and for those unashamed to admit ignorance!
Important Dates

Paper due by:  11.00 am  Friday, May 7 2004

Please ensure that you supply a full address with your assignments if you wish them returned to you. Resident students may have them sent to their RTS mailboxes. **If you do not have a mailbox at the seminary, please make sure that anything you turn in to the professor has your name and address on it.**

Should you need to contact me, you may do so the following e-mail address:

**dthomas@rts.edu**

**nb.** Should you attempt to contact me by e-mail, please remember that if you sign yourself ‘Jake’ or ‘Jemima’ I may not always know who you are. Please humor me by attaching a full name and the course in which you are enrolled. If you are really high-tech, you may attach a photograph too!
Appendices

Paper Grading Guide (40% of Final Grade)

The following criteria will be used in grading all written work for this course:

GENERAL (5%)
Riveting (5)  Interesting (4)  Yawn (3)  Dull (2)  “Next!” (1)  No paper! (0)

THESIS STATEMENT (5%)
Clear, brief, description of thesis statement (5)
No these statement (0)

DEVELOPMENT (ie. does it have a beginning, middle and end?) (5%)
Coherent (5)  Begins well, but,.. (4)  Falls apart after the first page (3)  Stream of Consciousness stuff (2)  Can’t make head nor tail of this (1)  No paper! (0)

CONTENT (5%)
Shows thorough grasp of the material AND some independent thinking (5)
Shows thorough grasp of the material AND some borrowed thinking (4)
Raises more issues than can be answered (3)
Doesn’t contain enough data to deal with the issue (2)
Has virtually no content! (1)
No paper (0)

BIBLIOGRAPHY (5%)
Solid bibliographical content (5)
Adequate bibliography (3)
Inadequate bibliography (2)
No bibliography! (0)

ERRORS (5%)
Some coherent but different style (identified in a footnote on page 1) (4)
Some grammatical and/or typographical errors (3)
Solecisms abounding (2)
Paper written in a language other than English (1)
No paper (0)

Because the paper was late, I have had to reduce your grade by two points per day from the due date, in fairness to your peers.

The grade I have assigned you is based upon your fulfillment of the instructions for the assignment, the overall quality of your presentation, my assessment of your grasp of the subject matter, your skill in communication of the material, and how well you did your work in comparison with your peers in the course.
Précis sample 1

Marshall Brown
ST III – Dr. J.L. Duncan

Précis on Union with Christ

D Thomas: “It is impossible to think of any aspect of salvation without thinking of union with Christ”

“Soteriology bridges the gap between Anthropology and Christology. Christ accomplished what man did not and could not” (Kelly, 35)

“Reformed Soteriology takes its starting point in the union established in the pactum salutis (Covenant of Salvation). . .” (Berkhof, 418) Because of this, it ought to precede any discussion of the ordo salutis (cf. Murray, 161, and Berkhof, 448, where the discussion is similar though the terms a bit different).

“It is through this union to X that the whole application of redemption is effectuated on the sinner’s soul.” (Dabney, 612)

I. In Three Dimensions
   A. Eternal Union
      1. Dimension of the Union that transcends our personal existence, this is not an existential union (see below)
      2. Source: the election of the Father before the foundation of the world
         a. “God cannot think of past, present, or future apart from Christ” (Murray, 164)
         b. Chosen in Christ
         c. Monergistic
      3. Scripture references: Eph. 1:3-14
   B. Incarnational Union
      1. Defined: when we become actual partakers of Christ at point of application of redemption (cf. Ephesians 2:12 esp. in light of what was written in chapter 1, Eph 2:3, I Cor. 1:9, the implications of John 3:36, Rom 8, Heb 2:11-15, Gal. 4:4-5, John 14:23, John 17 esp. verses 20-23)
      2. Spiritual - i.e. bond of the union is the Holy Spirit himself
         a. Essential bond - the Holy Spirit
         b. Instrumental bond - Faith
      3. Mystical - i.e. kept secret until manifested and made known in accord with will of God - “the fact that it is a mystery underlines the preciousness of it and the intimacy of the relation it entails” (Murray, 167).
         a. Organic and vital
         b. Mediated by the Holy Spirit
         c. Implies reciprocity
         d. It is both personal and transformational
      4. Exemplified: Acts 9:4 “Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?” (also, I Cor 12, 14, Ephesians 4)
   C. Existential Union
      1. Defined: How we live in light of our union
         a. This part of the union is synergistic?? (cf. Warfield??)
         b. While we are influenced by our past life, Christ’s past is dominant (Rom 6, I Cor. 15:21-23).
         c. We are becoming more fully human as effect of union as the dross of sin is burned away
      2. This union is NOT our deification
      3. Especially note Calvin III.i.

II. Images
   A. Old Testament – High priest and suffering servant of Isaiah
   B. New Testament
      1. Head to body (Col 1:8, Eph 4:15-16)
      2. Wife/Husband (Eph 5)
      3. Vine/branches (John 15)
      4. Chief cornerstone (Eph 2:19-22, I Peter 2:4-5)

III. Benefits that accrue to believer because of this union
   A. Legal union – justification
   B. Spiritual union – transforming power of Christ dwelling within
   C. Fellowship with Christ
   D. Communion of saints

Selected Bibliography

Berkhof, Louis. Systematic Theology, 447-453
Calvin, Jean. Institutes of the Christian Religion, esp. III.i.1-4, II.ii.7
Dabney, R.L. Systematic Theology, Lecture LI, 612-617
Kelly, D.F. Systematic III Notes, 36-47
Murray, John. Redemption Accomplished and Applied, 161-173