



Systematic Theology 1 (THEO 5300-ONL) New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary Theological & Historical Studies Division Fall 2023



Louisa Davis Minot, *Niagara Falls* (1818)

Dr. Tyler R. Wittman
Assistant Professor of
Theology

Office: Dodd 208
Email: twittman@nobts.edu

Office hours by appointment:
I would love to meet with you
and help in any way I can.
Please don't hesitate to email
me and make an
appointment.

Teaching Assistant:
Mr. Conner Hinton

I. MISSION STATEMENT

New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary and Leavell College prepare servants to walk with Christ, proclaim His truth, and fulfill His mission.

II. COURSE DESCRIPTION

This first course in systematic theology introduces the student to the methodology of the study of theology (Prolegomena) and the doctrines of revelation, God, humanity, and the person of Christ. The biblical foundation and the relevant historical developments are considered in construction of a Christian understanding of each doctrine.

III. STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES

1. *Understanding.* By the end of the course, the student should:

- Be able to understand theological method and the doctrines covered in their biblical foundations, historically significant moments, and systematic relations.
- Be able to communicate these doctrines in their particular ministry calling and context of the learner.

2. *Transferable skills*

- Students should show a capacity for attentive and reflective reading of ancient and modern texts.
- Students should demonstrate a capacity to analyze concepts and arguments.
- Students should demonstrate an ability to formulate arguments and articulate critical judgments, both orally and in writing.
- Students should demonstrate an ability to engage in and profit from group discussion.

IV. COURSE TEACHING METHODOLOGY

As an introductory course, the primary methods are very traditional: classroom lectures and assigned readings, meant to work together to help orient students to the main articles of the Christian faith.

V. TEXTBOOKS

There are two Reading Track options for this course, one more introductory and the other more intermediate (however, both are *graduate level*). Choose the one you think is best for you and stick with it. You may not change reading tracks or switch back and forth between them. You are encouraged to have physical copies of the course texts; studies show that e-books inhibit reading comprehension.

1. **Option 1: *Introductory*.** *This option is for those who want a more introductory experience with their readings; there are more books than option 2, but the readings are not as challenging.*
 - i. Herman Bavinck, *The Wonderful Works of God* (Westminster Seminary Press, 2019).
 - ii. D. Glenn Butner, *Trinitarian Dogmatics: Exploring the Grammar of the Christian Doctrine of God* (Baker Academic, 2022).
 - iii. Anthony Hoekema, *Created in God's Image* (Eerdmans, 1986).
 - iv. R. B. Jamieson and Tyler R. Wittman, *Biblical Reasoning: Trinitarian and Christological Rules for Exegesis* (Baker Academic, 2022).
2. **Option 2: *Intermediate*.** *This option is for those who want to delve deeper; the reading is not more than option 1, but it is more challenging. Most students are capable of this option, but there is a learning curve. Students who desire to pursue further studies, such as a Ph.D., should seriously consider this option.*
 - i. Herman Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, vols. 1-3 (Baker Academic, 2003-2006).
 - ii. R. B. Jamieson and Tyler R. Wittman, *Biblical Reasoning: Trinitarian and Christological Rules for Exegesis* (Baker Academic, 2022).

VI. ASSESSMENT: COURSE REQUIREMENTS AND EVALUATION OF GRADE

VI.1. *Assignments*

- | | |
|------------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| a. Précis Packet: 35% | Due date: Fall Break (Oct. 7) |
| b. Theological Research Paper: 35% | Due date: Week 13 (Nov. 18) |
| c. Reading and Lecture Report: 30% | Due date: Dec. 4 |

*** All assignments must be submitted on Canvas in Word document or PDF form, in their respective assignment portals. Assignments are due at midnight on Saturday evening of the week they are due (check Canvas for specifics)***

a. **Précis Packet.** The précis packet assignment has two main purposes. One purpose is to force you to slow down and assimilate the material from your readings with greater care. To help with this, the second purpose of this assignment is to deepen your ability to read with true comprehension. Theology demands joyful and serious intellectual work, which is cultivated around the reading of and critical interaction with texts. One of your main tasks in this course is to discover and cultivate the virtues of reading with justice and charity, which requires you to listen carefully and see things the way an author sees them before assessing whether their arguments persuade you or not (and why). To this end, you are required to write précis on selected assigned readings from the main text you have chosen to read by Herman Bavinck, either *The Wonderful Works of God* or *Reformed Dogmatics*.

Your précis packet will occupy your attention for the first half of the semester. This is perhaps your biggest and most challenging assignment in this course, so you are encouraged to give it appropriate time and effort. Do not put this assignment off until a week or two before it's due.

The précis should focus, not on the historical backgrounds, but on the positive argument Bavinck makes in each chapter, looking at how he's justifying his stances theologically and exegetically. Examples of what these notes should look like are provided in the course files section; please follow the example to the best of your ability.

i. Instructions for Reading. Among other matters, ask yourself the following questions as you read Gregory's *Orations* (as well as all of your assignments):

(1) Argument:

- > What is the chief claim being made and how is it constructed as well as supported?
- > What kind of arguments or people is the author responding to, from what you can gather in his writing?
- > What are the main questions to which the author's arguments are intended as answers?
- > What are some of the secondary things the author wants the readers to pick up? How do those secondary things support or take away from the primary things in the argument?
- > What are the highs and lows of the argument?
- > What objections could be raised against the author and how might they respond?

(2) Interpretation

- > Identify areas of the argument that are ambiguous or difficult; what are the most charitable and just ways of understanding these portions?

> Identify any the larger context(s) for the argument; how do these bear upon its intelligibility? What's in the background? Who are the author's interlocutors?

(3) Claims

> Where does the argument succeed and where does it fail?

> What are some unexplored/unarticulated consequences of the argument?

ii. **Instructions for Précis.** Those who choose to read Bavinck's *Wonderful Works of God* must write the following five précis: (a) chs. 3-4 ; (b) ch. 5; (c); ch. 6 (d) ch. 7 ; (e) ch. 9; those reading Bavinck's *Reformed Dogmatics* must write the following five précis: (a) RD 1:10; (b) RD 1:12; (c) RD 1:13; (d) RD 2:1-2; (e) RD 2:8. For the précis:

(a) Outline the author's argument step-by-step, demonstrate your understanding of the lines of reasoning and how they contribute to the overall point being made (try not to quote the reading too much; use your own words). Please summarize what you take to be the author's main thesis/point and how they support this. See *instructions for reading* above.

(b) Highlight how all the sections of the oration flow together to form one coherent argument about the topic at hand.

(c) Feel free to offer some brief comments on the strengths or weaknesses of the argument in footnotes.

(d) Use Times New Roman, 12pt font, with single spacing.

(e) Each précis should be 800-1500 words (include word count at the beginning of each précis). Your overall word count on all of your five précis will be anywhere from 4,000 to 7,500 words.

(f) **Due Date: Fall Break.** You will submit the five précis together as one assignment.

b. **Theological Position Paper.** The position paper has two purposes. Materially, it affords you the opportunity to explore a theological question in some depth, both so that you understand the faith and arrive at some convictions (however open to improvement these may be). Formally, this assignment cultivates your ability to organize and communicate your thoughts, which is something you are always doing in ministry. Writing helps you become a clearer thinker and communicator—it doesn't do this automatically, but it helps tremendously.

i. **Structure for Papers.**

(a) **Issue:** Unceremoniously state what the paper is about and precisely what you intend to argue, as well as how you will argue it.

(b) **Various positions:** Papers are position papers, evaluating two to four different positions on the issue, and then arguing for one of those views. You are responsible to carefully and charitably describe the views you discuss, interacting with *primary sources* (see Writing handout).

(c) **Support for your position:** When setting forth the position you believe is most responsible exegetically and therefore theologically, you are to present an argument (see Toulmin handout).

(d) **Objections to your position:** Part of a good argument is foreseeing and addressing potential objections. You should present two of the strongest objections to your position, one at a time, and offer a rebuttal to each.

ii. **Additional Instructions for Papers.**

(a) **Due Date: Week 13.** Word limit: 2,250-2,750 words. Bibliography: 2-4 primary sources; 8-16 secondary sources.

(b) **Length and Style:** You are encouraged to consult the Writing Center. If your paper is difficult to read due to grammatical and syntactical errors, this will count against you. Your

paper should be: 2400 to 2900 words (include word count on title page), double-spaced, Times New Roman font in 12-pt, and in general agreement with Chicago/Turabian style.

(c) **Topics.** Students may choose to write on any doctrine addressed in this class. Since it is a position paper, you should choose a doctrine on which you can easily find multiple perspectives. Students are encouraged to run potential topics by the professor. Examples of possible topics include but are not limited to the following:

- What is Scripture's inspiration?
- How is God's omniscience compatible with human freedom?
- Are there relations of authority and submission within the Trinity?
- Must we only use the names "Father, Son, and Holy Spirit" or are we free to use other names, like "Mother, Daughter, and Sophia"?
- In what does the image of God consist?
- How is original sin transmitted from Adam to his posterity?
- Does God "allow" or "permit" evil in his providence?
- Did Christ empty himself of any divine attributes or prerogatives during the incarnation?

c. **Reading and Lecture Report.** You must read all the assigned reading (either Option 1 or Option 2) and watch all the lecture recordings. At the end of the term, you will submit a statement detailing what reading and lectures you have and have not finished. Instructions will be available on Canvas. Due on **Dec. 4**.

VI.2. Grades

- The grading scale is as follows:
 - o A: 93-100 C: 77-84
 - o B: 85-92 D: 70-76
- Grades are not the measure of your success; learning is. Sometimes grades rhyme with learning, but it remains possible to merely "get the grade." And getting grades is easier than learning! For those with ears to hear...
- Late submissions will be docked five percent every day they are late. Please submit assignments on time.
- There will not be any extra credit. Neither will there be any extension of paper length/due date, save for truly extenuating circumstances.
- Since this is an introductory course, your professor (and grader[s], if any there be) errs in your favor when assigning grades. If, nevertheless, you feel that I have erred entirely in assigning your grade: (a) wait at least one week before taking action, and give your assignment a careful re-read to see if you feel the same way; (b) keep in mind that if I reconsider your grade, that can cut both ways (I may discover that I, or the grader, was *too* generous the first time around); (c) as specifically as possible, set down an argument in writing as to why your grade should be reconsidered.

VII. COURSE GUIDELINES

1. *Academic Misconduct.*

- a. ***Plagiarism on Written Assignments.*** NOBTS has a *no tolerance* policy for plagiarism. Plagiarism in certain cases may result in expulsion from the seminary. Consult the

- NOBTS Student Handbook for definitions, penalties, and policies associated with plagiarism.
- b. ***Professor's advice.*** The best advice for avoiding academic misconduct in all its forms is to love learning more than "grades." Be open and honest, ask questions if you're in doubt about whether something is plagiarism or not, do your own reading and writing, and take no shortcuts.
2. ***Technical Assistance.*** For assistance with any matters related to technology, please consult ITC (504-816-8180) or the following email addresses, where relevant:
 - a. Selfserve@nobts.edu - Email for technical questions/support requests with the Selfserve.nobts.edu or My.nobts.edu site (Access to online registration, financial account, online transcript, etc.)
 - b. Canvas@nobts.edu - Email for technical questions/support requests with the NOBTS Canvas Learning Management System (Faculty/Students/Staff) Canvas.NOBTS.edu.
 - c. Bluejeanshelpdesk@nobts.edu - Email for technical questions/support requests with the Bluejeans & NOBTS Bluejeans classrooms (On and Off-Campus)
 - d. TelephoneHelpDesk@nobts.edu - Email for technical questions/support requests with the NOBTS On-Campus Phone system.
 - e. ITCSupport@nobts.edu - Email for technical questions/support requests in the Flex classrooms and for general technical questions/support requests. If you are not sure who to contact, use this email address!
 - f. [504.816.8180](tel:504.816.8180) - Call for any technical questions/support requests. (Currently available Mon-Thurs 7:00am-9:00pm & Fri 7:00-7:00pm Central Time)
 - g. www.NOBTS.edu/itc/ - General NOBTS technical help information is provided on this website.
 3. ***Assignments.*** Assignments are not optional: to pass, students must complete all assignments.
 4. ***Attendance Policy.*** Students are expected to engage regularly with course content through the learning management system and other course delivery methods. Students who fail to participate consistently in course activities may receive a grade of "F" for the course.
 5. ***Writing.*** NOBTS maintains a [Writing Center](#) designed to improve English writing at the graduate level. Students can receive writing guides, tips, and valuable information to help in becoming a better writer. A copy of the approved NOBTS Style Guide can be found in the course Canvas shell, or can be located online at [the Writing Center's page on the seminary website](#).
 6. ***Technology.***¹ Except in online or distance courses, digital devices are prohibited in the classroom (laptops, tablets, phones of any sort, recording devices, etc). This guideline might appear draconian, but it's for your benefit. Though many may feel that their use of technology makes them better, more efficient learners, the [best research](#) says that [it does not](#). In fact, studies show that it significantly impairs your learning and [the learning of others around you](#). Taking notes by hand [improves recall](#) and apprehension, as does [reading on paper and not on screens](#). During class, phones will be completely silenced. Even then, if you are dependent on your smartphone, its mere presence – even if powered off – [has been proven to diminish your cognitive capacities](#). All that to say, we will use our short time together to practice a little technological asceticism.
 - a. Students should use standard tools (pen and paper) for notetaking, even when attending lectures remotely through a computer.
 - b. Recording is prohibited, as is sharing course content through any platform (like social media).

¹ I have adapted and expanded this section mostly from Prof. Alan Jacobs at Baylor University.

VIII. ESTIMATED LECTURE OUTLINE AND READING SCHEDULE

Key

WW: Bavinck, *Wonderful Works of God* (WW 1 = ch. 1)

RD: Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics* (RD 1:14 = vol. 1, ch. 14)

BR: Jamieson and Wittman, *Biblical Reasoning*

AH: Hoekema, *Created in God's Image*

GB: Butner, *Trinitarian Dogmatics*

Date	Topic	Readings: Option 1	Readings: Option 2
Week 1 Aug 15	Introduction & Syllabus I.1. Divine Teaching	Syllabus WW 1-3 BR 1	Syllabus RD 1:10 ² BR 1
Week 2 Aug 22	I.1. Divine Teaching	WW 4-8	RD 1:11-12 BR 2
Week 3 Aug 29	I.2. Holy Scripture	BR 2-3	RD 1:13-14
Week 4 Sept 5	II.1. God's Unity	WW 9 BR 4	RD 2:2-3
Week 5 Sept 12	II.1. God's Unity	WW 10 BR 5 GB 1	RD 2:4-5
Week 6 Sept 19	II.2. The Holy Trinity	GB 2-5	RD 2:6 BR 3
Week 7 Sept 26	II.2. The Holy Trinity	GB 6-7 BR 6	RD 2:8 BR 4
Oct 2-6	Fall Break	GB 8	

² Also recommended, but not required: RD 1, pp. 26-46.

Week 8 Oct 10	II.3. The Holy Trinity	WW 11-12	RD 2:12
Week 9 Oct 17	III.1. Creator and Creation	AH 1-4	RD 2:13
Week 10 Oct 23	III.2. Creation and Government	AH 5-8	RD 2:14
Week 11 Oct 31	III.3. Human and Angelic Creatures	AH 9-12	RD 3:2
Week 12 Nov 7	III.4. The Rebellion of Creatures	WW 13-14	RD 3:3-4
Week 13 Nov 14	IV.1. The One Lord Christ: Christ's Pre-existence & Pro-existence	WW 15-16	RD 3:6 ³
Nov. 20-24	Thanksgiving Break	BR 7-8	BR 7-8
Week 14 Nov. 28	IV.2. Conciliar Christology	BR 9, conclusion	BR 9, conclusion

****The professor reserves the right to alter the syllabus at his discretion****

IX. SELECT BIBLIOGRAPHY / RECOMMENDED FURTHER READING

Cyril of Alexandria, *On the Unity of Christ*. Popular Patristics Series 13 (Crestwood: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1995).
Duby, Steven J. *Jesus and the God of Classical Theism: Biblical Christology in Light of the Doctrine of God* (Baker Academic, 2022)
Emery, Gilles. *The Trinity: An Introduction to Catholic Teaching on the Triune God* (Catholic University of America Press)
Holmes, Stephen R. *The Quest for the Trinity: The Doctrine of God in Scripture, History and Modernity* (IVP, 2012).
Jones, Mark. *God Is: A Devotional Guide to the Attributes of God* (Crossway, 2017).
Kleinig, John W. *Wonderfully Made: A Protestant Theology of the Body* (Lexham Press, 2021).
Peter van Mastricht, *Theoretical-Practical Theology*, vols. 1-3 (Reformation Heritage Books, 2017-2021)
McCall, Thomas H. *Against God and Nature: The Doctrine of Sin* (Crossway, 2019)

³ This is a longer, very important chapter. Make time for it.

McFarland, Ian A. *From Nothing: A Theology of Creation* (WJK, 2014).
Murray, John. *The Imputation of Adam's Sin* (P&R Publishing, 1977).
Sanders, Fred. *The Triune God* (Zondervan, 2016)
Sokolowski, Robert. *The God of Faith and Reason: Foundations of Christian Theology* (Catholic University of America Press, 1995).
Swain, Scott R. *Trinity, Revelation, and Reading: A Theological Introduction to the Bible and its Interpretation* (T&T Clark, 2011).
Oliver, Simon. *Creation: A Guide for the Perplexed* (Bloomsbury, 2017)
Wellum, Stephen J. *God the Son Incarnate: The Doctrine of Christ* (Crossway, 2016)