

Module Coordinator: Prof Michael McClenahan

Module summary

This online distance learning module introduces students, at an advanced level, to the doctrine of God. It offers a critical assessment of the biblical, creedal and confessional nature of the doctrine of the Trinity within Reformed theology. Particular attention is given to the exegetical basis of the doctrine, the technical philosophical and theological language of the Reformation and Reformed orthodoxy, and the polemical contexts (early modern and contemporary) in which the doctrine has been confessed.

Learning outcomes

Upon completion of this module, successful students should be able to:

- Offer an advanced and systematic understandings of the **Reformed confessional doctrine of God** with reference to the following:
 - its confessional expression;
 - the major theological contributors and their writings (both historical and contemporary).

Upon completion of this module, successful students should have acquired and developed the following skills:

- the ability to **read and interpret** relevant primary and secondary in a way which is: careful and sophisticated; discerns and draws out theological and philosophical assumptions; and assesses their consequences and contribution to Christian doctrine and ethics;
- a high level of **presentational and communication skills** in the construction and articulation of cogent, well-informed, critically-engaged, and sustained arguments within the discipline; and
- the capacity to reflect upon and articulate one's own theological tradition as well as **engage in informed and respectful dialogue with other points of view**, particularly about controversial theological issues, recognising the strengths and weaknesses of other theological traditions and the methodological and philosophical issues involved.

Delivery

Within the 12 weeks (Monday 21 September to Friday 11 December 2020) students are required to complete the following:

- **Watch** introductory videos on the Doctrine of God from Third Millennium. You may wish to work through the personal reflection questions provided to assist your personal study. These will not be graded.
- **Read** core material from Robert Letham, [*Systematic Theology*](#) (Wheaton, 2019), 66-181
- **Watch** the lecture on The Doctrine of God in the Westminster Confession of Faith by Dr Martyn Cowan (see unit on the VLE called **The Doctrine of God in The Westminster Confession of Faith**)
- **Utilise** the e-learning engine, Cerego, in order to gain mastery of the learning items in the module study sets. Little and often is the key: it is also important to get started on all the learning sets early in the module (to begin using Cerego please go to the unit on the VLE called **Cerego Study Sets**)
- **Engage** in careful reading of the core text for this module:
 - Fred Sanders' [*The Triune God*](#) (Grand Rapids, 2016)
The full text is available as an e-book through Union's Gamble Library. In addition, **watch** the corresponding 15 video lectures by Fred Sanders from Zondervan Academic (links to the videos are on the VLE)
- **Participate** in the online discussion forums by posting three 1,000-word pieces and by commenting on at least three other articles posted by others (each of these comments should each be around 100 words in length).

Schedule

Wk	Complete by	Sanders' Videos	Sanders' <i>The Triune God</i> Book
1	26 Sep	Intro & 1	Introduction & Ch 1 Attunement: <i>Gloria Patri</i> pp.19-35
2	3 Oct	2 & 3	Ch 2 Revelation of the Triune God pp.37-68
3	10 Oct	4 & 5	Ch 3 Communicative Missions pp.69-91
4	17 Oct	6 & 7	Ch 4 Incarnation and Pentecost pp.93-119
5	24 Oct	8 & 9	Ch 5 God who sends God pp.121-153
6	31 Oct	10 & 11	Ch 6 Trinitarian Exegesis pp.155-189
7	7 Nov	12	Ch 7 New Covenant Attestation pp.191-208
8	14 Nov	13 & 14	Ch 8 Old Covenant Adumbration pp.209-237
9	21 Nov	15	Ch 9 Theses pp.239-243
10	28 Nov	Dr Cowan	Lecture on the Doctrine of God in the WCF
11	5 Dec		
12	12 Dec		

Assessment

The assessment comprises the following:

- The level of mastery attained with the learning items contained in the Cerego study sets on Friday 11 December at 13:00 (10%)
- Three 1,000-word exercises on Fred Sanders' *The Triune God* (40%) by the following dates:
 - First assignment by 11.00pm on Saturday 10 October 2020 – **Is Rahner's rule important for contemporary Trinitarian theology?** [56ff.]
 - Second assignment by 11.00pm Saturday 31 October 2020 – **Is the notion that divine missions reveal divine persons critical for constructive theology?** [69ff.]
 - Third assignment by 11.00pm on Saturday 21 November 2020 – **To what extent is the doctrine of the Holy Trinity revealed in the Old Testament?** [209ff.]
- A research essay of 3,000 words (50%) – this is due by the end of the autumn semester (11.00pm Friday 1 January 2021).

Would adopting a psychological rather than metaphysical understanding of divine 'persons' lead to a more fecund Trinitarianism?

Deadlines

Each piece of assessment should be submitted by the published deadline. If you cannot meet the submission deadlines for any reason, it is your responsibility to contact your module coordinator.

a. Late submission of coursework

Students will be penalised for the late submission of assessed coursework. Assessed work signed in after the published submission deadline will be automatically penalised by the deduction of five of the marks awarded for each day the work is overdue, up to a maximum of five working days, after which a mark of zero will be awarded.

Students seeking exemption from the penalty on the grounds of extenuating circumstances must do so in writing, using the standard application form. This must be submitted within three days of the deadline for submitting the assessed coursework concerned.

b. Illness or emergency

1. Failure on medical grounds to meet coursework assignment deadlines or absence for medical reasons from any examination or class test counting towards a module mark must be covered by a medical certificate signed by a registered medical practitioner.
2. Students are responsible for ensuring that medical certificates are submitted to the College Office within 3 days of the date when the work was to be submitted.
3. Evidence of any extenuating circumstance other than illness which has caused a student to miss an examination or a deadline for submitting assessed coursework must be submitted in the same way.
4. The examination board is not obliged to consider a medical certificate presented outside the 3-day deadline.

Word count

The word-count for written assignments includes text and notes but excludes bibliography. Submitted work that exceeds the word limit will be penalized by examiners. Some leeway is granted for work up to 10% over the word-limit. But examiners are authorised to subtract five marks from the mark awarded for every 500 words that follow.

For example, in the case of assignments with a word limit of 3,000 words, students submitting essays with the following sample word totals will be penalised as follows:

- Up to 3,000 words – no penalty
- Up to 3,300 words – no penalty (the total is just within the permitted leeway)
- 3,301 words or more (up to 3,800) – five mark penalty (the word count has exceeded the leeway threshold)
- 3,801 words or more – ten mark penalty (the word-count has exceeded the leeway threshold by a further 500 words).

Plagiarism

Plagiarism is defined as follows: to present as new and original an idea or product derived from an existing source. This existing source may be the work of others submitted without appropriate acknowledgement, or the writer's own previously submitted work. This includes auto-plagiarism (to use excerpts from your own previous work without appropriate acknowledgement) and self-plagiarism (to submit a piece of work more than once, e.g. one which has been previously submitted for a different assignment).

Warning about overlap between assessment choices

Students are encouraged to develop an integrated understanding of programme material but they should not repeat substantially the same material in different parts of the assessment either

within a module or the programme. The module convener will offer appropriate guidance for any queries but it is a student's own responsibility to ensure that assignment choices fall within the regulations.

Referencing

A consistent and clear style should be used for the citing of references in written work. For the 1,000-word pieces you must use Harvard style author-date referencing (to facilitate posting them on the online forum). For the 3,000-word essay you must use Oxford style as set out in the programme style guide.

Marking Criteria

Cerego adaptive learning

The learning metrics within Cerego assess your content engagement and mastery. The goal for your learning items is mastery level 4 which can be achieved in three months of spaced rehearsal. Marks are awarded according to the average level of mastery attained across the various sets on Friday 11 December at 13:00 (GMT).

Mastery level 4	100%
Mastery level 3.95	90%
Mastery level 3.9	80%
Mastery level 3.8	76%
Mastery level 3.7	74%
Mastery level 3.6	72%
Mastery level 3.5	70%
Mastery level 3.4	65%
Mastery level 3.3	60%
Mastery level 3.2	55%
Mastery level 3.1	52%
Mastery level 3.0	50%
Mastery level 2.5	40%
Mastery level 2	30%
Mastery level 1.5	10%

Marking criteria for 1,000-word pieces

The examiner will mark these six written assignments according to the criteria listed below.

Each short answer should:

- 1) Demonstrate critical knowledge of the Reformed tradition and its catholicity
- 2) Identify and critically engage with the area of discussion as outlined in the primary text
- 3) Engage in constructive theological debate in an informed and respectful dialogue

- 4) Be presented according to the required style, with good spelling and grammatical expression, with a structured argument

Marking criteria for 3,000-word essay

The examiner will mark written assignments according to the criteria listed below.

The essay assignments should:

- 1) Demonstrate critical knowledge of the Reformed tradition and its role in contemporary theological discussions
- 2) Identify and critically engage with relevant primary texts
- 3) Demonstrate strong analytical skills in approaching key debates
- 4) Be presented according to the required style, with good spelling and grammatical expression, with a structured argument

Feedback

Your assessed work will be returned with a draft mark and comments. Written work will be graded according to the postgraduate conceptual equivalents scale published in the College handbook (Appendix 2).

Further Reading in preparation for written work:

(Please see the relevant units in the VLE for links to these and further resources)

Sanders' *The Triune God*

Emery, G., *The Trinitarian Theology of St Thomas Aquinas* (Oxford, 2007).

Letham, R., *The Holy Trinity: In Scripture, History, Theology, and Worship* (Phillipsburg, 2004).

Smith, J.W., 'The Trinity in the Fourth-Century Fathers', in G. Emery and M. Levering (eds), *The Oxford Handbook of the Trinity* (Oxford, 2011), 109-22

Swain, S.R., 'Divine Trinity', in M. Allen and S.R. Swain (eds), *Christian Dogmatics: Reformed Theology for the Church Catholic* (Grand Rapids, 2016), 78-106.

Further essay reading

Dolezal, J.E., *All that is in God: Evangelical Theology and the Challenge of Classical Christian Theism* (Grand Rapids, 2017).

Emery, G., *The Holy Trinity: An Introduction to the Catholic Doctrine of the Triune God* (Washington, 2011). E-Book.

Giles, K., *The Eternal Generation of the Son: Maintaining Orthodoxy in Trinitarian Theology* (Downers Grove, 2012).

Holmes, S.R., *The Holy Trinity: Understanding God's Life* (Milton Keynes, 2012), 1-32. E-Book

King, J., *The Beauty of the Lord: Theology as Aesthetics* (Bellingham, 2018), 30-87. E-book.

Muller, R.A., *Dictionary of Latin and Greek Theological Terms: Drawn Principally from Protestant Scholastic Theology*, second edition (Grand Rapids, 2017), s.v. 'aseitas' and 'persona'

Sanders, F., 'The Trinity', in J. Webster, K. Tanner, and I. Torrance (eds), *The Oxford Handbook of Systematic Theology* (Oxford, 2007), 35-53.

Sanders, F., 'The Trinity', in K.M. Kopic and B.L. McCormack (eds), *Mapping Modern Theology: A Thematic and Historical Introduction* (Grand Rapids, 2012), 21-46. E-Book

Swain, S.R., 'Divine Trinity', in M. Allen and S.R. Swain (eds), *Christian Dogmatics: Reformed Theology for the Church Catholic* (Grand Rapids, 2016). E-Book

Volf, M., 'The Trinity is Our Social Program: The Doctrine of the Trinity and the Shape of Social Engagement', *Modern Theology*, 14, no. 3 (1998), 403-23.

Ware, B.A., 'Does Affirming an Eternal Authority-Submission Relationship in the Trinity Entail A Denial of the Homousios? A Response to Millard Erickson and Tom McCall', in B.A. Ware and J. Starke (eds), *One God in Three Person: Unity of Essence, Distinctions of Persons, Implications for Life* (Wheaton, 2015), 237-48. E-book.

Webster, J., 'God's Perfect Life', in M. Volf and M. Welker (eds), *God's Life in Trinity* (Minneapolis, 2006), 143-52.

Webster, J., *God without Measure: Working Papers in Christian Theology. Volume 1 God and the Works of God* (London, 2016), 13-28. E-Book

Weinandy, T.G., *Does God Suffer?* (Notre Dame Press, 2000). E-Book

Wellum, S.J., *God the Son Incarnate: The Doctrine of Christ* (Wheaton, 2016), 425-42.

Online Lectures:

These lectures correspond with some of the material above in published work of John Webster.

The first two lectures are particularly relevant

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=urNEROEK2Ak>

