TH607 Systematic Theology III
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Syllabus
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Course description

TH607 is the capstone of the systematic theology classes at Gordon-Conwell. As a result, I am very intentional about making it an integrative experience. The following doctrines are explicitly covered: Holy Spirit and spiritual gifts, salvation, church and sacraments, eschatology and final states. A very important objective of this class is to find the coherence between these doctrines and the rest of systematic theology, but also their significance for Christian life.

The doctrine of the person and work of the Holy Spirit grounds the rest of the discussion of soteriology, ecclesiology, and eschatology. A specifically Trinitarian Pneumatology is determinative for one’s understanding of the work of the Holy Spirit. On the other hand, a Trinitarian Christology leads to overcoming some of the oppositions between ‘merely’ forensic and participationist understandings of salvation (justification and sanctification). Moving into the doctrine of the church, a robustly Trinitarian theology will be shown to mediate between highly individualistic and highly institutionalized ecclesiologies.

We shall be reading three impressive theologians which are very much in conversation with each other. They each come from different Christian traditions. John Zizioulas is a contemporary Eastern Orthodox theologian whose book, Being as Communion is one of the most influential theological books of the last two decades or so. Miroslav Volf comes from within the Free Church tradition (Pentecostal) but he strongly reacts against its individualism. Finally, Michael Horton represents the Reformed tradition of Protestant theology. We shall engage in an immensely stimulating conversation with these three theologians.

The format of the class includes lectures, but also class-wide debates, as well as small-group discussion and processing. The student should bring her or his personal

1 This version is still provisional. A final and definitive version will be provided on the first day of class. Potential changes will not affect the required reading and the evaluation.
Bible. Although these activities are not graded, all students are required to participate in them.

**Learning outcomes**

- To understand the systematic coherence of pneumatology, soteriology, ecclesiology, and eschatology.
- To understand the differences between major Christian confessions on the respective topics.
- To understand what is at stake in various soteriologies, including their practical implications for the life of the church.
- To gain a better understanding of the distinctive role played by the Holy Spirit in salvation and the life of the church.
- To gain a sense for the importance and reality of the church and its implications for the life of the congregation.
- To understand various ecclesiological assumptions made by the variety of worship styles and liturgical traditions.
- To gain an appreciation for the importance of catechetical formation for the life of the church.
- To understand the implications of each of these topics for the following areas: evangelism, worship, missions, discipleship etc.

**Course outline**

1. **The person of the Holy Spirit**
   a. Person of the Spirit
   b. Gifts of the Spirit

2. **The work of the Holy Spirit**

3. **Calvinism v. Arminianism (or rather, the Work of the Spirit cont.)**
   a. Predestination
   b. Calling
   c. Perseverance

4. **Justification**
   a. The New Perspective debate
   b. Faith and works

5. **Union with Christ**
   a. Eastern Orthodox Perspectives
   b. The New Finish Interpretation of Luther

6. **The being of the church**
a. The marks of the church
b. Where is the church?

**Mid-term exam: 19-20 March.**

7. Sacraments: Baptism
   a. Infant Baptism
   b. Credo-Baptism

8. Sacraments: The Eucharist
   a. Transubstantiation
   b. Consubstantiation
   c. Symbolic/Anamnetic view

9. Church Governance
   a. Communion vs. institution
   b. Models of organization
   c. Women's ordination

10. Eschatology and final states
    a. Millennial views
    b. Creation and New Creation
    c. Soul, death, and resurrection
    d. Universalism
    e. Intermediary states

**Evaluation**

- **30% Reading report.** The student will have to report the percentage of the reading she has completed. Due by the last day of written work.
- **20% Midterm exam.** The student will have to respond to 2 essay questions out of three choices. The list of possible midterm essay questions will be supplied on the first day of class.
- **20% Final exam.** Exactly the same conditions as the Midterm.
- **30% Personal statement of faith.** This is a reflective exercise, covering all three systematic theology classes, in which the student integrates all the loci into a coherent statement of faith. While biblical references are required, it is preferable to avoid proof-texting and refer instead to wider biblical theology. Length: minimal 5-8 pages, at 1 ½ spacing (feel free to go as long as you need: this exercise is primarily for your benefit). My grading criteria include:
  o Comprehensiveness: The full extent of systematic theology should be covered. Ability to see connections between various doctrines.
  o Clarity: I prize both conceptual as well as literary clarity.
o Foundation: The ability to demonstrate the biblical bases for particular theological positions.

- Suggestions for reflection:
  - Ministry implications
  - How has your theological position changed
  - Your position in relation to your denominational affiliation

**Required Reading**

**Books**
- Gerald Bray, *God is Love* (Crossway, 2012, 1433522691)

**Articles and Excerpts**
- Roger Olson, *Arminian Theology: Myths and Realities* (IVP, 2006, excerpt)

**Additional bibliography**


