GRACE THEOLOGICAL COLLEGE
The knowledge of the truth that leads to godliness

ST302 Revelation & God

Syllabus Overview

When: 7-9pm Mondays **Starts:** 1 March

Where: Live online

Tutor: Geoff Macpherson BA, MDiv, GradCertDiv.

1. BIBLICAL CASE

- **Psalm 19:1 '***The heavens declare the glory of God, and the sky above proclaims his handiwork.'*
- **2 Timothy 3:15** *'…From childhood you have been acquainted with the sacred writings, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus.'*
- **John 17:3** '*And this is eternal life, that they know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent.'*

2. GRADUATE IDEALS

At GTC we believe that the ideal graduate is someone who, because of Christlikeness and kingdom focus, by hard work, a commitment to a lifetime of learning, becomes mighty in the Scriptures, and commits themselves to serving the church and evangelising the world.

3. COURSE DESCRIPTION & PURPOSE

3.1. Description

Sourced from the Bible, shaped by tradition, structured by logic, and informed by our experience, this course introduces the student to the theology of God's self-revelation. In this class we will seek to gain a clearer answer to the two questions: Firstly, ***how*** *can I know God,* and, secondly, ***what*** *can I know about God?*

This course follows the discipline of *systematic theology* to find the answers to these questions. Systematic theology formulates answers to theological questions by using the whole of the Bible. It attempts to discover what the whole Bible has to say on certain topics, which are in turn arranged in an ordered fashion, that is, 'systematically.'

The topics in the study are the *knowledge of God* and *God's character*. To quote John Calvin: '*Nearly all the wisdom we possess, that is to say, true and sound wisdom, consists of two parts: the knowledge of God and of ourselves.'* (Calvin) [1]

The technical terms for the topics in this study are ***Christian epistemology*** *(how Christians profess to know God)****, divine revelation*** *(how God reveals himself) and* ***theology proper (****about God's person).* We will learn other technical terms as the classes progress.

3.2. Purpose

Why study systematic theology? The main reason we study systematic theology is to *understand* more clearly (knowledge), *strengthen* our convictions, *change* our attitudes, and *modify* our behaviour, so that you can serve the Church of Jesus Christ with her mission to have Him worshipped as Lord by everyone on earth.

Furthermore, in ministry, most questions we face are about topics or issues rather than about biblical passages. Systematics helps answer those questions, as J.I. Packer so ably puts it: *"Theology helps the preacher as the coach helps the tennis player.... As the coach is the embodiment of decades of experience in playing tennis, so theology is the embodiment of centuries of study, debate and interpretative interaction as the church has sought to understand the Scriptures. One can play tennis after a fashion without ever having been coached, and one can preach from the Bible after a fashion without ever having encountered serious theology in a serious way. But, just as one is likely to play better with coaching, so one is likely to preach better—more perceptively, more searchingly, more fruitfully—when helped by theology; and so, the preacher who is theologically competent will, other things being equal, be more use to the church."*[2] (J.I. Packer)

4. COURSE LEARNING OBJECTIVES

4.1. General Objectives

This course is designed to give you a deeper understanding of what the Bible teaches about ***divine revelation*** *and* ***God's Being.*** The goal is to expand your knowledge and increase your capacity to worship. A greater capacity to worship will help you draw others to marvel at the glory of God. Greater knowledge will inform your skills in ministry. Pray that rather than simply becoming a 'know-all' or expert, you would rather be someone who's heart (attitudes) and life (behaviour) is being conformed into what God desires.

4.2. Learning Outcomes:

By the end of the course, you should be able to:

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[1] John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion & 2*, ed. John T. McNeill, trans. Ford Lewis Battles, vol. 1 of *The Library of Christian Classics* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2011). Bk.1, ch.1, Par.1

[2] J.I. Packer 'The Preacher as Theologian' in, John R. W. Stott and Christopher Green, eds., *When God's Voice Is Heard: The Power of Preaching*, New ed., repr. (Leicester: Inter-Varsity, 2003).107.

- *Identify key concepts such as general and special revelation, the Trinity, and the glory of God's person.*
- *Explain how God reveals Himself generally and specially, his Triunity, and his attributes.*
- *Use your theological knowledge to teach others, correct unbiblical ideas, and better serve God's people.*
- *Analyse how theological truths challenge prior assumptions and critically appraise common misunderstandings of revelation and God.*
- *Assess the implications of divine revelation and evaluate the doctrine of God for personal faith and ministry.*
- *Formulate relevant ways we can communicate the reality of God's revelation of himself so that we are effective gospel servants.*

5. ASSESSMENT ACTIVITIES

Credit students should read through this outline and ask any questions about things that you are unclear on. If any of the tasks are not suitable for your optimal learning, you are welcome to discuss an alternative that is acceptable to the tutor. *NOTE: Online students are required to have their web camera turned on during the class.*

Activity	**% grade**
Class attendance	5%
Readings completed	5%
Class Presentation	20%
Assignment	35%
Examination	35%
Total	**100%**

5.1. Classes (5% of total): Attend and participate in the classes. We learn when we are present and engaged with the material. We learn better when we think through what is being presented and discuss it with others. *Come to class with questions and ideas*. Online students to arrange with the tutor the best way for them to participate in the class and get the most from their experience.

5.2. Readings (5% of total): Credit students must read the assigned readings. The goal is 800-pages of text. In the exam there will be an honesty question about your completed readings.

5.3. Class presentations (20% of total): Prepare an introductory overview of an allocated doctrine to present to the class. Using the outline provided, prepare a one-to-two page summary of the doctrine in the form of a class handout. You will have about 10 minutes (depending on the number of students) to introduce and explain the doctrine using the summary (do not just read the summary notes). The class will ask you questions based on the notes and presentation for about 10 minutes.

5.4. Assignments (35% of total): Credit students are required to complete a research paper that tests their ability to demonstrate critical thinking by explaining a topic, identifying the key issues, comparing different views, and justifying your conclusions. The GTC

library has valuable resources for this. **Research and write 2,000 – 2,500 words on a topic from below:**

5.5. **Examination (35%):** An examination is an opportunity for you to review everything that you have learned, demonstrate critical thinking, explain key ideas, and justify your conclusions. *Note: If you are concerned about reading and writing in a limited time, or English is your second language, please talk to your tutor about how we can assist you.*

6. REQUIRED & RECOMMENDED BOOKS

The books marked with and asterisk are **required readings**.*

Author	**Title**	**Publisher**
Allison, Gregg	*Historical Theology*	Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2011
Bavinck, Herman	*Reformed Dogmatics: Prolegomena (Vol.1)*	Grand Rapids: Baker Publishing, 2011
Berkhof, Louis	*Systematic Theology*	Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1988
Bray, Gerald	*God Has Spoken: a history of Christian theology*	Illinois: Crossway, 2014
***Bray, Gerald**	***The Doctrine of God***	Illinois: IVP, 1993
Bromiley, Geoffrey	'Inspiration' by B.B. Warfield, in *International Standard Bible Encyclopaedia, The (ISBE), Vol.2 (E-J)*	Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982
***Calvin, John**	***Institutes of Christian Religion, The*** (Free online)	Massachusetts: Hendricksen Publishers, 2008
Frame, John M	*Systematic Theology: an introduction to Christian belief*	Phillipsburg, New Jersey: P&R Publishing, 2013
Ferguson, S (Ed.)	*New Dictionary of Theology*	Illinois: IVP, 1988, 2008
Gaebelein, F (Ed.)	'Authority and Inspiration of the Bible' by C.F. Henry in *Expositor's Bible Commentary (EBC), The (Vol.1)*	Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1972-
Grudem, Wayne	*Systematic Theology: an introduction to biblical doctrine*	Leicester, England: Inter-Varsity Press, 1995, 2020
Horton, Michael	*The Christian faith: a systematic theology for pilgrims on the way*	Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2011
Jensen, Peter	*The Revelation of God*	Illinois: IVP, 2002
***Letham, Robert**	***Systematic Theology***	Wheaton, Illinois: Crossway, 2019
Migliore, Daniel	*Faith Seeking Understanding*	Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2014
Packer, James	*A Concise Theology*	Illinois: Tyndale, 1993

Reymond, Robert	*A New Systematic Theology of the Christian Faith.*	Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2000

7. RESEARCH RESOURCES

7.1. Accessing required readings.

7.1.1. GTC library 75 Rogers Road, Manurewa. If you are a student, then you automatically receive library membership and can borrow books from our library for 1-month. Priority is given to credit students. You are welcome to come and use the library at any time between 9am and 4:00pm, Monday to Friday.

We are able to post out books to students if students are willing to pay.

7.1.2. Christ College Library: Our friends at Christ College are happy to allow GTC students to be members of their library. While you cannot access their books without a trip to Sydney, for AU$55 per year, you can purchase access to their online database of journals and e-books. This is highly recommended for any credit student. Their librarians have also curated a large list of free online research resources.

To join the Christ College electronic library, email: library@christcollege.edu.au

7.1.3. Purchasing books. Books purchasing in NZ is often expensive and books can take a long time to arrive. Try your local bookstore, Christian bookstore, or online. We also recommend:

Reformers Bookshop (reformers.com.au) in Australia offers students a discount on books. Please use the (2026) discount code: **BCD26N**

Grace Books (gracebooks.co.nz) are a NZ Christian bookshop which carries a good stock of books.

7.1.4. **Logos Software Library. Logos Bible Software** is more than simply a Bible search tool. It is also an electronic library where you can purchase many of the books that you need. Once you purchase books you own them, even if you choose to use the free software version. GTC recommends that you subscribe to a library package (annual or monthly) in order to gain access to reference resources. It is worth noting Logos also has a student discount scheme and GTC is registered with them.