The Triune God
Divine Identity & the Power of Gift
( THEO 3002)

Course Organiser: Prof. John McDowell

Semester 1

What is ‘God’ all about? What is God, and how can we speak of God? Where did the doctrine of God as Trinity come from, and how did it develop in the churches? In fact, who declared it to be a ‘doctrine’ in the first place? Were there any other conceptions of God in the earliest churches? What does the doctrine of the Trinity have to do with other Christian beliefs, and Christian life and practice? These are a few of the many questions that this course will ask, as it traces the complex development of the Christian doctrine of God through the past 2000 or so years. We will pay attention to what the doctrine does as well as what it ‘means’, especially its significance for the interrelation of Christian identity and practice. We will also pay attention to some challenges of believing in the Triune God today.

Week 1 Who is this ‘God’?
Week 2 What is Gospel about the Trinity?
Week 3 The 2-Stages of God: C2nd Trinitarianism and the Platonisms
Week 4 Making Doctrine: The Cappadocians and the C4th Councils
Week 5 The Trinity and the Self: Augustine
Week 6 Unspeaking Our Idols: Pseudo-Dionysius’ Apophatic Silence
Week 7 One Cause, One Life, One Goal, One Vision: Counting the Fate of ‘God’ in Modernity
Week 8 Theology’s Trinitarian Revival: Karl Barth and Karl Rahner
Week 9 The Sociality of God: Jürgen Moltmann and Social Trinitarianism
Week 10 Conversations about Pluralism and Interfaith Dialogue
Week 11 Hans Urs von Balthasar’s Kenotic Gospel
Week 12 Liberation Theology and the Praxis of Christian Performance

Recommended Reading

Philip Butin, Trinity
Franz Dünzl, A History of the Doctrine of the Trinity in the Early Church
Timothy George, God the Holy Trinity
Stanley J. Grenz, Rediscovering the Triune God
Colin Gunton, The Promise of Trinitarian Theology
Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen, The Doctrine of God
Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen, The Trinity: Global Perspectives
Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen, Trinity and Religious Pluralism
J.N.D. Kelly, Early Christian Doctrines
Catherine LaCugna, God for Us
Jürgen Moltmann, The Trinity and the Kingdom of God
Roger Olsen and Christopher Hall, The Trinity
William Placher, The Triune God
Basil Studer, Trinity and Incarnation
John Thompson, Modern Trinitarian Perspectives
T.F. Torrance, The Christian Doctrine of God
Miroslav Volf and Michael Welker (eds.), God’s Life in Trinity
<table>
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<th>Week</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Lecture Topic &amp; Assessment due dates</th>
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<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>3/03/2009</td>
<td>Introduction &amp; Overview – Who is this God?</td>
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<td>What is Gospel about the Trinity?</td>
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<td>The 2-Stages of God: C2nd Trinitarianism and the Platonisms</td>
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<td>Making Doctrine: The Cappadocians and the C4th Councils</td>
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<td>The Trinity and the Self: Augustine</td>
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<td>Unspeaking Our Idols: Pseudo-Dionysius’ Apophatic Silence</td>
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<td>7</td>
<td>21/04/2009</td>
<td>One Cause, One Life, One Goal, One Vision:</td>
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<td>Counting the Fate of ‘God’ in Modernity</td>
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<td>Essay 1 due by 5pm</td>
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<td>8</td>
<td>28/04/2009</td>
<td>Theology’s Trinitarian Revival: Karl Barth and Karl Rahner</td>
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<td>9</td>
<td>5/05/2009</td>
<td>The Sociality of God: Jürgen Moltmann and Social Trinitarianism</td>
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<td>12/05/2009</td>
<td>Conversations about Pluralism and Interfaith Dialogue</td>
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<td>19/05/2009</td>
<td>Hans Urs von Balthasar’s Kenotic Gospel</td>
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<td>12</td>
<td>26/05/2009</td>
<td>Liberation Theology and the Praxis of Christian Performance</td>
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<td>Essay 2 due by 5pm</td>
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<td>13</td>
<td>2/06/2009</td>
<td>Summing up, Student Presentations and Course Evaluation</td>
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**Examination period:** Tuesday 9 June to Friday 26 June 2008
# Weekly Tutorial Reading

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<td>Origen, <em>On First Principles</em>, Bk. I.</td>
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<td><strong>4</strong></td>
<td>24/03/2009</td>
<td>Making Doctrine: The Cappadocians and the C4th Councils</td>
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<td>Ellen Charry, <em>By the Renewing of Your Minds</em> (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), ch. 4</td>
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<td>Gregory of Nazianzus’ 5 Theological Orations (<em>Orations</em> 27-30, 32).</td>
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<td>• <em>OR</em> <a href="http://www.ccel.org/fathers2/NPNF2-07/TOC.htm">www.ccel.org/fathers2/NPNF2-07/TOC.htm</a></td>
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<td>Unspeaking Our Idols: Pseudo-Dionysius’ Apophatic Silence</td>
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<td>Pseudo-Dionysius, <em>The Divine Names</em>.</td>
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<td><strong>7</strong></td>
<td>21/04/2009</td>
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<td>The Sociality of God:</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>Jürgen Moltmann,</td>
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<td>Philip Clayton, ‘Kenotic Trinitarian Panentheism’, <em>Dialog</em> 44.3 (Fall 2005), 250-255.</td>
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Further Reading

von Balthasar, Hans Urs, *Mysterium Paschale*


Fiddes, Paul S., *Participating in God*


Olson, Roger, and Hall, Christopher, The Trinity (Grand Rapids MI: Eerdmans, 2002).


Placher, William, The Domestication of Transcendence


Shults, LeRon, Reforming the Doctrine of God


Torrance, T.F., *Trinitarian Perspectives*


Essay Questions and Reading

IMPORTANT ESSAY WRITING GUIDANCE NOTES
1) Not all the books at any one time may be available – search for others on these issues.
   • For instance, the library online catalogue can be helpful in searching for other books;
   • The ATLA Religion Database can aid in identifying articles;
   • Use the internet sparingly and critically (good for some primary etexts).
2) Carefully read the question – the essays may not be asking what one might expect from a quick glance.
3) The essay has to reflect an appropriate knowledge of the issue(s) and the key figures involved, an ability to critically engage with the main conversation partners, and carefully lucid and evidenced reasoning.
4) At level 1 an essay should use no less than 5 major resources; level 2 a minimum of 7 major pieces of resource; and level 3 a minimum of 10 major pieces of resource.
5) Avoid using ‘I’ in the essay – e.g., ‘I think that…’; ‘it appears to me…’ and so on.
6) Use gender inclusive language – e.g., ‘humanity’, or the like, rather than ‘mankind’ or ‘man’.

ESSAY 1

(2,000 words)

Week 7
Choose ONE from the following questions:

• Evaluate the God-world relationship in process theology and compare it with traditional notions of divine transcendence.

Clayton, John, The Problem of God in Modern Thought
Cobb, John, Process Theology: An Introductory Exposition
Cousins, E.H., Process Theology: Basic Writings
Gunton, Colin, The Triune Creator
Gunton, Colin, Becoming and Being: The Doctrine of God in Charles Hartshorne and Karl Barth
Hartshorne, Charles, Divine Relativity: A Social Conception of God
Hartshorne, Charles, The Logic Theism
McCabe, Herbert, God Matters, chs 1-2
Moltmann, Jürgen, God in Creation

Ogden, Schubert, The Reality of God and Other Essays
Pailin, David, God and the Processes of Reality
Pailin, David, Probing the Foundations: A Study in Theistic Reconstruction
Sanders, John, A God Who Risks
Surin, Kenneth, ‘Process Theology’ in David Ford (ed.) The Modern Theologians
Welker, Michael, Creation and Reality
Whitehead, A.N., Process and Reality
Williams, Rowan, ‘On Being Creatures’, in On Christian Theology

• The Doctrine of the creatio ex nihilo is an expression of the grace of the Triune God. Discuss.
Karl Barth, Church Dogmatics III/1 (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1957-8), 3-329.


Colin Gunton, The Promise of Trinitarian Theology, 2nd ed. (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1997).

Colin Gunton, The Triune Creator


Jan Milic Lochman, The Faith We Confess (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1985), Ch.6. ‘Maker of heaven and earth’.


Michael Welker, Creation and Reality (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1999).


- Critically Evaluate Augustine’s psychological model of the Trinity.

Augustine, On the Trinity

Ayres, Lewis,


Barnes, Michael René,


Gunton, Colin E., The Promise of Trinitarian Theology


Kelly, J.N.D., Early Christian Doctrines

LaCugna, Catherine, God For Us: The Trinity and Christian Life

Moltmann, Jürgen, The Trinity and the Kingdom of God

Pelikan, Jaroslav, The Christian Tradition Volume I

Rahner, Karl, The Trinity

Studer, Basil, Trinity and Incarnation

- “What God is in nature and essence, no man ever yet has discovered or can discover” (Gregory of Nazianzus). Discuss how Gregory can be both a Trinitarian theologian and an apophatic theologian.

Catherine LaCugna, God For Us: The Trinity and Christian Life

J.N.D. Kelly, Early Christian Doctrines


Anthony Meredith, The Cappadocians

John Meyendorff, Byzantine Theology: Historical Trends and Doctrinal Themes (New York, 1974)

Frederick W. Norris, Faith Gives Fullness to Reasoning: The Five Theological Orations of Gregory of Nazianzen

Jaroslav Pelikan, The Christian Tradition Volume I

Basil Studer, Trinity and Incarnation

T.F. Torrance, Trinitarian Perspectives

Denys Turner, The Darkness of God

Denys Turner and Oliver Davies (eds.), Frances Young, From Nicaea to Chalcedon

John Zizioulas, ‘The Doctrine of the Holy Trinity. The Significance of the Cappadocian
‘The God who reveals himself according to Scripture is One in three distinctive modes of being subsisting in their mutual relations: Father, Son and Holy Spirit’ (Karl Barth). Discuss the claim that Barth’s description of the Trinity betrays an inherent Sabellianism in his theology.

Barth, Karl, *Church Dogmatics I.1*, ch. 2, Pt. 1
Brown, Colin, *Karl Barth and the Christian Message*
Deddo, Gary, *Karl Barth’s Theology of Relations*
Johnson, W.S., *The Mystery of God*
Jüngel, Eberhard, *The Doctrine of the Trinity*
Laats, Alar, *Doctrines of the Trinity in Eastern and Western Theologies*
Moltmann, Jürgen, *The Trinity and the Kingdom of God*
Roberts, Richard, *A Theology on its Way*
Rosato, Philip J., *The Spirit as Lord*
Thompson, John, *Modern Trinitarian Perspectives*
Torrance, Alan, *Persons in Communion*
Webster, John, *Karl Barth*
Williams, Rowan, ‘Barth on the Triune God’, in *Karl Barth: Studies of His Theological Method*, ed. S.W. Sykes

ESSAY 2

*(3,000 words)*

Week 12

Choose ONE from the following questions:

- What, if any, difference does a Trinitarian conception of God do to petitionary prayer?
  Aquinas, Thomas, *Summa Theologiae*
  Baelz, Peter, *Does God Answer Prayer?*
  Baelz, Peter, *Providence and Prayer*
  Barth, Karl, *Church Dogmatics III.4*
  Barth, Karl, *Evangelical Theology*
  Barth, Karl, *Prayer*
  Barth, Karl, *The Christian Life*
  Berkouwer, G.C., *The Providence of God*
  Brümmer, Vincent, *What Does Prayer Do?*
  Calvin, John, *Institutes of Christian Religion*, Bk.3, ch.20
  Gorringe, T.J., *God’s Theatre*
  Grenz, Stanley J., *Prayer: The Cry for the Kingdom*
  Helm, Paul, *The Providence of God*
  Lochman, Jan M., *The Lord’s Prayer*
  McCabe, Herbert, *God Matters*
  McCabe, Herbert, *God Still Matters*
  McIntyre, John, *Theology After the Storm*
  Phillips, D.Z., *The Concept of Prayer*
  Sanders, John, *The God Who Risks*
  Tanner, Kathryn, *God and Creation*
  Torrance, Thomas F., *God and Rationality*, ch 6
  Turner, Denys, *Faith Seeking*

- How far does the doctrine of ‘inerrancy’ express a Trinitarian approach to the doctrine of the authority of Scripture?


Stanley Hauerwas, Unleashing the Scripture: Freeing the Bible from Captivity to America (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1993).


- What Relevance, if any, does the Doctrine of the Trinity have to Christian Life?

Adam, P. (1986) Living the Trinity, Nottingham: Grove


Lorenzen, L. Faber (1999) *The College Student's Introduction to the Trinity*; Michael Glazier
Lossky, V. (1957) *The Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church*, London: Clark, Ch.3
Studer, B. (1994) *Trinity and Incarnation* Edinburgh, T&T Clark

**What Relevance, if any, does the Doctrine of the Trinity have to Ethical Considerations of Pacifism?**

Banner, Michael C. (1999), *Christian ethics and contemporary moral problems*, CUP.
Barth, Karl, *Church Dogmatics III.1*

**Discuss How Liberating the Doctrine of the Trinity is.**

Construct your own bibliography

**Choose an Ethical Issue and Discuss What Light, if any, a Trinitarian Account of God Sheds upon it.**

Construct your own bibliography
Student Presentation

Week 13

8-10 mins in length

Take either one ‘religious’ painting or one hymn or one book or movie from popular culture and describe the theological themes (i.e., what it says about God, and God in relation to the world) suggested by it.

An important part of this essay is identifying a good picture or hymn to work on. You will need to find something which you think is interesting enough to give you 8 to 10 mins of cogent and succinct presentation on your reflections! The most important thing you can do in preparation for this reflection is to look very carefully at the painting or hymn you have chosen.

For a hymn, ask yourself questions like the following: does the hymn have a basic theme? What images or metaphors does it use to convey that theme? What does it suggest about the person who sings it? What does it suggest about the nature of God? What does it suggest about the identity and significance of God’s relation to creatures? What kind of theology would someone need to have to make singing this hymn make sense to them? How might the repeated singing of this hymn shape an individual’s or community’s life and ideas?

For a picture, ask yourself questions like the following: what is the picture’s main subject matter? What is interesting or distinctive about the way in which that subject matter is presented? How do the details and the background of the picture contribute to its meaning? What position does it put the viewer in? Does the artist use light and shadow to convey something about his subject matter? What is suggested about God’s identity and significance in the picture? What is suggested about his relationship to the viewer? What kind of background knowledge would someone need for this picture to have its full impact? How might seeing this picture every day shape an individual’s or community’s life and ideas?

You should try, if possible, to be aware of the historical background of the picture or hymn, but that historical background is not what you are writing about: you should mention it briefly in the introduction, but in the body of the presentation you should only bring in the historical background to the extent that it helps you interpret more deeply the meanings of the hymn or picture.

You should also try to locate the message suggested by your hymn/picture/book/movie against the wider background of possible messages: where, for instance, do the theological ideas suggested fit against the background of various different theologies which were explored in class sessions in the semester? However, once again: this broader background is not the subject of your presentation, and should only appear in it to the extent that it helps you see more clearly and state more fully the particular messages suggested by the hymn/picture/book/movie you are examining.

PLEASE NOTE

- If using a hymn or a picture please provide handouts of the for all the class members.
- Also provide handouts on the presentation for all the class members.