



Birmingham Theological Seminary
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TH3001 – Issues in Theology Proper: Prolegomena, Scripture, and the Trinity Syllabus

Semester: Fall 2025

Course: TH3001 Issues in Theology Proper: Prolegomena, Scripture, and the Trinity

Day & Time: See schedule

Room: Zoom

Professor: Harrison Perkins

Credits: 3

Email: harrison.perkins@ohcc.net

Course Note: TH3001 is a research-level seminar and prioritizes interaction with the sources. Accordingly, there is no lecture component. The class sessions focus on presentation and discussion concerning the required readings. The goal is to strengthen the students in analytical skills and interpretation of texts. **You will need to come to the first class session having completed a reading and a written assignment.**

Course Description: TH3001 is a seminar that explores readings on the intersection of prolegomena, Scripture, and the Trinity. It considers the developments in dogmatics concerning how theology proper comes to bear on our understanding of general and special revelation. Particular focus is given to understanding and discussing important texts.

Course Objectives:

- **Analyze** source readings
 - **Classify** reading material
 - **Appreciate** strengths
 - **Criticize** weaknesses
- **Evaluate** how doctrines relate and coordinate
 - **Compare and relate** particular approaches and perspectives on doctrine
 - **Defend** an approach to these classical doctrines
 - **Express** ability to critique appreciatively and polemically
- **Create** a statement of constructive doctrinal synthesis
 - **Formulate** doctrinal categories
 - **Appropriate** truth for significance
 - **Deploy** knowledge for the local church

Required Texts:

- Scott R. Swain, *Trinity, Revelation, and Reading: A Theological Introduction to the Bible and Its Interpretation* (London: T&T Clark, 2011).
- John Webster, “The Domain of the Word,” in *The Domain of the Word: Scripture and Theological Reason* (London: T&T Clark, 2012), 3–31.
- Irenaeus of Lyons, *On the Apostolic Preaching*, trans. John Behr (Popular Patristics Series; Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1997), 39–101.
- Michael C. Legaspi, *The Death of Scripture and the Rise of Biblical Studies* (Oxford Studies in Historical Theology; New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2010).
- Herman Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics, Volume One: Prolegomena* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2003), 1:283–621.
- Matthew Levering, *Scripture and Metaphysics: Aquinas and the Renewal of Trinitarian Theology* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2004).
- Fred Sanders, *The Triune God* (New Studies in Dogmatics; Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2016).
- Kevin J. Vanhoozer, *Mere Christian Hermeneutics: Transfiguring What It Means to Read the Bible Theologically* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Academic, 2024).

Total reading: 1602 pages

Collateral or Recommended Texts:

- John Webster, *Holy Scripture: A Dogmatic Sketch* (Current Issues in Theology; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003).
- Matthew Barrett, *Canon, Covenant, and Christology: Rethinking Jesus and the Scriptures of Israel* (New Studies in Biblical Theology; London: Apollos/Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2020).
- Geerhardus Vos, *Natural Theology*, trans. Albert Gootjes (Grand Rapids, MI: Reformation Heritage Books, 2022).
- Richard A. Muller, *Post-Reformation Reformed Dogmatics Volume Two: Holy Scripture: The Cognitive Foundation of Theology*, 2nd ed (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2003).
- Richard A. Muller, *Post-Reformation Reformed Dogmatics Volume One: Prolegomena to Theology*, 2nd ed (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2003).
- Jack D. Kilcrease, *Holy Scripture* (Confessional Lutheran Dogmatics; Ft Wayne, IN: The Luther Academy, 2020).
- John H. Walton and D. Brent Sandy, *The Lost World of Scripture: Ancient Literary Culture and Biblical Authority* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2013).

Course Requirements and Assessments:

- Research Paper:
 - a. Format
 - 15–20 pages, 1-inch margins, Times New Roman, main text being double spaced with 12 pt font and footnotes single spaced with 10 pt font

- Do not exceed the maximum page number. I am not impressed by defying criteria, even if it means that you have done more work
 - b. Topic
 - Examine some aspect of how the doctrines of prolegomena, Scripture, and the Trinity relate and/or intersect
 - c. Template: Use the following structure for your paper
 - Introduction
 - Briefly describe the topic and issue that you are exploring.
 - Be concise, and state the aims of your paper
 - ***The introduction must include a clearly stated thesis identified by the phrase “This essay argues...” If you omit this criteria, 15 points will be immediately deducted***
 - State of the Question
 - How has this topic been addressed by others?
 - What is the consensus, if any? Perhaps various parties – such as Reformed, Lutheran, Baptist, Roman Catholic – have consensus internally to the group, but the parties disagree with one another
 - Outline how this issue has been discussed and debated
 - Make sure to summarize various viewpoints and conclusions
 - Arguments for your view
 - Articulate your defense of the thesis stated in your introduction
 - Use exegetical, theological, and/or whatever arguments you find fitting
 - Potential Objections
 - Describe ways that you anticipate others might object to your view and/or its arguments
 - Deal with minimum of two objections
 - Response to Objections
 - How would you respond to those anticipated objections?
 - You may either have a separate response section or you may organize each response with the statement of the anticipated objection
 - Conclusion
 - Discuss how your argument affects ministry in the local church
 - d. Course Weight 25%
- Seminar Snapshots
 - a. Compose a written assessment for the reading for each class session
 - 2 pages, 1-inch margins, Times New Roman, main text being double spaced with 12 pt font and footnotes single spaced with 10 pt font
 - You will have **six** snapshots due, one on the day of each class meeting
 - b. Here are the sources for which you should compose a snapshot
 - Week 1: Swain
 - Week 2: Irenaeus or Legaspi
 - Week 3: Bavinck
 - Week 4: Levering
 - Week 5: Sanders
 - Week 6: Vanhoozer
 - c. Address the following issues:

- What is the historical context for this writing? What factors may have been at work in shaping the author's approach?
 - What is the main argument(s)?
 - How are those arguments defended?
 - What seem to be the author's goals in writing this work?
 - What are the strengths?
 - What are the weaknesses?
 - What is relevance for the church?
- d. Course Weight 20%
- Seminar Participation
 - a. Attend class, present something from your seminar snapshot to the class, and be ready to discuss issues raised in your own or other students' presentations
 - b. Course Weight 20%
- Reading Report
 - a. Submit the percentage of the assigned reading that you completed
 - b. Course Weight 10%

BTS Format, Style, and Writing Standards:

All research papers must be formatted in accordance with Turabian Chicago standards including the title page. All papers are to be #12 font Times New Roman and Double-Spaced. Any paper not conforming to these standards will automatically be dropped one letter grade. Please see the BTS Turabian Style Guide for more information on turning in papers and assignments.

The BTS Turabian Style Guide and other resources are available on the BTS Writing Center webpage: <https://www.btswritingcenter.net/>

In addition, the Writing Center runs 2-3 Writing Workshops every semester. They are very helpful and highly recommended.

BTS Plagiarism / Generative AI Policy

In addition to the BTS plagiarism policy, BTS is implementing a new Generative AI policy. Unless clearly directed by the instructor, the students should submit their own work, independent of artificial intelligence tools. Use of generative AI to write papers or to write significant portions of assignments is considered an ethical violation of our Student Code of Conduct and to be a violation of general academic integrity, which could result in a zero on the assignment and/or a lowered letter grade for the course by the professor. If determined to be an egregious violation, it could lead to further sanctions administered through the Academic Committee, including expulsion from BTS.

Course Schedule:

TM3001 – Issues in Theology Proper – Prolegomena, Scripture, and Trinity – Seminar Schedule		
Date	Topic/Readings/Assignments	# of pages
9/4/2025	Swain, <i>Trinity, Revelation, and Reading</i> , all; Webster, <i>Domain</i> , 3–31.	167
9/18/2025	Irenaeus, 39–101; Legaspi, <i>Death of Scripture...</i> , all	231
10/02/2025	No class	
10/16/2025	Bavinck, <i>RD</i> , 1:283–621	338
10/30/2025	Levering, <i>Trinity and Metaphysics</i> , all	241
11/13/2025	Sanders, <i>Triune God</i> , all	243
11/27/2025	Thanksgiving Break	
12/11/2025	Vanhoozer, <i>Mere Christian Hermeneutics</i> , all	372

Primary Assignment due dates

- Seminar Snapshots – Each snapshot is due on the date that the class meets to discuss the particular reading
- Reading Report – December 20, 2025
- Research paper – December 20, 2025

Attendance Policy:

Students are expected to demonstrate punctuality and attend all class sessions. Any absences should be communicated to the professor beforehand. Students may miss up to three classes with impunity.

[NOTE: Standard BTS Attendance Policy is that students may not miss any more than three classes without a course penalty. Given the reality of distance-based students and video conference options, if students **clearly identify at the beginning of the semester that they will primarily be asynchronous students (depending on the digital recording of class because of a conflict with their schedule)**, then the student may attend without incurring a penalty for their “absences,” providing they are turning in all their work on time. Please see the BTS Faculty Handbook for more information on synchronous and asynchronous video conference students and policies and the commitments a faculty member agrees to when they teach a video conference or a live hybrid class]

Class Policies and Procedures:

- BTS highly recommends using handwritten note taking methods in class and keeping computer usage to a minimum.
- Other electronics should be used sparingly.
- All assignments must be submitted by email by 11:59 (CDT/CST) on the due date.

- Late assignments will incur a -3 point deduction per weekday after the due date, except in cases of emergency communicated to the professor.
- Missed tests/exams may only be made up with an excused absence, preferably in advance of class. Excused absence tests/exams must be made up before the final day of the semester.
- **[Professor may add any additional policies specific to their class]**

Video Conference Policies and Procedures:

- Please utilize the BTS “Best VC (Video Conference) Practices” information for the course.
- Laptops/Desktops are the preferred method of attending a video conference course. Information will be shared on the screen, so phones will be less useful.
- In Video Conference, it is preferable for the student to keep their video on (when possible) so that students and faculty may engage with one another. Extended periods of dark screen will result in follow-up and potential removal from class.
- Other electronics should be used sparingly.
- **[Professor may add any additional policies specific to their class]**

Course Bibliography / Extended Bibliography

Barrett, Matthew, *Canon, Covenant, and Christology: Rethinking Jesus and the Scriptures of Israel* (New Studies in Biblical Theology; London: Apollos/Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2020).

_____*God’s Word Alone: The Authority of Scripture* (The 5 Solas Series; Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2016).

_____*Simply Trinity: The Unmanipulated Father, Son, and Spirit* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2021).

Barrett, Matthew, Ronni Kurtz, Samuel G. Parkison, and Joseph Lanier, *Proclaiming the Triune God: The Doctrine of the Trinity in the Life of the Church* (Brentwood, TN: B&H Academic, 2024).

Bates, Matthew W., *The Birth of the Trinity: Jesus, God, and Spirit in the New Testament and Early Christian Interpretations of the Old Testament* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015)

_____*The Hermeneutics of Apostolic Proclamation: The Center of Paul’s Method of Scriptural Interpretation* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2012).

Bauerschmidt, Frederick Christian, *Thomas Aquinas: Faith, Reason, and Following Christ* (Christian Theology in Context; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013).

Bavinck, Herman, *Philosophy of Revelation: A New Annotated Edition*, ed. Cory Brock and Nathaniel Gray Sutanto (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2018).

- _____. *Reformed Dogmatics, Volume One: Prolegomena* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2003).
- Berkouwer, *General Revelation* (Studies in Dogmatics; Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1955).
- _____. *Holy Scripture* (Studies in Dogmatics; Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1975).
- Billings, J. Todd, *The Word of God for the People of God: An Entryway into the Theological Interpretation of Scripture* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2010).
- Boersma, Hans, *Heavenly Participation: The Weaving of a Sacramental Tapestry* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2011).
- _____. *Sacramental Preaching: Sermons on the Hidden Presence of Christ* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2016).
- _____. *Scripture as Real Presence: Sacramental Exegesis in the Early Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2017).
- Bruno, Chris, Jared Compton, and Kevin McFadden, *Biblical Theology According to the Apostles: How the Earliest Christians Told the Story of the Old Testament* (New Studies in Biblical Theology; Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2020).
- Carter, Craig A., *Contemplating God with the Great Tradition: Recovering Trinitarian Classical Theism* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2021).
- _____. *Interpreting Scripture with the Great Tradition: Recovering the Genius of Premodern Exegesis* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2018).
- Crisp, Oliver D., and Fred Sanders (eds.), *The Voice of God in the Text of Scripture* (Explorations in Constructive Dogmatics; Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2016).
- Davison, Andrew, *Participation in God: A Study in Christian Doctrine and Metaphysics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019).
- Dockery, David S., and Malcolm B. Yarnell III, *Special Revelation and Scripture* (Theology for the People of God; Brentwood, TN: B&H Academic, 2024).
- Duby, Stephen J., *God in Himself: Scripture, Metaphysics, and the Task of Christian Theology* (Studies in Christian Doctrine and Scripture; Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2019).
- Irenaeus of Lyons, *On the Apostolic Preaching*, trans. John Behr (Popular Patristics Series; Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1997).
- Jamieson, R. B., and Tyler R. Wittman, *Biblical Reasoning: Christological and Trinitarian Rules for Exegesis* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2022).
- Kilcrease, Jack D., *Holy Scripture* (Confessional Lutheran Dogmatics; Ft Wayne, IN: The Luther Academy, 2020).

- Legaspi, Michael C., *The Death of Scripture and the Rise of Biblical Studies* (Oxford Studies in Historical Theology; New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2010).
- Levering, Matthew, *Participatory Exegesis: A Theology of Biblical Interpretation* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2008).
- _____, *Scripture and Metaphysics: Aquinas and the Renewal of Trinitarian Theology* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2004).
- Muller, Richard A., *Post-Reformation Reformed Dogmatics Volume One: Prolegomena to Theology*, 2nd ed (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2003).
- _____, *Post-Reformation Reformed Dogmatics Volume Two: Holy Scripture: The Cognitive Foundation of Theology*, 2nd ed (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2003).
- Sanders, Fred, *The Triune God* (New Studies in Dogmatics; Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2016).
- Smith, Brandon D., *The Trinity in the Canon: A Biblical, Theological, Historical, and Practical Proposal* (Brentwood, TN: B&H Academic, 2023).
- Swain, Scott R., *Trinity, Revelation, and Reading: A Theological Introduction to the Bible and Its Interpretation* (London: T&T Clark, 2011).
- Tabb, Brian J., and Andrew M. King (eds.), *Five Views of Christ in the Old Testament* (Counterpoints; Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan 2022).
- Vanhoozer, Kevin J., *The Drama of Doctrine: A Canonical Linguistic-Approach to Christian Theology* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2005).
- _____, *First Theology: God, Scripture, and Hermeneutics* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2002).
- _____, *Mere Christian Hermeneutics: Transfiguring What It Means to Read the Bible Theologically* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Academic, 2024).
- _____, *Remythologizing Theology: Divine Action, Passion, and Authorship* (Cambridge Studies in Christian Doctrine; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010).
- Vos, Geerhardus, *Natural Theology*, trans. Albert Gootjes (Grand Rapids, MI: Reformation Heritage Books, 2022).
- Walton, John H., and D. Brent Sandy, *The Lost World of Scripture: Ancient Literary Culture and Biblical Authority* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2013).
- Waters, Guy Prentiss, *For the Mouth of the Lord Has Spoken: The Doctrine of Scripture* (Reformed Exegetical and Doctrinal Studies; Fearn: Mentor, 2020).
- Webster, John, *The Domain of the Word: Scripture and Theological Reason* (London: T&T Clark, 2012).

_____ *Holy Scripture: A Dogmatic Sketch* (Current Issues in Theology; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003).

This is generally a good list for students to use in doing research for papers. It can be anywhere from 20 works to 100 works. Books in this list do not need to conform to traditional reformed standards, but it is the recommendation of the administration that a brief amount of time spent with students walking through the Extended Bibliography identifying potentially useful research texts or texts that argue from outside the reformed tradition to avoid student confusion.

GRADING CRITERIA AND ASSESSMENT RUBRIC

A to A-	B to B-	C to C-	D to D-
Correct spelling and grammar/punctuation	Minor errors in spelling or grammar/punctuation	Multiple errors in spelling or grammar/punctuation per page	Difficult to read due to English writing errors
Smooth writing that provides for effective and efficient reading	Writing is acceptable, but not as organized and coherent	Writing is not smooth, sometimes confusing and inconsistent	Writing lacks clarity, focus, structure, and is incoherent
Person and format are proper for assignment	Person and format are inconsistent	Person and format are not appropriate	Person and format are totally inappropriate
Scripture, paraphrases, quotes, and summaries are appropriately used, cited, and clearly supports main argument	Scripture, paraphrases, quotes, and summaries are appropriate but need more depth and use of critical thinking	Scripture, paraphrases, quotes, and summaries are inadequate for main argument and do not reflect understanding	Scripture, paraphrases, quotes, and summaries are improperly used, over used, under used, or cited in error

Paper completely conforms to Turabian's <i>Manual for Writers</i>	Paper generally conforms to Turabian's <i>Manual for Writers</i>	Paper somewhat conforms to Turabian's <i>Manual for Writers</i>	Paper does not conform to Turabian's <i>Manual for Writers</i>
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BTS Outcomes Evaluation

Please rank each outcome on a scale of 1-5

1: this outcome is not covered in this class

2: this outcome is only touched on in this class

3: this outcome is discussed in conjunction with class material

4: this outcome lightly assessed as part of course assessment (one assignment)

5: this outcome is fully integrated into the assessment of this course (multiple assignments)

1. Scripture: Students will effectively articulate the truth of Scripture and Scripture as truth, engaged with learning biblical knowledge and reformed principles of the supremacy of Scripture as God's word.
2. Reformed Theology: Students will be able to engage and reproduce the primary and essential elements of Reformed Theology.
3. Local Church: Students will be engaged in applied ministry projects in the local church
4. Wisdom: Students will grow in character; increasing in their demonstration of wisdom and its fruits.
5. Discipleship: Students will be able to understand and articulate the nature and importance of discipleship—both ordinary (means of grace) and extraordinary (biblical counseling).
6. Communication: Students will grow in the efficacy of their communication (articulation, teaching/speaking, and preaching—respective to various departments) both in content knowledge and rhetorical strategies.
7. Worldview: Students will demonstrate a growing ability to apply God's word to all spheres of life, evidenced through class discussion and other assigned assessments.
8. Leadership: Students will grow in their understanding of godly leadership and ability to lead others in service of the local church.

Outcome	Rank	Rational (one sentence)
Scripture	5	Scripture is the focus of this class
Reformed Theology	5	Reformed views are taken as the baseline to measure other varieties
Local Church	3	Oral and written assessments require application to the local church
Wisdom	1	N/A
Discipleship	1	N/A
Communication	3	Written and verbal presentations develop communication skills
Worldview	1	N/A
Leadership	1	N/A