

1-1-2008

DO 501 Basic Christian Theology

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Recommended Citation

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DO 501
(3 hours)

BASIC CHRISTIAN THEOLOGY

Fall 2008

I. **PURPOSE:** The purpose of this course is to provide an introduction to the study of Christian Theology. Over the course of the semester students will be introduced to all the major areas in the system of Christian doctrine. The relevance of theology for the Christian life and the practice of ministry will be stressed.

II. **OBJECTIVES:** By the end of the course students will:

1. Have developed a working theological vocabulary that will support further study in theology and related disciplines.
2. Have grasped the vital connection between theology and the Christian life and theology and the practice of ministry.
3. Have been introduced to all the major areas in the study of Christian theology.
4. Have examined, evaluated and used a reasonable range of literature related to the study of Christian theology.
5. Have used theological literature reflecting the global and historical character of theology as well as the multi-ethnic and cross-cultural nature of ministry.
6. Be able to reflect theologically upon the practice of ministry.
7. Grown in their knowledge and love for God through the study of Christian theology.

III. **TEXTS:**

Thomas Oden, *The Living God*
The Word of Life
Life in the Spirit

Gregory Boyd & Paul Eddy, *Across the Spectrum*

Timothy Tennent, *Theology in the Context of World Christianity*

IV. **REQUIREMENTS:**

1. Regular, active ATTENDANCE at class sessions. Dr. Seamands will generally lecture during class sessions (Go to this course on the Virtual Campus to download power point slides). You are encouraged to raise questions as we move along.

During three class sessions throughout the semester we will take time to discuss material in Boyd and Eddy's *Across the Spectrum*. Come prepared on those days with two or three

questions the assigned reading has provoked in your mind. On each of these three days, two groups will also present their video projects.

We will discuss Chapters 1,3,4,6 of *Across the Spectrum* on_____

We will discuss Chapters 9,10,11,12, of *Across the Spectrum* on_____

We will discuss Chapters 14,16,17,18 of *Across the Spectrum* on_____

2. Participation in a GROUP VIDEO PROJECT (20%) based on issues discussed in *Across the Spectrum* to be explained the first day of class. Video projects will be evaluated on the basis of *Content* (Did the group set the stage well by explaining what two views they were going to present? Did the group clearly set forth the differing views? In editing the video interviews, did the group include the pertinent material in clarifying the distinctive views on the subject?) and *Form* (Was the video clear, engaging, and able to hold our attention?)

3. SEVEN WRITTEN ASSIGNMENTS (80%) containing your typed responses to the assigned reading materials. You will turn in your assignments on seven precise dates at the beginning of the class session. There are no exams and no other written assignments. Dr. Seamands and his grader *will* evaluate your first written assignment and return it to you with suggestions for improvement. Then after written assignments two and three are turned in, he will grade *one* of them. He will follow the same pattern after assignments four & five and six & seven are turned in, each time grading *one* of the two assignments. The last page of the syllabus contains a grading rhubric that will be used for evaluating the first assignment. Similar grading rhubrics will be used for the assignments that follow.

Your final grade will be calculated based by averaging your grades for the four written assignments he has chosen to grade (10 % for first assignment, 70% for the next three) plus your grade for the group video project (20%).

Your participation in the course will be significantly weakened if the reading and writing is not done by the due dates, so it is expected that you will turn the assignments in on time. In case of an emergency based on unavoidable personal or family crisis, notify me by email or phone as the emergency is breaking. I can issue an authorization for late work in extreme emergencies.

The due dates for the written assignments are as follows:

1. Weeks 1-2_____

2. Weeks 3-4_____

3. Weeks 5-6_____

4. Weeks 7-8_____

5. Weeks 9-10_____

6. Weeks 11-12_____

7. Weeks 13-14_____

When you turn in your LAST ASSIGNMENT, make sure you put your name and SPO number on it, since I will return it through the SPO. If you want it sent to another address, please include a self-addressed stamped envelope with your paper..

There are three different types of written responses called for in the written assignments: Summary Reflections, Critical Reflection, and Application Reflections. Since these are such important components of the course, it is necessary to describe them in more detail.

A. Summary Reflections

You will simply summarize the content of the assigned reading in Oden your own words. There should be NO personal commentary or attempt to evaluate the content of the materials. Just summarize what the author says. Include as many of the key concepts and ideas as you can. Strive to be both comprehensive and intensive. Your abstract summary should be stylistically correct, coherent and clear. It should be one single-spaced page in length. Use a number 10 typefont (but nothing smaller!) for your Summary Reflection and 1 inch margins (no less) so you can include as much as possible in your summary.

Remember that meaning making requires first that you transform the reading materials into your OWN words. Effective "note taking" is more than capturing another person's words; it requires transforming a communication into your own language and symbols. Use explicit and visible QUOTE marks to identify the author's words. All other written material not clearly cited should be your own constructions and abstracted summaries of what you read.

B. Application Reflections

You will be relating the assigned material you have read in Oden to the life of the church and the practice of Christian ministry. Hence you will be asked to do things which more than likely you will be doing later on, especially if you are involved in some form of practical ministry. It is important that these reflections INTEGRATE what you have been learning in class and through the reading materials, and are not simply your "off the cuff" responses. The length of these application reflections is always specified.

C. Critical Reflections based on assigned readings in Tennent's *Theology in the Context of World Christianity*

You will be asked to critically reflect and respond to a question(s) based on assigned reading material from the Tennent text. Your critical reflections will generally be one page double-spaced (12 typefont) in length.

V. COURSE OUTLINE, READINGS AND WRITTEN ASSIGNMENTS

1. WEEKS 1 & 2. *THE NATURE AND ATTRIBUTES OF GOD*

A. Summary Reflection: 1 page single-spaced typed (10 font) abstract summary of Oden, *The Living God*, ix-xv, 11-130, 181-224 (159pp).

B. Application Reflection. In the light of what you have learned, write a prayer of adoration (one which centers upon who God is) which **focuses upon God's omnipresence, omnipotence, and omniscience**. Assume that you will be using the prayer in a worship service where you have been asked to pray. DON'T move to other elements of prayer such as thanksgiving, confession or petition, STAY with adoration. (1 page double-spaced).

B. Critical Reflection. Based on your reading of Tennent, *Theology in the Context of World Christianity*, 1-49, how would you answer the question posed in Chapter 2, "Do Christians and Muslim worship the same God? Or to put it another way, "Is the Father of Jesus the God of Muhammed?" (1 page double-spaced 12 font).

For further reading:

Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics II/1. The Doctrine of God*.

Donald Bloesch, *God the Almighty*

Gregory Boyd, et al., *Divine Foreknowledge: Four Views*

Emil Brunner, *The Christian Doctrine of God*.

Alan Coppedge, *Portraits of God*

Triune Theism

Timothy George, *Is the Father of Jesus the God of Mohammed?*

Catherine M. LaCugna, *God for Us: The Trinity & Christian Life*

Ted Peters, *God as Trinity*

A.W. Tozer, *The Knowledge of the Holy*

Jurgen Moltmann, *The Trinity and the Kingdom*

Stephen Seamands, *Ministry in the Image of God: The Trinitarian Shape of Christian Service*

Thomas Torrance, *The Christian Doctrine of God, One Being Three Persons*

2. WEEKS 3 & 4. *CREATION AND PROVIDENCE; THEOLOGICAL METHOD; THE PERSON OF CHRIST*

A. Summary Reflection: 1 page single-spaced typed (10 font) abstract summary based on Oden, *The Living God*, 227-234, 240-315, 319-344, 355-370; Oden, *The Word of Life*, 1-6, 13-56 (170pp).

B. Application Reflection: You are visiting with Mary and John Smith, an unchurched couple in your community whom you have gotten to know quite well. A year ago, their teenage son, Mark, was seriously injured in a football game. As a result he is paralyzed from the waist down and confined to a wheel chair. Because John's parents were active members in your church, you got to know them after the accident. In fact, you visited with them many times during the first few months after the accident and have helped them work through their emotional pain. Now things have settled down and they seem to be making the best of the situation.

But during the course of this particular visit they begin to voice their questions about God. John expresses it like this: "I just don't understand it. How could a god who is loving and all-powerful, let something like this happen? Why didn't God intervene? It makes me wonder if God really cares the way you say He does and if he really is in charge after all. I want to believe, but I just can't make sense of it." Write down what you would say to John and Mary? (2 pages 12 font double-spaced).

C. Critical Reflection: Based on your reading of Tennent, 53-74, respond to the question the author poses on page 59: "Should we encourage insightful quotations from the sacred texts of other religions such as the Islamic Quaran, the Hindu Upanishads, or the Buddhist Tipitake if it will help communicate the gospel in the varying contexts in which Christian witness takes place today?" If so, how should they be used? (1 page double-spaced 12 font).

For further reading:

G.C. Berkouwer, *Providence*

Emil Brunner, *The Christian Doctrine of Creation and Redemption*

Roger Hazelton, *Gods Ways with Man*

Jurgen Moltmann, *God in Creation*

Philip Yancy, *Disappointment with God*

Where is God When it Hurts?

The Jesus I Never Knew

Donald Bloesch, *Holy Scripture*

I.H. Marshall, *Biblical Inspiration*

Clark Pinnock, *The Scripture Principle*

John Wenham, *Christ and the Bible*

3. WEEKS 5 & 6. **THE INCARNATION**

A. Summary Reflection: 1 page single-spaced (10 font) abstract summary based on Oden, *The Word of Life*, 57-144, 164-194, 229-260, 268-278 (158pp).

B. Application Reflection: In the light of what you have learned, write a meditation for the December edition of a church newsletter. The meditation should be entitled, "Why All this Fuss About Christmas?" and should be based upon John 1:14--"The Word became flesh and dwelt among us" (2 pages, double-spaced 12 font).

C. Critical Reflection: Based on your reading of Tennent, 105-132, answer the following question: What is your assessment of the “Ancestor Christology” as presented by Tennent that is being set forth by African theologians today? (1 page double-spaced 12 font)

For Further Reading:

Athanasius, *On the Incarnation*
 Donald Baillie, *God Was in Christ*
 William Barclay, *Jesus as They saw Him*
 Donald Bloesch, *Jesus Christ*
 Oscar Cullmann, *The Christology of the New Testament*
 Millard Erickson, *The Word Became Flesh*
 Jurgen Moltmann, *The Way of Jesus Christ*
 Wolfhart Pannenberg, *Jesus--God and Man*
 Jaroslav Pelikan, *Jesus through the Centuries*
 Philip Yancey, *The Jesus I Never Knew*

4. WEEKS 7 & 8. **THE DEATH OF CHRIST**

A. Summary Reflection: 1 page single-spaced (10 font) abstract summary based on Oden, *The Word of Life*, 279-414 (135 pp).

B. Application Reflection: You are talking to Shinobu, a non-Christian Japanese friend of yours to whom you have been trying to witness about the Christian faith. Based on your reading of Tennent, 77-101, what might you say to him about the meaning and significance of Christ’s death on the cross? (2 pages, doublespaced).

No Critical Reflection this Time!

For further reading:

Gustaf Aulen, *Christus Victor*
 James Denney, *The Death of Christ*
 John Driver, *Understanding the Atonement for the Mission of the Church*
 Jurgen Moltmann, *The Crucified God*
 Leon Morris, *The Cross in the New Testament*
 Thomas Schreiner, et al., *The Nature of the Atonement: Four Views*
 Stephen Seamands, *Wounds that Heal: Bringing Our Hurts to the Cross*
 John Stott, *The Cross of Christ*
 Derek Tidball, *The Message of the Cross*
 Douglas Webster, *In Debt to Christ*

5. WEEKS 9 & 10. **RESURRECTION AND ASCENSION; THE HOLY SPIRIT; REPENTANCE**

A. Summary Reflection: 1 page single-spaced (10 font) abstract summary based on Oden, *The Word of Life*, 429-491, 501-525; *Life in the Spirit*, 1-8, 15-26, 34-70, 79-103 (164pp).

B. Application Reflection: In the light of what you have learned, work with your small group (to be assigned) and prepare an Affirmation of Faith (about the length of the Apostles' Creed) to be printed in the bulletin and used in a worship service on Pentecost Sunday entitled "I Believe in the Holy Spirit." Let your affirmation focus entirely on the person and work of the Holy Spirit.

C. Critical Reflection: Based on your reading of Tennent, 163-189, respond to the following question: What can Latin American Pentecostals teach us about the role of the Holy Spirit in the life of the Church today? (1 page 12 font double-spaced)

For further reading:

Paul Beasley-Murray, *The Message of the Resurrection*

Donald Bloesch, *The Holy Spirit*

Raniero Cantalamessa, *Come, Creator Spirit*

Harvey Cox, *Fire from Heaven*

Stephen Davis, *Risen Indeed!*

Gerrit Dawson, *Jesus Ascended*

John Jansen, *The Resurrection of Jesus Christ in New Testament Theology*

Walter Kunneth, *The Theology of the Resurrection*

Peter Toon, *The Ascension of our Lord*

Thomas Torrance, *Space, Time and Resurrection*

Leona F. Choy, *Powerlines: What Great Evangelicals Believed about the Holy Spirit*

Gordon Fee, *Paul, the Spirit, and the People of God*

Craig Keener, *Gift and Giver*

Charles Hummel, *Fire in the Fireplace*

Jurgen Moltmann, *The Spirit of Life*

J. Oswald Sanders, *The Holy Spirit and His Gifts*

J.T. Seamands, *On Tiptoe with Joy*

Clark Pinnock, *The Flame of Love: A Theology of the Holy Spirit*

Michael Welker, *God the Spirit*

6. WEEKS 11 & 12. **SALVATION, THE CHRISTIAN LIFE, AND THE CHURCH**

No Summary Reflection this time!

A. Application Reflection: Read Oden, *Life in the Spirit*, 108-119, 128-138, 145-50, 156-170, 177-246, 261-274, 279-310 (151 pp). Write a Theological Reflection Paper (5 pages 12 font double-spaced) where you consider your own spiritual journey in the light of the Order of Salvation that Oden has discussed on pages 79-246 of *Life in the Spirit*. How does the Order of Salvation parallel your experience? Are there aspects of your experience that don't fit the Order of Salvation he describes? Are there aspects that are hard to place within that order? Make sure that you don't merely "tell your story" but that you reflect theologically upon it. (This paper will become a part of your Christian Formation portfolio)

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a. Virtual students are encouraged to contact the Information Commons for research assistance including help determining the best sources to use for a paper, finding book reviews, or research questions about using the online databases or any other library materials.

4. Online Databases:

a. To access the online library resources including the library catalog and full-text journal databases, go to <http://www.asburyseminary.edu/information/index.htm> and enter your 10-digit student ID# number in the login box. Your student ID# is provided on the biographical information section of the student registration webpage. Add a 2 and enough 0's to the front to make a 10-digit number (20000XXXXX where XXXXX = your student id).

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NAME --

1. Summary Reflection:

A. Written from author's point of view, no commentary, no evaluation of content. Concise, linguistically and stylistically correct, coherent and clear.

(F)------(D)------(C-)------(C)------(C+)------(B)------(B)------(B+)------(A-)------(A)---
(A+)

B. Included the key concepts in the assigned material in the summary:

(F)------(D)------(C-)------(C)------(C+)------(B)------(B)------(B+)------(A-)------(A)---
(A+)

C. Summarized *all* the various parts of the material appropriately:

(F)------(D)------(C-)------(C)------(C+)------(B)------(B)------(B+)------(A-)------(A)---
(A+)

2. Application Reflection: A Prayer of Adoration

a. Content. Stayed with Adoration (didn't move to other elements of prayer). Focused adoration on the three omni attributes (omniscience, omnipotence, omnipresence).

(F)------(D)------(C-)------(C)------(C+)------(B)------(B)------(B+)------(A-)------(A)---
(A+)

b. Form. Communicated in a clear, engaging way. Uses words and images that inspire adoration.

(F)------(D)------(C-)------(C)------(C+)------(B)------(B)------(B+)------(A-)------(A)---
(A+)

3. Critical Reflection

Engaging the Question. Clearly and coherently answered the question. Integrated readings with answer.

(F)------(D)------(C-)------(C)------(C+)------(B)------(B)------(B+)------(A-)------(A)---
(A+)

Quality of Content. Evidences depth of insight and perception. Able to make connections and discern relationships between issues.

(F)------(D)------(C-)------(C)------(C+)------(B)------(B)------(B+)------(A-)------(A)---
(A+)

Grade: