

# **With All Your Mind: Christian Theology for Christian Life**

Christian Assembly Foursquare Church — Sundays, 11:15 a.m., across the street

## **Class Schedule**

- 1/24 What Is Theology?**  
*Deuteronomy 6, Genesis 32:22-32, Philippians 4:8-9*  
McGrath, Introduction, chapter 1
- 1/31 Not What You Think: The Otherness of God**  
*Exodus 3, Exodus 19:9-20:21, Romans 1:18-23*  
McGrath, chapter 2
- 2/7 The Threeness of God, part 1: Two Models of God**  
*John 17*  
McGrath, chapter 3  
McPherson, II
- 2/14 The Threeness of God, part 2: Three Mistakes and Their Costs**  
*Luke 3:1-22*  
McPherson, IX-XI
- 2/21 Creation and Its Alternatives**  
*Genesis 1, Psalm 104, John 1:1-5*  
McGrath, chapter 5
- 2/28 Humanity: What is the Image of God?**  
*Genesis 2-3*  
McGrath, chapter 6  
McPherson, VIII, XVI
- 3/7 Sin and Evil: What Are They, and What Can We Do About Them?**  
*Romans 3:8-20, Romans 5:12-21*  
McGrath, chapter 4  
McPherson, III-VII
- 3/14 The Heavens Declare ... What? How Much Does Creation Really Say About God?**  
Where Do We Go From Here?  
*Job 38:1-42:6*

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## **Assignment 1: For January 31**

### **A. What Is Theology?**

Read Deuteronomy 6, Genesis 32:22-32, Philippians 4:8-9.

Read McGrath, Introduction and chapter 1.

Consider the “dynamic” description of theology we explored in class: Theology as wrestling with God, or as sports commentary. How do your worship, Church fellowship, and daily living affect your theological reflection, and how does your reflection in turn affect your worship, fellowship, and Christian life? In other words, how is theology already a part of your life as a Christian, and how might its role be enriched?

### **2. Not What You Think: The Otherness of God**

Read Exodus 3, Exodus 19:9-20:21, Romans 1:18-23.

Read McGrath, chapter 2.

When you imagine God, what images come to mind? Where are these images coming from? In what ways do you think they adequately convey who God is and what God is like, and in what ways do they fall short?

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## **Assignment 2: For February 7**

### **2/7 The Threeness of God, part 1**

This coming week we will take a look at what we mean when we say that Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are one God.

Read: John 17, Jesus' prayer on the night he is betrayed. John 14-17, "the farewell discourse," is often understood as an "insider's view" of the relationships among Father, Son, and Spirit.

Read: McPherson, chapter 2, for a good description of what Christians everywhere believe about the threeness of God.

Read: McGrath, chapter 3. This chapter isn't directly relevant to our discussion, since we aren't discussing incarnation, or the idea that Jesus is divine and human. That happens in part 2. But it is *indirectly* relevant, in that it claims that Jesus shares divinity with the One who sent him into the world. It is our recognition that Jesus is divine that leads us to the idea of the Trinity.

Next week we will explore Christians' different ideas of how to understand God's threeness, and how thinking about God in the wrong way hurts our lives. In the meantime, here are several questions to ponder. I don't expect clear answers at this point, but it's good to start thinking about these things early:

1. What difference does it make whether there is one God, or three Gods? (Think back to John 17 and any other biblical texts to help you answer.)
2. Is God three-and-one in the Old Testament era too?
3. When Muslims worship God, are they worshipping the same God Christians worship? How about Jews?
4. Does the idea that God is both one and three at the same time make sense?

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## **Assignment 3: For February 14**

### **2/14 The Threeness of God, part 2**

The best place for us to understand the Trinity isn't illustrations of three-leaf clovers and so on, but Jesus' life. So:

1. Read Luke 3:1-22, on Jesus' baptism. The story of Jesus' baptism is also a picture of the Trinity in action. You can look all over the gospels for these pictures. What does this one tell us about Father, Son, and Holy Spirit?

2. Now read McPherson, IX-XI, on the sacraments and how they relate *us* to Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. How does the picture of Jesus' baptism tell us about *our* relationships with Father, Son, and Holy Spirit when we're in Christ? What does it say about "baptism in the Holy Spirit"?

3. Next week we will discuss several ways Christians have understood the Trinity *incorrectly* — as God simply acting three different ways, or as three Gods, or as Son and Spirit being inferior to God the Father. Put these two readings together. If we understand the Trinity incorrectly, what happens to our relationship with God? (We'll be discussing this in class, in case you want to ponder the question ahead of time.)

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## **Assignment 3: For February 21**

### **2/21 Creation and Its Alternatives**

1. **Read Psalm 104**, a hymn praising God for the creation. Does it surprise you to find anything here listed as part of God's good creation?
2. **Read Genesis 1:1-2:3**, the first of Genesis' two creation stories. How does it compare with Psalm 104?
3. What is "the moral of these stories," meaning the theological point of these creation accounts? (You can also review McGrath, 29-33 and 34-35, if you like.)
4. **Read John 1:1-5**. What is God the Son's role in creation? (You can also read Colossians 1:15-20, if you like.)
5. **Read McGrath, chapter 5**. On pages 79-81 and 86-88, McGrath discusses the Holy Spirit. What is the Spirit's role in creation?
6. How does meditating on God as creator change your self-image? How would you see yourself if you did *not* believe in God as creator of heavens and earth?

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## **Assignment 5: For February 28**

### **2/28 Humanity in the Image of God**

1. **Read Genesis 2-3**, on the creation and fall of humanity. We will discuss sin next week; this week we will be concentrating on what humanity looked like *before* the rise of sin. We will discuss alternative ways of understanding what it means that people are created in God's image. What do you understand the human image of God to be?
2. How does the image of God change your understanding of yourself?
3. How does it change your understanding of others?
4. How does it change your understanding of God?
5. **Read McGrath, chapter 6 and McPherson VIII and XVI.** These are texts about the nature of the Church, which is humanity redeemed. What does the picture of the Church tell you about the human image of God?
6. Do you think eternal life will be "back to Eden," or better than Eden?

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## **Assignment 6: For March 7**

### **3/7 Sin and Evil: What Are They, and What Can We Do About Them?**

1. **Read Romans 3:9-20 and 5:12-21**, on the extent and spread of sin among humanity. Last week we saw that human beings enjoy a special relationship with God, with each other, and with the rest of God's creation. What does sin do to each of these relationships?
2. How do we learn more about what sin is like through Jesus' life?
3. **Read McGrath, chapter 4**, on "the work of Christ." We will spend much more time on this in the next series; but note that the way we appreciate Jesus' death depends on our appreciation of the power of sin, and vice versa. What happens if we underestimate the power of sin?
4. **Read McPherson, III-VII**. As believers in Jesus Christ, what role does sin still play in our lives?

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## **Assignment 7: For March 14**

Congratulations! The last assignment in this part of the course!

1. **First, the “final exam.”** This is meant to crystallize everything we've talked about in this part of the course. (Aren't optional final exams nice?)

A translation of Matthew's version of the Lord's Prayer (Matt. 6:9-13) reads:

(9) “Pray then in this way: ‘Our Father in heaven, let your name be made holy. (10) Let your kingdom come. Let your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. (11) Give us today our daily bread. (12) And forgive us our debts, as we have forgiven our debtors. (13) And do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one.’”

How does the Lord's Prayer embody the material we've discussed in the course (for instance, God, Trinity, creation, providence, humanity, sin)? How do the common distortions of the Christian teachings we've discussed (for instance, pantheism, modalism, Pelagianism) distort the meaning of the Lord's Prayer?

2. We will wrap up by asking, “Where do we go from here?” One way we will do this is to examine different answers to how much we can say about God without referring explicitly to Jesus Christ, his Church, or the Bible. For background, **read Romans 1:18-25 and 2:12-16**. For a different perspective, you can also **read Job 38:1-42:6**.

So how much does creation by itself really say about God? Enough to condemn? Enough to excuse? Enough to save?