

## *An Introductory Course of Readings in Reformed Theology, 2006*

We often receive requests from prospective students, laymen, and ministers and ruling elders for a list of readings that will provide a basic, but thorough, foundation in Reformed theology. The following list has been designed to help meet this demand. Perhaps this list of readings will prove useful in an elder training program or as a self-directed course of continuing education. Whatever its use, it is our prayer that this course of readings will be used of God to strengthen many in their faith.

We have provided two levels of reading. The introductory level will, for many, provide little more than a review. Those, however, who have recently come to Reformed convictions and have had little exposure to the literature of Reformed theology should find the reading at this level quite useful. Pastors and elders who are looking for books that they can encourage earnest inquirers to read may want to use this level as a guide as well. The advanced level will definitely encourage the student to dig much deeper and will require concentrated time and effort.

In some of the categories we have suggested multiple titles that, to a great extent, cover the same content. The person working through the readings should decide which of the selections seems to best suit his tastes and needs. The section on the Westminster Standards is especially “full,” but we make no apology for this since it is our aim to serve those churches that are confessional in orientation. As much as possible, we tried to avoid overlap between the reading included here and the reading that is required for classes at GPTS, especially since many who will be using this list may be planning to attend seminary at some future date. Even so, some overlap seemed inevitable. The books marked with an asterisk (\*) are currently used in classes at GPTS. Even if one chooses to read these before embarking on his official seminary studies, we are convinced that they are works worth mastering by means of a second reading. A few final comments may help to explain what, to some, may seem a serious omission. We are by no means unaware that today’s evangelical church is facing many problems. Even so, we have, for the most part, avoided books covering specific controversies. It is our conviction that a thorough grounding in the knowledge of the Bible and theology, accompanied by a fervent piety, will be the best antidote to the changing whims of vain speculation, man-centered efforts, and personal fancy.

## Biblical Content and Interpretation

### Introductory

We recommend that each person using this list begin by developing a set of concise book outlines and book summaries for the whole Bible. These should be brief and should help the student learn to find his way through the Scriptures with ease. Note the main events, persons, promises, the progress and development of the covenant of grace, etc. Beware, it is all too easy to become overwhelmed with the details. As a model, one may wish to follow the sampling of several well-known Bible chapters, with key-verse reminders, that Hendriksen provides in his *Survey*.

Adams, Jay *What to do on Thursday: A Layman's Guide to the Practical Use of the Scriptures* (A very basic, but informative book about how to develop a disciplined, organized habit of Bible study. Adams drives the point home that the Scriptures should be studied not just for information, but for application.)

De Graaf, S.G. *Promise and Deliverance*, 4 vols.

Clowney, Edmund *The Unfolding Mystery* (A basic introduction to Messianic revelation and covenant theology.)

Dyer, Sidney "The Benefits of Knowing Greek and Hebrew" (GPTS class paper)

\*Hendriksen, William *Survey of the Bible: A Treasury of Bible Information*

M'Cheyne, R. M. *M'Cheyne's Calendar for Daily Readings* (Subtitled "A concise course whereby one can read through the whole Bible once a year – the Psalms and the New Testament twice.") At the seminary we recommend that the students read through a different evangelical translation of the Bible each year so that they may familiarize themselves with the translations that are most commonly used in the churches today.

### Advanced

Dorani, Daniel *Getting the Message: A Plan for Interpreting and Applying the Bible*

Dumbrell, William *The Faith of Israel: Its Expression in the Books of the Old Testament*

Machen, J. Gresham *The New Testament: An Introduction to its Literature and History*

Parson's Technology *Hebrew Tutor: Interactive Learning System* and *Greek Tutor: Interactive Learning System* (This software may be useful to those who desire to learn the Hebrew and Greek alphabets as well as basic grammatical forms and vocabulary. The biblical languages are admittedly the most difficult subjects to begin learning on one's own.)

\*Robertson, O. Palmer *The Christ of the Covenants*

## Theological Studies/Systematic Theology

### Introductory

Hodge, A.A. *Evangelical Theology: A Course of Popular Lectures* (Written in a lively and engaging style, these lectures are easy to follow and are a great introduction to the doctrines of the faith “once for all delivered to the saints.”)

Kerr, Hugh Thomson (ed.) *A Compend of the Institutes* (A even-handed abridgement of Calvin's monumental work. This work may prove a bit difficult to find since it has been out of print for several years.)

Lane, Tony and Hilary Osborne (eds.) *John Calvin: The Institutes of the Christian Religion* (A more recent abridgement of Calvin's *Institutes* than Kerr's. The language has been somewhat simplified, but it still provides a good exposure to Calvin's system of thought.)

Packer, J.I. *Knowing God* (The first three chapters are especially good for setting the tone and the aim of one's theological studies. We may know much "about" God, but do we really know Him as *our* God?)

Pink, A.W. *The Attributes of God* (The short, but pithy chapters in this book would make a good series of daily meditations.)

Sproul, R.C. *The Holiness of God* (An acknowledged modern classic that gets to the heart of Reformed/Reformation piety and doctrine.)

### Advanced

Berkhof, Louis *Manual of Christian Doctrine* (This work covers all the bases even though it does not go into near as much detail as Berkhof's *Systematic Theology*. Several GPTS students have found this work useful in reviewing for licensure and ordination exams.)

Boettner, Loraine *The Reformed Doctrine of Predestination* (This work has been placed under the "advanced" heading more for its length than for the difficulty of its contents. The work is straightforward and lucid and is a great introduction to the five points of Calvinism.)

Cunningham, William *Introduction to Theological Studies* (Although Cunningham's style can be a bit ponderous, this is a useful survey of the field of theology. It includes a most convicting treatment of the need for a true conversion as the essential prerequisite for fruitful theological studies.)

Ferguson, Sinclair *Children of the Living God* (An excellent introduction to the doctrine of adoption and its practical implications.)

Hodge, A.A. *Outlines of Theology* (A condensed version, arranged in a question and answer format, of Charles Hodge's *Systematic Theology*. This is a good introduction to the substance and style of 19<sup>th</sup> century Reformed dogmatics.)

\*Murray, John *Redemption Accomplished and Applied* (Must reading. Murray's treatment and explication of the *ordo salutis* – order of salvation - is especially helpful.)

Packer, J.I. *Fundamentalism and the Word of God*

Pink, A.W. *The Sovereignty of God* (A work similar in scope to Boettner's, but written with Pink's usual forcefulness and filled with numerous scripture quotations.)

Warfield, B.B. *The Plan of Salvation* (A relatively brief comparison of how various theological systems approach the doctrine of salvation – Calvinism, Arminianism, Sacerdotalism, Universalism, etc.)

Weeks, Noel *The Sufficiency of Scripture* (Weeks effectively argues that a disregard for the sufficiency and authority of the Bible is at the heart of many “evangelical” deviations from many of the church’s long-held views.)

## **The Westminster Standards**

Perhaps one of the best ways to become grounded in sound doctrine is to memorize the Shorter Catechism, especially questions 1-39 and questions 82-98. All GPTS students are required to memorize the whole of the Catechism by graduation.

### **Introductory**

Dabney, R.L. *The Doctrinal Contents of the Confession of Faith* (Booklet published by SPP/GPTS.)

Miller, Samuel *The Utility and Importance of Creeds and Confessions* (A fine introduction to the nature and purpose of confessions, showing the necessity of confessional standards for maintaining orthodoxy and true fellowship among believers.)

\*Smith, Morton H. *Harmony of the Westminster Confession and Catechisms* (The basic text for our *Introduction to Reformed Theology* class. The chapters follow the outline of the Confession. The catechisms are given in columns parallel to the statements of the Confession so that the teaching of the standards can be studied as a doctrinal whole.)

\**Westminster Confession of Faith* (For in-depth study of the Westminster standards we recommend this edition published by Free Presbyterian Publications that includes the catechisms, scripture proofs, Form of Government, Directory for Worship, as well as the Scottish form of the Confession favoring establishmentarianism. Dr. Smith’s *Harmony* contains both the PCA/OPC and the Scottish form concerning the Civil Magistrate.)

Williamson, G.I. *The Shorter Catechism for Study Classes*, 2 vols.

Williamson, G.I. *The Westminster Confession of Faith for Study Classes*

### **Advanced**

Beattie, Francis *The Presbyterian Standards* (Written late in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, this is the only commentary currently available that looks at the Westminster Standards as a whole.)

Fisher, James *The Assembly’s Catechism Explained, By Way of Question and Answer*. (A most challenging and edifying read, this work is indispensable for a thorough study of the Westminster standards.)

Hodge, A.A. *The Confession of Faith* (The brief introductory chapters on the history and use of creeds and confessions are especially good.)

Shaw, Robert *An Exposition of the Westminster Confession of Faith* (Written by a Scottish minister, this is an older, but still readable overview of the Confession.)

\*Smith, M. H. *The Subscription Debate* (Published by SPP/GPTS. An excellent introduction to the debate about “full/strict subscription” vs. “system subscription.” Argues that “full subscription” is the historic Presbyterian view and that the “system subscription” position is too loosely defined and eventually leads to a denigration of the church’s standards.)

Hall, David (ed.) *The Practice of Confessional Subscription* (An in-depth discussion of subscription that presents various views of the whole matter.)

Vos, Johannes G. *The Westminster Larger Catechism: A Commentary*. This is one of only two works that have been written on the Larger Catechism. The other work was written by Thomas Ridgeley and is not as accessible as Vos, who does a wonderful job of applying the teachings of the Larger Catechism to a number of modern issues.

## Historical Theology and Church History

### Introductory

Houghton, S.M. *Sketches from Church History* (An anecdotal and rather cursory view of church history. Best in its discussion of the events in the life of the English church.)

Kuiper, B.K. *The Church in History* (A brief, but fairly comprehensive introduction to the main people and events in the history of the church. This volume is often used by our students as an overview for licensure and ordination exams.)

Packer, J. I. *A Quest for Godliness: The Puritan Vision of the Christian Life*

### Advanced

Berkhof, Louis *The History of Christian Doctrines* (Written as a supplement to his *Systematic Theology*, this work covers historical theology from a topical angle.)

Bromiley, Geoffrey, *Historical Theology: An Introduction* (A meticulously arranged and comprehensive overview of the history and development of theological thought.)

Calvin, John, *The Necessity of Reforming the Church* (A good introduction to the rationale behind the Protestant Reformation and the continuing controversy with Roman Catholicism.)

\*Gonzalez, Justo. *The Story of Christianity*.

\*Hart, Daryl and John Muether, *Fighting the Good Fight: A Brief History of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church*.

Loetscher, Lefferts, *A Brief History of the Presbyterians*.

Singer, C. Gregg *A Theological Interpretation of American History* (This work places the controversy between evangelicals and liberals in its broader historical context, tracing the present day manifestations of many intellectual and social trends back to the seeds that were planted early in the life of the American Republic.)

\*Smith, Frank *The History of the Presbyterian Church in America*

Well, David F., ed. *Reformed Theology in America: A History of Its Modern Development*.

## Biography

Kelly, Douglas *Preachers with Power: Four Stalwarts of the Old South*

Kittleson, James *Luther the Reformer: The Story of the Man and His Career*

McNeill, John *The History and Character of Calvinism* (This work is especially good for its relatively concise biographical sketch of Calvin.)

Purves, Jock *Fair Sunshine* (Elegantly written, this is a wonderful and moving introduction to the piety and faith of the Covenanter Martyrs and their stand for Christ's "crown and covenant" during the "Killing Times.")

Stonehouse, Ned B. *J. Gresham Machen: A Biographical Memoir.*

## Applied Theology

### Growth in Grace/Experimental Calvinism

Augustine *The Confessions* (Published in various editions, this is a great introduction to the piety and theology of the early church. Augustine wrote his confessions "coram deo" – before God – and this work should spur us on to study all of theology with the same spirit of devotion.)

Bennett, Arthur *The Valley of Vision: A Collection of Puritan Prayers and Devotions*

Bunyan, John *The Pilgrim's Progress* (This long-revered classic of Puritan devotion is unsurpassed in its discovery of the wiles of the devil, the deceitfulness of the human heart, and the necessity of being watchful and diligent in our Christian walk.)

Ferguson, Sinclair B. *The Christian Life: A Doctrinal Introduction*

Flavel, John *Keeping the Heart*

Flavel, John *The Mystery of Providence*

\*Henry, Matthew *A Method for Prayer*

Owen, John *The Mortification of Sin* (An excellent introduction to spiritual warfare. The book's theme may be summed up in the following words, "be killing sin, or sin will be killing you.")

Packer, J.I. *Keep in Step with the Spirit* (Written with the same devotional tone as Packer's better known work, *Knowing God*, this book provides an excellent introduction to the doctrine of the Holy Spirit and the doctrine of sanctification. Our only criticism is that Packer seems to be much too generous in his assessment of the Charismatic movement.)

Pipa, Joseph A. *The Lord's Day* (We have all felt the harrowing pressures of our fast-paced modern life. Thankfully, our Lord has graciously *commanded*, not just suggested, that we rest from our labors. In this work Dr. Pipa shows how the Sabbath can indeed be a delight and he offers many practical suggestions to help us achieve that end, both corporately and privately.)

Ryle, J.C. *Holiness* (A classic series of devotional essays about personal sanctification, the Christian's warfare, and growth in grace.)

Smith, M.H. *A Call for a Return to Sabbath Observance* (Booklet published by SPP/GPTS.)

Warfield, B.B. *The Religious Life of Theological Students* (Booklet published by SPP/GPTS.)

## **Family Life/The Christian Home**

Knowing that the man of God should be one who "rules his own house well," we recommend the following works that provide a solid treatment of marriage and family issues:

Adams, Jay *Christian Living in the Home*

*Annotated Directory of Family Worship* (Booklet published by SPP/GPTS.)

Alexander, J. W. *Thoughts on Family-Worship*

Mack, Wayne *Your Family God's Way*

Ptacek, Kerry *Family Worship: Biblical Basis, Historical Reality, Current Need*

Strauch, Alexander *The Hospitality Commands: Building Loving Christian Community, Building Bridges to Friends and Neighbors.*

Wilson, Douglas *Reforming Marriage*

## **The Church, Worship, and the Sacraments**

### **Introductory**

Adams, Jay *The Meaning and Mode of Baptism*

Alexander, Archibald *Spiritual Worship* (Booklet published by SPP/GPTS.)

Chaney, James M. *William the Baptist* (Written in the form of a conversation between a Baptist law student and a Presbyterian minister, this book is both instructive and entertaining.)

\*Clowney, Edmund *Living in Christ's Church*

Johnson, John Scott *Baptism* (Booklet published by SPP/GPTS.)

Johnson, Terry *Reformed Worship: Worship That is According to Scripture*

Pribble, Stephen. *The Regulative Principle and Singing in Worship.* (Booklet published by SPP/GPTS.)

Smith, M.H. *The Regulative Principle of Worship: Is it Biblical?* (Booklet published by SPP/GPTS.)

Please note that the doctrine of the Lord's Supper is treated in the various works on the Westminster Standards and in the systematic treatments of doctrine that have been listed above. Willison's *Sacramental Catechism* has been mentioned in another category and is well worth an attentive read.

## Advanced

\*Burroughs, Jeremiah. *Gospel Worship*. (A series of Puritan-era sermons on Leviticus 10:3, “I will be sanctified in them that come nigh to Me.” Burroughs gives a clarion call to approach God in worship with sanctified hearts and sanctified lives.)

Peck, Thomas *Notes on Ecclesiology*

Rayburn, Robert O *Come Let Us Worship: Corporate Worship in the Evangelical Church*

Kuiper, R.B. *The Glorious Body of Christ*

Willison, John *A Sacramental Catechism* (A treatise concerning the proper preparation for and observance of the Lord’s Supper.)

## Pastoral Studies

### Introductory

Adams, Jay *A Consumer’s Guide to Preaching*: (All of us, like the Bereans, need to listen carefully to what we hear so that we can discern if it is in accord with the scriptures. But at the same time we must beware lest we set ourselves up as “judges” who are more concerned about wrangling over words and complaining about the style of the presentation than we are about obeying what we have learned. Larger Catechism, questions 155-160, and Shorter Catechism, questions 89-90, also deal with the matters that are addressed in this book.)

Adams, Jay *Ready to Restore: The Layman’s Guide to Christian Counseling* (For those unfamiliar with the biblical/nouthetic counseling movement, this is a fine distillation of its principles.)

Adams, Jay *How to Help People Change: The Four-Step Biblical Process*

Bonar, Horatius *Words to Winners of Souls*

Clowney, Edmund *Called to the Ministry* (A good introduction to the doctrine of calling in general and the call to the work of the ministry in particular. Those called to the ministry have been gifted by Christ to be servants to his people through the proclamation of the gospel.)

Dabney, R.L. “What is a Call to the Ministry?” *Discussions*, v. 2, pp. 26-46.

\*Ganz, Richard *Psychobabble: The Failure of Modern Psychology, and the Biblical Alternative*

Kruis, John *Quick Scripture Reference for Counseling*

Mack, Wayne *A Homework Manual for Biblical Living: Vol. 1, Personal and Interpersonal Problems* and *A Homework Manual for Biblical Living: Vol. 2, Family and Marital Problems* (An elder must be “apt to teach” and “one who rules his own house well,” but he must also be a man of proven Christian character and one who is full of wisdom. These manuals will prove useful in self-examination and will also help one to develop biblical responses to many of the problems and challenges that many of God’s people face on a regular basis.)

Martin, Albert *What’s Wrong with Preaching Today?*

\*Metzger, Will *Tell the Truth: The Whole Gospel to the Whole Person by Whole People*

Scipione, George *Timothy, Titus, and You*

\*Wetherow, Thomas *The Apostolic Church: Which is It?*

## **Advanced**

\*Adams, Jay *The Christian Counselor's Manual: The Practice of Nouthetic Counseling*

Adams, Jay *Handbook of Church Discipline*

Adams, Jay *A Theology of Christian Counseling: More Than Redemption* (In short, a book about why and how a distinctively Christian theology should develop a distinctively Christian counseling.)

\*Berghoef and DeKoster *The Deacon's Handbook* (A valuable discussion of the duties of the diaconate that provides many practical suggestions and insights.)

\*Berghoef and DeKoster *The Elder's Handbook* (A good introduction to the requisite qualifications and duties of elders.)

\*Kuiper, R.B. *God Centered Evangelism: A Presentation of the Scriptural Theology of Evangelism*

\*Lloyd-Jones, Martin *Preaching and Preachers*

\*Marcel, Pierre *The Relevance of Preaching*

\*Packer, J.I. *The Sovereignty of God and Evangelism* (A thorough reply to the oft heard statement, "If God is sovereign, why evangelize?" The answer? God's sovereignty is the only hope for *any* success in evangelism!)

\*Miller, Samuel *An Essay on the Warrant, Nature, and Duties of the Office of the Ruling Elder in the Presbyterian Church*

## **Ethics**

### **Introductory**

*The Larger Catechism* (Read through this Catechism's treatment of the Commandments, questions 91-152, and note especially the rules given for their exposition. In conjunction with this read the Westminster Confession, chapters 13-24, and think of the implications of these doctrines for a biblical view of ethics – motivation, goal, the ability to keep the law of God, etc. One will also want to read the sections dealing with ethics and the ten commandments in the various commentaries on the Westminster standards.)

Farley, Benjamin (ed.) *John Calvin's Sermons on the Ten Commandments*

Watson, Thomas *The Ten Commandments* (A commentary, written by an eminent Puritan divine, on the Shorter Catechism's exposition of the Ten Commandments. Quite practical and full of vivid illustrations and examples.)

### **Advanced**

Gerstner, John *Reasons for Duty*

Plumer, William S. *The Law of God as Contained in the Ten Commandments, Explained and Enforced.*  
\*Murray, John *Principles of Conduct*

## **Apologetics and Philosophy**

### **Introductory**

Adams, Jay *A Call to Discernment: Distinguishing Truth from Error in Today's Church*  
Pratt, Richard *Every Thought Captive: A Study Manual for the Defense of Christian Truth*  
Gunn, Grover *A Short Explanation and Defense of Presuppositional Apologetics*  
Wilson, Douglas *Persuasions: A Dream of Reason Meeting Unbelief*

### **Advanced**

Clark, Gordon *A Christian View of Men and Things* (A helpful critique of various non-Christian philosophies. Aply applies a Christian worldview to various areas of life – politics, science, ethics, etc.- thereby exposing and demolishing the enlightenment myth of “scientific objectivity.”)

Clark, Gordon *From Thales to Dewey* (A basic introduction to the history of philosophy that will help familiarize the student with various philosophical systems. Sadly, the book ends on a rather sour note, as Francis Schaeffer might have said, “below the line of despair.”)

\*Van Til, Cornelius *Christian Apologetics*

\*Van Til, Cornelius *The Defense of the Faith*

## **Christian Education**

\*De Jong, Norman *Teaching for a Change: A Transformational Approach to Education*  
Van Dyken, Donald *Rediscovering Catechism: The Art of Equipping Covenant Children*  
\*Van Til and Berkhof *Foundation of Christian Education: Addresses to Christian Teachers*  
\*Wilson, Douglas *Rediscovering the Lost Tools of Learning*

## **Contemporary Issues**

### **Introductory**

Grant, George *The Micah Mandate: Balancing the Christian Life* (Seeks to address, with keen wit and wisdom, the many tensions that arise as we seek to apply biblical principles to our culture.)

Postman, Neil *Amusing Ourselves to Death: Public Discourse in the Age of Show Business* (Whatever happened to serious, sustained public discourse and debate? How about individual initiative and creativity? The Romans clamored for “bread and circuses” and we find that little has

changed today as we are so prone to give ourselves over, heart and soul, to mind and conscience-numbing, entertainment.)

## **Advanced**

\*Machen, J. Gresham *Christianity and Liberalism* (To arms! Machen demonstrates that there can be no compromise between the Christianity of the Bible and the “new religion” of “Christian” liberalism. Machen helped define, in practical terms, the “antithesis” that has become so much a part of Van Tilian/presuppositional apologetics.)

Machen, J. Gresham *What is Faith?* (A brilliant expose of Liberalism’s “bad faith,” showing that it is little more than a vague, thoroughly subjective, even anti-Christian, sentimentalism. If you want to confront effectively the malaise that is at the heart of so much contemporary religion, this is a must read!)

## **Rhetoric and Logic**

Adler, Mortimer *How to Read a Book*

\*Braun, Frank *English Grammar for Language Students*

Flesch, Rudolf *How to Write, Speak, and Think More Effectively*

Gregory, Milton *The Seven Laws of Teaching*

Jones, Garfield *Parliamentary Procedure at a Glance*

Watts, Isaac *The Improvement of the Mind*

\*Weston, Anthony *A Rulebook for Arguments*