

Knowing and Naming the Holy Trinity

Semester: Spring/Trinity Term 2022 (4/11–6/17/22)
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Course Description

This course considers the knowledge of divine persons, or the names found in holy Scripture proper to the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, as articulated in Thomas, *ST I* qq 32–38. After considering briefly the divine notions (q 32 aa 2–4), we will consider the person of the Father, and how “principle,” “Father,” and “ingenerate” are names for him (q 33); similarly, we will consider the person of the Son, and the names “Word” (q 34) and “Image” (q 35); finally, we will consider the person of the Holy Spirit, especially the names “Love” (q 37) and “Gift” (q 38). In addition to primary source reading in Thomas, we will employ a number of helpful and recent secondary sources, e.g., Emery, White, Legge, Sanders, etc. The goal of this course is to gain some understanding of who each person is (quid sit), through an adequate catalog of the names found in holy Scripture.

Course Format

This class is lecture-based and will consider the issues covered in the course packet (to be supplied); space is left for some student questions and engagement. Additional student participation and interaction can occur on a private discussion board (discord) if desired. I am also available via email to deal with issues or questions.

Classes will meet via Zoom for two hours each week and will be recorded for temporary access for students to view who cannot participate.

Course Outline

The general course outline we will follow is (more TBD):

1. Introduction and trinitarian notions: the adequate reduction of knowledge of the holy Trinity (q 32)
2. The Father as principle, not cause of Son and Holy Spirit (q 33 a 1)
3. The name “Father”: properly and per prius (q 33 aa 2–3), and other things pertinent to naming divine persons
4. The Father as “Ingenerate” (q 33 a 4)
5. The Son as “Word” (q 34)
6. The Son as “Image” (q 35)
7. The Holy Spirit: Introduction and issues pertinent to naming (q 36)
8. The Holy Spirit as “Love” (q 37)
9. The Holy Spirit as “Gift” (q 38)
10. Conclusion

Note: We will have Dv one or two visiting scholars join us each for a session (perhaps an extra session?) for an “ask the experts” hour.

Course Requirements

- Reading of the assigned texts (30% of grade for for-credit students), most importantly Thomas and the course packet
- Careful attendance and thorough engagement with the lectures
- Discord interaction (!)

Additional Course Requirements for Course Credit

- One 3000 word essay explaining two names of a divine person, one proper and one improper (to be explained in class) (70% of grade)

Course Objectives

More specific course objectives are:

- To affirm the names of the divine persons as given in holy Scripture
- To understand the nature and use of trinitarian notions
- To understand the distinction between proper and improper names, and how each contributes to theology

More general course objectives are:

- Students will be able to articulate not just the basics of Thomas's account of Trinity but understand its underlying logic and core commitment to apprehend God as Father, Son, Spirit while preserving his transcendence as such. The student should be able to know the difference between an account of Trinity that allows us to know that God is Father, Son, Spirit without knowing what Father, Son, Spirit are, and an account that attempts to collapse the immanent Father, Son, Spirit into the defined concepts of the economic Trinity. Notably, the student should gather precisely how Thomas leaves space for gaining some real and true (as well as life-changing) understanding of who God is in himself as such even while refusing to know what Father, Son, Spirit are.
- Students will be able to understand the strengths and vulnerabilities of a "relations account" of Trinity and understand why this has generally been throughout church history the preferred account the orthodox have adopted, albeit several other broad schools of options have been held. The student will be supported in the attempt to mediate the issue of simultaneously preserving orthodoxy while maintaining a strong irenicism that recognizes the complexity of the historic tradition and what this entails for the contemporary church in all her forms of communion.
- Students will be able to articulate the place of Trinity within the entire sphere of theological loci. The student will be able to take advantage of the way Thomas structures the interplay of Trinity with other doctrines, especially how Trinity distributes in Christology and soteriology specifically without allowing Trinity to be swallowed up by either (as is the case in many significant Trinity accounts today).
- Students will be able to evaluate the input (pros and cons) of the philosophical tools yielded by Aristotelianism and Neoplatonism (e.g., act/potency, participation metaphysics) as philosophy encounters a Trinity account. The student will be equipped to recognize how the changes in philosophical preferences throughout church history and especially in the contemporary context helps or hinders the faith with respect to Trinity, and especially how Thomas himself views philosophy's relationship to theology and vice versa: *theologia non destruit sed supponit et perficit philosophiam*. Especially in the postmodern context with the return of participation metaphysics as a viable option for natural theology, the student will be able to have a healthy regard for the significance of contemporary work in philosophy for the contemporary church's attempt to systematize its thought on Trinity while continuing to maintain philosophy as subordinate to the higher order of supernatural theology and special revelation.
- Students will be able to navigate contemporary accounts of Trinity as well as areas related to theology proper, especially in light of the resurgence of Trinity since the mid-twentieth century e.g. in the wake of Rahner's Grundaxiom, the rise of social trinitarianism, as well as issues perhaps more localized to Protestantism (e.g., ESS, etc.). The student will be expected to humbly and quietly evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of accounts currently on offer and adjudicate them from the standpoint of orthodoxy while continually preserving the spirit of irenicism, especially as informed by the commitment to holy Scripture and its intense articulation without perverted speculation.
- Students will be introduced especially to the pastoral/practical implications of Trinity and pushed to deploy the doctrine to promote "knowledge unto piety" both in themselves and in others within the universal church. The student will be expected to avoid falling into vain speculation even with the difficulty of navigating Thomas's own account, and pushed to recall the fact that "the Trinity was revealed for our salvation," as Thomas says, and not for satisfying our sinful curiositas intellectual appetites.

Course Texts

Approx. reading load per week: ordinarily should not exceed about 4 hrs; but students going for the gold star are encouraged to spend that per day :) And as always, read as books are to be read!

I have divided up the readings into primary and secondary, to indicate their respective importance for this class. Please read accordingly in that order. For-credit students are required to read all that they can read (i.e., if they cannot read Latin, they are exempt from the readings only in Latin).

A note on reading Thomas: Medieval texts versus modern texts are extremely different in what they are; you cannot read them the same way. Reading Thomas is intensely difficult and very slow. He rewards careful, diligent, and repeated reading.

Primary Sources

1. Thomas, *ST I* qq 32–38: <https://aquinas.cc/la/en/~ST.I.Q32> (If Latin is known, I can supply the Leonine pdf, and please read the commentary by Caietanus therein; note that unfortunately little neoscholastic commentary on these questions is found—it is something of a lacuna in the tradition.)
2. *I Sent*, various qq tbd: <https://aquinas.cc/la/en/~Sent.I>
3. *De ver* q 4: <https://aquinas.cc/la/en/~ODeVer.Q4>
4. *SCG IV* cc 1–26, esp cc 1–9: <https://aquinas.cc/la/en/~SCG4>
5. *Contra Errores Graecorum* esp pars 1 cc 1–15; and pars 2 cc 1–31: <https://aquinas.cc/la/la/~Graecorum> OR <https://isidore.co/aquinas/ContraErrGraecorum.htm#1>
6. Course notes packet (to be supplied)

Secondary Sources

Students are especially recommended to purchase Emery, White, Legge, and Sanders: these are quite good texts in their own respective ways, and I am constantly recommending them. The other texts are more reference material for this course and for trinitarian theology generally; they need not be purchased. If you have the budget and desire, I would be happy to tell you in class what the other books are so you can make informed decisions accordingly.

1. Gilles Emery, *The Trinitarian Theology of St Thomas Aquinas*. OUP, 2010. https://www.amazon.com/Trinitarian-Theology-St-Thomas-Aquinas/dp/0199582211/ref=sr_1_1?crid=2HAL9WNJ56SNM&keywords=Trinitarian+Theology+of+St+Thomas+Aquinas&qid=1642587239&srefix=trinitarian+theology+of+st+thomas+aquinas%2Caps%2C295&sr=8-1
2. Thomas Joseph White, *The Trinity: On the Nature and Mystery of the One God*. CUA, 2022. https://www.amazon.com/Trinity-Nature-Mystery-Thomistic-Ressourcement/dp/0813234832/ref=sr_1_1?crid=1NIA8YUZROSPM&keywords=The+Trinity%3A+On+the+Nature+and+Mystery+of+the+One+God&qid=1642587281&srefix=the+trinity+on+the+nature+and+mystery+of+the+one+god%2Caps%2C234&sr=8-1
3. Jean-Herve Nicolas, *Catholic Dogmatic Theology: A Synthesis: Book 1, On the Trinitarian Mystery of God*. CUA, 2021. https://www.amazon.com/Catholic-Dogmatic-Theology-Trinitarian-Ressourcement/dp/0813234395/ref=sr_1_1?crid=J5DANZDSQABB&keywords=Catholic+Dogmatic+Theology%3A+A+Synthesis%3A+Book+1%2C+On+the+Trinitarian+Mystery+of+God&qid=1642587308&srefix=catholic+dogmatic+theology+a+synthesis+book+1%2C+on+the+trinitarian+mystery+of+god%2Caps%2C142&sr=8-1
4. Matthais Joseph Scheeben, *Handbook of Catholic Dogmatics*, book 2, *Doctrine about God, or Theology in the Narrower Sense*. Emmaus Academic, 2022. https://www.amazon.com/Handbook-Catholic-Dogmatics-Matthias-Scheeben/dp/164585146X/ref=sr_1_3?crid=85TOJIT8M5BL&keywords=Scheeben+Handbook+of+Catholic+Dogmatics%2C+book+2&qid=1642587358&srefix=scheeben+handbook+of+catholic+dogmatics%2C+book+2%2Caps%2C147&sr=8-3
5. Dominic Legge, *Trinitarian Christology of Thomas Aquinas*. OUP, 2018. https://www.amazon.com/Trinitarian-Christology-St-Thomas-Aquinas/dp/0198829094/ref=sr_1_1?keywords=Trinitarian+Christology+of+Thomas+Aquinas&qid=1642587408&sr=8-1
6. Fred Sanders, *Fountain of Salvation: Trinity and Soteriology*. Eerdmans, 2021. https://www.amazon.com/Fountain-Salvation-Soteriology-Fred-Sanders/dp/0802878105/ref=sr_1_1?crid=2T57K629UIYJJ&keywords=Fred+Sanders%2C+Fountain+of+Salvation%3A+Trinity+and+Soteriology&qid=1642587439&srefix=fred+sanders%2C+fountain+of+salvation+trinity+and+soteriology%2Caps%2C196&sr=8-1
7. Bernard Lonergan, *The Triune God, Systematics: De deo trino, pars systematica*. University of Toronto Press, 2009. https://www.amazon.com/Triune-God-Systematics-Collected-Lonergan/dp/0802094333/ref=sr_1_1?crid=2LWLJXNTOTC6F&keywords=Bernard+Lonergan+trinity+systematics&qid=1642587471&srefix=bernard+lonergan+trinity+systematic%2Caps%2C140&sr=8-1

8. Bernard Lonergan, *The Triune God, Doctrines*. University of Toronto Press, 2009.
https://www.amazon.com/Triune-God-Doctrines-Collected-Lonergan/dp/080209967X/ref=sr_1_1?crd=XYC036NTCI3&keywords=Bernard+Lonergan%2C+The+Triune+God%2C+Doctrines&qid=1645194977&sprefix=bernard+lonergan%2C+the+triune+god%2C+doctrines%2Caps%2C198&sr=8-1
9. Joseph M. Dalmau, *On the One and Triune God* (Sacrae Theologiae Summa IIA; Biblioteca de autores Cristianos). Keep the Faith, 2016.
https://www.amazon.com/Sacrae-Theologiae-Summa-IIA-Triune/dp/0991226801/ref=sr_1_1?keywords=Joseph+M.+Dalmau%2C+On+the+One+and+Triune+God&qid=1643356093&sr=8-1
10. Reginald Garrigou-Lagrangé, *The Trinity and God the Creator*.
https://www.amazon.com/Trinity-God-Creator-Commentary-Theologica/dp/1469908441/ref=sr_1_1?crd=19J362A6TDHXO&keywords=the+trinity+and+god+the+creator+lagrange&qid=1646398665&sprefix=the+trinity+and+god+the+creator+lagrang%2Caps%2C143&sr=8-1

Additional Details

I am delighted to help you in any way I can in issues or questions related to this course. Please use my email (e.g., not Facebook) to contact me, so I can make sure I do not miss your question but handle it in a timely fashion.

Further, a word on the Discord server: students in the past have found this extremely helpful and I think I can say enjoyable. **Please interact extensively and even daily if you can.** This is the place to really work things out, things immediately and only very tangentially related to the course. Debate, discuss, rework your thoughts, and use it as your mental playground to digest the matters of this course.