



Grace Communion Seminary
TH502 Nature of Humans and Salvation
Short Syllabus

Professor: Russell Duke

Please contact me through the course website by clicking on “message my professor” in the right-hand column.

GCS mission statement

Grace Communion Seminary is committed to equip the saints for pastoral ministry through quality graduate-level distance education programs in biblical, theological, ministerial and pastoral studies informed by Incarnational Trinitarian faith.

Course description

This course studies the nature of human beings, of evil, and the inherent effects of sin. The work of Christ in salvation history is central. Issues of predestination and the order of salvation are studied.

Required texts

Johnson, Alan F., and Robert E. Webber. *What Christians Believe: An Overview of Theology and Its Biblical and Historical Development*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1993. ISBN 0310367212. Cost: About \$12 new, less if used.

St. Athanasius. *On the Incarnation*. Translated by A Religious of C.S.M.V. Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir’s Seminary, 1993, 1996 or 2007; Several acceptable ISBN numbers, such as 978-1948648240, 978-0881414097, or 978-0881414271. Cost: about \$10, or you can download an older translation free at Christian Classics Ethereal Library, <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/athanasius/incarnation.html>.¹

¹ An audio version is available free at archive.org/details/AthanasiusIncarnation. Audio is NOT a format suitable for study and writing a book review. However, it can be a helpful supplement to your reading.

Torrance, Thomas F. *When Christ Comes, and Comes Again*. Original date 1957; now reprinted by Eugene, OR. Wipf and Stock Publishers. ISBN 978-1579100094; about \$15 new from third-party sellers.

* To find the lowest online price, use bookfinder.com.

Recommended texts

Gurentzki, Stanley, et al. *Pocket Dictionary of Theological Terms*. Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 1999.

Torrance, Thomas F. *Incarnation: The Person and Life of Christ*. Ed. by Robert T. Walker. Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic. 2008.

Torrance, Thomas F. *Atonement: The Person and Work of Christ*. Edited by Robert T. Walker. Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic. 2009.

Student learning outcomes

GCS SLO 2: Reason from a sound theological basis as new covenant Christians centered in Incarnational Trinitarian faith.

Students will:

1. Develop and express an understanding of Christ's worldview through inductive study of his teaching as it informs our theology.
2. Develop and express an understanding of the Christian worldview of the early church in matters of theology on the nature of humanity and sin, the work of Christ, and salvation.
3. Express theological understanding about God's plan of salvation through Jesus in the fellowship of the Holy Spirit.

Course objectives

1. To understand the importance of theology and its place in the Christian life.

2. To develop the ability to reflect intelligently about one's faith in order to better apply Christian teaching to personal life and to enable one to give a more coherent account of one's convictions (learning to think theologically).
3. To grasp the fundamental questions of God's sovereignty that faith addresses and that Christian theology seeks to answer.
4. To introduce students to the biblical foundation, historical development, and essential nature of basic Christian doctrines on the nature of sin and salvation.
5. To learn to read, analyze, and evaluate a particular theological position.

Course requirements

1. Participate in students' forum (50 points)
2. Review of Athanasius: *On the Incarnation* (due by Monday midnight Pacific time – that is, when the third class is posted) (100 points)
3. Reflections of a chapter in *When Christ Comes and Comes Again* (due on a week to be assigned) (as part of forum discussion) (50 points)
4. Review of *When Christ Comes and Comes Again* (100 points)
5. Sermon/Paper A: What is humanity? (due on Monday the fifth week) (100 points)
6. Review of Torrance *When Christ Comes and Comes Again* (100 points)
7. Sermon/Paper B: What is the work of Christ? (due on Monday the eighth week) (100 points)
8. Sermon/Paper C: What is salvation? (due the twelfth week) (100 points)

Expectations for Sermon/Papers

Each of three sermon/papers is to be limited to 5-7 pages long (font Times New Roman 12, double-spaced, one-inch margins) with biblical references and scholarly sources.

You may choose to develop a sermon, a Bible study, or a formal paper for each or all of the assignments for this course. Please include a bibliography of the sources used in each assignment. Whichever form you use to fulfill the assignment, be sure to include the following elements:

1. A title, which may include a stimulating question or statement, but that has a subhead that identifies the issue you will address.
2. An interesting and challenging introduction that sets up the issue you will be addressing.
3. A thesis statement that states the issue in one sentence. It either informs the audience/reader of the issues at stake, or establishes your position on the subject.
4. An inductive study of a biblical passage that is most relevant to your subject. Expound its immediate context, the context of the culture of its day, and application for today's Christian.
5. Make at least two references in the sermon/paper to noted church leaders who have been instrumental in debates on this issue. These may be woven into the discussion at whatever point you feel best.
6. Address scriptures, if any do exist, that may seem to be in opposition to your main point.
7. At the end, in conclusion, express application of the message to Christians in today's culture.

These papers will be posted on the site for the professor and not shared with other students.

The Specific Assignments

Review of Athanasius' text: *On the Incarnation*. (5-6 pages)

Write a review of this book summarizing its main point in each chapter; then reflect on its impact on ministry. What do you take from the text for ongoing use in your ministry? Due at the beginning of the fifth week.

Reflection of chapters in T.F. Torrance: *When Christ Comes and Comes Again*

We will have each of you summarize a chapter in this text and reflect on its impact on theology. Each student will then reflect on its impact on ministry as part

of the forum discussion. Students are welcome to then respond to those reflections. These should be two to three pages in length.

In the first week, please choose two chapters and report your choices to me on the course website. I will then assign you a chapter to review so that we get all chapters covered.

Sermon/Paper One: What is humanity? Good, Bad, or Ugly?

What is the nature of humanity? How has that nature been corrupted by sin? How is humanity to be viewed by Christians? How is the cultural gap from biblical times bridged in understanding sin in its definition and effect in western culture?

This paper is due at the beginning of the fifth week, Feb. 15, 9:00 a.m. Pacific Time, and should be submitted on the course website.

Review of Torrance: *When Christ Comes and Comes Again*

Identify the thesis of the text, and summarize the theological development of the four chapters, citing references in the text as you go so the reader can further investigation if desired. Reflect on the most important concept or two that impacts you the most.

Sermon/Paper Two: What is the work of Christ?

How does the Bible prophesy and witness to the work of the Messiah? How is *Christus Victor* played in the plan of salvation? How is the perfect *Imago Dei* restored? This sermon/paper is due at the eighth class, March 7.

Sermon/Paper Three: Select one of the following topics:

1. What is the role of grace, faith, and works in the process of salvation?
2. Who is predestined? And for what?
3. How does the grace of God work?
4. What is the process of salvation (the *ordo salutis*)?
5. What is _____? (Choose any related topic).

This last paper is due in week 12.

Lecture Schedule			
Topic	Johnson/Weber reading for the week	Due Monday	Torrance Readings
1. Creation: General & Specific Revelation	Chapter 9; 189-198 Q. 1, 2 (p. 211)	(Read Athanasius)	
2. In the Image of God, Yet Fallen	Chapter 9; 198-211 Q. 3, 5, 6 (p. 211)	(Read Athanasius)	
3. Man and Sin: Historical Views	Chapter 10; 212-230 Q. 1, 2, 5 (p. 230)	Athanasius – Chapter I	
4. Nature of Christ	Chapter 11; 231-256 Q. 1-5 (p. 256)	Athanasius Chapter II and III: Chapters IV and V	
5. Work of Christ: Messiah and Savior	Chapter 12; 257-276 Q. 1, 3, 5 (p. 276)	Review of Athanasius	
6. Work of Christ: Christus Victor			Ch. 1 The Advent of the Redeemer
7. Restoration of The Image of God	Chapter 13; 277-301 Q. 1, 2, 4, 5 (p. 301)	Sermon/Paper A Humanity	Ch. 2 The Word of the Gospel
8. Salvation	Chapter 14; 302-321 Q. 3 (p. 301) Q.1, 2 (p. 321)		Ch. 3 The Foundation of the Church
9. Historical Views: on Predestination and Grace		Sermon/Paper B Work of Christ	Ch. 4 The Faithfulness of God
10. Ordo Salutis		Review of Torrance	
Week 12		Sermon/Paper C <i>Salvation</i>	

Assignments, Estimated Hours, and Grade Weighting

Assignment	Hours *	Percentage of grade
Reading the syllabus and lectures	16.5	0
Reading discussions and making responses	6	10
Reading the textbooks	28.3	0
Writing research papers	75	55
Writing reaction or review papers	20	35
Total – about 12 hours each week	145.8	100

* This is a rough estimate. A student who reads quickly may be slow in writing, and vice versa. Some students will complete the course requirements in less total time, and some will take more.