



Grace Communion Seminary

TH508 Christology of T. F. Torrance

Complete Syllabus

Instructor: Gary W. Deddo

(Instructor may be contacted through GCS course website)

GCS Mission Statement

“Equipping the Saints for Pastoral Ministry.” We are 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 surveys the Christological thought of theologian Thomas F. Torrance with a focus on the person, life and work of Jesus Christ. Consideration will also be given to the topics of the church and eschatology (the last things), as explicated in his two-volume series of edited lectures on Christology originally delivered to students at New College, University of Edinburgh. Since for Torrance Christology intersects with every other doctrine, this course will serve as a mini-systematic theology.

Required textbooks

Torrance, Thomas F. *Incarnation: The Person and Life of Christ*.

Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2008. 978-0-8308-2891-3, 424 pp., \$28.00 (new from IVP)

Torrance, Thomas F. *Atonement: The Person and Work of Christ*.

Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2014 reprint, 978-0830824588, 489 pp. \$28.00 (new from IVP). Any printing is

acceptable.

Please obtain these books before the class begins. To find the lowest prices on these books, you may find it helpful to use www.bookfinder.com. But check InterVarsity Press, the publisher, too. Online prices may be cheapest there.

Recommended textbooks

Colyer, Elmer M. *How To Read T. F. Torrance: Understanding His Trinitarian and Scientific Theology*. Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity; Eugene, Or.: Wipf & Stock Pub, 2007.

McGrath, Alister E. *T. F. Torrance: An Intellectual Biography*. Edinburgh: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2006.

Molnar, Paul D. *Thomas F. Torrance: Theologian of the Trinity*. Farnham, England; Burlington, VT: Routledge, 2009.

Torrance, Thomas F. *Trinitarian Faith: The Evangelical Theology of the Ancient Catholic Faith*. New edition. Edinburgh: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2000.

Torrance, Thomas F. *Christian Doctrine of God, One Being Three Persons*. Reprint edition. Edinburgh and New York: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2001.

Torrance, Thomas F. *The Mediation of Christ*. Revised edition. Colorado Springs: Helmers & Howard Publishers, 1992.

GCS Outcomes

This course will contribute primarily to these two GCS objectives:

a) Reason from a sound theological basis as new covenant Christians centered in Incarnational Trinitarian faith. And e) Integrate biblical exegesis with sound theological exposition that informs personal spiritual growth and that directs effective ministry in Jesus Christ.

Student Learning Objectives:

This course will enable to the student to:

- 1) describe the major theological themes of Incarnation, Atonement, the Church and Eschatology and their inter-relationships as developed by Torrance, including his understanding of the

Christian life that is fostered in response to these realities. (Gained through readings and class lectures and accounted for in the Quotation and Comment Notebook, the Online Forums and Final Exam.)

- 2) Identify key biblical teaching that informs T. F. Torrance's doctrinal understanding of the Incarnation, the Atonement, the Church and Eschatology and explain how those biblical teachings contribute to his understanding. (Gained through readings and class lectures and accounted for in the Quotation and Comment Notebook and Written Sermon/Meditation)
- 3) analyze and critique aspects of Torrance's thought and theological arguments in the light of Scripture, relevant ecumenical creeds of the church and contemporary expressions of evangelical theology with some reference to a few of his contemporary critics. (Gained through readings and class lectures and accounted for in the Quotation and Comment Notebook, the Online Forums, written Sermon assignment and Final Exam.)
- 4) Illustrate and explain how Torrance's theological understanding can contribute to Christian ministry by enabling more faithful articulation of key theological themes and thereby enriching ministry, preaching, teaching and personal lives as members of the Body of Christ in its local and global expressions. (Through the Forums, Quotation and Comment Notebook, written sermon, and final exam.)
- 5) Interpret, paraphrase and use Torrance's theological understanding of these key theological themes for Christian teaching and worship (Demonstrated through the Online Forums and the submission of a 5-page sermon or meditation on one of the major themes Torrance explicated in the assigned reading.)

Requirements and assignments

- 1) Submitting a one-page **Autobiographical Sketch** for the instructor and the rest of the class participants the first week of class.
- 2) Completion of all **assigned reading** of required texts and essays due prior to participating in class forums. This amounts to about 768 pages of reading, accounted for in the Reading Notebook and the Quotation and Comment Notebook. (30% of grade).
- 3) Reading all **instructor lectures** and instructions posted during the assigned week, about 2.25 hrs hour per week. (Required to pass)
- 4) Participation in two weekly **Online Forums**: Two entries per week on the Instructor’s Forum and two entries per week on the class discussion forum. (25% of grade)
- 5) Completion of one 5-6 page **written Sermon or Meditation** making use of one of Torrance’s explications of a key theological truth showing the related key biblical teaching and making reference to one other Torrance book and to a common objection to Torrance’s understanding of the doctrine. (15% of Grade)
- 6) Completion of the **Final take-home exam** (30% of grade)

Assignments, estimated hours, and grade weighting

Assignment	Hours *	Percentage of grade
Reading the syllabus and lectures (11 x 2.25 hrs @ 10 pages per hour)	25	Required to pass
Reading forum discussions and making responses (1.5 hrs per wk)	16	25%
Reading the textbooks (786pp. @10 pp/hr logged in Reading Report List and accounted for in Reading Quotation and Comment Notebook)	78	30%
Completing Quotation and Comment Notebook (0.5 hr. per week)	6	Included in reading grade
Studying for the final exam	10	
Taking the final exam	3	30%
Writing 5-page Sermon (with footnotes!)	10	15%

Total – about 12 hours each week (13 wks)	148	100
---	-----	-----

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

Weekly topics and assignments (tentative)

Week	Lecture Topic	Assignments to be done during the week (besides reading lecture for the week)
Week 1	Editor’s Introduction Introduction to Christology	<i>Incarnation</i> Editor’s Intro and ch. 1 (61 pp.) Two Forums Autobiographical sketch Reading Notebook Entries
Week 2	The Incarnation Once for All Union	<i>Incarnation</i> , chs. 2 & 3 (78 pp.) Two Forums Reading Notebook Entries
Week 3	Continuous Union in Life of Jesus The Mystery of Christ	<i>Incarnation</i> , chs. 4 & 5 (76 pp.) Two Forums Reading Notebook Entries
Week 4	The Hypostatic Union Kingdom of Christ and Evil	<i>Incarnation</i> , chs. 6 & 7 (76 pp.) Two Forums Reading Notebook Entries
Week 5	Introduction to Atonement Atonement in the New Testament	<i>Atonement</i> , Editor’s Intro. <i>Atonement</i> , chs. 1 (74 pp.) Two Forums Reading Notebook Entries Submit Reading Notebook for midterm evaluation by Sunday, midnight.

Week 6	Redemption in the Old Testament Priesthood of Christ	<i>Atonement</i> , chs. 2 & 3 (75 pp.) Two Forums Reading Notebook Entries
Week 7	Atonement: Paul and Justification Atonement as Reconciliation	<i>Atonement</i> , chs. 4 & 5 (62 pp.) Two Forums Reading Notebook Entries
Week 8	Atonement as Redemption Resurrection of Jesus Christ	<i>Atonement</i> , chs 6 & 7 (62 pp.) Two Forums
Week 9	The Nature of the Resurrection Event The Ascension and Parousia of Jesus Christ	<i>Atonement</i> , chs. 8 & 9 (62 pp.) Two Forums Reading Notebook Entries
Week 10	The Biblical Witness: The Spirit and the Apostolic Testimony and Gospel The One Church of God in Jesus Christ, (partial)	<i>Atonement</i> , ch. 10 & ch. 11, pp. 341-389 (pp. 73) Two Forums Reading Notebook Entries
Week 11	The One Church of God in Jesus Christ, (continued) Jesus Christ: the First and Last Epilogue: The Reconciliation of Mind	<i>Atonement</i> , ch. 11, pp 389-400; ch.12 & Epilogue (57 pp.) Two Forums Reading Report List and Reading Notebook is due, midnight, Friday
Week 12	Final paper must be turned in by Thursday, midnight, of Week 12	
Week 13	Final exam must be turned in on or before Tuesday, midnight, of Week 13	

Course Assignment Details

Autobiographical Sketch: No later than Wednesday of the first class week please be prepared to post a one-page autobiographical description of yourself, including church background, educational background (including any seminary courses taken previously), and present ministry situation. End with a one-paragraph description of what you are presently finding to be the greatest theological question/concern in ministry or your own life related to

this class. I and all course members will be able to read this so we can get to know each other at least a little bit.

Lectures: There will be a lecture for each week on a topic that will prepare for, explain or expand on the readings assigned for the week. These should help you digest and apply what you're learning from the readings. They are in written form at the moment and average about 20 pp. per lecture. Reading them should take about 2 ¼ hours time.

Reading: Students will be expected to complete all required reading from the two assigned textbooks. This will amount to approximately 790 pages. You will be expected to complete the reading *before* the lecture. While you must read what is assigned for any given week, you may read ahead, especially on the weeks where fewer pages are assigned. The reading will be logged on a Reading Report List that will be filled out by the student and turned in at the end of Week 5, Sunday midnight, with the Notebook, for midterm evaluation and again at the end of the 11th week along with the Reading Notebook for final grading.

Reading Notebook For each chapter of assigned reading, make an entry in a notebook of a key quotation (with page numbers) from Torrance and then add a short paragraph (4-8 sentences or so) that explains why this quotation and the understanding it represents is significant for Christian faith and or ministry. And finally indicate a biblical passage that seems to point to the same reality as does the theological understanding expressed in the quotation. Provide a heading for each entry noting the week with the book and chapter title. The final notebook is due by midnight, Friday of Week 11

Forums: There will be two forums for you to participate in, online. Add to the **Class Discussion Forum** one comment or one question per week on the current week's reading or lecture *and* contribute at least one response to one other comment or question added by members of the class or the instructor. Second, the instructor will contribute two questions per week in a separate **Instructor Forum** that students should also comment on. This adds up to a minimum of four entries, total. These will constitute our class discussion.

For credit you must add your initial comments in *both* forums by 10 pm, Friday. You must submit your responses to others in the Class Discussion Forum by 10 pm, Sunday. You will receive an interim grade based in part on your participation after Week 5 of the course.

Written Sermon or Meditation (with academic citations) The purpose of this assignment is to give you an opportunity to take something you have learned and benefitted from in this course and from T. F. Torrance and repackage it as a sermon or meditation. But you will include in it notes/citations that trace back the understanding you have gained to its source/inspiration in TFT's writings that we have read for this class.

So this will be a sermon that represents the fruit of research (homework! into or the study of T. F. Torrance's theology. You will not preach Torrance, but you will leave indicators (footnotes) for me that trace back to where your understanding is in agreement with or has borrowed from Torrance's. If there is a certain point in your understanding where you disagree with Torrance, you should indicate that in a footnote as well and explain very briefly in the note why you disagree. This will be due Thursday, midnight of the 12th week.

Instructions for Sermon/Meditation

Write a five-page sermon or meditation (about 1250 words) that explains to a potential church or fellowship a theological theme that became significant to you as a result of grasping Torrance's understanding of that theme. This will include:

- 1) indicating and integrating a key biblical text or group of texts that ground your and TFT's understanding of this doctrine.
- 2) *Do not* make this a sermon about T.F. Torrance's view. Do not preach Torrance. He should stay in the background. Preach and proclaim the doctrine (and the reality to which it points). But *do* use a quotation or a brief phrase or two from TFT's writings to illustrate or help you explain the doctrine.
- 3) Also mention and reply to one common objection that has or might be raised against the understanding you are putting forth (and so likely has been raised against TFT as well).
- 4) And finally, purely for academic purposes to enable me to give this

assignment an academic grade, include footnotes in this sermon/meditation giving citations and quotations that point back to where in the writings of TFT you have drawn from or grown in your own understanding of this theme and the biblical teaching it develops.

Final Exam: A final exam of three hours length, involving short identification questions, mostly taken from the glossaries of the two Torrance texts, and two essays on major themes of the Incarnation and Atonement. This is due no later than Tuesday, midnight of the 13th week.