

Unit Outline



TH402/602 Doctrines of God & Christ

QUEENSLAND THEOLOGICAL COLLEGE

About this Unit Outline

This unit outline contains information you will need to find your way around the unit, **Doctrines of God & Christ**. It provides a structure for your learning, giving details of the weekly lecture topics, key resources, and assessment items

Important Notice

While every care has been taken to ensure accuracy in the information given below, **it is the personal responsibility of each student to check the current ACT Undergraduate or Postgraduate Handbook**, copies of which may be found in the Library or online at www.actheology.edu.au

It is very important that students plan their time carefully to ensure that reading and especially assignments receive adequate attention and so as to prevent a bottleneck of work at the end of the semester.

It is very important that all quoted material in assignments be properly footnoted and acknowledged. The attention of students is drawn to the section in the current ACT Undergraduate or Postgraduate Handbook, headed "**Academic Misconduct**". Failure to comply with the standards required will incur penalties as outlined in the ACT Undergraduate or Postgraduate Handbook.

The attention of students is also drawn to the section in the current ACT Undergraduate or Postgraduate Handbook, headed "**Guidelines for Essays.**" (see also the QTC Student Handbook) All essays should comply with these standards.

Information about this unit

Unit description

This unit is designed to help students explore a group of doctrines that stand right at the heart of the Christian faith – the nature and identity of the Christian God and his work to save humanity. This involves examination of the doctrine of the Trinity, God’s attributes, the person of the God-man, Jesus Christ, and his atoning work on through his life, death on the Cross, and then beyond in his movement back towards heaven in his resurrection, ascension and heavenly session. This unit will consider these fundamental Christian teachings as they are presented in the Scriptures of the Old & New Testaments, and in light of debates and insights past and present.

This unit will begin by considering the doctrine of God, including the attributes and the Trinity, and the question of whether we should begin our reflection with one or the other. The second part of the course will turn to the person and work of Christ, exploring some of the concepts and terminology that believers have used to expound the double-nature of the God-man Jesus Christ and their implications as well as looking at the different elements of Christ’s ministry—his birth, life, death, resurrection, ascension, glorification and heavenly session—and different understandings of the nature of the atonement.

Learning outcomes

TH402 Learning Outcomes

On completion of the unit, students will:

Know and understand

In relation to the Christian doctrine of God

- The being and attributes of God
- The person of Christ
- The Holy Spirit
- The Holy Trinity

In relation to the work of Christ

- His incarnation and ministry
- The death and resurrection of Jesus
- His ascension and session
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For this unit, be able to:

- Interpret the Bible theologically
- Understand the major creeds and confessions and other classical theological statements
- Trace the interrelationships with the major themes of Christian theology
- Identify the role of cultural and ecclesial contexts in the task of Christian theology
- Analyse the relationship between Christian doctrine and individual and corporate Christian life

And

- Present an analytical, evidence based argument or reflection’

Be in a position to

- Inform their Christian thinking in both formal and informal study with perspectives about the doctrine of God and the work of Christ
- Show how knowledge of the doctrines of God and the work of Christ is appropriated in personal life and the life of the community
- Apply the doctrines of God and the work of Christ to situations and issues in contemporary church and society

TH602 Learning Outcomes

On completion of the unit, students will:

Know and understand

In relation to the Christian doctrine of God

- The being and attributes of God
- The person of Christ
- The Holy Spirit
- The Holy Trinity

In relation to the work of Christ

- His incarnation and ministry
- The death and resurrection of Jesus
- His ascension and session
- Leading theologians and their interpretations of the doctrine of God and the work of Christ

For this unit, be able to:

- Interpret the Bible theologically
- Understand the major creeds and confessions and other classical theological statements
- Trace the interrelationships with the major themes of Christian theology
- Identify the role of cultural and ecclesial contexts in the task of Christian theology
- Analyse the relationship between Christian doctrine and individual and corporate Christian life

And

- Present an analytical, evidence based argument or reflection
- Discuss interpretations and applications of the doctrine of God and the work of Christ

Be in a position to

- Inform their Christian thinking in both formal and informal study with perspectives about the doctrine of God and the work of Christ
- Show how knowledge of the doctrines of God and the work of Christ is appropriated in personal life and the life of the community
- Apply the doctrines of God and the work of Christ to situations and issues in contemporary church and society
- Evaluate uses of the doctrine of God and the work of Christ

How this unit contributes to the course

The TH units in the ACT courses are designed to sum up biblical teaching in key areas and integrate your understanding of the content of the biblical texts taken as a whole with the insights of historical and contemporary theology on the matters in question. It is intended that this unit will assist candidates to be able to better know, worship and declare the God who is revealed in Scripture above all as Father, Son and Holy Spirit, and who has acted supremely towards humanity in the work of his incarnate Son. This subject aims to help integrate the findings of subjects in biblical studies and provide a foundation for ministry practices developed in the practical theology units.

Pre-requisites and Co-requisites

TH402 is an advanced-level (400-level) core unit in the Bachelor of Theology, Bachelor of Ministry, Associate Degree of Theology (includes WordWorks). TH602 is an advanced-level core unit in the Master of Divinity & Graduate Diploma of Divinity. CH305/505 has the following ACT pre-requisites for all students except those enrolled in the Graduate Diploma: at least two of OT301/501, OT302/502, NT301/501, NT302/502; AND at least one foundation-level Christian Thought unit (CH424/624 is the unit you would need to have taken at QTC to meet this requirement).

Normally at QTC, you would only be permitted to take TH402/602 once you have entered the second full-time year of your course (or part-time equivalent). GradDipDiv students are exempt from normal ACT prerequisite requirements, but at QTC will only be permitted to enrol in this unit provided they have already completed at least 16 cps with a Credit average or better, and with the permission of the unit lecturer.

How this unit is organised and what we expect of you

The unit is taught week by week right through the Semester of 13 weeks. There are three classes each week, each of 50 minutes duration. Some of these classes will be in traditional lecture format, others will be variously seminar-type discussions involving the whole group, small group discussions, or in-class student exercises.

This unit is worth 4 credit points towards your degree. At Bachelor level, a 4 cp unit is considered to require a total time commitment of 6-8 hrs per week, and 7-9 hours at MDiv level. Please speak with the lecturer as a matter of urgency if you are finding that you need to consistently spend more time than this on TH402/602.

Students are expected to attend all lectures, complete any set pre-reading and complete any assessment tasks by the relevant due date. Please do be in touch as soon as you can if you anticipate having any difficulties with your assessments or with meeting the due date. **Note:** Assignments submitted late and without an extension granted will incur late penalties (please refer to student handbook). Full attendance at lectures is required for all units in the ACT; repeated absences without reason and permission may result in application of the ACT's policy that your final assessment for this unit will not be marked, resulting in failure of this unit.

Teaching staff

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Unit Timetable: topics & teaching & learning activities

Week	Topic
Week 1	Introduction; Question of the starting point—with the “One” or with the “Three”
No lectures – Don Carson Week	
Week 2	Incommunicable attributes
Week 3	Incommunicable attributes
Week 4	Communicable attributes
Week 5	The Trinity – an introduction, terms, debates; Tertullian, Athanasius
Week 6	Athanasius; Cappadocians
Week 7	Relational Trinity; The Son’s submission to the Father; Pulling the Trinity together
Week 8	Introduction to the person and work of Christ; Christological heresies
Holidays and Mission Week	
Week 9	Chalcedonian Christology; Calvin’s Christology
Week 10	Further Christological reflections, Atonement Groundwork
Week 11	Views of the atonement
Week 12	Views of the atonement
Week 13	Limited versus general atonement; How closely connected is the incarnation to the atonement?

TH402 Assessment

Assessments are submitted online via Moodle.

In order to pass the unit, you must submit all assessment pieces and attain a mark of at least 50% for the unit as a whole.

Unless an extension has been applied for and granted in accordance with the Late Penalty Policy found in the QTC Handbook, where a student submits an assessment past its due date, the assessment marks will be reduced at the rate of 3% of the total possible marks for the assessment item per calendar day, up to 14 days late.

Your essays must also be within 10% of the required word limit and your ability to meet this requirement will also be taken into account in determining your mark. QTC seeks to prepare you for ministry, and in ministry delivering presentations on time and within an acceptable length are essential skills.

ASSESSMENTS	DESCRIPTION
<p>2500 Word Essay 40%</p>	<p>Choose one of the following:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. In what sense can God do anything and everything? 2. Are the Son and the Spirit truly equal with the Father? How and Why? 3. How do God's love and holiness relate to each other? 4. In what sense was it impossible for Jesus Christ to sin during his earthly life and ministry? 5. Was the death of Christ penal and substitutionary? Discuss with reference to at least two different critiques of penal-substitutionary atonement. 6. Is Christ himself the atonement or is he merely the agent of the atonement? Or is there another option?
<p>Take-Home Exam 60%</p>	<p>Three compulsory questions, 900 words each (2700 words total).</p>

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ASSESSMENTS	DESCRIPTION
3,000 word Essay 40%	Choose one of the following <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Is God impassible? What are the implications of your answer? 2. Is the Son eternally begotten of the Father? What are the implications of your answer for what it means to call the divine persons 'Father' and 'Son'? 3. "God is love." Would it be as right to say "God is justice" or "God is holiness" or is there something unique about the love of God? 4. What does the Chalcedonian Definition seek to uphold? Are either Nestorianism, or alternatively a belief that there is only one will in Jesus Christ, compatible with this Definition? 5. Are the incarnation, life and resurrection of Christ part of the atonement? What are the implications of your answer for our understanding of the atonement? 6. In what sense was Christ's death for our sins?
Take-Home Exam 60%	Three compulsory questions, 1,200 words each (3,600 words total).

Guide to Assessments

In this subject we are looking for both the research essay and the take home exam essays to offer a *sustained persuasive argument*. This involves several factors.

First, it requires you to have *articulated a clear answer to the question*—preferably one that you have written out in a sentence or two before you begin writing the essay. This answer should be clearly stated in the essay—often in the introduction, but certainly in the conclusion. Stronger essays are ones whose answers demonstrate one or more of: grasping the essence of the issues, offering something comprehensive, demonstrating a deeper understanding of the issues rather than one that, while accurate, is at a more introductory level, and showing an understanding of the implications of the answer.

Second, it requires you to *offer evidence* for your answer. There should be information in the essay that is relevant to the question and which supports your answer. Some essays may also want to discuss evidence that could be used to reject your answer and show why it doesn't actually do that when understood correctly.

Third, it requires you to *show how* the evidence you include actually does support your answer. A common mistake students make is to include information—quotes, Scriptural passages or the like—and do nothing with them but to have them in the essay as though their significance for their answer is self-evident. It almost never is to the reader (however much it might be to the writer) without explicit commentary that takes the reader by the hand and explains how that information helps supports the case they are making.

Fourth, it requires you to try and *persuade your reader that your answer is the correct one*. Good doctrine essays don't treat the exercise as a case of 'show and tell'—where the idea is simply to get all the ideas and information out and the order in which they come doesn't matter. Instead, the writer thinks about how to organize their material so as to build a case for their answer in the most persuasive fashion they can.

Finally, it requires you to engage with both Scripture and scholars and theologians. Ideally there should be signs that your answer is the way it is because you are convinced that that is what Scripture teaches. It should also be evident that you standing on the shoulders of others—modern scholars, and theologian's modern and ancient, to help you read Scripture and think through the issues better than you could do on your own.

Learning resources

Textbooks

You do not need to buy any of these to complete the unit, however it is worth owning at least a couple of these for your use in the Semester and into ministry after college.

Bray, Gerald. *The Doctrine of God*. Leicester: IVP, 1993.

Jeffery, Ovey, M. & Sach, A., *Pierced for Our Transgressions*. Wheaton, IL.: Crossway, 2007.

Letham, Robert. *The Work of Christ*. Leicester: IVP, 1997.

— *The Holy Trinity*. Phillipsburg, NJ.: Presbyterian & Reformed, 2004.

Students should also own and refer to at least a couple of well-established quality Protestant expositions of Christian doctrine during the course. Two that support a conservative, Reformed and evangelical understanding are:

Calvin, John. *Institutes of the Christian Religion*. 1559 edition. 2 vols. ed. McNeill, John T. trans. Battles, Ford Lewis. Louisville, KY.: Westminster John Knox, 1960.

Horton, Michael. *The Christian Faith: A Systematic Theology for Pilgrims on the Way*. Grand Rapids, MI.: Zondervan, 2011

Other Key Reference Texts

There exists a very large number of recent works on the doctrines covered in this unit. One of the aims of this advanced unit is to help you to discover and evaluate these for yourself, as more material continues to be published over the coming decades. I have therefore listed below reference works and general systematic theologies that will help to introduce you to the issues and to identify and navigate your way through other materials, rather than listing specialist works that multiply and date rapidly. See also the unit bibliography in the ACT Handbook. I will mention and discuss various particular authors and works as we move through the unit.

Bavinck, H. *Reformed Dogmatics*. 4 vols. Grand Rapids, MI.: Baker, 2008.

Bromiley, G.W. *Historical Theology: An Introduction*. Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 2000.

Cross, F.L. & Livingstone E.A., eds., *The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*. 3rd ed. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997.

Douglas, J.D. & Cairns, E.E., eds., *The New International Dictionary of the Christian Church*. Grand Rapids, MI.: Zondervan, 1978.

Elwell, W.E. ed. *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*. Grand Rapids, MI.: Baker, 2001.

Erickson, M., *Christian Theology*. 2nd ed. Grand Rapids, MI.: Baker, 1998.

Flint, T. & M. Rea, eds. *The Oxford Handbook of Philosophical Theology*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013.

Frame, John. *The Doctrine of God: A Theology of Lordship*. Phillipsburg, NJ.: Presbyterian and Reformed, 2002.

- *Salvation Belongs to the Lord*. Phillipsburg, NJ.: Presbyterian and Reformed, 2002.
- Gibson, D. and D. Strange, eds., *Engaging with Barth*. Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 2009.
- Grudem, Wayne. *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine*. Grand Rapids, MI.: Zondervan, 1994.
- Hart, T.A., ed., *The Dictionary of Historical Theology*. Grand Rapids, MI.: Eerdmans; Carlisle, Cumbria: Paternoster, 2000.
- Harvey, S. and Hunter, D., eds., *The Oxford Handbook of Early Christian Studies*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008.
- Hastings, A., A. Mason and H. Pypers, eds., *The Oxford Companion to Christian Thought*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000.
- Hawthorne, G., R. Martin, and D. Reid, eds., *The Dictionary of Paul & His Letters*. Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 1993. See also other volumes in The IVP Bible Dictionary Series.
- Helm, Paul. *John Calvin's Ideas*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006.
- Kelly, J.N.D., *Early Christian Doctrines*. 5th ed., London: HarperOne, 1977. (or any later edition).
- Marshall, I.H. et. al., *New Bible Dictionary*. 3rd edition., Leicester: IVP, 1996.
- McGrath, A.E., *Christian Theology: An Introduction*. 5th edition., Hoboken: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010.
- *Historical Theology*. Hoboken: Wiley-Blackwell, 1998.
- McGuckin, A., *The Westminster Handbook to Patristic Theology*. Louisville, KY.: Westminster John Knox, 2004. See also other handbooks in this reference series that relate to other periods / theologians you need an entry to get you started on in terms of your reading.
- McKim, D., ed., *The Cambridge Companion to Martin Luther*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003.
- McKim, D., ed., *The Cambridge Companion to John Calvin*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004.
- Reymond, Ronald. *A New Systematic Theology of the Christian Faith*. 2nd ed. Nashville, TN.: Thomas Nelson, 1998.
- Rosner, Brian S. Desmond T. Alexander, D. A. Carson, Graeme Goldsworthy and Steve Carter eds., *The New Dictionary of Biblical Theology*. Leicester: IVP, 2000.
- Stump, E. & N. Kretzmann, eds., *The Cambridge Companion to Augustine*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001.
- *The Cambridge Companion to Aquinas*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993.
- Webster, John. ed., *The Cambridge Companion to Karl Barth*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000.
- Webster, J., Tanner, K., & Torrance, I., eds., *The Oxford Companion to Systematic Theology*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009.

ACT Standards

Grades

Grades in assessment instruments are awarded in the following categories-

Grade	Score	GPA
Fail (F)	0-49%	0
Pass (P)	50-57%	1
Pass Plus (P+)	58-64%	1.5
Credit (C)	65-74%	2
Distinction (D)	75-84%	3
High Distinction (HD)	85+%	4