

Seminar in Theological Hermeneutics

ST 808

Spring 2010

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Thursdays, 8:00 –11:00 a.m.

Bowie Divinity Hall

Erskine Theological Seminary

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Office hours: Thursdays and Fridays, 2:30-5:30 pm. I will make every reasonable effort to be in my office during these hours. However, due to meetings and unforeseen circumstances that may arise, my schedule may change. If you need to see me, please contact me by email or telephone to schedule an appointment.

COURSE DESCRIPTION:

In a seminar format, students analyze major theological and philosophical theories of interpretation from the Reformation to the present. The course involves substantial reading of primary sources, selected readings in secondary sources, and independent research. Students present the findings of their research in both oral presentations and written essays.

COURSE PURPOSE:

This year's seminar focuses on the hermeneutics of J. Gresham Machen (1881-1937) whose contribution is among the most important in American Protestantism in the 20th century. Students examine Machen's approach to the exegetical task by reading a variety of primary and secondary sources. Special attention is given to Machen's main academic works, *The Origin of Paul's Religion* and *The Virgin Birth of Christ*. The focus of this course is on Machen's hermeneutical presuppositions and commitments, his theological development, and his understanding of reason, revelation, faith, history, science and the role of historical criticism.

COURSE OBJECTIVES:

In accord with the seminary's mission statement, one of the goals set for students in this course is that they will be prepared to utilize the Church's historical and theological heritage as an important resource in their personal spiritual development and ministry. To this end, the instructor will try to describe the intellectual context out of which J. Gresham Machen emerged and the theological challenges he sought to address, and it is the instructor's intention that by the end of the term, student will be able to:

1. **Define** key terms and concepts necessary for understanding theological hermeneutics and engaging in faithfully informed theological conversation.

2. **Identify** some of the basic theological and philosophical problems for modern readers of the Bible.
3. **Understand** how these problems were posed in early part of the twentieth century.
4. **Grasp** the importance of the relationship between revelation and reason, faith and history, and the role of historical criticism.
5. **Respond** to at least some of the major challenges posed by Machen and his theological critics and defenders.

COURSE METHOD:

The purpose and objectives of this course will be achieved through three learning components. The first is the **Content Component**, the student's own engagement with the theological and philosophical questions and solutions posed by Machen and his contemporaries. This will be accomplished through readings, independent research, class lectures and discussion. Students will demonstrate the level of their engagement of this material by completing each of the course requirements stated below.

The second component is **Classroom Participation**. A vital exchange of ideas is essential to the process of exploration, and all students are to be prepared for class discussions by completing the assigned readings prior to class. To ensure and gauge such participation, each student is asked to fulfill requirements 1 and 3 (below).

The third is the **Research Component**. Each student is expected to complete a research paper on one of the major topics assigned in the course and according to the instructions specified in requirements 2 and 4 (below).

REQUIRED TEXTBOOKS:

Required and recommended textbooks may be purchased through Erskine Theological Seminary's Virtual Bookstore at www.ecampus.com/erskine from January 4, 2010.

Chrisope, Terry A. *Toward a Sure Faith: J. Gresham Machen and the Dilemma of Biblical Criticism, 1881-1915*. Fearn Ross-shire: Christian Focus, 2001. ISBN 1-85792-439-8

Hart, D.G. *Defending the Faith: J. Gresham Machen and the Crisis of Conservative Protestantism in Modern America*. Phillipsburg, New Jersey: P&R Publishing, 2003. ISBN 978-0-87552-563-1

Machen, J. Gresham. *Christianity and Liberalism*. New York: Macmillan, 1923.
Published under the same title: Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1981. ISBN 0-8028-1121-3

Machen, J. Gresham. *The Origin of Paul's Religion*. New York: Macmillan, 1921.
Published under the same title: Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1925. ISBN 0-8028-1123-X

Machen, J. Gresham. *The Virgin Birth of Christ*. New York: Harper and Bros., 1930.
Published under the same title: Cambridge: James Clarke and Co. ISBN 0227676300

Machen, J. Gresham. *What is Faith?* New York: Macmillan, 1925. Published under the
same title: Carlisle, Penn.: Banner of Truth. ISBN 9780851515946

RECOMMENDED TEXTBOOKS:

Machen, J. Gresham. *Selected Shorter Writings*. Edited by D.G. Hart. Phillipsburg,
New Jersey: P&R Publishing, 2004. ISBN 0-87552-570-9

Stonehouse, Ned B. *J. Gresham Machen: A Biographical Memoir*. Grand Rapids:
Eerdmans, 1954.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS:

Requirement One (15% of total grade): Each student will have read and will be prepared to discuss the reading assignments for each session. In order to encourage classroom participation and provide greater focus for discussion, each student will prepare in written form at least two thoughtful, well-crafted questions that have primarily to do *not* with facts, dates, or definitions (which a diligent student might otherwise look up in any good theological dictionary), but with *theological or philosophical claims, concepts, presuppositions, or doctrines* discussed in the material assigned for each class session. These questions, which the student may be asked to share in class, will be taken up at the end of each class and will be graded on the degree to which the student has made serious effort to engage the subject matter discussed in the assigned reading.

Requirement Two (25% of total grade): Each student will write a 6-8 page paper and present it orally on the topic (and leading question) of the day. The topic will be assigned no later than Feb.21 and in consideration of the student's interests yet in cooperation with his/her classmates (which means every student may not receive the topic he/she wishes!). Based on the assigned reading for that session, the paper should be a *close and critical engagement* of the topic and should answer the leading question of the day.

The presenter of this paper will respond to questions put to him/her by a designated respondent, who will receive the presenter's paper one week before it is to be presented. The presenter's paper should serve to test theses for the final paper.

Requirement Three (20%) of total grade): Each student will serve as a designated respondent to one class presentation (respondents will be designated no later than

Feb.21). The respondent will receive a paper from the presenter one week prior to the presentation and will write a 2-3 page in response to it. The respondent's paper should be a critique of the presenter's paper on the basis of the assigned reading.

Requirement Four (40% of total grade): Each student will write a 15-20 page final paper on the same topic assigned for the class presentation. This paper will consist of further reflection and research (including primary and secondary literature) beyond the paper presented in class and will take into consideration feedback from the respondent, the professor, and the rest of the class. This paper will be due on May 12.

Criteria for Grading the Final Research Paper:

- Writing that is grammatically correct and stylistically clear
- A form that adheres to the guidelines in Turabian, *Manual for Writers* (6th edition)
- Adherence to the parameters of the assignment (length, scope)
- Choice of a topic that is suitable for this course and for the length of the paper
- Clear organization of material
- In the introduction, a clear statement of the topic, the specific question to be addressed, and the way the paper will address it
- In the body, evidence that the student has used relevant primary and secondary sources
- In the body, evidence that the student grasps historical and philosophical information
- In the body, evidence that the student understands theological concepts
- Depth and creativity in handling the topic and questions

OVERALL GRADING SCALE:

See Seminary Catalogue, p.36.

COURSE EXPECTATIONS:

Evaluation of your work in this course will be based on *completion* of the following:

Requirement One (Weekly Written Questions)	15%
Requirement Two (Seminar Presentation)	25%
Requirement Three (Response to Another Seminar Presentation)	20%
Requirement Four (Final Paper)	<u>40%</u>
	100%

COURSE EXPECTATIONS and SEMINARY POLICIES:

Registration: Once a student has completed, signed, and submitted his/her registration to the Registrar for this class, it is a binding contract, and billing will be based on this registration. If the student decides not to take this class, a "drop/add" form must be completed and the appropriate signatures must be secured. Failure to withdraw from the

class properly will result in the student's receiving a grade of "F" for the course, and full tuition charges will apply. No exceptions will be made to this policy.

Attendance: If a student misses more than one class period (3 hours), or significant time from classes totaling more than 3 class hours during the semester, he/she may be required to do make-up work. It is the student's responsibility to consult with the professor immediately (before the missed class time if possible so that taping can be arranged) to have the extra work and "due date" assigned. All make-up work must be handed in by noon on May 12. Except in extraordinary circumstances, a student cannot complete this course if he/she misses more than two class days (or 6 hours total). If this happens, the student must consult with the professor as soon as possible to see whether the reasons for the absences warrant special arrangements to complete the material for the course.

Inclusive Language: The Seminary encourages all students to make use of language, in reference to human beings, that is inclusive rather than needlessly exclusive. It is a mark of a good communicator to build bridges rather than barriers; therefore, such language should be used in all written work and oral presentations. The Seminary Catalog stands as an example of recommended usage.

Form of Written Work: For the research paper, students are required to follow the form and style guidelines found in Turabian, *Manual for Writers* (6th edition). These guidelines are summarized in the Erskine Seminary document "Style and Form Standards for all Masters Level Programs," available on the professor's web page.

Plagiarism: Any student who commits plagiarism is in violation of Seminary policy and is liable for dismissal. See the academic section of the Catalog for complete information.

Return of Written Work: Federal privacy guidelines do not allow the return of student documents to an unsecured mail box *unless* the student grants permission in writing. Students who wish to have their work returned as early as possible to their student mail boxes will place their student box number on the front page of their work. This will be viewed as written permission to return documents in this manner. Students who decline to give such permission (that is, students who do not write their box numbers on the work) will get their work back in person at a later time.

Late or Incomplete Work: Any work not submitted by the due date will be assessed a late penalty. The final deadline for submitting all late work is noon on May 12. Any work not received by this deadline will be given a grade of "0," unless the student has made **prior** arrangements to take an incomplete for the course. Incomplete (I) marks will be handled in accordance with policy statements in the Catalog. In particular, one should note that the student does not automatically have the privilege of taking an incomplete. Rather, it is the professor's prerogative to give an incomplete, and only when the student has completed most of the work for the course and has been providentially hindered from completing the remainder. Note that there is a processing fee associated with "Incompletes," and that "Incompletes" must be completed by the stated deadline or they automatically become an "F." Only the Dean may approve extensions of deadlines for "Incompletes."

Chapel Attendance Policy: All morning and afternoon on-campus classes (except for Friday and Saturday courses) carry a chapel attendance requirement. Consult the Catalog

or registration booklet for the specifics of the chapel attendance policy. There is a per chapel fee if you attend fewer chapels than required. (Th. M. students are encouraged, but not required, to attend chapel.)

RESERVE MATERIALS: Unless otherwise indicated, all reserve materials for this course can be found by going to the link below and by entering the following user name: ST808. The professor will give the password to any student enrolled in the course at anytime upon request. Please remember that capitalization is important:

<http://www.erskine.edu/library/ireserves/Burnett/ST808/>

COURSE SCHEDULE:

Feb. 4 Machen's Contribution: An Overview

[Please note that the following assignment should be read by the first class session on Feb.4]

D.G. Hart, *Defending the Faith: J. Gresham Machen and the Crisis of Conservative Protestantism in Modern America*, 1-83.

Question: What is your initial assessment of and interest in Machen's contribution to Protestant theology in the twentieth century?

Feb. 11 Machen's Crisis of Faith

Question: What was Machen's crisis of faith? How would you describe the theology of "Old Princeton" and Machen's relationship to it?

J. Gresham Machen, "Christianity in Conflict" (1932) in *Selected Shorter Writings*, ed. D.G. Hart (Phillipsburg, New Jersey: P&R Publishing, 2004), 547-569.

Terry A. Chrisope, *Toward a Sure Faith: J. Gresham Machen and the Dilemma of Biblical Criticism, 1881-1915*, 11-135.

George M. Marsden, "Evangelical America at the Brink of Crisis" and "Presbyterians and the Truth" in *Fundamentalism and American Culture* (Oxford: University Press, 1980), 11-21, 109-118.

Ned B. Stonehouse, *J. Gresham Machen: A Biographical Memoir* (Philadelphia: Westminster Theological Seminary, 1977), 87-144.

Recommended Reading:

Mark A. Noll, "Decline: 1900-1935" in *Between Faith and Criticism: Evangelicals, Scholarship, and the Bible in America* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1986), 32-61.

Feb. 18 **Machen, "History and Faith"**

Question: What were Machen's understanding of history and faith and their relationship? What are the strengths and/or weaknesses of his understanding?

Required Reading:

J. Gresham Machen, "Christianity and Culture" (1912) in *Selected Shorter Writings*, ed. D.G. Hart (Phillipsburg, New Jersey: P&R Publishing, 2004), 399-410.

J. Gresham Machen, "History and Faith" in *The Princeton Theological Review* 13/3 (1915), 337-351. Also found in *Selected Shorter Writings*, ed. D.G. Hart (Phillipsburg, New Jersey: P&R Publishing, 2004), 97-108.

Terry A. Chrisope, *Toward a Sure Faith: J. Gresham Machen and the Dilemma of Biblical Criticism, 1881-1915*, 137-153.

George M. Marsden, "J. Gresham Machen, History, and Truth" in *Westminster Theological Journal* 42 (1979): 157-175.

Recommended Reading:

George M. Marsden, "Understanding J. Gresham Machen" in *Understanding Fundamentalism and Evangelicalism* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991), 182-201.

Feb. 25 **Machen on Theology, Science, and the Task of Exegesis**

J. Gresham Machen, *What is Faith?*, 13-117.

J. Gresham Machen, "The Relation of Religion to Science and Philosophy," *Princeton Theological Review* 24 (January 1926): 38-68.

D.G. Hart, *Defending the Faith: J. Gresham Machen and the Crisis of Conservative Protestantism in Modern America*, 84-107.

Recommended Reading:

Charles Hodge, *Systematic Theology*, 3 vols. (1871-1873; reprint ed. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1989), 1-66, 151-188.

George M. Marsden, “The Evangelical Love Affair with Enlightenment Science” in *Understanding Fundamentalism and Evangelicalism* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991), 122-152.

Jonathan Wells, “Charles Hodge on the Bible and Science” in *American Presbyterians*, 66:3 (Fall 1988), 157-165.

March 4 **Machen, *The Origin of Paul’s Religion***

Question: What is Machen’s primary concern in discussing the origin of Paul’s religion and what are his main arguments?

Required Reading:

J. Gresham Machen, *The Origin of Paul’s Religion*.

Recommended Reading:

J. Gresham Machen, “The Witness of Paul” in *Selected Shorter Writings*, ed. D.G. Hart (Phillipsburg, New Jersey: P&R Publishing, 2004), 33-44.

March 11 **Machen, *The Origin of Paul’s Religion*, cont. and Its Reception**

Question: What are the strengths and weaknesses of Machen’s arguments in *The Origin of Paul’s Religion*?

Required Reading:

J. Gresham Machen, *The Origin of Paul’s Religion*.

Terry A. Chrisope, *Toward a Sure Faith: J. Gresham Machen and the Dilemma of Biblical Criticism, 1881-1915*, 157-164.

March 18 **Machen, *The Virgin Birth of Christ***

Question: What is Machen’s primary concern in discussing the Virgin birth of Christ and what are his main arguments?

Required Reading:

J. Gresham Machen, *The Virgin Birth of Christ*

March 25 Machen, *The Virgin Birth of Christ*, cont. and Its Reception

Question: What are the strengths and weaknesses of Machen's arguments in *The Virgin Birth of Christ*?

J. Gresham Machen, *The Virgin Birth of Christ*

Terry A. Chrisope, *Toward a Sure Faith: J. Gresham Machen and the Dilemma of Biblical Criticism, 1881-1915*, 164-171.

April 1 No Class! Easter Break!

April 8 Machen on Historical Criticism and the "History of Religions School"

Question: What was the role of historical criticism for Machen? How did he view the "history of religions school"?

J. Gresham Machen, "Forty Years of New Testament Research" in *Selected Shorter Writings*, ed. D.G. Hart (Phillipsburg, New Jersey: P&R Publishing, 2004), 174-183.

D.G. Hart, "Fundamentalism, Inerrancy, and the Biblical Scholarship of J. Gresham Machen," *Journal of Presbyterian History* 75 (1997): 13-28.

April 15 Machen on Reason and Revelation

Question: What is Machen's understanding of the relationship of reason and revelation? What is "rational theism"?

Required Reading:

J. Gresham Machen, *Christianity and Liberalism*, 1-116.

April 22 Machen on the "Historical Jesus" and the "Deity of Christ"

Question: What are the right and wrong ways of affirming the "historical Jesus" and the "deity of Christ" for Machen? What is at stake?

Required Reading:

J. Gresham Machen, *The Christian Faith in the Modern World* (New York: Macmillan, 1937), 1-201.

Recommended Reading:

J. Gresham Machen, "What the Bible Teaches about Jesus" in *Selected Shorter Writings*, ed. D.G. Hart (Phillipsburg, New Jersey: P&R Publishing, 2004), 23-32.

April 29 **Machen and "The Theology of Crisis"**

Question: What were the strengths and weaknesses of "the theology of crisis" according to Machen?

Required Reading:

Annette G. Aubert, "J. Gresham Machen And The Theology of Crisis," *Westminster Theological Journal* 64 (2002), 337-363. (On Reserve)

D.G. Hart, "Machen On Barth: Introduction To A Recently Uncovered Paper," *Westminster Theological Journal* 53 (1991) 189-196.

J. Gresham Machen, "Karl Barth And 'The Theology Of Crisis,'" *Westminster Theological Journal* 53 (1991), 197-207. Also found in *Selected Shorter Writings*, ed. D.G. Hart (Phillipsburg, New Jersey: P&R Publishing, 2004), 533-543.

Karl Barth, "Foreword to the First Edition," *The Beginnings of Dialectic Theology*, trans. Keith Crim and ed. James M. Robinson (Richmond: John Knox, 1968), 61-62.

Adolf Jülicher, "A Modern Interpreter of Paul," *The Beginnings of Dialectical Theology*, trans. Keith Crim and ed. James M. Robinson. Richmond: John Knox, 1968, 72-81.

Karl Barth, "Foreword to the Second Edition," *The Beginnings of Dialectic Theology*, trans. Keith Crim and ed. James M. Robinson (Richmond: John Knox, 1968), 88-99.

Recommended Reading:

Adolf Schlatter, "Karl Barth's Epistle to the Romans," *The Beginnings of Dialectic Theology*, trans. Keith Crim and ed. James M. Robinson (Richmond: John Knox, 1968), 121-125.

Rudolf Bultmann, "Karl Barth's Epistle To The Romans In Its Second Edition," *The Beginnings of Dialectic Theology*, trans. Keith Crim and ed. James M. Robinson (Richmond: John Knox, 1968), 100-120. (On Reserve)

Karl Barth, "Foreword to the Third Edition," *The Beginnings of Dialectic Theology*, trans. Keith Crim and ed. James M. Robinson (Richmond: John Knox, 1968), 126-130.

May 6 **Machen and his Critics and Defenders**

Question: What is your assessment of the claims of Machen's critics and defenders? What is your assessment of Machen's contribution to hermeneutics and the task of exegesis in the twentieth century?

Required Reading:

Roy A. Harrisville and Walter Sundberg, *The Bible in Modern Culture: Baruch Spinoza to Brevard Childs*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002), 169-216.

Terry A. Chrisope, *Toward a Sure Faith: J. Gresham Machen and the Dilemma of Biblical Criticism, 1881-1915*, 185-197.

THOUGH NO MAJOR ALTERATIONS IN THIS SYLLABUS ARE ANTICIPATED, THIS SYLLABUS IS TO BE CONSIDERD TENTATIVE UNTIL THE FIRST DAY OF CLASS.