

## BI 807 Seminar in Biblical Theology

### Erskine Theological Seminary

Fall 2009

Required for Th.M. students majoring in Old or New Testament.

Elective for other Th.M. students.

Due West: Thursdays 1:00-4:00 PM

3 Credit Hours

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### Office Hours for Fall 2009

Tuesday 4:00-5:00; Wednesday 3:00-5:00; Thursday 4:00-5:00; Friday 3:00-5:00. My normal office hours are printed in this syllabus. However, due to meetings and unforeseen circumstances that may arise, my schedule may change. If you need to see me, I strongly recommend that you call or e-mail to schedule an appointment. Other times by appointment only. Breakfast or lunch discussions are also encouraged. ☺

### Course Description

#### OT407 Seminar in Biblical Theology

Students study the holistic, interdisciplinary nature of Biblical Theology in a seminar format. The course involves substantial reading and critical analysis of the history of development of this discipline, major interpretive figures, and major theological themes within the Creation-Fall-Redemption-Consummation structure of the Bible. Special attention is paid to both the unity and diversity of the Bible within its coherent canonical and covenantal structure. Students present the findings of their research in both oral presentations and written papers.

### Who Might Be Interested in This Course Who Is Not in the OT/NT ThM Tracks?

The methods and approaches used in Biblical Theology are relevant for anyone who wants to better understand the metanarrative of Scripture, i.e., where is the Bible going from Genesis to Revelation. Therefore this course may also be of real interest as an elective to students in both Systematic Theology and Historical Theology tracks. Systematics people who wish to gain further expertise in Exegetical Theology and Biblical Theology and wish to handle Scripture with more depth and insight makes this course inherently significant to any theology that wants to be exegetically and biblical-

theologically based. Additionally the field of Systematics is currently becoming further involved with both the interplay between Biblical and Systematic Theology and the recent (re)appropriation of what is being called the Theological Reading of Scripture which is encouraging more systematics people to become involved with exegesis. Any of these areas of interest could be pursued by a student taking the class who is in the Systematic Theology track.

The course is also relevant to people interested in Historical Theology, first because the process that ends up becoming developed Biblical Theology begins in the Patristic period, e.g., Irenaeus. People with an interest in the Historical Theology track could write on how a major figure from church history contributes to the growing discipline that will become a fully-fledged Biblical Theology.

### **Course Purpose**

The mission of Erskine Theological Seminary is to educate persons for service in the Christian church. As part of that mission, training in Biblical Theology which leads to a deeper understanding of the coherent biblical message of Creation Fall, Redemption and Consummation is a powerful resource for Gospel teaching and ministry. Commitment to the centrality of the Bible for ministry will be strengthened by this course.

### **Course Objectives**

- To seek to uncover and comprehend more clearly the overall structure of the Bible itself. We want to better understand the architectonics<sup>1</sup> of the Bible, that is, the existing theological structure of the Bible's overarching plot(s). We want to better understand how each part of that revelation contributes to and is related to and functions within the greater and coherent canonical whole, and how the greater whole contributes to and contextualizes each individual part, in order to begin to think about the Bible holistically. This includes gaining an appreciation for the value and theological contribution of each book in the Bible. The goal is to enable us to more accurately understand the historical unfolding of God's revelation in its inner-biblical relatedness, through the whole Bible and the hermeneutical significance of that interconnecting. Redemptive history and biblical theology attempt to discover the theological architectonics of the Bible that form its theological themes, trajectories, unity and diversity. This involves understanding the progression of God's plan for his people, beginning to appreciate the redemptive-historical significance of each stage of redemptive history reading from left-to-right in light of God's intended purposes. It is important to be able to place any biblical text within its redemptive-historical moment, including its connection to God's final revelation in the person and work of Jesus Christ. This means reading the Bible in such a way that we genuinely seek to faithfully understand "The Whole Bible" (*tota Scriptura*) and to better appreciate the Bible in the shape that it has come to us.

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<sup>1</sup> "Architectonics" is a technical term used to describe the dynamic of inter-connectedness within a complex whole. I thank Dr. Byron Berger for this concept.

- To better appreciate the overall meta-narrative of Scripture and the profound insight of the biblical categories of *Creation* (What is the nature of reality? Where do we come from, and who are we?); *Fall* (What has gone wrong with the world?); *Redemption* (What is God doing with this broken, fallen world? What is God doing to repair his rebellious creation? What does God call us to do, working alongside of him, to fix it?); and *Consummation* (What is the divinely intended future for God's creation? What are God's ultimate plans for reality? How does understanding what that future reality will be like help me in my life now? What is the relation between this creation and the age to come? Is redemption solely personal or also cosmic? Is the final future of humanity to be found in heaven or on a purified and exalted earth and cosmos?).
- To better appreciate the interconnectedness of Creation and Redemption, as inseparably connected and mutually illuminating. We seek to better understand that the nature and plan of God is revealed in both creation (which itself is utterly gracious) and redemption (which is re-creation and restoration). The original creation helps us to understand both who God is (as well as who we are!) and what he intends for his creation. We wish to better understand that the commitments of God in redemption are the *same* commitments he displayed in creation, and that the extent of redemption and the covenant of grace is the whole of God's creation. As Abraham Kuyper once said, "There is not a single square inch of the universe of which Christ, who is Lord of all, does not say "It is mine!"
- To better understand both the *diversity* of God's revelation and the *unity* of his plan. All of God's revelation tells a unified story of creation, fall, redemption and consummation which expresses the one will and one purpose of the one God.
- To introduce students to the discipline, contents, methodology of Biblical Theology, its unique role, and to begin to think through its contributions to exegetical theology, systematic theology, practical theology and preaching. This will also involve us in better understanding how to preach the Gospel faithfully from any portion of Scripture with sensitivity to its Biblical Theological role and its moment in Redemptive History.
- To emphasize that careful and faithful exegesis is the necessary basis for reliable biblical-theological conclusions.
- To give careful attention to selected major concepts of the Bible as well as gain the appropriate technical vocabulary, such as, covenant, the Kingdom of God, promise and fulfillment, creation/new creation, Law and Gospel, exodus/second exodus, old covenant/new covenant, the New Testament teaching of "the Two Ages"; redemption accomplished and applied; and have students gain the ability to intelligently discuss selected biblical teachings and their ministerial value on these points.
- To better understand what has been both the most vexing and the most crucial question in reading the Bible, namely, "What is the relationship between the two Testaments?" This includes an increased understanding that the Old Testament is the key to understanding the New Testament and that the Bible must be read

from left-to-right and then from left-to-right again. Old Testament theology interconnects with and profoundly enriches our understanding of Christ, his Gospel and the New Covenant.

- To give attention to current issues of discussion by biblical theologians regarding the vitality and future directions of Biblical Theology.
- To appreciate that the theme of the Bible is a message of victory! The goal of redemption is the complete triumph of the Triune God over the Devil, the Fall, sin and its consequences and the glorious perfection of his people on the renewed earth forever and ever!
- The personal dimension. As Calvin wisely and profoundly teaches us in the beginning of his *Institutes*, true knowledge of God and true knowledge of ourselves are inseparably connected. Since this is so, coming to better understand who God is as Creator, Sustainer, Redeemer and one day Consummator means that we will begin to understand better who we are, who we were made to be, and what sort of things we are called to do in his world and for his Kingdom. Also, since only man and woman are made in God's image and we have our origin in God, we can only find our true destiny in God and his good will for us. Saint Augustine puts this beautifully when he writes in his first prayer in the Confessions "Lord, you have made us for yourself and therefore our hearts are restless until they find rest in you." This means that we will frequently discuss what the ecclesial and the personal implications are of all that we are studying together. This also means that a course that results in a deeper understanding of Scripture and the Gospel should also result in our greater love for and commitment to Father, Son and Spirit and his people, the church.
- To give students the opportunity for significant input regarding questions, content and issues that they want us to think through together and sustained opportunities for discussion together.
- To aid students in continuing to develop graduate level biblical and theological analysis, research skills, rhetorical skills in leading discussions, critical thinking and evaluation, reading, writing and conversational skills.

## The Big Picture

"The essence of the Christian religion consists in this: that the creation of the Father, devastated by sin, is restored in the death of the Son of God, and re-created by the Holy Spirit into a kingdom of God." Herman Bavinck, from *Gereformeerde Dogmatiek*, fourth edition (Dutch), 1928, I: 89.

## Course Methods

The purposes and objectives of this class will be achieved through lectures, class discussions, oral presentations, formal and informal responses and papers. There will be a lecture component to this content-rich class, however, this class will be taught in a

graduate seminar dynamic which seeks to be genuinely collaborative in nature<sup>2</sup>. We will seek for all members of the class, professor and graduate students alike, to be actively engaged in comprehending, evaluating and mastering the materials together. One cannot master the field of biblical theology in a single semester<sup>3</sup>, but a proper foundation can be poured and a substantial beginning can occur, with diligence.

Each student will give a major seminar presentation and write a major research paper this semester. Every student will prepare two paper presentations. The first will be a 15 page research paper which will be presented and defended in a near-final condition to the class. This will include guiding the discussion that follows the paper's presentation. Copies of the paper will be submitted to the professor and each of the students the class period the week before the presentation. Because these papers are the basis for the day's discussion it is essential that all work is submitted on time. The revised final draft of your paper will reflect the benefits of the class interaction and my own. The final version of the paper will be submitted electronically to the professor in both Microsoft Word and PDF format. Second, each student will be a designated formal responder to another student's paper giving a four to five page written critique. This will be submitted electronically at least two days before the student's presentation to the professor and on the day of class to each of the students. All students who are not the formal respondent will be expected to give an informal response to the presenter after the formal responder.

### **Conduct in Theological Discussions**

Erskine Seminary is committed to the one, holy, catholic, and apostolic Church, and it expects its students to show respect for all who identify with that one Church. In all written work, oral presentations, and discussions both inside and outside the classroom, the Seminary expects students to conduct discussions of controversial issues in a context of respect for those with whom one disagrees. Please see the Community Life Statement in the Catalog for more information.

### **Rules of Engagement in Discussion<sup>4</sup>**

You are invited and encouraged to intellectually engage one another and your professor in this class! Thoughtful and vigorous discussion is crucial to this class. Biblical Theology involves thoughtful and disciplined inquiry about matters that are of fundamental importance to human existence. Such inquiry is best done in community, and there is no greater potential for productive interaction – interaction that is mutually beneficial and productive of real, valid, and worthwhile answers – than in a community of Christian scholarship. Recognizing that together we form a small community of truth-seekers devoted to Christ and his Kingdom, let us commit ourselves to work together in a spirit of mutual respect and love. The following guidelines are proposed as some ground rules,

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<sup>2</sup> Since this class meets once a week I will encourage each student to send the professor and all other students questions, thoughts, interpretive issues, concerns, implications, etc., that we can be thinking about in better preparing for our class discussions.

<sup>3</sup> I will repeatedly give students suggestions for future readings throughout the semester as well as providing an initial research bibliography in the mid-August version of this syllabus.

<sup>4</sup> These rules represent a slightly modified version of Dr. John Wingard's rules. I'd like to thank my generous former colleague and friend for sharing them with me.

or “rules of engagement,” for our class discussions and interaction:

- Be humble, courteous, and respectful.
- Work hard to correctly understand the day’s readings and one another.
- Try to articulate your thoughts as clearly as possible.
- Avoid personal attacks.
- Keep clearly in mind that our mutual goal is Truth, not personal gain or ego.
- Avoid monopolizing the conversation.
- Try to stay on topic.
- Welcome criticism and questions.
- Expect disagreement at times, and deal with it constructively when it arises.
- Be quick to apologize if you offend someone.
- Be equally quick to forgive if you are offended by someone.

### **Required Textbooks**

Students are expected to secure their own copies of all required textbooks. As a convenience, the seminary has a bookstore portal of the website at <http://www.erskineseminary.org/bookstore.html> There you will find links to familiar vendors and can check availability of texts, compare prices, and place orders. The Erskine Campus Bookstore will carry a limited number of copies of every required text and orders for books can be placed through the Campus Bookstore.

James K Mead, *Biblical Theology: Issues, Methods, and Themes*, Westminster John Knox Press, 2007, ISBN 664229727.

Albert M. Wolters, *Creation Regained: Biblical Basics for a Reformational Worldview*, Second Edition, William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, Grand Rapids, MI: 2005. ISBN 0802829694.

Willem VanGemeren, *The Progress of Redemption: The Story of Salvation from Creation to the New Jerusalem*, Baker Academic, 2000, ISBN 0801020816.

Scott J. Hafemann, *The God of Promise and the Life of Faith: Understanding the Heart of the Bible*, Crossway Books, 2001, ISBN 1581342616.

Scott J. Hafemann, *Biblical Theology: Retrospect and Prospect*, Inter-Varsity Press, January 2002, ISBN 083082684X.

Dennis E Johnson, *Him We Proclaim: Preaching Christ from All the Scriptures*, P & R Publishing, 2007, ISBN 596380543.

### **Optional Supplemental Reading**

Brevard S Childs, *Old Testament Theology in a Canonical Context*, Augsburg Fortress Publishers, 1989 ISBN 800627725. If students are interested we could meet during the lunch hour or for an hour after class and discuss Child’s book together to further round out the course and the topic of Biblical Theology.

Students are encouraged to bring an English translation of the Bible with them to class. Students with skills in Hebrew and Greek are encouraged to bring a Hebrew Bible and/or Greek New Testament.

Journal articles will frequently be distributed as supplemental readings in class or assigned in the library as required.

### **Course Requirements**

Attendance and active participation in each class is essential to the graduate educational task. One class period's absence (three hours) is permitted. If any additional crisis or emergency absence becomes necessary, please consult the professor immediately (before class if at all possible). Each student is expected to be on time and to have thoughtfully read and critically thought through the week's reading materials prior to class in order to significantly contribute to the discussion of that week's materials. All required course work is to be submitted at the beginning of that day's class.

### **Style and Bibliographical Formatting Requirements**

All papers must be typed/processed (12-point type, double-spaced, one-inch margins) and fully documented, following the standards in the "Style and Form Standards" (Erskine Seminary). In this course, footnotes and a bibliography are required in each paper. The paper is to be fifteen pages in length. The paper's cover page and bibliography are not counted towards page requirements. The font used is to be clear and legible, such as Arial, or Calibri. Students who need help in finding good Hebrew or Greek fonts should ask me for assistance. No papers will be accepted that are not stapled or put in an appropriate binder. With the exception of students who have been granted an incomplete (see later in syllabus for policy) all work received after the deadline will be given a grade of zero.

The hard copy of the paper, and its electronic form submitted in both Microsoft Word and Adobe PDF forms will be due at the beginning of class on December 3 except for the final presenter(s) on December 3 whose work is due at 1:00 PM on December 10. Students who give presentations earlier in the semester are encouraged to turn their papers in earlier than the final deadline.

### **Criteria for Grading Papers**

This professor is operating with the expectation that each student will have enrolled in Dr. Fairbairn's writing/research January seminar. Papers will be evaluated based on the following considerations: grammar and style; organization; clarity and rhetorical power of argument; competent research; depth and creativity; independence of thought; significance of research for Christian life and thought.

### **Language about God and Humanity**

Although God transcends the distinction between male and female, the Bible and the Church's historic creeds and confessions use masculine language in reference to God. Thus, the Seminary encourages all students to retain this masculine usage when speaking and writing about God. Furthermore, the Seminary recognizes that all human beings, male and female, are created equally in the image of God (Gen. 1:26-27), and believers of both sexes are fellow heirs of the grace of life (1 Pet. 3:7). Accordingly, whenever students are speaking and writing about males and females, they should use language that clearly includes both men and women (for example, by saying/writing "humanity" rather than "man" or "people" rather than "men").

### **Form of Written Work**

For the research paper, students are required to follow the form and style guidelines found in Turabian, *Manual for Writers* (7<sup>th</sup> edition). These guidelines are summarized in the Erskine Seminary document "Style and Form Standards for all Masters Level Programs," available on Dr. Don Fairbairn's web page.

### **Official Seminary Plagiarism Policy**

Plagiarism is the use in writing of wording or ideas produced by others without crediting the author and/or source from which the material was taken. As the following statement indicates, plagiarism is a serious offense that undermines both the witness and integrity of the Christian community:

*Plagiarism injures the community by inhibiting the recognition and cultivation of gifts imparted by the Spirit. Clearly unattributed use of the words and/or ideas of others fails to give appreciative recognition of their gifts. But this illegitimate appropriation of the gifts of others also blocks the recognition and cultivation of the actual gifts of the person engaged in plagiarism.*

*Plagiarism creates an atmosphere of falsehood in the community's discernment and cultivation of gifts, both within the Christian community and in God's larger creation. Since freedom comes only by way of truth (Jn. 8:32), such falsehood can only result in captivity, and therefore has no place in the Christian community.*

*On this basis, the Seminary adheres to the following general requirements for the acknowledgement of sources of academic work. These requirements apply to both print and electronic media.*

*1. Quotations. Any sentence or phrase that a student uses from another source must be placed in quotation marks or, in the case of longer quotations, clearly indented beyond the regular margin. Any quotation must be accompanied (either within the text or in a note) by a precise indication of the source.*

*2. Paraphrasing. Any material that is paraphrased or summarized must also be specifically acknowledged in a note or in the text.*

*3. Ideas. Specific ideas that are borrowed should be acknowledged in a note or in the text, even if the idea has been further elaborated by the student.*

*4. Bibliography. All the sources consulted in the preparation of an essay or report should be listed in a bibliography.*

*In addition to plagiarism, the following related practices are also unacceptable compromises of the truth requisite to a free community:*

*1. Multiple submission. Failure to obtain prior written permission of the relevant instructors to submit work which has been submitted in identical or similar form in fulfillment of any other academic requirement at any institution.*

*2. False citation. The deliberate attribution to, or citation of, a source from which the material in question was not, in fact, obtained.*

*3. Submission of work done by someone else, either with or without that person's knowledge. Neither ignorance of the regulations concerning academic violations nor personal extenuating circumstances are an adequate defense against charges of plagiarism. The Seminary's provisions for "due process" apply in cases of alleged plagiarism.*

[The italicized statement above is used by permission of The Lutheran Theological Seminary at Philadelphia and Princeton University, Princeton, New Jersey, based upon a document adapted by LTSP, with permission, from "Princeton University Rights, Rules and Responsibilities," 1990 Edition. Princeton University, Princeton, New Jersey.]

Occurrences of plagiarism shall be considered 'documented' when the instructor is able to produce documentary evidence that plagiarism has occurred, and when the instructor has reason to believe that the plagiarism was motivated by a deliberate attempt to receive credit for ideas or work not the student's own. Where such plagiarism involves the theft of the academic work of another student, whether at Erskine or any other institution, it shall be designated 'documented theft of another student's work.'

The instructor involved, in consultation with the Dean, may recommend measures deemed appropriate. In cases of documented plagiarism or documented theft of another student's work, the offending student will automatically receive the following penalties:

- Failure of the course(s) in which plagiarized or stolen work is submitted
- Dismissal from the Seminary for a minimum of one semester
- Forfeiture of the right to tuition refunds during the semester(s) affected

Before such penalties are imposed, a committee of at least three faculty members must agree that they are appropriate to the case. Appeals in such cases may only be addressed, in writing, to the President of Erskine College and Theological Seminary.

## **Grading Percentages**

Percentages of Work: preliminary paper, formal presentation and leading that class discussion 25%, one formal response 15%, final edition of paper 40% and the quality of preparation and contribution to class 20%.

## **Grading Scale**

100-95	A	85-84	C+	71-70	D-
94-93	A-	83-80	C	69-0	F
92-91	B+	79-78	C-		

90-88	B	77-76	D+	
87-86	B-	75-72	D	

### **Class Attendance Policy**

Students must attend each class meeting. If a student must be absent they are responsible for all work due and accomplished during that class session. Up to two class periods can be missed without penalty, which may require makeup work. Any additional class period missed, unless it constitutes a genuine emergency (to be determined by the professor) threatens the student's ability to successfully pass this course. Students who miss more than one class period should consult with the professor to see if makeup work is required. Students who miss more than two class periods should consult with the professor to see whether they can pass the course.

### **Drop/Add/Withdrawal**

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, he/she must complete a "drop/add" form and secure the appropriate signatures prior to the drop/add deadline during the second week of the semester or term. If one wishes to withdraw from the course after the drop/add deadline, one must complete a withdrawal form, and tuition will be refunded on a pro rated basis. 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.

### **Incompletes**

The grade of "I" or incomplete is given at the discretion of the professor. A grade of "I" is normally given when a student has substantially completed the requirements for a course but has been prevented by extraordinary circumstances from completing the remainder of the course requirements. A student who wishes to request an incomplete should normally complete an incomplete form prior to the end of the semester and ask the professor to grant the request. (Under unusual circumstances, the student may communicate with the professor by phone or email rather than in person, and the professor may then agree to fill out the form at the student's request. Under exceptional circumstances, the professor may initiate the process by filling out the form on the student's behalf.) If the professor grants the request, he/she will sign the incomplete form and turn it in with his/her final grade report. An "I" in any course must be removed by March 1 for the Fall Term, April 1 for the January Term, August 1 for the Spring Term, and November 1 for the Summer Term. Only the Dean may grant extensions of incompletes beyond the established completion date. Otherwise, these grades automatically become "F."

### **Dates for Inclusion in Fall 2009 Course Syllabus**

Classes begin  
 Erskine Lecture Series  
 Erskine Lecture Series  
 chapel

Thanksgiving Break  
 Classes end on campus  
 Exam week on campus

Tuesday, September 1  
 September 9, 10, chapel only  
 Thursday, October 29,

and 1:00-2:00 p.m.  
 November 21-29  
 Friday, December 4  
 December 7-11

### **Course Outline: Lectures and Assignments**

The detailed syllabus with all readings, assignments and presentation dates cannot be created until we have a stable class list. I will post a second edition of this syllabus including presentation dates once we have this. In the meantime the first three books we will be reading are in order:

James K Mead, *Biblical Theology: Issues, Methods, and Themes*, Westminster John Knox Press, 2007, ISBN 664229727.

Albert M. Wolters, *Creation Regained: Biblical Basics for a Reformational Worldview*, Second Edition, William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, Grand Rapids, MI: 2005. ISBN 0802829694.

Willem VanGemeren, *The Progress of Redemption: The Story of Salvation from Creation to the New Jerusalem*, Baker Academic, 2000, ISBN 0801020816.

Since Mead attempts to get us up to speed on the discipline of Biblical Theology try to have James Mead's *Biblical Theology: Issues, Methods, and Themes* thoughtfully and critically read for the first day of class. You are encouraged to begin to read and think through the textbooks as early as possible.

September 3 Distribution of syllabus, assignment of dates for paper presentations and formal responders, for introduction and discussion of initial readings.