

1.271 - Opening the Scriptures: The Old Testament in the New

MGVHoffman – LTSG – Fall 2008

Rationale

The earliest Christian reflection on Jesus was centered on their reading and interpretation of Scripture. This course will investigate the use of the Old Testament in the New and focus on some of the key texts that shaped the early Christian understanding of Jesus. While a significant component of this course will be a historical investigation into how early Christians read and reflected upon Scripture, it is also important to identify the hermeneutical procedures that were employed then and to reflect on how they might be appropriately applied today. (*Fulfills required elective in Old Testament.* Prerequisite: 1.103, 1.205 and knowledge of Greek.)

Objectives

Upon completion of this course, students will be able to :

- Demonstrate a familiarity with the non-canonical ancient texts that relate to early Jewish and Christian reflections on Scripture
 - Specifically, they will read excerpts from the OT Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha, Dead Sea Scrolls, Philo, Josephus, rabbinic literature, NT Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha, and other early Christian literature
- Demonstrate an ability to work with the exegetical tools and resources necessary for investigating the use of the OT texts in the NT
 - Specifically, they will use such tools (either physical or digital) as concordances, Treasury of Scripture Knowledge, Archer & Chirichigno, NET notes, Ginzberg's *Legends of the Jews*, and scripture indices in the works listed in the previous bullet
- Demonstrate an understanding of ancient exegetical and hermeneutical methods, especially as evidenced in particular NT texts, and express how such an understanding is helpful for contemporary reflection on the biblical texts.
 - Specifically, in their final paper they will explain how the ancient authors were using and interpreting Scripture (OT) and use that insight to reflect on the contemporary interpretation of Scripture (OT and NT)

Goal

By the end of this course, participants should be able to discern instances where the Hebrew Scriptures have influenced the NT writings. They will know how / where to look to clarify the relationships between the testaments and chart out a history of interpretation, including its modern application.

Strategies

In order to accomplish the stated Objectives of this course, the following Strategies will be employed:

1. CLASS SESSIONS and PARTICIPATION

Class meets Wednesdays, 2:15-5:15pm (with a break) in Valentine 308 beginning September 3 through December 14. (No class on Sept. 24 [Senior interviews] or Oct. 29 [Luther Colloquy].)

The students will be expected to attend class, to have read all required readings prior to class, and to be prepared to discuss the topics for each class session. If you are absent, you are absent. It may reflect negatively on your final grade. If there are mitigating circumstances, let me know.

2. CLASS PRESENTATIONS and FINAL PAPER

Completion in advance of readings and other assignments is critical for your readiness to learn and your ability to contribute to the mutual learning that occurs in class. Students will be expected to

present their work according to their scheduled time. Assignments will be accepted past the due date ONLY if the reason for tardiness is commensurate with a reason why a rostered leader would not be prepared to preach or teach as expected by their congregation on a given Sunday.

- ✚ Ancient Document presentation: Students will report on an ancient document selected from the list provided or in consultation with the instructor. Presentations will be made at a scheduled time during September and October. The best presentations will likely include a distributable guide of some kind for the members of the class and pointers to other resources (a one page handout max or an online entry), and they will provide background to the document and reasons why they are significant for a study of the OT in the NT. These presentations are intended to be brief introductions to the document and be 5-10 minutes long. Some possible topics include:
 - Wisdom of Solomon
 - Joseph and Asenath
 - Pseudo-Philo
 - Psalms of Solomon
 - Enoch (= 1 Enoch)
 - Genesis Apochryphon (Qumran)
 - Gospel of Peter
 - Justin Martyr's *Dialogue with Trypho*
 - Eusebius' *Proof of the Gospel*
 - Origen's *Hexapla*
 - In general, I would like you to become somewhat 'expert' on some ancient document from the Apocrypha, OT or NT Pseudepigrapha, the early Church outside of the NT, or rabbinic literature.
- ✚ Topic Presentation: Students will select a topic that will become the focus of their work from the list provided or in consultation with the instructor. Presentations on the preliminary work accomplished will be scheduled in October and November. The best presentations will help the other members of the class understand the issues involved with your text or topic and the preliminary ways you are working with it. The presenter should keep in mind that a final paper will yet be written on this topic, and so feedback should be solicited that will contribute to that paper. Depending on the number of students in the course, these presentations will be 20-30 minutes long.
- ✚ Final Paper: Based on the topic chosen, this paper will be 7-12 pages long. (one inch margins, double-spaced, 12pt font) The best papers will have a strong thesis statement that clearly defines the issue involved with the chosen topic and a proposal for how it should be handled. Interaction with appropriate resources (both primary and secondary) is expected, and the conclusion should indicate how this topic fits within the larger scope of early Christian attempts to interpret Scripture. This paper will be due on Wednesday, December 3, 2008.

3. ONLINE PARTICIPATION

As a way to continue in-class discussions and for students to explore other aspects of this topic with each other and the instructor, there is an online discussion board for this class, both on the private Fishersnet site and the public course blog (and possibly also on a wiki). In addition to topics that arise from class, each student will be able to create his/her own forum related to his/her particular topic. It is expected that students will share resources and their own findings online. Full credit will be given for those who are actively engaged in substantive online discussion.

4. REQUIRED READINGS

Students are expected to read all assigned readings in the following:

- *The New Revised Standard Version Bible with Apocrypha* (recommended: HarperCollins Study Edition or Zondervan's *NRSV Student Bible* or *The Access Bible* or New Oxford Annotated)
 - You will need a good study Bible, preferably NRSV. You should bring this to every class, but you may bring it as a book or as part of your computer [Bible software](#).
- *NET Bible* Nestle-Aland²⁷ Diglot
 - Bring this to each class session. (Note: the cheapest way to acquire this book is through the seminary bookstore. The digital versions in Bible software are adequate, but this print edition is really necessary for text-critical notes and other aids. Also note the online [NeXt Bible](#).)
- For an Old Testament, we will be consulting the Hebrew (using *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia* [print edition from American Bible Society] or working through Hebrew-English tools to get at the Hebrew) and Greek Septuagint. Computer Bible software should have appropriate editions of both. For the LXX, Rahlfs' *Septuaginta* (Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 2006) is the standard book edition. Online versions are also available. (E.g., [The Unbound Bible](#) or see [LXX Texts and Translations](#))
- *Early Biblical Interpretation* (Library of Early Christianity, Vol 3) by James L. Kugel (Author), Rowan A. Greer (Author), Wayne A. Meeks (Editor) (Westminster John Knox Press, 1988) ISBN: 0664250130
- *Messianic Exegesis: Christological Interpretation of the Old Testament in Early Christianity* by Donald Juel (Augsburg Fortress Publishers, 1992) ISBN: 0800627075
- ONE of the following:
 - *The Last Trial* by Shalom Spiegel (Jewish Lights Publishing, 1993) ISBN: 187904529X
 - *The Bible As It Was* by James L. Kugel (Belknap Press, 1999) ISBN: 0674069412
- Additional readings may also be required.
- See the online Bibliography for recommended books and additional resources.

Evaluation

Evaluation of students will be as follows:

- **Class Participation:** 20%
- **Online Participation:** 5%
- **Ancient Document Presentation:** 10%
- **Topic Presentation:** 15%
- **Final Paper:** 50%

A grade of at least 70% is needed to pass.

For those taking the class for a grade, the scale is: A = 93-100%; B = 80-92%; C = 70-79%