

CH233 Interpreting the Bible After the Holocaust
Fall, 2004
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Course Description: Awareness of the long history of Christian anti-Judaism as a contributing factor to the Nazi Final Solution has led many Christian biblical scholars to examine interpretations of the Bible that perpetuate negative portrayals of Jews and Judaism. In this course we will consider methods and paradigms for interpreting the scriptures that address the problem of anti-Judaism.

Objectives:

1. to gain an understanding of the origin and history of Christian anti-Judaism
2. to consider the significance of the Holocaust for the transformation of Christianity
3. to appreciate the importance of context for interpretation
4. to become familiar with the ways Christian anti-Judaism is manifest, especially in biblical interpretation
5. to learn critical methods of biblical study

Requirements:

1. Read assigned material carefully
2. Attend class and participate in class discussions.
3. Turn in written assignments, including the final take home exam, at class time on the date due. If circumstances present a problem meeting the due date, talk with the instructor beforehand to negotiate an acceptable time for completing the assignment. Late assignments will not be accepted.

Evaluations: Your grade will be based primarily on the written assignments, but participation in class discussion will be considered also. Papers will be evaluated on the basis of the following criteria: shows careful and critical reading of the texts, addresses the question(s) asked, shows understanding of context, depth of insight, ability to integrate the ideas of others rather than simply repeat them, communication skills (including punctuation, spelling and proper footnoting).

Required Texts:

HarperCollins Study Bible, NRSV

Boys, M., Has God Only One Blessing?

Carroll, J., Constantine's Sword

Fredriksen, P., and Reinhartz, A., eds., Jesus, Judaism and Christian Anti-Judaism

Holmgren, F., The Old Testament and the Significance of Jesus

Stendahl, K., Paul Among Jews and Gentiles

Supplemental:

Bieringer, et al, eds., Anti-Judaism and the Fourth Gospel

Crossan, D., Who Killed Jesus? (Supplemental)

Schedule of Assignments

9/16 Introduction; the Holocaust and Christians

9/23 Christian Anti-Judaism

Read: One Blessing, 5-74

Constantine's Sword, 3-63

Jesus, Judaism, and Christian Anti-Judaism, ix - 30

Write: Drawing from the readings, discuss the difference between anti-Semitism and Christian anti-Judaism and implications of that distinction, and why it is imperative for Christians to respond to the Holocaust. You might also include any of your own "consciousness-raising" moments concerning Christian anti-Judaism. (500-600 words)

9/30 Study of Early Judaism; Emergence of Christianity and Judaism

Read: Zannoni, Jews and Christians Speak of Jesus, 3-34 (on reserve)

One Blessing, 87-159

Constantine's Sword, 144-152; 165-219

Write: Write a few paragraphs (about 200-250 words) on each of the following questions: Why is it important for Christians to understand early Judaism for interpreting the New Testament? What is the significance of Constantine for the development of Christianity and its relationship with Judaism? What did you learn about Judaism that surprised you, or that you did not know before?

10/7 Reinterpreting Paul

Read: Paul Among Jews and Gentiles, v-77

Gaston, Paul and the Torah, 1-34 (on reserve, book and Course Packet)

Jews, Judaism, 56-76

Galatians

Romans 1-4, 7, 9-11

Due 10/14: Choose one of the following texts from Romans and give a "Reformation Reading," i.e., supposing Paul was opposed to the Law and to Judaism. Then interpret the same text according to the paradigm that views Paul within the diversity of early Judaism and as a missionary specifically to gentiles. Show your understanding of the difference the paradigm shift makes in interpreting Paul. (400-600)

Romans 3:21-31 4:13-25 6:12-23

10/14 Gospels as Jewish Literature; Oral Torah

Read: Jews, Judaism, 31-35

First two chapters of Matthew, Mark and Luke

Mark 7

Matthew 5-7; 25

Be prepared to discuss what the first chapter of each of the synoptic gospels implies about the convictions, point of view, suppositions of author and audience.

What does the author suppose the audience knows and/or believes?

prepared to discuss the prejudices E.P. Sanders names that affect our views of Jesus in relationship with Judaism.

10/21 The Pharisees; Polemic in the NT

Read: One Blessing, 177-198

“Pharisees” entry in Interpreter’s Dictionary of the Bible, and entry in IDBS Supplement (Reference and on reserve)

Johnson, “The New Testament’s Anti-Jewish Slander” (reserve)

Brawley, Luke-Acts and the Jews, 84-106 (reserve)

Matthew 23

John 3; 11; 18-20

Mark 2:23 - 3:1-6; Matthew 12:1-14; Luke 6:1-11

Luke 18:9-14

Matthew 21:33-46; Luke 20: 9-19

Be Prepared to discuss the differences between the two IDB entries on the Pharisees. Where do you see evidence of anti-Jewish bias? What are the key points of Johnson’s article and how do they affect our reading of the polemic in the gospels?

Due on 11/4: Matthew 21:33-46 is a difficult parable, one that has historically been interpreted as a rejection of Jews and Judaism. Discuss this text, identifying the difficulties. Do you see a way to interpret this passage within its first century context that would not be disparaging of Jews? How would you present this parable either in an adult education bible study or in a sermon? Consulting a few commentaries would be helpful. (600-800)

10/25-29 Reading Week. Classes do not meet.

Please note that on 11/18, you have an assignment due on Constantine’s Sword, pp 237-543. Now might be a good time to begin reading.

- 11/4 Luke-Acts; Christian Supersessionism; Gospel of John
 Read: Tyson, ed., Luke-Acts and the Jewish People, articles 1,2,4,5 (reserve, book and in course packet)
One Blessing, 75-85
Jews, Judaism, 99-116
 Luke 4; 10; 24
 Acts 1-5; 7; 15-16; 21-23; 28
Brawley, Luke-Acts and the Jews, chapter 2 (reserve)
Brawley, Luke-Acts and the Jews, 84-106 (reserve)
 Recommended: Anti-Judaism and the Fourth Gospel, 3-37 (reserve)
- 11/11 No Class Meeting Today
- 11/18 Decisive Moments in History; Christian Symbols
 Read: Constantine's Sword, 237 – 543
 Write: The premise of Constantine's Sword is that "things could have turned out differently," in Christianity's relationship with Judaism, that the Church took a particular path at several historical occasions or times that made a critical difference in the way the Church related to Judaism. Identify two or three of these decisive moments and the impact of each on Christian-Jewish relations. (750-1000 words)
- Thanksgiving
- 12/2 Passion Narrative
 Read: Crossan, Who Killed Jesus, Prologue, chapter 5, Epilogue (reserve)
 Mark 14-15; Luke 22-23
 Articles on Oberammergau (reserve)
 Vatican Guidelines for Passion Plays; internet site
One Blessing, 223-244
- 12/9 Christian Old Testament and Tanak; Relationship between the Testaments
 Read: The Old Testament and the Significance of Jesus
 Matthew 1:18-25 and Isaiah 7:10-14
 Isaiah 52:13-53:12
 Romans 4, 5; Genesis 2-3; 13,15
- 12/16 OR 20 Presentation of Take Home Final Questions
 Take Home Final Due

See the Student Handbook for Policies Affecting Classes.

For this course, circumstances justifying an extension for the course include: death in the family, serious illness or injury, self or family member. If you think you have reason to request an extension, please talk with me about it. Please note that all written work must be completed in order to pass the course.

Policy on Extensions

The faculty voted to approve the following policy on extensions in April, 1999:

The work for a course is terminated at the end of the final class session. The performance in the course is evaluated on the basis of the work submitted by that time, unless an exception is made by the instructor, in which case a formal petition for extension must be approved by the instructor by the end of the final class session. Extensions (of course work) beyond the end of the semester will be approved only under extraordinary circumstances. Each instructor will include this policy on each course syllabus as well as the criteria by which she or he will grant such an extraordinary exception.

Policy on Sexual Harassment: See Student Handbook

Policy on Plagiarism: See Student Handbook