

Mw:Psalms/Psalms06Syl.doc
April 11, 2006

The Psalms in the Life of the Church

OT-628 and PM 790 PLC (3 units)

Mennonite Brethren Biblical Seminary

Summer 2006
Monday to Friday
June 19-30, 2006
6:00-9:00 PM

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I. COURSE DESCRIPTION

In this course, we will examine the Book of Psalms from two different angles: Exegetical and pastoral.

In the initial part of the course, we will examine the Psalms from an exegetical perspective. We will first do a survey of poetic literature in the Ancient Near East, and we will examine the fundamental characteristics of Hebrew poetry. This first section will then be followed by a general introduction to the Psalter as well as a discussion of the hermeneutical issues specifically related to the interpretation of the Psalms. We will also examine a few selected Psalms.

In the second part of the course, we will give special attention to the relevance of the Psalms for the believer and the Christian community. We will seek to explore the various ways in which the Psalter can be used in the life of the Church. In this respect, we will particularly focus on the use of the Psalms in preaching/teaching, counseling, spiritual formation, chaplaincy, corporate worship, and individual prayer.

II. COURSE OBJECTIVES

- A. The students will develop some familiarity with Ancient Near Eastern poetic literature.
- B. Introduce the students with the basic principles of Hebrew poetry.
- C. Allow the students to become familiar with the general structure of the Psalter and with the various types of Psalms.
- D. The students will become familiar with the hermeneutical issues involved in the study of the Psalter and will be exposed to an exegetical approach that takes into account the specificity of Hebrew poetry.
- E. Allow the students to become familiar with the Psalter's theological perspective particularly as it pertains to God's nature and human experience.
- F. Allow the students to reflect on the relevance of the Psalms for the Christian community.
- G. Enable the students to explore how the Psalms can be concretely utilized in the the life of the church.

III. RELATED DEGREE OBJECTIVES

This course will address the following curriculum objectives:

- Assumptions and principles of biblical interpretation.
- Ability to distinguish between primary and derivative teachings of Scripture.
- Knowledge of historical, political, intellectual, social, economic, and religious world of the biblical texts.

- General knowledge of the Bible.
- Commitment to inspiration and authority of the Bible.
- Personal application of the biblical texts.
- Biblical exegesis.
- Biblical theology.
- Ability to use the biblical texts in a relevant fashion in the Church and society.

IV. TEXTS FOR THE COURSE

Brueggemann, Walter. *The Message of the Psalms*. Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1984. 206 p. (ISBN: 0-8066-2120-6)

Lewis, C. S. *A Grief Observed*. Harper, 2001 reprint (1961). 112 p. ISBN: 0060652381

Peterson, Eugene H. *Answering God. The Psalms as Tools for Prayer*. Harper, 1991 reprint (1989). 160 p. (ISBN: 0060665122)

A series of articles dealing specifically with pastoral issues will be distributed.

Recommended for Consultation

Craigie, Peter. *Psalms 1-50*. Word Biblical Commentary. Vol. 19. Waco, Texas: Word Books, 1983. (ISBN: 08499-0218-5)

V. COURSE ASSIGNMENTS

(Note: Students who wish to take this course for less than 3 units may negotiate the workload with the professor.)

A. Reading

The students are required to read a total of 1000 pages, including Brueggemann, Lewis, and Peterson. Students should attempt to read as broadly as possible and will hand in a report that will list the bibliographical data of the books/monographs/articles (journals, encyclopedias, etc.) read and a very brief annotation (one sentence) for each entry indicating the topic covered and usefulness.

Students are strongly encouraged to have read Brueggemann and Peterson for the first day of class and to be ready to hand in a short 1.52 page report on each.

Students are required to have read Lewis' book by June 26. A onepage personal reflection will be due on the same date.

These reports should highlight and expand on one or two elements that were found to be particularly helpful for understanding the Psalms and their use in the church.

B. Devotional

Each student will be asked to select one Psalm for presentation at the beginning of a class. The student will read the Psalm, propose a few exegetical observations and comment on its relevance for Christians and for corporate worship. Approximate length of the presentation: 5-7 minutes.

C. Written Assignments

Each student will be required to write two papers for this course. The **first** will be an exegetical paper and will apply the principles covered in the first half of the course. The **second** paper will focus on the pastoral dimension of this course. In this paper, the student will explore the use of the Psalter in respect to one of the following issues: preaching/teaching, counseling, spiritual formation, chaplaincy, corporate worship, and individual prayer. Precise topic to be determined in consultation with the instructor.

Each paper should be 8-10 pages in length (2500 words).

The papers should reflect adequate research and scholarship.

Due Dates:**Paper 1: August 1, 2006****Paper 2: August 15, 2006****D. Oral Presentation**

Students will be expected to present the preliminary results of their research in respect to the second paper (pastoral use) during the second week of the course. Students are invited to present their research as creatively as possible and to propose questions for class discussion. Students are strongly encouraged to provide a detailed handout summarizing the main points of the presentation and a bibliography. More details will be provided in class.

Length of presentation: 2530 minutes + discussion time.

VI. COURSE OUTLINE

- A. General Introduction to Poetic Literature
 - 1. General Introduction to Poetry
 - 2. Poetry and Wisdom in Ancient Near Eastern Literature
- B. Poetic Literature in Israel
 - 1. Hebrew Poetry
 - 2. The Psalter
- C. Exegesis of Selected Psalms
- D. Pastoral Use of the Psalms
 - 1. Theoretical Framework
 - 2. Student Presentations
- E. Conclusion

VII. COURSE GRADING

1. Reading:	20
2. Participation and Attendance	10
3. Exegetical Paper I:	30
4. Exegetical Paper II:	30
5. Oral Presentation:	10
Total:	100

VIII. ACADEMIC POLICIES

Policies regarding academic integrity, plagiarism, extensions, the use of inclusive language and other matters are at <http://www.mbseminary.edu/fresno/policies/> Students are expected to be familiar with these policies and to follow them.

IX. COURSE BIBLIOGRAPHY**1. General**

Bullock, C.H. *An Introduction to the Old Testament Poetic Books: The Wisdom and Songs of Israel*. Chicago: Moody, 1979. (SH BS 1405.2B84)

Cross, F.M. *Studies in Ancient Yahwistic Poetry*. Missoula, Mont.: scholars Press, 1975.

Fohrer, G. "Sophia." *TDNT*. Vol. 7. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1971.

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- Kidner, D. "Wisdom Literature of the Old Testament." *New Perspective on the Old Testament*. Ed. by J.B. Payne. 1970. Pp. 117-130.
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2. Psalms

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3. Contemporary Psalm Compositions

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