Course Description and Relevance for Ministry

The course studies two enigmatic and fascinating books. One, Jeremiah, comes from the second part of the Hebrew Bible, the Prophets (Nebi‘im), while the second, Daniel, comes from the third part, the Writings (Ketubim). These books will be studied from a historical, literary, and theological perspective. Generically, Jeremiah is a prophet and Daniel is an apocalyptic seer.

Focus will be on original meaning, contemporary significance and the hermeneutical principles that allow us living at the beginning of the third millennium AD to appropriate these ancient books.

Class Schedule

Monday, January 29: 8:30-3:30
Tuesday, January 30: 8:30-3:30
Wednesday, January 31: 8:30-3:30
Thursday, February 1: 8:30-3:30
Friday, February 2: 8:30-3:30
Reading Assignment

Read Jeremiah and Daniel in at least four different translations: recommended are NLT (the most recent edition [has a diamond rather than a square logo], NRSV, NIV, the Message, the ESV, the New Century Version, and the Holman-Standard Bible. Read at least two before the beginning of class if possible.

The student is required to read the introductions to at least 5 Jeremiah commentaries and 5 Daniel commentaries (minimum of 500 pages total). The student then must write a 5-7 page paper describing the distinctive approaches of these commentaries. The commentaries may be chosen from the following list.

Commentary Resources

Jeremiah

A popular theological commentary on four prophets from the latter half of the seventh century. Boadt treats them together because they offer different perspectives on the same historical events. LM***

This is one of the better commentaries on Jeremiah, although it is written from a moderately critical angle. Bright has good theological and literary sense. One disconcerting feature of this commentary is its arrangement. Bright has chosen to depart from Jeremiah’s more topical arrangement and has commented on the text in a reconstructed chronological order. MS***

Brueggemann provides an easy to read and contemporary interpretation of the book of Jeremiah. As usual, he is thought-provoking in his reading. LM****

Carroll includes an excellent bibliography. His commentary emphasizes a redaction-critical approach to the book in an attempt to reconcile what he calls the “disparate personae of Jeremiah represented by the various levels of tradition in it” (p. 37). S***

Clements adopts a moderately critical approach to questions of composition and authorship. He concentrates on integrating historical background and theological message. The book is clearly written and profitable. LM***
Craigie died in a car accident after finishing only the first seven chapters in this commentary. Kelley and Drinkard combined to finish this volume; G. Keown is the announced author of the second volume on Jeremiah.

The volume as a whole is consistent with Craigie’s high level of scholarship. The volume is especially helpful in matters of language and form. The analysis of content is a little thin and theological reflection is at a minimum. The bibliographies are extensive. MS****

The author builds on a moderately critical approach to the text in order to emphasize Jeremiah’s theology and the relevance of the book for today. He also focuses on Jeremiah’s personality as it is disclosed in the text. LM***

Davidson devotes all of the first volume and most of the second to a study of the prophecy of Jeremiah. While he accepts a moderately critical approach to the text, he does not present critical discussions in the commentary. The result is a popularly written and helpful exposition. LM****

A very sensitive theological reading that also brings these two books into touch with the contemporary world. In keeping with the series, Dearman does not deal with technical issues. LM*****

Fretheim, T. E. *Jeremiah*. SHBC; Smyth and Helwys, 2002).xx 684
This is an extremely well written commentary with an emphasis on Jeremiah as literature and theology though there is attention to critical issues and history as well. Highly recommended. LM*****

Guest writes with a good understanding of the book in its Old Testament background and awareness of its New Testament connections. His writing style is engaging and he provides insightful comment. LM***

Due to its size restrictions, this commentary is unable to compare with some of the others as a major research tool. However, it is an excellent commentary for laypeople. The emphasis is on history, philology, and theology. LM***

This is a major contribution to Jeremiah studies written from a form-critical perspective that should be consulted by everyone who does serious work on the book. Like the others in the series, it is a well-presented commentary. MS****

This commentary, in keeping with the series, emphasizes the theological message of the book in its historical context. What it says is true and helpful, as far as it goes, and that is its main shortcoming. It is rather thin. Professor Huey represents a traditional conservative approach to the books that he studies. LM**

This commentary produced by a competent senior scholar has a higher level of confidence in the history of the book than most critics. He gives a strong synchronic exposition, but, due to the constraints of the series, the analysis is not detailed. LM***

When the original contributor to the Word series on Jeremiah, Peter Craigie, died, it was an odd decision to assign the rest of the book to four other scholars (including Allen in vol. 1). MS***

Lundblom, J. R. Jeremiah 1-20. AB. Doubleday, 1999. 934 pp. see also now vols. 2 and 3 are published.

This is a brilliant commentary on the book in terms of its original meaning, though biblical theology of the book is not an interest of the author. A must buy for those ministers and scholars who are really interested in looking at the book. MS*****

This is an example of the “new generation” ICC commentaries. Not many Old Testament commentaries are out yet. They have the same critical concerns as the older series: textual criticism, philology, and historical matters. There is little theological reflection. However, since the newer volumes take into account recent changes, these volumes are more valuable than the older ones. McKane’s volume has extensive text--critical and redaction-critical discussions. A must for all scholars, but just as well ignored by most laypersons and ministers. S***

The introduction helpfully reconstructs the historical background to the prophecy. Nicholson examines the literary growth of the book from Jeremiah the prophet through the Deuteronomistic school. LM**

Thompson takes a more traditional and evangelical approach to the book. However, he does allow for some non-Jeremiah parts. He treats Jeremiah as a real person in a definite historical setting. Well worth getting. MS****

Daniel


Baldwin, J. G. Daniel. TOTC. Inter-Varsity, 1978. 210 pp. Although short, this commentary contains a wealth of information and careful exegetical insight. Baldwin is a balanced and sane exegete, which is important to note in a commentary on a book that attracts some wild ideas. Baldwin is solidly conservative, but not rigid. LM****

Collins, J. J. Daniel. Hermeneia. Fortress, 1993. 498 pp. The lengthy and extremely informative introduction includes an essay by A. Y. Collins on “The Influence of Daniel on the New Testament.” J. J. Collins is a noted Daniel expert and this volume is the apex of his decades-long research. It is critical in its approach, but evangelicals can learn much from this volume. MS*****

Ferguson, S. B. Daniel. CC. Word, 1988. 252 pp. Ferguson provides a good balance of exposition and application. His narrative is spiced with helpful illustrations and anecdotes. He avoids speculation on some of the prophecies, preferring to concentrate on the theme of the “good news of the kingdom of God.” Good christological focus. LM****

Goldingay, J. Daniel. Word, 1989. liii/351 pp. Goldingay’s is perhaps the most comprehensive commentary on Daniel listed here. He gives insight into historical, literary, and theological issues concerning the book. He also demonstrates an amazing grasp of the secondary literature. Many of his readers will be put off by some of his radical (at least for an evangelical) conclusions, most notable of which are that the stories in chapters 1–6 are fictitious and the visions are quasi-prophecies. However, it would be a major mistake to ignore this important commentary while studying Daniel. MS*****

Hartman, L. F., and A. A. Dilella. The Book of Daniel. AB. Doubleday, 1978. xiv/345 pp. This is one of the skimpier volumes in the Anchor Bible series. It takes a typically critical approach to the date of the book. The exegetical comments are not that helpful. S*

Heaton, E. Daniel. TBC. SCM, 1956. 251 pp. In his lengthy introduction, Heaton draws a close connection between the author of Daniel and Ben Sira, as well as the Hasideans. He argues that Daniel should be identified
with the Danel of Ugaritic literature. He presents a typical argument for the late date of the book. Nonetheless, it may still be profitably read. LM****

This is an English translation of a French commentary originally published in 1976. Although he does provide some helpful textual and philological notes, Lacocque is strong on theology and contemporary application (at least relatively so for a critical scholar). He adopts a traditional critical dating and interpretation. MS***

In keeping with the design of the NIVAC series, I explore the original meaning and contemporary significance of this interesting, yet often enigmatic biblical book. In addition, I explain how I move from the ancient text to our modern situation. Daniel becomes, in the first six chapters, a study of how a person of faith not only copes but thrives in a hostile cultural setting. In the last half of the book, it raises the question of how we are to understand the apocalyptic sections of Scripture that describe the end of history. The theme of the whole book is “In spite of present difficult circumstances, God is in control and will defeat the forces of evil and oppression.” LM


Miller writes competently in defense of a conservative approach to the book. He concentrates on historical issues and the basic theological message. In the apocalyptic sections, he adopts a literal (plain) reading of the text. LM***

This commentary concentrates on the building blocks of exegesis like philology and text. It becomes the basis for the theological comments of more recent commentaries as diverse as Young and Porteous. S****

Porteous concentrates on theology, not language. The commentary is short. Porteous adopts a critical stance toward the book. S**

Russell is one of the leading critical interpreters of apocalyptic literature of the previous generation. In his introduction, he dates the book late and gives a very unsatisfactory explanation of pseudonymity. However, his insistence on the present relevance of the book (over against a speculative futuristic approach) has much to commend itself. LM***

This commentary concentrates on the theology of the book and is written from a critical perspective. The writing is clear and often insightful. MS***

Wallace has written a good popular exposition from an evangelical perspective. Solid research backs up his comments. The introduction provides a helpful conservative defense against a late dating of the book. LM****

The importance of this commentary is found in its firm and intelligent conservative stance. Young polemicizes against critical and dispensationalist approaches. He is not particularly sensitive to the literary nature or biblical theology of the book, but he is an excellent language scholar. MS***

Graded Assignments

1. **Term Paper**

   All students will write a paper between 10 and 15 pages. This paper will be a detailed exegetical and biblical theological examination of one unit of text from either Jeremiah or Daniel. Alternatively, a topical paper is acceptable. The student may choose the text or topic, but it must be cleared by the professor by the last day of class. This paper will show the student’s personal reflection on the passage as well as interaction with the commentaries and other secondary literature.

   **Due: Friday, March 16, 2007 by 4:00p at Ceci Helm’s desk.**

2. **Reading Report**

   All students are to write a book report on the required reading (see above under required reading).

   **Due: Friday, March 16, 2007 by 4:00p at Ceci Helm’s desk.**

3. **Take-Home Exam**

   The exam will be an essay-type exam in an open book, take-home format. It will be written by all students taking this course for credit. The questions will help students review the class material and reflect on further implications of the material for their reading of the Bible and their application of Jeremiah and Daniel in their ministry. Students’ exam responses are not to be edited after the designated writing time has ended.
Due: Friday, February 9, 2007 by 4:00p at Ceci Helm’s desk.

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