

## **CH419: Creation Themes in the Hebrew Bible**

Chicago Theological Seminary, spring Quarter, 1998

Tuesdays, 9:00-12:00, Room 450

Ken Stone, Professor

**Course Description:** This course examines a number of biblical texts that shed light on Israel's understanding of creation. Attention will be given to the ancient socio-cultural background of the biblical creation texts; the relations among God, humanity, and nature that are presupposed by the creation texts; the role of gender in the biblical views on creation; and the impact of ecojustice hermeneutics on biblical interpretation.

### **Textbooks:**

Bernard f. Batto, *Slaying the Dragon: Mythmaking in the Biblical Tradition* (Westminster/John Knox press, 1992)

Jon d. Levenson, *Creation and the Persistence of Evil: the Jewish Drama of Divine Omnipotence* (Harper & Row, 1988)

Ronald A. Simkins, *Creator and Creation: Nature in the Worldview of Ancient Israel* (Hendrickson Publishers, 1994)

**Requirements and Evaluation:** All M.A./M.Div. students have the option of taking this course on a Pass/Fail basis. A grade of Pass will be given to those students who attend class regularly, participate in class discussions, and turn in two reflection papers. Each reflection paper should be 5-7 pages in length, typed, and double-spaced, with margins no larger than 1 and inches.

Reflection Paper #1 is due on Tuesday, May 26, and should answer the following question: What do you find most interesting and helpful in each of the three required textbooks as you reflect upon the contemporary theological significance of biblical creation themes?

Reflection Paper #2 is due on Tuesday, June 2, and should answer the following question: What aspects of the biblical creation themes do you find most helpful for the construction of a contemporary ecojustice theology, and why?

What aspects do you find least helpful, and why?

Please note that all students should come to class prepared to discuss these questions on the dates on which the reflection papers are due.

S.T.M. students and those M.A./M.Div. students who wish to receive a letter grade should turn in both of the reflection papers as well as an additional research paper.

The research paper should be 10-12 pages in length, typed, double-spaced, with margins no larger than 1 and inches. The paper may explore a topic of interest to the individual student but the topic should be approved by the instructor no later than Tuesday, May 12. The paper is due on the last day of the quarter, Friday, June 5.

Ph.D. students are also required to turn in both of the reflection papers and a research paper. The

research paper for Ph.D. students should be 20-30 pages in length and reflect a level of research appropriate to doctoral work.

### **Tenative Course Outline**

(with assigned readings from the Hebrew Bible and Batto)

March 31 Introduction to the Course

April 7 Creation in the ancient Near East

READ: Batto, pp. 1-40

April 14 The Yahwist Creation Account

READ: Genesis 2-4b-3:24

Batto, pp. 41-72

April 21 The Priestly Creation Account

READ: Genesis 1:1-2:4a

Batto, pp. 73-101

April 28 Flood and Exodus as Creation Accounts

READ: Genesis 6:1-9:17

Exodus 13:17-15:21

Batto, pp. 102-52

May 5 Creation Themes in the Psalms

READ: Psalms 8, 19, 74, 89, 104,

146, 147

May 12 Creation Themes in the wisdom Literature

READ: Job 36:24-42:6

Proverbs 1-9; 30:1-33

May 19 Creation and New Creation: Prophecy and the Apocalyptic Tradition

READ: Isaiah 40:1-41:20; 45:1-19

Daniel 7; Ezekiel 29

Batto, pp. 153-85

May 26 Discussion of Batto, Levenson, Simkins

(reflection paper #1 Due for all students)

June 2 Concluding Discussion: The Contemporary

Significance of Biblical Creation Themes

(Reflection Paper #2 Due for all students)

### **Select Bibliography**

Anderson, Bernhard. *From Creation to New Creation: Old Testament Perspectives*. Fortress Press, 1994.

Barr, James. *Biblical Faith and Natural Theology*. Oxford University Press, 1993.

*The Garden of Eden and the Hope of Immortality*. Fortress Press, 1992.

"Man and Nature: The Ecological Controversy and the Old Testament". In *Ecology and Religion in History*. Ed. David & Eileen Spring. Harper & Row, 1974.

Batto, Bernard F. *Slaying the Dragon: Mythmaking in the Biblical Tradition* Westminster/John Knox Press, 1992.

Bird, Phyllis. Section III (Genesis 1-3). In *Missing Persons and Mistaken Identities: Women and*

Gender in Ancient Israel. Fortress Press, 1997.

Brueggemann, Walter. "The Loss and Recovery of Creation in Old Testament Theology." *Theology Today* 53/2 (July 1996) 177-90.

Fowler, Robert Booth. *The Bible as (Contested) Foundation* (Chapter 2). In *The Greening of Protestant Thought*. University of Chapel Hill Press, 1995.

Hiebert, Theodore. "Re-Imaging Nature: Shifts in Biblical Interpretation." *Interpretation* 50/1 (January 1996) 36-46.

"Rethinking Traditional Approaches to Nature in the Bible" in *Theology for Earth Community: A Field Guide*. Dieter Hessel, ed. Orbis books, 1996.

Jacobson, Diane. "Biblical Bases for Eco-Justice Ethics." *Theology for Earth Community: A field Guide*. Dieter Hessel, ed. Orbis books, 1996.

Levenson, Jon D. *Creation and the Persistence of Evil: The Jewish Drama of Divine Omnipotence*. Harper & Row, 1998.

McAfee, Gene. "Ecology and Biblical Studies" in *Theology for Earth Community: A Field Guide*. Dieter Hessel, ed. Orbis books, 1996.

Perdue, Leo. *Wisdom and Creation: The Theology of Wisdom Literature*. Abingdon Press, 1994.

Simkins, Ronald A. *Creator and Creation: Nature in the Worldview of Ancient Israel*. Hendrickson Publishers, 1994.

Trible, Phyllis. *Clues in a Text* (Chapter 1) and *a Love Story Gone Awry* (Chapter 4). in *God and the Rhetoric of Sexuality*. Fortress Press, 1978.

Westermann, Claus. *Creation*. SPCK/Fortress Press, 1974.

"Creation and History in the Old Testament" in *The Gospel and Human Destiny*. Ed. Vilmos Vajta. Augsburg Publishing, 1971.