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# BT 605 Old Testament Theology

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## BT 605 OLD TESTAMENT THEOLOGY

Fall 2003—A Three Hour Course    Instructor: Lawson G. Stone

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Appointments are Also Available

### Course Aspirations and Place in the Curriculum

**General Course Objective:** OT 605 seeks to equip students for ministry by initiating them into the application of the discipline of biblical theology to the OT. The course explores the issues raised when we employ the fruits of exegetical and historical biblical study in shaping an understanding of the witness and core values of the OT seen *as scripture*, that is, as the critical norm and rule for Christian faith.

Two realities inform and shape our exploration of OT Theology. The first is that the OT and its theological perspectives originate from times, places far removed from any modern setting. In addition, its linguistic expression, literary genres, religious practices, and main ideas express the values of a culture distinct from our own. Thus the element of historical study of the OT strives for more than antiquarian illumination, but seeks to learn how we listen to God's word spoken in a language and accent not our own, from faces not the colors of our faces, and addressing cultural, political, and spiritual issues that diverge significantly from our own. Moreover, this cultural distance does not stop with the OT. The earliest interpreters of the OT, who established its canonical shape and position in the Christian Bible came from Egypt, Babylon, Syria, Turkey, and Asia Minor. To ignore the contribution of these voices would be to lose formative insights into the OT and its role in the church. Therefore class will not be limited to the modern era, but will situate OT theology in the flow of the church's quest to read the OT normatively, meaning that we will listen to voices from throughout the church's history.

Second, the reality of ministry must shape our approach. As we explore selected methods, insights, and examples of various attempts to read the OT normatively, we will also attempt a theological interpretation of select large sections of the OT ourselves. Such a task must always be oriented to the question of how the OT provides norms and standards for Christian believing, worshiping, and living..

**Specific Objectives:** We will pursue the general objectives of the course by pursuing these specific objectives, which will shape the day-to-day conduct of the class. Students successfully completing this course will be able to:

1. Describe and assess the essential stages and developments through history of the theological interpretation of the Old Testament, making concrete reference to specific interpreters, and their exegetical efforts;
2. Describe and assess the *contemporary discipline* of OT Theology, noting its principle problems, methods, and achievements, however modest;
3. Set the methods and problems of OT theology in context by reference to a contemporary and controversial voice, Brevard Childs (Note: each term, a different representative figure is chosen);
4. Identify in the OT itself crucial thematic *motifs* or core values unfolding through the OT in its present, canonical form, that seem to form the basic network of theological teaching in the OT;
5. Work with specific OT texts to demonstrate how knowledge of the discipline of OT Theology, combined with an awareness of the overarching themes of OT theology, illuminate the OT.
6. Indicate how the themes of OT theology engaged in class facilitate the ministry of preaching, teaching, and worship leadership in the church.

## Means of Realizing Course Aspirations

### READING

Anderson, Bernhard. *Contours of Old Testament Theology*. Minneapolis: Fortress, 1999. A very accessible survey of OT theology that tries to blend the historical unfolding Israel's faith with the canonical order of the OT.

Childs, Brevard S. *Old Testament Theology in a Canonical Context*. Philadelphia: Fortress, 1985. A survey of the theology of the OT that proceeds by topics rather than historically or in canonical order.

Childs, Brevard S. *Biblical Theology: A Proposal*. Minneapolis: Fortress, 2002. A brief analysis of the current problems of OT and biblical theology combined with a fresh argument for a canonical approach.

Sailhammer, John. H., *Introduction to Old Testament Theology: A Canonical Approach*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1995. This book reviews the history and achievements of OT Theology, but does so with a thematic and methodological concern that goes beyond a mere bibliographic survey.

A significant selection of additional readings will be posted on the Intranet

**Recommended:** Bauer, David. *Biblical Resources for Ministry* Contains excellent listings of other volumes dealing with the OT theology.

**Completion of the reading constitutes 10% of the grade.** While readings are correlated to specific days, it is recognized that students will not always be able to read the exact assignments for each day. If an article is part of a particular day's reading assignment, students will find the article especially helpful and relevant for that day and would profit from having read it prior to class. What is **required**, though is a midterm and a final reading report in which you will *indicate your completion of reading assigned to that date as a percentage*. The final reading report will be comprehensive. The two percentages will be entered as 5% of the student's grade respectively.

**LECTURES** are a vital component of the course. Note that instead of directly expounding readings, lecture will present the professor's attempt at a synthetic overview of the core values of OT theology. Reading exposes students to the discipline's history and problems (Sailhammer, selected readings), and to modern statements of the field expressing both consensus (Anderson) and controversy (Childs).

**Attendance Policy:** Occasional absences are an inevitable part of academic life, but attendance is vital. Attendance will be taken via a daily sign-in sheet. The professor assumes students will exercise the highest diligence and integrity in recording attendance.

Student attendance will be calculated as a percentage of all classes. The percentage will be calculated based on 24 class sessions. Thus if you attend 19 sessions, this is 79% and will be entered in as 10% of your final grade. *All absences count, and all may be made up*, therefore no distinction between "excused" and "unexcused" will be observed.

*Any absence can be made up* by contacting the instructor for a reasonable, brief written assignment to be completed by the student. Request for make-up work must be made by the student either ahead of time, or by Friday of the week in which the absence occurred. The make up work must be submitted within 7 days of the professor giving the student the make-up assignment. Completion of the make-up work will remove the absence. Typically, make-up work involves reading an additional article (of reasonable length) or listening to an audio recording of the class presentation and submitting a 1-page response.

**Three Essays** 7-8 pages (typed, double-spaced, 1" margins) will be assigned. These papers are take-home assignments, details of which will be circulated 2 weeks prior to the due date. They are to be the students' *own individual study, thought, organization, and wording completed without assistance from others*. Use of materials other than texts and class notes is not required and will, in fact, detract

from the student's own analysis. Work done for other classes or by other students is dishonest and will result in a failing grade and institutional disciplinary action.

These papers will involve direct study of biblical texts with a view to implementing insights gained from lecture and reading. Rubrics for evaluation of the essays will be included with each assignment.

**Grade Calculation:** Attendance and reading scores are entered as percentages.

Attendance -----	10%
Mid Term Reading Report -----	5%
Final Reading Report -----	5%
Essay One-----	20%
Essay Two -----	30%
Essay Three-----	30%

Office Hours are indicated above, but you are welcome at any time to speak to me personally, call, or e-mail me with a question or to make an appointment. As a courtesy, I ask you *not* to try to see me about course business just prior to the start of the class session. My middle-aged brain is working full time at that moment just to be ready for class!

#### **Crucial Due Dates**

First Essay Assigned: Sept. 19

First Essay Due: Oct. 3

Mid-Term Reading Report Due: Oct. 17

Includes:

Sailhammer, pages 11-311

Childs, *Biblical Theology: A Proposal*

Anderson, 1-36

All Supplemental Reading related to the History of Interpretation

Second Essay Assigned: Oct. 17

Second Essay Due: Oct. 31

Third Essay Assigned: Nov. 21

Third Essay Due: Final Exam Period

Final Reading Report Due: Final Exam Period

Includes: well...uh...the rest of the reading.

**Lecture Themes and Emphases**

The outline below is my sketch of how an OT Theology might be unfolded. We will cover at least through "E" of the second major part in class lecture.

**OT THEOLOGY AS A FORM OF BIBLICAL STUDY**

- A. Fundamental Question of OT Theology
- B. The Early Church and the *regula fidei*
- C. Medieval Exegesis and Figural Interpretation
- D. From Reformation to *Religionsgeschichte*
- E. Biblical Theology: Flowering and Floundering
- F. The Craft of Old Testament Theology: A Recipe

**OT THEOLOGY AS THE UNFOLDING, ACCUMULATING THEMATIC EMPHASES OF THE OLD TESTAMENT (NOT ALL WILL BE COVERED)**

- A. A Whole New Worldview: Primeval History, Primal Vision
- B. The Loving Care of Yahweh: The Faith of Israel's Ancestors
- C. The Name of Yahweh: The Heart of the Mosaic Faith
- D. The Acts of Yahweh: God Does What He Says, and Says What He Does
- E. The Will of Yahweh: Law as Proclamation and Instruction
- F. The Worship of Yahweh: From Ritual to Reality
- G. The Love Of Yahweh: The Portable Torah
- H. The Gift of Yahweh: Holy War and Holy Love in the Holy Land
- I. The People of Yahweh: We Have Met the Enemy, and They Is Us!
- J. The Anointed of Yahweh: King And Zion
- K. The Word of Yahweh: The Emergence and Essence of Prophecy
- L. The Judgment of Yahweh: Proclamation of Judgment, Judgment as Proclamation
- M. The Promise of Yahweh: Never Again and Not Yet
- N. The Wisdom of Yahweh: Waiting on God