

OT 551 FOUNDATIONS IN BIBLICAL PROPHECY
Biblical Theological Seminary
Dr. J. Robert Vannoy
Winter Semester 2007



COURSE DESCRIPTION:

"Foundations in Biblical Prophecy" has a twofold purpose: 1) to introduce the student to the phenomena of "prophecy" in Ancient Israel, and 2) to familiarize the student with the general content of the prophetic corpus of the Old Testament. The first purpose will be accomplished by classroom discussion of such questions as: did all of Israel's prophets receive a special "call" to their prophetic task; how is the origin of prophetism in Israel to be explained; are there analogies to Israel's prophetism to be found among other ancient peoples; how could the ancient Israelite distinguish between a true and a false prophet; were the prophets cultic functionaries; were the prophets writers; does biblical prophecy have apologetic value, etc. Beyond these general features of the prophetic phenomena in the Old Testament, attention will be given to hermeneutical principles that are important for a proper interpretation of the Old Testament prophetic writings. This will include discussion of such things as the prophetic time perspective, the conditionality of prophetic statements, and the idea of double sense or double reference in prophetic statements. The student will read each of the major and minor prophetic books along with C. H. Bullock's An Introduction to the Old Testament Prophetic Books. Interpretive issues in the books of Obadiah, Joel, Jonah and Amos will be discussed in the classroom.

Prerequisite: Hebrew 2. *Three hours.*

OBJECTIVES OF THE COURSE:

1. To examine the phenomena of prophetism in Ancient Israel, including such things as the prophetic call, the inspiration of the prophets, relation of the prophets to the cult, true and false prophets, symbolic acts, comparison of prophecy in Israel to prophecy outside Israel, and the apologetic value of biblical prophecy and its fulfillment.
2. To become familiar with the writings of the prophets of Israel including the general content of each book, its historical setting, and purpose of writing.
3. To learn some principles of hermeneutics relative to the prophetic writings, both in theory and application.
4. To become acquainted with critical theories concerning the authorship and character of prophetic books, with particular attention given to Isaiah and Daniel.
5. To explore how the message of the prophetic writings has relevance for the church of the 21st century.

METHODS EMPLOYED TOWARD THE SECURING OF THE COURSE OBJECTIVES:

1. Texts: C. Hassel Bullock, An Introduction to the Old Testament Prophetic Books.

Elizabeth Achtemeier, “Preaching from the Prophets,” (Chapter 7, pp. 109-135) in Preaching From the Old Testament

Elizabeth Achtemeier, Preaching from the Minor Prophets.
Or:
Donald A. Leggett, Loving God and Disturbing Men. Preaching from the Prophets.
2. Reading each of the prophetic books in the English Bible.
3. Lectures will supplement readings and will concentrate on various aspects of the phenomena of prophetism in ancient Israel and the books of Obadiah, Joel, Jonah, and Amos.
4. Classroom discussion and interaction will be encouraged.
5. Preparation of an exegetical paper on the Book of Hosea.
6. Preparation of an exegetical analysis of Amos 9:11-15.
7. Brief written discussion of the readings from Achtemeier **or** Achtemeier and Leggett.

PROCEDURES USED IN TESTING ACHIEVEMENT OF THE COURSE OBJECTIVES:

1. Potential quizzes each week on assigned readings. During the quarter three or four quizzes will be given.
2. Mid-term examination, primarily on lecture material.
3. Final examination, also primarily on lecture material
4. Evaluation of papers.

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Assignments

Reading

C. Hassell Bullock, An Introduction to the Old Testament Prophetic Books.
Chicago: Moody Press, 1986.

Elizabeth Achtemeier, "Preaching from the Prophets," (Chapter 7, pp. 109-135)
in Preaching From the Old Testament. Louisville: Westminster/John
Knox, 1989.

Elizabeth Achtemeier, Preaching from the Minor Prophets. Grand
Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998.

OR:

Donald Leggett, Loving God and Disturbing Men. Preaching from the Prophets.
Bowmanville, Canada: Clements Publishing, 2003, Revised Edition.

Term Paper

A study is to be made of the book of Hosea, the results of which are to be summarized in a paper of 15-20 pages (typewritten, double-spaced, using correct form for footnotes, bibliography, etc.). The paper is to include discussion of the following matters:

1. The moral problem of Hosea's wife of whoredoms - what position do you take on this, and why?

Resources to begin your study:

H. Eybers, "The Matrimonial Life of Hosea," In Studies in the Books of Hosea and Amos. Pretoria: OTWSA, 1964, 1965, pp. 11-34.

H. H. Rowley, "The Marriage of Hosea," In Men of God: Studies in Old Testament History and Prophecy. London: 1963, pp. 66-97.

2. Select some verse, section, or topic in the book of Hosea (**other than the topic of Hosea's wife of whoredoms**) that you find to be particularly interesting, and comment on it, utilizing insights derived from Hebrew translation and exegesis.

3. Make some comments on the significance of the book of Hosea for the time in which it was written; and then bridging the historical gap, comment on its significance for God's people at the beginning of the 21st century.

Assignment Schedule - dates given are due dates

Tues	Jan. 16	Bullock:	Obadiah, Joel, Jonah, Amos,	pp. 254-262 pp. 324-334 pp. 41-54 pp. 55-83	11 14 29 (63)
Tues.	Jan. 23	Bullock:	Hosea, Micah,	pp. 84-102 pp. 103-124	18 22 (40)
Tues.	Jan. 30	Hosea paper research			
Tues.	Feb. 6	Bullock:	Isaiah Zephaniah	pp. 125-164 pp. 165-173	40 9 (49)
Tues.	Feb. 13	Hosea paper research			
Tues.	Feb. 20	MID-TERM EXAMINATION			
Tues.	Feb. 27	Bullock:	Habakkuk, Jeremiah, Nahum,	pp. 174-184 pp. 185-214 pp. 215-226	11 30 12 (53)
Tues.	March 6	Bullock	Ezekiel, Daniel,	pp. 227-253 pp. 279-300	27 22 (49)
Hosea paper due*					
Tues.	March 13	Bullock:	Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi,	pp. 301-309 pp. 310-323 pp. 335-343	9 14 9 (32)
Tues.	March 20	Amos exegesis			
Tues.	March 27	Give a two page summarization of the five most significant things you have learned from reading either the two			

assigned readings from Achtemeier, or Chapter 7 from Achtemeier and the book by Leggett.

Elizabeth Achtemeier, Preaching from the Minor Prophets. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998.

Elizabeth Achtemeier, "Preaching from the Prophets," (Chapter 7, pp. 109-135) in Preaching From the Old Testament. Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 1989.

Donald Leggett, Loving God and Disturbing Men. Preaching from the Prophets. Bowmanville, Canada: Clements Publishing, 2003, Revised Edition.

* A one week extension will be granted without penalty. A .5 grade point penalty per week will be given for subsequent lateness.

Grading

1/4	Quizzes on Bullock (potential every day on which a reading assignment from Bullock is due); Amos exegesis; Achtemeier report.
1/4	Hosea paper
1/4	Mid-term Exam
1/4	Final Exam

Extra-credit

You may achieve extra- credit for your grade in this course by reading chapters 1,2,6,7 in the book CONTINUITY AND DISCONTINUITY. PERSPECTIVES ON THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE TESTAMENTS, edited by John Feinberg, Crossway, 1988. This book is no longer out of print if you desire to purchase it, but photo copies of these four chapters are on reserve in the Library. The articles in this book, as the title suggests, raise the important issue of continuity and discontinuity between the Testaments, which is a particularly important issue when one attempts to interpret the "kingdom prophecies" of the OT prophetic books. Do these prophecies speak in figurative language about the New Testament church, or do they have reference to a future that involves some sort of a reconstituted national Israel? Does the Bible see a future for Israel, or is Israel superceded by the church? You should read the above chapters

and then reflect on the issues that they raise, and write an 8-10 page paper describing your own conclusions on these issues. This does not necessarily mean that you have to agree with the expression of either side of the issue as represented in the essays you have read. There may be other alternatives. This, of course, is a very large subject, and one that is very complex as well. It is possible that you may not be able to come to any firm conclusions in the short time that you have to work on this project. I am aware that most of you are probably in the early stages of your own theological reflection, and that issues like this need to be worked out over a longer rather than a shorter period of time of wrestling with the issues involved. But I would hope that this project would encourage you to at least make some tentative steps toward finding your own way on these questions, and then enable you to identify some of the outstanding issues that in your own mind are as yet unresolved. These unresolved issues could also be part of the discussion included in your paper.

Due date March 27 – no extensions.

Should you choose to do this paper, I will give extra-credit as follows:

Grade of A on your paper = .75 grade point increase of your final grade.

Grade of B on your paper = .50 grade point increase of your final grade.

**Biblical Seminary's policy on
Plagiarism**

To plagiarize is “To steal or purloin and pass off as one’s own (ideas, writings, etc., of another)” (*Webster’s new collegiate dictionary*, 1953). Plagiarism is theft. Not putting the definition above within quotation marks, not crediting Webster’s (via the text citation), or changing a word (e.g., “claim” for “pass off”) and presenting the definition as your own would all be plagiarism. In other words, plagiarism is using someone else’s material without giving that person credit. Other forms of plagiarism include mixing unmarked quotations with your own words and putting a single reference at the end of the paragraph, buying a paper from a term paper service (from any source, including one of those online), turning in a paper written by a student who already took the course, or having someone else write your paper. If in doubt, ask your professor or the library staff *before* you turn it in.

Any paper containing plagiarized material will receive a zero (0%). You may appeal this policy to the faculty, who could forgive you **or** discipline you further by, e.g., expulsion or failure for the course.

CLASS LECTURE OUTLINE

- I. Prophetism in ancient Israel - general remarks.
 - A. A unique phenomenon.
 - B. The prophets were servants of God, invested with the prophetic function.
 - 1. Some of the prophets received a special call to the prophetic task.
 - 2. For some prophets no special calling is recorded, but all the prophets demonstrate awareness that they are endowed with the prophetic function.
 - 3. The endowment with the prophetic function was a power that no prophet could resist.
 - C. The function of the prophet is the proclamation of the Word of God.
 - 1. Expressions with which the prophets introduce their sermons are indicative that the message is God's, not their own.
 - 2. The prophet must declare God's Word, regardless of whether or not this is pleasant to him.
 - 3. There is a distinction between the prophet's own word and the Word of God which they spoke.
 - D. The phenomenon of Israel's prophets is as old as the history of Israel itself.
 - E. Besides male prophets, Israel also had her prophetesses.
 - F. Besides individual prophets, there are also bands or companies of prophets referred to in the O.T.
 - 1. References to the prophetic bands or companies.
 - 2. Members of these companies came to be called $\langle \text{yalyb!N+h}^{\wedge} \text{yn} \rangle \text{B=}$
 - 3. The term "school of the prophets."
 - 4. The companies of the prophets apparently lived in their own communities.
 - 5. The degeneration of the prophetic function within the companies.
 - 6. The canonical prophets are distinguished from these companies.
 - G. The canonical prophets, or writing prophets.
- II. The prophetic nomenclature
 - A. The most general name is "the man of God."

- B. "Servant of the Lord."
 - C. "The messenger of the Lord."
 - D. aybn
 - 1. Etymology of aybn.
 - 2. Usage of the word aybn.
 - E. ha#r)
 - F. hz#oj
- III. The origin of prophetism in Israel.
- A. Alleged analogies to Israel's prophetism in other nations.
 - 1. Mesopotamian analogies.
 - a. Letter of Itur-asdu to Zimrilim.
 - b. Letter of Kibri-Dagan to Zimrilim.
 - c. Letter of Kibri-Dagan to Zimrilim.
 - d. Letter of Kibri-Dagan.
 - e. Conclusion regarding Mesopotamian analogies.
 - 2. Egyptian analogies.
 - a. Admonitions of Ipu-wer.
 - b. Prophecy of Nefer-rohu.
 - 3. Canaanite analogies
 - 4. Conclusion
 - B. Internal Israelite explanations for the origin of prophetism.
 - 1. Religious genius of Israel itself.
 - 2. Religious consciousness of the prophets.
 - C. Prophetism in Israel according to the witness of the Old Testament finds its origin in God and must be viewed as a gift of God to his people (Deut. 18:9-22).
- IV. The ways and means of God's revelation to the prophets.
- A. Prophetic seeing and hearing the word of God.
 - B. The function of the Holy Spirit in the revelation of God to the prophets.

1. Some biblical passages which have a bearing on the function of the Holy Spirit in the revelation of God to the prophets.
 2. The Holy Spirit, ecstasy, and the prophets.
 - a. Mowinckel - Spirit and ecstasy belong together.
 - b. Sometimes the Holy Spirit produces abnormal behavior described as prophesying.
 - c. Must not exaggerate this into more than the Bible says.
 - d. To admit abnormal behavior does not mean derivation from heathen practices.
 - e. The Bible does not indicate that the coming of the Spirit on a man always brings about abnormal behavior.
 - f. Mowinckel's contention is not true.
- C. In what sense may we speak of ecstasy among Israel's prophets?
1. There has always been a difference of opinion here.
 2. Ecstasy is a broad concept and very different things can be understood by it.
 3. Certainly not everything labeled as ecstatic behavior on the part of the canonical prophets can be so considered.
 4. The form of ecstatic behavior most frequently displayed among Israel's prophets is that of the visionary experience - not wild abnormal behavior.
- V. The preaching of the prophets.
- A. General remarks
1. The prophets were first and foremost proclaimers of God's Word.
 2. The message of the prophets was a faithful proclamation of God's revelation, but not to the exclusion of a personal element in the form of its presentation.
- B. Some formal characteristics of the prophetic proclamation.
1. The messages are direct and living - not abstract and dry.
 2. The prophets often utilize a play on words to get a point across.
 3. The prophets often utilize poetic expression.
 4. The prophets often use imagery or figurative language.
- C. Some characteristics of the content of the prophetic proclamation.
1. The prophets do not bring a new religion or morality.
 2. The message of the prophets centers in four areas.
 - a. Religious.
 - b. Morality and social relationships.

- c. Political issues.
- d. Eschatology and messianic expectation.

VI. True and false prophets.

- A. Statement of the problem.
- B. Validation criteria for true prophecy.
 - 1. Moral character of the prophet as observed in his daily conduct.
 - 2. Signs and wonders.
 - 3. The fulfillment of prophecy.
 - 4. The conformity of the message to previous revelation.
 - 5. Enlightenment by God's Spirit.

VII. Prophet and cult in ancient Israel.

- A. The view that the prophets were anticultic
 - 1. Explication of the view.
 - 2. Scripture adduced for support of this view.
 - 3. Assessment of the view.
- B. The view that the prophets were cultic functionaries.
 - 1. Explication of the view.
 - 2. Scripture adduced for support of this view.
 - 3. Assessment of the view.
- C. The view that the prophets were neither anticultic as such, nor cultic functionaries, but simply the proclaimers of divine revelation.

VIII. The composition of the prophetic books - were the prophets writers?

- A. The traditional view.
- B. The literary critical school.
 - 1. Isaiah
 - 2. Daniel
 - a. The a priori that predictive prophecy does not happen.
 - b. Alleged historical errors.
 - c. Alleged late linguistic features.
 - d. Conclusion.
- C. The history of traditions school.
 - 1. Nyberg
 - 2. Birkeland
 - 3. Nielsen

- a. Synopsis of his thesis
 - b. Assessment of his thesis.
- IX. Some hermeneutical principles for interpretation of the prophetic writings.
- A. Some general characteristics of predictive prophecy.
 - 1. The purpose of predictive prophecy.
 - 2. Predictive prophecy and history writing.
 - 3. The progressive character of predictive prophecy.
 - 4. Predictive prophecy has its own peculiar time perspective.
 - 5. The message of predictive prophecy may be couched in culturally dated terminology.
 - 6. Predictive prophecy may be conditional.
 - 7. Kinds of predictive prophecy.
 - B. Some guidelines for interpretation of prophecy.
 - 1. Make a careful grammatical-historical-contextual analysis of the passage.
 - 2. State explicitly to whom or to what the passage refers.
 - 3. Pay attention to fulfillment citations.
 - 4. Avoid the idea of double fulfillment or double sense.
 - 5. Interpretative analysis must precede a decision on the exact relationship between the literal and figurative in any passage (cf. Mickelsen, 299ff.).
- X. The apologetic value of biblical prophecy.
- A. Does biblical prophecy have apologetic value? - a preliminary consideration.
 - B. The revelatory claim of the Bible.
 - C. Prophecy and fulfillment.
 - D. Conclusion.

SECTION TWO - A SURVEY OF THE PROPHETICAL BOOKS

- I. Introductory remarks.
- II. Obadiah.
 - A. Author and date.

- B. Theme of the book.
- C. Comments on the content.
- III. Joel
 - A. Author and date.
 - B. Content of the book.
 - 1. The problem of approach to the first two chapters.
 - 2. The problem of chronological sequence.
 - 3. Outline of the book.
 - 4. Some comments on the content.
- IV. Jonah.
 - A. The name and the writer.
 - B. The nature of the book - historical or non-historical.
 - C. The content of the book.
 - 1. Historical background.
 - 2. Purpose of the book.
- V. Amos.
 - A. The author and his background.
 - 1. His name.
 - 2. His place of residence.
 - 3. The place of his prophetic activity.
 - 4. The time of his prophetic activity.
 - 5. The political and social conditions of his time.
 - B. The book of Amos and its content.
 - 1. General outline.
 - 2. Major theme.
 - 3. Comments on content.

OT 551 FOUNDATIONS IN BIBLICAL PROPHECY

Bibliography Keyed to Class Lecture Outline

Winter 2007

GENERAL REFERENCE VOLUMES ON THE PROPHETIC BOOKS

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VI. TRUE AND FALSE PROPHETS

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