

STMM 501: CHRISTOLOGY

Winter 2007

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Hunthausen 213

Office Hours: by appointment

COURSE DESCRIPTION

A survey of theological reflection on Jesus of Nazareth, his life, his teaching, his death and resurrection. The course examines the New Testament, early Christian theologians, the important conciliar definitions, the scholastic synthesis, and contemporary discussion. It covers three main questions: Who is Jesus? How does Jesus save us? What did Jesus teach and do during the time of his ministry?

GOALS OF THE COURSE

By the end of the course students should:

1. have a basic sense of the scriptural and dogmatic teachings of the Church which deal with Christology.
2. have a basic sense of the development of theological reflection upon the presentation of Jesus in the New Testament and the Christian tradition.
3. be conversant with the basic issues and approaches modern theology has taken in Christology.
4. be able to reflect on the pastoral implications of these issues and approaches.

INSTRUCTIONAL METHODS

Lectures, class discussion, and short papers.

TEXTBOOKS

O'Collins, G., Interpreting Jesus, Reprint through Wipf and Stock, Publishers.

Luttenberger, Gerard, H., Who Do you Say That I Am? An Introduction to Christology in the Gospels and Early Church, Twenty Third Publications.

Weaver, J. Denny, The Nonviolent Atonement, Eerdmans.

Borg, Marcus, Jesus, A New Vision, Harper.

One of many possible views of the historical Jesus. This text should be read in connection with the issue of the historical Jesus.

COURSE OUTLINE

Session 1:

Introduction

Pluralism in Christology

Images of Jesus

From our own experience

From the world of art

From the scriptures, especially the Hebrew Scriptures

No reading assigned before the first class session

Session 2:

Finish the overview of images from the Hebrew Scriptures used by early Christian thought

A quick survey of the New Testament Christologies of the gospels

Readings: Mark 1, Matthew 1 and 2, Luke 1 and 2, John 1.

Each of the gospels sets up its key images of Jesus quickly in its opening chapters. Read these selection and try to get some sense of how the various gospels differ in the fundamental images they use to present Jesus.

Christology Syllabus 2

Luttenberger, Part 2.

Read this after you have tried getting the images from the gospels on your own. Luttenberger gives a quick overview of what each of the gospels is doing in its presentation of Jesus. What are the practical implications for ministry each of these presentations open up?

Session 3:

We will finish up our treatment of the Christologies of the New Testament.

And we will begin to look at the Historical Jesus

Readings: O'Collins, chapter 2;

Luttenberger, chapters 5 and 6

Read at least O'Collins for this week. We will be covering this topic for a couple of weeks so the reading can be spread out a bit.

Some key questions as you read:

Why is there a problem getting back to the historical Jesus?

How do the authors propose to deal with the problem so that they might say something about the historical Jesus? What criteria do they propose for handling passages in the gospels to see if they bear historical content or not?

What are the key elements in each of their presentations of the historical Jesus?

Session 4:

Continuation of the discussion of the historical Jesus.

Readings: finish those listed for session 4.

You might begin reading Borg.

Session 5:

Continuation of the discussion of the historical Jesus.

Readings: All of Borg's book.

We read Borg as one example of a Christology rooted in the approach to Jesus through his ministry and teaching. Key questions:

Why does Borg take this approach (through the historical Jesus)? How much ink does he give to the cross and resurrection or the doctrines regarding Jesus' natures? Why so little?

What is the central metaphor or image Borg uses in his approach to Jesus?

What is Jesus ministry about? What are its central features according to Borg?

Session 6:

Finish the discussion of Borg.

Move on to the 2nd major approach to Christology: the path through Jesus death and resurrection, i.e. Jesus as Saviour.

Readings: Luttenberger, chapters 7 and 8;

O'Collins, chapters 3, 4 and 5.

I would begin with O'Collins and then move on to Luttenberger. We will continue this discussion in the 7th session, so you need not get it all done for this week.

Key questions in reading both of them:

What historical issues surround the death and the resurrection of Jesus?

What do we need to be saved from?

How are we saved?

Is the cross the only saving act of Jesus?

Does the resurrection play a role?

Is anything else Jesus did salvific?

3 major approaches to soteriology (how we are saved by Jesus).

Session 7:

Continuation of the discussion of the topics of the 6th session, so see the materials above.

If we have time, we will begin to look at Weaver's book. So you might want to begin reading the first 3 chapters.

Key questions for Weaver:

- Why does he object to the usual Christian view of the Atonement (that of St. Anselm)?
- How does he handle scripture passage that we tend to read through the lens of Anselm's view of the atonement?
- How does he think we are saved by Jesus?

Session 8:

Continuation of the discussion of Weaver's position in the first 3 chapters of his book.

Finish reading his book and be ready to discuss

- Black soteriologies
- Feminist soteriologies
- And Womanist soteriologies

- What problems do each of these have with the usual theories of atonement?
- How do they describe the saving work of Jesus?

Session 9:

We move on to the third major theological approach to Christology, that taken through the question of the natures of Jesus as divine and human.

Readings: Luttenberger, Part 4.

O'Collins, chapter 6.

We will begin by looking at the development of Christology in the early centuries of the Church. Luttenberger gives a good short account of these early developments. We will look at them to see how Christian reflection on Jesus developed to the point of the dogmatic teachings of the Councils of Nicea and Chalcedon. Key questions:

- What were the issues the Church struggled with in the development of thought leading up to each of these councils?
- What were the key steps taken forward in the development of the Church's reflection?
- What exactly did each council teach about Jesus?

Session 10:

Complete our discussion of the historical developments in the early church.

How does theology deal with these issues today—how do we interpret the councils?

O'Collins, chapter 6. is especially helpful here.

Key questions in reading O'Collins and in our own thought:

- What does it mean to be human: what does it mean to say that Jesus is human?
- What does it mean to be God: what is the divine nature and what are we saying about Jesus when we apply divinity to him?
- How do humanity and divinity come together in Jesus?
- Why is the notion of person a problem here?

ASSIGNMENTS

1. the assigned readings;
2. class discussion;
3. Two Papers :
 - A. Take a significant theologian who wrote before 1800 and write a short paper on how he or she handled a specific issue in the area of Christology. Some suggested areas the paper might cover:
 - what the issue was and why it was important to the life of the Church at that time,
 - the state of the question at the time the author wrote,
 - how the author's position fit with the rest of his or her theological approach,
 - the contribution he or she made to the issue,
 - and any pastoral implications the issue might have for us today.
 - B. Take a significant theologian who wrote after 1800 and write a short paper on how he or she handled a specific issue in the area of Christology. Guidelines are the same as those listed above for the first paper.

- Papers are due at class in the 5th and 9th sessions of the course.
- Notes should make clear the sources consulted in writing the paper.
- Papers are to be double spaced, paginated, and handed in without a cover.
- Simply staple the paper in the upper left hand corner.
- Follow the general guidelines for written material for the School of Theology and Ministry;

4. Take home exam: Answer the following two questions with regard to the dogmatic section of the Nicene Creed and the dogmatic statement of the Council of Chalcedon:

1. What does the dogma intend to state positively;
2. What positions does it intend to counter.

Take home exam is due at the 10th class session. If it is more than one typed page, you are missing the point.

Criteria for grading papers:

The Superior Paper (90-100, i.e. A/A-)

Thesis: Easily identifiable, plausible, novel, sophisticated, insightful, crystal clear.

Structure: Evident, understandable, appropriate for thesis. Excellent transitions from point to point.

Paragraphs support solid topic sentences.

Use of texts: the passages from cited texts are clearly understood, well expressed or explained, and use appropriately for the development of the thesis of the paper.

Logic and argumentation: All ideas in the paper flow logically; the argument is identifiable, reasonable, and sound. Author anticipates and successfully defuses counter-arguments; makes novel connections to outside material (from other parts of the class, or other classes), which illuminate the thesis.

Mechanics: Sentence structure, grammar excellent; correct use of punctuation and citation style; minimal to no spelling errors; absolutely no run-on sentences or comma splices.

The Good Paper (84-89, i.e. B+/B)

Thesis: Promising, but may be slightly unclear, or lacking in insight or originality.

Structure: Generally clear and appropriate, though may wander occasionally. May have a few unclear transitions, or a few paragraphs without strong topic sentences.

Use of texts: passages from cited texts are understood, but may not be clearly expressed or explained throughout. They support the thesis of the paper, but all the nuances may not be seen.

Logic and argumentation: Argument of paper is clear, usually flows logically and makes sense. Some evidence that counter-arguments acknowledged, though perhaps not addressed. Occasional insightful connections to outside material made.

Mechanics: Sentence structure, grammar strong despite occasional lapses; punctuation and citation style often used correctly. Some (minor) spelling errors; may have one run-on sentence or comma splice.

The Borderline Paper (78-83, i.e. B-/C+)

Thesis: May be unclear (contain many vague terms), appear unoriginal, or offer relatively little that is new; provides little around which to structure the paper.

Structure: Generally unclear, often wanders or jumps around. Few or weak transitions, many paragraphs without topic sentences.

Use of evidence: passages from cited texts not clearly understood, expressed or explained. The relationship between the text and the thesis of the paper is not always clear.

Logic and argumentation: Logic may often fail, or argument may often be unclear. May not address counter-arguments or make any outside connections.

Mechanics: Problems in sentence structure, grammar, and diction (usually not major). Errors in punctuation, citation style, and spelling. May have several run-on sentences or comma splices.

The "Needs Help" Paper (C/C-)

Thesis: Difficult to identify at all, may be bland restatement of obvious point.

Structure: Unclear, often because thesis is weak or non-existent. Transitions confusing and unclear. Few topic sentences.

Use of text: Cited texts not understood, explained or expressed. Not related well to the thesis.

Christology Syllabus 5

Logic and argumentation: Ideas do not flow at all, usually because there is no argument to support.

Simplistic view of topic; no effort to grasp possible alternative views.

Mechanics: Big problems in sentence structure, grammar, and diction. Frequent major errors in citation style, punctuation, and spelling. May have many run-on sentences and comma splices.

The Failing Paper

Shows obviously minimal lack of effort or comprehension of the assignment. Very difficult to understand owing to major problems with mechanics, structure, and analysis. Has no identifiable thesis, or utterly incompetent thesis.