



MCMaster DIVINITY COLLEGE
WINTER SEMESTER, 2016

NT 3A03
BIBLICAL THEOLOGY
February 16, 17 + online
Location: TBA

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Course Statement

This course introduces the discipline of biblical theology, which integrates the contents and theological themes of the Old and New Testaments as the essential foundation for Christian discipleship and ministry. More specifically, this course examines the language of Exodus 34:6–7, tracing the development of a biblical theology of God through the Hebrew Bible and its various ancient renderings, via intertestamental literature to the New Testament and the person of Jesus, and thereafter in rabbinic and patristic exegesis.

Course Objectives

KNOWING

- ▶ To introduce basic approaches to the discipline of biblical theology.
- ▶ To delineate the contours of a biblical theology of God, concentrating on the Jewish tradition of the “thirteen attributes of love” from Exodus 34:6–7, and tracing the subsequent development of this theology, primarily within Jewish and Christian traditions.
- ▶ To examine aspects of the historical process of formulation, reception, transmission, and evolution of biblical theological traditions.
- ▶ To explore the relevance of biblical theology for contemporary North American culture, and inter-faith relations in particular.

BEING

- ▶ To review and reform aspects of personal discipleship, identity, and devotion in relation to the divine character.
- ▶ To evaluate and embody a holistic biblical spirituality in the context of Christian life and ministry.

DOING

- ▶ To develop greater proficiency in reading canonical texts for their theological assumptions, orientation, and world view.
 - ▶ To develop and apply ministry resources for use in the context of professional ministry.
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Specializations

Biblical Studies (BS)

Students enrolled in a Biblical Studies specialization will examine the development of particular theological themes within biblical texts (including both Old and New Testaments) as well as in subsequent exegetical, theological, and devotional literature.

Christian Worldview (CW)

Students with a Christian Worldview specialization will explore the theoretical dimensions and practical implications of life governed by the character and personal reign of Israel's God.

Pastoral Studies (PS)

Students with a Pastoral Studies specialization will focus on developing strategies of pastoral engagement that are informed by the divine-human encounter attested in Scripture, with the goal of forming individuals and communities that directly reflect the character of God.

Texts and Resources

Michael P. Knowles. *The Unfolding Mystery of the Divine Name: The God of Sinai in Our Midst*. Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2012.

The course text is available for purchase through the College bookstore, and/or directly from

READ On Bookstore
304 The East Mall Suite 100
Etobicoke, ON M9B 6E2

books@readon.ca
www.readon.ca
Tel: (416) 622-2934

Supplementary course readings are either on reserve at Mills Library (see following), available from Mills Periodicals (3rd floor), or accessible online via the Avenue to Learn (A2L) course website. Students are also encouraged to access the online Study Guide for *The Unfolding Mystery of the Divine Name* at <http://www.ivpress.com/extras/divinemystery/3985studyguide.pdf>.

On reserve:

- Blackaby, Henry T., and Claude V. King. *Experiencing God*. Revised Edition. Nashville: Broadman and Holman, 1998. MILLS BV 4501.2 .B537 1998
- Charlesworth, James H., ed. *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*. 2 vols. Garden City: Doubleday, 1983, 1985. MILLS BS 1700 .O43 1983b
- Kugel, James L. *Traditions of the Bible: A Guide to the Bible as it Was at the Start of the Common Era*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1998. MILLS BS 1225.2 .K85 1998
- Neusner, Jacob. *A Rabbi Talks With Jesus: An Intermillennial, Interfaith Exchange*. New York: Doubleday, 1993. MILLS BM 620 .N48 1993
- Payton, James R. *Light from the Christian East: An Introduction to the Orthodox Tradition*. Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2007. MILLS BX 320.3 .P39 2007

Course Schedule and Assignments

This course is organized in three sections:

1. Six weeks (online) from January 4 to February 12
2. Nine in-class hours on February 16 and 17
3. Six weeks (online) from February 22 to April 1

In the course of the first six weeks, students will complete four *research* modules; during the last six weeks (or earlier if they wish), students will complete three *praxis* modules; the in-class sessions will facilitate transition between these two sections. Assignments are to be posted to the Avenue to Learn course website (in PDF), and may be submitted at any time up until the final due date (see also the late submission policy, below).

Research Modules (all specializations) 4 × 750 words [4 × 7.5% = 30%]
Due Date: February 12 or earlier

Each student will submit a brief reflection on the assigned readings for four of five research modules (750 words each). Reflection papers will summarize the content of

the reading material, identify theological issues worthy of further investigation, and indicate points of practical relevance and application with respect to the life, ministry, and mission of the Christian community.

A. Compassion and Grace

- Reading:* *Unfolding Mystery*, 50–93
T. B. Dozeman. "Inner-Biblical Interpretation of Yahweh's Gracious and Compassionate Character." *JBL* 108 (1989), 207–23.
Jacob Neusner. *A Rabbi Talks With Jesus*. Rev. ed. Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2000. Pp. 89–110.
MILLS BM620 .N48 2000 (e-book)
- Supplemental:* "Study Guide," 13–19

B. Anger and Forbearance

- Reading:* *Unfolding Mystery*, 94–121
Tertullian. *Of Patience*, tr. S. Thelwall. ANF 3.707–17.
<http://www.tertullian.org/anf/anf03/anf03-56.htm#P12189_3412415>
- Supplemental:* "Study Guide," 20–27

C. Steadfast Love

- Reading:* *Unfolding Mystery*, 122–48
Hermann Spieckermann. "God's Steadfast Love: Towards a New Conception of Old Testament Theology." *Biblica* 81.3 (2000), 305–27.
(Online at <http://www.bsw.org/Biblica/Vol-81-2000/v1-3/>)
- Supplemental:* "Study Guide," 28–36

D. Truth, Faith, and Fidelity

- Reading:* *Unfolding Mystery*, 149–66
Gabriel Hébert. "'Faithfulness' and 'Faith'." *Theology* 58, no. 424 (1955), 373–79. MILLS Periodicals BR 1.T5
Lester J. Kuyper. "Grace and Truth: An Old Testament Description of God and Its Use in the Johannine Gospel." *Interpretation* 18 (1964), 3–19. (PDF via MILLS ATLA Religion Database)
- Supplemental:* "Study Guide," 37–42

E. Forgiveness and Justice

- Reading:* *Unfolding Mystery*, 167–201
J. H. Charlesworth. "Prayer of Manasseh." *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*. 2 vols. Ed. James H. Charlesworth. Garden City: Doubleday, 1985. 2.625–37. MILLS BS 1700 .O43 1983b (on reserve)
Albert H. Friedlander. "Judaism and the Concept of Forgiving." *Christian Jewish Relations* 19.1 (1986), 6–13.
MILLS Periodicals DS 101.C47
- Supplemental:* "Study Guide," 43–50

In-Class Sessions

Tuesday, February 16

- 9:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m. What Is "Biblical Theology" and Why Does it Matter?
1:00 p.m. – 4:00 p.m. The "Image and Likeness" of God

Wednesday, February 17

- 9:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m. Walking in the "Ways" of God

- Reading:* *Unfolding Mystery*, 202–42
Moberly, R. W. L. "How May We Speak of God? A Reconsideration of the Nature of Biblical Theology." *Tyndale Bulletin* 53.2 (2002), 177–202.
James R. Payton. "The Application of Salvation." In *Light from the Christian East: An Introduction to the Orthodox Tradition* (Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2007), 132–54.
MILLS BX 320.3 .P39 2007 (on reserve)
Robert V. Rakestraw. "Becoming like God: An Evangelical Doctrine of Theosis." *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 40/2 (June, 1997), 257–69. (PDF via MILLS ATLA Religion Database)
- Supplemental:* "Study Guide," 51–60

Praxis Modules

I. Encountering God (all specializations)

Biblical theology is a “theology of encounter,” insofar as it arises out of the human encounter with Israel’s God, whom Christian writers identify as “the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ” (2 Cor 1:3; Eph 3:1; 1 Pet 1:3). Biblical theology is thus immensely practical: those whom God encounters come away changed as to their thinking, their sense of identity, and their personal conduct. The following assignments concern various dimensions of the human response to God.

Assignments in this section are to be posted in the appropriate section of the A2L website by the due date: full documents must be in PDF; online comments can be posted directly.

A. *Character Study*

For my thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are your ways my ways, says the LORD. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts. (Isaiah 55:8–9)

1. Part One:

1,500 words [15%]

Due Date: March 4 or earlier

Compose (and post) a detailed character study of one of the following biblical figures, identifying specific ways in which they were changed by their encounter with God. How and what did they discover regarding the character or “ways” of God; what theological and practical difference did these discoveries make?

Daniel

Deborah

Esther

Hannah

Jacob of Canaan

Jeremiah

John the Baptist

Jonah

Joseph of Canaan

Mary of Nazareth

Moses

Samson

Saul of Tarsus

Sarah

Simon Peter (Gospels)

Simon Peter (Acts)

2. Part Two:

2 × 500 words [2 × 5% = 10%]
Due Date: March 18 or earlier

Post online responses to two of the above character studies. One response will indicate the impact or implications of God's character and "ways" for your own discipleship and ministry; the other will propose concrete ways in which this understanding of God can be implemented and imitated in the life of the congregation (e.g. along the lines of the *Unfolding Mystery* Study Guide).

B. *Prayer and Journaling*

500 words [5%]

Due Date (Prayers): March 4 or earlier

Due Date (Responses): March 18 or earlier

Do not approach the words of the mysteries contained in the Scriptures without prayer and without asking for God's help. Say, "Lord, grant that I may receive an awareness of the power that is within them." Consider prayer to be the key to the understanding of truth in Scripture. (St. Isaac of Syria, d. ca. 700 CE)

Throughout the semester, keep a prayer journal that focuses on your own desire to know and experience God more deeply. To this end, you may find the following exercises (and others like them) from the "Study Guide" to be helpful:

"The LORD Waits" (p. 14)

"Lord, I Believe; Help My Unbelief" (p. 37)

"Forgive Us Our Sins" (pp. 43–44)

"Father, Forgive Them" (p. 48)

"Whoever Has Seen Me Has Seen the Father" (p. 52)

The Prayer of Moses (p. 56)

On the basis of your devotional reflection, compose and post two prayers suitable for wider use under the appropriate headings (below) on the A2L course website. Post reflections on two or more of the prayers posted by other members of the class.

Headings:

Faith and Faithfulness

Forbearance

Forgiveness and Justice

Grace

Imitating/Image of God

Love

Mercy and Compassion

Other

II. Life in the Presence of God (specialization-specific)

3,000 words [40%]

Due Date: April 1 or earlier

A. Biblical Studies (BS)

Discuss the theological and practical dimensions of a particular aspect of the divine-human relationship (e.g. mercy, sin and forgiveness, judgement, providence, etc.) as it is described in at least four texts selected from each of a) the Old Testament; b) the New Testament; c) extra-biblical Jewish literature (whether Intertestamental or Rabbinic/midrashic); and d) extra-biblical (e.g. Patristic) Christian literature. For additional resources, see the course and “Researching Biblical Traditions” bibliographies, as well as the supplemental readings for the applicable subject area. After outlining exegetical and theological dimensions of the question, the essay should draw out implications for contemporary Christian discipleship, teaching, and ministry.

B. Christian Worldview (CW)

Keeping in mind the five foundational worldview questions (Who are we? Where are we? What’s the problem? What’s the solution? What time is it?), evaluate a specific non-Judaeo-Christian worldview on the basis of a Christian vision of God. First describe a particular worldview (e.g. Consumerism, Eastern Pantheism, Existentialism, Goth culture, Korean Confucianism, New Age spirituality, Native American religion, Postmodernism, White Supremacy, etc.), documenting your account from appropriate sources. Then, making use of the theological resources reviewed in the first half of the course, offer a point-by-point response that arises out of God’s encounter with humanity in the history of Israel and the person of Jesus of Nazareth.

C. Pastoral Studies (PS)

Design a summer urban missions programme for your church young adults group (ages 18–24). Their task is engage in a series of activities that will *embody* and thereby demonstrate the character of God for people who have no idea of who God is according to the Judaeo-Christian tradition. Explain what (and how) you will teach your team members about God, what activities you will have them undertake, and how these activities will help them embody the divine character and indicate to others what God is like.

Grading Summary			
<i>Assignment</i>	<i>Length</i>	<i>Percentage</i>	<i>Due Dates</i>
Research Modules	4 × 750 words	4 × 7.5% = 30%	February 12
Praxis Modules			
Character Study	1,500 words	15%	March 4
Character Study postings	2 × 500 words	2 × 5% = 10%	March 18
Prayers	500 words	5%	March 4
Prayer postings			March 18
Life in the Presence of God	3,000 words	40%	April 1

Style

All stylistic considerations (including but not limited to questions of formatting, footnotes, and bibliographic references) must conform to the McMaster Divinity College Style Guidelines for Essays and Theses: https://www.mcmasterdivinity.ca/sites/default/files/documents/mdc_styleguide.pdf. To assist with prose composition, students are encouraged to make use of grammarly.com (funded by the university), along with the Writing Support Services provided by McMaster's Student Success Centre (<http://studentsuccess.mcmaster.ca/students/academic-skills/writing-support-services.html>). Failure to observe the appropriate format will result in grade reductions. See also "CRITERIA FOR GRADING OF WRITTEN ASSIGNMENTS," below.

Academic Dishonesty

Academic dishonesty is a serious offence that may take any number of forms, including plagiarism, the submission of work that is not one's own or for which previous credit has been obtained, and/or unauthorized collaboration with other students. Academic dishonesty can result in severe consequences, e.g., failure of the assignment, failure of the course, a notation on one's academic transcript, and/or suspension or expulsion from the College. Students are responsible for understanding what constitutes academic dishonesty. Please refer to the Divinity College Statement on Academic Honesty: <http://www.mcmasterdivinity.ca/programs/rules-regulations>.

Inclusive Language

McMaster Divinity College uses inclusive language for human beings in worship services, student written materials, and all of its publications. In reference to biblical texts, the integrity of the original expressions and the names of God should be respected. The NRSV and TNIV are examples of the use of inclusive language for human beings. It is expected that inclusive language will be used in chapel services and all MDC assignments.

Cell Phone/Computer Policy

Students must refrain from conducting cell phone conversations while class is in session. Should you need to maintain contact with family members and/or your church or ministry, please turn off the ringer so as to avoid disturbing others; upon receipt of an urgent call, you may discretely excuse yourself from the classroom. The same policy applies to all computer-generated sound schemes, pagers, or other electronic annunciation systems.

Late Submission Penalty

Assignments are due online by noon on the due date, after which they will be considered late and penalized accordingly. The penalty for late submission of assignments is 1% per calendar day (to a maximum of 10%); access to the submissions page will close ten days after the due date for each assignment.

*Final date for late submission of course assignments is the last day of exams, April 8
Assignments received after this date will not be accepted for grading or credit*

Disclaimer

This syllabus is the property of the instructor and is prepared with currently available information. The instructor reserves the right to make changes and revisions up to and including the first day of class.

CRITERIA FOR GRADING OF WRITTEN ASSIGNMENTS

Grading of written materials will be based on the following general criteria

Grade Range	Content		Argument		Presentation	
90–100 A+ 85–89 A 80–84 A–	Mastery of subject matter; creativity and individualized integration of insights and their relationships; exceeds required elements		Clear, logical structure; with comprehensive introduction, persuasive argumentation, and innovative conclusions		Detailed adherence to relevant style for formatting of text, notes, and bibliography; no errors of grammar or syntax; elegant presentation	
77–79 B+ 73–76 B 70–72 B–	Above-average grasp of principles and concepts, and their inter-relationship; completion of all required elements		Coherent structure and consistent argumentation; well-stated introduction and conclusion		General adherence to relevant style and format; few errors of grammar or syntax	
67–69 C+ 63–66 C 60–62 C–	Adequate understanding of theoretical foundations; minimal completion of required elements		Rudimentary structure; minimal introductory and concluding statements		Significant errors of grammar, syntax, or style	
57–59 D+ 53–56 D 50–52 D–	Low level of comprehension; required elements incomplete or missing		Lack of coherence or structure in argumentation; no introduction or conclusion		Abundant grammatical, syntactical, and stylistic errors	
0–49% F	Inability to grasp basic concepts; required elements missing		Incomprehensible or illogical structure/argumentation		Failure to follow stylistic guidelines; incomprehensible syntax	