

TESP 187 CHRIST and CATHOLIC THEOLOGY Winter, 2009

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Office Hours:
After class or
by appointment

Course Description:

This is a third level course in Catholic theology. The course is aimed at students with an interest in and some lived experience of Roman Catholicism. While this course deals with the person of Jesus of Nazareth as he is understood in the Roman Catholic tradition, at the same time, what is said would be held by many non-Catholic Christians as well.

The approach is that of a Christology “from below.” That is, after an initial consideration of some fundamental theological concepts, which define the “playing field” of a Roman Catholic Christology, we proceed to examine Jesus Christ as an historical figure *and* as an object of faith. Our movement, then, is from “the Jesus of History” to “the Christ of Faith,” although the two phases of our inquiry are intertwined because this is, after all, a course in theology.

Since Roman Catholicism is officially non-fundamentalist, the approach to “the Jesus of History” is through the “historical-critical method.” That is, the gospels are treated as a unique literary genre, as *faith testimonies* or confessional literature, not as pure historical reports but as expressions of faith which incorporate historical reports.

The course pivots around Jesus’ proclamation of the “Kingdom of God” and treats of his “history” through the Resurrection and the sending of his Spirit. The result is a Trinitarian Christology. The Kingdom (Reign) of God turns out to be the self-gift of the Father, through the Son in the Spirit. Since Jesus was a first century Galilean Jew, our approach will be to understand him through his Jewish heritage.

Texts:

Ben Meyer, *The Man for Others*, (Xerox in bookstore)

Xeroxed Materials available in the bookstore:

Francis Smith, SJ, "The Mystery of Jesus Christ" (containing readings from two of Smith's books, *The God Question* (Paulist Press, 1988) and *The World Is Charged: the Transcendent with Us*, (a Herder & Herder Book, the Crossroad Publishing Co., 2003) and some unpublished writings).

Also useful:

The Church's Confession of Faith: A Catholic Catechism for Adults, San Francisco: Ignatius/Communio, 1987 (*The German Catechism*)

E.P. Sanders, *The Historical Figure of Jesus*. Penguin 1993

Other recommended books:

John Meier, *A Marginal Jew: Rethinking the Historical Jesus*, Vol. II *Mentor, Message and Miracles*, Doubleday, 1994 (like Sanders' book, an attempt to answer purely historical questions about Jesus.)

Walter Kasper, *Jesus the Christ*, Paulist, 1977 (according to the late Raymond Brown, premier American Catholic New Testament scholar, still the best Theological treatment of Jesus using a historical approach. Pages 1-61 can be bypassed.)

Two important recent encyclopedia articles:

The Anchor Bible Dictionary, Vol. 3, "Jesus Christ" (B. F. Meyer)
The New Jerome Biblical Commentary, "Jesus" (John Meier)

Requirements:

Class Attendance: A student who misses more than three classes (unexcused) cannot merit an **A**, more than four a **B**, more than five a **C**, More than six a **D**.

Two midterms and a final.

FINAL EXAM: Friday, March 20, 9:10 – 12:10 AM
(The final will only be given at this date and time)

Course Outline:

I. A Theological Framework

Readings: Smith, "The God-World Mystery"
(*German Catechism*, Part I: 15-117)

Exam

II. The Historical Framework: Jesus—Past and Present

Readings: Smith, "The Search for the Historical Jesus--Past and Present"
"Jesus: His Historical Theological Context"
"Israel in the Time of Jesus"
Meyer, Chapter 1, "The Gospels and the Historical Jesus"
(*German Catechism*, 121-138, 153-180)

Exam

III. The Ministry, Death and Resurrection of Jesus and the Sending of His Spirit: An Historical-Theological Synthesis

Final Exam

Outline and readings for Part III: The Ministry, Death and Resurrection of Jesus: An Historical-Theological Synthesis

1. The Ministry of Jesus:

(A) The Central Theme of His Preaching: "The Reign of God"

Readings: Smith, "The Reign of God in the Preaching and Acts of Jesus," 1-11

Meyer, Ch. 2, "The Great Proclamation"

(*German Catechism*, 121-129)

(B) The Reign of God in the Acts of Jesus

Readings: Smith, "The Reign of God in the Preaching and Acts...",
11-23

Meyer, 96-99, "Did Jesus Work Miracles?"

(German Catechism, 129-131, 131-138)

2. The Question of the Earthly Origin of Jesus

Smith, "The Infancy Narratives and the Question of Jesus' Origins"

Walter Kasper's "Letter on the Virgin Birth"

Meyer, 103-109, "Are the Infancy Gospels Historical?"

(German Catechism, 139-152, esp. 145-149)

3. The Aim and Expectations of Jesus

Smith, "The Aim of Jesus"

Meyer, Ch. 3, "The Promise and the Threat"

Ch. 4, "The Israel of the Last Times"

4. Jesus' Relation to the Coming of the Reign of God

Smith, "Jesus' Relation to the Coming of the Reign of God"

Meyer, 100-102, "Did Jesus Think of Himself as Divine?"

5. The Reign of God and the Death of Jesus

Smith, "The Death of Jesus"

Meyer, Ch. 6, "How Jesus Died and Why"

(German Catechism, 153-163 [A theological reflection on the death of Jesus])

6. The Resurrection

Smith, "The Resurrection of Jesus"

Meyer, Ch. 7, "The Stunning Reversal"

(German Catechism, 165-180)

7. The Sending of the Spirit

Smith, "The Trinity as the Summary of the Christian Answer to the (Reign of) God Question"

Meyer, Ch. 8, "The Man for Others"

(German Catechism, 181-210)