

Louisville Presbyterian Theological Seminary Supplemental (not required)  
J-Term 2011  
Professor Susan R. Garrett

***NT 4013/ Theo 530:  
Evil, Suffering, and Death in the New Testament***

***Course Description:***

In this course we will seek to identify some of the ways that evil, suffering, and death were experienced and explained by New Testament authors and their contemporaries. Other questions to be addressed include: How do the ancient views compare and contrast with modern ones? And, how may we use such historical and comparative knowledge to minister effectively to those who suffer?

***Intended Major Learning Outcomes:***

*Upon completion of the course, each student should be able to:*

1. Describe major features of a Jewish apocalyptic worldview and discuss ways that apocalyptic ideas about Satan and his servants are reflected in the New Testament;
2. Identify at least two distinct hermeneutical models for interpreting New Testament language about “principalities and powers”;
3. Exposit various New Testament passages pertaining to human temptation and affliction, showing how they utilize cultural models current in the first-century Mediterranean world;
4. Identify and summarize biblical passages pertinent to the topic of death and afterlife, and explain how views on these topics changed over the course of the biblical era and beyond; and
5. Articulate his or her personal beliefs about (a) trials of faith; and (b) death and afterlife.

***Format:*** Sessions will include lecturing by the professor, discussion of assigned readings, and structured activities of various kinds.

***Meeting dates and times:*** January 3, 6, 10, and 13 from 6:30–9:30 p.m.; and. January 8 and 15 from 9:00 a.m.–1:00 p.m.

***Course Requirements:*** Consistent attendance is required, and absences will necessitate written make-up work. Careful reading of assigned materials and energetic participation in classroom discussion are essential. Five short papers and a notebook on assigned readings are required. The student’s grade will be based on attendance, general preparedness, and participation (@25%); papers (@50%; topics described below), and completeness of the notebook (@25%). The purpose of the notebook is both to increase student accountability for the reading, and to provide the student with a resource that can be used in lifelong work of ministry. It should include notes on all readings, of sufficient length and detail to make it clear that the materials were read in full. Copy biblical texts directly into notebook (using Bibleworks or a Web site such as <http://www.biblegateway.com>). Arrange by day and topic, as per schedule below. Reading-notes may be integrated with notes and handouts from class.

**Course Readings:**

Several books have been recommended for purchase. A number of articles and shorter readings are available on CAMS or on the Internet (links in syllabus). A few items will be distributed ahead of time or in class.

Books Recommended for Purchase:

- Bonhoeffer, Dietrich. *Creation and Fall: Two Biblical Studies*. ISBN: 0684825872.
- Garrett, Susan R. *No Ordinary Angel: Celestial Spirits and Christian Claims about Jesus*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008. ISBN: 0300140959.
- McAlpine, Thomas H. *Facing the Powers: What Are the Options?* Wipf & Stock, 2003. ISBN: 159244282X.
- Stringfellow, William. *Instead of Death*. New and expanded edition. Wipf & Stock, 2004. ISBN: 1592448739

**Schedule:****Monday, January 3:**

- **Orientation to the topic. Readings/Assignments:**
  - Thomas F. Tracy, “Why Do the Innocent Suffer?” in *Why Are We Here?* (Edited by Ronald F. Thiemann and William C. Placher; Harrisburg: Trinity Press International, 1998), 40-55 (on CAMS)
  - Carol A. Newsom, “Three (Rather Different) Ways of Imagining Good and Evil” (manuscript distributed to class; audio available on iTunes University).
- **The apocalyptic worldview.**
  - Daniel 7–12 (*skim* these chapters, along with the introduction in a good study Bible)
  - Sidnie White Crawford, “Apocalyptic,” in *Eerdmans Dictionary of the Bible* (ed. David Noel Freedman; Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 2000), 72–73 (on CAMS).
  - **Written assignment #1:** Write a short (1-2 pages double-spaced) paper based on the foregoing article. In the first part, summarize the following: key features and major antecedents of *apocalypse* as a literary genre; the definition and key features of *apocalyptic eschatology*; and key features of an *apocalyptic worldview*. In the second part, discuss how you see features of apocalyptic eschatology and worldview reflected in 2 Thessalonians.
- **Satan and his servants.**
  - Job 1:1–2:13; Zech 3:1-6; 2 Sam 24:1-14, together with parallel account in 1 Chron 24:1-13; Wis 2:21-24; Luke 4:1-13
  - *The Life of Adam and Eve* (= *Apocalypse of Moses*) 15-30 (at <http://wesley.nnu.edu/sermons-essays-books/noncanonical-literature/the-apocalypse-of-moses/>)
  - *Jubilees* 10:1-14; 17:15–18:19 (available at <http://wesley.nnu.edu/index.php?id=2127>)
  - *Testament of Job* (available at <http://wesley.nnu.edu/sermons-essays-books/noncanonical-literature/testament-of-job/>)

- Susan R. Garrett, “Devil/Satan” (on CAMS)
- Susan R. Garrett, “Jesus Christ, Exorcist.” Online:  
<http://www.beliefnet.com/Faiths/Christianity/2004/04/Jesus-Christ-Exorcist.aspx?p=1> )
- Susan R. Garrett, *No Ordinary Angel*, chap. 3

#### Thursday, January 6:

- **Principalities and powers.**

- Luke 22:53 [What does Jesus mean by his assertion “This is your hour...”?]; 1 Cor 2:6-8 [who are “the rulers of this age?”]; 15:24-28; Rom 8:38-39; Eph 1:20-23; 6:10-17; Heb 2:14; Revelation 13
- Thomas H. McAlpine, *Facing the Powers: What Are the Options?* (Monrovia, Calif.: MARC, 1991).
- William Stringfellow, *Instead of Death*
- Susan R. Garrett, *No Ordinary Angel*, chap. 4
- **Written assignment #2:** based on the handout by Bill Wylie-Kellerman, “Thinking Biblically and Theologically About a Particular Power: An Inventory of Provoking Questions” (on CAMS). Identify a “principlality” with which you have had some experience. Examples include church judicatories; the court system; INS; IRS; U.S. military; a corporation; also various “ideologies,” “isms,” and “icons.” Write an essay, due in class, not to exceed 3 single-spaced pages, answering the “provoking questions” as applied to that principlality. Address all of the questions under the first heading (“Creatureliness: Defining a Principlality”). If you have too much material to address all questions under the second two headings, then pick and choose, but do not exceed the 3-page limit. *NOTE: To inspire you, I have posted three essays by former students on CAMS. One is on ICE (Immigration and Citizenship Enforcement, Part of the U.S. Citizen and Immigration Services), one is on the organization Presbyterian Women, and one is on racism in the United States.*

#### Saturday, January 8:

- **Traditions about testing.**

- Mark 1:12-13; 8:11, 31-33; 10:2; 12:15; 14:32-42 (together with Heb 5:7-10); Luke 4:1-13; Rom 5:3-4; 1 Cor 7:5; 11:28-32 (in context); 2 Cor 12:7-10; Heb 2:14-18; 4:16; 5:7-10; 12:5-11; James 1:2-8; 4:7; Rev 3:10. Can you identify the tempter/tester in each instance? Does the writer regard the testing/tempting as a good thing, or something utterly contrary to God’s purposes?
- Susan R. Garrett, *The Temptations of Jesus in Mark’s Gospel* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1998), 19-49 (on CAMS)

- **Reflecting theologically on temptation.**

- Bonhoeffer, *Creation and Fall: Two Biblical Studies*, 109-44.
- **Written assignment #3:** Write a short reflection paper (3 pages double-spaced; due in class) on a theme treated in the Bonhoeffer essay. In your paper, you should interact with Bonhoeffer, and also draw on biblical perspectives on the topic as well as human

experience (yours or others'). You may choose the theme yourself, or you may use one of the following ideas:

- In times of temptation the Christian is abandoned by his or her powers—and, in a manner of speaking, by God (see p. 112 and elsewhere).
- Satan is a deceptive seducer, who comes to us not from hell but in paradise (see pp. 116-117).
- There are three types of temptation for the Christian: temptation of the flesh, spiritual temptation, and complete temptation (each correlated with one of Satan's temptations of Jesus in the accounts of Luke 4 and Matthew 4; this theme is introduced on pp. 118-20 and elaborated on pp. 131-42).
- In the experience of lust (including but not limited to sexual lust), "powers of the body, the mind and the will, which were held in obedience under the discipline of the Word, of which I believed that I was the master, make it clear to me that I am by no means master of them" (132).
- "Temptation of the flesh through desire and through suffering is at bottom one and the same" (134).
- Linda A. Mercadante, "Sin, Addiction, and Freedom," *Reconstructing Christian Theology* (Edited by Rebecca S. Chopp and Mark Lewis Taylor; Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1994), 220-44; also the handout with the "Twelve Steps." Take notes for discussion on the similarities and differences that Mercadante finds between the Twelve Steps and traditional theological constructions of the doctrine of sin. What shortcomings does she find in the Twelve Steps approach? What strengths?

## Monday, January 10.

### • Cultural Models of Affliction.

- Susan R. Garrett, "Paul's Thorn and Cultural Models of Affliction," in *The Social World of the First Christians: Essays in Honor of Wayne A. Meeks* (Edited by L. Michael White and Larry Yarbrough; Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1995), 82-99 (on CAMS). Focus especially on the first part of the essay, in which I discuss the notion of "cultural models" and sketch three models of affliction.
- On suffering as "chastisement" or "discipline" read Deut 8:2-5, 16; Prov 3:11-12; 2 Macc 6:12-17; Sir 1:26-27; 2:1-11; 4:11-19; 6:18-31; 18:13-14; 30:1-2 (note that, throughout Sirach, the Greek *paideia* is translated sometimes as "instruction" or "learning" and sometimes as "discipline"); Wis 3:1-6; Hebrews (especially 2:10-18; 5:7-10; 12:1-13); Seneca, *Epistle* 13; Epictetus, *Discourses* 1.29; Charles H. Talbert, *Learning Through Suffering: The Educational Value of Suffering in the New Testament and in Its Milieu* (Collegeville, Minn.: Liturgical Press, 1991), 9-23 (on CAMS)
- On the "Job-model," read *Testament of Job*; 4 Maccabees (skim; this is found in most study Bibles that include the OT Apocrypha); Luke 4:1-13; 1 Pet 5:6-11; Rev 12:1-12 (especially v. 10). Questions to consider: Who is the "tyrant" in each of these texts? What is the correct or ideal response to persecution by the tyrant in each document?

### • Ministering to Sufferers.

- **Written assignment #4:** Write a reflection paper (maximum of 3 double-spaced pages in length; due in class) addressing the following questions: (1) What are the types of

suffering that you yourself have witnessed, or that you expect to witness (or experience) in your practice of ministry? (2) Is psychological suffering such as grief or depression worse than, not as bad as, or about the same as physical suffering? Think of specific examples: e.g., how do the grief and loneliness felt by a wealthy widow in Lexington, Kentucky compare to the suffering experienced by persons who are starving or living in wretched conditions in Appalachia, or in an inner city? To the suffering of persons who are in the throes of painful illness? To the pain of persons who are victims of racial or sexual violence? Is it even possible to quantify suffering in this way? (3) In general terms, what are the pastor's responsibilities in ministering to the suffering? Is he or she obligated to provide answers to the intellectual problems that suffering raises? Merely to offer a "ministry of presence?" Or should he or she do both? What are the pastor's responsibilities in training parishioners to minister to one another in their suffering, or to the community/world in its suffering?

### Thursday, January 13:

- **"And the last enemy is Death."**
  - Garrett, *No Ordinary Angel*, 186-202
  - Articles from the *Anchor Bible Dictionary*: "Abode of the Dead"; "Destroyer"; "Hades, Hell"; "Resurrection" (all on CAMS)
  - Richard Bauckham, "Life, Death, and the Afterlife in Second Temple Judaism," in *Life in the Face of Death* (ed. Richard N. Longenecker; Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1998), 80-98 (on CAMS).
- **Coping with the fear of death:**
  - **Written assignment #5:** Write a reflection paper (approximately 2 pages, double-spaced) addressing one of the following scenarios:
    - A. You are pastor/counselor to a woman whose mother (in her 70's) is dying. The mother is a woman of faith, who is at peace with her coming death. She speaks often of "going home to be with the Lord." A son (one of several adult children) has been saying that Mom's theology is wrong: there won't be any experience of heaven until the Day of Resurrection. He has held his tongue in front of Mom, but the rest of the family members, including Dad, are now confused and upset.
      - Future Pastors: The daughter comes and asks you if you will meet with her, with the "troublemaking" brother, and with the father and "tell us what Christians are supposed to believe about heaven." All have agreed to the meeting and you do, too. How will you proceed, and what points will you try to communicate? What aspects of family dynamics do you think will be important here?
      - Future Counselors: The daughter shares her distress with you and asks you what she should do. She expresses that she is very confused now about what she is supposed to believe. How do you help her, within the limits appropriate to the counseling context?
    - B. A middle schooler ("Ty") was taken by some friends to a "Hell House," where he was shown enactments of the agony and torments of various sinners in the afterlife. Ty's parents have come to you, very upset. They had thought it would be "just a routine haunted house." They tell you that although the family attends church regularly, Ty

had been indifferent about his faith before. Now he is obsessed with worry that he and the people he loves will go to hell. The parents tell you that they don't know how to reduce their son's obsession. They want to know how they should handle his fears about hell and what they should teach him to believe. What do you say? (Answer in a way appropriate to your envisioned ministerial role, whether as pastor, counselor, social worker, or in some other capacity).

**Saturday, January 15:**

- **Death and the life hereafter**

- Garrett, *No Ordinary Angel*, 202-36.
- Selections from James Moorhead, *World without End: American Mainstream Protestant Visions of the Last Things, 1880–1925* (on changing views of death, heaven, and hell in American society; on CAMS).
- “Spiritualism,” online: <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Spiritualism>
- Zoe Enstone, “Freak Like Me,” (online: <http://expositionmagazine.com/?p=29>). A commentary on the current state of the Gothic subculture.
- Visit the Web site [www.near-death.com](http://www.near-death.com). Spend at least an hour perusing; be sure to read some specific accounts of near-death experiences.

**\*\*NOTEBOOKS DUE ON WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 19 AT 5:00 P.M.\*\***