

**PERKINS SCHOOL OF THEOLOGY  
SOUTHERN METHODIST UNIVERSITY  
DM9305**

**Evangelism and the Logic of Renewal  
William J. Abraham**

**Course Description**

A critical examination of various proposals for the renewal of the church that have emerged over the last generation and an exploration of their significance for the revitalization of evangelism in the twenty-first century.

**Aims**

1. To provide a critical overview of the leading proposals on the renewal of the church which have emerged in the last generation.
2. To enable students to think through conceptually and practically the relation between church renewal and evangelism.

**Pre-class Readings**

[ABE books on the web is a great place to find any book.]

Abraham, *A Very Short Introduction to Methodism* (MSS available by email from author)

Brown, Raymond, *The Churches the Apostles left Behind* (New York: Paulist, 1984)

Kinzer, Mark, *Israel's Messiah and the People of God* (Eugene, Oregon: Cascade Books, 2011).  
[Introduction and Part I]

Levi, *The Journal Once Lost, Extracts from the Diary of John Sung* (Singapore: Genesis Books, 2012)

Newbigin, Lesslie, *Proper Confidence; Faith, Doubt, and Certainty in Christian Discipleship* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995)

Vickers, Jason, *Minding the Common Ground* (Waco: Baylor University Press, 2011).

Spong, John Selby, *Why Christianity Must Change or Die* (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1998)

Tickle, Phyllis, *The Great Emergence, How Christianity is Changing and Why* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2008).

Vanhoozer, Kevin, *Biblical Authority after Babel* (Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2016).

**Pre-Class Assignments**

In our time together we shall focus on critical reviews of the texts identified above. In each case students will provide: 1) an accurate, comprehensive summary of the text and 2) a critical evaluation of the strengths and weaknesses of the material presented. For one section of the course noted below as the Messianic Judaism Working Group, student will join as observers. The Messianic Judaism Working Group is a group of Messianic Jewish and Christian scholars working on the significance of contemporary Messianic Judaism.

[You may find it helpful to use the following schema for reading the texts: 1. What description does the author supply as regards the current state/problems of the church? 2. What diagnosis does the author offer of the current state/problems in the church? 3. What prescription does the author propose to set things right? 4. What is your evaluation of the description, diagnosis, and prescription offered by the author? 5. How far do the author's proposals foster or inhibit healthy evangelistic practices? There are exceptions to this schema, for example, the material by Brown and Kinzer]

Within the critical evaluation, students should feel free to focus on a particular aspect of the work in question. At least one half of the review should be devoted to critical evaluation. The texts should be read in the following order: Brown, Spong, Newbigin, Kinzer, Levi (Sung journal), Tickle, Vanhoozer, Abraham, Vickers.

The reviews should be about 4 pages long.

All reviews must be completed and in hand for the first session of the class.

Total written work should be no more than 30 pages. [Note that it is not essential that students write on every author, although all authors are to be read prior to class time. Students are free to combine two authors in one review.]

## **Assignments during Seminar**

During the classes we shall work as a single group, proceeding thorough the texts and the written reviews.

## **Post-Seminar Assignment**

Students should choose *one* of the options listed below.

### **Option A:**

Develop and deliver three sermons on either the nature of the church or the renewal of the church, or a combination of both these themes. Get feedback from a select group in the congregation on the effectiveness of these sermons for your local congregation. [A minimum of three responses is essential.] Supply either a manuscript of the sermon or extensive notes plus your brief review of the evaluations received.

### **Option B:**

Write a 10-page paper gathering together your own thoughts on the renewal of the church with particular reference to your local congregation or ecclesial situation.

## **Grades**

Grades are numerical with an 80 required to meet the requirements of this course. The essays will be graded *as one whole* and will be counted toward 50% of the total grade. The quality of your participation in the group will count for 20% of your grade. The post-seminar project, due within 90 days after the end of the seminar, will count for 30%.

### **Class Schedule**

Session 1	Brown
Session 2	Spong
Session 3	Newbigin
Session 4	Sung
Session 5	Kinzer
Session 6	Tickle
Session 7	Vanhoozer
Session 9	Abraham
Session 10	Wrap-up Vickers