Yale Summer Study

June 4-8, 2018

The Bible and the Reformation

Bruce Gordon

Syllabus

Outline

In 1521 Martin Luther stood at the Diet of Worms and declared not only "Here I Stand" but that he would publicly retract anything he said that could be proved wrong by the words of the Bible. Scripture stood at the heart of the Reformations, both Protestant and Catholic, as the sacred text of Christianity was the focus of a storm of controversy. No one doubted that the Old and New Testaments were the Word of God, but what did that mean? And who had the authority to interpret them? Was it only doctors of the church, or, as Erasmus famously quipped, could the plowman in the field expound the parables of Jesus? This course will consider the nature of the Bible in the Reformation in its many dimensions and manifestations. How was the book printed, translated, and interpreted? We shall marvel at Erasmus' Greek New Testament that changed Western Christianity, be amazed by Albrecht Dürer’s illustrations for the Book of Revelation in Martin Luther’s Bible, and read William Tyndale's prose that created the English Bible, and which remains with us today. The enormous influence of Jewish traditions on the Reformations will be evident as we consider how Christian scholars in the sixteenth century began to learn Hebrew. Through extensive use of visual and printed material we shall explore how the Bible shaped the theological debates of the age and formed Protestant and Catholic cultures. The course will end with a visit to the treasures of the Beinecke Library.
Monday:

*Christian Humanism and Erasmus’ New Testament*

Reading:

Erasmus, Preface to the New Testament (Paraclesis) (1516)

Tuesday

*Sola scriptura: Martin Luther and his Bible*

Reading:

Preface to the Old and New Testaments (1522, revised 1545)

Wednesday

“*In the Beginning*: William Tyndale and the Formation of the Bible in English

Reading:

Tyndale’s Prefaces to the New Testament and the Pentateuch (1526/1530)

Thursday

*The Reformed Tradition*

Reading:

John Calvin's Preface to the French Bible of 1539
Friday  (Class in Beinecke Library)

*The Bibles of Shakespeare: Geneva and the King James*

Reading:

Geneva Bible Preface (1560)

King James Preface  (1611)