



SCHOOL FOR MINISTRY
The Episcopal Diocese of San Diego

New Testament II
Spring 2019
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Welcome to New Testament II! This class continues to explore the discipline of academic Biblical Studies, building on the material covered in New Testament 1

- Specifically, the literature of the Early Apostolic Church, especially the Life and Writings of St. Paul.

“New Testament” or “Christian Scriptures”?

The preferred terminology today is “Christian Scriptures” rather than “New Testament.” Referring to the Bible as the “Old” and “New” Testaments might suggest to Jews that their sacred scriptures are outdated compared to the “New” Christian Testament, or have been superseded. [Remember: The Hebrew Scriptures are the sacred texts of Judaism, however important they might be to Christians - primarily *because* they were the sacred scriptures of Jesus of Nazareth, a Jew.] Also, as we will see, the language of “Old” and “New” Testaments imposes a “Christocentric” interpretive framework on the Hebrew Bible that is liable to corrupt or distort the original meaning of the texts. [In Judaism, the preferred term of art for their sacred writings is *Tanakh* - an acrostic made up from the three first letters of the three principal sections of the Hebrew Bible: (1) The *T*orah (the “Teachings”); (2) the *N*evi'im (the “Prophets”, which includes History Books); and (3) the *K*etuvim (the Miscellaneous “Writings”) - hence, *TaNaKh*.]

The Mission of the Class is to Nurture Students towards a Nuanced, Critical Interpretation and Understanding of the Texts of the Hebrew Bible. The Bible is the most widely read and influential set of texts in human history, and is really a library of many books that chronicle the stories about God’s revelation in two volumes:

- I. The Story of God's Covenantal Relationship with the Jews in the Hebrew Scriptures (the *Tanakh* or "Hebrew Bible")
- II. The Life, Teachings, Death, and Resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth, and the Story of his Followers in the Early Church (the "Christian Scriptures")

This class is the *second* part of a two-part course that forms an introductory survey of the various writings compiled into the Christian Scriptures. In essence, the Christian Scriptures synthesize these two stories – of Jesus and the Early Church – as the *witness* ("Testament") of the earliest Christians who wish to proclaim that Jesus of Nazareth is the Messiah ("Christ"), and that this is "Good News" (Gospel) signifying salvation for the whole world.

In New Testament II, much of our focus will be on the figure of Paul as we study his life and his various letters (both authentic and pseudepigraphical). Paul is the dominant figure in early Christianity, who takes the message of the Gospel "global" by preaching to the Gentiles throughout the (eastern) Greco-Roman world. Some even go so far as to claim that Paul "invented" Christianity. Jesus never appears or claims to be anything other than a practicing Jew (except in John's Gospel); but some accuse Paul of taking the "Messenger" (the historical Jesus of Nazareth, a Jew) and transforming him into the subject of his "Message" - the "new" faith of Christianity, for Jews and Gentiles alike. An exceptionally polarizing figure (you either love or you hate him - few people sit on the fence when it comes to Paul), nevertheless this larger-than-life figure bestrides the world of early Christianity like a colossus - and virtually all early Christian writings are produced in dialogue with Pauline theology, whether *pro* or *con*. Paul needs to be sifted so that Fact can be separated from Fiction, and Clarity from Caricature - an accurate, nuanced, contextualized appreciation of Paul is essential for appreciating the literature of the second half of the New Testament.

In addition to the towering figure of Paul, we will also encounter the disciple Peter, leader of the Apostles who led the "Jesus Movement" after Pentecost, and operates as a counterpoint to Paul in the Early Church. Other early Christians, known and unknown, also contributed various letters to the literature of the New Testament, and we will attempt to hear their distinctive voices, and attune ourselves to the issues and disputes in the nascent Christian community for which their letters provide a one-sided partial version of an incomplete conversation. As with the Hebrew Scriptures, the authorship of the New Testament is "polyphonic" - various factions representing different theological perspectives contribute to the collage of diverse theology that characterizes the early Church, which lacked the cohesion and uniformity that comes with a centralized, institutional structure, something that the Church would not possess until the middle of the 4th Century.

The literature found in the New Testament was composed and edited over the course of approximately 50-70 years. Students will be exposed to the literary genres, forms and motifs that comprise these writings. The texts will be placed in the historical, cultural, sociological and religious milieu of their audience. Students will learn a variety of techniques, which are helpful in the analysis of Biblical texts: these include analysis of

form and structure, as well as genre, historical and redaction criticism. Students will be encouraged to put knowledge to use as they apply Biblical interpretation to theological construction and pastoral practice.

Course Objectives:

Students who have completed the New Testament classes will hopefully be able to:

- Distinguish between various Interpretative Methods used to Study, Examine, Analyze, Research, and Comprehend Biblical Texts
- Understand the Historical Context within which the Religious Texts of Early Christianity were Created and Read / Heard
- Appreciate the various Literary Genres found in the texts of the Christian Scriptures, and Understand their Functions for Interpretation
- Be aware of the Social and Cultural Issues Relevant to the Formation of the Texts and their Ethical Implications
- Comprehend the Significance, Relevance, and ongoing Influence of the Christian Scriptures on Contemporary Life and Debates, both inside and outside of the Church

“B.C.” or “B.C.E.”?

When did “B.C.” and “A.D.” change to “B.C.E.” (Before the Common Era) and “C.E.” (Common Era), and why? Is this more unnecessary political correctness from the Academy? As with “Old Testament” and “New Testament,” the method of dating history according to the epochs of “Before Christ (B.C.)” and “Anno Domini” (A.D. - Latin for “In the year of our Lord”, not “After Death”!) imposes a Christocentric standard of time on historical eras...which was convenient for a period when Christianity was the religion of the dominant (European) colonial powers...but is more and more untenable in a diverse and multicultural world (in both the academy and among everyday folks) where the majority of the global population does not acknowledge Jesus Christ as the be all-and-end-all of human history. Furthermore, the ancient monk responsible for this division of eras wasn’t that great at math, and it’s more likely than not that Jesus was born approximately 6-4 B.C.E. (just before the death of Herod the Great in 4 B.C.E.). Nevertheless, the Christian calendar - like the English language - has become the default standard of globalization; but to mitigate the religious and cultural dominance of one particular system of measuring time, the preferred, *more neutral* universal terminology used today is “B.C.E.” (Before the Common Era) and “C.E.” (Common Era).

This class will be divided up as follows:

Part One: The Early Church & Apostolic Christianity

3 Weeks (January 12th, 19th & 26th)

Part 1 of the Class will begin with a brief introduction to the diverse world of 1st Century C.E. Judaism, and the broader geo-political and cultural context of the Greco-Roman Empire in which Early Christianity was born and developed in its nascent stage. Understanding Christianity’s Jewish roots, and the Gentile urban culture of the Eastern Mediterranean in which it was nurtured and thrived, are indispensable for appreciating the form and growth of Early Christianity. The Jewish and Gentile components of Early Christianity are manifest in the Acts of the Apostles, which is the second-volume of the two-part text that began with the Gospel of Luke. The birth of Christianity is traced back

to Pentecost, and the attempts by the Apostles / Disciples, led by Peter, to preach the Gospel of Jesus of Nazareth to the Jews in and around Jerusalem in Judea. At this point in time, the “Jesus Movement” still seems very much anchored in (Apocalyptic) Judaism. But then along comes Saul of Tarsus, a “triple threat” – a Greek by Education, a Jewish Rabbi by Training, and a Citizen of the Roman Empire. Changing his name to Paul, he applies the same zeal he once poured into persecuting the Early Church to a new goal of spreading the message of Christianity as Apostle to the Gentiles, traveling tens of thousands of miles all over the Eastern Mediterranean.

Part Two: The Pauline Epistles

6 Weeks (February 9th, 16th, 23rd, March 9th, 16th & 23rd)

The main bulk of this class will be taken up with a close reading of the Letters of Paul, and an attempt to discern the main contours of his Theology. For the most part, Paul’s Letters are occasional, unsystematic responses to crises in the churches that he founded throughout the Eastern Mediterranean; and represent his attempt to exercise remote authority and leadership over his (often renegade, faction-riven and sometimes heretical) congregations, sometimes many months later due to the challenges of communication in the ancient world. Whether you love him or loathe him, Paul is never less than a larger-than-life personality: he can be witty, pugnacious, contentious, angry, self-pitying, even offensive and alienating; but he can also be humble, selfless, compassionate, generous, patient, self-deprecating and charming. Care will be taken to identify the specific contexts for each Letter – who Paul is addressing, and for what reason...and how each individual Letter relates and connects to the surviving corpus. We will also be sensitive to the scholarly disputes about which letters are “genuine” and which might be “pseudepigraphical” – and thus consider the weight that ought to be given to some of Paul’s apparently more judgmental pronouncements.

Part Three: Non-Pauline Epistles

2 Weeks (March 30th & April 6th)

Following the Letters attributed to Paul are another series of Letters whose authorship is controversial: most are attributed to Apostles or others closely connected with Jesus, but most scholars believe them to be written at a much later time, and are almost certainly pseudonymous texts. These are all *very different* works in terms of Authorship, Dating, Audience, Genre, Purpose, Subject-Matter and overall Theology, and reflect the Ups and Downs of Life in the Early Church beyond the world dominated by Paul. They are all one side of a conversation that we will attempt to reconstruct in order to properly understand the provenance and purpose of these diverse set of texts.

Part Four: The Apocalypse

1 Week (April 13th)

We complete our studies at the end of the Bible with the most notorious book of the Bible - Revelation! The Book of Revelation affirms Christianity’s original hope for an immediate transformation of the world; and assures the faithful that God’s pre-arranged plan—including the destruction of evil and the advent of Christ’s universal reign—is about to be accomplished. The book presents an *apokalypsis* (Greek: “unveiling” /

“revelation”) of unseen realities, both in heaven as it is now...and on earth as it will be in the future. Placing government oppression and Christian suffering in a cosmic perspective, Revelation conveys its message of hope for believers in the cryptic language of metaphor and symbol.

PLEASE NOTE: There will be **NO** classes on Saturday 2nd February and Saturday 2nd March.

Materials and Class Format

Pre-Semester Reading for the class is *Paul: In Fresh Perspective* by N.T. Wright (Fortress, 2009).

Our main text for this class is the Bible, and we will be using the following translation and edition:

The New Oxford Annotated Bible - New Revised Standard Version (NRSV) with the Apocrypha
(College Edition, 5th Ed.) edited by Donald Coggins (Oxford, 2018)

[The *New Oxford Annotated Bible* (5th Ed.) is \$35 new in hardback on Amazon, and contains a wealth of useful introductory essays, maps, and annotations – and is required for all Bible Classes at SFM. (If you have a 4th Ed. From a previous class, that will be just fine.) The Wright book is \$22 new on Amazon (about \$10 for a used copy in good condition from Amazon Marketplace).]

Handouts and Outlines will be provided, as well as access to other Online Resources. You are expected to complete assigned Readings and Written Assignments before each class, and pay attention and take notes during class, which will form the basis for your Study for Assessments. This Course uses a “Flipped Classroom” methodology – rather than the teacher lecturing students in order to transmit content, students are expected to have absorbed primary content through weekly reading and assignments, enabling secondary reflection and analysis to take place through guided classroom discussion in a Seminar-Style Setting.

The class is designed according to the “Five Pedagogical Characteristics” of the School for Ministry:

1. *The Seminar Table* - Classes at the SFM take place around the seminar table. Different from the lecture hall, the classroom that gathers around the seminar table is necessarily interactive between faculty and students.
2. *An Inquiry-Based Curriculum* - The curriculum of the SFM is an inquiry-based curriculum wherein academic material is critically explored by the student body in preparation for and during class time via the leadership of faculty who act as facilitators to the critical inquiry of their students.
3. *A Place-Based Curriculum* - The ministry contexts for students are seen as sources of a two-way interaction between classroom theory and ministerial practice.

4. *An Integrated Curriculum* - Recognizing that theology and ministry make an integrated whole, the SFM's curriculum encourages the cross-fertilization of ideas between subject areas.
5. *A Skills-Based Curriculum* - The cultivation of critical thinking skills for ministry lies at the heart of the SFM's pedagogical philosophy. Successful completion of a course of study at the SFM should result in a student having grown in the use of such skills and an ability to apply them across academic disciplines and in their everyday practice of ministry.

Procedures and Grading:

Grades for the class will be based on weekly Assignments (usually in the form of brief written reflections), occasional Projects and Presentations, Exegesis Papers, and Examinations. Because the class is a Seminar-Style class based on Discussion, Students will also be evaluated based on their Contributions to Class, as well as other ways in which they enrich the class through their Curiosity, Cooperation, and Citizenship.

Every student is expected to attend class on time, complete assigned reading, be prepared for assessments, turn in completed work done to the best of your ability before the deadline in hard copy (not by e-mail), and show an interest in learning. *If you don't think you will be able to make a deadline for whatever reason, please contact your teacher immediately in person or by e-mail. Indeed, if there are any issues or concerns that you have that might prevent you from performing at your best in the class, please contact your teacher immediately so that we can try to figure out a solution.* All Assignments and Assessments will be explained in detail both in class and through postings on the SFM class website ahead of time. Please feel free to ask for help when you do not understand class material or assignments.

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Best Wishes for the Class!