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NT 520 New Testament Introduction

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INTRODUCTION

I am looking forward prayerfully to our time together this semester. My journey toward wholeness in the image of Christ began 50 years ago in Rutland, VT, where I was born and raised. A confirmed atheist, God graciously manifested God’s presence to me as I was on the verge of suicide due to a profound emptiness at the core of my being. That experience was the start of a relationship with God which sustained me through the U. S. Naval Academy, four years of service in the U. S. Navy, seminary at Wesley Theological Seminary in Washington, DC, and my doctoral program in New Testament Studies at Harvard. Along this educational pilgrimage were pastoral ministries in a two point rural circuit, an inner city church in a racially explosive setting, an associate pastor position in a large suburban church, and the sole pastor of a smaller suburban church. Sandwiched in with my time at Harvard were five summers as a foreman on the river drive for Scott Paper Company, moving pulpwood down the rivers of Maine, as well as serving as Supervisor of Examinations for Harvard University. After two years as an Assistant Professor at McMurry University in Abilene, TX, I was called to Asbury Theological Seminary in 1979, where I have served as a Professor of New Testament along with 17 years as Vice President and Chief Academic Officer (1985-2002) under two presidents. All of this is merely the historical context within which God has steadily and lovingly drawn me ever deeper into life in Christ and enflamed me with a desire to be radically abandoned to God in love and radically available to God for others. I trust that God will enable me to be all God wants me to be for you as we are together.
Welcome to NT520 ExL. I am looking forward to facilitating your intellectual and spiritual learning in this course. We will have an opportunity to read the New Testament together, to explore the Jewish and Roman-Hellenistic contexts in which the New Testament arose, to examine the literary features of the text, and to reflect upon the spiritual dimensions of the New Testament. It will be our goal to draw all of this together into a coherent way of understanding and proclaiming the New Testament in the contexts where we live and work.

Office Hours: I will be keeping virtual office hours on Wednesday mornings from about 8 am to noon Eastern Time. During this time I will be logged into the system and will be responding to all of your postings (in the order in which they were received). I will also be checking on the class periodically throughout the week. However, Monday is an administrative day at the seminary and Friday is a writing day (or travel day if I have weekend engagements), so I am not available to students on those days. I will let you know if I am going to be away during my office hours or for any extended time during the semester. Please let me know if you will be away for any extended periods as well. Just let me know if you would like to set that up. Note: If you have an urgent matter, please flag your email with the word Urgent in the subject line.

Support Staff:

For general questions regarding the ExL program, contact Dale Hale:
ExL_Office@asburyseminary.edu
Phone: (859) 858-2393

For technical support, library research support, library loans, and ExL media contact the Information Commons:
Info_Commons@asburyseminary.edu
Phone: (859) 858-2233
Toll-free: (866) 454-2733

Accessing Information Commons Materials:
1. General Questions:
   ▪ The Information Commons is a "one-stop shop" for all student research, circulation and technical needs. The Information Commons hours are posted here: http://www.asburyseminary.edu/icommons/hours.shtml.
2. Materials Requests:
   ▪ To search the library catalog for available materials, click here: http://www.asburyseminary.edu/icommons/index.shtml
   ▪ ExL Students may request books, photocopies or emailed attachments of journal articles/reference books from Asbury Seminary's Library. Please allow 3-10 business days for all requests to be filled. Contact the Information Commons for costs and instructions on how to make requests.
• ExL students are encouraged to make use of local library resources. Students who live within a 50 mile radius of either the Florida or the Kentucky campus should come to campus to obtain their materials.

3. Research Questions:
• ExL students are encouraged to contact the Information Commons for research assistance including help choosing a paper topic, determining the best sources to use for a paper, finding book reviews, or research questions about using the online databases or any other library materials.

4. Online Databases:
• To access the online library resources including the library catalog and full-text journal databases, go to http://www.asburyseminary.edu/icommom/index.shtml and enter your 10-digit student ID# number in the login box. Your student ID# is provided on the biographical information section of the student registration webpage. Add a 2 and enough 0’s to the front to make a 10-digit number (20000XXXXX where XXXXX = your student id).

ExL students are encouraged to make use of local libraries, if possible. However, library services are always available to students through the Asbury Seminary Library. Students who live within a 50 mile radius of either the Florida or the Wilmore campus should come to campus to obtain their materials. Please allow 5-10 business days for all requests to be filled. ExL students are billed for the cost of photocopies (5 cents per page) if the materials are not available in electronic format; however, shipping via media rate is free. (Media rate normally takes 5 business days for shipping, but it can take two weeks to addresses in the West). Express mail services (prices vary according to weight) and scanning (5 cents per page in pdf format) are also available. Requests generally require 1-2 business days to be processed. Plan ahead and make your requests early enough to allow for shipping and processing!

The Course Icon: This is located on the First Class desktop. Use this icon to enter the classroom.

Course Center: This is the location where all of the modules will be posted.

Office: This icon is used to post things to the professor. All postings to this icon are private and will only be read by the professor. Please use this icon/address rather than my personal email address.

Team Folders: This is the location where you will carry on discussion in your teams. Each member of the class will be assigned to a team. You will only be able to read other teammates’ postings. People from the larger class, who are not on your team, cannot read or post material in your team folder.

Archives Center: When we are finished with a module or a section of a
module, I will move the discussion and work that has been generated from the module into the archive center. You can access things in the archive center, but you cannot change, delete, or add to them. They are a reference source for you to consult if you have questions about previous class material.

**Resource Center:** This icon links you to various resources like the library and specific sources available through the internet.

**Discussion Center:** The discussion center is the lower part of the classroom. When you click on the classroom icon you will see postings that are to be read by the whole class.

**Course Description:**

**Perspective:** All we are and everything we do is a spiritual matter because our lives are immersed in God's presence, purpose, and power. In all we are, think, say, and do in this course, individually and collectively, we should seek to be conscious of God's constant and pervading presence. We should also consciously and consistently seek God's purpose for us in this course. We need to be open, receptive, and responsive to the power of the Holy Spirit at every level of this course as the mediator of God's presence and the actualizer of God's purposes. We must bathe this course in prayer, releasing ourselves and one another to the presence, purpose, and power of God. Only in this way can this course be all God purposes it to be in our present life and future ministry.

**Purpose:** There are three areas in which we will seek the actualization of God's purpose for us in this course:

- Part I - An Introduction to the New Testament as an historical document
- Part II - An Introduction to the New Testament as a literary document
- Part III - An Introduction to the New Testament as a spiritual document

**Particulars:** It is prayerfully expected that this course will be used by God to enable you to:

Part I

1. Appropriate a basic knowledge of the introductory issues of the New Testament writings (History of New Testament times; authorship, place, date, relationships to other New Testament writings; genres of literature; etc.), and how the cultural contextualization of the New Testament relates to the global, multi-ethnic, cross-cultural nature of the church and its ministry.

2. Understand the process by which the New Testament documents became the canon of the Christian movement.
Part II

3. Acquire a knowledge of the history of New Testament Criticism from the Enlightenment to the present and its significance for pastoral leadership:
   a. The origin and development of various methods of criticism.
   b. The foundational presuppositions of these methods.
   c. Evaluation of these presuppositions.

4. Develop a working understanding of the various methodologies of New Testament criticism and their interplay, especially within a biblical and Wesleyan conception of the Gospel:
   a. Historical Methodologies: Historical Criticism, History of Religions.
   c. Literary Methodologies: Literary Criticism, Source Criticism.
   d. Structural Methodologies: Form- and Redaction-Criticism,
   e. Post-modern Methodologies: Reader-response theories; Meta-
      critical, Socio-Critical, and Socio-pragmatic hermeneutics;
      deconstruction.

Part III

5. Nurture an awareness of the spiritual realities incarnate in the text of the New Testament with the ability to discern their incarnation in the historical and literary context of the New Testament.

6. Appropriate these spiritual realities for discipleship and service.

PROCEDURES: The following will provide some of the scholarly disciplines of loving obedience and stewardship through which I trust the Lord will enable you to actualize His purposes for you in this course:

Preparation:

a. It is hoped that you will enter into a covenant of prayer for the class and the course.
b. It is urged that each period of individual study be started with prayer and dedicated to God in prayer at its close.
c. It is expected that you will be a faithful steward of time in two areas:
   i. Consistent participation in team and class activities.
   ii. Commit at least six hours each week to the Lord for prayer and study in preparation for the class.
d. It is expected that you will engage in class activities fully prepared through disciplined prayer and study to be all God wants you to be for your class participation.
e. It is presumed that you will exhibit graduate level competence in
comprehension of reading, integration of learning, and presentation of understanding.

**What Will this Course Be Like?**

**It will stretch you.** You will most likely hear theories and interpretations that are new to you. This may require you to think carefully as you interact with scholars from traditions that are different than your own.

**It will require 2000-2500 pages of reading.** This course covers a lot of ground. As part of the course, you will read the whole New Testament; although, we will not talk about every book. You will also read an introduction to the New Testament, a book on the historical context of the New Testament times, two books on interpretation, and two books on the spiritual dimension of the NT. Much of the reading—particularly the historical and interpretive works will be read at the beginning of the class. This will form a foundation for our work together over the rest of the semester.

**It will be interactive.** You will have the opportunity to discuss questions from each module with your team mates, with the class and with me.

**It will be useful.** As you study the New Testament, you will have new insights that you will be able to use in your preaching, teaching, and conversation.

**Guidelines**

1. **Assignments:** All assignments are due by the stated due dates. These are outlined below for your reference. Late assignments will be penalized one grade level per day late. For example, a B paper turned in one day late becomes a B-, etc.

2. **Postings:** Postings in the Discussion Center and in your team folder should be limited to between 75 and 100 words.

3. **Grammar:** I expect us (myself included) to use proper English grammar at all times. This includes complete sentences, punctuation, capitalization, and spelling. For assistance in this area, consult a standard style guide such as Carole Slade, *Form and Style: Research Papers, Reports, and Theses* (11th ed., Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1999). Poor grammar will adversely affect your grade.

4. **Discussion:** A crucial element of this course is the dialog that we enter into with each other. All discussions are to be in the vein of encouragement, gentleness, patience, persistence, and hope. This does not mean that we will not challenge, confront, or question each other. It does mean that these things will be undertaken for the purpose of growth and stimulation to think and understand the subject at hand more deeply and more intimately.

**Course Requirements:**

**Preparation and Participation:** (35%) Students should prepare for each module by completing the reading and participating in group discussions. Your participation grade will be based on both quality of thought, reflection, and questions contributed as well as on quantity of responsiveness to your class and
team mates.

1. Students will be assigned to a **Team** consisting of four or five students and the professor. The Team will be the primary venue for discussion. Students will submit to their Team folder **Interaction Papers** that will initiate discussions among their team members over required reading. Please write 1 single spaced page (about 250 words -- 500 words MAX). Interaction papers are always due on Wednesdays by 3am Eastern Time (ET). (This should allow me to grade and respond to them on Wednesday during my online office hours) Please write these in the body of the email rather than posting them as attachments. The interaction papers will have three parts:
   a. In part one students will write a few sentences that identify the subject of a particular reading and what is the **writer's thesis** or concern in relation to that subject.
   b. In part two students will briefly identify one or two specific issues raised in the reading that are important to them and briefly (in a few sentences) indicate why they think the issue(s) is(are) important to them.
   c. In part three students will raise **one or two questions** prompted by the reading that they would like their team to discuss.

2. Students will each week submit to their Team folder their **thoughts on at least two of the questions** raised by their team members or professor (100 words or less per posting). This is a minimum expectation. I encourage all Team members to strive to respond to all members of their Team each week (all members, not all of each member’s questions).

3. Students will participate in particular “**Team Projects**” that are laid out in the modules. These are opportunities for guided discussion around particular texts and topics raised by the professor.

**Interpretive Assignments:** (3 x 10% = 30%) For (at least) three of the seven interpretive assignments, the student will prepare an interpretive assignment. Each close reading should be 750-1,000 words (3-4 pages). Post the interpretive assignments to the Office. Interpretive Assignments are NEVER accepted late. If you do not have it in on time, then you will have to do a different one. Remember you have seven opportunities to complete the necessary three assignments. Guidelines for writing interpretive assignments can be found in the Course Center in the Guidelines Folder.

**Final Comprehensive Essay Exam:** (35%) Exams are due on the Wednesday of Finals Week by noon ET.

Grading:
Asbury Seminary defines grades using the following criteria (catalog, p. 29):

A= Exceptional work: surpassing, markedly outstanding achievement of course
objectives
B= Good work: strong, significant achievement of course objectives
C= Acceptable work: essential achievement of course objectives
D= Marginal work: inadequate, minimal achievement of course objectives
F= Unacceptable work: failure to achieve course objectives

A plus (+) or minus (−) indicates positions between categories (for example, B+ = very good; C− = slightly below acceptable, etc.).

Important Notes on My Grading Policies:
1. Interpretive Assignments are NEVER accepted late.
2. Other late papers are marked down one grade level per day late.
3. Poor grammar figures into the final grade.
4. Papers that are too long (over the word limit) or too short (under the word limit) are marked down. (I don't count words, so if you are over or under by 50 words that isn't going to matter, but if you have many pages or almost no pages, then you need to rewrite your paper before you submit it.)
5. Participation grades are based on quality and quantity of contribution.
6. You may complete as many of the 7 interpretive assignments as you would like (I take the 3 highest grades to count towards your final grade).
7. You may consult with me before turning in papers and projects to see if you are on the right track.

Required Reading:

The New Testament (RSV or NRSV; however, the use of multiple translations is recommended)
Part I: Backgrounds of Early Christianity, Everett Ferguson
   Introducing the New Testament, Achtemeier, Green, Thompson
Part II: Interpreting the New Testament, Black and Dockery, eds.
   Hearing the New Testament, Joel B. Green
Part III: Opening the Bible, Thomas Merton
   Shaped by the Word, M. Robert Mulholland, Jr.

Bibliography:

The following list is neither exhaustive nor inclusive. It provides basic resources for additional study. Give attention to the bibliographies given in Guthrie (985-1032). Also helpful are the articles in The Interpreter’s Dictionary of the Bible.

Part I

F. F. Bruce, New Testament History
----------------------  Paul: Apostle of the Heart Set Free
J. Ellul, Apocalypse
Craig Evans and Stanley Porter, Dictionary of New Testament Background
W. R. Farmer, *The Synoptic Problem*
Feine-Behm-Kümmel, *Introduction to the New Testament*
Everett Ferguson, *Backgrounds of Early Christianity*
R. M. Grant, *The Formation of the New Testament*
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A. E. Harvey, *Jesus and the Constraints of History*
M. Hengel, *Acts and the History of Earliest Christianity*
J. Jeremias, *Jerusalem in the Time of Jesus*
H. Koester, *History, Culture, and Religion of the Hellenistic Age*
H. Mattingly, *Roman Imperial Civilization*
B. M. Metzger, *The New Testament: Its Background, Growth, and Content*
F. E. Peters, *The Harvest of Hellenism*
B. Reicke, *The New Testament Era*
M. Rostovtzeff, *Rome*
E. P. Sanders, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism*
O. Skarsaune, *In the Shadow of the Temple: Jewish Influences on Early Christianity*
E. Schurer, *The History of the Jewish People in the Age of Jesus Christ*
A. N. Sherwin-White, *Roman Society and Roman Law in the New Testament*
E. M. Smallwood, *The Jews under Roman Rule*
Paul Veyne, *The Roman Empire*
H. Von Campenhausen, *The Formation of the Christian Bible*
N. T. Wright, *The New Testament and the People of God*  
*Jesus and the Victory of God*

Part II

J. Barr, *The Semantics of Biblical Language*
W. A. Beardslee, *Literary Criticism of the New Testament*
Blasi, Duhaime, Turcotte, eds. *Handbook of Early Christianity: Social Science Approaches*
W. Bousset, *Kyrios Christos*
R. Bultmann, *Kerygma and Myth*
W. G. Doty, *Contemporary New Testament Interpretation*
Cain Hope Felder, ed. *Stony the Road We Trod: African American Biblical Interpretation*
R. Funk, *Language, Hermeneutic, and the Word of God*
Justo L. Gonzales, *Santa Biblia: The Bible through Hispanic Eyes*
R. M. Grant, *A Short History of the Interpretation of the Bible*
Joel B. Green, *Hearing the New Testament: Strategies for Interpretation*
A. M. Johnson, *Structuralism and Biblical Hermeneutics*
Koester-Robinson, *Trajectories through Early Christianity*
E. Krentz, *The Historical-Critical Method*
E. V. McKnight, *What Is Form Criticism?*
B. M. Metzger, *The Text of the New Testament*
D. Patte, *What Is Structural Exegesis?*
D. and A. Patte, *Structural Exegesis: From Theory to Practice*
N. Perrin, *What Is Redaction Criticism?*
R. M. Polzin, *Biblical Structuralism*
J. M. Robinson, *The Problem of History in Mark*
H. H. Stoldt, *History and Criticism of the Marcan Hypothesis*
A. Thiselton, *The Two Horizons: Philosophical Description and New Testament Hermeneutics*

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Part III

Gorman, Michael, *Cruciformity: Paul's Narrative Spirituality of the Cross*
Green, Michael and Stevens, R. Paul, *New Testament Spirituality*
Johnson, Jan, *Savoring God's Word*
Larsen, David L., *Biblical Spirituality: Discovering the Real Connection between the Bible and Life*
Leech, Kenneth, *Experiencing God: Theology as Spirituality*
McKenzie, John L. *New Testament for Spiritual Reading*
Muto, Susan, A, *A Practical Guide to Spiritual Reading*
  *Renewed at Each Awakening: The Formative Power of Sacred Words*
  *Steps Along the Way: The Path of Spiritual Reading*
Pennington, M. Basil, *Lectio Divina: Renewing the Ancient Practice of Praying the Scriptures*

On-line Resources:

Schedule

Module One:
Introduction and Historical Background
February 7-25
Required Reading: Ferguson 1-546, Achtemeir, Green, Thompson 1-51
The Four Gospels, The Pauline Letters

Time: Plan to spend approx. 8 hours per week on reading for this module; plan to spend approx. 1-1.5 hours per week formulating and writing your responses to Ferguson; plan to spend approx. 1-1.5 hours per week reading and responding to your team and class mates.

Special Notes: This module and the next module have the heaviest reading of the semester. It may take you more time than the 6 allotted hours. This will be compensated by less required reading time towards the middle and end of the semester. The intense reading and discussion will help us to lay a good foundation for the rest of the class. I am aware that the material you are reading is difficult, and it is my job to help you work through and understand the reading to the best of your ability. So, feel free to raise questions in your teams or in the discussion center as you work through your reading.

Course Assignments Due:
February 16-- interaction paper, Ferguson; report, indicating how the study of the Jewish background has informed some Gospel passage for you.
February 23-- interaction paper, Ferguson; report, indicating how the study of the Roman Hellenistic background has informed some Pauline passage for you.
February 25--Team Project 1: Find and analyze one gospel passage and one Pauline passage which are significantly informed by the Jewish (gospel) and Roman-Hellenistic (Paul) contexts.

Module Two:
The New Testament Writings (Gospels and Acts)
February 28-March 11
Required Reading: Achtemeier, Green, Thompson 53-270
Read Acts

Time: Plan to spend approx. 6 hours per week on reading for this module; plan to spend approx. 1-1.5 hours per week formulating and writing your responses to AGT on one Synoptic Gospel of your choice, or on Luke-Acts; plan to spend approx. 1-1.5 hours per week reading and responding to your team and class mates.

Course Assignments Due:
March 9--interaction paper, AGT
March 11—Team Project 2: Develop a report on Acts which delineates the major themes developed in the book.
Team Project 2:

Module Three:
The New Testament Writings (Paul, John, General Epistles)
March 14-April 1 (March 21-25 is Spring Reading Week)
Required Reading: Achtemeier, Green, Thompson 271-588,
1-3 John, Revelation, Hebrews, James, Jude, 1-2 Peter

Time: Plan to spend approx. 6 hours per week on reading for this module; plan to spend approx. 1-1.5 hours per week formulating and writing your responses to AGT on one epistle of your choice; plan to spend approx. 1-1.5 hours per week reading and responding to your team and classmates.

Course Assignments Due:
March 30--interaction paper, AGT
April 1--Team Project 3: Exegesis of 2 Peter 1:3-9.

Module Four:
The Art of Biblical Interpretation (1)
April 4-15
Required Reading: Joel B Green, Hearing the New Testament pp. 1-36; 90-126; 175-255; 278-427
Recommended Reading: The rest of Green's Hearing the New Testament

Time: Plan to spend approx. 6 hours per week on reading for this module; plan to spend approx. 1-1.5 hours per week formulating and writing your responses to Green on one chapter of your choice; plan to spend approx. 1-1.5 hours per week reading and responding to your team and classmates.

Course Assignments Due:
April 13- interaction paper, Green
April 15--Team Project 4: Discourse analysis (Green Ch. 9) of Philippians 1:27-30.

Module Five:
The Art of Biblical Interpretation (2)
April 18-29
Required Reading: Black and Dockery 46-187; three chapters of your choice from 188 to 524.
Recommended Reading: The rest of Black and Dockery

Time: Plan to spend approx. 6 hours per week on reading for this module; plan to spend approx. 1-1.5 hours per week formulating and writing your responses to B&D on one chapter of your choice; plan to spend approx. 1-1.5 hours per week reading and responding to your team and classmates.
Course Assignments Due:
April 27--interaction paper, B&D
April 29--Team Project 5: An application of literary criticism (B&D Ch. 7) to the letter to Philemon.

Module Six:
   New Testament Spirituality
   May 2-13
   Required Reading: Merton and Mulholland

Time: Plan to spend approx. 6 hours per week on reading for this module; plan to spend approx. 1-1.5 hours per week formulating and writing your responses to Merton and Mulholland on one aspect of spiritual reading; plan to spend approx. 1-1.5 hours per week reading and responding to your team and classmates.

Course Assignments Due:
May 11--interaction paper, Merton/Mulholland

Final Exam: Due May 19.

Due Dates at a Glance: (Note: all personal assignments are due on Wednesdays by 3am E.T., so I can interact with them on Wednesday morning. Team Projects are all due on the last Friday each module.)

Week One, Feb 7-11
Week Two, Feb 16, Interaction paper on Judaism
Week Three, Feb 23, Interaction paper on Ropman-Hellenism
   Feb 25, Team Project 1
Week Four,
Week Five, Mar 9, Interaction paper on Achtemeier, Green, Thompson (#1)
   Mar 11, Team Project 2
Week Six
Reading Week, March 21-25
Week Seven, Mar 30, Interaction paper on Achtemeier, Green Thompson (#2)
   Apr 1, Team Project 3
Week Eight
Week Nine, Apr 13, Interaction paper on Green
   Apr 15, Team Project 4
Week Ten
Week Eleven, Apr 27, Interaction paper on Black and Dockery
   Apr 29, Team Project 5
Week Twelve
Week Thirteen, May 11, Interaction paper on Merton/Mulholland
   May 13, Team Project 6
Finals Week, Exam Due May 19