

MISSISSIPPI COLLEGE
BIBLE 324
THE NEW TESTAMENT: TEXT AND CANON
CREDIT, 3 SEMESTER HOURS
Spring, 2012
DR. G. ROGER GREENE (“BIG G”), PROFESSOR
2012 Revision

PREREQUISITES: Bible 210 or Junior Standing

COURSE DESCRIPTION: Bible 324 is a study of the origin and transmission of the New Testament writings with particular emphasis on the processes involved in the writing, determination of canonicity, preservation, and translation of the New Testament.

RATIONALE FOR BIBLE 324

Bible 324 is an extensive treatment of issues and processes involved in the origin and transmission of the documents which make up the portion of the Christian scriptures known as the New Testament. The course involves coming to a thorough knowledge, understanding, and appreciation of the how diverse early Christian writings were produced and gathered together into a grouping of writings known as the New Testament canon of scripture. It introduces the student to other early Christian writings which were not included in the New Testament, for the New Testament canon can only be understood in the light of other Christian literature which was excluded from scriptural status. The course also involves appreciative understanding of how the texts were transmitted and translated from their original language into accessible English. The course offers an historical approach to the understanding and appreciation of the origin, nature, context, and content of the New Testament which is simply foundational for appropriate interpretation.

The purpose of this course is as follows:

- 1. To acquaint the student with the historical and critical issues surrounding the origin of early Christian documents, through examination of the general historical and religious background of the New Testament materials.*
- 2. To acquaint the student with the larger body and forms of early Christian writings from which the New Testament was selected, through examination of the extant primary literature and significant secondary discussion of that literature.*
- 3. To guide the student toward a fuller appreciation of the historical background and circumstances which brought the New Testament into being.*
- 4. To fully acquaint the student with the process of **canonization** of the New Testament, i.e., the forces and factors which brought the New Testament books together as a collection of writings understood to have divine authority.*
- 5. To acquaint the student with the process and state of preservation of the New Testament from the very earliest period, i.e., the early manuscripts of the New Testament now extant.*
- 6. To develop in the student an appreciation for the work of scholars and other contributors to the fields of textual analysis and translation of the New Testament.*

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

The learning objectives of the course are as follow:

Cognitive Objectives

1. To sharpen one's understanding of the struggles of the young Christian church which have brought the New Testament into being through a study of the contextual matrix of Judaeo-Christian history.
2. To grasp the nature and relevance of the New Testament as both a divine and a human book through the comprehension of the matters of text and canon.
3. To sharpen one's understanding and appreciation of the demanding work of textual scholars and translators through a brief study of textual criticism and translation of the New Testament.
4. To help one to see the relationship of matters such as text and canon to interpretation and proclamation through readings which demonstrate the contributions made by sound historical study.
5. To relate in an appropriate way the issues faced in the first century world with issues raised for the Christian faith in the 21st century world.

Behavioral Objectives

1. When asked to do so, the student will write and discuss from memory specific matters pertaining to the background, origin, canonization, translation, and interpretation of the New Testament.
2. When asked to do so, the student will discuss and evaluate the New Testament as the historical production of the early Church.
3. When asked to do so, the student will demonstrate the relevance of historical background and development to contemporary proclamation of the New Testament.
4. When given opportunity to do so, the student will participate fully in class discussion, presentation, and proceedings which seek to examine and comprehend with a view toward contemporary application and relevance the matters pertaining to the text and canon of the New Testament.

APPROACH OF THE COURSE

The approach to be taken in the study of the text and canon of the New Testament will employ the historical-analytical method. The word "historical" represents acknowledgment of the fact that God has revealed himself to humankind in the events of history and has been instrumental in guiding those events. Thus, an historical perspective is crucial to understanding the biblical record of God's revelation of himself even to approaches which are more topical, doctrinal, or theological in nature. The word "analytical" refers to careful analysis. It involves the art of judging with knowledge, perspective, and propriety the truths, beauties, and basic nature of works of art or literature. An analytical approach, sometimes referred to by the word "critical," represents a careful and balanced consideration of the value inherent in art or in literature. Sound principles of factual knowledge demand attention given which will take both content and method seriously. As the historical-analytical method is applied to the exegetical study of biblical books, the desired result is to maximize one's knowledge, understanding, and appreciation of the value of every scripture inspired by God for training in righteousness (2 Timothy 3:16). One is free to seek to discover the meaning inherent in scripture (*exegesis*), but one is not free to wishfully insert meaning into scripture (*eisegesis*). Appropriate appreciation of the development and transmission of the New Testament texts and canon can make positive contribution to exegetical endeavors. The desired results of historical-analytical understanding coupled with sound principles of exegesis may therefore be deemed to have significant value for sound confessional religious expression for contemporary contexts.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

Mississippi College students are expected to be honest. Dishonesty is not tolerated at Mississippi College and is subject to severe penalties including loss of credit and dismissal from school. The student should be thoroughly informed on these matters of academic and personal integrity which are set forth in the *Mississippi College Undergraduate Catalog*, the *Tomahawk*, or Policy 2.19 available on the Mississippi College web site.

OUTLINE OF COVERED TOPICS

The topics covered are reflected in the schedule of daily assignments.

METHODS OF INSTRUCTION

Primary methods of instruction utilized in this course include dialogical lecture, class discussion, presentation of necessary background materials, group work which engages in canonical and textual investigations in primary materials, and exegetical interpretation of specific scriptural passages with a view toward contemporary relevance. It is the intent of the professor to offer a modified seminar format, with primary responsibilities of research and presentation being shifted to the student. The focus will be upon student involvement and student learning.

REQUIRED PRACTICES

Required practices include reading of required texts, discussion and presentation of material of exegetical significance, group work, examination of assigned material and scriptural passages within the classroom setting. The student will be responsible for formal and informal class presentations. Recall and application of material learned or examined is also required.

INSTRUCTIONAL MATERIALS

Instructional materials include the following textbooks required for this course.

Black, David Alan. **New Testament Textual Criticism: A Concise Guide**. Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1994.

Laymon, Charles M. (Ed.). **The Interpreter's One-Volume Commentary on the Bible**. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1971.

Metzger, Bruce M. **The Bible in Translation: Ancient and English Versions**. Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 2001.

_____. **The Canon of the New Testament: Its Origin, Development, and Significance**. Oxford: Clarendon Press, [1987] 1997.

Souter, Alexander. **The Text and Canon of the New Testament**. London: Duckworth & Co., 1913. [Bibliolife]

A Bible is required on a continuing basis for use in this course. **The New Oxford Annotated Bible with the Apocrypha** (RSV/NRSV) and/or **The Greek New Testament** is strongly recommended.

Pertinent bibliographies relevant to the subject matter may be found in the above textbooks.

Reading assignments in the above textbooks are given in the assignment schedule by periods. These readings are to be prepared in advance of the designated class period. Other assignments may be made in class pertaining to classroom activities. The student should come prepared to present and to discuss the assigned materials.

METHODS OF EVALUATION

Evaluation in this class is based upon class attendance and participation, individual class presentation, group work, sectional examinations, and a final examination. Attendance assumes a positive role in the learning process as it pertains to attitudes of learning and class participation.

Evaluation of Student Progress

1. There will be two sectional examinations, each worth 100 points, given at the points indicated in the schedule of assignments. These major exams may not be missed without penalty, except for emergency reasons and authorized college activity. Death in the immediate family and illness verified by a doctor's statement qualify as emergency reasons. It will be to your advantage to be present for all scheduled exams. See the make-up policy of the professor given below. Each exam will be sectional, i.e., it will focus upon material covered since the previous exam.
2. The student's class participation grade will count 100 points. The nature of the class will be such that the student will be expected to participate fully in classroom presentation and proceedings. While the student will be assigned definite presentations, the emphasis here is upon the freedom to lead and to contribute in a meaningful way to the classroom experience. This class is not meant to be a spectator sport. Thus, continuing preparation is required on the part of the student. In the event the class refrains from preparation and contribution, the professor reserves the right to attribute these and any other appropriate points to "pop quizzes."
3. A final examination, with a value of 150 points, will be given at the end of the semester during the regular examination period on the day and at the time determined by the Registrar's Office. It will be a maximum of two hours in length and will be comprehensive in nature.

Class Policy on Make-Up Examinations

If it is necessary for the student to miss an exam for any reason, the professor should be notified **prior to** the exam period if the student is to avoid penalty. It is the intention of the professor that few or no make-up exams be given. In any event, once a student misses an exam it is **the sole discretion of the professor as to whether a make-up exam will be allowed and whether or not a penalty will be assessed**. Generally speaking, exams missed without appropriate excuse and/or notification will incur at least a letter grade or 10% penalty. It is to the student's advantage to be present at all regularly scheduled exam periods. In the event the student misses the final exam, the policies of this paragraph apply as well as the procedures involving incomplete grades.

Criteria of Grade Assignment

There are 450 possible points for this course. Any student who accumulates 91-100% of the total **after adjustment is made for attendance (see below)** will earn a grade of **A**, 81-90% a grade of **B**, 71-80% a grade of **C**, 61-70% a grade of **D**, and below 60% an **F**. These percentages represent both an ideal standard and an assured grade. Any adjustments beyond these will be at the sole discretion of the professor. Should any adjustments be made, they will be fair and equitable and to the benefit of the student. Needless to say, quality work and full participation is expected of the student in this course. The grade received will represent an evaluation of your work done in the course and not your person. One will get out of the course what she/he is both willing and able to put into it.

Final Course Grade

In accordance with the percentages given above, the final grade earned in the course will be representative of the quality of student work accomplished in terms of mastery of the material assigned. A grade of **A** will represent superior work, **B** above-average work, **C** average work, **D** below-average

work, and **F** a failure to meet minimal course and proficiency requirements.

OTHER COURSE INFORMATION

Attendance

Mississippi College has standards regarding attendance of classes. These are found in the ***Mississippi College Undergraduate Catalog***. The student is expected to attend classes regularly and punctually. The student should be fully aware of these policies. All classes missed count as absences, whether excused or unexcused. An automatic **F** is given if absences exceed 25% of the class meetings. This is the equivalent of 11 class meetings in a MWF class, and 7 class meetings in a TR class. There is an appeal process which may be instituted through the office of the appropriate dean.

In addition to the above, the student should be advised that excessive *unexcused* absences beyond the allowable limits (three clock hours, which is only **2 unexcused absences** in a TR class) **will penalize** the student's *final* percentage semester grade point average by **1% per unexcused absence**. To reiterate, **the student's final grade point average will be penalized for excessive unexcused absences**. Thus, excessive absences can make a difference in the letter grade received in the course. The professor values class attendance and participation, particularly in a class with a seminar format and group work to be done.

Incomplete Grades

An incomplete (grade of **I**) may be given to a student who has been hindered by circumstances beyond the student's control from completing work required for the course. The student should be familiar with procedures for removal of incomplete grades as given in the ***Mississippi College Undergraduate Catalog***.

Late Assignments

In the event of late completion of outside assignments for reasons other than excused absences, the late work will be accepted only during the next seven days from the date due and only with penalty. The penalty assessed will represent the equivalent of one letter grade for each two days late.

Tardiness

Students are expected to attend class regularly and punctually. Class attendance will be emphasized by this professor and roll will be checked at the beginning of each class period. **In the event of tardiness, it is the student's responsibility to notify the professor at the close of the particular class period in order to assure that she/he is not marked absent.** No recorded absences will be erased after the week in which they are recorded, if the tardy student fails to properly notify the professor.

Other Information

Information on student appeals of academic matters is given in the ***Mississippi College Undergraduate Catalog*** or website, as is information pertaining to special accommodations. Mississippi College intends to be a non-discriminatory, service oriented institution.

In order for a student to receive disability accommodations under Section 504 of the Americans with Disabilities Act, he or she must contact Student Counseling Services (SCS). SCS will assist with information regarding the appropriate policy and procedure for disability accommodations before each

semester or upon immediate recognition of the disability. SCS is located in Alumni Hall Room #4 or you may contact them by phone at 601-925-7790. The Director of Student Counseling Services, Dr. Bryant may be reached via email at mbryant@mc.edu.

Important dates pertaining to the current session may be found in the academic calendar on the Mississippi College website. The final exam schedule may also be found

Assignments

Assignments are listed in the assignment schedule. Any deviation from the schedule or period correlation will be made by the professor in class. A basic outline of course content is incorporated into the assignment schedule. Additional assignments to the readings in the textbooks may be made as appropriate to the material being studied.

It is important that the student read the assigned materials for each class period prior to that class period. Essentially, one assignment will be covered per class period. While it is possible (and maybe even desirable) to spend much more time on each topic listed, time will be a limiting factor. Best use of class time will be made with advance preparation.

OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

Matters of Decorum

Cell phones and beepers should be turned off while in the classroom. If a student chews gum, it should be done with the mouth closed. No meals are allowed in the classroom. The professor does not tolerate the student writing notes to or talking with a neighbor during class about matters not pertaining to this class, nor does he tolerate the student sleeping or making preparation for other classes during the period for this class. The professor does not wish to embarrass the student, but will publicly insist that these matters be properly observed. The professor expects the student to be involved in the classroom proceedings with full freedom to contribute to the classroom learning experience.

A Final Word

Participation is expected in this class—it is not a spectator sport. While there is a significant amount of work to be completed in this course, it is meant to be an enjoyable course which offers some rather unique learning opportunities for developing significant skills. The course is intended to be experienced as an opportunity for the broadening of both knowledge and faith. It is also intended to develop the student's thinking, writing, and exegetical skills through inquiry and dialogue with the professor, other students, and relevant class materials and exercises. The course will be, however, what **you the student** make it to be. The more one is willing to both receive and give, the more one will gain foundationally from the course.

For Your Convenience

The professor would prefer to be called either **Big G** or **Dr. G**, whichever makes the student comfortable. He would prefer **not** to be called "Dr. Greene," although he does answer by that name and title.

Office—Provine Chapel 108, west side center

Office Hours: Although sometimes interrupted by other meetings, office hours are posted on the professor's door. Appointment sheets will also be found on the professor's door. It is always good to

schedule appointments in order to avoid time conflicts.

Office Telephone: 601-925-3291
Home Telephone: 601-924-5403
E-Mail: rgreene@mc.edu

Messages may be left on voice mail or
home answer machine.

ASSIGNMENT SCHEDULE

Big G, Spring 2012

Reading assignments are given for class periods as listed below. Each student is expected to read the assigned materials prior to the given class period. Each student is also expected to volunteer to present particular reading assignments on a continuing basis.

I. THIS KIND OF BIBLE

1. Orientation—This Kind of Bible
 - God, the Bible and Laypersons
 - God, Scholars, and History
 - History as a Medium of Divine Encounter
 - Encounter in Dialogue, Not Monologue
 - Prepare future presentations
2. The Problem of This Kind of Bible
 - DeWolf, “The Word of God,” **ICB**, pp. 994-998.
 - Souter, 149-159

II. THE HISTORICAL AND RELIGIOUS BACKGROUND OF THE NEW TESTAMENT

3. The Religion, Scriptures, and Historical Setting of the Hebrew Community
 - a) Terrien, “The Religion of Israel,” **ICB**, pp. 1150-1158
 - b) McKenzie, “The Hebrew Community and the Old Testament,” **ICB**, pp. 1072-1076.
 - c) Blair, “The Dead Sea Scrolls,” **ICB**, pp. 1063-1071.
4. Historical Setting of the New Testament
 - a) May, “Greece and Rome in the Biblical World,” **ICB**, pp. 1032-1036.
 - b) Stanley, “The Greco-Roman Background of the New Testament,” **ICB**, pp. 1037-1044.
 - c) Greig, “The New Testament and Christian Origins,” **ICB**, pp. 1187-1193.
5. The Religion and Scriptures of the Early Church
 - a) Norwood, “The Early History of the Church,” **ICB**, pp. 1045-1053.
 - b) Laymon, “The New Testament Interpretation of Jesus,” **ICB**, pp. 1167-1175.
 - c) Johnson, “The New Testament and the Christian Community,” **ICB**, pp. 1116-1123.

III. THE MAKING OF THE NEW TESTAMENT LITERATURE

6. Literary Forms, Relationships, and Non-Canonical Writings

- a) Wilson, "The Literary Forms of the New Testament," **ICB**, pp. 1124-1128.
- b) Filson, "The Literary Relations Among the Gospels," **ICB**, pp. 1129-1135.
- c) Gilmour, "The Letters of Paul," **ICB**, pp. 1136-1143.
- d) Mowry, "Noncanonical Early Christian Writings," **ICB**, pp. 1144-1149.

7. FIRST EXAM

IV. THE NEW TESTAMENT CANON

8. Canons, Old and New

- a) Silberman, "The Making of the Old Testament Canon," **ICB**, pp. 1209-1215.
- b) Sundberg, "The Making of the New Testament Canon," **ICB**, pp. 1216-1224.
- *c) Recommended Reading: Beare, "Canon of the New Testament," **The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible**, Volume 1 (A-D), pp. 520-532.

9. New Testament Canon: Preparation and Developmental Influences

- Metzger, **Canon of the New Testament (CNT)**, 1-8, 39-73.
- Metzger, **CNT**, 75-112
- Souter, 160-181

10. New Testament Canon: Development East and West

- Metzger, **CNT**, 113-164
- Souter, 182-194

11. New Testament Canon: Making Choices, Attempts at Closure

- Metzger, **CNT**, 165-207
- Metzger, **CNT**, 209-247
- Souter, 195-204

12. New Testament Canon: Criteria, Principles, Problems, Questions

- Metzger, **CNT**, 251-288

13. Prelude to Canonical Convention 2012–

- Metzger, **CNT**, 289-315

14. EXAM 2– Thursday, February 28, 2008

15. Prelude to Canonical Convention 2008–March 4-13, 2012

- Metzger, **CNT**, 289-300

16. Canonical Convention 2012

17. Canonical Convention 2012–cont.

18. Canonical Convention 2012–cont.

19. Canonical Convention 2012–cont.
Cf. Metzger, **CNT**, 267-288

V. THE TEXT AND TRANSMISSION OF THE NEW TESTAMENT

20. Languages and Scripts

a) Grobel, “The Languages of the Bible,” **ICB**, pp. 1194-1200.

b) Trever, “Writing in Biblical Times,” **ICB**, pp. 1201-1208.

c) Black, **Textual Criticism**, 7-26

d) Souter, 3-32

21. Transmission of the New Testament

a) Reumann, “The Transmission of the Biblical Text,” **ICB**, pp. 1225-1236.

b) Metzger, **Bible in Translation (BT)**, 13-51

c) Souter, 33-93, *passim*

*d) Recommended: Metzger, “Ancient Versions,” **The Interpreter’s Dictionary of the Bible**, Volume 4 (R-Z), pp. 749-760.

22. Textual Analysis: Principles and Practice

Black, 27-41

Souter, 94-110

23. Textual Analysis: Principles and Practice–cont.

Black, 43-71

Souter, 111-145

VI. THE NEW TESTAMENT IN TRANSLATION

24. Issues of Translation of the New Testament

a) Manschreck, “The Bible in English,” **ICB**, pp. 1237-1242.

b) Bratcher, “The Bible in Every Tongue,” **ICB**, pp. 1243-1247.

c) Metzger, **BT**, 175-190

25. English Versions Prior to the King James Version

Metzger, **BT**, 55-69

26. The King James Version and the Great Tradition

Metzger, **BT**, 70-137

27. Modern Revisions

Metzger, **BT**, 138-174

VII. TEXT AND CANON: INTERPRETATION AND PROCLAMATION

28. Biblical Interpretation

- a) Anderson, "The History of Biblical Interpretation," **ICB**, pp. 971-977.
- b) McCasland, "The Historical Study of the Bible," **ICB**, pp. 978-982.
- c) Wright, "The Theological Study of the Bible," **ICB**, pp. 983-988.
- d) Filson, "The Unity Between the Testaments," **ICB**, pp. 989-993.

29. Summation– Proclamation of the New Testament

- a) DeWolf, "The Word of God," **ICB**, pp. 994-998.
- b) Buttrick, "The Bible and Preaching," **ICB**, pp. 1254-1258.
- c) Eastman, "Teaching the Bible to Children," **ICB**, pp. 1259-1263.
- d) Kearns, "Teaching the Bible to Youth and Adults," **ICB**, pp. 1264-1268.

FINAL EXAM–SATURDAY, APRIL 28, 2012