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ME 820 Seminar in Evangelization: Applied Historical Perspectives

Fall Semester, 2006

ESJ School of World Mission and Evangelism

Asbury Theological Seminary

Instructor: George Hunter

I. Course Description and Objectives

The seminar is designed to ground students in readings that are related to the history of Christian Evangelization—primary sources of enduring significance, and secondary sources interpreting the propagation of the gospel and the expansion of Christianity. The instructor hopes that students will come to understand how the Christian Movement was evangelizing in specific contexts and times, and will retrieve some of the lost “apostolic lore” (and the mistakes) from the past—with a sense of how the insights might be applied to different times, cultures, and contexts.

II. Course Readings

Asbury’s bookstore has ordered the following sources for us:

1. Michael Green. Evangelism in the Early Church, rev. ed. (Eerdmans, 2003)
2. Rodney Stark. The Rise of Christianity (Harper-Collins p. b., 1997).
- 3 Richard Fletcher. The Barbarian Conversion: From Paganism to Christianity (University of California Press, 1999).
4. Smith, Stout, and Minkema, Eds. A Jonathan Edwards Reader (Yale University Press p. b., 2003)
5. C. H. Spurgeon. The SoulWinner (Whitaker House, 1995)
6. Alcoholics Anonymous, fourth edition.

The bookstore has also ordered a packet of readings, featuring

- a. St. Patrick’s Confession
- b. Selections from Bede’s Ecclesiastical History of the English People
- c. John Wesley’s “Character of a Methodist” and “Short History of the People Called Methodists.”
- d. Selected chapters from Charles G. Finney’s Lectures on Revivals of Religion.

Robert Tuttle’s The Story of Evangelism: A History of the Witness to the Gospel (Abingdon, 2006) would serve as a marvelous introductory text for this subject, but was not used because of the seminar’s greater stress on primary sources. Tuttle’s book is admirably suited to (say) a course in which the students mainly read one text.

III. Assignments and Seminar Participation

Students are expected to read the assignments for each session of the seminar, and to come with any written work assigned for the day—with a copy for the instructor AND for each member of the seminar. The student is encouraged to reflect and interact with the historical materials from the perspective of what we have learned since (say) the fifth century, and from the student’s wider missiological knowledge; reflecting from ancillary literature is encouraged, but first priority should be given to the assigned reading.

The presentation of student papers will largely constitute each class session; so students, each week, need to come prepared to present. Some of the reading assignments are substantial; in some cases the

instructor will indicate the chapters to give priority, whether you can thoroughly read the rest or not. In the case of Fletcher's tome, feel free to read rapidly much of the historical material—and then read more carefully the material dealing with very major figures, events, or movements, or material of particular interest to you, and especially pages and sections in which Fletcher is summarizing trends and insights, or stating conclusions.

Students will be writing and presenting eleven short papers during the seminar. Each paper should be three to five pages, double-spaced, in normative academic style. (That means students will write, say, 33 to 55 pages for the semester.) There will be no final exam, but do schedule the time for the exam that week—in case we need a make-up class. The instructor will award a grade for each paper; a student's final grade will be based on the "top ten" paper grades that have been given, with some secondary weight given to class preparation, attendance, and contribution.

Seminar Schedule and Outline

(Subject to modification)

September 6: Introduction to Advanced Studies in "Evangelization."

September 13: Green, Evangelism in the Early Church, chapters 1-5. (Give priority to, and mainly report from, chapters 1, 2, and 5.)

September 20: Green, chapters 6-10. (Give priority to, and mainly report from, chapters 7, 9, and 10.)

September 27: Stark, The Rise of Christianity, chapters 1-5. (Give priority to, and mainly report from, chapters 1, 2, and 4.)

October 4: Stark, The Rise of Christianity, chapters 6-10. (Give priority to, and mainly report from, chapters 6, 7, and 9.)

October 11: Fletcher, The Barbarian Conversion, chapters 1-4, and **Patrick's Confession**.

In addition to your first paper from Fletcher, come to class prepared to summarize and discuss the ten questions that Fletcher identifies in chapter one, AND to identify any additional questions that should be addressed by scholars in Evangelization. (You might want to identify [say] one or two of Fletcher's questions for framing each of your three reflection papers from Fletcher.)

You might find Hunter's The Celtic Way of Evangelism useful background reading.

October 18: Fletcher, The Barbarian Conversion, chapters 5-9, and excerpts from **Bede's Ecclesiastical History of the English People**.

October 25: Fletcher, The Barbarian Conversion, chapters 10-15.

November 1: **Jonathan Edwards**. From Smith's A Jonathan Edwards Reader, read the "Editors' Introduction" pp. vii-xl, from Edwards' "Faithful Narrative of the Surprising Work of God" (pp. 57-87), and from Edwards' "Treatise Concerning Religious Affections" (pp. 137-171).

November 8: **John Wesley**. “The Character of a Methodist,” and “A Short History of the People Called Methodists.”

November 15: **Charles G. Finney**. From the Introduction and four assigned chapters in the McLoughlin edition of Lectures on Revivals of Religion.

November 22: Reading week, no class.

November 29: **Charles H. Spurgeon**. The SoulWinner. (Give priority to, and mainly report from, chapters 1-6.)

December 6: Alcoholics Anonymous. Read, especially, pp. 1-103 and any five testimonies. “AA” is one of a number of twentieth century movements that developed their own approach to reaching and restoring people, from whom would-be evangelizing Christians might learn.

December 13: Exam week; no class, unless we need a make-up session.