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# MS 685 The Church Abroad: Turkey/Greece (with an extension to Rome)

Robert G. Tuttle

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Asbury Theological Seminary  
**MS 685 The Church Abroad: Turkey/Greece**  
**(with an extension to Rome)**

3 credit hours

Trip, Jan. 8-19, 2008

Robert G. Tuttle, Jr. professor

e-mail: [robert\\_tuttle@asburyseminary.edu](mailto:robert_tuttle@asburyseminary.edu)

### **Purpose:**

The purpose of this trip/class is to expose participants to what the church is doing abroad within the context of our history, our culture, our religions, our typography, but most of all, our present day mission.

### **Course Description:**

The trip to Turkey and Greece will begin in Istanbul where we will be met by Ralph and Elaine Elliot, leaders in the church in Turkey where there are less than 3,000 Protestant Christians nationwide.<sup>1</sup> They will deliver the first lecture.

This is a course that begins with history and focuses on evangelism and mission. Not only are we visiting the sites, we are visiting local churches in both Turkey and Greece to receive some instruction as to how the Church survives in an overwhelmingly predominate Muslim setting (Turkey) and Orthodox setting (Greece). Apart from the local churches and traditional sites of Paul's missionary journeys we visit the Blue Mosque and Saint Sophia in Istanbul and then include visits to the rock fortress of Meteora and the Byzantine monasteries in western Thessaly.

During the 11 days in Turkey and Greece (an extension to Rome is also possible) there will be frequent input from the professor along with evening sessions for reflection and processing the day's events. Students will be asked to read in advance from a selection of books that cover topics relevant to the Biblical times as well as the contemporary religious and socio-political scenes.

### **Course Highlights:**

- Explore the history, culture, and religions of Turkey and Greece.

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<sup>1</sup> The U.S. state department says: While exact membership figures are not available, there are an estimated 50,000 Armenian Orthodox Christians, 25,000 Jews, and from 3,000 to 5,000 Greek Orthodox adherents. There are approximately 3,000 Protestants and 10,000 Baha'is. Additionally, there are an estimated 15,000 Syrian Orthodox (Syriac) Christians and small, undetermined numbers of Bulgarian, Chaldean, Nestorian, Georgian, and Maronite Christians. The number of Christians in the southeast is low, as the younger generation, especially among Syriacs, has migrated to Istanbul, Europe, or North America.

- Visiting local churches in a predominately Muslim culture and then a predominately Orthodox culture.
- Experience worship in the places referred to in the Bible.
- Reflect on the significance of God's plan for salvation as relates to the history and culture of these places.
- Experience fellowship among the indigenous peoples and fellow travelers.

### **Learning Goals:**

- It is expected that the student will learn about the history, role, and influence of the places Paul visited in the New Testament.
- It is expected that the student will learn better how to relate to peoples of different cultures where Christianity is writ small (Islam) and where Christianity is writ large (Orthodoxy).
- It is expected that students will learn something of Islam and Orthodox Christianity.

### **Reading:**

#### **Required texts:**

Robert Tuttle, Jr. *The Story of Evangelism* (especially chapters 7-12), Abingdon Press, 2006.

*The Bible*, "Luke, Acts and the Epistles of Paul."

#### **Collateral texts:**

Terry Muck. *How to Study Religion*, Wood Hill Books, 2006.

David Noss. *A History of the World's Religions*. Tenth Ed., Prentice Hall, 1999.

Robert Tuttle, Jr. *Can We Talk, Sharing Your Faith in a Pre-Christian World*, Abingdon Press, 1999.

The Qur'an. Although I've read half a dozen different translations of the Qur'an the one I prefer is translated by Abdullah Yusuf Ali. He has an edition published by Tahrike Tarsile Qur'an, Inc. The ISBN # for the paperback is 0-940368-31-5. It has the Arabic text along side and commentary.

**More Recommended texts:** TBA

**Movies:** TBA

## **Evaluation:**

- 1200 pages of reading (or equivalent).
- The following written assignments are due before and after the trip:
  - Prior:
    1. A 2-page essay on the questions and expectations you bring to this trip and why you feel it important to participate.
    2. Begin a Journal at least one week prior to the trip and continue the Journal during and at least one week following the trip.
  - After:
    1. 12-15 pages (double spaced) paper on a topic of interest, such as:
      - how do we as Christians relate to a people and culture that is overwhelmingly Muslim?
      - how do we as Christians establish ties with a people and culture that is predominately Orthodox?
      - how does a review of our past inform our future as we seek to become a relevant Church for the 21<sup>st</sup> century?

## **Cost:**

All travel costs, including airfare from Orlando (many other origination cities available at somewhat different pricing), hotels, meals (except lunches), transportation, tips, taxes, admission fees, and administrative fees, etc. - **(CONSULT THE BROCHURE)**

## **Financial Aid**

Students are encouraged to seek support from your home congregations and supervised ministry sites in addition to your own families. This class is most significantly a mission trip. We are a global Church. John Wesley insisted that, as Christians, we know full well what God is doing in other parts of the world.