

## **ASSEMBLIES OF GOD THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY**

Springfield, Missouri 65802

### **BNTM 533, Studies in the Letters of Paul: 1 Corinthians**

**Adjunct Professor Russell P. Spittler**

March 3-7, 2003

### **COURSE SYLLABUS**

#### **COURSE DESCRIPTION**

The book of 1 Corinthians, a pastorally corrective letter, remarkably anticipates many of the congregational disorders found in the church today: disunity, immorality, litigiousness, charismatic elitism, theological heresy, financial delinquency. The course will approach the book with three questions in mind: What did the author intend in each part of this letter? How may contemporary Christians apply the letter's teachings? What principles and resources best allow the student of scripture to link a biblical author's intention with a contemporary reader's situation?

#### **OBJECTIVES**

These course objectives are stated in a way that applies equally to students and teacher, who together form community of inquiry. The primary objective is to advance each member's understanding of the contents, interpretation, and application of 1 Corinthians, that is, to develop an exegetical instinct. The secondary objectives are four in number: (1) to deepen familiarity with published resources useful in the interpretation of scripture; (2) to gather specific data from 1 Corinthians in order to determine the nature of an inspired biblical text; (3) to sharpen hermeneutical skills; and (4) to convert exegesis into obedience.

#### **TEXTBOOKS**

1. The biblical text itself, in a closely literal English translation, such as the NIV, the NAB (not the same as the NASB), or the RSV second edition of 1972 (used by the teacher). Consult too a variety of other translations and paraphrases, such as Phillips, *The Message*, *The New Jerusalem Bible*, and others you may own.
2. Gordon Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*. Eerdmans 1987. "New International Commentary Series." Hard cover. A leading commentary prepared by a world-class AG New Testament scholar, who is F. F. Bruce's successor as editor of the series.
3. Bruce W. Winter, *After Paul Left Corinth: The Influence of Secular Ethics and Social Change*. Eerdmans paperback 2001. Suggestive and stimulating light on 1 Corinthians from historical, literary, and archaeological research.

4. Victor Paul Furnish, *The Theology of The First Letter to the Corinthians*. Cambridge University Press, 1999. An insightful summary of how this letter, often viewed as “practical,” reflects considerable theological depth.
5. Nicos Papahatzis, *Ancient Corinth: The Museums of Corinth, Isthmia, and Sicyon*. Published by Ekdotike Athenon in Athens, Greece (reprinted 1998). This is a lavishly color-illustrated, 112-page paperback guide to what's known of the ancient city. Many maps, photos, and reconstructive diagrams bearing on Corinth in Paul's day.

## **METHOD**

*Pre-session* assignments, which are submitted at the beginning of the first class, prepare students for the intensive, week-long class sessions. These will involve interruptible lectures, discussion, viewing color slides. The *intensive week* will end with a two-hour final examination consisting of 100 multiple choice items drawn mainly from the biblical text and the intensive session activities. A *post-session* paper gives opportunity to integrate the course activities through an extensive exegetical paper on a passage in 1 Corinthians selected by the student and approved by the teacher.

For any questions related to the course, its requirements, textbooks, and schedule, or its suitability for possible enrollees, students are welcome to reach the instructor either by telephone (626.794.3722) or by email, [spittler@fuller.edu](mailto:spittler@fuller.edu)

## **COURSE REQUIREMENTS**

### **A. Pre-session**

1. Read through at one sitting the book of 1 Corinthians. Do this no less than six times. But alternate the translations that you use for these readings, beginning with your primary translation. Then use another translation or paraphrase. So, you read your basic translation three times, and you read three other, different translations. Do these readings before you consult commentaries or handbooks. If an occasional puzzling passage stays with you, be free to check a commentary or two—but only after you've done the reading at a single sitting, in between readings.
2. As you read each time, make brief notes. Do all this in the form of a reading diary: put down the date of the reading, note any items that strike you as puzzling or informative or insightful. Or striking readings, good or bad ones, that catch your attention. Raise questions. Note items for future study, such as important words or possible connections with other places in the NT. It's not a case of doing “what the teacher wants”: you make these notes in ways that are useful to you. Provided your handwriting is legible, this reading diary can be handwritten as you go along. Or you can type as you go. Retyping is overkill: avoid it. This diary is not the place for perfected writing: your raw notes, brief expressions of discovery, short phrases, brief questions—these are enough. I am looking for evidence of serious, personal, consistent, and substantial engagement with the text

of 1 Corinthians. Plan to turn in this Reading Diary at the beginning of the course (keep a photocopy for yourself).

3. Read the books by Winter and Furnish. Read also the introductory matter in Fee's commentary. Write a comparative, critical review of these readings. Do this in a paper of about 2000 words. Compare and evaluate the three works, describing the approach, assumptions, and value of each of the works to you. In this paper, I will look for evidence that you have read the works with curiosity, depth, and understanding. Turn in the Critical Review at the opening class session, along with the separate Reading Diary.

#### **B. Intensive Session (March 3 to 7)**

1. Since the class meets for a full day, use what little time you will have left for informal discussion with fellow students during the breaks. If you haven't already, browse carefully through Papahatzis' pictorial guide to ancient Corinth. For each class day, try to skim Fee enough to absorb his positions on that day's specified text.
2. The last two hours of the last day of the course will be allotted for the 100 item multiple choice examination. While the text will cover chiefly the content of 1 Corinthians and the class session activities, anything you read or have read on 1 Corinthians will be helpful. Students should understand that this test is a sort of IQ test centered on 1 Corinthians: no one (so far) makes a perfect score. Just saturate yourself in the text and learn all you can from any source about 1 Corinthians and ancient Corinth.

#### **C. Post-session:**

1. Produce a careful paper of about 6,000 words dealing with a single passage in 1 Corinthians. This should be an exegetical paper: your central aim is to clarify what Paul intended his readers to understand. It is not a thematic paper, not dealing with a theological theme throughout 1 Corinthians or the NT. You deal with the subject in the passage you have selected, very properly noting connections with places elsewhere in the letter, in Paul's writings, or in the NT. If, for example, you selected 1.18-25 you would very properly deal with the cross; and it would be proper in a paragraph or two to note the role of the cross in Paul's thought at places like 1 Cor. 1.13b, 2 Cor. 13.4 or Gal.6.12. Still, it's the paragraph from 1.18 to 25 that you are dealing with, and reference to any other places should be in support of elucidation of your target passage. Within the class sessions, the teacher will give full directions on how to do this paper, for whose completion you have three months following the intensive session.
2. On or before Monday, June 9, 2003, mail a copy of this paper to the teacher using this address: Prof. Russ Spittler, Fuller Seminary, 135 North Oakland Avenue, Pasadena, CA 91101. If you prefer, you can send the paper as an email attachment: please use Microsoft Word or Rich Text Format (RTF) only, and send to [spittler@fuller.edu](mailto:spittler@fuller.edu) by the same date.

## **GRADING PROCEDURE**

The final course grade will reflect the following weighting:

Reading Diary	30%
Critical Review	20%
Examination	20%
Exegetical Paper	<u>30%</u>
Total	100%

## **PROJECTED CLASS SCHEDULE**

Monday, March 3:	Introduction; assumptions; background to Christianity at Corinth; 1 Cor as a whole; 1 Cor. 1-4
Tuesday, March 4	1 Cor 5-7; protognosticism at Corinth
Wednesday, March 5	1 Cor 8-11.1; freedom
Thursday, March 6	1 Cor 11.2-14.40; worship, spiritual gifts
Friday, March 7	1 Cor 15-16; color slides of Corinth; examination

### ***Ten (More) Top Books on 1 Corinthians***

The richest sources for comprehensive, up-to-date bibliography on 1 Corinthians can be found in the relevant sections of the commentaries by Collins and Thiselton mentioned below. The past dozen years have averaged at least one major commentary a year on 1 Corinthians, which might be the most studied of Paul's letters after Romans. Here's one teacher's choice of ten leading works on this famous letter or its background:

1. Thiselton, Anthony C. *The First Epistle to the Corinthians: A Commentary on the Greek Text*. Eerdmans, 2000. Nearly 1500 pages; rich in bibliography, in connections with contemporary hermeneutical theory, and in the history of interpretation.
2. Collins, Raymond F. *First Corinthians*. Sacra Pagina Series, vol 7. Liturgical Press, 1999. Gives special attention to the rhetorical features of 1 Corinthians.
3. Barth, Karl. *The Resurrection of the Dead*. New York: Arno Press, 1977 (and other printings). A brief work that traces the sequence of thought through 1 Cor so as to argue that Chapter 15 is the climax of the letter and that chapters 1 to 14 are commentaries upon 15.

4. Bruce, F. F. *1 and 2 Corinthians*. London: Oliphants, 1971. Brief but insightful. This is the commentary to own for a single, very useful commentary on both 1 and 2 Corinthians.
5. Wire, Annette, *The Corinthian Women Prophets*. Fortress, 1990. Brings special attention to gender issues in the charismatic practices at Corinth.
6. Grant, Robert M. *Paul in the Roman World: Conflict at Corinth*. Westminster John Knox, 2001. Connections between Paul, Roman Corinth, and the Roman Empire. It's important to see that Corinth, while located in Greece, was a Roman colony in Paul's day.
7. Rothaus, Richard. M. *Corinth, The First City of Greece. An Urban History of Late Antique Cult and Religion*. E. J. Brill, 2000. A history of the city. Use with Richard Engels, *Roman Corinth: An Alternative Model for the Classical City*. University of Chicago Press, 1990.
8. Witherington, Ben, III. *Conflict and Community in Corinth: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary on 1 and 2 Corinthians*. Eerdmans, 1995. Summaries of recent research, with special attention to rhetorical features of 1 Corinthians.
9. Hengel, Martin, *Crucifixion in the Ancient World and the Folly of the Message of the Cross*. Fortress, 1977. Gathers what's known about the practice of this form of Roman punishment, then applies it to Paul's reference in 1 Corinthians.
10. Murphy-O'Connor, Jerome. *St. Paul's Corinth: Texts and Archaeology*. Liturgical Press, revised and expanded (third) edition, 2002. Gathers and interprets most all references to Corinth in ancient literature. The same author published a very fruitful and brief commentary, *1 Corinthians*. Liturgical Press (Michael Glazier Imprint), 1979.