

## ASSEMBLIES OF GOD THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

### BNT 540 THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES

**Martin Mittelstadt, Ph.D.**

**Spring 2009:** Jan. 9 + 10; Feb. 6 + 7; Mar. 13 + 14 (Fri 1:30 – 9:30 pm; Sat 9 am – 5 pm).

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**Martin Mittelstadt** (Ph.D. @ Marquette University; M.Div. @ Providence Theological Seminary). I am currently associate professor of New Testament at Evangel University. I bring to the classroom ten years of pastoral experience and active participation at Evangel Temple in Springfield, MO. In terms of my work in Luke-Acts, I continue to devote considerable pastoral and scholarly energy to Luke's work for contemporary Pentecostals. For example, "The Spirit and Suffering in Luke-Acts: Implications for a Pentecostal Pneumatology" (T & T Clark, 2004). Current Monograph: "Reading Luke-Acts in the Pentecostal Tradition: The History and Status of Luke-Acts Research" (Forthcoming).

#### COURSE DESCRIPTION

- Acts is a pastoral narrative documenting the origin and advancement of the early church. As a story of the emerging Jesus movement, Luke charts the triumphs and tragedies of the first Christians and provides a historical context for our NT. As such, this study will examine the fate of the gospel message from its Jewish origins to Rome. Attention will be given to the role of Acts as part of the NT canon and its literary significance for contemporary Christians.

#### COURSE TEXTBOOKS

Required

- Stronstad, Roger. The Charismatic Theology of St. Luke. Hendrickson, 1984.
- Tannehill, Robert C. The Narrative Unity of Luke-Acts. Volume 2: The Acts of the Apostles. Fortress, 1991.

AND one of the following three based upon your interest, vocation and/or passion:

- Arlandson, James. Women, Class and Society in Early Christianity: Models from Luke-Acts. Hendrickson, 1997.
- Kurz, William. Reading Luke-Acts: Dynamics of Biblical Narrative. Westminster, 1993.
- Mittelstadt, Martin. The Spirit and Suffering in Luke-Acts: Implications for a Pentecostal Pneumatology. T. & T. Clark, 2004.
- Wenk, Matthias. Community-Forming Power: The Socio-Ethical Role of the Spirit in Luke-Acts. Sheffield, 2000.

#### COURSE REQUIREMENTS

- All assignments should be DS, Arial Font, 12 Points with 1 inch margins. Number all pages with your last name in the top right hand corner of every page (e.g. Mittelstadt 3).
- As the course unfolds read the primary textbook by Tannehill in conjunction with the panels listed below.

- This class will be interactive. Please prepare by doing timely assignments and necessary readings. This will contribute greatly to your overall satisfaction of the course.
1. Reading and Analysis (5 page report)
    - Read Luke-Acts. This should be done in one sitting before any other secondary readings. After the first reading of Luke-Acts offer your thoughts concerning its purpose(s) and theme(s). How do the two volumes function as a whole? Offer any other observations/insights that come from this reading.
    - Read Acts (for the second time) and take note of plot development, characterization of major and minor figures, and flow of the narrative. Where is the narrative going? Begin to consider preliminary didactic purpose(s) that might be gleaned from the Lukan story?
    - This assignment is not meant to be technical but rather an entry into the primary literature. Don't fret but enjoy. As my former professor used to say: "let's not simply read around the text but make sure to dive in ourselves." Grading will be gracious for completed work.
    - I would also suggest that at least one reading be from a translation that you do not normally use.  
Due: First day of class.
  2. Critical Review # 1 (5 pages)
    - See the last page – "The Critical Review" – a guide for writing your reviews.
    - Roger Stronstad's Charismatic Theology – This is a helpful introduction to Lukan pneumatology from a Pentecostal perspective. Offer a short summary of the work and identify areas that shed light on exegesis and contemporary application of Acts.  
Due: First day of class.
  3. Critical Review # 2 (5 pages)
    - These texts deal with various thematic issues in Acts: women, narrative literature, persecution and social justice. Do a critical review of one that relates to your passion and/or ministry. Be sure to summarize and then address the relevance of this work for contemporary application to the life of the church. A portion of class time will be set aside to share insights gleaned from these readings.  
Due: Feb 6.
  4. Survey of Pentecostal Scholarship on Luke-Acts (5 pages)
    - Early in the course I will supply you with a bibliography of scholarly activity produced by Pentecostals. Since much of this material is lost on pastors and teachers you will choose to read 200 pages from this list and reflect upon the value of this material for the development of your own Pentecostal theology and its impact upon praxis.  
Due: Feb 6.
  5. Final Project (12 pages)
    - Based upon your current or aspiring ministry, write a thematic paper charting a literary motif found in (Luke-) Acts. This project might serve as a homiletical exercise – imagine a one-shot occasion to speak on a particular Lukan theme. How would you express this message to your audience?  
Due: Mar 14.
    - Please bring a one page summary to be distributed in class.  
Due: Mar 13.

**GRADING SCHEME**

1. Reading and Analysis	5 pages	Jan 9	10 %
2. Stronstad Review	5 pages	Jan 9	15 %
3. "Choice" Review	5 pages	Feb 6	15 %
4. Pentecostal Scholarship	5 pages	Feb	15 %
5. Summary Paper	12 pages	Mar 13/14	35 %
6. Interaction and Participation			10 %

**COURSE SCHEDULE**

## January

- Syllabus; Introduction to (Luke)-Acts: a thorough historical, theological, thematic, and interpretative overview.
- Discussion of Stronstad.

- The panels below follow the outline of Richard Longenecker's commentary on Acts.

## February

- Panel 1 (1:1-6:7)
- Panel 2 (6:8- 9:31)
- Panel 3 (9:32-12:24)
- Discussion of Kurz, Arlandson, Mittelstadt

## March

- Panel 4 (12:25-16:5)
- Panel 5 (16:6-19:20)
- Panel 6 (19:21-28:31)
- Discussion of Pentecostal Scholarship
- Reflection: a concluding discussion on living, preaching and teaching Acts with contemporary vigor and relevance.

**SELECT BIBLIOGRAPHY**

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Bauckham, Richard. The Book of Acts in its First Century Setting. Vol. 4: Palestinian Setting.

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### The Critical Review

- In today's world, so many books are written and published that one cannot hope to read everything, even in a specific field. In order to have an idea of what others are saying, I can read book reviews. They give the thrust of the work, an evaluation of its contents, and an assessment of its importance. In short, critical book reviews force students to read carefully and write thoughtfully.

#### What is a critical Review?

- A critical review is not a destructive criticism of the author and his or her ideas, but a careful analysis of the work. A critical review attempts to answer at least seven different questions:
  1. What is the basic thrust of the author's work?
  2. Why does the author say what he or she says?
  3. To whom is the writing directed and for what purpose?
  4. For whom or what (or against whom or what) does the author stand?
  5. How well has the author met his or her own objectives?
  6. How does this work compare with other writings?
  7. What is the reviewer's opinion of the work?

#### How to write a critical review?

- Preparing a 5 page book review entails reading, taking notes, evaluating what has been read, and writing out a summary, assessment, and comments of the book or article. A book review should contain four main parts:
  1. A complete bibliographical entry. For example  
 Wright, N. T. What Saint Paul Really Said: Was Paul of Tarsus the Real Founder of Christianity? Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997. 192 pp.
  2. Information regarding the author, his or her academic training, position, and other books authored. Information on the author may be obtained from the book itself, from biographical files many libraries keep, and from other sources.
  3. A summary should synthesize the thrust of the book and its main arguments. Take care not to distort the emphasis given by the author. The length of the summary will depend, not only on the length of the material, but on the complexity of its contents. Try to keep the summary to three or four paragraphs.
  4. An evaluation of the book should be made first of all on the basis of the author's own objectives, as stated in the introduction. This mandates a careful reading of the introduction or preface. For example, if an author states that the book deals with New Testament Christology, she will not be expected to deal with the topic in the sub-apostolic era. A critique must document the author's statements, giving the page where the item was found. Sometimes a review quotes paragraphs that show the author's position. Be sure to keep in mind the author's content in order not to distort the ideas. Although one may disagree with the author and with the position he or she espouses, the language of a book or article review must be courteous. A well-documented analysis will be more convincing than a heated, emotional tirade. The language of a review written for a class assignment should be similar to that of research—cool, calm, and collected. Think of meeting the author of the book at a professional meeting and having him say in dismay, "So are you the reviewer who hit me so hard?"

#### Questions to guide evaluation:

1. Is the subject vital? If so, to whom? What difference will it make ten years from now?
2. Is the subject too broad or too narrow for the author? Is it too shallow, too restricted?

3. Is the author straightforward? Does he announce his bias? His limitations? His intentions?
  4. In the introduction, are the purpose of the study and the statement of the problem clear?
  5. Is the presentation clear and logical? Is the sequence natural? Are there missing points? Are the sections clear and self-contained?
  6. Is the research reliable? Does anything indicate you cannot fully trust this paper? Do you feel the author really looked everywhere she possibly could and reported accurately and without bias?
  7. What does the use of footnotes show? Are there too many notes? Too few? Are they from old sources? All from similar sources? Or from the same sources? Is the form clear and consistently used?
  8. Does the bibliography tell you something additional about the paper? Can you tell whether the author is using primary sources? General sources? Or authorities in the field?
  9. Is the language clear, concise, or wordy and unnecessarily difficult? Does the choice of words show carelessness? Conceit?
  10. Does the paper show a sincere desire to search out truth or is it a defense of a position?
- Usually the last item in our evaluation is mention of what group will profit from reading this book. You may also want to suggest how useful the book will be for this certain group.

Much of this material is taken from:

Nancy Jean Vyhmeister, Quality Research Papers, Zondervan, 2001)