

The New Testament and Early Christianity
RS 116A
Spring Quarter 2008

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Course website:

<http://www.religion.ucsb.edu/faculty/thomas/classes/RS116A.html>

Final Exam

Due Tuesday, 10 June, at 5 pm

This is a take-home exam. The exam must be at least 6 pages; it must also be carefully written with documentation from the textbooks we have read for the course (note title of book and page number, which should be within parentheses in the text rather than in footnotes). The exam must be double-spaced, and typed or computer-generated in Times New Roman or a similar font.

Exams should be turned in to the main office of the Department of Religious Studies (3d floor HSSB Tower), or to the instructor's mailbox in the mailroom in the same location. They should not be shoved under the door of the instructor's office because they may be counted late even if they are not.

Choose ONE of the following questions:

1. Apocalypticism. Outline the defining characteristics of apocalyptic. Beginning with the Revelation of John, and choosing at least one additional early Christian author/text (such as Mark, Paul, Q, or Luke), describe briefly which apocalyptic features each of the two (or more) writings have, comparing and contrasting as appropriate. What is the message each author is trying to communicate, and how does apocalyptic imagery assist this purpose? How are these examples of Christian apocalyptic similar to and different from a Jewish example such as the War Rule of the Qumran community (Essenes)? What can one conclude about the concerns and historical situation of the communities that the authors are addressing in the texts that you have chosen?

Your answer will treat: the Revelation of John; one other early Christian text; the War Rule

2. Christianity and Judaism. One of the major themes running through most early Christian literature is the problem of the relationship between the new community forming around Jesus, and the rest of Judaism. What were the critical issues over which the earliest Christians disagreed with the rest of Judaism, and what were the solutions proposed to the problem? Describe the approaches of at least two of the major figures or texts of early Christianity. Helpful sources would be the letters of Paul, Q, the *Gospel of Thomas*, the Gospel of Matthew, the Gospel of John, the Acts of the Apostles, or the Revelation of John; but you may choose other texts. When would you say that Christianity truly became something different from Judaism, and why?

Your answer will treat: two early Christian texts (see above)

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3. Canon. Briefly describe what is meant by the canon of the New Testament, and when and why it came about. Then, chose **one** pair from the following list:

- *Gospel of Thomas* and Gospel of Matthew
- *Q* and Gospel of Luke
- *Apocryphon of James* and Gospel of John
- *Acts of Paul* and Acts of the Apostles

Briefly compare and contrast the two works in the pair. How do the overriding issues expressed in one differ from the other? What new information does the first (apocryphal) work give us that we would not find in the second? What elements of the history of early Christianity become more apparent from them?

4. Legacy of Paul. Compare and contrast the Pastoral Epistles (1 and 2 Timothy, Titus) with the *Acts of Paul*. How do they differ in their understanding of Paul and his teachings? Which parts of Paul's teachings and ministry do each emphasize? Which is truer (in your opinion) to the real Paul? What important points of Paul's teaching are not covered either in the Pastoral Epistles or in the *Acts of Paul*, that is, what parts of the teachings of the "genuine" or "early" Paul (depending on your own view of the authenticity of the Pastorals) were not continued in the later writings?

Your answer will contrast the Pastorals with the *Acts of Paul*, and will refer to the other Pauline letters in the New Testament.