

## COURSE SYLLABUS

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# The Ancient Church

Course Lecturer: Richard C. Gamble, ThD

## Course Description

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We are indebted to the Church Fathers for the lasting influence of their lives and their works. This course covers the history of the ancient church (Pentecost to AD 500) and the men and writings of that era. Following a historical progression, the course covers the development of doctrine and the main figures in the Patristic Age. Lectures focus on influential men like Irenaeus, Origen, Chrysostom, Athanasius, and Augustine. Significant creeds are also analyzed for their intentions, influence, and correctness. Throughout the course, students are prompted to evaluate their own beliefs as compared to historical orthodoxy.

## Course Objectives

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Upon completion of the course, you should be able to do the following:

- Understand the historical development of doctrine and how we came to believe what we do today.
- Know the creeds of the church and how they came to exist.
- Understand the theological mistakes of the past so as to prevent those errors from happening today.
- Understand the history of interpretation of the Scriptures.
- Appreciate the roots of today's church.
- Appreciate the relation between church and state.
- Understand church government and its different shapes.

## Course Lecturer

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*Richard C. Gamble, ThD*

**Education:**

- Universitat Basel, Switzerland, ThD
- Pittsburgh Theological Seminary, MA
- Westminster College, BA

**Teaching Career:**

- Professor of Systematic Theology, Reformed Presbyterian Theological Seminary

- Professor, Reformed Theological Seminary (1997-2005)
- Professor of Historical Theology and Director of the Henry Meeter Center for Calvin Studies, Calvin Theological Seminary (1987-1997)
- Professor, Westminster Theological Seminary (1981-1987)
- Scholar in residence, Great Lakes Gulf Presbytery, RPCNA
- Guest lecturer in Church History at the Freie Evangelisch-Theologische Academis in Riehen, Switzerland (1977-1980)

### **Other Career Highlights:**

- Ordained in the Orthodox Presbyterian Church
- Senior Pastor, Teaching Elder, Associate Pastor, and church planter for churches in Michigan, Pennsylvania, and Florida
- President of Calvin Studies Society
- Member of the Editorial Board of *The Peter Martyr Library*
- Internationally recognized Calvin scholar; in July 2009 was a special lecturer for the Calvin500 celebration in Geneva, Switzerland

### **Publications:**

- Editor or author of more than 75 publications, including *The Whole Counsel of God* (his multi-volume systematic theology), *Calvin's Old Testament Commentaries*, *A Handbook for Calvin's Institutes*, and *Calvin and the Church*.

## Recommended Reading

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Though not required, you may choose to read the textbooks shown below to supplement your learning.

Kelly, J.N.D. *Early Christian Doctrines*. 5th edition. London: Continuum International Publishing Group, 2000.

Wiles-Santer. *Documents in Early Christian Thought*. Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 1977.

Textbooks can be ordered through your local bookstore, various online bookstores, or through your preferred eReader when available.

## Course Methods

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The lecture content for each lesson is provided in two easy-to-use formats: audio and PDF text (if available). Students can choose the medium (or combination of media) that most closely aligns with their individual learning styles.

## Course Assessment and Requirements

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To earn a Certificate of Completion, you must complete the course requirements. Course requirements include:

1. Listening to all 24 audio lectures.
2. Completing a final self-assessment form in which you will reflect on the content in the course and evaluate your life in light of what you have learned. The specifics of this assessment are provided in the course materials.

Course requirements noted in this syllabus will be validated before a Certificate of Completion is awarded to any student.