



# ***The Bible and The Early Church***

Yearlong 2023-2024

## **ELIGIBLE STUDENTS:**

### **Grades 7- 9**

*The Bible and The Early Church* is for the middle school student who is interested in learning about the sweeping story of the Bible and how exactly the Lord Jesus fulfilled His promise that “the gates of hell will not prevail” against the church. The student in this class should be able to read at a middle school level, form paragraphs easily, follow instructions on how to mark a book, writing summaries, taking notes, and writing short essays.

**Class Dates:** Tuesday, September 5, 2023 through Thursday, May 24, 2024

**Class Times:** Tuesday and Thursday 11:00-12:15 p.m. Eastern Time

**Instructor:** Nathan Dickinson

**Email:** nathan.dickinson.scholeacademy@gmail.com

**Office Hours:** Thursday 9:00-11:00 a.m. ET

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## **COURSE DESCRIPTION**

While Canterbury House is a program of studies dedicated to rediscovering and renewing a lively Anglican heritage of theology, Scripture reading and prayer, this course in Early Church History is the study of a time when the church was undivided in the sense of modern “denominations,” but when there was still a diversity of opinions about the theological and doctrinal meaning of Christ’s life, death and resurrection. It is a course that would appeal to anyone interested in a survey of the Bible and the development of the beliefs, rites and practices of the Early Church. We will be looking at Biblical interpretation in a way that is as true to the Patristic (Early Church) understanding as possible.

The course starts with reading significant portions of the Old and New Testaments to trace the story of creation, fall and redemption. They will discover the Biblical message about God’s goodness, human sin, and the need for a Savior. Students will learn key terms (covenant, exodus, law, sacrifice, prophet, disciple, apostle, passion, great commission, etc.), key figures (Adam & Eve, Noah, Abraham, Jacob, David, Ruth, Mary, Zachariah, Elisabeth, John the Baptist etc.), and important theological ideas (creation, fall, sin, atonement, incarnation, resurrection, grace, charity, etc.). They will learn about the fourfold sense of scriptural interpretation and the importance of each: the literal, allegorical, tropological (moral) and eschatological.

The second part of the course looks at the history of the Church from the time of the apostles through to the ecumenical councils of the 4th and 5th centuries: the teaching of the Apostles, the conversion of the Gentiles, the practices of the early church such as baptism and the Lord's Supper, persecution and martyrdom, the successors to the apostles (known as the Church Fathers), the Apostles Creed, the establishment of the canon of scriptures, the controversies over the nature of Christ and the doctrine of the Trinity to the final form of the Nicene Creed. Marcellino D'Ambrosio's book *When the Church Was Young* will provide our entry into this time. Occasional supplemental material will be provided, such as the writings of the Church Fathers (all of which are available online or in book form, if desired).

## **SCHEDULE**

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### **CLASS SESSIONS DATES:**

Classes will take place on Tuesday & Thursday 11:00-12:15 p.m. (ET) for 32 weeks.

**Orientation:** Tuesday August 30 at 11:00 a.m.

#### **Semester 1:**

September 5, 7, 12, 14, 19, 21, 26, 28  
October 3, 5, 10, 12, 17, 19, 24, 26, 31  
November 2, 7, 9, 14, 16, 28, 30  
[Thanksgiving Break: Nov. 20-24]  
December 5, 7, 12, 14,  
[Christmas Break: Dec. 18-Jan. 5]  
January 9, 11, 16, 18

#### **Semester 2:**

January 23, 25, 30  
February 1, 6, 8, 13, 15, 27, 29  
[Winter Break: Feb. 19-23]  
March 5, 7, 12, 14, 19, 21, 30  
[Holy Week Break: March 25-29]  
April 2, 4, 9, 11, 16, 18, 23, 25, 30  
May 2, 7, 9, 14, 16, 21, 23

*\*Please note that dates are subject to change as the instructor's circumstances might dictate (e.g. illness, family emergency). Any classes canceled by the instructor will be made up in some other way.*

## COURSE MAP

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### QUARTER 1

1. The Overarching Story of the Bible
2. Creation
3. Noah's Flood and God's covenant with Noah
4. Abraham and God's Covenant with him
5. Exodus, Law, and God's People
6. David and God's covenant to him
7. The New Covenant

### QUARTER 2

1. The Promised Messiah
2. The Life of the Messiah
3. The Crucifixion and Resurrection of the Messiah
4. The Followers of the Messiah (Acts and Epistles)
5. The Hope of the Followers of the Messiah (Revelation 21-22; "Already, Not Yet" paradigm)

### QUARTER 3

1. The Apostles and the Apostolic Fathers
2. The Cultural and Political Situation of the Early Church
3. Didache
4. Ante-Nicene Fathers

### QUARTER 4

1. Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers
2. Nicene Creed and its opponents
3. Cappadocian Fathers
4. Augustine
5. The Papacy

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## COURSE READINGS

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### COURSE TEXTS TO PURCHASE:

1. *ESV Bible*
2. *When the Church Was Young* by Marcellino D'Ambrosio
3. *Zondervan Essential Atlas of the Bible* by Carl Rasmussen

### OTHER READINGS SUPPLIED BY THE TEACHER WILL INCLUDE:

1. Copies of the Apostles' Creed, Didache, Nicene Creed, and other related documents

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## EXPECTATIONS OF STUDENTS

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1. Students are expected to come to class prepared: with reading assignments completed and contemplated, all materials present, and ready to actively participate.
2. Students are expected to be engaged: listening carefully, asking and answering questions, and thinking about the matters under discussion.
3. Students are expected to take notes on important and relevant content in an organized way so those notes can be consulted for assignments and assessments.
4. Students are expected to submit written assignments on time, completed neatly and thoroughly.

5. Students are expected to act responsibly: to let the teacher know if he or she will be absent and seek a way to make up for the lost class; to keep up with all reading and writing assignments, and ask for guidance and direction from the teacher whenever necessary.
6. Students are expected to be respectful to their teacher, their classmates and the material.
7. Students are expected to submit their work by scanning it and uploading it into the Canvas assignment window.

## **STUDENT MASTERY**

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Assessment of students is made in light of the following goals:

1. That they understand the “Creation, Fall, Redemption, Restoration” paradigm of Holy Scripture
2. That they understand the covenants and can navigate the Bible well with them
3. That they know the primary characters in the Biblical narrative and early church
4. That they appreciate the beauty of redemptive history and the perseverance of the early church
5. That they are able to articulate the basic timeline of the church from ascension to Pope Gregory, with particular attention to the councils
6. That they develop the habits of reading with care, listening with attention and writing summaries.
7. That they organize and express thoughts in essay format.

## **ASSIGNMENTS**

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### **Reading Assignments:**

Students will be given a reading assignment for each class, accompanied by a few questions intended to direct the student to what is most important in the reading for the purposes of this course. Students will also be directed at times to mark in their text in order to make note of key names or terms. Students should expect to spend almost as much time preparing for class as they will spend in class.

### **Class Discussion and Note-taking:**

Class time will be spent drawing out the essential meaning of the readings through Socratic discussion. Students will be directed to take additional notes as necessary.

### **Commonplace Journal:**

At the end of each class, student will be directed to write a few sentences summarizing one or two of the main points of the reading and discussion in a commonplace journal. This journal will become a helpful tool for the student to write short essays on assigned topics. Whenever possible, there will be some time at the end of class given to the students to work on this. Journal entries should be sent to Mr. Dickinson by noon the next day for comment and approval.

**Writing Assignments:**

Students will be asked to write short essays at the end of each quarter on selected topics in order to cement and clarify their understanding and to develop their writing skills. They will be given clear instructions about what is expected, and will receive feedback on the content of the composition and on their spelling, grammar, writing style and clarity.

**Critical Reading Questions:**

Occasionally, we will be looking closely at various Biblical and early church texts, and students will be asked to answer questions related to the reading. These questions will spring from a careful reading of the text and discussion.

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**GRADING**

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The *Bible and Early Church* course through the Canterbury House of Studies at Scholé Academy is intended to engage and invite students to read, to think, to question and to express their thoughts in discussion and writing, and these are activities that do not always lend themselves to easy evaluation and assessment. These are not quantifiable activities. Nonetheless, we also recognize the need or desire for grades, so traditional numeric or letter grades will be provided and readily accessed on the *Bible and Early Church* Canvas page. Additionally, Scholé will provide a transcript of that grade to the requesting parent at the end of the year.

Student grades will be comprised of:

1. Daily Summaries: 20%
2. Critical Reading Questions: 30%
3. Writing Assignments: 30%
4. Class Participation/Reading: 20%

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**ACADEMIC DISHONESTY**

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Students will sometimes take assessment tests and/or quizzes privately at home. Students are on their honor to abide by [Scholé Academy's Learning Philosophy](#) which assumes the personal cultivation of Student-Virtues described in the Student-Parent Handbook.

Additionally, plagiarism is a serious and punishable offense. Proper citation of all sources is essential to the academic endeavor. Remember to cite any source if the information is not common knowledge or is an opinion obtained through any source. A plagiarized assignment will result in a failing grade. Students should consult their chosen style manual (see Student Expectations above) for specific direction on obtaining, quoting and paraphrasing sources.

## THE VIRTUAL CLASSROOM

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We will be using the free online “virtual classroom” software provided by Zoom, one of the leading companies that provides such software. The virtual classroom will provide students with interactive audio, text chat and an interactive whiteboard in which texts, diagrams, video and other media can be displayed and analyzed. We will provide students with a link (via email) that will enable students to join the virtual classroom.

Specific information regarding the technology used by Scholé Academy (including required technology) can be found by visiting the [Technology in the Classroom](#) section of the Student Parent Handbook.

Students will submit documents by scanning and uploading them to their personal computer, then attaching those files as .pdfs to an email. They will submit their work to the *The Bible and Early Church* Canvas assignment page (access granted after enrollment is secured).

## ABOUT THE INSTRUCTOR

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**Nathan Dickinson** holds a M.Div. from Southern Baptist Theological Seminary and currently serves as the planting priest of Church of the Good Shepherd in Summersville, West Virginia. He is a West Virginia native who has had approximately a decade of teaching experiences in local churches and missionary settings. He has taught the Bible in Kenya, Zambia, Myanmar, and Jamaica, and has taught English (among other things) to students in a Christian school setting. He loves helping students see the beauty of God in Holy Scripture and helping students learn to engage in meaningful dialogue.

His two boys (Barnabas and Martin) keep his home life interesting and full of adventure! When he is not adventuring with his wife and boys, he is looking for a good cup of coffee, a good book, and a good conversation.