



## Theology Part One: The Apostolic Age to the Reformation Spring 2019 Mark Mann

**Required Readings:** Our main text will be William Placher's *A History of Christian Theology: An Introduction*. In addition, there will be various primary sources students will read. Most are readily available either in the Holy Bible or the Book of Common Prayer. Additional readings will be made available to you by the instructor.

**Assignments:** Each week you will write an essay responding to the prompt given by the professor. The essay should be about 600-700 words in length, with attention given to both the quality of the substance (clearly addresses the question in relation to the materials you have read) and style (proper grammar, spelling, etc.). Each prompt will have two parts: one that focuses on the issues as dealt with in the early church, the second regarding the pertinence of the issues for the life of the church today.

### Weekly Topics, Readings and Assignments

*Week I: Canon, Creed, and Catholicity: Authority and the Church*

**Readings:** Placher, chs. 1-3; Galatians 2, Acts 15; Apostles Creed

**Essay Prompt:** Part I: What were the chief issues addressed at the Council of Jerusalem as depicted in both Galatians 2 and Acts 15? Why was this a problem for early Christians, and how did they go about navigating a settlement? In your opinion, were the outcomes and process for achieving these outcomes satisfactory? Why or why not? Part II: What are the sources we have available to us today to settle similar disagreements and how do you think they should be used for settling disputes within the church today?

*Week II: Who Do You Say That I Am? Christology and Orthodoxy*

**Readings:** Placher, chs. 4-6; Nicene Creed; Chalcedonian Symbol

**Essay Prompt:** Part I: What were the chief issues at stake in the controversies surrounding both the councils of Nicea and Chalcedon? In your opinion, were these issues settled satisfactorily? Why or why not? Part II: Define and assess the role that the creeds play in the life of the Episcopal church today? Is commitment to the creeds important for the life of the church? Why or why not?

*Week III: St. Augustine of Hippo and the Foundations of Western Christendom*

Readings: Placher, chs. 8, 10; Excerpts from Confessions

**Essay Prompt:** Part I: Outline the chief issues at stake in Augustine's controversies with the Donatists and Pelagians, and assess Augustine's solutions (especially with regards to his doctrine of original sin) to these problems. Part II: How would you explain the doctrine of original sin to your parishioners? Building on this explanation, how would you then explain to a parishioner why 'bad things happen to good people'.

*Week IV: The Reformation and the Demise of Christendom*

Readings: Placher, 12-14

**Assignment:** Part I: What were the chief points of Martin Luther's critique of the Catholic theology of his day? Was he correct or not? Defend your answer. Part II: Imagine that a non-believer comes into your church wanting to know how to be 'saved' from her sins? How would you explain what it means to receive salvation and how this happens? Does Luther provide us a helpful way of addressing these questions? Why or why not?