



EARLY CHURCH HISTORY (the First 5 Centuries)

Erik van Alten, ThM

November 7-11, 2016

Riga, Akas street 13, 3 rd floor, 18:00-21:00.

In English, with translation into Latvian.

ABOUT PROFESSOR

Erik van Alten was born and raised in South Africa from Dutch parents. Currently working on and defending Doctoral degree at the Theological University of Kampen (The Netherlands) early 2017.

Having served as minister in Reformed churches in South Africa for a number of years, from 2013 Erik is the director of the Evangelical Reformed Seminary of Ukraine, and is also teaching Church History and Systematic Theology there.

He is married to Tineke, also a South African from Dutch parents, and they have three sons and one daughter. Erik about himself, church history, ministry: "I love doing theology, especially church history. It's a revelation to see history come alive, and to realize how much poorer we are without knowledge of the history of the church. Current affairs just make so much more sense once we understand them in the context of the past. When I'm not running the seminary or teaching, I spend time with my family. Being a pastor just makes you realize how valuable a good marriage and a happy family are."

ABOUT COURSE

In this course, an introduction will be given to the growth and development of the Eastern and Western church to the time of the Great Schism. At the course we will study prominent church fathers, the creeds, councils, and controversies of the early church.

Particular attention will be given to the history and spread of the Byzantine church and its theological development, including the iconoclastic controversy, the meaning of salvation, the role of tradition in the church. Differences between the Byzantine and Western church will be considered.

COURSE GOALS

1. Cognitive goals

The student receives knowledge of:

- Important events and facts of the history of the Christian church in the period from the years 33 to 590.
- The formation of the life of the Church, as well as of theology in East and West
- Life and works of famous scholars of East and West
- The effects of the ecumenical councils

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2. Spiritual goals

The student...

- learns more about what the Church of Christ always had to struggle with to remain faithful to her Lord - the guidance of the Holy Spirit as well as human sin are always present and need to be able to distinguish between them
- feels that he is not the first Christian, but that the Lord gives him a definite place in the church
- understands that the theological discussions and decisions of the past influence the present. We cannot repeat history, but we can learn a lot from it.

3. Practical goals

The student will be able to:

- Give explanations of the main events and know the basic facts of the history of the early church
- Show the relationship and differences between the past and the present in light of Christian doctrine, spirituality, church life, social and religious aspects
- Use the knowledge of the history of the church in preaching the gospel

REQUIREMENTS:

1. Attendance; 2. Written final exam; 3. Required reading: For pastoral students: JL Gonzales, *The Story of Christianity*, volume 1, chs. 1-29 (~ 326 pp.); For lay leader students: JL Gonzales, *The Story of Christianity*, volume 1, chs. 5-9 (~ 52 pp.); Recommended reading: ANS Lane, *A Concise History of Christian Thought*, part I-III (~140 pp.)

ABOUT THE CLASSES:

Auditors welcome. Participation fee is 14 EUR (includes materials and coffee breaks).

Signing up for the course and additional information: Janis Perkons, phone +371 26356030, janis@brts.edu.lv