



**Team University**

*EMPOWER FOR GENERATIONS*

Plot 446 Kabaka Anjagala Rd-Mengo  
P.O.BOX 8128  
Kampala – Uganda

**TEAM UNIVERSITY**

**FACULTY OF EDUCATION**

**DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION**

**INTRODUCTION TO CHURCH HISTORY**

**LECTURE MATERIAL**

**DIPLOMA IN EDUCATION-PRIMARY**

**CODE: DRE 5223**

**@TU**

## **COURSE TITLE: INTRODUCTION TO CHURCH HISTORY**

**CODE:** DRE 5221  
**YEAR:** YEAR 2 TRIMESTER 1  
**HOURS TAUGHT:** 3 CUS  
**PREREQUISITES:** NONE

### **COURSE DESCRIPTION**

CH 501/502 is a two-part course in the study of church history. The first part of the course (CH 501) will expose the student to the broad flow of church history from its beginning at Pentecost to the time just prior to the Reformation. CH 502 will pick up the study at the time of the Renaissance and Reformation and take the student up to the present era.

### **COURSE OBJECTIVES**

- A. To have the student know the major events of church history.
- B. To have the students know and appreciate the major doctrinal issues that developed throughout church history and how these doctrines came into formal articulation over the ages.
- C. To have the student recognize the importance of protecting the Body of Christ from doctrinal deviations.
- D. To have the student recognize the importance of learning from the past—learning from the right choices of the past as well as from the mistakes of the past.

### **EXPECTED LEARNING OUTCOMES**

### **MODE OF DELIVERY**

- Lectures
- Reading assignments
- Practical assignments
- Field trips
- Documentaries

### **INSTRUCTIONAL MATERIALS AND / OR EQUIPMENT**

- Whiteboard and Markers
- Flip Charts
- LCD Projectors
- CDs, DVDs and Tapes

## **COURSE ASSESSMENT**

|                                              |             |
|----------------------------------------------|-------------|
| ▪ Continuous assessments tests               | 20%         |
| ▪ Group and individual project (course work) | 10%         |
| ▪ End of Semester Examination                | 70%         |
| <b>Total</b>                                 | <b>100%</b> |

## **READING LIST**

Bruce Shelley, Church History in Plain Language, 2nd ed. (Word, 1995). This is the best single volume introduction to church history. It's written for college courses.

Timothy Paul Jones, Christian History Made Easy (Rose, 2010). This is a popularly written church history survey intended for use in local churches.

Diana Lynn Severance, Feminine Threads: Women in the Tapestry of Christian History (Christian Focus, 2011). This is a fine treatment women in church history. The author is a credentialed historian who holds to traditional biblical gender roles.

Stephen J. Nichols and Ned Bustard, The Church History ABCs: Augustine and 25 Other Heroes of the Faith (Crossway, 2010). This is a wonderful tool for teaching church history to children.

## **UNIT 1: INTRODUCTION TO CHURCH HISTORY**

### **INTRODUCTION**

Church History is the study of what the Holy Spirit has wrought through the church from the end of the first century AD to the present day. Studying church history reminds us that we are part of a movement that is bigger than ourselves, our families, our church, and our denominations. In the Church History BFL track, we will spend a quarter studying the main events, figures, and doctrinal developments in the past two thousand years.

Most of all, perhaps, we need intimate knowledge of the past. Not that the past has any magic about it, but because we cannot study the future, and yet need something to set against the present, to remind us that the basic assumptions have been quite different in different periods and that much which seems certain to the uneducated is merely temporary fashion. A man who has lived in many places is not likely to be deceived by the local errors of his native village: the scholar has lived in many times and is therefore in some degree immune from the great cataract of nonsense that pours from the press and the microphone of his own age.

The final quarter of the Theology and Church History BFL track is dedicated to a survey of the history of Christianity from the end of the first century AD to the present day. Over the next three months, we'll learn about some of the most important figures, movements, controversies, and events in Christian

history. We'll cover topics such as the early church fathers, the development of medieval Catholicism, the Protestant Reformation, the great awakenings, the spread of global Christianity, and the history of the Southern Baptist Convention. This week, we'll begin the series with an introduction to church history.

THE birth of Christ saw the lands which surrounded the Mediterranean in the possession of Rome. To a degree never before equalled, and unapproached in modern times, these vast territories, which embraced all that common men knew of civilized life, were under the sway of a single type of culture. The civilizations of India or of China did not come within the vision of the ordinary inhabitant of the Roman Empire. Outside its borders he knew only savage or semicivilized tribes. The Roman Empire and the world of civilized men were coextensive. All was held together by allegiance to a single Emperor, and by a common military system subject to him.

The Roman army, small in comparison with that of a modern military state, was adequate to preserve the Roman peace. Under that peace commerce flourished, communication was made easy by excellent roads and by sea, and among educated men, at least in the larger towns, a common language, that of Greece, facilitated the interchange of thought. It was an empire that, in spite of many evil rulers and corrupt lower officials, secured a rough justice such as the world had never before seen; and its citizens were proud of it and of its achievements. Yet with all its unity of imperial authority and military control, Rome was far from crushing local institutions.

In domestic matters the inhabitants of the provinces were largely self-governing. Their local religious observances were generally respected. Among the masses the ancient languages and customs persisted. Even native rulers were allowed a limited sway in portions of the empire, as native states still persist under British rule in India. Such a land was Palestine at the time of Christ's birth. Not a little of the success of Rome as mistress of its diverse subject population was due to this considerate treatment of local rights and prejudices. The diversity in the empire was scarcely less remarkable than its unity. This variety was nowhere more apparent than in the realm of religious thought.

Christianity entered no empty world. Its advent found men's minds filled with conceptions of the universe, of religion, of sin, and of rewards and punishments, with which it had to reckon and to which it had to adjust itself. Christianity could not build on virgin soil. The conceptions which it found already existing formed much of the material with which it must erect its structure. Many of these ideas are no longer those of the modern world. The fact of this inevitable intermixture compels the student to distinguish the permanent from the transitory in Christian thought, though the process is one of exceeding difficulty, and the solutions given by various scholars are diverse.

Certain factors in the world of thought into which Christianity came belong to universal ancient religion and are of great antiquity. All men, except a few representatives of philosophical sophistication, believed in the existence of a power, or of powers, invisible, superhuman, and eternal, controlling human destiny, and to be worshipped or placated by prayer, ritual, or sacrifice. The earth was viewed as the center of the universe. Around it the sun, planets, and stars ran their courses. Above it was the heaven; below the abode of departed spirits or of the wicked. No conception of science or the laws of nature had penetrated the popular mind. All the ongoings of nature were the work of invisible powers of good and evil, who ruled arbitrarily. Miracles were, therefore, to be regarded not merely as possible; they were to be expected whenever the higher forces would impress men with the important or the unusual.

The world was the abode of innumerable spirits, righteous or malevolent, who touched human life in all its phases, and who even entered into such possession of men as to control their actions for good or ill. A profound sense of unworthiness, of ill desert, and of dissatisfaction with the existing conditions of life characterized the mass of mankind. The varied forms of religious manifestation were evidences of the universal need of better relations with the spiritual and unseen, and of men's longing for help greater than any they could give one another.

Besides these general conceptions common to popular religion, the world into which Christianity came owed much to the specific influence of Greek thought. Hellenistic ideas dominated the intelligence of the Roman Empire, but their sway was extensive only among the more cultivated portion of the population. Greek philosophic speculation at first concerned itself with the explanation of the physical universe. Yet with Heraclitus of Ephesus (about B. C. 490), though all was viewed as in a sense physical, the universe, which is in constant flow, is regarded as fashioned by a fiery element, the all-penetrating reason, of which men's souls are a part. Here was probably the germ of the Logos conception which was to play such a role in later Greek speculation and Christian theology.

As yet this shaping element was undistinguished from material warmth or fire. Anaxagoras of Athens (about B. C. 500-428) taught that a shaping mind (*voûs*) acted in the ordering of matter and is independent of it. The Pythagoreans, of southern Italy, held that spirit is immaterial, and that souls are fallen spirits imprisoned in material bodies. To this belief in immaterial existence they seem to have been led by a consideration of the properties of numbers—permanent truths beyond the realm of matter and not materially discerned. Socrates and Plato To Socrates (B. C. 470?-399) the explanation of man himself, not of the universe, was the prime object of thought. Man's conduct, that is morals, was the most important theme of investigation. Right action is based on knowledge, and will result in the four virtues—prudence, courage, self-control, and justice—which, as the “natural virtues,” were to have their eminent place in mediaeval Christian theology. This identification of virtue with knowledge, the doctrine that to know will involve doing, was indeed a disastrous legacy to all Greek thinking, and influential in much Christian speculation, notably in the Gnosticism of the second century. In Socrates's disciple, Plato (B. C. 427-347), the early Greek mind reached its highest spiritual attainment. He is properly describable as a man of mystical piety, as well as of the profoundest spiritual insight.

To Plato the passing forms of this visible world give no real knowledge. That knowledge of the truly permanent and real comes from our acquaintance with the “ideas,” those changeless archetypal, universal patterns which exist in the invisible spiritual world—the “intelligible” world, since known by reason rather than by the senses—and give whatever of reality is shared by the passing phenomena present to our senses. The soul knew these “ideas” in previous existence. The phenomena of the visible world call to remembrance these once known “ideas.” The soul, existing before the body, must be independent of it, and not affected by its decay. This conception of immortality as an attribute of the soul, not shared by the body, was always influential in Greek thought and stood in sharp contrast to the Hebrew doctrine of resurrection. All “ideas” are not of equal worth. The highest are those of the true, the beautiful, and especially of the good. A clear perception of a personal God, as embodied in the “idea” of the good, was perhaps not attained by Plato; but he certainly approached closely to it.

The good rules the world, not chance. It is the source of all lesser goods, and desires to be imitated in the actions of men. The realm of “ideas” is the true home of the soul, which finds its highest satisfaction in communion with them. Salvation is the recovery of the vision of the eternal goodness and beauty. Aristotle Aristotle (B. C. 384-322) was of a far less mystical spirit than Plato. To him the visible world

was an unquestioned reality. He discarded Plato's sharp discrimination between "ideas" and phenomena. Neither exist without the other.

Each existence is a substance, the result, save in the case of God, who is purely immaterial, of the impress of "idea," as the formative force, on matter which is the content. Matter in itself is only potential substance. It has always existed, yet never without form. Hence the world is eternal, for a realm of "ideas" antecedent to their manifestation in phenomena does not exist. The world is the prime object of knowledge, and Aristotle is therefore in a true sense a scientist. Its changes demand the initiation of a "prime mover," who is Himself unmoved. Hence Aristotle presents this celebrated argument for the existence of God. But the "prime mover" works with intelligent purpose, and God is, therefore, not only the beginning but the end of the process of the world's development.

Man belongs to the world of substances, but in him there is not merely the body and sensitive "soul" of the animal; there is also a divine spark, a Logos which he shares with God, and which is eternal, though, unlike Plato's conception of spirit, essentially impersonal. In morals Aristotle held that happiness, or well-being, is the aim, and is attained by a careful maintenance of the golden mean. Greek philosophy did not advance much scientifically beyond Plato and Aristotle, but they had little direct influence at the time of Christ. Two centuries and a half after His birth, a modified Platonism, NeoPlatonism, was to arise, of great importance, which profoundly affected Christian theology, notably that of Augustine. Aristotle was powerfully to influence the scholastic theology of the later Middle Ages. Those older Greek philosophers had viewed man chiefly in the light of his value to the state. The conquests of Alexander, who died B. C. 323, wrought a great change in men's outlook.

Hellenic culture was planted widely over the Eastern world, but the small Greek states collapsed as independent political entities. It was difficult longer to feel that devotion to the new and vast political units that a little, independent Athens had, for instance, won from its citizens. The individual as an independent entity was emphasized. Philosophy had to be interpreted in terms of individual life. How could the individual make the most of himself? Two great answers were given, one of which was wholly foreign to the genius of Christianity, and could not be used by it; the other only partially foreign, and therefore destined profoundly to influence Christian theology. These were Epicureanism and Stoicism.

Epicureanism Epicurus (B. C. 342-270), most of whose life was spent in Athens, taught that mental bliss is the highest aim of man. This state is most perfect when passive. It is the absence of all that disturbs and annoys. Hence Epicurus himself does not deserve the reproaches often cast upon his system. Indeed, in his own life, he was an ascetic. The worst foes of mental happiness he taught are groundless fears. Of these the chief are dread of the anger of the gods and of death. Both are baseless. The gods exist, but they did not create nor do they govern the world, which Epicurus holds, with Democritus (B. C. 470?-380?), was formed by the chance and ever-changing combinations of eternally existing atoms.

All is material, even the soul of man and the gods themselves. Death ends all, but is no evil, since in it there is no consciousness remaining. Hence, as far as it was a religion, Epicureanism was one of indifference. The school spread widely. The Roman poet Lucretius (B. C. 98?-55), in his brilliant *De Rerum Natura*, gave expression to the worthier side of Epicureanism; but the influence of the system as a whole was destructive and toward a sensual view of happiness. Contemporarily with Epicurus, Euhemerus (about B. C. 300) taught that the gods of the old religions were simply deified men, about whom myths and tradition had cast a halo of divinity. He found a translator and advocate in the Roman poet Ennius (B.C. 239?-170?). Parallel with Epicureanism, in the teaching of Pyrrho of Elis (B.C. 360?-

270?), and his followers, a wholly sceptical point of view was presented. Not merely can the real nature of things never be understood, but the best course of action is equally dubious.

In practice Pyrrho found, like Epicurus, the ideal of life one of withdrawal from all that annoys or disturbs. With all these theories Christianity could have nothing in common, and they in turn did not affect it. Stoicism The other great answer was that of Stoicism, the noblest type of ancient pagan ethical thought, the nearest in some respects to Christianity, and in others remote from it. Its leaders were Zeno (B. C.?-264?), Cleanthes (B. C. 301?-232?), and Chrysippus (B. C. 280?-207?). Though developed in Athens, it flourished best outside of Greece, and notably in Rome, where Seneca (B. C. 3?-A. D. 65), Epictetus (A. D. 60?-?), and the Emperor, Marcus Aurelius (A. D. 121-180), had great influence. It was powerfully represented in Tarsus during the early life of the Apostle Paul. Stoicism was primarily a great ethical system, yet not without claims to be considered a religion. Its thought of the universe was curiously materialistic. All that is real is physical. Yet there is great difference in the fineness of bodies, and the coarser are penetrated by the finer. Hence fine and coarse correspond roughly to the common distinctions between spirit and matter. Stoicism approximated, though it much modified, the view of Heraclitus. The source of all, and the shaping, harmonizing influence in the universe is the vital warmth, from which all has developed by differing degrees of tension, which interpenetrates all things, and to which all will return.

#### BENEFITS OF STUDYING CHURCH HISTORY

Many of us may struggle with the feeling that the church is already too old-fashioned. If so, why should we study church history? Shouldn't we stop looking backward to the 16th century and start living in the 21st century?

Contrary to our concerns, the church has always realized that a forward-looking church is also a backward looking church. Likewise, well-balanced, progressive Christians will be students of church history.

The Bible supports this. Christianity, as revealed in Scripture, is an inescapably historical religion. The Christian conception of time itself is linear, not cyclical. That is, time has a beginning, a middle and an end. It is within this spectrum of time that the great themes of the Bible are all rooted. The Creation, Fall, Redemption and Restoration of humanity are not merely ideas; they are real events that remind us of the importance of history.

Most Christians would agree that it's important to study this history (the Bible's history of redemption). But God's actions in history are significant and worthy of study whether they are recorded in Scripture or not. Consider the words of the Psalmist: "I remember the days of old; I meditate on all your works; I muse on the work of your hands" (Psalm 143:5). Along the same lines, the Apostle John ends his Gospel with these words: "And there are also many other things that Jesus did which, if they were written one by one, I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the books that would be written" (John 21:25). We don't know all of those works but they are real history as are all the other works of God.

The word "remember" is used 164 times in 39 of the 66 Bible books. In repeating this word, God is saying, "Don't neglect the past." Or as C.S. Lewis so memorably put it, "Don't be a chronological snob," only valuing the era in which you live. Henry Ford exemplified such snobbery when he said, "History is bunk." It's not. Instead, it's filled with meaning that God calls us to learn in our day.

In 1 Corinthians 10, Paul reviews a portion of Israel's history, particularly their exodus from Egypt and their subsequent desert exile. Paul tells us in verse eleven that "all these things happened to them as examples, and they were written for our admonition..."

Similarly, Stephen's sermon (Acts 7) is one monumental history lesson. It begins with the call of Abraham, moves to the people's bondage in and deliverance from Egypt, and an account of the construction of the tabernacle and temple. The point of this lesson is that the Jewish leaders have not learned from history. Instead they have perpetuated the sins of their fathers.

Not only are we to learn from history, we must also be teachers of history. Psalm 145:4 says, "One generation shall praise our works to another, and shall declare your mighty acts." The result of this command to teach God's history is recorded in Psalm 44:1. "We have heard with our ears, O God, our fathers have told us, the deeds You did in their days, in days of old".

There are also practical considerations that urge us to study God's history. The following six reasons help demonstrate the value of learning from and teaching history. Knowing history helps us:

### **1. Appreciate the Sovereignty of God**

If you were to spend just one hour reading an accurate overview of church history, you might wonder how the church has continued to exist at all. From the Roman persecutions of the first three centuries to atrocities of today, the church has undergone tremendous opposition. The study of Church history reminds us of Christ's words: "I will build my church and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it" (Matt. 16:18, Cf. Belgic Confession, Art. 27).

### **2. Apply Debated Biblical Teachings**

We look to the practices of the early church to help us understand such important issues as church membership, baptism, worship and government involvement. For example, how do we know on which day we should rest from our labors and join together with other believers for worship? Not everyone agrees that the Bible answers this question with absolute clarity. But when we consider that the early Christians worshipped on the first day of the week and that this pattern has continued in a nearly unbroken string for 2,000 years, it lays a very strong precedent for modern churches to consider.

### **3. Defend Against Heresies and Cults**

Take Athanasius. He fought a vigilant battle in the 4th century against the teachings of Arius, who denied that the Son is essentially equal to the Father. In the mind of Arius, Christ was neither fully God nor fully man, but belonged to an entirely different category.

Athanasius argued that only by the real Godhead coming into union with the full manhood in Christ could fallen men be made right with God. In other words, Jesus can only save if he is God.

Given that the Jehovah's Witnesses are modern-day, self-conscious followers of Arius, understanding Athanasius' arguments (especially in his book *On the Incarnation*) is extremely valuable today.

### **4. Resist Being Captivated by Fads**

Many churches today are desperately trying to overhaul their image to be more hip. Churches seek to impress by embracing cultural fads of style, technology, music, movies and even shock-jock approaches to sexuality.

As historian Bruce Shelley once wrote, "Church history tends to separate the transient from the permanent, fads from basics."

### **5. Reevaluate Common Church Practices**

Ever wonder why, in some churches, when a minister gives a call to repent and believe the room becomes filled with sentimental music? Those stirred by religious sentiment are encouraged to come forward to make a decision. Why?

Likely, these are a few remnants of Charles Finney's 19th century revival techniques, which at the time were considered "new measures" of evangelism. There was, of course, a theological reason for the introduction of these new measures. Finney believed that God could not regenerate a person without that person's help. From this context it makes sense to encourage people to "give God permission" to save them.

A more expansive view of history would help us to understand that true revivals have come about not by novel advertising techniques or psychological manipulation but by the regular, powerful expository preaching of God's Word.

### **6. Live Courageous Christian Lives Today**

Isaac Watts, the 18th century British Hymnist, asks a number of powerful questions making the point that the study of church history can be a spur to faithfulness:

"Am I a soldier of the cross, a follower of the lamb, and shall I fear to own his cause, or blush to speak his name? Must I be carried to the skies on flowery beds of ease, while others fought to win the prize and sailed through bloody seas? Are there no foes for me to face? Must I not stem the flood? Is this vile world a friend to grace, to help me on to God? Since I must fight if I would reign, increase my courage, Lord; I'll bear the toil, endure the pain, supported by Thy Word."

Until the Lord comes again, the church is appropriately called the church militant. Many before us have fought well. But the fight continues.

Studying the history of the church soberly reminds us that we take our place in the ranks of the army of God. We take up the same battle-beaten armor that the saints of old used. We use the same weapon, the gospel of Jesus Christ. And we fight, not only to continue our heritage but to leave a lasting legacy for future generations as well.

## **THE BIBLE AND HISTORY**

One of the great contributions of the Judeo-Christian tradition is a linear view of history. According to Jews and Christians, history isn't just a series of cyclical events captive to fate or controlled by naturalistic forces, but history is purposefully moving forward to an ultimate goal according to the sovereign plans of God himself.

Christianity is at root a historical faith, meaning that our religion is grounded in events that Christians believe to be real historical occurrences. For example, Christians believe that at particular points in history Abraham migrated from Ur to Palestine, Moses led the Israelites out of Egyptian slavery, David became the king of Israel, Jesus of Nazareth preached and was crucified, and Paul established churches all over the Roman Empire.

The figures spoken of in the Scriptures were real people who lived real lives—just like you and me. Christians also believe that the Bible records miracles and other mighty acts of God, each of which is just as historical as the everyday, "mundane" events recorded in Scriptures. For example, we believe God really did speak the world into existence, the Israelites really were fed manna from heaven in the

wilderness, the prophets really healed sick people, Jesus really walked on water, God really did become a man, and most important, Jesus really did come back to life after being dead for parts of three days. Because we take biblical history seriously, we also take the things we will learn in this BFL class seriously—Christianity is a historical faith.

### **History as God's Story**

Though Christianity is a historical faith, it isn't merely historical in the sense that it simply recounts bare facts—Christianity, and all of history, is part of a particular story. The Scriptures record for us a grand biblical narrative (GBN) in four movements: creation, fall, redemption, and consummation. This GBN is God's Story—it has aptly been called “the true story of the whole world.”<sup>2</sup> The Bible recounts the “Story of Stories,” and our own individual stories only truly make sense when we realize we are bit players in the true story of the whole world. The GBN records for us everything that God has done through Jesus Christ to reconcile unto himself lost sinners and ultimately the entire created order. Everything we'll discuss in this track occurs at a particular point in the GBN: the time “between the times,” the period between redemption and consummation. Church history is the continuation of the part of God's Story that begins in the New Testament and continues until the end of the age—the same God who inspired the Scriptures continues to work through his people, the church.

### **Presuppositions and History**

There is no such thing as pure, neutral history—every event that has ever occurred must be interpreted. All historians interpret history according to their presuppositions. At FBC Durham, we are evangelical Christians in the Baptist tradition—this identity lends itself to particular presuppositions that will inform how we'll interpret the events of church history. As Christians, we believe that God is acting to redeem lost sinners through the person and work of Jesus Christ. We further believe that God has never been without a true Christian witness from the time of Christ to the present day. We'll read every event in church history—even the ones we aren't particularly proud of—through our Christian lens.

As evangelicals, we believe that the Bible is God's trustworthy written word, that the perfect life, substitutionary death, and victorious resurrection of Jesus Christ is the only means of salvation, and that all Christians are called to proclaim this gospel to all the peoples of the earth. We'll read many controversial doctrinal developments in church history through our evangelical lens. As Baptists, we believe that New Testament churches were covenanted, local assemblies that were comprised of believers who had been immersed in water following their conversion to faith in Christ. These churches were ruled by Christ through his chosen apostles, governed by their members, led by their elders (or pastors), and served by their deacons. We'll read developments in church structure, leadership, and the ordinances (or sacraments) through our Baptist lens. A key biblical passage that informs how we'll interpret church history in this BFL track is Galatians 4:4–5: But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons (ESV).

These verses argue that Jesus was born in “the fullness of time”—Jesus was providentially born at just the right time. He was born when the Jews were subject to the Romans and could not execute criminals without Roman permission, when most all Jews and Gentiles spoke Greek, when the Roman road system made travel easier than it had ever been, etc. All of these factors contributed to the spread of the Christian movement. The same God who providentially sent his Son in the fullness of time continues to work that way—he brings all his purposes to pass, according to his perfect timing, using whatever means he wants. We'll see this again and again as we study church history.

## Studying Church History

As we study church history together this quarter, it'll be helpful if everyone is on the same page in terms of how we're defining some key terms. For our purposes, church history is the study of the beliefs and practices of professing Christians from the end of the New Testament era to the present day.

A Christian is any individual who claims that title for himself—as a general rule, we won't be making final judgments about people's regeneration. Many other key terms will be defined along the way.

Church history is typically divided into four main time periods:

- 1) The Patristic Era (ca. 100–600 AD)
  - 2) The Medieval Era (ca. 600–1500)
  - 3) The Reformation Era (ca. 1500–1650)
  - 4) The Modern Era (ca. 1650–present)
- In addition to these periods, there are other divisions used by church historians. These include the study of Christianity in particular regions or nations (e.g. American church history), key topics (e.g. history of missions), or specific denominations or traditions (e.g. Baptist history).

## Why Church History Matters

Some people like to learn about history, while others don't; the same is true of church history. But church history matters for contemporary Christians. There are at least seven reasons that Christians should learn about church history:

1) Church history reminds us that Jesus is building his church. It tells us about how Jesus is saving people from every tongue, tribe, language, and nation as his gospel is preached to the ends of the earth. It tells us about how Jesus has saved individuals from our particular people group(s) in our particular context. Church history is our history.

2) Church history helps to rescue us from the tyranny of the present. This is what C.S. Lewis was getting at in the quote we cited at the beginning of this lesson.

3) Church history tells us how we got where we are today. It helps us to understand why we have all these different denominations and traditions. It reminds every tradition, including Southern Baptists, that the church is bigger than any particular Christian group.

4) Church history gives us examples from which we can learn. It provides us with plenty of examples of Christians from all walks of life who were trying to follow Jesus in different contexts. We can learn from all of them—even the negative examples.

5) Church history helps us to confront challenges we face today. Many of the questions and challenges faced by contemporary churches were encountered and dealt with by saints from bygone eras—in them we have guides and teachers to help us as we journey through the Christian life.

6) Church history compels us to worship the Lord who reigns over all of history. “The sheer fact of believers across centuries and continents worshiping God reminds us that our Lord is over all and everywhere. A poem scratched out by a persecuted Christian in prison or the testimony of a missionary's

communion with Christ as he faced imminent martyrdom or the story of whole peoples in Burma coming to Christ all point to the God who alone can satisfy every human heart.”<sup>4</sup>

7) Church history is fun. You may not believe it now—but you’ll figure it out at some point during the next three months!

## **REASONS WHY CHRISTIAN LEADERS SHOULD STUDY CHURCH HISTORY**

Church History is not often on most Christians’ list of favorite topics. As I travel throughout the world, I remain surprised by leaders’ vocal disinterest and sometimes even avid aversion to explore the history of God’s involvement in and through His Church. So why should Christian leaders study the history of the Church? Here is a short list of ten reasons of why the study of Church History remains important for the development and growth of authentic and biblical Christianity and Leadership.

1. To be obedient: We study the history of God’s people as a simple act of obedience to the Word of God. The Scriptures repeatedly instructs the faithful to explore and search out the historical accounts of those that have gone before us. The Book of Job (Job 8:8-10, NIV) offers this advice for the ones seeking wisdom and understanding in their own day: “Ask the former generations and find out what their fathers learned, for we were born only yesterday and know nothing, and our days on earth are but a shadow. Will they not instruct you and tell you? Will they not bring forth words from their understanding?”

2. To understand God: The study of Church History is not only the study of the historical Church but also the exploration of God’s active involvement with His own people in our world. Knowing the acts and ways of God in working with His people throughout history provides us with a better understanding of God Himself. As the psalmist (Psalm 44:1, NIV) declares, “We have heard with our ears, O God; our fathers have told us what you did in their days, in days long ago.”

3. To develop humility: Our, current generation suffers from pride-filled perspectives and attitudes when we declare that we are the greatest generation of believers in the history of the world. For instance, reading about the courageous commitment to serve Jesus unto death in the letters of the Church Father, Ignatius of Antioch (35-108 AD), places our own efforts in perspectives. The words of Ignatius to the church in Rome, about his own willingness to die as a martyr, should humble us in the light of the “easy-living” approach of many of today’s Christians: “I am writing to all the Churches and I enjoin all, that I am dying willingly for God's sake, if only you do not prevent it. I beg you; do not do me an untimely kindness. Allow me to be eaten by the beasts, which are my way of reaching to God. I am God's wheat, and I am to be ground by the teeth of wild beasts, so that I may become the pure bread of Christ.”

4. To keep us from error: Not knowing about the many errors in the history of the Church dooms us to repeat those failures again. Many of the heresies of the first, few centuries of the Church have surfaces once again in our times. Knowledge of those early heresies will help us to remain on the clear path of Biblical truth.

5. To be renewed: The Scriptures declares that our God is the same, yesterday, today and forever (Hebrews 13:8). Understanding His ways of renewal and revival in the past, prepares us to receive His work of grace and liberty in our own midst, today.

6. To be communal: Church History reminds us that we are part of a larger, eternal community of believers. The Scriptures describes these saints of old as cheering us on from heaven (Hebrews 12:1). These saints are not dead in Christ, they remain alive in Jesus.

7. To be encouraged: The good example of the believers that have gone before us encourages us to imitate them as they have imitated Jesus (1 Corinthians 11:1). They remind us that it is possible to not only serve God well in this life, but to endure right until the end.

8. To understand our own time: Church History helps us to understand our own time better. The author of the Old Testament book of Ecclesiastes once wrote that there is nothing new under the sun (Ecclesiastes 1:9). History, in very real and concrete ways, moves in circles and cycles. A fuller understanding of our past helps us to understand how we have arrived at this point in history. It helps us to see today from God's perspective.

9. To boldly step into the future: We are only able to move with confidence into the future if we understand our past. One can use the example of a swing or pendulum to explain this principle of truth. In order to "swing" into the future, we must first "pull" back by studying our history – in doing so we will have enough momentum to move beyond the struggles and challenges of our own time and embrace God's purposes and blessings for our future. The apostle Paul (1 Corinthians 10:11, NIV) offers further clarification on the study of history prepares us for tomorrow: "These things happened to them as examples and were written down as warnings for us, on whom the fulfillment of the ages has come."

10. To give glory to God: The ultimate and most important reason to study Church History is that it facilitates true and extravagant worship of our God. Our hearts are filled with awe and wonder when we explore the mighty acts of God in the past. The apostle John (Revelation 4:8, NIV) recorded that in heaven four living creatures, surrounding a throne, do not stop day or night declaring the glory and holiness of God, "who was, and is, and is to come."

We are a people of history, a history of God's passionate and loving involvement in our world. May we once again commit to study and learn from the great work of God in and through His people in ages past.

## **UNIT 2: THE SPREAD OF THE FAITH**

### **The Spread of the Faith (100–324 AD)**

The Roman Empire in the Second Century During the earliest days of Christian history, the only real political, economic, and military superpower in the world was the Roman Empire. Geographically, the empire encompassed almost the entire Mediterranean region and included most of Europe, Western Asia, and North Africa. Linguistically, although dozens of languages were spoken in the empire, the two official languages were Latin (spoken in the West) and Greek (spoken in the East). By the second century, Roman religion centered upon emperor worship, but remained polytheistic and syncretistic—the gods of conquered peoples were incorporated into the state religion. The cultural centers of the empire were the imperial cities, which enjoyed considerable autonomy so long as they paid taxes and were loyal to Caesar.

## **Church Life during the 2nd and 3rd Centuries**

By the turn of the second century, the church was primarily a gentile movement. The earliest centers of Christian growth were the cities—this is evident even in the New Testament. Though critics claimed Christianity was a religion for women and slaves, the evidence indicates the early church was fairly socioeconomically diverse. By the early second century, many churches were setting apart special buildings for corporate worship gatherings—typically houses that had been bequeathed to the congregation. When churches gathered for worship, they sang hymns, recited creedal statements, prayed, read the Scriptures, listened to teaching from a biblical text, and celebrated the Lord’s Supper. Local churches were led by elders or bishops, though there was a debate as to whether a church should have only one bishop or a plurality of bishops.

Clement of Rome (died ca. 100) argued for a plurality of bishops who could share shepherding responsibilities. Ignatius of Antioch (died ca. 110–115) argued for a single bishop—plurality leads to factions, while one man can preserve the church’s unity. All bishops were men, though in many churches both men and women served as deacons. By the third century, bishops and elders were considered two different positions. Elders, who were increasingly called priests, provided pastoral care to particular congregations. Like the first century apostles, bishops exercised oversight over all the churches in a particular city.

The most important bishops served in the key imperial cities such as Rome, Alexandria, and Antioch; over time, they exercised authority over other bishops in smaller cities and rural areas. By the second century, church membership had been divided into a two-step process: catechesis and baptism. Those who came to faith in Christ became catechumens who were instructed (catechized) in basic Christian doctrine and ethics, often for a period of at least a year. (It was three years by the third century.)

After the catechesis period came to an end, catechumens were baptized by immersion, typically at sunrise on Easter Sunday. Following their baptism, the new church members celebrated their first communion, which in the early second century was a full meal following the worship gathering.

By the end of the second century, the Lord’s Supper had been separated from a meal and incorporated into the worship gathering. Also by the turn of the third century, some terminally ill infants were being baptized on the presumption that baptism would guarantee their salvation. In Christian families, infant baptism became increasingly popular over the next three centuries, though adult converts were still baptized by immersion. There was no comprehensive missions strategy during the Patristic Era—typically, the faith simply spread with merchants, soldiers, and immigration.

Beginning in the third century, some individuals began to indicate a special calling to intentionally spread Christianity to unreached places. Typically, the bishop would give his blessing to this calling and send the missionary out with his endorsement. One early missionary was Gregory Thaumaturgus (210–265), a gifted evangelist who allegedly performed miracles and established the first permanent Christian witness in Cappadocia, a region in eastern Turkey that became home to several important Christian leaders in the fourth century.

## **Defining and Defending the Faith**

By the second century, several heresies were beginning to threaten the church. For our purposes, a heresy is a theological error that arises from within the church and threatens a core teaching about God,

Jesus Christ, or salvation—heresy is damnably incorrect doctrine. Other errors weren't necessarily damnable, but were still spiritually dangerous. We might think of dangerous, but not necessarily damnable beliefs as heterodox, but not heretical. One notable heterodox group were the Montanists, a second century sect that claimed the gift of prophecy and imposed legalistic moral requirements on all members. As a general rule, when heresy or heterodoxy threatened the faith, God would raise up key thinkers to clarify what the church had believed since the time of the apostles. We call these thinkers the Church Fathers, and we call their beliefs orthodoxy.

By far the most influential heresy was Gnosticism, an umbrella term used to describe hundreds of pagan religions in the second and third centuries. As a general rule, Gnostics believed that the spiritual is good and the material is bad, the physical world was created by an evil or ignorant being, and salvation comes through believing a secret oral tradition that had been passed down by the apostles. Irenaeus of Lyons (ca. 130–200) argued against the Gnostic belief in a secret oral tradition, countering that there was a public oral tradition that was consistent with the Scriptures and that was known to the whole church. Irenaeus also argued that Jesus had “recapitulated” or reenacting Adam’s history, but without sin—only those who trust in the perfect obedience and atoning death of the Last Adam will be saved.

Other Church Fathers made key contributions to the faith. Tertullian (ca. 160–220) agreed with Irenaeus that there was a public oral tradition that dated to the time of the apostles. In response to those who argued the Son or Spirit weren't fully divine, he coined the Latin term trinitas to explain God’s triune nature. Tertullian was very pessimistic about Roman culture, especially traditional pagan philosophy, famous asking “what does Athens have to do with Jerusalem?” Justin Martyr (ca. 100–165) and Clement of Alexandria (ca. 150–215) took a more optimistic view of philosophy, arguing that God had communicated real truth through the greatest Greek philosophers; they even hinted that some of them (particularly Plato) might have even been saved as pre-Christians. They also were gifted apologists and evangelists who provided rational arguments for the Christian faith against Jewish and pagan critics.

Clement’s student Origen (185–254) straddled the fence between orthodoxy and heterodoxy. On the one hand, he defended the faith against critics and wrote what was arguably the first systematic theology. On the other hand, he preferred allegorical interpretations of the Old Testament over more literal interpretations, he argued that human souls preexisted in heaven before they were placed in bodies at birth, and he at least hoped that all rational beings, including the demons, would eventually be saved. Though his views on preexistent souls and universal salvation would be rejected by the church, his allegorical interpretation greatly influenced the medieval church.

## **The Canon of Scripture**

One important early heretic was Marcion (ca. 85–160), who argued that the God of the Old Testament was wrathful and only loved Jews, while the God of the New Testament was merciful and loved all people. He thus rejected the Old Testament completely and argued that Jesus wasn't really a Jew. Marcion circulated his own canon of Scripture that rejected all of the New Testament writings except the letters of Paul and an edited version of Luke’s Gospel.

Marcion’s anti-Semitic canon created the need for Christian leaders to determine which New Testament books seemed to be inspired in the same way as the Old Testament Scriptures.

By the second century, virtually all Christians agreed on the core of the New Testament canon. All agreed there are only four true Gospels, even though the second century witnessed a proliferation of “Gospels” written from a Gnostic perspective. All agreed that the letters of Paul are inspired, though the Church Fathers debated whether or not Paul wrote Hebrews.

All agreed that Acts was written by Luke and is inspired. But some of the other books weren’t universally accepted, particularly the non-Pauline epistles and Revelation. Furthermore, some books sounded similar to the New Testament writings, especially the Epistle of Barnabas and the Shepherd of Hermas, both of which date to the turn of the second century. Though there was never any formal vote as to which books were inspired and which weren’t, several criteria became important in the canonization process:

- 1) Apostolicity – only those books that were written by apostles or those closely associated with apostles were authentic Scripture
- 2) Catholicity – only those books that were widely accepted by most mainstream Christians were authentic Scripture
- 3) Orthodoxy – only those books that accurately represented the mainstream beliefs of orthodox Christians were authentic Scripture

For the most part, the canon was settled by the third century, though it wasn’t until the fourth century that the debate completely ended. The point to remember is this: no books included in the New Testament were widely doubted to be inspired, and there are no other books not in the New Testament that were widely considered to be inspired. Consensus about the canon emerged relatively early in church history.

## **Persecution**

During the first century, persecution was sporadic, was never empire-wide, and was typically the result of mob violence. By the early second century, Christianity was an illegal sect that was punishable by death. As a general rule, the scope and ferocity of persecution increased from generation to generation until the legalization of Christianity in 313. In 111, Emperor Trajan argued that Christians shouldn’t be systematically sought out, but if one was discovered to be a Christian, he should be executed if he refused to worship Caesar. Bishops and other Christian leaders were often targeted.

Around 115, Ignatius of Antioch was martyred in Rome. In 155, Polycarp of Smyrna was martyred. Polycarp was an elderly bishop who had been discipled by the Apostle John. When Polycarp was led into the coliseum and commanded to renounce Christ, he responded, “Fourscore and six years have I been His servant, and He hath done me no wrong.

How then can I blaspheme my King who saved me?” Justin Martyr earned his surname in 165 when he was executed during the reign of Marcus Aurelius, the famous philosopher-emperor and a harsh enemy of Christianity. By the turn of the third century, persecution was becoming more common. Many emperors wanted to return Rome to its former glory, seeing Christianity as a threat to traditional Roman religion and values. In addition to church leaders, new converts were tortured and executed. The most famous martyr (and most famous woman) during the Patristic Era was Vibia Perpetua, who was executed in the coliseum in 202. In 249, Emperor Decius decreed that all citizens must offer sacrifices to a statue of Caesar. All who complied received certificates; after a grace period, anyone caught without a certificate was tortured or killed, including many Christian leaders.

Some Christians purchased certificates on the black market. Many Christians offered the sacrifices and worshiped Caesar. After the Decian persecution ended in 249, many of those who had offered sacrifices applied to rejoin their churches—they claimed that they privately still worshiped Christ, and that their worship of Caesar was merely outward and insincere. Some church leaders, such as Cornelius of Rome, argued that these “lapsed” believers should be allowed back into church membership if they sincerely repented. Novatian disagreed with Cornelius, arguing that the lapsed had abandoned Christ and forfeited their salvation. Novatian led a breakaway movement called the Novationists that claimed to be the true church. Cyprian of Carthage rejected the Novationist claim by arguing, “he cannot have God as his Father who doesn’t have the church as his mother” and “there is no salvation outside the church.” During the Middle Ages, the writings of Cyprian would be used to argue that the Catholic Church is the institutional embodiment of the universal church. Persecution affected Christians in a variety of ways. First, it forced them to worship in hiding—a popular place was the catacombs under the major Roman cities. Second, it led to a great reverence for martyrs that sometimes bordered on worship. Many Christians collected relics that were in some way tied to a martyr, while others prayed to martyrs.

Third, and most important, persecution led to growth. No matter how bad persecution became, the church continued to grow—historians estimate that by 300, between twenty-five and forty percent of the Roman Empire had become Christian. Tertullian argued that, despite efforts to destroy the church, “the blood of the martyrs is seed.”

### **The Legalization of Christianity**

In 284, Diocletian became emperor. The Roman Empire was rapidly declining, and two consecutive Caesars had been assassinated prior to Diocletian taking the throne. To facilitate renewal, in 293 Diocletian divided the empire into a tetrarchy. Diocletian remained the primary ruler, but he appointed three generals to help him rule. Diocletian also instituted the worst persecution of the church to date, ordering that all Christians be systematically executed. He also seized all Christian property for the state. His successor, Galerius, succeeded in almost wiping out Christianity in North Africa.

After Diocletian had to step down for health reasons in 306, a young general named Constantine became one of the members of the tetrarchy. Constantine refused to continue to persecute the Christians in the area of the empire he controlled. Perhaps he was lenient because his half sister was a Christian. Maybe he believed that Christianity was the way of the future. Whatever his reasons, Constantine intentionally cultivated loyalty from the Christians at the very time he began moving to consolidate imperial rule back into the hands of a single emperor.

In 312, Constantine launched an invasion of Rome. He met his rival Maxentius at the Milvian Bridge, about five miles North of Rome. In the ensuing battle, Constantine defeated Maxentius and drowned thousands of his soldiers in the Tiber River. According to the early church historian Eusebius of Caesarea, the day before the battle Constantine received a vision from the Christian God commanding him to conquer in the sign of Christ and his cross—in response to the vision, Constantine had the chi-rho symbol put on his soldiers’ shields. Constantine marched into Rome on October 29 and was declared the sole emperor in the western half of the empire.

In 313, Constantine reached an accord with Licinius, the emperor in the eastern half of the empire. Because they met in Milan, their treaty has been called the Edict of Milan. The treaty included three provisions: Constantine and Licinius wouldn’t go to war with each other, Licinius would marry Constantine’s half sister, and Christianity would be granted legalized status and all confiscated property

would be returned to the church. Despite the agreement in Milan, Licinius and Constantine battled for full control of the Roman Empire off and on for a decade until Constantine finally became sole emperor in 324.

### **A Christian Emperor?**

After the Edict of Milan, Constantine continued to publicly favor Christianity. Under his leadership, destroyed churches were rebuilt and Christian clergy were exempted from paying taxes. In 330, Constantine relocated his throne to the newly built city of Constantinople, which was meant to be both the new Rome and a Christian city. However, despite his partiality toward Christianity, Constantine maintained strong ties to traditional paganism. For example, he retained the title of Pontifex Maximus, which made him the official high priest of the state pagan religion.

The first coins he issued contained images of pagan gods and not Christian iconography. When he declared the first day of the week a public holiday in 321, he named it in honor of the sun rather than the Christian God. The sun was the sign of Apollo, one of the most important gods in the Roman pantheon—many scholars speculate that perhaps Constantine conflated the Christian God with Apollo, assuming they were two ways to speak of the same deity.

Despite the ambiguities surrounding his Christian commitment, Constantine played a crucial role in legalizing Christianity and putting it on the road to becoming the official imperial religion. Like earlier emperors, Constantine wanted to restore Rome's ancient glory; unlike his predecessors, Constantine wanted to base this renewal upon Christianity rather than paganism. Constantine did receive baptism near the end of his life, which may have indicated a final break with traditional paganism as well as his personal confidence in the superiority of the Christian faith. It's perhaps best to think of Constantine as one who, for whatever reasons, was favorable to Christianity during his reign and perhaps finally embraced the faith at the end of his life

## **UNIT 3: The Imperial Church (313–590 AD)**

### **A Christian Emperor?**

Despite their treaty in Milan in 313, Licinius and Constantine battled for full control of the Roman Empire off and on for a decade until Constantine finally became sole emperor in 324. Throughout this time, Constantine continued to publicly favor Christianity. Under his leadership, destroyed churches were rebuilt and Christian clergy were exempted from paying taxes. In 330, Constantine relocated his throne to the newly built city of Constantinople, which was meant to be both the new Rome and an explicitly Christian city. However, despite his partiality toward Christianity, Constantine maintained strong ties to traditional paganism. For example, he retained the title of Pontifex Maximus, which made him the official high priest of the state pagan religion.

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In 381, Emperor Theodosius I declared Christianity to be the official state religion of the Roman Empire. Little by little, Europe became increasingly Christian over the course of the next six hundred years until virtually all Europeans except Jews and Muslims were professing Christians by the dawn of the second millennium.

### **The Triumph of Orthodoxy**

From the time of Constantine until well into the Reformation, church and state worked closely together to bring about God's purposes on earth. This included using the full power of the state to help define and defend orthodox doctrine. During the fourth and fifth centuries, the church rejected several key errors about God in general and Jesus Christ in particular. Heresies were renounced and orthodoxy was clarified through the means of ecumenical councils of bishops—the idea was that the bishops represented the church. Many of the councils were actually called by emperors, and even when they were called by church leaders, the empire cooperated with the church in enforcing the decisions of the councils. There were four main councils in the early church, each of which helped clarify key doctrines related to the Trinity and Christology.

### **The Four Ecumenical Councils**

| Date | Place          | Heretic                      | Heresy                                                                     | Hero                           | Response                                        |
|------|----------------|------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------|
| 325  | Nicea          | Arius                        | Jesus is divine, but has not always existed                                | Alexander of Alexandria        | Creed of Nicea                                  |
| 381  | Constantinople | Apollinaris Pneumatomachians | Jesus had a human body, but a divine soul<br>The Spirit is a created being | Athanasius Cappadocian Fathers | Nicene Creed                                    |
| 431  | Ephesus        | Nestorius                    | Jesus' divine nature was fused to his human nature at his birth            | Cyril of Alexandria            | Hypostatic Union<br>Communication of attributes |
| 451  | Chalcedon      | Eutyches                     | Jesus's divine nature overwhelmed his human nature                         | Leo the Great                  | Chalcedonian Definition                         |

### **Church, Sin, and Grace**

After being radically converted around the age of thirty, Augustine served as the Bishop of Hippo from 396–430. During his ministry, he emerged as arguably the most influential theologian in church history.

He was involved in two key controversies that continue to shape Christian theology and practice to the present day.

The Donatists were a heterodox sect in North Africa that claimed baptism, the Lord Supper, and ordination were only valid when presided over by a bishop who was morally pure. The Donatists were concerned because some bishops had surrendered the Scriptures to the Roman authorities during the Diocletian persecution, effectively disqualifying them from Christian ministry.

For the Donatists, the church is a visible society of the elect that is separated from the world unto holiness—sin in the camp can't be tolerated, especially among church leaders. Augustine responded that the elect are “the church within the church,” which means that every church by design includes both saved and unsaved members. The validity of the church's sacraments and ceremonies isn't dependent upon the purity of the church's leaders, but rather upon the fact that they've been celebrated within the context of the true church. For Augustine, the true church meant the visible church, not the elect alone. Because the empire was now officially Christian, Augustine argued the state should compel the Donatists to conform to mainstream Christian practice. Perhaps because the Donatists also championed exclusive believer's baptism, Augustine argued for the importance of infant baptism. Like many Church Fathers, Augustine believed infant baptism washed away the effects of original sin. In the century after Augustine, infant baptism would finally supplant believer's baptism as the normative practice for Christian families. By the early medieval era, rejecting infant baptism was a capital crime in most of Europe.

Augustine's second major controversy was with Pelagius, an English monk who argued that Adam's original sin has no effect on the rest of the human race. Pelagius claimed people are born without sin, we only become sinners once we choose to sin, and some people never choose to sin. For Pelagius, there are two ways to be saved: some people perfectly obey all of God's commands, and some people trust in Jesus Christ for their salvation. Furthermore, because sin doesn't affect human free will in any way, even those who believe in Jesus simply choose to do so without any divine intervention from the Holy Spirit. Augustine responded that Adam's original sin affected all humanity—we are born as sinners, which leads all people to inevitably and habitually choose to sin. Furthermore, our free will has been so corrupted by the fall that we never totally choose the good—even our best choices are tainted by sinful motivations.

All people must trust in Jesus Christ for their salvation, but none will do so without God's enabling grace to believe, which is a gift he bestows only upon the elect he chose to save before the foundation of the world. The church agreed with Augustine's critique of Pelagius, but there was widespread disagreement about Augustine's alternative. Many “semi-Pelagians” agreed with Augustine that we are born sinners and thus inevitably and habitually choose to sin, but they disagreed with his idea that we need special grace to believe in Jesus Christ. Semi-Pelagians argued that belief is a simply free will decision—once we believe, God gives us the grace to complete our salvation. Though semiPelagianism was officially rejected at the Council of Orange in 529, it became the default view of most medieval Catholics and Eastern Orthodox Christians.

## **Monks and Missionaries**

During the third century, a growing number of Christians were convinced that the best way to please God was to separate from the world and devote themselves to Bible study, prayer, and meditation. Early on, male monks lived by themselves while female monks clustered into small groups (for protection).

The most famous of the solitary monks was Anthony, who lived in the desert of North Africa until he died when he was 105 years old.

One of Anthony's protégés, Pachomius, pioneered communal monasticism when he began gathering male monks into small communities in North Africa. These communities evolved into the earliest monasteries. A number of key Christian leaders were influenced by Anthony and Pachomius. Athanasius and the Cappadocian Fathers popularized the idea that the monastic life was inherently more holy than the ordinary Christian life.

John Chrysostom, the leading preacher of the late fourth century, argued that even pastors should embrace celibacy and simplicity. Augustine agreed with Chrysostom—the former wanted to be a monk before he was literally forced to become a bishop by the people of Hippo. Jerome, who translated the full Bible into Latin, founded a monastery in Bethlehem. By far the most important monk was Benedict of Nursia, who founded several monasteries in northern Italy and wrote a monastic rule that became the guidebook for the Benedictine Order, the most influential monastic order for most of the Middle Ages. Many monks also transformed their monasteries into missions outposts that intentionally spread the faith to unevangelized parts of Europe. The most famous monastic missionaries were located in the British Isles. Patrick of Ireland (389–461), a former slave-turned-monk, trained hundreds of missionary monks to spread the gospel all over Ireland. In thirty years, Patrick and his associates planted 200 churches and baptized around 100,000 converts. A couple of generations later Columba (521–597) followed the same model. Columba established a monastery on the island of Iona that sent hundreds of missionaries all over Scotland and northern England.

## **Barbarians and Popes**

Between 410 and 476, northern invaders conquered and occupied most of western Europe, a transition that was later called the “fall” of the Roman Empire. Some of the so-called barbarians were pagans, while others were Arians. The barbarians assimilated with the indigenous peoples they conquered and, over time, most of Europe was divided into hundreds of smaller kingdoms that were dominated by a feudal economy. Virtually all the barbarians and their descendants gradually became Christians between 500 and 900. Sometimes the conversions came about through preaching and missions, but often the barbarians were converted through conquest. By the time the Middle Ages began around the turn of the seventh century, it was common practice to force baptism upon newly conquered subjects.

A new institution slowly filled the leadership vacuum created with the collapse of the western Roman Empire: the papacy. Roman bishops had been arguing for their unique authority since at least the third century, but two popes played a key role in creating the papacy. Leo I (440–461) argued that the pope is preeminent because of Petrine succession, claimed the title Pontifex Maximus for the Bishop of Rome, and was the first Roman bishop to be buried under what is now St. Peter's Basilica. When Attila the Hun attempted to invade Rome in 451, the emperor fled the city—it was Leo who met with Attila and persuaded the barbarian general to spare the city. Leo is probably the first pope in the sense that we use that term today. Gregory I (590–604) was the first monk to become a pope. Prior to becoming a monk, Gregory had served as a secular prefect in Rome, and prior to becoming pope, Gregory served as his predecessor's representative in Constantinople.

Gregory's administrative giftedness, diplomatic experience, and monastic values influenced his time as pope. Under his influence, the papacy took upon itself many of the prerogatives previously held by the emperor, including negotiating with foreign powers, acquiring property for Rome, and appointing

governors over Italian cities. Gregory was also a gifted theologian who wrote a pastoral handbook and developed the concept of the seven deadly sins.

Gregory is the last of the Church Fathers and the first medieval pope. The start of his papacy in 590 is frequently cited as the beginning of the Middle Ages. The last member of the royal family living in Rome was executed in 476, marking the end of the old Roman Empire in western Europe. But Constantine had moved the imperial capital to Constantinople in 330 and the imperial bloodline continued in that city. Though Constantinople claimed to represent the Roman Empire throughout the Middle Ages, most historians call this the Byzantine Empire to distinguish it from the old Roman Empire.

As the Middle Ages began, western Christians increasingly preferred to call themselves Catholics, while eastern Christians preferred to call themselves Orthodox (though everyone liked both terms). What began as two different trajectories within one church gradually developed into two different churches.

#### **UNIT 4: Early Medieval Christianity (590–1054)**

**Popular Religion** In the Greek-speaking East, popular Christian piety centered on the use of icons (pictorial representations of Christ and the saints). Technically speaking, icons represented the person depicted, so any prayers or other acts of veneration were made to the person of which the image was a reminder. Icons also served as a means of religious instruction in a semi-literate society. By the early 700s many Christians were opposing the use of icons, and even emperors went back and forth on the issue. Eastern Christians divided into two camps, iconoclasts and iconodules; both sides agreed icons of God the Father are a violation of the second commandment, but they disagreed about images of the man Jesus of Nazareth. Iconodules argued that Christ's human nature could be represented in an image because he has two natures and his divine nature is invisible anyway. Iconoclasts argued that it was heretical to divide Christ's natures so artificially and any picture of the man Jesus was also a picture of the divine Son. Emperors and church leaders went back and forth for a half century, but in 787 a council sided with the Iconodules and made an official distinction between giving "honorable reverence" to icons and "true devotion" to God.

Pope Hadrian agreed with the council, making the use of icons the official practice in both the East and the West. Though icons were used in the West, popular religion was characterized even more by collecting of relics and making pilgrimages. Relics were personal possessions or body parts (!) associated with dead saints. Noteworthy relics included splinters from the true cross, vials of Mary's breast milk, and the pickled hand of St. James. Pilgrimages were religious trips to allegedly holy sites. By far the most important place to visit on pilgrimage was Palestine, a fact that later contributed to the rise of the crusades. In the West, by far the most popular saint was Mary.

Catholics often used rosary beads to pray to Mary, who was considered a mediator between humanity and Christ. Formerly pagan festivals were increasingly Christianized throughout the early Middle Ages; what is now known as the Christian calendar was an effort to sanctify dates that were long associated with paganism. The earliest cathedrals were also built during this era. Cathedrals were intended to symbolize the reality that all of medieval society was under the eye of God. Every aspect of a cathedral

pointed to the faith, from the stained glass windows to the very architecture itself, which was shaped like a cross and pointed to heaven.

### **The Photian Schism**

Throughout the Middle Ages, the Eastern Orthodox Church was more or less the department of religious affairs under the Byzantine emperors. This had been the case since Justinian's reign in the sixth century (527–65). Justinian was a devout believer, a firm proponent of missions, and a devoted patron of the arts; the famous Hagia Sophia in Constantinople was built during his reign. The close relationship between church and state led to a huge controversy in 858 when the emperor deposed Ignatius as Patriarch of Constantinople for running afoul of imperial politics.

The emperor replaced Ignatius with a rival named Photius. Many observers, including Pope Nicholas, opposed Photius's consecration because of the political intrigue involved. Photius responded by denouncing Pope Nicholas because of several differences between Christians in the East and West, especially the adoption of the so-called filioque clause, which the West had added to the Nicene Creed in 589. The Latin word filioque literally means "and the Son." The Latin version of the Nicene Creed argued that the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father and the Son (filioque), while Greek version claimed the Spirit proceeds from the Father alone. The East resented the West unilaterally adding a phrase to the Nicene Creed. Photius called a regional council in 867 that excommunicated Nicholas as pope, which dissolved relations between the pope and the patriarch. But that same year a new emperor came to power and deposed Photius and reinstated Ignatius as the patriarch. The pope remained unimpressed with all the political shenanigans. When Ignatius died in 878, Photius became his successor as patriarch and the new pope, John VIII, accepted his claim to the position, thus restoring relations between the papacy and the patriarchate. The so-called Photian Schism illustrated the growing rift between the East and the West, a rift that led to permanent schism 200 years later.

### **The "Holy Roman Empire"**

Since the barbarian invasions of the fifth and sixth century, the West had been dominated by an agrarian culture wherein land equaled wealth. This agrarian emphasis gave rise to a system that historians call feudalism. In the feudal system, individuals of lesser wealth pledged themselves to serve individuals of greater wealth. The person of lesser wealth was called a vassal, while the person of greater wealth was the patron. In exchange for serving the patron (normally through military service and agricultural labor), the vassal was given a piece of land called a fief. In this system, peasants were vassals to knights, who were vassals to barons, who were vassals to counts, who were vassals to kings, who could be vassals to more powerful kings. Churches and monasteries were also involved, especially as dying Christians deeded their land to the church, which then established feudal relationships with peasants to work those lands.

The lack of a centralized government led to instability as powerful regional kings conquered lesser kings, establishing feudal relationships throughout the West. By the eighth century, modern-day France had theoretically been ruled by the Merovingian dynasty for several generations, though the king's lord mayor was the de facto ruler. In 751, Pippin the Short became the lord mayor and sent a letter to the pope arguing that Pippin should be the king because he was the one who actually ruled. The pope agreed and deposed the Merovingian king and exiled him to a monastery.

In 754, Pope Stephen II traveled to France and anointed Pippin and his sons as the new royal line. In exchange for this formal papal recognition of his power, Pippin agreed to be the military defender of

Rome and donated considerable land (that he did not technically own) to the papacy—this land became the Papal States. When Pippin died in 768, he was succeeded by his two sons, one of whom died in 771, leaving Charles as the sole ruler. Charles, called Charlemagne, set out to build a Franco-Roman Empire. Between 771 and 800, Charlemagne re-conquered much of the western lands that had been claimed by the barbarian tribes.

He also conducted missions through military might, forcing conquered pagans to accept baptism. He mandated the baptism of all infants before their first birthday; noncompliance carried the death penalty because of presumed paganism. During Charlemagne's rule, the bishops of large cities became known as archbishops, which was a position in between mere bishops and the papacy, and a standardized liturgy was adopted in the West. His reign also inaugurated what some have called a "Carolingian Renaissance" that gave birth to renewed interest in education, theology, and the preservation of the best of ancient Greek and Roman cultures.

Charlemagne's influence reached its height on December 25, 800, when Pope Leo III crowned him as emperor and then bowed before him—this sent mixed signals, since it was unclear who was submitting to whom. The coronation ceremony illustrated both the partnership between church and state and the tension it would cause throughout the Middle Ages. While future popes continued to crown emperors, Leo was the only pope to ever bow after the coronation. With Charlemagne as emperor, the West began to unify beyond local tribal kings and a further wedge was driven between East and West, since Charlemagne and his successors claimed they had no loyalty to the emperor in the East. Frequently, the coronation of Charlemagne is called the beginning of the Holy Roman Empire, but such an entity didn't really exist; on paper, Charlemagne remained a subject of the Byzantine Empire.

### **Theological Debates in the West**

During the early Middle Ages, there were two key theological debates in the West. The first surrounded the Eucharist. Since at least the second century, some theologians have argued that Christ is physically present in the Lord's Supper, though initially the doctrine of "real presence" was assumed more than it was defended. During the ninth century, a monk named Radbertus wrote a treatise titled *On the Body and the Blood of the Lord* wherein he argued that when the bread and wine are consecrated during communion the elements are transformed into the literal body and blood of Christ.

Radbertus claimed that this transformation is mystical and unobservable to Christians participating in the sacrament. Charles the Bald, who was one of Charlemagne's successors as western emperor, disagreed with Radbertus's conclusions and asked another monk named Ratramnus to write a response. Ratramnus agreed that Christ was present in communion, but claimed his presence was spiritual rather than physical.

Ratramnus wanted to safeguard the biblical truth that Christ is now physically present at the right hand of the Father, even if he is spiritually present everywhere else, including communion. Radbertus's views were later further developed into what became the doctrine of transubstantiation, while during the Reformation the Reformed tradition would revive Ratramnus's view that Christ is spiritually present in the Eucharist. The second major debate, also during the ninth century, concerned the doctrines of grace. Gottschalk was a Benedictine theologian who became interested in the writings of Augustine.

Gottschalk embraced Augustine's doctrine of double predestination and left his monastery to preach the doctrine itinerantly. Gottschalk is also the first theologian to unambiguously argue for the doctrine of

limited atonement or particular redemption, though there were earlier theologians (like Augustine) who sometimes hinted at the doctrine without clearly arguing for it. Most Catholic theologians considered Gottschalk's hard Augustinianism extreme, so a council in 849 condemned him as a heretic—he was forced to burn his books, renounce his ordination, and was imprisoned in a monastery for the last 20 years of his life. Despite the verdict on Gottschalk, there were several later medieval theologians who affirmed an Augustinian view of salvation, including at times double predestination and limited atonement.

## **The Great Schism**

The Eastern and Western churches had been growing apart for centuries, and by the eleventh century they were marked by different languages, ethnicities, ecclesiologies, liturgies, and theological emphases like the filioque. Furthermore, there was widespread resentment on both sides because of the Photian Schism of two centuries earlier. Politically, the revival of the West after the time of Charlemagne alienated many in the East, as did the creation of the Papal States in the eighth century. Like the empire itself, what in theory was united as a whole was in reality divided into parts.

Michael Cerularius (1043–58) was the Patriarch of Constantinople and he resented the papacy because of the latter's claims to supremacy. Michael believed that all of Europe was part of the Byzantine Empire, under the rule of the eastern emperor, and that all patriarchs (including the Bishop of Rome) were equal in power. Pope Leo IX (1049–54) believed Michael claimed too much power for Constantinople—he claimed Rome was the mother church of Christendom and those not in submission to Rome were synagogues of Satan. Both sides also disagreed on several theological matters, including clerical celibacy. Emperor Constantine IX tried to intervene to avoid a formal schism, so in 1054 Leo sent three papal delegates to meet with the emperor and represent the papacy's interests in the reconciliation attempts. One of Leo's delegates, Humbert, was a champion of papal supremacy who resented the theological differences between the East and West.

Humbert and his companions entered the Hagia Sophia in Constantinople and, without Leo's permission, laid a papal bull (formal pronouncement) on the altar excommunicating Michael, but declaring the emperor and the people of Constantinople orthodox. Michael responded by excommunicating the papal representatives. Leo never knew any of this had happened—he died before his representatives had excommunicated Michael, rendering the excommunications invalid!

The mutual excommunications have been called the Great Schism because they marked a lasting break between the Eastern Orthodox and Western Catholic movements. In reality, all the excommunications did was give a symbolic event to signify a division that had been slowly growing for over 500 years. The two churches have never permanently reunited, though on a couple of occasions they briefly reunited due to the threat of invasion by Muslims in the East. In 1965, the pope and the Patriarch of Constantinople canceled the excommunications of 1054, but they did not enact a formal reunion between Roman Catholicism and Eastern Orthodoxy.

## **UNIT 5: LATE MEDIEVAL CHRISTIANITY (1054–1500)**

The Investiture Controversy Pope Gregory VII (1073–85) was a moral reformer and a champion of papal supremacy. He claimed that the papacy not only exercised spiritual oversight over Christendom,

but exercised temporal rule over all of Europe. In the mind of Gregory, the church was formally independent of the state, but the state deferred to the authority of the church.

In contrast, Henry IV of Germany agreed that the church was independent of the state, but he also believed the church was under state supervision. Their different opinions became apparent when the bishopric of Milan became vacant; each man believed he had the right to invest (choose) the new bishop. In 1075–76, Gregory and Henry took turns denouncing and excommunicating each other.

The electoral princes in Germany saw an opportunity, so they gave Henry one year to resolve the conflict or they would elect a new emperor. Gregory fled to a castle in Tuscany because he was afraid Henry was going to march on Rome. Henry appeared at the castle barefoot, clothed in a penitential robe.

Gregory made Henry stand barefoot in the snow for three days to prove Henry was genuinely repentant. Gregory reversed Henry's excommunication, but the emperor had deceived the pope; soon thereafter Henry resumed choosing his own bishops. Gregory excommunicated Henry again, but this time the emperor marched on Rome, deposed Gregory in 1084, and selected a new pope; Gregory died in exile the following year. The debate over lay investiture wasn't finally settled until 1123, when the First Lateran Council decided that the emperor could recommend candidates for bishop, but the final decision rested with the pope.

### **The Crusades**

Islam began under the leadership of Muhammad in 622, espousing a radical monotheism and affirming the necessity of forcing non-Muslims to embrace Islam. By 733, Muslims had conquered the Middle East, Eastern Europe, North Africa, and Spain. Early on, Muslims were generally tolerant of Christians in their lands, though that began to change with the rise of the Turks, a people group that migrated from Central Asia into the Middle East and established a new Islamic dynasty in the 1070s.

In 1095, the Byzantine emperor asked Western Christians to come to the aid of Constantinople and recapture the Holy Land. Pope Urban II (1088–99) called for a war pilgrimage to Jerusalem in 1095, arguing that it was God's will for Christians to retake Jerusalem from the Turks. The first crusade was under the leadership of Christian knights and lasted from 1096–1099. The majority of the ranks were made up of peasants, many of whom pillaged Eastern towns and persecuted Jews along the way. In 1099, after much bloodshed, Jerusalem was captured by the crusaders, which the Christians attributed to God's providence. Though there were certainly atrocities on both sides, neither the Christians nor the Muslims were outrageously brutal for wars of the period.

Control of Jerusalem moved back and forth between Christians and Muslims over the next couple of centuries, resulting in further crusades; none were as successful as the first. In 1244, the Turks retook Jerusalem and maintained control of Palestine for 700 years. The crusades contributed to intense animosity between Christians and Muslims throughout the Middle Ages and Early Modern era.

### **Late Medieval Monasticism**

The Cistercians began in 1098 as a reform movement within the Benedictine Order. The Cistercians were convinced that the Benedictines had become too wealthy as an order and were not sufficiently separated from the world. The Cistercian abbot Bernard of Clairvaux was the most important Catholic preacher-theologian of his lifetime. He was very outspoken, weighing in on controversies over church

offices, theological debates, and the crusades. He also helped popularize the medieval idea that Mary was a co-redemptrix with Christ because of her intercessions for believers.

Dominic was a Spanish monk who became convinced that all monks should model their ministry after the example of the apostles. In 1215, he established the Order of the Preaching Brothers (the Dominicans), who emphasized itinerant preaching, voluntary poverty, and fighting heresy. The Dominicans were such fierce defenders of Catholic orthodoxy that the pope placed the order in charge of the Spanish Inquisition, a ministry intended to protect sound doctrine.

The Dominicans also emphasized theological education, founding many of the most famous Catholic universities in Europe and eventually the New World. Francis of Assisi is arguably the most popular Catholic in history. Francis came from a wealthy family before he was dramatically converted to a life of monasticism. Against the wishes of his family, he gave his clothes to a beggar, sold all his worldly possessions, and married “Lady Poverty.”

Francis was committed to itinerant preaching and taking the gospel to Muslims. Francis emphasized cultivating humility and a love for the created order, besides the normal monastic emphases on poverty, chastity, and obedience. He was also a poet, writing the lyrics to the famous hymn “All Creatures of Our God and King.” The Franciscan Order was approved by the pope in 1223. Francis is perhaps most famous for allegedly receiving the stigmata in 1224 after forty days of fasting and praying.

### **Late Medieval Theology**

During the late medieval era, the leading theological movement was scholasticism. Scholastic theologians, so-called because most of them worked in universities, were known for their interest in even the most obscure questions of theology, their commitment to rigorous logic, and a desire to make whatever distinctions were necessary to accurately explain a point. Several scholastic theologians made key contributions to the history of Christian doctrine. Anselm of Canterbury (1033–1109) argued for a close connection between Christ’s incarnation and his atonement.

According to Anselm, the Savior had to be a God-man because only man is obligated to perfectly obey God, but only God is wholly without sin. He was challenged by Peter Abelard (1100–1160), who emphasized the subjective influence of the atonement. Anselm was most concerned with how the atonement reconciles us to God. Abelard was most concerned with how the atonement inspires us to be reconciled with our fellow man. Thomas Aquinas (1225–1274) developed several famous arguments for the existence of God, including the argument from design and the argument from causation.

He also made major contributions to just war theory and the Judeo-Christian natural law tradition. Unfortunately, he also introduced the doctrine of transubstantiation as a way to argue that Christ was physically present in the Eucharist. According to Thomas, when the bread and wine are consecrated, their substance is transformed into the body and blood of Christ, even though their accidents (what we can perceive with our senses) appear to still be bread and wine.

Transubstantiation was adopted as official Catholic dogma in 1215. William of Ockham (1285–1347) challenged mainstream scholasticism by arguing that simplicity was a virtue in theology and that all non-essential premises must be eliminated (“Ockham’s razor”). This eliminated some of the elaborate argumentation that other scholastic theologians had employed. Unfortunately, he also overemphasized human virtue, arguing that humans take the first step toward God in salvation and that justification is a lifelong process that is only completed at death.

Neo-Augustinians such as Thomas Bradwardine (1290–1349) responded to this rampant semi-Pelagianism by championing the doctrines of grace. Several influential doctrines were officially embraced by the Catholic Church during this period. In 1095, indulgences were introduced as a means of cancelling out the penalty due for sins. In theory, indulgences drew upon a heavenly “treasury of merits” to which the pope had access.

In 1215, the seven sacraments were codified: baptism, the Eucharist, confirmation, penance, extreme unction (last rights), marriage, and ordination. When observed in faith, these sacraments “infused” (filled) the believer with saving grace, sustaining him from birth until death. In 1274, the Catholic Church officially affirmed purgatory as a place where unconfessed sin was burned off to prepare the dead Christian for heaven. Only saints were thought to go directly from earth to heaven upon death. Their excess good works comprised the treasury of merits.

### **Papal Decline**

As a general rule, the papacy began a steady spiritual decline around the turn of the fourteenth century. Boniface VIII (1294–1303) epitomized the corruption that was beginning to characterize the papacy; his rule was characterized by simony, the abuse of indulgences, and nepotism. Boniface had a high view of the papacy, and in a clash with Philip IV of France, Boniface issued a famous decree arguing that every person on earth must submit to papal authority or be damned. Philip responded by forcibly removing the pope and replacing him with a new pope who was loyal to French interests. The papacy even moved to Avignon, France for over seventy years, during which time the pope was a pawn of the French court. Catholics refer to this period as the Babylonian Captivity of the Church.

Even after the papacy returned to Rome in 1377, corruption continued. For nearly forty years, there were always at least two different claimants to the papacy—three from 1409–1415! Western Europe was divided between rival popes.

In 1415, the papacy was reunited through the efforts of the Council of Constance. Unfortunately, the moral decline continued. Most of the so-called Renaissance popes were guilty of nepotism and sexual immorality; a couple of prominent families controlled the papacy and at least one pope was succeeded by an illegitimate son. The popes of this period were skilled leaders and patrons of the arts: famous artists such as Michelangelo, Leonardo da Vinci, and Raphael were patronized by popes. But even Catholics agree that most of the Renaissance popes were not faithful shepherds. Grassroots discontent with the papacy would last into the Reformation period.

### **Eastern Orthodoxy**

By 1400, Constantinople was surrounded by the Turks on all sides, physically cut off from the rest of the Christian world. A dynamic Turkish general named Mehmet II launched a six-week siege against Constantinople in 1453 before capturing the city, executing the emperor, and placing the city under Muslim control. Constantinople was renamed Istanbul and became the key Muslim city in Europe. Most Byzantine Christians migrated to the West—the latter took many Greek writings with them. The influx of Greek primary sources led to a revival of interest in Greek philosophy and the Greek-speaking church fathers among both Renaissance scholars and Catholic theologians. The Ottoman Empire would rule Eastern Europe and North Africa until the end of World War I.

### **The kingdom of Kievan**

Rus had been nominally Eastern Orthodox since the 900s. In 1240, Kievan Rus fell to the Mongols and Kiev was destroyed. The center of Russian culture began shifting to Moscow, which was a Mongol vassal state. Because the Mongols were indifferent to religious matters, the Russian Orthodox Church flourished during the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries; the Church was by far the best-organized institution in the Russian lands.

In the 1470s, Moscow gained its independence from the Mongols under the leadership of Ivan III (“Ivan the Great”), who was a devout Orthodox believer. Ivan became the key leader of the emerging Russian kingdom that was gradually breaking away from Mongol control. Ivan married the niece of the last Byzantine emperor and in 1510 their son Vasili III claimed that Moscow was the “Third Rome” based on his lineal connection to the old imperial family in Constantinople. He also argued that the Patriarch of Moscow had replaced the Bishop of Rome because the latter was apostate.

In 1547, Vasili’s son Ivan IV (“Ivan the Terrible”) was proclaimed the first Russian tsar (czar), the Slavic translation of the word “Caesar.” Moscow in particular and Russia in general became the center of the Eastern Orthodox world until the Communist Revolution of 1917.

### **Medieval Reformers**

John Wycliffe (1320–1384) was a theologian at Oxford who challenged many popular Catholic ideas. Wycliffe argued that the true church was composed only of all the redeemed of all the ages and he rejected sacramentalism, supreme papal authority, and transubstantiation. Wycliffe also argued for the supreme authority of Scripture and believed that the Bible should be available in common English. Wycliffe was never formally condemned during his lifetime, though he did lose his faculty position at Oxford. He died in exile, though in 1415 the Council of Constance posthumously declared him a heretic, exhumed his bones, and burned them.

Wycliffe’s followers, called the Lollards, perpetuated Wycliffe’s views and translated most of the Bible into English. John Huss (1372–1415) was a pastor in Prague who agreed with many of Wycliffe’s views, though he was more concerned with moral reform than theological renewal. Huss was called before the Council of Constance and promised safe conduct, but once he arrived he was imprisoned, tried for heresy, and burned at the stake in 1415. After the death of Huss, the Hussite movement continued to advocate for moral reform in Central Europe for over a century. They were also known for offering both the bread and the wine to the laity during the Eucharist.

## **UNIT 6: REFORMING THE CHURCH (1500–1619) RENAISSANCE CRITICS**

By 1500, it was clear to many observers that the Catholic Church, particularly the papacy, was in a state of moral and spiritual decline. This spiritual declension helped to usher in an unprecedented period of reforms, schisms, and religious conflicts.

Some of the earliest critics of Rome were Renaissance figures such as Erasmus, Lorenzo Valla, John Colet, and Michelangelo. The most famous of the Renaissance critics was Erasmus, a humanist scholar who edited a critical edition of the Greek New Testament and wrote several tracts criticizing the immorality of the Catholic clergy (including the pope). Erasmus was widely considered to be the greatest scholar of his era.

Valla and Colet were also humanist scholars. Valla demonstrated that the Latin Vulgate had mistranslated a key Greek word, causing Catholics to read “do penance” every time the Bible calls for repentance. He also proved a famous document that supported papal supremacy was a forgery. Colet was the dean (senior pastor) of St. Paul’s Cathedral in London. He publicly preached against Catholic corruption and immorality.

Michelangelo, the famous artist, was a member of the spirituali, a reform movement that championed justification by faith alone and criticized clergy corruption. These Renaissance critics remained critical, but committed members of the Catholic Church, though Erasmus in particular inspired many of the early reformers who left the Church.

**The Lutheran Movement** The first movement to break away from the Catholic Church was the Lutherans. Martin Luther abandoned his legal studies to become a monk, much to the chagrin of his parents. Luther harbored an immense fear of God’s wrath against his sin, leading Luther to become a very legalistic monk. He earned a doctoral degree in biblical studies and became a professor at the University of Wittenberg. While lecturing on Psalms and Romans, Luther began to struggle with his own legalism. He also became increasingly concerned with corruption in the Church, especially the abuse of indulgences.

In 1517, Luther published the Ninety-Five Theses, a document that criticized indulgences and pushed back against supreme papal authority. By 1520, Luther had embraced justification by faith alone and the supreme authority of Scripture, had rejected papal authority, and was arguing for a German state church.

In 1521, the pope excommunicated Luther and the emperor demanded that Luther appear before the Diet of Worms. While testifying before the emperor and the German nobles, Luther famously argued that his conscience was captive to God’s Word and that he wouldn’t back away from his views.

After hiding out in a castle for a brief season, Luther returned to Wittenberg in 1522 and spent the next quarter century building the movement that the Catholics dubbed the Lutherans. In addition to justification by faith alone and the supreme authority of Scripture, Luther advocated congregational freedom, the priesthood of all believers, predestination, and clerical marriage— Luther married Katherine von Bora in 1525. He also wrote catechisms, composed hymns, and helped draft confessions that helped to define the fledgling movement.

Following Luther’s death in 1546, leadership of the Lutherans passed to Philip Melanchthon, Luther’s protégé. Melanchthon, who was a gifted systematic theologian, set out to further define and consolidate the Lutheran movement.

Melanchthon disagreed with Luther about predestination, and since that time most Lutherans have followed Melanchthon rather than Luther. In 1555, Lutherans and Catholics signed the Peace of Augsburg, a treaty that declared that every state in the Holy Roman Empire (Germany) could be either Catholic or Lutheran, depending upon the preferences of the nobleman who ruled that state. The treaty was necessary so that Lutherans and Catholics could form a military alliance against the Turks, who were threatening to invade Central Europe from North Africa. Reformed Christians and Anabaptists weren’t included in the Peace of Augsburg.

## **The Early Reformed Tradition**

In 1519, Ulrich Zwingli became the new pastor of the Great Minster in Zurich, at that time the most important church in the most important city in the Swiss states.

Zwingli soon broke from Catholic tradition by preaching verse-by-verse expositional sermons through entire books of the Bible. He also secretly married his longtime mistress, defended his parishioners who refused to fast during Lent, and finally renounced Catholicism and resigned his church in 1522 (they subsequently renounced the Catholic Church, reconstituted as a new congregation, and called Zwingli as their “new” pastor). He convinced the city’s elected officials to officially endorse and help implement reform measures in all the churches in Zurich. Soon the so-called Reformed movement spread to other cities such as Strasbourg, Bern, and Basel.

Zwingli was similar to Luther in many ways. He affirmed justification by faith alone, predestination, infant baptism, and close cooperation between church and state. But Luther and Zwingli also disagreed in some key areas. Zwingli was far more conservative in his views of corporate worship, arguing that only practices evidenced in the New Testament were appropriate for public worship. Luther believed churches were free to add new elements to public worship that were not practiced by the apostolic churches. Far more divisive were their respective views of the Lord’s Supper.

Luther argued that Christ was physically present in the bread and the wine, though he rejected transubstantiation. Zwingli countered that Christ was spiritual present in the celebration of communion, but argued Christ was physically present at the Father’s right hand. This quarrel over communion prevented the Lutheran and Reformed churches from merging into a single movement. Zwingli died in battle against Catholic invaders in 1531, but not before he inspired other Reformed leaders such as Martin Bucer and Heinrich Bullinger.

### **The English Reformation**

By the 1520s, some English professors and pastors were reading Luther’s works and embracing justification by faith. The most famous early English Protestant was William Tyndale, who published an English translation of most of the Bible before being martyred in Belgium in 1536. Henry VIII, the king of England, was a devout Catholic who desperately wanted a male heir, which would facilitate a peaceful transition of royal power. Unfortunately for Henry, his wife Catherine of Aragon failed to give birth to that heir (though two sons died in infancy).

Henry wanted to annul the marriage and find a more “fertile” queen (by which he meant one who could produce healthy baby boys), but the pope refused on political grounds—Catherine’s nephew was the German emperor, who was the pope’s chief political rival on the Continent. Henry fell in love with Anne Boleyn, and in 1533 he secured an annulment from an English court, declared himself head of the Church of England, and began persecuting clergy who remained loyal to Rome. Thomas Cranmer, the Archbishop of Canterbury, began leading the Church of England in a cautiously Reformed direction.

Over the next quarter century, England vacillated between Protestantism and Catholicism. Henry put the brakes on most reforms in 1536, but his son and successor Edward VI, a convinced Protestant, allowed Cranmer to pick up where he had left off a dozen years earlier. (Edward was the son of Henry’s third wife, Jane Seymour—he married six times, but Edward was his only surviving son.) Under Cranmer’s leadership, the Church of England became moderately Reformed in theology, though only incremental changes were made to English worship. When Edward died in 1553, Mary Tudor, daughter of Catherine of Aragon, became queen and reverted England to Catholicism.

Hundreds of Protestant pastors were exiled to the Continent and at least three hundred were martyred. The most famous martyrs were Nicholas Ridley and Hugh Latimer, two Reformed bishops, and Archbishop Cranmer, who by now was an old man. When Mary died in 1558, Elizabeth Tudor, daughter of Anne Boleyn, was crowned queen. Elizabeth, who ruled until 1603, implemented a moderate strategy intended to unite the English people in terms of religion. The so-called Elizabethan Settlement combined a mildly Reformed theology with a generally Catholic approach to worship, though perceived extremes on both ends were rejected. English citizens were allowed to affirm whatever private religious views they desired, but their public practice had to conform to the Book of Common Prayer, which embodied Elizabeth's moderate sympathies. Debates over the merits of the Elizabethan Settlement defined English Christianity for the next century and a half.

### **The Later Reformed Movement**

In the decade after Zwingli's death, John Calvin emerged as the key Reformed leader. Calvin was the most important Protestant scholar of the Reformation era. He led the Reformation in Geneva, which many considered to be the model Reformed city. Though the citizens of Geneva resented Calvin early on (and briefly ejected him from the city), by the early 1540s they had accepted his reform measures. Dancing, drunkenness, and public swearing were declared illegal.

Calvin founded a ministerial academy to train younger pastors in Reformed theology. A church-sponsored public welfare system was enacted to care for the poor. All parents were urged to catechize their children in the Reformed faith. Before long, other Reformed leaders from all over Europe were traveling to Geneva to learn from Calvin's example.

Missionaries were sent from Geneva to France and Brazil. Calvin was the most prolific theologian during the Reformation era; his Institutes of the Christian Religion is still considered the foundational theology text of the Reformed tradition. Calvin built upon the doctrinal foundation of Zwingli and other early Reformed theologians in advocating justification by faith alone, predestination, expositional preaching, infant baptism, church-state cooperation, and biblically regulated worship.

Calvin also added his own emphases on progressive sanctification, the centrality of prayer in the Christian life, a close relationship between Word and Spirit, the ongoing importance of God's moral law, and foreign missions. After Calvin's death, his protégé Theodore Beza became the leading Reformed theologian.

Beza further developed Calvin's views, becoming the father of the Reformed Orthodoxy movement. The emphases of Reformed Orthodox thinkers such as Beza and the English theologian William Perkins so pervaded the movement that much of what we call "Calvinism" is based as much on Reformed Orthodoxy as it is Calvin himself (who, of course, was himself building on earlier thinkers). When one of Beza's former students, Jacob Arminius, began to challenge the Reformed understanding of salvation, a group of Reformed theologians met at the Synod of Dort in 1618–1619 and adopted a document called the Canons of Dort. This statement codified the so-called five points of Calvinism, which became the most well-known understanding of salvation in the Reformed tradition.

### **The Counter-Reformation**

Some Catholics, such as the aforementioned spirituali, agreed with justification by faith alone, though they remained loyal to the pope and waffled on other points of Protestant theology. The most influential

of the spirituali, Cardinal Contarini, tried to broker a compromise that would lead to reconciliation between Catholics and Protestants.

In 1541–1542, representative Catholics and Protestants met in Regensburg, Germany; Contarini was the pope's official ambassador, while the key Protestants were Philip Melancthon and Martin Bucer. The parties negotiated a consensus statement on justification, but it was rejected by the pope for being too Protestant and by Luther for being too Catholic! The pope shut down the meeting and called for an ecumenical council to respond to the Protestants. The Council of Trent met off and on from 1545 to 1563. No Protestants were invited to participate in the council. Several key decisions were made at Trent, most of which were in response to Protestant ideas.

The apocryphal books were formally declared to be inspired in the same way as the sixty-six canonical books are inspired. The Latin Vulgate was declared to be the authoritative Biblical text. Unwritten church tradition was declared equally authoritative with Scripture. Instant justification by faith was rejected in favor of justification as a progressive act based upon faith and works. The seven sacraments were reaffirmed, and the mass was declared to be a "propitiatory sacrifice." Clerical celibacy, purgatory, and the accumulation of relics were reaffirmed. The Council of Trent is often considered the height of the so-called Counter Reformation, the official Roman Catholic response to Protestantism. Trent made it clear that Protestants were heretics who were headed for eternal damnation unless they repent of their errors and reunite with Rome. This remained the official view of Rome toward Protestants until the Second Vatican Council of 1962–1965.

## **UNIT 7: REFORMING THE REFORMATION (1525–1689)**

### **THE ANABAPTISTS**

By 1523, Ulrich Zwingli and many of his followers in Zurich were questioning the validity of infant baptism. Some of Zwingli's disciples became convinced that the reformation in Zurich was not proceeding fast enough. A group of pastors led by Conrad Grebel, George Blaurock, and Felix Mantz tried to convince the Zurich city council to reject the mass, icons, and infant baptism in 1524, but they were unsuccessful. On January 21, 1525, these men and a small group of their followers met at the home of Mantz; following a time of prayer, Blaurock asked Grebel to baptize him by pouring water over his head. Blaurock then baptized everyone else who was present.

They called themselves the Swiss Brethren; Zwingli, Luther, and the Catholics called them Anabaptists (literally "re-baptizers"). The Anabaptists were more radical than the Lutherans and Reformed because they sought to bypass all human traditions and return to what they considered to be pure apostolic Christianity. This meant they rejected both the Catholic Church and the magisterial reformers because these movements continued to embrace views of the church that the Anabaptists considered to be based upon unbiblical traditions.

In addition to the aforementioned leaders, other leading Anabaptists included Michael Sattler (who wrote the first Anabaptist confession), Balthasar Hubmaier (who was the first Anabaptist writing theologian), Pilgram Marpeck (who was a leading theologian and church planter), and Menno Simons (who founded the Mennonites). Though there were lots of bizarre and even heretical sects that got labeled as Anabaptists, mainstream Anabaptists tended to emphasize several key doctrines that they believed were overlooked by the magisterial reformers. Anabaptists rejected the territorial church and argued for congregational freedom and full religious liberty.

They advocated regenerate church membership—only professing believers were considered full members of local churches. They rejected infant baptism in favor of various forms of believer's baptism, though few of them practiced immersion. They practiced church discipline, called and supported their own pastors, and refused to pay tithes to state churches. Most were pacifists, refused to take oaths, and argued that Christians couldn't serve in government positions. Beyond their core emphases, Anabaptists were very diverse. They were all over the map on justification, from semi-Catholic to consistently Protestant. Some were very legalistic. A few became violent revolutionaries. Most of them held to what would later be called an Arminian view of salvation.

The Anabaptists were fiercely persecuted by Catholics, Lutherans, and Calvinists. For example, Zwingli imprisoned numerous Anabaptists leaders, including Mantz (who was drowned) and Sattler (who was burned at the stake). Hubmaier was tortured on the rack by Zwingli and eventually burned at the stake by Catholics.

Most Anabaptists who weren't drowned or burned were forced into exile; Marpeck was expelled from the Reformed city of Strasbourg. Even those Anabaptists who managed to die of old age, such as Simons, were forced to spend their lives on the run from authorities. Despite the persecution, it would be fair to say that the Anabaptists were the Reformation movement that most emphasized evangelism and church planting.

### **Puritans and Separatists**

While Anabaptists were pushing back against Continental reform movements, the Puritans were arguing for a further reformation within the Church of England. When Mary Tudor was queen from 1553–1558, she exiled many Protestant pastors to the Continent. Many of these pastors moved to Reformed cities such as Geneva and Strasbourg, where they were mentored by men like John Calvin, Theodore Beza, and Martin Bucer. While in exile, they adopted strong convictions about the doctrines of grace, the regulative principle of worship, and presbyterian polity.

When Elizabeth ascended the throne in 1558 and the exiles returned to England, they were ready to see the Church of England become a Reformed national church. Unfortunately, Elizabeth's Religious Settlement was too moderate in its Calvinism, retained hints of Catholicism in its worship, and defended episcopal polity. Before long, the exiles and other likeminded Reformed Protestants became known as Puritans because of their desire to purify the Church of England. For two generations, the English crown did all it could to stifle and sometimes suppress Puritanism.

Puritans were coerced to conform to the Book of Common Prayer, were forced out of teaching posts at Oxford and Cambridge, and were at times removed from their pulpits. In response to the Puritans, most Anglican leaders moved toward Arminianism, embraced semiCatholic rituals and sacramentalism, and remained vigorously committed to the rule of bishops. Yet, Puritanism became increasingly popular through an emphasis on expositional preaching, catechizing, and electioneering—Puritans were gradually taking over Parliament. The leading early Puritans were Thomas Cartwright, William Perkins, and William Ames.

In Scotland, John Knox and his followers advocated similar reforms against Mary Queen of Scots; the Scottish reformers eventually gave rise to the "capital-P" Presbyterian movement. Some Puritans became even more radical, arguing that the Church of England was apostate and that the way forward was to form autonomous, congregationally governed churches of presumably regenerate members. These independent evangelicals were called Separatists because, unlike the mainstream Puritans, they

left the Anglican Church completely, much as the Anabaptists had left the Reformed and Lutheran churches on the Continent. The first well-known Separatist was Robert Browne, who in 1580 formed a Separatist church in Norwich, which he relocated to the Netherlands in 1581 to escape persecution.

In 1582, Browne wrote *A Treatise on Reformation without Tarrying for Anie*, which was a tract calling upon true reformers to leave the Church of England. Although Browne himself returned to the Church of England in 1591, many other Separatists continued to drift away from the state church. John Greenwood and Henry Barrow established a Separatist church in London in the early 1580s; both were arrested and imprisoned. In 1583, the new pastor of the Greenwood-Barrow Church, former Cambridge professor Francis Johnson, relocated the entire congregation to Amsterdam, renaming it the Ancient Church. Other Separatists would follow this pattern and relocate their churches to the Netherlands, where there was greater religious freedom. For example, in 1607 John Robinson led the Pilgrim Church to Leiden.

In the 1620, this group secured a royal charter to relocate to New England, where they founded the Plymouth Colony. After 1620, most Separatists relocated to New England rather than the Netherlands; they wanted to have freedom of worship, but they also wanted to be loyal subjects of the crown.

Though their respective strategies were different, the Puritans and Separatists shared many common emphases. Both groups held to a Reformed understanding of salvation, though there was always some debate over the extent of the atonement. Both advocated the regulative principle of worship and soundly rejected the Book of Common Prayer. Both affirmed covenantal pedobaptism—the idea that the Abrahamic covenant of circumcision continues under the New Covenant in the form of baptizing the infants of believing parents. Both emphasized church discipline and, following Martin Bucer, argued that discipline is a mark of a true church. Both rejected episcopatism, though they disagreed over whether presbyterian or congregational polity was the most biblical alternative.

## **The Baptists**

In 1608, John Smyth led his Separatist church to relocate to Amsterdam. The following year, Smyth and his church rejected infant baptism in favor of believer's baptism by pouring. They had become convinced that infant baptism was a Catholic practice and was one of the last unreformed aspects of Separatism. Smyth's church is the first Baptist congregation. Smyth was friends with some Mennonites in Amsterdam, and by 1610 he had rejected Calvinism and applied to have his church join the Mennonites. This led to a church split (yes, the first Baptist church split—you can't make this stuff up).

In 1612, Thomas Helwys led the faction that didn't want to join the Mennonites back to London, where they planted the first Baptist church in England and the first permanent Baptist church. Because Helwys had also rejected Calvinism, his movement is called the General Baptists because of their belief in a general atonement. In 1616, Henry Jacob planted an underground Separatist church in London, often called the J-L-J Church after the initials of its first three pastors.

Between 1630 and 1639, the church split numerous times due to size and theological differences. In 1639, John Spilbury, the pastor of one of those church splits, led the new congregation to embrace believer's baptism by pouring. Spilbury's church is probably the first Particular Baptist Church, so-called because they were Calvinists who embraced a particular (limited) atonement. In 1642, the J-L-J Church itself came around to Baptist convictions, though they opted for immersion over pouring. By 1650, both General and Particular Baptists had embraced immersion as their standard baptismal practice. In New England, a group of Separatists established the Massachusetts Bay colony in 1630.

One of the early pastors to settle there was Roger Williams. In 1636, Williams fled the colony after being convicted of heresy and sentenced to return to England. His heresies consisted of arguing for freedom of religion and advocating Native American land rights. Later that year, he founded Providence Plantation (Rhode Island). In 1638, Williams became convinced of believer's baptism and founded what is now the First Baptist Church of Providence, RI. He soon left the Baptist fold, but the church endured as a mixed congregation of both Calvinists and Arminians.

In 1643, John Clarke founded the First Baptist Church of Newport, RI, which also became the first known church in America to practice baptism by immersion. In many ways, the Baptist tradition represented the culmination of the other more radical Protestant groups. Like their Separatist forebears, they advocated congregational freedom, regenerate church membership, and religious liberty. Through the Separatists, they also inherited mainstream Protestant convictions about the supreme authority of Scripture, justification by faith alone, and penal substitutionary atonement. But they combined these emphases with a couple of views championed by the Continental Anabaptists: believer's baptism and an emphasis on intentional evangelism and church planting. In so doing, they became a new group that was no longer Separatist, but had not necessarily become Anabaptist (they disagreed with Anabaptist views about war and peace, oaths, civil government, etc.). Baptists argued that in combining these views and rejecting bad doctrines and practices, they represented the culmination of the Reformation (the other guys disagreed, of course).

### **Civil War, Restoration, and Religious Toleration**

Puritans finally gained control of Parliament in 1642, resulting in the English Civil War between Parliament and the crown. The Puritans won the war, beheaded Charles for treason in 1649, and exiled his son, Charles II, to the Continent. Between 1649 and 1653, Parliament remade the Church of England into a Presbyterian state church, though they granted toleration to Independents (Separatists), Baptists, and even more radical groups like Quakers. In 1653, a general named Oliver Cromwell dissolved Parliament (which he believed had grown inept) and declared himself the Lord Protector of the Commonwealth of England.

During this time, several well-known Puritan(ish) pastor-theologians were at the height of their careers, most famously the Independents John Owen and Richard Baxter and the Particular Baptist John Bunyan. After Cromwell's death in 1659, his son Richard briefly ruled, though he was removed by a group of generals for ineptitude. The exiled Charles II was invited to return to England in 1661. Before being crowned, Charles promised that the religious changes of the Commonwealth would continue under his rule. Unfortunately, the new Parliament was fiercely anti-Puritan and passed a series of restrictive laws that reversed the changes that had occurred over the previous decade. Thousands of pastors lost their pulpits and hundreds were imprisoned.

During this time the Presbyterians, Independents, and Baptists began to emphasize their commonalities much more than their differences. Collectively, they became known as "nonconformists" or "dissenters." Charles supported Parliament's purge of the nonconformists, though he shocked everyone when he converted to Roman Catholicism on his deathbed in 1685. When his son James II, also a Catholic, impregnated his wife in 1688, most Englishmen feared they were witnessing the beginning of a new Catholic dynasty in Britain. A group of Protestant nobles encouraged William of Orange, a Dutch nobleman and the king's son-in-law, to invade England and overthrow James.

When William's forces landed in England, James refused to fight and fled the country. William asked Parliament to determine how the nation should be ruled. It was decided that James had abdicated the throne when he fled and William and his wife Mary (James's daughter) were the rightful joint rulers of England. The ascension of William and Mary has been called the Glorious Revolution because it ended a century and a half of political turmoil without any bloodshed. With the urging of the new rulers, in 1689 Parliament passed a new English Bill of Rights that included an Act of Toleration.

The Act of Toleration granted religious freedom to all nonconformists (except Catholics and anti-Trinitarians) who agreed to take an oath of allegiance to the crown and pay tithes to the Church of England. Though Puritans had lost the battle for the Church of England, those who held to Puritan beliefs (and many others) were now more or less free to practice their dissenting faith.

## **UNIT 8: REASON AND REVIVAL (1650–1800)**

### **THE ENLIGHTENMENT**

The Enlightenment was a period from roughly 1650 to 1800 wherein European intellectuals argued for the superiority of reason over revelation, which they hoped would liberate Western Culture from all alleged superstitions. Many intellectuals considered traditional religion to be more trouble than it's worth. The Thirty Years' War (1618–1648) and English Civil War (1642–1653) had both led to widespread death and political turmoil, even though all the combatants were various types of professing Christians who believed that they represented the true faith.

Some of the leading Enlightenment thinkers included Baruch Spinoza, John Locke, Isaac Newton, Voltaire, and Immanuel Kant. While the Enlightenment had many positive effects on political theory, for our purposes the movement represented a significant challenge to Christianity because it revised or rejected virtually every cardinal doctrine of the faith. As a general rule, Enlightenment thinkers such as David Hume and Voltaire ruled out the possibility of miracles, including the incarnation and resurrection.

In France, the French Revolution (1789–1799), which was influenced by the Enlightenment, led to widespread repression of Catholicism, which had previously been the state religion. In English-speaking lands, it became fashionable for intellectuals and cultural elites to be either Deists or Unitarians, even if they attended Protestant churches. This was the case in America with Founding Fathers such as John Adams (Congregationalist), Benjamin Franklin (Anglican) and Thomas Jefferson (Anglican). In England, Unitarianism so infiltrated the churches that a majority of the pastors rejected the Trinity and Christ's deity in denominations such as the General Baptists and the Presbyterians. Even among Trinitarian Protestants in England and North America, Universalism became very popular.

### **Continental Pietism**

In Central Europe, the Holy Roman Empire remained divided between Lutheran and Catholic states. The Lutherans were in the minority, and a growing number of Lutheran pastors were convinced that their tradition was spiritually stagnant—especially those who had been evicted from Catholic states

during the Thirty Years' War. Some Lutherans turned to mysticism for spiritual vitality, but the Pietists sought renewal through focusing on personal holiness, spiritual disciplines, and Christian activism.

Philipp Jakob Spener launched the movement in 1675 with a tract called *Pia Desideria* (pious desires), which argued for personal devotions, small group Bible studies, and congregational polity. Spener believed the only way to renew dead churches were to form "churches within the church": small groups of like-minded believers. Spener's protégé was a nobleman named August Hermann Francke, who in 1695 founded the University of Halle as a Pietist university.

Halle became the epicenter of the Pietist movement. In addition to the university, Francke founded an orphanage and a printing press; the latter published Pietist material that was distributed all over the continent. Francke provided two pastors to a group of "underground" Pietists in the Catholic state of Silesia when revival broke out among the Silesians in 1707. The Silesian Revival was widely reported in English and American newspapers, and many Congregationalists such as Solomon Stoddard in Connecticut and Isaac Watts in London began praying for a similar movement in their contexts. Nicholas Ludwig von Zinzendorf was another Pietist nobleman whose parents were friends with Spener. Zinzendorf inherited a large estate called Hernhutt, and in 1722 he opened his property to Pietist and other Protestant refugees from Catholic states. Around 1730, revival broke out among the Moravians, a group of Pietists who had sought refuge at Hernhutt. By 1735, Zinzendorf had sent Moravian missionaries to Greenland, the East and West Indies, Georgia, and North Carolina. In 1741, Zinzendorf relocated to Pennsylvania to evangelize the Iroquois and try to persuade Pennsylvania Lutherans to embrace Moravian Pietism; he named his settlement Bethlehem. Zinzendorf was controversial among German-speaking Christians because of some odd theological views and alleged megalomania, but English-speaking evangelicals such as John Wesley and George Whitefield considered him a spiritual role model.

## **Early American Awakenings**

What we call the "First Great Awakening" was actually a series of revivals in North America that occurred off and on from 1727 to 1787. The earliest revivals occurred in New Jersey, under the leadership of Gilbert Tennant (Presbyterian) and Theodore Freylinghuysen (Dutch Reformed). Freylinghuysen was influenced by the Dutch Pietists; they had sent him to America to work as a missionary priest.

Tennant was a teacher at his father's "Log College," an informal school that trained revival-minded Presbyterians for pastoral ministry and was the forerunner to Princeton. Both men were controversial because they assumed that most of the clergy in New Jersey were unconverted and urged revived parishioners to "shop around" for the best church. In 1734–1735, a Connecticut church pastored by Jonathan Edwards (Congregationalist) experienced revival. His church had a track record for revival; between the 1680s and the 1720s, the congregation experienced five different revivals under Edwards' grandfather and pastoral predecessor, Solomon Stoddard. In a little over six months, over three hundred converts were added to the membership of Edwards' church.

The revival affected several dozen churches in the Connecticut Valley. At the urging of a pastor in Boston, Edwards wrote about the revival in *A Faithful Narrative of the Surprising Work of God*, which became a bestseller in England and was translated into German and circulated among the Moravians. Edwards wrote many other works about revival and related themes, including *Thoughts on Revival*, which was a defense of revival, and *Distinguishing Marks of a Work of the Spirit of God*, which was an

attempt to discern the difference between authentic conversion and passing spiritual decisions. Edwards was also a gifted theologian.

He wrote a number of important works, including books about sanctification, the Trinity, original sin, the relationship between divine sovereignty and human responsibility, and eschatology. He edited the *Diary of David Brainerd*, which has never gone out of print and has inspired countless believers to become foreign missionaries. Edwards is perhaps best known for preaching one of the two most famous sermons in American history: “Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God.” To this day, Edwards is certainly the most influential Reformed theologian in American history and arguably the most important American theologian of any stripe. He died prematurely in 1758 from a smallpox vaccination just one month after becoming the third president of Princeton College.

### **Early British Awakenings**

Around the same time Jonathan Edwards was shepherding his church through revival, a Welshman named Howell Harris (Anglican) was converted and began to preach itinerantly. Before long, his fellow Anglicans Griffith Jones, Daniel Rowland, and William Williams were also preaching all over Wales. Many of the churches in Wales experienced revival during the 1730s. These churches became part of a movement known as Welsh Calvinistic Methodism, which was a renewal movement in the Anglican Church of Wales before becoming a separate denomination in 1811. Selina Hastings, the Countess of Huntington, was a wealthy noblewoman who became a financial patron for the Welsh revivalists and many other revival leaders in eighteenth-century Britain.

In 1738, John Wesley (Anglican) had just returned from a failed mission in Savannah, Georgia. Wesley had been raised in the home of a renewal-minded Anglican priest and had been a good student at Oxford. He had also helped to start a “Holy Club” on campus for students who were earnest about pursuing godliness. After his graduation and ordination, he was sent as a missionary to Georgia. During his almost two years in Savannah, Wesley saw almost no converts, struggled with assurance of his own salvation, and was finally run out of the colony for practicing church discipline on a young woman who spurned his affections and married another man. One of his few encouragements during this time came from the Moravian missionaries in Georgia; they kept asking him if he’d experienced the new birth.

Wesley finally received assurance of his salvation on May 24, 1738; he was attending a Moravian Bible study in Aldersgate Street in London. Most Anglican churches refused to allow Wesley to preach because he so stressed repentance and regeneration, so he began to preach evangelistic sermons outdoors. Following the Moravians, Wesley gathered his followers into “bands,” small groups that worked to renew the Church of England from within. The Methodists were committed to evangelism, discipleship, and social justice. Wesley differed from most of the other revival leaders of this era because he advocated Arminianism rather than Calvinism. His brother Charles was also a key revival leader, though he is most famous today for his hymns. Wesley’s followers in America were called Methodists, though in England the term was more generic and was more or less a synonym for evangelicalism.

### **George Whitefield**

In 1740–1742, a second revival broke out in New England and spread all over the Eastern Seaboard. The key catalyst was George Whitefield (Anglican), an itinerant preacher from England who was the most influential figure during the eighteenth-century revivals. Whitefield had grown up wanting to be a stage actor, and after he was converted he used his public speaking skills to great effect as a revivalist. After graduating from Oxford, Whitefield followed Wesley as a missionary priest to Georgia before

returning to England in 1737. It was Whitefield who encouraged his friend Wesley to preach outdoors when the Anglican churches refused to allow the revivalists to preach from their pulpits. Whitefield also worked with the aforementioned Welsh revivalists, helping to found the Calvinistic Methodist denomination. Unfortunately, Whitefield and Wesley had a falling out over the doctrine of predestination; Whitefield was closer to Edwards than Wesley when it came to the doctrines of grace.

In 1740, Whitefield returned to America and preached all over the East Coast. He frequently collaborated with Gilbert Tennant and he preached one Sunday in Jonathan Edwards' pulpit (Edwards wept through the sermon). Whitefield preached in all thirteen colonies and was probably the most well-known man in America in the generation before George Washington.

Unfortunately, Whitefield's popularity and the weird behavior of some lesser revivalists led to a backlash against revival, especially among some New England pastors. This prompted Edwards to write in defense of revival, arguing for a balanced middle between dead orthodoxy and reckless religious fanaticism. Historians estimate that Whitefield preached over 18,000 sermons in his lifetime; sometimes he preached as many as three sermons a day.

After 1740, many denominations in America divided into pro-revival and anti-revival factions. Some of the pro-revival Congregationalists, called the Separates, embraced believer's baptism in the late-1740s. These Separate Baptists migrated from New England to Virginia before landing in Sandy Creek, North Carolina in 1755. Led by two Whitefield converts named Shubal Stearns and Daniel Marshall, the Separate Baptists planted dozens of churches all over Virginia, the Carolinas, and Georgia. The Separate Baptists eventually merged with the older Baptist groups who predated the revivals. By 1800, virtually all Baptists in the South were pro-revival, broadly Calvinistic, and fiercely committed to evangelism and church planting. These were the very Baptists who formed the Southern Baptist Convention in 1845.

### **The Modern Missions Movement**

The revivals led directly to the birth of the modern missions movement. Prior to the eighteenth century, Protestant missions had been relatively hit and miss while Roman Catholics spread rapidly to lands such as South America and Asia. Some of the earliest Protestant intentional missionaries were the Moravians, who established several mission outposts in the 1730s and 1740s.

Jonathan Edwards and John Wesley preached frequently about missions, and many denominations were committed to evangelizing Native American tribes. Some persecuted exslaves left North America for Jamaica and East Africa, establishing churches in their new lands. Nevertheless, no English-speaking Protestants took the step of intentionally relocating to other nations to serve as missionaries until the end of the eighteenth century. The first denomination to engage in intentional foreign missions was the British Particular Baptists. For much of the eighteenth century, the Particular Baptists had mostly ignored the revivals because they were influenced by an unevangelistic hyper-Calvinism.

In the 1780s, the fog of false doctrine began to lift. Several pastors such as Robert Hall Sr. and Andrew Fuller read Jonathan Edwards' books and embraced his revival-friendly evangelical Calvinism. In 1792, Fuller and William Carey led a group of Particular Baptists to form the Baptist Missionary Society. The next year, Carey relocated to India, where he spent the next forty years evangelizing, translating Scripture, founding a university, and fighting against social evils. By the 1810s, most Protestant denominations in Britain and America had formed mission societies and sent out missionaries to places such as India, China, and East Africa.

## **UNIT 9: THE PROTESTANT CENTURY (1800–1910)**

### **THE SECOND GREAT AWAKENING**

Like the First Great Awakening, the Second Great Awakening was a series of revivals that occurred off and on during the first third of the nineteenth century. The earliest revivals were at Yale College in the late 1790s. President Timothy Dwight, a grandson of Jonathan Edwards, preached on the need for revival during Yale's chapel services, eventually leading to revival at the college. Dwight was the pioneer of the New Divinity, a movement that sought to soften Calvinism in an effort to usher in revival and counteract the growing influence of Unitarianism in New England. Dwight's protégé Lyman Beecher became the leading revival-minded pastor in the North, often wedding revival preaching with a commitment to social justice; he opposed alcohol consumption, child labor, and slavery. The second outbreak of revival occurred at a camp meeting at Cane Ridge, Kentucky in 1801.

As many as 20,000 people camped at Cane Ridge, where they listened to preaching from Presbyterian, Methodist, and Baptist speakers. The camp meetings were modeled after mass communion seasons in the Scottish Presbyterian tradition, but in America they became most popular among the Methodists. In the years after Cane Ridge, revival-friendly Protestants spread all over the "Old West" of Kentucky, Tennessee, and Ohio. Several heterodox sects were also birthed out of the frontier revivals, including the Disciples of Christ, the Millerites, the Shakers, and the Mormons.

Each of these denominations and sects competed with each other and claimed they were either the true church or the tradition closest to the apostolic faith. The third revival outbreak occurred in 1825 in Upstate New York under the preaching of Charles Finney, a converted lawyer. Finney adopted the practices of camp meeting Methodists and introduced them to East Coast Congregationalists and Presbyterians. These "new measures" included nightly revival meetings, public testimonies (both men and women), advertising, and the so-called anxious bench. During the height of his revival ministry from 1825–1835, Finney rejected several mainstream Protestant doctrines such as original sin, justification by faith, and penal substitutionary atonement. He also adopted the belief that believers can experience a second baptism of the Holy Spirit and stop intentionally sinning, another idea he picked up from the Methodists. Finney was opposed by Asahel Nettleton, an older evangelist in New England who was a traditional Calvinistic evangelist in the vein of an Edwards or Whitefield.

The Second Great Awakening exercised tremendous influence on American Protestantism. As a general rule, revivalists emphasized methods and means far more than the leaders in the earlier revivals. Calvinism declined noticeably between about 1780 and 1820, with Arminianism and modified forms of Calvinism becoming more acceptable. The South was thoroughly evangelized during this period by Baptists and Methodists; in 1730, the South had been the most unchurched part of America, but by 1830 it had become the Bible Belt.

American Protestantism had become far more activist. Northern evangelicals especially formed denominational mission boards, founded parachurch Bible societies, frequently opposed hard drink and slavery, often advocated women's suffrage, and sent church planters to the South, Midwest, and Southwest.

### **Revival and Revolt**

In August 1857, America entered into a massive economic depression called the Panic of 1857. Many historians consider it to be the first worldwide economic crisis. In September 1857, a New York businessman named Jeremiah Lanphier began hosting an interdenominational lunchtime prayer meeting at a Dutch Reformed church. By the spring of 1858, thousands of similar groups had sprung up all over the country. The “Layman’s Revival” of 1857–1858 resulted in an estimated one million conversions and led to numeric growth in every major denomination.

A similar revival occurred simultaneously in the UK, affecting Wales in particular. Unfortunately, the Layman’s Revival didn’t prevent the Civil War, which lasted from 1861–1865. The Civil War not only divided the nation, but it also divided American believers. Between 1837 and 1846 the Presbyterians, Baptists, and Methodists had all divided along northern-southern lines; in each case, slavery played a decisive role. The Civil War and especially Reconstruction hardened the regional animosity, even within denominations. Christians on both sides “baptized” their cause.

Northern Christians tended to see the war as a crusade against slavery. Southerners tended to see the war as a defense of their more thoroughly evangelical culture. Abraham Lincoln, whose own religious views were ambiguous, weighed in on this debate with his Second Inaugural Address, which suggested God might be on neither side and argued for national reconciliation. More positively, armies on both sides experienced revivals among the ranks. For example, a massive revival broke out in 1863–64 in Robert E. Lee’s Army of Northern Virginia; the revival was led by Southern Baptist and Presbyterian chaplains.

### **The Evangelical Quilt**

By the mid-nineteenth century, the default civil religion in America was evangelical Protestantism. Evangelicalism was not so much a movement as it was a patchwork quilt of various groups that all emphasized biblical authority, the importance of conversion, and religious activism such as evangelism and mercy ministries. The intellectual center was Princeton Seminary, where Charles Hodge and B.B. Warfield championed biblical inerrancy and traditional Calvinism.

A Southern Baptist version of the Princeton tradition was perpetuated at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary; founding president James P. Boyce had studied with Hodge at Princeton. The Holiness movements comprised a second patch on the evangelical quilt. Many of the Wesleyan groups, especially the Nazarenes, perpetuated the “Christian Perfection” understanding of sanctification. The leading perfectionists were Phoebe Palmer, Hannah Whitall Smith, and William Boardman. Charles Finney, though not officially a Wesleyan, helped to popularize this view.

Some moderate Calvinists rejected the Wesleyan position and argued instead for gradual fillings of the Holy Spirit that gave temporary victory over besetting sins, furthered one’s sanctification, and helped believers live the “victorious life” or “higher life.” Keswick views were popularized by F.B. Meyer, D.L. Moody, and R.A. Torrey. A third influential movement was premillennialism, the idea that Christ would return to earth and physically reign over a kingdom that lasts one thousand years. This view had been advocated by some Puritans, but it became extremely popular among evangelicals after the Civil War. A new form of premillennialism called dispensationalism was especially popular.

Dispensationalism argued for a sharp continuity between the Israel and the Church and claimed the latter would be secretly raptured (caught up to heaven) prior to a Great Tribulation that would last seven years before Christ returned to inaugurate the millennium. Dispensationalism was popularized through prophecy conferences like Moody’s Northfield Conference and books, especially Cyrus Scofield’s *Rightly Dividing the Word of Truth* and his Scofield Reference Bible. Premillennialism, and especially

Dispensationalism, motivated many Americans to enter the foreign mission field and “rescue the perishing” before Jesus comes again.

### **Protestant Modernism**

Some Protestants moved in a different direction after the Civil War. Younger scholars studied abroad in Germany, where they imbibed of the historical critical method of interpretation. This approach argued for the importance of the history “behind” the biblical text, often leading to interpretations that contradicted the Bible. Around the same time, Charles Darwin’s *Origin of Species* (1859) caught on in America, challenging the biblical understanding of human origins. Early on, these “modernists” were still fairly evangelical when it came to their understanding of sin and salvation, but by the turn of the twentieth century many were downplaying the exclusivity of Christ and biblical miracles such as the virgin birth and resurrection. The leading modernist schools were the University of Chicago (which was then Baptist) and Union Theological Seminary in New York.

The most famous early modernists were Crawford Toy and Charles Briggs. Toy was an Old Testament professor at Southern Seminary who embraced an evolutionary reading of Genesis 1–11 and argued that there were historical errors in the biblical narratives. In 1879, he was forced to resign from Southern over his views. His fiancé also broke off their engagement because of Toy’s views; her name was Lottie Moon. Toy took a post at Harvard Divinity School, where he became a Unitarian. Briggs, who was also an Old Testament scholar, was a Presbyterian on the faculty of Union Theological Seminary.

In 1892, Briggs was excommunicated from the Presbyterian Church for arguing against inerrancy, denying Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch, arguing for two authors of Isaiah, and downplaying the exclusivity of Christ. In 1893, Chicago hosted a World’s Parliament of Religions. Most of the attendees were Protestant modernists. They typically embraced an evolutionary view of religion, arguing that Christianity was the most advanced pathway to God, but allowing that there might be other valid ways to God. In addition to Protestant groups, some heretical sects were represented, most notably Mary Baker Eddy’s Christian Science movement. Eastern religions were also represented; some observers argued that the Hindu teacher Swami Vivekananda was the most impressive speaker on the program. While most denominations were represented on some level at the World Parliament, Southern Baptists and Roman Catholics refused to participate. Most scholars consider the World Parliament to mark the beginning of the interfaith dialog movement.

### **Foreign Missions**

Throughout the nineteenth century, Protestant missionaries spread to Asia, Africa, and South America. By far, the largest mission field was China. Some of the missionaries were part of denominational mission boards, especially Baptists, Methodists, and Presbyterians. Many of the missionaries were single women, including Lottie Moon, who served as a Southern Baptist missionary in China from 1873–1912. After the Civil War, a growing number of missionaries raised their own support and served through interdenominational “faith missions.” The most famous of these missions organizations was China Inland Mission, founded in 1865 by Hudson Taylor. Many of the nondenominational missionaries were premillennialists who hoped that Jesus would return when all nations were evangelized.

In 1886, the Presbyterian pastor A.T. Pierson and D.L. Moody helped launch the Student Volunteer Movement (SVM). The SVM was committed to mobilizing recent college graduates for “the evangelization of the world in this generation.” Over four thousand young people became foreign missionaries in the next two decades, many of them serving through faith missions. The SVM accounted for just over half of the American missionaries who were recruited during this time. The key leader of

the SVM was John R. Mott, a YMCA executive who also founded the World Student Christian Federation (WSCF) in 1895. The WSCF was an organization that united Christian collegians in North America and Europe for the purpose of world missions.

In 1910, a World Missionary Conference was held in Edinburgh, Scotland. Over 1200 Protestant missions leaders convened, almost all of them from Europe and North America. Mott served as chairman of the conference. The conference took ownership of the SVM's agenda, sought to unite diverse Protestants for the purpose of missions, and sponsored books related to evangelism, missions strategy, social justice, and Christian cooperation.

Historians argue the World Missionary Conference represented the culmination of the nineteenth-century missionary movement and the birth of the twentieth-century ecumenical movement. Unfortunately, the ecumenical movement almost immediately focused on cooperation and justice and downplayed evangelism and church planting. Though intended for missions, it became the seedbed for much of twentieth-century Protestant liberalism.

## **UNIT 10: MODERN AMERICAN EVANGELICALISM (1910–PRESENT)**

### **FUNDAMENTALIST-MODERNIST CONTROVERSIES**

Protestant Modernism reached its apex during the first third of the twentieth century. Classical liberals denied the exclusivity of Christ, downplayed most biblical miracles, and rejected the infallibility and inerrancy of Scripture. Social Gospel advocates minimized the importance of personal conversion in favor of mobilizing churches as instruments of social transformation. Progressives combined Social Darwinism with an optimistic postmillennialism, in many cases arguing that American culture was gradually becoming more Christian and in turn would take the lead in ushering in Christ's kingdom on earth. Missions reflected this theme and became primarily about social uplift.

The University of Chicago, the Ivy League divinity schools, and Union Theological Seminary (NY) emerged as intellectual strongholds for modernist views. By 1920, most of the mainline Protestant denominations were led by theological progressives, especially in the North. Traditionalist evangelicals began fighting against modernist hegemony. The traditionalists came to be known as fundamentalists, so-called because they claimed to be defending the fundamentals of the faith against the progressive revisionists. Fundamentalists united around several key doctrines, including the inerrancy of Scripture, the virgin birth, the blood atonement, the bodily resurrection, and the importance of personal evangelism.

Most fundamentalists also preferred premillennialism over postmillennialism, in part reacting to modernist versions of the latter. Because most seminaries and other denominational ministries were led by progressives (or their moderate sympathizers), fundamentalists tended to work primarily through independent schools, parachurch ministries, and Bible conferences.

During the 1920s and 1930s, most every major denomination experienced tensions between modernists and fundamentalists. The Northern Presbyterians and Northern Baptists endured acrimonious denominational schisms; in both cases, the modernists won and the fundamentalists withdrew. In the broader culture, fundamentalists suffered a setback over the 1925 Scopes "Monkey" Trial—a legal win, but a public relations disaster.

Some fundamentalists formed new denominations such as the Orthodox Presbyterian Church and the General Association of Regular Baptist Churches (GARB), but many others formed nondenominational or independent churches (especially among Baptists). Leading fundamentalists included Baptists such as W.B. Riley, J. Frank Norris, and John R. Rice; Presbyterians such as J. Gresham Machen, Clarence McCartney, and Carl McIntire; Methodists such as Bob Jones Sr. and “Fighting Bob” Shuler.

### **New Evangelicalism vs. Separatist Fundamentalism**

Following the denominational wars and the Scopes Trial, fundamentalists focused on building their own ministries and networks for the next quarter century. Older schools flourished. For example, Moody Bible Institute expanded into a full Bible college and Wheaton College was the fastest-growing college in America during the 1930s. New schools proliferated, most notably Dallas Seminary (1924), Bob Jones College (1927), Westminster Seminary (1929), and Fuller Seminary (1947). New parachurch ministries included the Navigators (1933), Sword of the Lord (1934), National Association of Evangelicals (1942), Wycliffe Bible Translators (1942), World Vision (1950), Billy Graham Evangelistic Association (1950), and Campus Crusade for Christ (1951). Generally speaking, the terms “fundamentalist” and “evangelical” were used as synonyms to refer to theologically conservative, evangelistic Protestants. That began to change as a younger generation came of age after World War II. These younger fundamentalists hadn’t personally gone through the controversies of the previous generation.

In the postwar years, younger leaders began claiming that evangelicals were a less argumentative and reductionist, though equally orthodox and evangelistic alternative to the older fundamentalists. These “new evangelicals” (or “neo-evangelicals”) included Boston pastor Harold John Ockenga, Fuller Seminary theologian Carl F.H. Henry, and evangelist Billy Graham. The new evangelicals rallied around Fuller Seminary and the National Association of Evangelicals (NAE), while the older fundamentalists rallied around Bob Jones College and regional Bible and evangelism conferences. Neo-evangelicals gained influence over Dallas Seminary and Wheaton College, while fundamentalists opened new Bible colleges all over the country.

New evangelicals founded the periodical *Christianity Today* (1954), while fundamentalists preferred the *Sword of the Lord*. Most of the newer parachurch ministries became more closely identified with neo-evangelicalism than fundamentalism. The growing rift between neo-evangelicals and fundamentalists became an outright schism in the years after 1957. That year, Billy Graham conducted an evangelistic crusade in Madison Square Garden. Though nurtured as a fundamentalist under the patronage of Jones and especially Rice, Graham broke with fundamentalist practice by inviting modernists and Catholics to participate in crusade planning and leadership. The fundamentalists saw this as a compromise of the faith. Graham argued that he didn’t care who sponsored him—he always preached the same gospel. Though neo-evangelicals and fundamentalists were in substantial theological agreement, they differed sharply over cooperation and strategy. Throughout the 1960s, you could tell which folks were in which camp based largely off how they felt about Graham and his ministry.

Over a generation or so, fundamentalists and evangelicals moved further apart. Most “separatist” fundamentalists refused to cooperate in any meaningful way with Graham and his colleagues. Many fundamentalists also came to believe that it was wrong to cooperate with anyone (even other fundamentalists) who did cooperate with Graham or other evangelicals. Still others argued that true fundamentalists were independents who were compromising the gospel if they cooperated with

theological conservatives in mainstream denominations. The most militant fundamentalists were also hardening their theological views by the late 1960s.

In particular, they mandated the pre-tribulational rapture as a test of orthodoxy and claimed that the King James Bible was the only appropriate English translation of Scripture. These tensions led to an acrimonious split in the early 1970s between Bob Jones Jr. and John R. Rice; the former was the key leader in the militant camp, while the latter was a more centrist fundamentalist.

Centrist fundamentalists like Rice were ensconced in schools such as Liberty Baptist College and Tennessee Temple College and in denominations such as the GARB. For their part, evangelicals became increasingly theologically diverse during the 1960s. Graham, Henry, and Ockenga remained the key leaders of the more conservative wing, which also produced apologists such as Francis Schaeffer and Norman Geisler, theologians such as John Murray and Roger Nicole, and pastors such as J. Vernon McGee and James Montgomery Boice. The more progressive wing was influenced by the counterculture of the 1960s and drifted leftward theologically and politically. Fuller Seminary rejected biblical inerrancy in its confessional statement in 1968.

Many younger evangelicals protested Vietnam, marched in the Civil Rights Movement, rejected traditional gender roles, and embraced the belief that some people are saved apart from conscious faith in Christ. Key thinkers among the evangelical left included Bernard Ramm, Clark Pinnock, Tony Campolo, and Ronald Sider. In response to the progressive tendencies, conservative evangelicals formed new schools such as Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary (1969) and drafted the Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy (1978).

### **Evangelicals and Politics**

The counterculture also inspired many evangelicals to change their political sentiments. Prior to the 1960s, evangelicals were on the whole far more (vocally) interested in regional politics than national elections. Evangelicals were always willing to show support for Israel and oppose Catholic presidential candidates, but 1968 marked a turning point in the intentionality of evangelical political engagement. Republican candidate Richard Nixon ran a campaign that focused on law and order and traditional values. At the same time, the Democratic Party was fracturing internally due to radical influences, especially from students and other younger activists.

Evangelicals in the Deep South, Midwest, and Southern California abandoned their traditional Democratic loyalty and voted for the Republican Party. They did so again in 1972. Around the same time evangelicals were moving toward the GOP, the Supreme Court was handing down rulings that offended many traditionalist Protestants (and Catholics). Decisions against school prayer and Bible readings were controversial, but the most important ruling was *Roe v. Wade* in 1973. Although many evangelicals had never given much thought to the morality of abortion, by the late 1970s most had come to believe that abortion on demand was tantamount to legalized murder.

Many evangelicals voted Democrat again in 1976 because Jimmy Carter was an outspoken Southern Baptist layman. However, Carter's ambivalence concerning abortion and his progressive views of gender and sexuality caused many of his erstwhile evangelical supporters to abandon him in 1980. It didn't help Carter that his Republican challenger was Ronald Reagan, who had served as governor of California from 1966–1974.

Reagan was enormously popular with West Coast evangelicals, who helped to introduce him to their southern and East Coast counterparts. Although there were many individuals who were dedicated to facilitating evangelical political engagement, the major player during this time was Jerry Falwell, an Independent Baptist pastor and the founder of Liberty University. Falwell was a centrist fundamentalist who was influenced by Francis Schaeffer's views of the decline of Western Culture. Following Schaeffer, and unlike militant fundamentalists, Falwell became willing to lock arms with evangelicals and even nonbelievers to advance traditional morality (and other conservative positions) in the public square. In 1979, Falwell formed an advocacy group called the Moral Majority.

The Moral Majority was the most important early player within the so-called Religious Right, a grassroots network of evangelicals, fundamentalists, Catholics, and Mormons. Many pollsters argued that religious conservatives played a decisive role in Reagan's election in 1980. The Religious Right became an important part of the Republican Party's constituency and influenced subsequent elections. Many left-of-center evangelicals remained active in the Democratic Party, but they were far less influential among Democrats than the Religious Right was among Republicans.

### **The Miraculous Gifts Movement**

On April 14, 1906 an African American preacher named William Seymour spoke in an unknown tongue at a revival meeting at the Asuza Street Mission in Los Angeles. Within weeks hundreds of people were attending the multi-ethnic meetings and speaking in tongues. The tongues movement rapidly spread all over the country and affected numerous congregations. Fairly soon divine healings, prophesying, Spirit-slaying, and a number of other phenomena became part of the movement. Many interpreted the gifts, especially tongues, as evidence that God was pouring out his Spirit in a "Latter-Rain" revival that would usher in the Second Coming. Hundreds of folks moved to the mission field, convinced that the Holy Spirit would give them the spiritual gifts they needed to preach in unknown tongues and miraculously heal diseased foreigners. There have been three different stages or "waves" in the broader miraculous gifts movement. The Pentecostal stage began with the Asuza Street revival.

Early Pentecostals formed new denominations, emphasized a second Holy Spirit baptism experience that was subsequent to conversion, argued that all Christians should experience this second baptism, and claimed that Spirit baptism always results in speaking tongues. In terms of other doctrines and emphases, the Pentecostals were very similar to fundamentalists. Key Pentecostal denominations include the Assemblies of God, the Church of God, the Pentecostal Holiness Church, and the Church of God in Christ. Most of the noteworthy prosperity gospel preachers are Pentecostals. The Charismatic stage began around 1960 when members of mainline denominations began to practice miraculous gifts and formed Holy Spirit renewal movements within their denominations.

Even many Roman Catholics became charismatics, especially in Latin America. Like the older Pentecostals, early charismatics argued for a second Holy Spirit baptism, though many of them claimed that tongues isn't always part of the experience. As with any other spiritual gift, some Christians have the gift of tongues and others do not.

In terms of other doctrines and emphases, the charismatics were very similar to the new evangelicals. Most of the earliest Contemporary Christian Music artists were charismatics who had ties to the Jesus People movement. Many of the earliest praise choruses were written by charismatics. The so-called Third Wave began around 1980 when several faculty members at Fuller Seminary began practicing the miraculous gifts.

The Third Wave movement is nondenominational, tends to focus on multiple fillings of the Spirit instead of a single second Spirit baptism, is often more open to Reformed theology, and distances itself from the “prosperity gospel” that has infected so many Pentecostal and Charismatic groups. Several nondenominational networks of churches identify with the Third Wave, including Vineyard, Hillsong, and Sovereign Grace. Wayne Grudem and C.J. Mahaney are leading contemporary figures in the Third Wave. The miraculous gifts movement has literally changed the face of global Christianity.

In 1910, the average evangelical was a middle class white male in the American Midwest who was a member of a mainline denomination. By 2010, the average evangelical was a poor black woman in Central Africa who speaks in tongues and is a member of a nondenominational church. Most evangelicals in the majority world are at least open to the continuation of the miraculous gifts.

On the upside, this has led to great spiritual vibrancy and impassioned evangelism among believers in the Global South. On the downside, it has opened the door for the prosperity gospel teachings to flourish in parts of Latin America and Africa.

## **UNIT 11: SOUTHERN BAPTIST HISTORY**

**The Origins of the Southern Baptist Convention, 1814–1845** In 1814, Baptists on the East Coast founded the Triennial Convention, which was a foreign missions society formed to support Adoniram and Ann Judson in their mission work in Burma. Southerners always felt like outsiders in the Triennial Convention because its meetings were held in the North.

Southerners also wanted to make the Triennial Convention into an umbrella ministry that supported all kinds of missions priorities, though northerners succeeded in keeping the Convention focused exclusively on foreign missions. Though Baptists in the South supported the Convention, they focused their efforts on building state conventions in the South. For example, the Baptist State Convention of North Carolina (BSCNC) was founded in 1833. Between the 1820s and the 1840s, Baptists in the North and South drifted increasingly apart.

The Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) was formed due to a variety of motives. Baptists in the South wanted to form a new convention through which their churches could cooperate in other ministries besides foreign missions. They also believed they needed a new convention because Baptists in the North controlled all the existing ministries and didn’t prioritize home mission work in the South and Southwest.

Finally, Baptists in the South had a different opinion of slavery than their northern counterparts. These motives collided when Baptists in the North derailed the efforts to appoint a slaveholder as a missionary to the Cherokees in Georgia and then suggested that no slaveholder was fit to be a foreign missionary either. In April 1845, almost 293 Baptists met at First Baptist Church Augusta, GA and formed the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC).

The first SBC president was W.B. Johnson, pastor of First Baptist Church Columbia, SC and chaplain at University of South Carolina. Southern Baptists and their northern brethren still claimed they were part

of the same denomination, though after the Civil War the two groups drifted further apart, ending hopes of reconciliation. Three months after the SBC was formed the Rose of Sharon Baptist Church was constituted in what is now Durham County, NC. Jesse Howell was the founding pastor. The church predated the incorporation of the City of Durham by almost a quarter century.

### **A Century of Growth, 1845–1945**

When the SBC was formed in 1845, the first two ministries established by the Convention were the Foreign Mission Board and Home Mission Board. In 1859, Southern Baptist Theological Seminary was founded in Greenville, SC; Southern was the first seminary in the South. The founding president, James P. Boyce, was arguably the best-educated Baptist pastor in the South and proved to be a prolific theologian. The SBC experienced steady growth during its first decade and a half, but like everything else in the South the SBC was almost destroyed by the Civil War and Reconstruction during the 1860s and 1870s. By the late 1870s, the SBC was beginning to prosper once again with new churches being planted all over the South and Southwest and new ministries being established to serve those churches in various ways.

Southern Seminary relocated to Louisville, KY in 1877, a move that saved the seminary from insolvency. In 1881, the Home Mission Board called an entrepreneurial president named I.T. Tichenor who led that ministry during two decades of unprecedented growth. By the 1880s, the Foreign Mission Board was expanding to new nations in Africa, Asia, and South America. A single woman named Lottie Moon departed for China in 1873, where she became the most famous of Southern Baptist missionaries. In 1888, a Woman's Missionary Union was formed as an auxiliary ministry to aid the FMB in raising money for its expanding missionary force. The key leader was Annie Armstrong of Baltimore.

A Baptist Sunday School Board was established in 1891, and in the first two decades of the twentieth century, two new seminaries were founded in Fort Worth, Texas (1908) and New Orleans, Louisiana (1917). In 1917, the SBC formed an Executive Committee to represent the Convention's interests between annual meetings. Prior to this time, the SBC only legally existed while in session every summer. In 1925, the SBC made two important decisions with ramifications that continue to the present day. First, the Convention approved a confession of faith, the Baptist Faith and Message (BF&M)—this was the first official denominational confession of faith. Second, the SBC adopted a unified budget called the Cooperative Program (CP) that was intended to unite state conventions with the SBC and provide adequate funding to all denominational ministries. By 1950, the CP had become the most efficient financial structure of any Protestant denomination in America and played a significant role in the further expansion of the SBC after WWII. During the first half of the twentieth century, the SBC gradually took on a particular ethos that was shaped by a combination of theological convictions, ministry emphases, and cultural context.

The Convention's churches were characterized by a grassroots evangelical theology, a staunch commitment to a Baptist view of the church, a priority on evangelism and missions, and a southern-style political conservatism. Southern Baptists also became a national denomination; by mid-century, there were SBC churches in all fifty states. But even these churches were culturally southern; most of them were new church plants comprised of transplanted southerners who had moved North or West to find better job opportunities. Rose of Sharon Baptist Church also grew during this period.

In its first quarter century of existence, the church planted four other churches; eventually, the congregation helped plant almost twenty other churches in Durham and Orange Counties prior to 1950.

In 1877, Rose of Sharon relocated to downtown Durham and adopted the name Durham Baptist Church. The following year, the church again changed its name to First Baptist Church of Durham. In 1927, the congregation built its existing building on Cleveland Street.

### **Pragmatists and Progressives, 1945–1980**

After World War II, the SBC launched several influential denominational programs, most of which were focused on evangelism and membership enlistment through Sunday School. For example, during “A Million More in ’54” almost 600,000 members were added to church rolls through a Convention-wide Sunday School recruiting initiative. Other key programs included Royal Ambassadors, Girls in Action, Acteens, Training Union, and Baptist Student Union; these programs provided a cradle-to-grave indoctrination in Southern Baptist identity. The leading congregations during this era were downtown First Baptist churches, most of which wholeheartedly embraced the full range of denominational programs. FBC Durham was this type of congregation. Between 1940 and 1980, the church was a leading congregation among North Carolina Baptists and hosted many denominational events in its large sanctuary. The downside to all the programs is that the SBC was becoming increasingly pragmatic, focused upon buildings, budgets, and baptisms more than orthodox theology.

During this time period, almost every denominational program was dubbed “missions,” which led to “baptizing” the status quo. (If Southern Baptists were doing it, it was missions, which meant it was something worth doing.) This pragmatism ushered in an era of burgeoning bureaucracy. New denominational ministries were started throughout the 1950s, older ministries significantly expanded their overhead, and corporate consultants were contracted to advise SBC leaders.

The pragmatism also created an atmosphere where progressive theology was able to take root in Baptist colleges and seminaries, much of which filtered into churches like FBC Durham. Though most SBC progressives didn’t become thoroughgoing liberals who denied the incarnation and bodily resurrection, many embraced Darwinism, rejected biblical inerrancy, and advocated women in pastoral ministry. Many also elevated social justice ministries above traditional evangelism and missions (though of course all of it was considered missions). These progressive trends concerned grassroots Southern Baptists, sometimes leading to conflict.

In 1963, Ralph Elliot was terminated from Midwestern Seminary following a controversy over his book *The Message of Genesis* (1961), which promoted a liberal interpretation of Genesis 1–11. At Southeastern Seminary, three professors were pressured to resign between 1964 and 1966 for arguing that the Bible should be interpreted mythologically. In 1969, the Sunday School Board published the *Broadman Bible Controversy*; the Genesis volume was pulled from the shelves in 1970 and revised due to its liberal interpretations. Some pastors emerged as vocal defenders of sound doctrine, personal evangelism, and missions. W.A.

Criswell spent nearly fifty years as the pastor of First Baptist Church of Dallas, TX, which by the 1960s was arguably the largest Baptist church in the world. Criswell defended biblical inerrancy, modeled expositional preaching, and started a conservative Bible college as an alternative to state Baptist colleges. Herschel Hobbs, the longtime pastor of First Baptist Church of Oklahoma City, was another leading conservative who served as a key denominational statesman during this era. The vast majority of pastors served in congregations of less than 150 people—these small church pastors were almost uniformly conservative and evangelistic. On the conservative/progressive spectrum, FBC Durham could

be considered centrist. The congregation was always committed to missions and evangelism, but some of her pastors leaned progressive while others were more consistently conservative.

### **Conservative Resurgence, 1979–2000**

Many Southern Baptists refer to the final two decades of the twentieth century as the Conservative Resurgence. Conservatives won many battles in the 1960s and early 1970s, but they were frustrated that they made little headway in reversing leftward trends. In 1979, a group of conservative pastors and evangelists launched a movement to take over denominational leadership and bring it in line with the conservative theology of the churches. There were three key leaders in this movement: Paul Pressler, a judge in Houston; Paige Patterson, at the time president of Criswell College in Dallas; and Adrian Rogers, pastor of Bellevue Baptist Church in Memphis, TN.

The central plank in their agenda was advocating biblical inerrancy. These men and their colleagues discovered that if a conservative SBC president was elected, and if that president appointed conservatives to serve on a denominational nominating committee, and if that nominating committee chose conservatives to fill vacant trustee positions at the denomination's ministries, then in a decade or so every seminary, agency, and board would be under conservative leadership.

Rogers was elected SBC president in 1979, the first in a string of conservative presidents that implemented this strategy. In 1987, conservative majorities began assuming control of trustee boards. As a general rule, the mission boards transitioned fairly peacefully, but the changes at the Sunday School Board (LifeWay) and several seminaries were fraught with controversy. The key year was 1985, when over 45,000 Southern Baptists gathered in Dallas and elected Charles Stanley of First Baptist Church of Atlanta, GA as president. After the Dallas Convention, the progressives, who preferred to call themselves "moderates," began to withdraw from the SBC and form new networks; the most notable is the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship (CBF), which was founded in 1991. The following year, the SBC withdrew fellowship from Binkley Memorial Baptist Church in Chapel Hill and Pullen Memorial Baptist Church in Raleigh because those churches affirmed the homosexual lifestyle. By the mid-1990s, some Independent Baptists such as Jerry Falwell and David Jeremiah aligned with Southern Baptists because of the conservative shift. By 1998, every SBC ministry had come under conservative leadership and the battle had moved to the various state conventions. For example, the BSCNC increasingly came under conservative control from 1995–2005. The seminaries were thoroughly transformed, especially Southeastern and Southern, which were the two most progressive seminaries. Southeastern's trustees came under conservative control in 1987; Lewis Drummond was named president the following year. Following Drummond's retirement in 1992, Paige Patterson became president, resulting in an exodus of progressive faculty members.

During the 1990s, SEBTS grew dramatically and became known for its emphasis on evangelism, missions, and expository preaching. In 1993, Albert Mohler became president of Southern Seminary; he moved that school into a more conservative and broadly Calvinistic direction. SBTS is now the second largest seminary in the world with over 4000 students and Mohler is probably the leading public intellectual in the SBC. Though generally more conservative than Southern and Southeastern, the other four seminaries have also become more consistently orthodox in recent years.

By 2000, the Convention's paid and elected leadership was thoroughly conservative. This was perhaps best symbolized when the SBC revised the Baptist Faith and Message in 2000 to make it more consistently orthodox and evangelical. The revised BF&M was adopted by every Southern Baptist

denominational ministry and many local churches (including FBC Durham). Every Southern Baptist missionary and seminary professor must affirm the BF&M 2000 as a condition of employment.

Since the conclusion of the Conservative Resurgence, Southern Baptists have focused on expanding foreign missions efforts, planting new churches, advocating a biblical worldview in the public square, and providing an orthodox theological education to seminarians. Unfortunately, the SBC has also experiencing ongoing tensions over issues such as spiritual gifts, church polity, declining Cooperative Program receipts, and Calvinism.