

A Concise Guide to the History of Biblical Christianity (Church History)

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Preface

Many Christians do not understand the immense importance of church history. Many mistakenly reason that because it is not part of the Bible, it is not something that we as Christians need to be all that concerned about. For this reason, many pastors spend almost no time on church history with their members. All of this is deeply

unbiblical. The overwhelming vast majority of Christians do not need to be experts in church history. Most really don't need to know more than what will be presented in this book. Having said that, the bulk of the Bible is history. And this history is, for the most part, the history of God's people. That in itself proves that God takes the history of His people very, very seriously.

Many Christians often wonder why there is so much detailed history in the Bible. For those who may not like history that much, it can make reading all of the Bible extremely difficult. I have sought to help Christians with this reality in my essay on a Bible reading plan. It can be found on my website. I understand that most people, including most true Christians, are not history buffs like myself. This is why I wrote out my proposed Bible reading plan the way that I did. The goal is to help Christians who are not as into history with their devotions. So, I am not at all unsympathetic to those who are not pumped on history like myself.

Having made all of that clear, it is important to read all of the Bible and have a basic understanding of the history of God's people. As stated, this is clearly something that is very important to God. And from this principle, we must conclude that God also takes church history seriously as well. The history of God's people did not end with the completion of the Bible. It will continue until Jesus returns. Church history books, like this one, are not infallible. They are not the word of God. But, they are trying to be faithful to the principle found in God's word that we have been discussing here. The story of God growing His people through His work of salvation from Adam and Eve at first, all the way to today where we have hundreds of millions of Christians found all over the world from all walks of life, is an amazing story. It should inspire you and cause you to praise and worship our mighty God all the more. I sincerely hope this book does in fact help you do this.

I highly encourage you to read my "basics" series so that you will have a solid grasp of the basics of Christian doctrine. It can be found on my website. Sound doctrine is very important to God and so a lot of church history is taken up with the church fighting for God's truth. Therefore, it will be very helpful to you to have some knowledge of what are the core doctrines of the Bible. If you really want to avoid confusion as you read this work, I recommend reading all of the books and essays for beginners that are

found on my website. I recommend holding off on *Doctrine: Going Deeper*, my essay on apologetics, and my essay on the history of Confessional Presbyterianism until you have read this work first though. But, I do recommend reading those works eventually, and after you do so it will illuminate this work even further. For further resources on church history in general, see the section on church history in the bibliography to my book *A False Kind of Christianity*. It also can be found on my website.

Before diving into the meat of this book I want to give you the opportunity to receive Jesus. If you have never received Jesus as your God and Savior, please do so now. You do not know what can happen even in the next few moments, and so there is no time to wait. If you are not ready at this time, but become ready at any time you are reading through this book, please return to this section and receive Him. When you are ready, pray the prayer below sincerely from your heart and you will become a true Christian. It is very, very important to understand that merely saying the words of this prayer will not save you. There is no ritual, whether it be a prayer or anything else, that saves us. You must actually and sincerely mean these words or they will be of no help to you.

“Dear Lord Jesus, I believe that you are God Almighty and the only Savior. I recognize that I am a sinner and I have come to hate my sin. I ask that you come into my life so that I can have an eternal relationship with you, your Father, and your Spirit. I ask that you forgive all of my sins based on what you did on the cross and through your bodily resurrection from the dead. I ask that you cover me with your righteousness. I ask that you give me your Spirit so that you will become number one in my life, far above all else, and so that I will be completely changed. I want to live my life for you from now on, and I can only do that through your Spirit. I understand that I will continue to sin until I die or you come back, so please give me the strength through your Spirit to always seek your help and to continue to ask for your forgiveness. I now know I will spend all eternity with you. I now love you and worship you, and I am so thankful and grateful to you for saving me. Amen.”

Chapter 1: The Ancient Church Part 1

Introductory Remarks

Before we fully dive into the meat of this chapter and this work in general, we need to discuss some introductory material. The first thing I want to say is that despite how many lies are out there today, the church has overwhelmingly been a force for good in the world. The church has certainly had its horrible sins over the centuries, no question about that. But, for the most part, the church has been responsible for many of the advancements in all societies that we see today. It is not the purpose of this work to defend this. For this reality, I recommend to you *How Christianity Changed the World* by Alvin J. Schmidt.

The purpose of this book is to help new Christians or Christians who are starting to take seriously the command to love God with our minds, understand the overarching flow of church history. This work is intended to give the reader a very basic and introductory overview of the major ages, events, and people that have shaped the development and expansion of the church throughout its history. With that made clear, at every point you should know that in the background of all that we talk about in this book, true Christians were feeding the poor; helping widows; taking in orphans; sheltering the homeless; visiting those in prison; attending to the wounded in battle; counseling the hurting; fighting against injustice; educating the ignorant; and working tirelessly to make the world a more civilized place.

Most people today cannot fathom how barbaric the world was before the rise of Christianity. I understand that the church has made a lot of evil mistakes. I understand that it still does. I understand that there are horrific scandals in the church even today. I understand how many people have been abused and hurt in the church. I am not denying any of these things. What I am saying is that despite what a sinful world we still live in, it is a historical fact that the world was once unimaginably more barbaric than it is today. A lot of this has to do with technology, no question about it. However, that is hardly the whole story. Even many Christians are hesitant to recognize this reality because of their belief that the world will get so much worse in the end times. Let me be

clear: I am not a postmillennialist. I also believe that the world is going to enter a period of untold evil in the few years preceding the return of Jesus. But that does not mean that we should not recognize the progress that has been made in the world before that horrible period begins.

Before the rise of Hinduism and later Christianity, the world was a very tribal and sick place. It was in many respects out of control. Hinduism does deserve a lot of credit for bringing a lot of civilization to the Eastern portion of the world. Buddhism in many respects carried this forward as it splintered off from Hinduism. It was with the rise of Christianity though, that the world really began to move forward. Roman Catholicism, Eastern Orthodoxy, and Islam are all false religions. Please, please understand that I am not in any way saying anything otherwise. Yet, they are all heavily influenced by Biblical Christianity. And therefore, despite the many problems with these religions, they brought a great deal of civilization to many parts of the world. Hence, Biblical Christianity has indirectly influenced massive swaths of the world for the better. And even where Hinduism, Buddhism, Confucianism, and Taoism have brought civilization, it was often Christianity that helped places where these religions reigned supreme become even more civilized. I cannot give all of the examples here, but I will give one.

In many parts of Hindu culture there was a monstrous practice of sacrificing a wife in a fire when her husband died. I will not here give all the religious justifications for this belief, but it was a very real thing that happened quite frequently. And this was in Hindu culture, which as said above, tended to be far, far better than many other cultures around the world as far as human rights are concerned. Even when Christians struggled to see many conversions to Jesus among Hindus, they still labored ceaselessly to fight against this appalling practice. And over time, the practice was abolished. No historian denies the fact that the primary driving force behind this abolition was Biblical Christianity.

Many people think that the opposite is true. Many people have been lied to and believe that Christianity brought about the Dark Ages and pushed humanity backwards. But, the entire concept of the Dark Ages was made up by Atheists during the Enlightenment. It is a myth. Yes, there were a lot of problems in Western Europe after the fall of the Roman Empire, but the church was the one thing that kept the culture

from completely falling apart. And the church would have been able to push things forward even faster if not for a lot of bad teachings that developed during the Middle Ages. Protestantism came along and corrected many of these bad teachings and led to the modern world. The most prosperous and advanced countries on the earth today, by far, are those that were the most orthodox Protestant at one time. These countries today have largely abandoned the gospel because of Liberal Protestantism and secularism, but those in these cultures fail to see that they are living off of the blessings that were provided by the church when it was at its healthiest. These blessings will not last forever in these countries though.

So at every point as you read this book, please keep this in mind. We will cover some pretty negative things about the church in this book, such as the Crusades and slavery. If you are not careful, you can come away with the idea that the church has not been very good for society. And that is often what is taught in Western schools today and is often what people in those cultures believe. But, it is such a lie. It is revisionist history at its worst. It comes from those who hate Christianity and want to see it eradicated from society. Period.

The next item we need to cover is how brief this work is. Even though this work is going to be far longer than most of my books for beginners, in the big scheme of things it is extremely short. Church history covers a period of around two thousand years. An immense amount of history happened in that time. I will only be giving the major highlights and so a ton of material is being left out. I would love to spend more time on the adventure of church history, on the amazing lives of some of the greatest Christians, and many other things as well. I highly encourage you, if you have time, to dig deeper into church history, especially the biographies of some of the greats that I will mention in this work. This work may seem a bit dry at times to the reader, but what it will help you to understand is the major contours of how church history developed and how the church ended up where it finds itself today.

The next reality we need to discuss is the fact that Christians, like all people, are products of their time and culture. It is not reasonable or fair to expect people from the past to be as advanced as we are today. Humanity learns from its past mistakes and God has providentially worked things this way. There are things we do today that will

shock people, including true Christians, hundreds of years from now if Jesus does not return before then. You may ask, "But, doesn't the Bible touch upon all aspects of life? So, how can true Christians be so off on certain things?" The Bible does touch upon all aspects of life at least to one degree or another. But, it does not touch upon everything explicitly and comprehensively. If God did this, the Bible would be longer than a set of modern Encyclopedias and would be very difficult for your average Christian to read on a regular basis. Hence, on some things God only hints at how He feels about them. And on other things, the Bible is basically silent. However, the Bible does emphasize the importance of how God has revealed many things to us outside of the Bible through nature and the academic disciplines. Further, the Bible is clear that we are to love God with our minds. Hence, the church is to do its best to understand the world around us. In that sense, the Bible does indirectly say something about all of reality. Because of the slimness of information on certain topics in the Bible, the church is not going to figure everything out at once and we have to be honest about this.

None of this is an excuse for bad behavior though. All of us should be constantly praying and examining ourselves to see where we believe something because it is the common belief of our culture. With that made clear, none of us ever does this perfectly and you must keep this in mind when reading about Christians of the past. If you take my advice and dig deeper into some of the great Christian heroes of the past mentioned in this work, be very aware of the fact that while you will find a lot of extremely positive things that will inspire you, you will always also find a lot of things regarding both their beliefs and their practices that should deeply trouble you.

You might be wondering about now, "But, I thought true Christians can never embrace heresy or live in sin." This is completely true. With that said, the actual reality is somewhat more complicated. For example, many true Christians in the Middle Ages believed that technically we earn our salvation. You are probably saying, "But that is heresy! You yourself have been clear about how heretical such a belief is. It is a denial of the gospel! How can you then turn around and say that such people were true Christians?" I can say this because they also often talked about how we are saved by faith alone. If you feel like you need an Excedrin about now, believe me, I completely understand.

What many medieval (this is a word used to describe the era of the Middle Ages) Christian theologians taught, and what many medieval Christians believed, was that God saves us by faith alone in the sense that we receive the work of the cross on our behalf for the forgiveness of sins (freedom from hell) by faith alone. Further, they said that faith alone is what brings us into the kingdom of God and it is what keeps us in the kingdom of God. They said that as long as a person has true faith, he or she will be saved. But, they said that we must still technically earn our full salvation (our entrance into heaven) by our good works. However, they also taught that the Holy Spirit makes certain that we will freely and willingly and joyfully do the good works we need to do in order to earn our salvation. And that as long as one has faith, the Holy Spirit will keep you on the path to eternal life and make sure that you finish that path. This was all *extremely* close to heresy. I fully admit that. But, because these teachers still said that there is a sense in which we are saved by faith alone and that as long as one has faith in Jesus, the Holy Spirit will ensure that he or she is saved, it was not quite a full denial of the gospel. Don't get me wrong. It was certainly muddying things and needed correction. And this correction came at the time of the Reformation.

At the time of the Reformation, the Roman Catholic Church and Eastern Orthodoxy did not heed this correction. In fact, they hardened themselves and denied the gospel of faith alone. It would have been one thing if they merely did not heed the correction, that would have been bad enough. But Roman Catholicism officially condemned the doctrine of faith alone, and most Eastern Orthodox theologians did as well. And most have continued to do so up until this day. This fact renders these religions false religions. The theologians in the Middle Ages however, were extremely off in my very strong estimation, but they still upheld the spirit of the gospel by making it clear that there is a sense in which we are indeed saved by faith alone. Many, many other examples like this can be found throughout church history. Often when you read a non-technical biography of a great hero of the faith, the work may point out flaws along these lines, flaws that in themselves sound heretical, without giving all of the nuances involved as I did above. When that happens, try not to get stressed out, I assure you that there is more to the story.

The next item we need to cover is some brief background to church history. Church history began around AD 100. With that said, it is important to understand that the church itself did not begin at that point. The church began at Pentecost around AD 33. And there is even a sense in which we can say the church began before that. The church is the people of God and therefore in some sense goes back to Adam and Eve. But, this is a controversial point among Christian theologians, and everyone agrees that the fullness of the church did not begin until Pentecost. With all that laid out, you should understand that until around AD 100, the history of the early church is largely seen as part of biblical history because the Bible was still being written. The Apostle John was probably still writing his works all the way up to the end of the first century.

When Jesus was born, the Roman Empire was in place. It controlled much of Europe, the Middle East, and North Africa. And this included the land of Israel. This was still the case by AD 100. The Roman Empire hated the Jews because they only believed in one God. The Jews hated being a part of the Roman Empire because of the Pagan beliefs of the Empire. For an explanation on the meaning of *Pagan*, see my book *A Biblical Guide to the Religions of the World* (chapter 3). This Jewish hatred towards Rome made the Romans hate the Jews all the more. Therefore, when Christians came on the scene and began to grow, the Roman Empire really hated them because they believed in only one God, they had sprouted from Judaism, and because they were spreading so fast. This led to terrible persecution of the Christians. The worst of this during this time came under the infamous Emperor Nero. By AD 100, the church had grown exponentially, but it was still a tiny minority group in the Empire at that time. And that is where we pick up our story.

The Pre-Nicene Era

Persecution

The Ancient Church period lasted from about 100-500 (everything in church history is part of the AD era and so I will not continue to put *AD* down for every date). It can be split into two key sub-eras. These are the Pre-Nicene and Post-Nicene eras. The

focus of this chapter will be the Pre-Nicene era. The pivotal event that marks the transition between these two eras was the Council of Nicea (you will often see it spelled *Nicaea*, but I prefer the shorter spelling), and the Nicene Creed it produced. Thus, the names of these eras. We will discuss the Council of Nicea later, but for now, you should know why things are split up this way. The Pre-Nicene period lasted from about 100-300. The first aspect of this era we will discuss is the persecution that marked it.

Rome continued its practice of persecuting the church all the way up until the time of Constantine. It should be said though, that not all Christians were under severe persecution at all times and places throughout the Empire during the entirety of this age. Many critics of Christians say that we often exaggerate the extent of the persecution during this time and there is some truth to this. These persecutions were sporadic, differed in intensity, and were highly dependent on the region of the Empire and who was in charge at the time and place. With that said, and this cannot be understated, all Christians throughout the Empire during this entire period were under the basic threat of persecution. And it has been well documented in psychology and sociology that this can have a profoundly negative effect on people. People who are in a war torn country, or are part of a persecuted minority, even when they are not directly experiencing violence, live in almost paralyzing fear of the ever near prospect of violence towards them. This can make it very difficult to function in a normal way on a day to day basis. Therefore, we should not minimize the effect of this persecution upon the church as a whole, even among those Christians who were never directly persecuted. There existed a deep and general persecution of the church throughout this age and all Christians were affected by it to one degree or another.

During this time many Christians were fed to wild beasts; killed by gladiators; hung; strangled; impaled; burned alive; crucified; and had hot molten materials poured into body cavities. Many Christians had their property confiscated, including godly books and especially books of the Bible. Many Christians were sold into slavery. Despite this, Christians endured this persecution with such bravery and solemnity, that they inspired millions throughout the Empire. Many became followers of Jesus because of their example. This is why it is often said that the blood of the martyrs was the seed of the

church. No matter how hard Rome tried to stop the growth, the church kept expanding throughout the Empire.

Doctrinal Developments

There were not a great deal of doctrinal developments during this time because the church was mostly focused on its own survival. The church certainly believed in all of the essential doctrines of the faith since the Bible had been completed, but not a ton of clarification was provided. And most of the doctrinal developments were not in a positive direction in my estimation. There were a couple of exceptions to that though. One key exception we will look at here, was that the church was really trying to figure out what books belonged in the Bible and which ones did not. And by the time of the Council of Nicea, the church had for the most part figured this out. If this sounds scary, like how could the church have not even had the Bible at this time, it is not nearly as bad as it sounds at first. Don't let the enemies of the faith use this fact to freak you out. They can be very deceptive in how they portray the reality to new Christians.

From the beginning of church history, the true church understood that the Old Testament, the Gospels, Acts, and all of the epistles of Paul, were part of the Bible. That right there makes up almost all of the Bible. And all the doctrines of our faith can be derived from those books alone. When the enemies of the faith love to scare new Christians by telling them that the Bible was not completely agreed upon until about 300 years after the time of Jesus, they leave this part out. Now, it is very important to understand that I am not saying that the remaining books are unimportant. Far from it; they powerfully as the word of God confirm for us what is taught in the books just mentioned. It is indeed a terrible shame it took so long for the church to completely figure things out. With that made clear, the church was hardly in a state of total confusion. It had most of the Bible. And the only reason things took so long is because of the persecution. It should further be noted that most of the church did accept the other books of the Bible as Scripture anyway.

Some doctrinal developments that were not so positive were the developing doctrine of church government and the practice of praying to dead Christians. The

church did not embrace full-blown heresy in these areas (if it had, it would have ceased to be the church), but it did start to adopt teachings that myself and most true Christians today think are very unbiblical. It seems to most Christians today that the only two official positions in the church are that of elder (or pastor; sometimes called other names as well) and deacon. There is absolutely nothing wrong with churches adopting other ministry positions. So, for example, a church can appoint someone to be in charge of the children's ministry. They can even give this person an official title. The key thing to understand though, is that all such positions are not mandatory in all churches. Other churches do not need to have the same positions. All true churches however, should have elders and deacons or should be moving in that direction. During this time in church history, the church started to add such positions as bishop, patriarch, and many others as mandatory. This was the first step in a doctrine of church government that went well beyond what the Bible teaches in my strong estimation. Finally, you should know that church leaders are often referred to as *clergy* in works on church history.

The church also started to allow, and then even encouraged, the practice of praying to dead Christians. The reasoning of the church was that true Christians live on in heaven after death. This is true. And all true Christians are united by the Spirit. This is also true. And the prayers of the strongest Christians are especially effective. This is also true. And Christians in heaven are free from all sin. This is true as well. Hence, they said that since we are united to our brothers and sisters in Christ who are in heaven by the Spirit, and because their prayers for us must be especially effective because they are no longer in sin, we should seek them out so that they can pray for us. The problem is that both common sense and the Bible strongly seem to suggest that prayer is an act of worship, and is therefore only reserved for God. And these early Christians had no idea how bad things would get in this area later in church history. Today, Roman Catholics and Eastern Orthodox followers regularly engage in overt idolatry because of how carried away people have gotten with this practice.

It should be said that at this point in church history, the church was still being very careful when it came to images of God and other Christians. Christians were not yet praying to dead Christians through images of God and/or other Christians. That practice did not fully develop until the Post-Nicene era and into the Middle Ages. Because so

many Christians were being valiantly martyred during this time, many Christians began to emphasize the belief that these Christians should be sought after for prayer more than any others. This led to the bad doctrine of the “Saints.” A saint in the Bible is anyone that is truly saved. It refers to all true Christians. Unfortunately, the church began to use the term to describe the martyrs and then from that to describe any great Christians. And this was the beginning of the unbiblical doctrine of praying to and over-emphasizing the “Saints.”

Heretical Movements

In every era of church history, the church has had to confront heretical groups. This is a very sad and honestly annoying reality, but it is the reality nonetheless. I understand that in our day where “tolerance” has become the new “god,” many Christians find this a very painful truth to address. Many want to say that anyone who claims to be a Christian should be accepted as such. The problem is that there is no way, none whatsoever, to square this with the Bible. The Bible discusses the problem of those who seek to lead the true sheep astray from beginning to end. We dare not ignore this reality. For a fuller discussion of this, please see my essay “Addressing Heresy.” It can be found on my website.

The early church, to its credit, dealt seriously with the heretical groups that arose during this time. Every era of church history has had to address heretical groups, but some eras have done a much better job than others. Now, it needs to be understood that literally thousands of heretical groups have arisen over the course of church history. Many are or have been no more than a few hundred people in one very tiny region on the planet. Many don’t last for more than a few decades. Therefore, we cannot cover all of them in this work. What we will do is look at all of the major ones that cropped up in each era of church history.

Now to be clear, there are some heretical groups that allegedly number in the millions today that I will not be including in this work. This is because these groups are recent, I believe their numbers are greatly inflated, and they exist almost solely in one region of the world. Some of these are covered by the series on the religions of the

world, edited by Bodie Hodge and Roger Patterson, that I referenced in my book on the major world religions, if you are interested in more information on them. Further, while millions of people is of course a lot of people no matter how you slice it, because the world population has become so large, the percentage of the world population for these groups is actually very small. Hence, their impact on the global church is minimal. I also believe most of them will die out soon. But, I don't want you to be confused if you come across a movement with 2-3 million members (allegedly) and wonder why it was not included when I have included other movements that have much smaller numbers today. Many of the smaller movements I do include have shrunk considerably and had a much bigger impact upon the global church when they first arose. This is why I have included them.

With all of this made clear, there were six major heretical movements that came about in the pre-Nicene era.

The Ebionites

The Ebionites were a small heretical group that actually first began to develop in the first century. In all likelihood, they came from the Judaizers that we see in the New Testament itself. They said that people needed to strictly follow the law in order to be saved. They denied the gospel that we are saved by faith alone. In the New Testament, we see that this group largely sprouted from Pharisees who claimed to have received "Jesus." The Ebionites took things even further from the Judaizers though. They went so far as to say that "Jesus" was primarily only for the Jews and that "he" was not divine in any sense. They said that "Jesus" was the Messiah and was therefore a mighty man, but nothing more than a man nevertheless. They died out by the end of the 100's.

Gnosticism

The largest and most dangerous heretical group to develop during this era was the Gnostics, and man were they a doozy. Like the Ebionites, we see the beginnings of Gnostic beliefs being addressed in the New Testament itself. However, it was not until

the 100's that it became a full-blown movement. The Gnostics believed in Dualism. They taught that there were two basic realms. They said that these were the pleroma and the kenoma. The pleroma was the higher realm and was the realm of light and spirit. The kenoma was the realm of matter. In keeping with the Greek thought of the day that dominated the Roman Empire, spirit was seen as good and holy, while matter was seen as evil. In the pleroma existed the highest "god," who was called *the Monad*; *the One*; *the Abyss*; and other titles. They said that he or it roughly corresponded to "the father" in the New Testament. From this Monad comes emanations. It is hard to fully explain this concept in a non-technical work such as this, but essentially these are what took place that resulted in aeons. And aeons were sort of like lesser forms of the Monad. With each emanation, a lesser aeon came about. At the bottom of these aeons is Sophia.

In some way, Sophia became the world-soul of the kenoma. From this, she gave birth in some way to the Demiurge. The Demiurge then created the world and was largely seen as the evil "god" of the Old Testament. It is important to understand that most of the Gnostics did not see this as a creation from nothing, but only as the Demiurge organizing the matter of the kenoma. Most of the Gnostics said that "Jesus" and "the holy spirit" are not fully "god," but are merely the two highest aeons. Because matter was seen as evil, many Gnostics said that "Jesus" only appeared to be human, but was actually only a spirit-being. Therefore, many Gnostics denied that "Jesus" literally died on the cross or was literally resurrected from the dead. Salvation for most Gnostics came through the special knowledge that could only be achieved by being a part of their special group.

The Gnostics accepted most of the Bible as the word of "god," but most said that it was written in coded language that only the Gnostic leaders could understand. Gnosticism was very eclectic and had many subgroups, each with their own opinion. But, this summary gives you a basic idea of what most Gnostics believed. All of them adopted a number of blatant heresies at the very least. Despite how bizarre this movement was, it was extremely popular among many people who claimed to be "Christians" during this era. The movement largely died out by the 300's.

Marcionism

Marcionism was started by the heretic Marcion. Many heretical groups have no one specific founder, but as you will see as we make our way through this work, many have or have had one very charismatic founder. Marcion taught that the “god” of the Old Testament was cruel and evil. He said that only “the father” in the New Testament was the true merciful “god.” Based on this belief, he rejected all of the Bible except for the Gospel of Luke and the epistles of Paul. And even these books, he heavily edited. Marcionism died out by the end of the 100’s.

Montanism

Montanism was started by the heretic Montanus. He led a movement that was in many respects very similar to what we see in the Pseudo-Pentecostal/Charismatic Movement today. His movement heavily emphasized “the holy spirit” and the alleged revelations and experiences that came from “him.” The Montanists were often out of control in their worship services and often pushed “revelations” that went blatantly against the Bible.

Adoptionism

The Adoptionists said that “Jesus” was a mere man that was in some sense adopted as the Messiah and/or “son of ‘god,’” usually at “his” baptism. Many, though not all, saw the idea of “Christ” as not referring to the Jewish idea of Messiah, but as referring to a dynamic power from “god.” Therefore, many of the Adoptionists said that what made the adoption of “Jesus” unique from the adoption of ordinary Christians is that “he” was anointed with this dynamic power. Some said that this dynamic power left “Jesus” while “he” was on the cross. While the official movement of the Adoptionists had mostly died out by 300, Adoptionist ideas have crept up here and there among heretics throughout church history.

Modalism

There were many different shades to this heretical group, and therefore there were many subgroups going by differing names. With that said, the primary heresy of this broad group was the denial of the Trinity. All three persons of the “godhead” were said to be the same person, only with differing roles. Many groups throughout church history, even today, have adopted some form of Modalism. Montanism, Adoptionism, and Modalism (the original movement of Modalism) all started in the 100’s in various parts of the Roman Empire, but were mostly dead by the 300’s.

Great Christians

In every era of church history, God raises up certain believers whom He uses in extraordinary ways. These Christians are not perfect by any means, but God gave them to us in order to inspire us. Before diving into the great Christians of this era, I want to briefly address the fact that many may wonder why I have included a number of Christians as great Christians in this work who are primarily known for developing a doctrine I disagree with. It may make perfect sense for me to accept them as my brothers or sisters in Christ, but if they are mostly known for a doctrine that I think is unbiblical, wouldn't they be not all that great in my estimation? The fact is that while I do disagree with these Christians very strongly on the doctrines for which they are most known, these Christians never would have been so respected if not for their overall godly lives. Therefore, in that sense, they are still great Christians who inspired many other Christians to live more godly lives even if they pushed a doctrine that I don't think is technically healthy.

With all that made clear, the great Christians of this era were: Ignatius; Polycarp; Justin; Irenaeus; Tertullian; Perpetua; Cyprian; and Anthony. We will discuss Anthony more in a later chapter (for reasons that will become clear then). Perpetua was one of the most famous martyrs in the early church. She is truly an inspiration. I encourage you to look more into her as you are able. The others on this list were some of the earliest Church Fathers. In every era of church history God raises up amazing teachers, who

further clarify the faith for us and fight against the arguments from the leaders of false religions (including the heretical groups). Because the earliest teachers of the faith were so foundational in helping the church understand the Bible and fight for the truth, they have been called the *Church Fathers*.

Creeds and Confessions

In every era of church history, and in most sub-eras as well, God leads His people to create creeds and/or confessions of faith that can be used to summarize Christian belief. During this era, the Apostles' Creed was written. It is a short creed because the church was anxiously expecting the return of Jesus and was under heavy persecution. It was probably written to combat both the Ebionites and the Gnostics. While we are not certain of its exact origin, it eventually was widely used across the whole church. It was not written by the apostles, but is a very short summary of their core teachings.

Chapter 2: The Ancient Church Part 2

The Post-Nicene Era

Constantine and the Council of Nicea

The Post-Nicene era lasted from about 300-500. By around 300, the Roman Empire was showing serious cracks. Years of war and moral corruption had taken their toll. By this time, the Empire had split into two sub-regions. These were the East and the West. These regions had become rather different in many respects from a cultural standpoint. The West was more rural and agrarian. The East was more urban and developed. The West mostly spoke Latin, while the East continued to speak Greek. At the time of Jesus, most of the Roman Empire spoke Greek, and Latin was primarily a

military language. Most of the Christian church used the Greek New Testament as it was originally written in Greek, but used the Septuagint for the Old Testament. The Septuagint was the Greek translation of the Old Testament. There were exceptions to this, most notably Syriac, but for the most part this was the case. By the time of the 300's, there was beginning to be a need for a Latin translation of the Bible in the West. In the broader political world, the differences between the two regions were creating more and more problems. It was also clear that Christianity was not going anywhere.

It was into this environment that the Emperor Constantine entered the scene. He was raised by an amazingly godly woman named Helena. Because of this, Constantine later claimed to convert to Christianity. Whether his conversion was genuine or not is hotly debated among historians to this day. There is good evidence that it was sincere, and there is good evidence that it was done mostly for political reasons and to make his mother happy. Whichever is the truth, Constantine said that he prayed to the Christian God before a major battle and that the Christian God gave him victory. He said that this led to his conversion. Many people who don't know what they are talking about will often incorrectly say that he made Christianity the official religion of the Roman Empire. This is not so. That would not come for around another 100 years. But, he did make Christianity a legal religion for the first time.

A lot of good came from this fact, but a lot of bad came from it as well. The first and most obvious good was that the persecutions finally stopped. This also allowed the church to begin building regular church buildings. Over time, Christianity became the dominant influence over Europe and remained so for a very, very long time. This would not have been possible without Constantine. And because of Constantine, the wonderful Nicene Creed came about, which we will discuss in a moment. However, as the church and the government became more and more united, this led to a long problem, which lasted centuries, namely *cultural Christianity*. This is where you have many people who join the church for cultural reasons and not because they have truly given their lives to Jesus. This leads to a lot of hypocrisy and bad teachings. And that is precisely what happened throughout the Middle Ages.

By the time of the early 300's, two basic and overarching branches of the Christian tree had developed. They were the Roman Church and the Eastern Church.

The Eastern Church was primarily located on the Eastern outskirts of the Roman Empire and to the East of the Empire itself. The Roman Church was primarily the church found throughout the Empire. Within the Roman Church though, you had two clear sub-branches beginning to emerge. These were the Latin and Byzantine branches. The Latin branch was primarily the church as it was found in the western portion of the Empire, and the Byzantine was primarily the church as it was found in the eastern portion. All of this will become very important as we proceed.

Constantine hoped that he could use Christianity to unite the fractured Empire. He did not try to push the Pagan majority too fast or too hard, but his hope was that Christianity would become more and more dominant and that the unity of the church would lead to a more unified Empire. His hopes were dashed however when the heretical movement Arianism came along. We will discuss the beliefs of this movement below, but for now it needs to be said that this movement grew extremely fast in the first part of the 300's. It was not a true Christian movement, but to outsiders it looked like Christians were dividing down the middle. Constantine was furious and so he called a Council to deal with the matter. He called Christian leaders from all over the Empire, as well as Arius (who started the heretical movement in North Africa) and some other Arian representatives. The Council was convened in the city of Nicea and became the famous Council of Nicea. It took place in 325.

All sorts of lies are told all over the internet and elsewhere by the enemies of the faith regarding this Council. Many of these lies were popularized by the fictional *The Da Vinci Code* book, and later movie by the same name. I cannot even begin to cover all of the nonsense that is out there, but some of these lies are that the Council invented the doctrine that Jesus is fully God, decided who was truly Christian and who was not, and decreed what belonged in the Bible and what did not. It did none of these things. You may be saying about now, "Ok, but maybe you are saying that because you are a Conservative Evangelical." Nope. Even non-Christian historians agree that the above book and movie are pure fiction. It is not so easy to convince many in the general population of this fact though. The Council was convened upon the authority of Constantine to see if he would adopt Biblical Christianity or if he would adopt Arianism. Other matters were of course discussed, but this was the core issue. And if he had

adopted Arianism, the true church would have continued right on as it always had. And if that meant persecution, so be it. They had already been persecuted for 300 years! Many of the leaders at the Council still had severe scars from the days when they were persecuted. The idea that any of them were going to allow anyone, even an emperor, to tell them what to believe is sheer rubbish.

Constantine decided to adopt Biblical Christianity. It is impossible to know if he did this out of conviction or because he understood that true Christians outnumbered the Arians (even though there were a lot of Arians at that time in the Empire). This led Constantine to command the drafting of an orthodox creed that spelled out the beliefs of true Christians in contrast to the Arians. This would go on to become the Nicene Creed, one of the most beautiful expressions of the Christian faith outside of the Bible. The full Creed was not developed at this time, but an initial version was put down. It cannot be more emphatically stated that the Council of Nicea did not invent the full deity of Christ (the belief that Jesus is Almighty God). This is something that many Atheists, Muslims, and heretical groups say today. The full deity of Christ is plainly taught in the Bible and was taught by all of the Church Fathers. It was the belief of the true church from the very beginning. With that said, the church did not have a complete grasp of the doctrine of the Trinity yet and we have to be honest about this. The church taught all of the basic elements of the doctrine, but with all of the persecutions, the church had not put all of these elements together yet. That began to happen after the Council of Nicea. And it must be said that some Church Fathers had already started to do this very thing. Tertullian first used the term *Trinity* far before the Council of Nicea.

The church taught the full deity of the Father, and it taught the full deity of the Son as well. Some were not completely sure about the Holy Spirit, but none denied that He is God. They simply felt that they needed to study the Bible further on the subject. And the Church Fathers understood that there were roles to the members of the Trinity. Hence, sometimes the language they used for the Son and the Holy Spirit was imprecise. And all of the Church Fathers were completely clear that there is only one God, yet somehow the persons of the Trinity are not the same person. All of this was fully fleshed out after the Council of Nicea. But any notion that they were making things up is not in accordance with the historical facts. You may ask, "Why on earth did the

church take so long to hammer out such important issues?" The reason is primarily because of the persecutions. It is difficult to engage in a lot of theology when you are trying to keep the church alive. This is not to say that no theology went on. It certainly did. But, it was primarily only to assert the most basic teachings of the Bible and to fight against the heretical movements that were so clearly contradicting the Bible.

Another doctrine that was not fully hammered out during the time of persecutions was the gospel itself. The church basically proclaimed that we are saved by faith unto good works. And the church for the most part did not try to complicate matters beyond that. This is certainly a true summary of the gospel, but it does not very precisely elaborate on the exact relationship between faith and good works. This ambiguity led to many problems later in church history, and by the time of the early 1500's, the gospel was hardly being proclaimed at all. This is why God raised up the mighty Reformation at that time.

After the Council of Nicea, Constantine tried to ban Arianism, but to no avail. They were not going away. This led Constantine to compromise and say that both positions should be allowed in the church. This might at first seem to prove that Constantine was never a true Christian, but it may also have been the result of him being a very immature Christian at that time. Either way, the Arians were actually pretty happy with this compromise, but the true church was having none of it. This did not make Constantine happy. Therefore, despite personally adopting Biblical Christianity himself (at least outwardly), he more and more began to favor the Arians. This led many pastors and leaders in otherwise true churches to either adopt Arianism or to compromise with Arians. Never forget how many wolves there are in the church. Jesus warned us about this and we do well to heed His warnings. More and more true Christians were left to fend for themselves without pastors and leaders in many parts of the Empire. It was at this time that God rose up the great Athanasius.

Athanasius

Athanasius was a true hero of the faith. He had been at Nicea, defending the truth of the full deity of Jesus. Throughout the 300's, the church was tossed to and fro

as there would be an orthodox emperor, then an Arian one, and so on (at one point a Pagan one ascended the throne!). Athanasius was often banished when an Arian one would come on the scene. No matter what happened, Athanasius stayed true to the Scriptures and fought tirelessly to help ordinary Christians defend the truth and find good churches and pastors. He wrote many works against the Arians, showing that what they taught was blatant heresy from the Bible. Athanasius made it clear that he didn't care if he was the only true Christian left on earth, he would not deny his Savior. When he died, the phrase *Athanasius Against the World* was used to describe him in honor of this stand. By the end of the 300's, he had influenced other great theologians, who also defended the truth against the Arians. By the end of the century, Biblical Christianity had won out and Christianity was declared the official religion of the Empire by Theodosius at the end of the century.

This did not mean that all non-Christians were gone or that all problems went away. Far from it. Christians were still actually a minority in the Empire at this time, albeit a very large one. And non-Christians remained in pockets of Europe for centuries to come, even after Christianity had become overwhelmingly dominant on the continent. Further, cultural Christianity only became worse and worse as the church entered into the Middle Ages. With that said, the church was in a far more stable place at the end of the 300's because of Athanasius.

The Rise of Manichaeism and Neoplatonism

Throughout most of the Ancient Church era, other than heretical groups, Christians had two other primary religions to contend with for the battle over truth. These were Judaism and Paganism. Most in the Roman Empire were the latter. Two notable exceptions to this were Manichaeism and Neoplatonism. Neoplatonism was really more of a philosophy though. There were many schools of philosophy in the Empire throughout the Ancient Church era, but most of them still attached themselves in some way with the reigning Paganism. Neoplatonism was an exception to this. Hence, it is important to briefly discuss these movements here. Both of them arose around the late 200's, but really got cooking in the 300's. Both of them had for the most part died by

500. Although small numbers of people continued to hold to these belief systems for centuries after 500.

Manichaeism was started by a man named Mani. He taught Dualism and his religion was in many respects very similar to elements of Gnosticism. This is not surprising because his parents were Gnostics. The key difference though, is that he did not claim to be “Christian” in any sense, although he did admit that “Jesus” influenced him. He taught that everything was part of a major struggle between the realm of spirit and light and the dark world of matter. And he said that a number of prophets had come on the scene to help humankind out of this struggle. He said that he was the last and greatest of the prophets after Zoroaster, Buddha, and “Jesus.”

Neoplatonism was started by a man named Plotinus. He saw himself as furthering the thought of Plato in the service of humankind, especially the need to rid the world of Christianity (which he despised). He had a strong belief in what he called *the One*. Many have mistakenly believed that Neoplatonism advocates Pantheism or Monism because of this, but Plotinus did not actually advocate either of those positions. He did not believe that everything was the One, but he did say that all comes from the One. By this, he did not mean that the One created all things, but that all emanates from the One in some sense. On that front, he sounded very similar to the Gnostics, but he was for the most part opposed to them as well. Plotinus was very mystical and basically said that the goal of life is to become one with the One. Both of these belief systems fought against Christianity in the marketplace of ideas in the Empire, especially after Constantine.

Doctrinal Developments

During this period there were a number of excellent doctrinal developments, but also some very unfortunate trends as well. Let us start with the more positive side of things. As we have already seen, the church really began to understand the full doctrine of the Trinity during this period of time. Further, the church also began to fully understand the relationship between the divine nature and human nature in Jesus. The church had always said that Jesus is fully God and that He is also a complete human

being. However, the church had not said a great deal about how these two were connected. During the 400's, with the rise of a number of heretical groups that were making serious errors on this front, the church was forced to clarify things. The church used the Bible and common sense to say that Jesus must be one person with two natures, and that these natures can never be mixed together, but that they can never be separated or seen as only loosely connected either.

Further, due to the work of Augustine, one of the greatest theologians and Church Fathers of all time, the church began to emphasize predestination more. Not everyone agreed with Augustine on this point, and many Christians still do not to this day. But, before this time, the biblical doctrine of predestination was not heavily emphasized. It was of course never denied, but it was often not discussed very much. After Augustine, all Christians have emphasized the fact that God is sovereign and that He predestined our salvation in some sense. Finally, the West finally got its much needed Bible translation when Jerome (a great Church Father) translated it into Latin. This translation was known as the Vulgate.

On the negative side, the practice of praying to the "Saints" only became increasingly worse during this era, especially after Christianity became the official religion of the Empire. Many Pagan temples, shrines, and statues were converted to churches or statues of the "Saints." The church's initial motivation in this was to try to help the Pagans feel more comfortable as many were converting to the new state religion for cultural reasons. This might have been a noble goal, but over time many people were indeed worshiping these statues. The church tried to justify this by saying that the statues can be used to help Christians think of the "Saint" they are addressing. As you can imagine though, it was not long before people were bowing down to these statues, decorating them, bringing them gifts, etc. The idolatry that marked so much of the Middle Ages was beginning in this era. And during this era, especially the 400's, the doctrine of church government continued to become more elaborate and ornate, going well beyond what the Bible teaches in my strong opinion. Finally, many of the seeds for later medieval theology, especially in the West, were planted during this era.

Heretical Movements

Arianism

As we have seen, Arianism was started by the false teacher Arius and caused enormous problems for the church. What made Arius so dangerous is that he was so orthodox on most points of doctrine, so to many people he didn't sound that bad. But, he denied the full deity of Jesus, and that is about as blasphemous and heretical as one can get. He did not say that "Jesus" was merely a man though. He said that "Jesus" was divine in some sense because "god" created "Jesus" as "god's" first creation and then "god" used "Jesus" to create everything else. Hence, he rejected the theology of the Adoptionists. With that said, he was still quite clear that "Jesus" is not fully "god." As we saw, this movement started at the beginning of the 300's. It had largely died out by 500, but still remained in pockets of what had been the Empire after 500. By 800, it was basically gone, but many heretical groups throughout church history, even up to today, deny or denied the full deity of Jesus.

Pelagianism

Pelagianism was started by a heretic named Pelagius in the 400's in the northern part of the Empire. He denied the doctrine of original sin. He did not deny the fact that humans often do in fact sin, but he was emphatic that humans are not sinners by nature. This is a blatant denial of the clear biblical teaching. While his movement largely died out by 500, most Liberal Protestants today and throughout the history of Liberal Protestantism have basically agreed with him.

Donatism

Donatism was a heretical movement that was started in the 300's, but became very powerful in the 400's. It began primarily in North Africa. The Donatists were seeking to purify the church, but in the end they became the Pharisees of their day.

They were judgmental fault-finders. The movement largely died out by 500, but in its short time it caused an immense amount of division.

Nestorianism

Nestorianism was started by the heretic Nestorius in the 400's. He was part of the Eastern Church. He taught that "Jesus" was two persons and that the divine nature and human nature were only loosely connected. This of course would mean that "Jesus" is not truly "god." This is because "Jesus" would only be a man who was loosely connected to "god." Even if one says that this connection is far deeper than anything experienced by anything else in creation, it is still not a full incarnation as is plainly taught by the Scriptures. Nestorius and his followers broke off from the Eastern Church to create the Church of the East. It was and still is often also known as the Persian Church. This heretical movement still exists to this day, but it is very small.

The Monophysites

The Monophysites were started by a false teacher named Eutyches, also in the 400's. Like Nestorius before him, he was part of the Eastern Church. He said that "Jesus" was only one person, but that "he" only had one nature. Eutyches said that this was possible because the divine nature and the human nature were mixed together to become the one new nature of "Jesus." This is utterly impossible because this would mean that "god" morphed and changed into a "god-human" mixture. But, we know from the Bible that God cannot change. Eutyches led most of the Eastern Church astray after what was left of it after Nestorius. This movement later became known as Oriental Orthodoxy and still exists to this day, primarily in the Middle East. The current religion does not like to be called *Monophysites* though, preferring to use the term *Miaphysites* instead.

The Monothelites

This religion sprouted off from the Monophysites in the late 400's. We will discuss them more down the line.

Mysticism and Syncretism

Both of these heresies started to become an issue in the 300's, but really began to get problematic in the 400's. They remained a huge problem throughout the Middle Ages and we will discuss them further soon.

Great Christians

Some of the most outstanding Christians of this time were: Helena; Athanasius; Hilary; the Cappadocian Fathers; Ambrose; Monica; Augustine; Chrysostom; Jerome; and Patrick. We have already discussed Helena; Athanasius; Augustine; and Jerome. It should also be said about Augustine that he fought hard against the Manichaeans; Neoplatonists; Pelagians; and Donatists. He would have assuredly fought against the other heretical groups we just discussed, but he died before they came on the scene. We will discuss Patrick in the next chapter. The Cappadocian Fathers were some of the primary theologians discussed earlier who backed up Athanasius at the end of the 300's. The rest on this list, other than Monica, were great Church Fathers. Monica was the devout mother of Augustine. She prayed ceaselessly for his conversion and for God to use him mightily, and her prayers were answered.

Creeds and Confessions

Three key creeds and/or confessions were developed during this time. They are: the Nicene Creed; the Chalcedonian Definition; and the Athanasian Creed. The Nicene Creed explicitly spells out the full deity of Christ. It also talks about the full deity of the Holy Spirit, but does not directly discuss the Trinity, although the Trinity is plainly implied by the Creed. The Chalcedonian Definition was written at the Council of Chalcedon. This Council was held to deal with Nestorianism and the Monophysites. It lays out the

biblical doctrine that Jesus is one person with two natures. The Athanasian Creed was not written by Athanasius, but was named after him to honor him. The Creed more fully defines the doctrine of the Trinity and the incarnation of Jesus.

The Fall of the Roman Empire

The last thing that needs to be said about the Post-Nicene era is what happened to the Roman Empire. As we have seen, the Roman Empire was greatly weakened by around 300. From this time until 500, many groups from outside of the Empire took advantage of this weakness and began to attack the Roman Empire. Some of these groups were the Huns; the Germanic Tribes (made up of groups such as the Goths; Ostrogoths; Vandals; and later the Visigoths); and the Franks. By 500, the Roman Empire had collapsed. The Eastern portion was able to regroup and became the Byzantine Empire. We will discuss them more in the chapter after the next one. The Western Empire was in shambles. This led to a long period of decay that we will further discuss in the next chapter. The Huns came from Asia. The Germanic Tribes came from the northeast portion of Europe that Rome had not yet fully conquered. The Franks largely came from what is today France. Many of these groups had converted to Arianism and thus hated the Roman Empire, which had at least outwardly adopted Biblical Christianity. The Germanic Tribes eventually fully conquered and settled in North Africa and what is today Portugal and Spain. Yet, many of these groups were converted to the true church by the end of the Roman Empire. The damage had been done however, and the Middle Ages began around 500 and would last until about 1500.

Chapter 3: The Medieval Church Part 1

Introductory Remarks

Most people have some idea of what the Middle Ages looked like. This was the age of castles with moats; palaces; cathedrals and basilicas; peasants working the farms; nobles; kings; queens; priests; bishops; popes; monks; nuns; monasteries; convents; knights in shining armor; catapults; troubadours; jousting competitions; etc. And most of these images are correct, but as stated earlier, far too often they have been placed within a false picture of the Middle Ages as being the Dark Ages. Often Europe at this time is portrayed as a place of filth; disease; ignorance; superstition; violence; and religious hypocrisy. This picture is wrong and to whatever extent it is true, it is often presented in highly biased and misleading ways.

It is true that over the course of 1 thousand years there was a lot of violence, but no more than in other cultures. In fact, in the Byzantine Empire, there was considerably less, other than when outside forces, such as Islam, were brutally attacking them. In the West, there was indeed far too much violence for a Christian society, but this was often because Western Europe was so broken up after the fall of the Roman Empire. This led to a lot of tribalism and disputes over resources. But, the church worked hard to put an end to this and by the year 1000, most of it had stopped.

It is also true that sanitation was very poor in the West, especially before 1000. Yet, this was also true of much of the rest of the world and was not the case in the Byzantine Empire. The West was a farming culture with lots of animals around in small villages, and this often did not make for great sanitation. Over time though, Western Europe produced an immense amount of food because of this culture and this led to the population booming. That is hardly an indication of a completely broken society. And after 1000, more and more peasants began to move into cities. Now it is true that because the West had a long history of not overly focusing on sanitation, that some of this cultural bent carried over into these cities. And many of these cities became far too big, which did cause sanitation issues. But, the same was true for big cities in other parts of the world. And yes, the Black Death (the Bubonic Plague) did ravage Europe, but this disease came from outside of Europe. I'm not saying Asia was to blame for this (Asia is where the disease originated); I'm merely saying that Europe was not to blame either.

As far as ignorance and superstition, again, this was no worse than in other cultures at the time. And this reality was far less problematic in the Byzantine Empire. As far as the West is concerned, things had crumbled very badly after the fall of the Roman Empire. But this was hardly the fault of the church. This led to a period where most of the people had to be farmers. Education was very difficult to administer across the board in such an environment. As far as religious corruption and hypocrisy, this largely became a massive problem only at the very end of the Middle Ages, right before God raised up the Reformation.

And to whatever extent there was corruption and hypocrisy far beyond what should have been the case in a Christian society, it was largely caused by cultural Christianity. Cultural Christianity is a huge problem, but at that time the church did not know how to really avoid cultural Christianity. In most societies throughout history up until that time, the religion of the people and the government worked closely together. Minority religions were almost always discriminated against, if not outright persecuted. Hence, the church was not about to advocate that another religion should be dominant in the society and be allowed to work closely with the governments of Europe. And any notion of a strong distinction between religion/church and state would have been utterly foreign to them. It is important that we not judge people of the past based upon civilized advancements that took place long after those people lived.

With all of that laid out, it should also be noted that most of what we think of as the Middle Ages from books and movies, mostly applies to Western Europe after 1000. And even then, these things did not all develop at once. They took hundreds of years to get to the Renaissance period, from which springs many of our images of the Middle Ages. The Middle Ages in Western Europe can really be broken down into three key sub-eras. These are: the Early Middle Ages (500-1000); the High Middle Ages (1000-1300); and the Late Middle Ages (1300-1500). But none of these correspond very well to the Byzantine Empire. It is not that things did not change in the Byzantine Empire. Obviously, over 1 thousand years (the Byzantine Empire lasted from about 500-1500; pretty much the entire period of the Middle Ages) a lot is going to change! With that said, the Byzantine Empire resisted change as much as it could. It saw itself as carrying on true Christianity and the Roman Empire. It felt that the synthesis between

the two was God's ideal and should remain in place until Jesus returns. Even to this day where Eastern Orthodoxy (Eastern Orthodoxy eventually evolved out of the Byzantine Church) is dominant, these cultures tend to strongly resist change. Therefore, in the Byzantine Empire, far more of the people lived in bigger cities, or in close proximity to bigger cities, and the Byzantines tried hard to keep these cities looking and feeling as Roman as possible. Technological changes from the outside world of course crept in throughout the Middle Ages, but always slowly and with suspicion.

After the fall of the Roman Empire, the West was in very bad shape as that is where most of the outside forces had ransacked. Throughout most of the Early Middle Ages, Western Europe was split up into tribal regions and small kingdoms. Most of the people lived in very small villages with not a lot of governmental structure over them. They tended to live in small hut like homes. Churches were often small structures made of blocks. There were priests, but they tended to be scattered and things were often very disorganized. And they tended to not dress nearly as ornately as had been done before the fall of the Empire. There were also higher church officials as well as monks and nuns, but we will discuss them more soon. These higher church officials tended to live in the few bigger cities that did exist. There was the beginning of castles, but not like what we tend to think of as Middle Ages castles. These castles tended to be primitive and often little more than fortifications.

During this time there began to develop six basic classes of society that would go on to mark the Middle Ages in the West. These were: the royalty; the nobility; the knights; the clergy; the monks and nuns; and the peasants. The royalty was made up of the kings and queens when nations began to develop and their extended families. The nobility was made up of the land owners. They were under the authority of the royal class, but they did possess a lot of power over the peasants who lived on their land. Often, there was a lot of overlap between royalty and the nobility. The knights generally came from the nobility, but lived lives outside of the mainstream of that class. As was the case in most older societies, they were both the warriors and the police force. Early knights were not what we tend to think of as Middle Ages knights. They were basically local tribal warriors for the most part. Over time though, they became a highly sophisticated fighting force with all of the armor and weapons we tend to think of in the

Middle Ages. The clergy were the church leaders and we will discuss them more soon. The monks and nuns were also a crucial part of medieval society and we will discuss them more soon as well.

Finally, the peasants were the workers. They were not slaves, but they had very few rights. There were slaves in both Eastern and Western Europe throughout the Middle Ages, but they were not a massive portion of society and there were usually ways for people to gain their freedom. Hence, they were for the most part incorporated into the peasant class. During the Early Middle Ages, the peasants were overwhelmingly farmers. They worked the land and gave the proceeds to the noble who was essentially their landlord. They also had to fight along with the knights whenever the noble needed them to do so. In return, the noble would take care of their basic necessities, such as housing; food; clothes; medical care (especially when you were older and could no longer work); etc. Obviously, the peasants often had to build and make their own hut houses, clothes, food, etc., but it was the job of the noble to make sure you had the materials and help you needed from others in the village. There were of course many nobles who took advantage of their situation and abused the peasants. But many of the nobles were true Christians and did all in their power to help the peasants live as nicely as possible given the difficult situation after the fall of the Empire.

Around 800, all of this started to change with the rise of Charlemagne, whom we will discuss more later. The West began to slowly civilize and the process actually would have gone a lot more quickly if not for the merciless invasions of the Vikings to the north. But, by 1000, the church in the West was beginning to look a lot more like what we often see portrayed in movies. And by 1300, the West was one of the most advanced societies on the planet. Most peasants lived in cities by then and while many were still farmers, many were tradesmen; craftsmen; artisans; and many other occupations. Many of them had become quite wealthy, but they still did not have the rights of the nobility.

The Rise of Monasticism

It is hard to fully explain how important the monks and nuns were to the church in medieval society. They were the backbone of the church. Even though these are not official positions laid down in the Bible, and therefore later in church history these positions became very problematic, God nonetheless used them to lead and foster His church for almost 1 thousand years. The monks and nuns throughout the Middle Ages were the primary preachers; teachers; scholars; theologians; copyists of the Scriptures and other godly books (not to mention books in general); missionaries; evangelists; and those who most ministered to the poor; the downcast; the sick; the imprisoned; the elderly; the orphans; and the widows. They also became responsible for most of the worship music in the church. Worship music was very different back then from what we think of today. Much of the music was in the form of chants, and the monks and nuns produced some of the most beautiful chants in history.

The pastors should have done more of this, and many did, but later we will get to why the clergy was more and more seen as the governmental administrators of the church, especially in the West. Peasants also should have been encouraged to at least do some of these things more than they generally did, but the church primarily wanted them to focus on raising Christian children. And it is biblical to understand that the overwhelming vast majority of Christians are to focus primarily on having godly families. With that said, the peasants clearly should have been allowed and encouraged to do more.

Monasticism goes back to Anthony, whom we briefly mentioned in chapter 1. Anthony was not the first monk-type person to exist in the church, but he was the first to really separate himself from society, leading to the monastic movement. Anthony took the commands in the Bible to be separate from the world very, very seriously. Hence, he removed himself from society and went out into the desert to live alone with God. However, he understood that as Christians we are not to be completely severed from this world, otherwise we couldn't help people (especially God's people) as we are also commanded to do. Hence, he would often come into society to attend to the needs of people. He was known as an amazingly compassionate man who loved God deeply. He later came into contact with Athanasius when Athanasius was constantly being

banished. Athanasius was inspired by Anthony and eventually wrote a famous biography on him. This biography would spark the monastic movement.

Before moving forward, it must be said that some of the earliest Desert Fathers (mostly in North Africa), as they are often known, were problematic. Many of them engaged in the heresy of Mysticism (which we will discuss further down the line). The monastic movement was not always under the authority of the church at first, and so problems did occur. With that said, there were many early monks at this time who were trying to follow the example of Anthony while remaining orthodox.

Eventually, women joined the monastic movement and became known as nuns. Over time, the movement became more formalized. Monks began to live together in small communities known as monasteries, and nuns began to do the same in what became known as convents. In the Byzantine Church, the monks and nuns slowly began to fully submit themselves to the governance of the church, but there were generally not monastic orders as developed in the West.

One of the biggest turning points in the West was when an extremely godly man named Benedict came on the scene. He saw the need for more structure in the monastic movement and so in the 500's, at the beginning of the Middle Ages, he wrote a guidebook for monks and nuns. This became known as St. Benedict's Rule. From this developed the concept of a monastic order that was based upon a specific rule such as the one laid down by Benedict. Throughout most of the Early Middle Ages, most monks and nuns in the West became part of the Benedictine Order. It became standard for monks and nuns to take three vows. They were: the vow of poverty; the vow of chastity; and the vow of obedience. The vow of poverty stated that the monk or nun would own no property of his or her own. Everything was owned by the monastery or convent. The vow of chastity stated that the monk or nun would remain completely celibate for the rest of life. The vow of obedience stated that the monk or nun would be completely obedient to the church and the superiors at the monastery or convent unless commanded to do something that went against Scripture.

These vows were not really biblical. They were taking things too far as the Bible nowhere commands such vows to be made. Despite this error, which did cause huge problems down the line, God still honored the hearts of these wonderful Christians who

so desperately wanted to live and serve God with all of their beings. Later in the Middle Ages in the West, other monastic orders began to spring up, but we will discuss them down the line. For now, I again, cannot state more clearly how influential the monastic movement was throughout the Middle Ages, in both East and West.

Patrick and the Celtic Church

One of the greatest and most famous of the early monks was a man named Patrick. Patrick was from the lower part of what is today the United Kingdom during the 400's. This region was on the very northern outskirts of the Roman Empire. There were violent tribal groups that surrounded this area, and the Empire for the most part hated sending soldiers up there to keep the peace. Patrick was born to godly and wealthy Roman parents. But, as a teenager, he was kidnapped by warriors from one of these tribal groups and taken to Ireland as a slave. Patrick was not saved at this time and had been a very rebellious teenager (yes, this is not a new thing in our day). He was treated horribly and it was during this time that he cried out to the God his parents had taught him about. He was saved and radically changed. With God's help, he was able to escape and make it back home. He then became a monk, but felt like God was calling him to go back to preach the gospel in Ireland. This was very risky as he would not have the protection of Rome there. It is a true testament to God's providence that Patrick was not killed.

Over the remainder of Patrick's life, almost all of the Irish people, at least outwardly, accepted Biblical Christianity. And many seemed genuinely sincere in their faith. It is one of the most remarkable missionary stories in history. It is truly despicable that Patrick is most associated with a drunken holiday today. The Irish people at the time were part of the broader Celtic culture of the time. While much of this culture was extremely barbaric, this culture did have a true love and appreciation for nature and art. After the conversion of Ireland, the Irish people began to channel this love towards God. They had an immense appreciation for the beauty of God's creation and were deeply thankful to Him for it. They also produced some of the most beautiful Christian art in church history. The Celtic Cross is still a very popular symbol among many true

Christians today. All of this eventually led to the Celtic Church, which became a third branch on the Christian tree. The Latin and Byzantine Churches were no longer sub-branches within the overall Roman branch, but had become rather distinct branches. And since the Eastern branch had apostatized, they were the only two branches in the church until the full rise of the Celtic Church at the beginning of the Middle Ages.

Eventually the Celtic Church spread throughout much of the British Isles, and eventually the northern portion of the Isles (what is today Scotland) was converted by Columba and became part of the Celtic Church. The Celtic Church thrived until 664, when at the Synod of Whitby it was officially incorporated into the Latin branch. But, it never lost many of its original elements. After that point, there were again only two major branches in the church. Only this time, this would be the case for a very, very long time.

The Rise of Islam

If you do not know what Islam is, I recommend reading the brief summary of its history and teachings in my book on the world's religions. Islam came about in the late 500's, but really began to conquer huge chunks of land in the 600's. Islam had a profound effect upon the Christian church. At the time of the fall of the Roman Empire, the Latin Church was found throughout Southwest Europe, Central Europe, and much of Northern Europe. The Byzantine Church was found throughout much of the Middle East, and Greece was solidly a part of the Byzantine Church. Constantine made the city of Byzantium (this is where we get the term *Byzantine*), the new capital of the Eastern portion of the Empire. It was renamed after him and called Constantinople. It is located today in the very northwest tip of Turkey. It became the cultural center and capital of the Byzantine Empire after the fall of the Empire. In 537, the Hagia Sophia was built there as a massive church. It became the place where the biggest religious ceremonies were held in the Byzantine Empire. It still stands today, but is now an Islamic mosque.

The Muslims conquered all throughout the Middle East, North Africa, and what is today Portugal and Spain. Many Arians were killed or captured, but many true

Christians, both East and West, were as well. The Byzantine Empire was hit the hardest by far. The Muslims mercilessly and ruthlessly killed, conquered, and sold millions of Christians into slavery. The Muslims conquered all the way up to Constantinople in the East, and up to the Frankish Empire in the West. The Byzantine Empire was largely reduced to Constantinople and Greece. The Franks were primarily in what is today France, as stated earlier. The Byzantine Christians were able to hold off the Muslims in Constantinople and the Latin Christians were able to hold off the Muslims at the famous Battle of Tours. This battle was led by Charles Martel (king of the Franks), who was also known as “the Hammer.” It is hard to say whether or not he was a true Christian, but he was certainly quite the military leader and God used him mightily to protect His church throughout Western Europe.

One of the reasons it is so important to understand all of this is because far too often people today try to make out the Christians as the bad guys in the Crusades, and the Muslims as the good guys. The Crusades were ugly and will be discussed more later. But, for now it must be said that the church always felt an extremely strong sense of injustice regarding how the Muslims treated them during this time. The Crusades did not happen out of nowhere the way many people try to say today. They were largely a reaction to this brutal and completely unprovoked conquest by the Muslims.

None of this should be taken as anti-Islamic sentiment on my part. There is far too much of this in the church today, especially in our country. Islam is a false religion that leads people to hell. So, please don't get me wrong. With that made clear, that is true of *all* false religions. Most Muslims are good, hard-working, family oriented people. And even most Muslims at the time of this conquest were only doing what their leaders told them to do. And after the Muslims stopped advancing, they were responsible for bringing a great deal of civilization and culture to much of Africa and Asia. We need to love Muslims, pray for them, and preach the gospel to them as we have the opportunity. With all that said, the Muslims were not the completely innocent party during the Crusades. That is an overly simplified presentation of what actually happened.

Chapter 4: The Medieval Church Part 2

The Byzantine Church

As we have discussed, a lot of course changed (especially in the area of technology) over the one thousand year time span that made up the Byzantine Empire and Church. With that said, it is truly remarkable how much stayed the same throughout this era in the Byzantine Church. Things were far more different in the Western Church. This is why the Western Church must be broken down much further. For the Byzantine Church, we will look at seven key items. It is very important to note though, that the rise of Islam was a huge part of what took place during the Byzantine era, but we have already covered that.

Justinian I

Justinian I was the first major Emperor of the Byzantine Empire. He was not a godly man, but he did claim to be a Christian (like Constantine) and was used by God to firmly establish the Byzantine Empire. He skillfully consolidated the Eastern Empire and kept it from entirely falling apart as was the case in the West. If it was not for him it is highly unlikely the Byzantine Empire would have been as successful and lasted as long as it did. Justinian is part of a long line of rulers who were themselves not godly, but that God used for His purposes. He is early in that line, but we will see this line throughout this work. It may seem odd to us as true Christians that God would do this, but we know from His word that He does. King Cyrus is one key example of this. Many true Christians today say the same thing regarding Donald Trump. I have no problem with this, but I do think we should be more clear about the fact that he has shown no signs of true conversion. It should also be said that because of Justinian, the Byzantine Empire and the Byzantine Church were basically one. There were government officials and there were clergy, and they were clearly distinguished, but the church and the Empire worked together as one on everything.

Maximus the Confessor

Maximus was one of the last Church Fathers. He was a monk in the 600's in the Byzantine Empire. He fought against the Monothelite heresy. The Monothelite heresy arose as an extension of the Monophysite heresy. It technically had its roots in the late 400's, but it officially became a big problem in the early 600's. This group said that "Jesus" had only one will. This may sound like no big deal and hair-splitting, but it actually is a very big deal. If the human nature of "Jesus" did not have its own will, it would mean that "Jesus" did not have a full human nature, and that is heresy. It is true that the human will always submitted to the divine will, but the human will can never be identical with the divine will because the divine will is omniscient and infinite. Therefore, for example, when Jesus felt hunger, his soul would have initially willed to eat if there were no reasons for Him not to eat at the moment. But, the divine nature could have had good reasons for Him not to eat at that moment and would have revealed that to the human nature, which of course would have immediately submitted. This does not mean that the divine nature and the human nature talked to each other. That would mean that "Jesus" was two persons and that is the Nestorian heresy. But, the two natures did interact with each other on some level.

Further, we authoritatively know that Jesus had two wills from Scripture (Matthew 26:39; Mark 14:36; Luke 22:42). The fact that God made sure to record the fact that Jesus said these words three times, makes it clear that this is an essential doctrine of the faith. Some argue that Jesus is only distinguishing His will from the Father in these verses and so they cannot be used against the Monothelites. But, Jesus' divine will is one with the Father as they are the same God. This is also made plain in John 10:30.

Unfortunately, many in the Byzantine Empire, including many leaders in the Byzantine Church, actually embraced the Monothelite heresy. This does not mean that the Byzantine Church became a false church. This heresy was certainly not universally embraced at the time. But, enough leaders did embrace it that Maximus was persecuted for his stance. He ended up dying in this state of persecution. Later, the Byzantine Church, along with the Western Church, rightfully condemned the Monothelite heresy

and proclaimed Maximus a hero and Church Father. By the end of the 600's, the Monothelites had for the most part disappeared.

The Iconoclast Controversy

This controversy arose in the 700's within the Byzantine Empire. The Iconoclasts were those that were opposed to images in the church. The term *icon* was the term that was used in the Byzantine Church to describe holy images. The term is still used by Roman Catholics and Eastern Orthodox adherents to this day, although it is mostly associated with Eastern Orthodoxy. As a Historic Protestant, I have a lot of sympathy for the Iconoclasts. Images and devotion to them were becoming a huge problem in both the Byzantine and Western churches. And Historic Protestants have always said that we should either not use images in church at all or we should be very careful in regard to them. The problem with the Iconoclasts was that they often went way too far and articulated themselves in ways that sounded very Nestorian. I don't think all in the movement were heretics, but the movement overall was. The Byzantine Empire and Church eventually condemned them, but unfortunately, they did not clean up their act in regard to the abuse of images and the continued practice of praying to the "Saints." By the end of the 700's, most of the Iconoclasts were gone.

The Conversion of the Slavs

The Slavs were a group of people that mostly lived in what is today the southern countries of Eastern Europe and some of Russia. They had lived on the outskirts of the Roman Empire and were a very Pagan people. The Byzantine Empire and Church sent Cyril and Methodius to evangelize the Slavs in the late 800's. They allowed the Slavs to keep their language and also helped them establish the Slavic alphabet. This allowed Cyril and Methodius to be much more successful than earlier missionaries from the Western Church had been, because the Western missionaries insisted that only Latin be used to translate the Bible and in church services. Over time, the Slavic people became part of the Byzantine Empire and Church.

The Conversion of the Russians

The Byzantine Empire and Church also sent missionaries to Russia. And in 988, Vladimir, the ruler of the Russians, converted. With his conversion, the Russian people were brought into the Byzantine Empire and Church. Now of course many of the Russian people did not become true Christians overnight. But, culturally Russia became Christian and over time more and more Russians sincerely gave their lives to Jesus. Vladimir was not the most godly man, but saw converting to Christianity as advantageous to the Russian Empire. He may have been truly saved, his case is more debatable along the lines of Constantine. Either way, he is in that long line of rulers who were not terribly godly, but whom God used mightily nonetheless. Even though the Russians became part of the Byzantine Empire technically, they still remained fairly independent of it. This was why the Russian Empire continued after the fall of the Byzantine Empire.

With the conversion of the Slavs and the Russians, the Byzantine Empire and Church had grown exponentially. This was a huge encouragement to them, especially after the massive losses that took place during the rise of Islam.

The Sack of Constantinople

During the 4th Crusade, at the very beginning of the 1200's, Crusaders sacked the capital of the Byzantine Empire (Constantinople). The Western Church and the Byzantine Church had split apart from each other about 150 years earlier (they had been strongly distinguished from each other for much, much longer than that), and therefore many Western Christians felt justified in taking over the city during this crusade. This was one of the most despicable acts in church history, and it must be said that most of those that committed this act were probably not truly saved and the Western Church as a whole did not support this action. It is important to note that this did not lead to the doom of the Byzantine Empire. The Western Crusaders did not stay long and the Byzantine Empire was able to recover.

The Fall of the Byzantine Empire

The Byzantine Empire fell in 1453. Constantinople was conquered by the Muslims, specifically by the Ottoman Empire. Greece and the Slavic countries largely became struggling independent countries. The Russian Empire continued and in some ways became stronger. But, the longstanding Byzantine Empire was gone, never to return. However, the Byzantine Church continued. It became known as Eastern Orthodoxy. That term had been used before, but now it became the predominant term for this wing of the church.

The Early Middle Ages and the Latin/Western Church

Rise of the Papacy

The term *papacy* refers to the doctrine of the Pope. The term *Pope* comes from the Latin word for *father*. Over time, there developed a practice in the church of calling priests *father*. The Bishop of Rome over time began to be seen as the head of the Church in the West. So, he was seen as the supreme father of the church on earth, and was thus called *the Pope*. For a long time in the church, a doctrine had been developing that pastors were actually priests on some level. At first this was not heresy and seemed relatively harmless. After all, in the Old Testament there were the governmental leaders (the kings, elders, and judges), and the priests were in charge of the religious affairs. It was their job to teach the people God's word and to pray for them regularly. And they alone had the power to perform the symbolic rites God had commanded. Most, although not all, true Christians down through the ages have believed that the pastors alone have the right to perform the sacraments or ordinances. Therefore, there are clearly a lot of similarities between the Old Testament priests and the New Testament pastors. Even most Historic Protestants have always agreed with this.

Because of this, it didn't seem problematic to call pastors *priests*. The problem is that there is no clear evidence from the New Testament that this should be done. And

for good reason, because the priests' primary role was to offer the Old Testament sacrifices. Hence, over time in the church there developed the idea that the priests in the church must also have some sacrifice to offer. But, what could they possibly offer became the pressing question. Especially in the Western Church, a doctrine began to slowly develop that they offered up the sacrifice of Jesus in the Lord's Supper. Now to be fair to these theologians and to Roman Catholics today, they are (were) careful to say that Jesus cannot be sacrificed more than once. He was sacrificed once on the cross. It cannot be repeated. But what these theologians were saying, and what Roman Catholicism says today, is that the one unrepeatable sacrifice of Jesus is being re-presented again and again at the Lord's Supper. Therefore, many theologians also began to say that the bread and wine are miraculously changed into the body and blood of Jesus even though they remain looking, smelling, and tasting like bread and wine. This is what Roman Catholicism teaches today. Eventually church services were called *Mass*. So, the church began to call the Lord's Supper *the sacrifice of the Mass*. This doctrine was not full-blown heresy, but it was certainly very close. It was hotly debated for centuries in the Western Church, but eventually it became the formal doctrine of the West. And it remains so to this day in the Roman Catholic Church.

As this doctrine of priesthood was developing, it was developing alongside views of church government that were making that doctrine far more complicated than necessary (something we have already discussed). What was beginning to develop was the episcopal form of church government. You can read about that type of church government in my book *A Brief Look at the Denominations and Movements within Biblical Christianity Today* (chapter 2). In the early church, the bishops were seen as equals. They ruled over large geographical regions of the church. However, there also arose the position of *patriarch*. These were bishops that were seen to have what was known as a *primacy of honor*. This meant that they did not have any actual greater authority, but because they ruled over areas that were so prominent in the church from the earliest days, it was thought that the other bishops should listen to their opinions with special respect. There were five places where the position of patriarch existed. They were Jerusalem; Antioch; Alexandria; Constantinople; and Rome. All of these were in the East, with the exception of Rome. At first, this arrangement was not terribly

problematic. Over time however, Rome began to take greater and greater prominence in the West because it was the only bishopric in the West with a patriarch.

Despite what Roman Catholics will tell you today, no bishop of Rome ever claimed to have any sort of broader authority beyond Rome until Pope Damasus in the late 300's. His claims were largely ignored in the East, but the doctrine that the bishop of Rome had much broader authority beyond Rome itself only grew and grew for centuries in the West. By the time of Charlemagne in the 800's, whom we will discuss soon, the West was clearly saying that the bishop of Rome was the leader of the entire church. The East strenuously disagreed. Eventually, this controversy boiled over and the two major branches of the Christian tree fully broke off from each other. We will discuss that controversy down the line.

Another key element in the development of the papacy was the Vulgate that we discussed earlier. If you remember, that was the translation of the Bible into Latin done by Jerome. As the Western Church grew and expanded throughout Western and Northern Europe, fewer and fewer Christians spoke Latin. However, in order to consolidate power, the leaders in the Western Church began to say that the Vulgate was the only legitimate Bible and that church services needed to be in Latin as well. Now the priests did preach their sermons in the language of the people and would translate the Vulgate as best they could when reading it to the people. But, many of the prayers and sayings (especially in regard to the "sacrifice of the Mass") in the service were only to be in Latin. This, combined with the episcopal form of church government and the papacy, gave the Western Church a firm grip on the people of Western and Northern Europe.

Because of all of this, the clergy in the Western Church more and more began to be seen as the governmental leaders of the church. The priests primarily performed the church services, and even in these the focus more and more became on the "sacrifice of the Mass" itself. This was one of the key reasons why, especially in the West, that the monks and nuns were the ones who were doing the practical pastoral work of the church for the most part.

Conversion of the Franks

The Franks came from central Europe, mostly from what is today France. Despite being right in the center of the Roman Empire, they had never fully adopted Biblical Christianity and later rebelled against the Empire. In the early 500's, right after the collapse of the Roman Empire, the ruler of the Franks, Clovis I, outwardly converted to Christianity and brought his people into the Western Church. He himself was a very ungodly man, but he was yet another king in that long line of rulers who was personally not godly despite being used by God in big ways to advance His church. As was so often the case, many of the Frankish people were of course not truly converted overnight. Over time though, more and more Franks became true Christians.

Conversion of the Germans

In the early 700's, a man named Boniface went to evangelize the Germans. Most of the Germans who had converted to Arianism and had taken over most of North Africa and what is today Spain and Portugal, had been wiped out by the Muslims. Up in the German lands to the north, most of the people were either still Pagan or were Arian. Boniface boldly went and preached the gospel to the German peoples, and over the course of the 700's most of them became true Christians and an integral part of the Western Church.

The Venerable Bede

Despite the fact that the British peoples were part of the Roman Empire, many of them did not convert to Christianity even after it was made the official religion of the Empire. Now, many did as we saw with Patrick's family, but countless others remained Pagan all the way into the 700's. Therefore, in the late 500's, Pope Gregory I sent a number of monks to the British Isles to be missionaries to these people. Over time, the British people became strongly Christian alongside their Celtic Christian neighbors. In the early 700's, a wonderful monk named the Venerable Bede wrote a work of church history on the conversion of the English people. English Christians have always looked

back to this work with pride as a powerful testimony to God's plan in that part of the world.

The Rise of Charlemagne

In the year 800, Charlemagne was anointed the Emperor of the newly formed Holy Roman Empire by the Pope. This was a major event in church history because up until this time in the Middle Ages in the West, Western Europe had been a fractured mess since the collapse of the Roman Empire. This brought Western and much of Northern Europe together from a civil government perspective in a way that had only been the case in the Western Church among the people. This led to a long period of greater and greater civilization in Western and Northern Europe, known as the Carolingian Renaissance, that was begun by Charlemagne. This event also signaled the complete power that the Pope had in the Western Church. It was now universally recognized in the Western Church that the Pope had the power to reconstitute the old Roman Empire and to anoint the first new emperor. Remember though, the Byzantine Church and Empire already thought of itself as the continuation of the Roman Empire and so this move in the West only furthered the tensions between the two branches.

In the Western Church, this event led to the doctrine known as *Christendom*. The idea behind this doctrine is that God has ordained both governmental authorities and authorities in the church. Governments were obligated to join the church from a moral perspective whether they realized this or not. But, the church said that each of these spheres of authority (which they called the two swords) should stay independent of each other as much as possible. This was a very different doctrine than that which existed in the Byzantine Empire and Church. The two spheres were supposed to work together for the advancement of God's kingdom, but they were not supposed to interfere with each other needlessly. Because of this tension in the West, both of these spheres argued with each other even to the point of violence at times. This tension existed in the West all the way up to the time of the Reformation.

Charlemagne was a descendant of Charles Martel. If you remember, he was king of the Franks during the Muslim invasions and pushed them back at the famous Battle

of Tours. Charlemagne was another ungodly man that God used. He consolidated and civilized Western Europe in ways that were extremely helpful to the church. Unfortunately though, at times he used brutal tactics to deal with the many remaining Pagans scattered throughout Western and Northern Europe. Not every nation or region officially joined the Holy Roman Empire throughout the rest of the Middle Ages in the West. However, the church required all of them to work closely with the Holy Roman Empire as part of the doctrine of Christendom. The Holy Roman Empire was primarily made up of central Europe throughout the rest of the Middle Ages.

The Vikings

The Vikings came from Scandinavia, the most northern countries in Europe. They were thoroughly Pagan and were some of the best warriors and seamen in history. From around 800-1000, they mercilessly attacked and pillaged the people of Northern and Western Europe. Many Christians were raped, killed, or taken into slavery. Slowly over time though, the Vikings began to come to Christ and by 1100, the Scandinavian countries were part of the Western Church.

Doctrinal Developments

We have already discussed most of the doctrinal developments that took place during the Early Middle Ages. Most of them were negative. One of the only major positives was that the church fully clarified that Jesus had two wills. On top of the other negatives we have already covered, there were some other negatives as well. The doctrine of purgatory began to fully take shape in this era in the West. The Byzantine Church rejected this doctrine, but the Western Church more and more accepted it and clarified it. This doctrine states that after death, most Christians (not the "Saints") go to a place where they can be purified from the remaining sin within them before entering into heaven.

The next negative development was the continuation of the syncretism and Mysticism that we saw towards the end of the Ancient Church era. The term *syncretism*

refers to the blending of religions. We saw how this became a bigger and bigger problem at the tail end of the Ancient Church era after the Roman Empire officially adopted Biblical Christianity. This is not to say that syncretism did not exist before Constantine. It absolutely did. But, most of those who were blatantly syncretic were not part of the true church and really tended to not even be a part of any concrete heretical movement either. Most were simply Roman Pagans who dabbled with Christian beliefs. After Constantine, and especially after Theodosius, syncretism began to seep into the true church. And things became much, much worse throughout the Middle Ages in both of the major wings of the church. And it must be said that many were taking this to heretical lengths even if the church as a whole never embraced full heresy on this front.

Mysticism is the heretical doctrine that “god” not only reveals “his” word to “Christians” today through Scripture, but that “he” also does so through private mystical revelations and experiences. This may seem confusing for me to call this heresy when elsewhere in my writings I have said that some Christians do believe that other limited forms of revelation are also the word of God alongside Scripture. The difference is that these true Christians always say that these revelations must be interpreted by the Bible. “Christian” Mysticism says that the Bible must be interpreted in light of these so-called revelations. Mysticism was largely not something that took place outside of the church, but was a heresy that was practiced by far too many monks and nuns and was often ignored by the church. The church as a whole never embraced Mysticism, it merely ignored it as long as the Mystic monks and nuns did not get too vocal. Both syncretism and Mysticism were a huge problem in the church for the rest of the Middle Ages.

The church also began to add to the two sacraments or ordinances of Baptism and the Lord’s Supper. Most of the church settled on the idea that there are 7 sacraments total. Finally, the church began to more and more explain salvation in the way I described on pages 7-8. They also began to more and more tie it into their doctrine of the sacraments. At every point they were becoming more and more dangerously close to teaching a form of works salvation, especially in the West.

Heretical Movements

The heretical movements of this time were Monothelitism; the Iconoclasts; syncretism; and Mysticism. All of which we have already examined. Even though Monothelitism and the Iconoclasts were in the Byzantine Church, the subject of the previous subsection, it is still important to note them here as the Western Church still saw these groups as a threat to their churches as well. While the first two died out as we discussed, the last two are still very much alive and well today.

Great Christians

The great Christians of this era were Benedict (the founder of the Benedictine order), Columba, Maximus, John of Damascus, Boniface, the Venerable Bede, and Cyril and Methodius. We have already looked at all of these greats, with the exception of John of Damascus. He was a scholar in the Byzantine Church at the time of the Iconoclast controversy and he wrote against the Iconoclasts. He was the last of the Church Fathers. Maximus, John of Damascus, and Cyril and Methodius, were all technically part of the Byzantine Empire and not part of the Early Middle Ages in the West (the subject of this subsection). However, the church in the West recognized the greatness of all of these men.

Creeds and Confessions

No major creeds or confessions were written during this era. This is true for the Byzantine Church as well.

Chapter 5: The Medieval Church Part 3

The High Middle Ages and the Latin/Western Church

The East-West Schism

In 1054, after years of growing tensions between the Eastern Byzantine Church and the Western Latin Church, the two sides called each other heretics and split from each other. The split had to do with the Western doctrine of the papacy and a disagreement over a very abstract and difficult point concerning the doctrine of the Trinity. This was terribly sad because while both sides had many, many errors and problems in my strong opinion as a Historic Protestant, neither side was fully heretical. So you had brothers and sisters in Christ condemning each other and this is grave evil in the sight of God. To this day, the Roman Catholic Church believes that it is the only true church on earth, and Eastern Orthodoxy believes the same about itself.

Scholasticism

Very early on in the High Middle Ages in the Western Church, there became a real push for the Church to focus more on education. Unfortunately, at this time this was not seen as something that was to be universally applied to all Christians. However, there was a real push to see the theologians of the church become full scholars. The nuns had always been fairly educated compared to most women around the world, and the monks were very well read. Yet, the monks mostly were well read in the Bible and the works of the Church Fathers. The Church began to see the need for the theologians of the church to be well read in all of the academic subjects. Further, most of the theologians of the past had only written on a handful of Christian doctrines. Over the course of the history of the church up until this time, all Christian doctrines had been touched upon by one or more of the Church Fathers or great theologians of the past. But no theologian had tried to write upon all of them and tried to put them all together as much as possible. That began to change in the High Middle Ages in the West. This led to a number of universities being established and a number of full works of theology being written as well. This period became known as *Scholasticism*, and it began towards the early part of the High Middle Ages and lasted throughout this era.

There were a number of fantastic theologians during this time, but the two most prominent were Anselm and Thomas Aquinas. Thomas Aquinas was also one of the greatest apologists in Christian history.

The Crusades

In 1096, the first of many Crusades was launched. The Crusades were the attempt of the Western Church and the Holy Roman Empire to recover the land of Israel (often referred to as the Holy Land) from the Muslims. Because of the advancements from the Carolingian Renaissance, the High Middle Ages saw huge advancements in the development of castles and military tactics. Most people when they think of the Middle Ages are actually probably thinking about the High Middle Ages whether they realize this or not. This is when knights really began to look like the knights in movies. It is true that a lot of stupidity and sin took place during the Crusades as many rogue knights and soldiers often went astray and engaged in all manner of nonsense. For this reason, the Crusades are largely seen as a black eye on the church. And we have already discussed the disgusting capture of Constantinople.

With all of this said, it must be remembered that the Crusades were largely seen as justice for all of the atrocities Muslims had committed against Christians when Islam first came on the scene. It was further thought by the Christians that it was sacrilege for the Holy Land to be in possession of the Muslims, who had been so horrible to the church centuries earlier. Today, we of course know that none of this is justification for conquest when many of these horrible actions by Muslims happened centuries earlier. And the Crusades were all the worse because Islam had become fairly peaceful by this time. With all that made clear, the Christians at this time were products of their time and culture, and they did not attack the Muslims out of nowhere as is so often portrayed today.

The New Monastic Orders

We have already discussed the rise and huge importance of monasticism earlier in this work. We discussed how the Byzantine Church did not really have monastic orders for the most part. We further discussed how the Western Church mostly had the Benedictine Order throughout the Early Middle Ages. All of this began to change in the High Middle Ages. The Benedictine Order emphasized stability. They believed that the monks and nuns should spend most of their time in the monasteries or convents. The monks and nuns did often leave the monastery or convent to do the work of the church as we discussed earlier, but this was only one key part of their weekly regimen. In the High Middle Ages, a number of new monastic orders sprang up that emphasized mobility. They felt that most monks and nuns should spend much of their time outside of the monastery or convent doing the work of the church. This was especially true of the Franciscans.

The Franciscans were started by one of the most godly men to ever walk the face of the earth, Francis of Assisi. He was raised wealthy and spoiled in the Western Church, but was radically converted to Jesus. He spent the rest of his life preaching the gospel, ministering to the poor, and especially loving and ministering to lepers. He was joined by one of the most godly women to ever walk the face of the earth, Clare of Assisi. This work led Francis to start the Franciscan Order. Francis and Clare worked tirelessly among the people.

The two other major monastic orders that came to prominence during this time were the Dominicans and the Cistercians.

The Waldensians

The Waldensians were a group of Christians started by Peter Waldo in the late 1100's. They were the first seeds of the Protestant Reformation. Many people have the mistaken notion that the Reformation sort of came out of nowhere. This is not true. The seeds were planted by the Waldensians, those seeds germinated and grew with the Lollards and Hussites (whom we will discuss later), and then with Martin Luther things burst forth from the ground to become the full-fledged Protestant movement. The Waldensians did not challenge all of the Western Church doctrines that the later

Protestants did. However, they began to see the problems in the Western Church and broke off from it. For the first time since the Celtic Church, you had three major branches in the church. Despite teaching nothing heretical, the Waldensians were severely persecuted by the Western Church for the rest of the Middle Ages.

The Inquisition

The Inquisition is another reality where the church takes a lot of criticism, and to a large extent rightly so. The Inquisition was started in the 1100's, but really got steam in the 1200's. It would continue with varying degrees of intensity until around 1600. The goal of the Inquisition was to root out heretics and witchcraft from the Holy Roman Empire. Obviously today we know this is not ok. It must be remembered though, that very few societies around the world at this time believed in a separation or extremely strong distinction between religion and general society. Almost all societies had rules and punishments against religions they deemed to be dangerous. It is not entirely fair to impose our highly developed sense of religious freedom upon previous ages. Further, there are a lot of commands in the Old Testament about rooting out idolatry and witchcraft, even to the point of the death penalty. Therefore, as unpopular as it is to hear in our day, these Christians were actually trying to be biblical and took heresy and witchcraft very seriously, as does the Bible.

There is no question that abuses took place and at times things got pretty out of control. There is also no question that there were sick people who used the Inquisition for vengeful or deviant reasons. With that said, most of the inquisitors genuinely tried to get witches and heretics to repent and rejoin the church. Most felt a great deal of sadness when anyone ended up being handed over to be executed. And while there were many false accusations that took place during this time from evil people, the fact is that both witchcraft and heresy became a big problem in the latter part of the High Middle Ages. Paganism had never been completely rooted out of Europe. And many people were still secretly practicing it, and often this took the form of engaging in practices associated with witchcraft. And during this time, a huge heretical group rose up in France. This group was known as the Cathars. We will discuss them more soon.

But, they were very aggressive in their evangelism efforts, and many people joined their religion. They created a great deal of confusion for many true Christians.

Doctrinal Developments

There were not a great deal of doctrinal developments during this time other than clarifying long established doctrines. A great deal of clarifying did take place during this era because of Scholasticism. Both biblical doctrines and unbiblical doctrines received greater and greater clarification. One very notable exception to this was in the area of Mary, the mother of Jesus. Mary had been overly exalted going all the way back to the early church. As the church began to teach that it is good to pray to the “Saints,” the church also began to say that she is the supreme “Saint” because she was the mother of our Lord. Early on, the church also began to insist that Mary remained a virgin after the birth of Christ despite many passages in the Bible that certainly seem to teach otherwise. And during the High Middle Ages, new Marian doctrines began to be pushed as well.

The first was that a new prayer to Mary was established. This prayer was (and still is) known as the *Hail Mary*. It became an obsession in the Western Church and remains so in the Roman Catholic Church to this day. The second new doctrine was what is known as the *Immaculate Conception*. This doctrine basically states that Mary was made sinless from the moment of her conception. To be fair, it does not state that she does not need a Savior. It clearly says that Mary would have been a normal sinner like the rest of us, but that God through the work of Jesus preemptively cleansed her from all sin from the moment of her conception. It is important to note that the Byzantine Church rejected this doctrine, and that not all in the Western Church accepted it either. Thomas Aquinas firmly wrote against it. However, what is clear is that the entire church other than the Waldensians, the Lollards, and the Hussites (we will discuss the Lollards and Hussites soon) became more and more idolatrous in its devotion to Mary throughout the rest of the Middle Ages. After the Reformation, this idolatry only became worse and worse in both Roman Catholicism and Eastern Orthodoxy, especially in the former.

Heretical Movements

The primary major heretical movement that developed during this era was the Cathars in France in the 1100's. The Cathar religion was basically a medieval revival of Gnosticism. They did not hold to every detail of Gnosticism and they did not call themselves by that label, but they did believe in two supreme "gods," one who was good and one who was evil. They further taught that "Jesus" did not have a physical body and thus was not physically resurrected. Many other details could be given about this false religion, but that suffices to show how deeply out of bounds they were from a biblical perspective. They were pretty much gone by 1400.

Great Christians

Some of the outstanding Christians of this era were Anselm; Bernard of Clairvaux; Peter Waldo; Francis of Assisi; Clare of Assisi; and Aquinas. We have already looked at each of these except for Bernard of Clairvaux. He was a famous Cistercian monk who wrote beautifully on love for God.

Creeds and Confessions

No major creeds or confessions were written during this era. This is true for the Byzantine Church as well.

The Late Middle Ages and the Latin/Western Church

The Renaissance

The Renaissance of the Late Middle Ages is what people usually think of when they think of "Renaissance." This particular Renaissance is not to be confused with the Carolingian Renaissance. Unlike the Carolingian Renaissance, which took a long time

to fully develop and was heavily slowed by the Viking invasions, this Renaissance exploded onto the scene in the early 1300's and marked the period of the Late Middle Ages in Northern and Western Europe throughout. It fed off of all of the developments that had taken place from the Carolingian Renaissance and Scholasticism. However, unlike Scholasticism which primarily looked back to ancient philosophers for further knowledge and wisdom, especially Aristotle, it was trying to recover and refine the art, architecture, commerce, and literature from across the spectrum in antiquity. This led to a giant boom in art; architecture; business; poetry; military tactics; and education throughout the entire society. More and more peasants began to move into cities with more opportunities beyond farming. This was the period of the massive and ornately decorated (both within and without) cathedrals of Western and Northern Europe. This was the period when Dante wrote his famous *Divine Comedy*. This was the age of the famous artists Donatello; Raphael; Giotto; Leonardo Da Vinci; and Michelangelo (he painted the Sistine Chapel). This was an age of great food and entertainment as well. This was the age of the famous jousting tournaments.

A lot of this was good and made the lives of people throughout Western and Northern Europe better. However, underneath all of this was a growing philosophy known as *Humanism*. At first, the theologians and philosophers of this age said that they were simply trying to elevate humans to their rightful dignity as the image of God. The problem was that as humans more and more became the focus, God became the focus less and less. Slowly this led to a great deal of corruption and moral decay, so that by the end of this period, on the eve of the Reformation, the Western Church was as bad as any branch of the church has ever been.

The Black Death

The Black Death refers to the coming of the Bubonic Plague upon Northern and Western Europe during this time. The Bubonic Plague was a horrible disease that ravaged whole cities. It killed at least one-third of Western and Northern Europe, and some historians believe that the numbers are actually closer to one-half.

The Great Western Schism

The Great Western Schism refers to when the Western Church could not always decide on who exactly was Pope. Further, often some of those who claimed to be Pope were not even in Rome, but were ruling from the city of Avignon in France. All of this caused a tremendous amount of arguing, division, and confusion among Christians throughout the Western Church.

The Lollards

The Lollards were started by John Wycliffe in the 1300's. He was an English theologian and was the next major figure after Waldo to push the church in the direction of what would become Protestantism. Wycliffe was a brilliant scholar who fought tirelessly through his writings against the unbiblical teachings and corruption of the Western Church. He also translated the Bible into English for the common people. Many have the mistaken notion that common Christians had no way of reading or hearing the Bible in the Middle Ages. This is not correct. First of all, many true Christians became monks or nuns primarily so that they could learn Latin in order to read the Bible. And true Christians among the peasants that chose not to become monks or nuns would often go to a priest or monk or nun and have him or her read and translate the word of God to them. God always provides the word for His children. With that said, this was a very inconvenient way to receive the word. And many true Christians did not get enough of it because of this fact. Wycliffe saw this problem and sought to address it. The Western Church despised him for it.

Because Wycliffe had strong political connections, he was protected throughout his lifetime and was able to write and grow his movement for years. After his death, the Western Church dug up his remains, burned them, and dumped them into a river. The Lollards then began to experience persecution from the Western Church.

Joan of Arc

Joan of Arc was one of the most godly and amazing Christian women ever to live. She was a peasant girl who was passionately devoted to Jesus from a very young age. She lived in France in the early 1400's. She lived at a time when the English were terribly corrupt and oppressive. The English often attacked and treated the French horribly. Look at how the English treated Wycliffe and the Lollards. France was hardly perfect by any means, but there were a lot more faithful Christians there at the time than there were in England. And I believe that Joan of Arc was used by God to punish the English for their treatment of Wycliffe. Despite being a teenage peasant girl, Joan was insistent that God had called her to lead the French armies to defeat and humiliate the English. Obviously at first most thought she was delusional. But her faith was unwavering and she persevered and eventually she did fulfill her calling. There were times where she was so feared that the English would not even fight back, but would allow her to walk into a French city that had previously been taken by the English. She was eventually captured by the English and charged with heresy and burned at the stake, even though she held to no heretical teachings. As she burned, she cried out to Jesus, the Savior she so dearly loved and worshiped.

The Hussites

John Hus followed in the footsteps of Waldo and Wycliffe. He lived in Bohemia in the 1400's. Bohemia was a region on the eastern borders of Western Europe and was part of the Western Church. He fervently preached against the growing problems in the Western Church and he gained a huge following that became known as *the Hussites*. Almost all of Bohemia ended up joining him. Eventually, the Western Church burned him at the stake. As he burned, he sang hymns unto God.

The Printing Press

In the mid-1400's, a man named John Gutenberg invented the printing press. This invention changed society along the lines of what we have seen with the internet in our day. It was absolutely revolutionary. Before the printing press, books and the Bible

had to be hand-copied. This was a very long and difficult process, and was very prone to mistakes in the text. The printing press allowed books to be printed by a machine. This allowed for the printing of hundreds of books and copies of those books in a very short period of time. It also greatly reduced the amount of mistakes. One of the primary reasons Martin Luther would be so successful in the next century was because of this invention.

The Conquest of Spain

If you remember, we discussed earlier how the land that is today Spain and Portugal had been taken by the Muslims. Towards the end of the 1400's, Spain was conquered and the Muslims were kicked out. Spain became part of the Western Church and would play a key role in the events that took place in the Reformation period.

Girolamo Savonarola

Savonarola was an Italian preacher who followed in the footsteps of Waldo, Wycliffe, and Hus. He was a fiery preacher against the corruption that was becoming so out of control throughout the Western Church. He did not start a movement because he was burned before he could do so. But, he was a huge inspiration to the Reformers, along with the great men just mentioned who went before him.

Christopher Columbus

Towards the end of the 1400's and the end of the Middle Ages, Columbus set out on the ocean. There are a lot of stupid myths out there that Europeans thought the world was flat and Columbus set out to try to prove them wrong. This is sheer nonsense. Europeans had known that the world was round for centuries. What was debated was whether or not one could sail all the way around the world to India and China. Columbus thought one could and set out to do so. But, he ended up finding the Americas. Columbus was not a godly man even though he gave lip service to Jesus. He

and many of his men treated many of the American Indians terribly. It is still very important to make note of him here though, because God would soon bring the gospel to the Americas.

Doctrinal Developments

There were not very many doctrinal developments during this time. Mostly what happened was that the problematic doctrines of the church were further clarified and emphasized. The church was truly straying very far from the Bible. There was one key exception. And this was the doctrine of indulgences. This doctrine had existed in minor and germ forms well before the Late Middle Ages. But it really came into its own during this era. The Western Church taught that when Christians sin after their baptism, there is a twofold punishment that is required. The first is the eternal punishment in hell. The Western Church taught that this was completely satisfied by Jesus on the cross. The second was a temporal punishment. And the Western Church taught that it was the job of the church to give out these punishments through the priests. This is why Christians in the West had to go to the priests to confess their sins. And the Western Church began to say that one could give money to the church as a substitution for the temporal punishment deserved. These payments were known as indulgences. Over time, the Western Church began to abuse this already very unbiblical doctrine in order to enrich the leadership of the church. The Byzantine Church rightfully rejected this doctrine.

Heretical Movements

No major heretical movements developed during this era. This is true for the Byzantine Church as well. It should be said though, syncretism and Mysticism remained major problems.

Great Christians

Some of the most outstanding Christians of this era were Wycliffe, Joan of Arc, Hus, and Savonarola. We have already looked at each of them.

Creeds and Confessions

No major creeds or confessions were written during this era. This is true for the Byzantine Church as well.

Chapter 6: The Reformation Church Part 1

Introductory Remarks

I cannot be more emphatic when I say that the Protestant Reformation of the 1500's was the greatest work of God after the completion of the Bible took place. Obviously, God has done greater works than the Reformation. We read about many of them in the Bible, most especially the work of Jesus Himself. With that made clear, after God wrapped up the Bible, from that time forward until today, no work of God has been so mighty as the Protestant Reformation, not even close. It is truly a shame that most Bible-believing Christians today do not know anything or very much about the Reformation. Many look back to the Great Awakening or to the events surrounding the beginnings of the Pentecostal movement instead. While a tremendous amount of good things came from these events, there were also a lot of problems associated with them as well. There were of course problems with the Reformation also, but the problems associated with the Great Awakening and the Pentecostal movement were far greater and deeper.

The church as a whole at the end of the Middle Ages was as bad as it had ever been. Corruption, scandal, and immorality were rampant. Bad doctrine had become out of control, especially in the West. The church was on the verge of embracing all out heresy as Mary had basically been made into a "goddess," and the gospel that we are

saved by grace alone through faith alone was almost non-existent. Things were far better in the Byzantine Church to be fair, but even there a horrible staleness of going through the motions had taken over much of that wing of the church. There were now five basic branches in the church: the Byzantine or Eastern; the Western or Latin; the Waldensians; the Lollards; and the Hussites. But the latter three, despite being very godly and sound overall, had been severely persecuted and suppressed. And even they were not as clear on the gospel as they should have been.

The Reformation era lasted only 100 years, from 1500-1600. Because Bible-believing Christians were protesting against the two main branches of the church, especially the West, they eventually became known as *Protestants*. These Christians actually first preferred the title *Evangelical*, but their enemies called them Protestants and by the end of the century the name had stuck and became the more prominent title used of them and by them for themselves. Over the century of the Reformation, Protestants walked passionately with God; read and studied their Bibles with zeal; preached the gospel throughout Northern and Western Europe; loved and helped the hurting as best they could; and boldly endured unimaginable persecutions. Many were imprisoned; tortured; slandered; killed in battle; or burned at the stake. But, like we saw with the early church, the move of the Holy Spirit could not be stopped.

During this time, the Western Church began to really emphasize itself as the Catholic Church. This title had been used for many centuries already, but usually alongside other titles. This was now becoming the primary title the Western branch was using for itself. Therefore, from here forward, I will be referring to the Western branch as the Catholic Church. By the end of the century, the Catholic Church was also often referring to itself as the *Roman Catholic Church*. This was to emphasize the fact that they were in submission to the Pope in Rome in distinction from the Protestants and the Byzantine Church. Because of the fall of the Byzantine Empire at the end of the Middle Ages, the Byzantine Church began to more and more call itself the *Eastern Orthodox Church*. Again, this title had been around well before this, but it became the primary title because the Byzantine Empire no longer existed.

The Protestants mostly fought against the Catholic Church because the Reformation started and first spread in that region. The Protestants only fought against

Eastern Orthodoxy indirectly as they did not have very much contact with Eastern Orthodox adherents. With that made clear, the Eastern Orthodox Church certainly took notice of the Reformation and refused to adopt it or even at least receive any correction from it. The Eastern Orthodox Church did not formally condemn the Reformation as would the Catholic Church go on to do later in the 1500's, but they were quite clear in rejecting many of the individual doctrines of the Reformation. On the specific point of the gospel, which was the most important element of the Reformation, the Eastern Orthodox Church as a whole remained relatively silent. However, most of the theologians and leaders in that organization condemned the gospel of God as heresy. Therefore, indirectly, by allowing these theologians and leaders to be so clear in their rejection of the gospel, the Eastern Orthodox Church as a whole rejected the gospel and still does so to this day. Most of the Waldensians, Lollards, and Hussites joined Protestant churches during the 1500's.

The Great Reformers Part 1

Katharina von Bora

Katharina von Bora was the wife of Martin Luther. She was truly the unsung hero of the Reformation. Make no mistake about it, none of the other Reformers would have been able to do what they did without Martin Luther. And Martin Luther would not have been able to do what he did without Katharina von Bora. While Luther got the Reformation started before marrying her, they married shortly after in 1525. Luther died in 1546, 21 years later. During those 21 years, Luther strengthened the Reformation and gave inspiration to the other Reformers throughout Europe. And he would not have been anywhere close to as successful as he was without Katharina. And I don't mean this in the sense of the old saying, "Behind every great man, there is a great woman." That statement is certainly true, and Katharina was without question a wonderful wife and mother, but I am saying much more than this with Katharina. Many of the other Reformers had wonderful wives who were also wonderful mothers. But, they were not on par with Katharina in other areas.

Katharina was a brilliant woman who knew the Scriptures. She also possessed far more common sense than your average person. Luther had the utmost respect for her as a fellow intellectual and student of the Bible. Luther and Katharina were given a huge house for their big family and they also used it to house traveling Protestants. Luther would sit with these travelers for hours, helping them better understand the Scriptures. And Katharina would often join them as well. And Luther could be a difficult man as he got older. His tireless work took its toll on him, and he struggled with depression. Katharina was the one who always got him through his most difficult times. After Luther died, Katharina often had to flee from Catholic persecutors. She could have easily recanted her faith and surrendered to them, but she refused to do so, trusting in the one true God alone. These persecutors never captured her and she eventually died in an accident. I have no doubt that she received a hero's welcome when she entered heaven.

Martin Luther

Martin Luther was the father of Protestantism and the Lutheran branch of the Christian tree. He was born in Germany at the end of the 1400's. As a young adult, after a series of dramatic events, he became a monk in an attempt to save his soul. Luther was tormented in his soul by the fact that he clearly saw that the Bible said that the only way to fulfill the law of God was to do so perfectly. Luther knew though, that he was far from perfect. No matter how much his Catholic peers tried to explain to him that he didn't need to actually be perfect, he could not get around the many passages in the Bible that say otherwise. Eventually, in 1515, Luther fully rediscovered the gospel after it had been glossed over for almost all of church history. He saw that being saved by faith alone did not mean that God would make sure we would be saved if we had faith. He saw that it meant receiving salvation in its entirety as a free gift by faith alone. He saw that Jesus had perfectly fulfilled the law of God in our place. Once he discovered this, he gave his life to Christ and was truly saved. He was overwhelmed by the peace of God.

At first, Luther did not see himself as a revolutionary figure at all. He was merely overjoyed by his new understanding of the fullness of the gospel. He started out by teaching this to his few students (he had become a university professor on top of being a monk). Things only started to really heat up for him on the public stage when the vile John Tetzel came to town. Tetzel had been commissioned by the Pope to sell as many indulgences to the people as possible in order to pay for the Pope's new and highly expensive project, St. Peter's Basilica (which still stands in Rome as a key monument in the Roman Catholic Church). He was a masterful salesman and was causing poor people all over Germany to give far more money than they could afford.

This enraged Luther and in 1517 he wrote and posted his 95 Theses on the Wittenberg Church door. The theses were not only written against Tetzel, but against the entire doctrine of indulgences. They caused a huge firestorm in Germany and officially launched the Protestant Reformation (even though it was of course not called that at first). Normally someone like Luther would have been burned at the stake fairly quickly and his writings burned and banned. Who knows how many other courageous people like Luther stood up for the full gospel before him. Thankfully, in God's providence, a number of German princes sided with Luther and so he was given protection. Unlike Wycliffe before him though, who only had protection in a small part of England, Luther gained the protection of a number of German princes throughout huge swaths of Germany. Luther took full advantage of this and began writing other works defending the full gospel. Between this protection and the printing press, the Reformation spread rapidly throughout Germany as more and more people were truly giving their lives to Jesus.

And because of the doctrine of Christendom, the Pope could not execute princes so easily. And because of the princes, he could not execute Luther without a full trial. And this trial finally came in 1521 at the Diet of Worms. I know that name sounds very odd in English, but *Worms* was a German city and *diet* was another word for a formal assembly of the Empire. Charles V was the Holy Roman Emperor at the time and he summoned this assembly in order to deal with Luther. He promised the princes, who were subordinate to him but who nonetheless had a great deal of power, that Luther would be given safe conduct to and from the trial. The princes agreed so that they did

not look rebellious and because they thought they could continue to protect Luther once he was back in Wittenberg. Charles felt confident that Luther would be condemned of heresy and he could then put immense pressure on the princes to hand Luther over to be executed once back in Wittenberg. So, at the behest of the princes, Luther set out for Worms.

On the first day of the trial, Luther was examined and became very nervous. Luther was no coward, but being before the Emperor and so many other powerful people was extremely intimidating. He also knew that this trial would probably eventually lead to his death. But, what scared Luther the most was the possibility that he may have been wrong. How had no other great theologians seen what he saw before? What if he really was a heretic and God was using this trial to deal with him? What if he had been misleading the people in his zeal? Luther asked for more time and the Emperor granted it to him. Luther was told that he must answer the next day. That night Luther poured out his soul unto God and experienced intense spiritual warfare. But God reminded him that often even the best of God's people don't see the fullness of God's truth. Many kings in ancient Israel would often repent and return the people back to God, but still not destroy all of the Pagan high places as they should have done. And Luther realized that the church had always taught faith alone on some level and that many recent great teachers (especially Hus) had gotten very close to understanding the fullness of the gospel. And at the end of the day, the passages on faith alone were so clear that Luther knew he was not wrong. God had given him peace and courage.

The next day at the trial, Luther boldly refused to recant his writings and theology. He gave one of the most famous speeches in Christian history, saying that Popes and church councils were under the authority of the Bible and not the other way around. Luther was condemned as a heretic and in so condemning him the Catholic Church was condemning the gospel itself. The accusers of heresy had become the heretics without realizing it. Later at the Council of Trent (which we will discuss soon), the Catholic Church did not only condemn Luther, it officially and formally condemned the entire Protestant Reformation, the greatest move of the Holy Spirit in church history. It had become a false church and true Christians started leaving it in droves to join the Protestants. The German princes did not trust the Emperor to keep his word, and so

they had Luther secretly kidnapped and taken to a castle. There Luther was kept safe and translated the Bible into German in the spirit of Wycliffe who had translated the Bible into English for the common people. One key difference though, was that Wycliffe had translated from the Vulgate. The Vulgate was an excellent translation, but it had its problems. Luther used the original Hebrew of the Old Testament, and the original Greek of the New Testament for his translation.

Eventually, Luther returned to Wittenberg and in 1525 married Katharina. They went on to have a large family together, and jointly they worked tirelessly to further the Reformation throughout Europe. A brilliant scholar and theologian by the name of Philip Melanchthon became Luther's chief disciple. He went on to write the Augsburg Confession, which we will discuss down the road. Luther died in 1546 and Melanchthon was the primary leader who carried on the work of the Reformation in Germany.

Despite Luther's unquestioned greatness, he was far from perfect and was a man of his day. The most notable flaw of Luther was his views towards the Jews, which developed towards the end of his life. In order to fully put this in context, it is important to explain the long and often difficult relationship that existed between Jews and Christians from the beginning.

During Jesus' day, the Jewish people were ruled by a number of different groups. Within Judaism itself, the two most prominent groups by far were the Pharisees and the Sadducees. The Sadducees were the priests and the Pharisees were the teachers of the law. The Pharisees believed that God's law consisted of two key parts. The first was Scripture and was seen as the written law of God. This aspect most specifically included the law of Moses. The second key part according to them was the oral law. This was based on centuries of oral tradition that had developed within Judaism and had been formalized by the Pharisees. Jesus opposed both of these groups vigorously. He especially rejected the oral law of the Pharisees.

After the death, resurrection, and ascension of Christ, Jews and Christians continued to have a lot of tension between each other going back to the arguments Jesus had with these groups. In the year 70 however, things really changed. This is when the Romans destroyed Jerusalem and burned the Temple to the ground. Because of this reality, all of the various Jewish leadership groups evaporated, other than the

Pharisees. The term *rabbi* means *teacher*. The Pharisees had been the teachers of Israel and they continued this practice, only after 70 they became the only leaders. This gave them a dominance over Jewish life that did not exist before 70, even though before that date they still had a lot of power and influence. Of all the groups that Jesus argued with the most within Judaism, the Pharisees were at the top of the list. Therefore, the antagonism between the Jews and Christians was unfortunately off the charts after the year 70.

You may be saying to yourself about now, “Ok, but aren’t we as Christians supposed to love our enemies?” Absolutely. This is why many Christian nations throughout Europe often allowed the Jews to live in their countries, because the Jews often had nowhere else to go. The problem was that any notion of freedom of religion was very foreign to Christians, Jews, and Muslims at this time. Hence, both sides felt that it was important for the two groups to be kept apart from each other. So, the Jews tended to live in one area apart from other Christian villages. As you can imagine, because the Jews were so much fewer than the Christians in these Christian nations, they often did not have enough resources. And both sides often still preached against one another to their people at church and at synagogue. Therefore, often cultural Jews and cultural Christians did not behave very well towards each other. And because the Christians so vastly outnumbered the Jews in Christian countries, persecution of the Jews did take place. It is important to note though, that often this persecution was condemned by the church and Christian leaders. In many cases, “Christians” were brought to trial for these crimes. With that said, the church often did not do nearly enough to stop these persecutions, and unfortunately often felt that the Jews were ungrateful for the kindness shown to them in allowing them to live in Christian countries.

Over many centuries of this conflict, often rumors and stereotypes towards the Jews developed that even many church leaders started to believe. This was truly disgusting because most of these have been thoroughly debunked by later historians. But, many true Christians who otherwise tried to love the Jewish people however they could, began to fear the Jews and felt that they were out to hurt Christians. And it must be said, that while the vast majority of these rumors and stereotypes were false, many

Jewish leaders were pretty harsh in their rhetoric towards Jesus and Christianity, something that was not always cool or wise, especially within Christian countries.

Things got really bad when the church said that Christians could not charge interest towards other Christians, but that Jews could charge interest towards Christians. If you don't know what interest is, this is when someone loans someone else money but says that the borrower must pay back the lender what is owed plus some extra. So, if John lends Jack five dollars and says that Jack needs to pay back six dollars, John has charged Jack one dollar in interest. Or another way of putting it, and this is usually how interest is calculated, John charged Jack 20% in interest. This is because 1 dollar is 20% of 5 dollars, the amount that was loaned to Jack. Usually interest percentages are much lower than 20%, but you get the idea.

This may sound like a bizarre move by the church, but the Bible is very clear that Christians are not to charge interest to other Christians. The problem is that societies need lenders in order to function. This is because individuals cannot always loan people the large sums of money that they need. Therefore, lenders can be instrumental in helping societies move forward. People and businesses can get the large sums of money they need, which helps them be more successful in the long term, and the lenders make good money from the process as well from the interest. Everyone wins. The problem is that lenders can often take advantage of people and so they do need to be regulated by governments.

Where the church really blew it is that the Bible nowhere condemns companies or organizations, such as banks, from charging interest, even if those banks are fully run by Christians and are charging individual Christians interest. What the Bible is clearly condemning is an individual brother in Christ charging interest on another brother in Christ who is in need. That is evil. We should loan whatever we can to our brothers and sisters in Christ when they ask us. And we certainly should not charge them extra for this. But, because the church so feared the commands against charging interest, they felt that Christians could never charge interest in any sense, even organizations or banks run by Christians. So, they felt the solution was to allow the Jews to be the lenders. The problem was that in many parts of Europe, many Jews were getting very rich from this practice because they were the only ones allowed to charge interest. Now,

this was certainly not universal. Most Jews were still very poor and disadvantaged. And the church eventually was not always very consistent with this doctrine and later allowed Christian bankers. But, enough Jews became wealthy from this that it produced deep resentments among a lot of the Christian population, even among very true Christians. And with the already existing deep tensions, this only made things much, much worse over time.

When Luther started the Reformation, tensions between the Jews and Christians were at an all-time high. This is because most “Christians” in Germany at this time were cultural Christians. This is why so many people were saved and joined the Protestants as the Reformation really got rolling. Luther himself felt very badly for the Jews and how they had been treated for so long. He felt strongly that if the fullness of the gospel was preached to them, many of them would come to Jesus in fulfillment of biblical prophecy. Unfortunately, this did not happen. Very few Jews in Germany converted. Over time, this deeply hurt and frustrated Luther and he began to see them as a cursed people in fulfillment of Matthew 27:24-26.

To be very clear, Luther never advocated for Jews to be persecuted by individual Christians. And there is zero evidence that Luther himself was ever mean to any Jew he encountered. Luther hated vigilante justice and often wrote very fiercely against it. But in a work he wrote very late in life, he did advocate for the government expelling the Jews from Germany, as Germany in his mind was becoming a pure Protestant nation. Many people have taken a lot of what he says in this book out of context. Many have said that Luther advocated killing the Jews or actively persecuting them within Germany. He did not say that they should be killed and while he did say that synagogues should be burned down, he mostly desired that they be removed from Germany. Don't get me wrong. This was a despicable book that Luther wrote. He was still a sinner. But Luther was a product of his time and felt that the Jews should be treated like idolaters were treated in the Old Testament. As you can probably imagine, Hitler later appealed to Luther's views on the Jews and grossly exaggerated them, but used this to great effect. Luther is a hero for bringing back to the church the fullness of the gospel, but this part of his legacy is truly very sad. Thankfully, the German government did not listen to him and he died shortly after writing this evil book.

Chapter 7: The Reformation Church Part 2

The Great Reformers Part 2

Ulrich Zwingli

Zwingli was a priest in Switzerland before he came to truly know Jesus and joined the Reformation. He led a passionate group of Protestants in the city of Zurich. He was protected by the town leaders and so he was able to continue his work there for a very long time. Eventually, the Catholics came for Zurich and Zwingli joined the soldiers and died fighting alongside them.

John Calvin

Calvin was a Frenchman who studied law until he truly received Jesus and joined the Reformation. He did most of his work in Geneva. Geneva is a city in Switzerland right on the border between Switzerland and France. Because more and more of Switzerland was adopting the Reformation due to the influence of Luther and Zwingli, Geneva tentatively did as well. However, there were a lot of people in Geneva that did not go along with this change and the city was rampant with corruption. Calvin was called to lead the city and did so for a very long time. He was often harassed and persecuted by enemies of the Reformation in Geneva. Yet, he kept his head down and kept pressing on and Geneva became a beacon for Protestantism. Calvin went on to write *The Institutes of the Christian Religion*. This work is a monumentally distant second to the Bible of course, but it is nonetheless, in my strong estimation, the greatest written work of all time after the Bible. All knowledgeable Conservative Evangelicals recognize Calvin as one of the greatest theologians of all time, and many (including myself) believe him to be the greatest of all time by far. No one, in my strong opinion, so

thoroughly studied the Scriptures and allowed them to speak for themselves, and wrote so extensively on the teachings of the Bible than did Calvin. He died of health issues as a middle-aged man, but his legacy on Protestantism cannot be overstated.

Before plowing forward, I do want to quickly address the controversial title *Calvinist*, since it is so associated with John Calvin. Many great theologians had held to many of the doctrines of grace before him, but he was the first to fully develop all five, although even he was not always completely clear on limited atonement. Because of this, many Reformed people became known as *Calvinists*. The term *Reformed* goes back to the original Reformed movement at the beginning of the Reformation. The Reformed were first led by Ulrich Zwingli; John Calvin; William Tyndale; and many others. They were called this in order to distinguish themselves from the Lutherans. They felt that despite Luther's unquestioned greatness, he was pretty off on some key points, especially his doctrine of the Lord's Supper. Hence, they saw themselves as taking the Reformation forward. Later this movement became the Continental Reformed, and the Anglicans, Presbyterians, and Puritans all branched off from the original Reformed movement despite remaining Reformed in doctrine in the sense of holding to the doctrines of grace. This is why those who remained committed to the doctrines of grace were still known as *Reformed*, in the older sense of the term, and still are to this day. And the other title that was also often used for them, and still is, is *Calvinist*.

The problem with this title is that it can sound like Calvinists are following a sinful man, rather than Christ alone. This is why most Reformed people do not like the term all that much, and much prefer to be called *Reformed*. The title was largely first used by the theological opponents of the Reformed, and that is important to note because they were not followers of John Calvin strictly speaking. At the same time, they had the utmost respect for Calvin. They believed he was the greatest theologian of all time. But, he was often wrong on certain things, and he was a sinful man, and the Reformed were quite clear about this. So, on the one hand, they felt that if they overly distanced themselves from the term it could seem like they were ashamed of their connection to Calvin, or worse, that they were not as passionate about the doctrines of grace as people thought. Therefore, most did not reject the term if used sparingly. On the other

hand, they were completely clear about the fact that where they thought Calvin was not in line with the Bible, they did not hesitate to disagree with him on those points. Calvin was not a prophet. He was not infallible. Period. Hence, they much preferred and more often used the title Reformed. And this is true of Reformed true Christians to this day.

William Tyndale

Tyndale was an Englishman. He was a scholar and after coming to Christ, he felt called to translate the Bible into English in the spirit of Luther. If you remember, the Bible had already recently been translated into English by Wycliffe not all that long ago. Tyndale realized though, that because Wycliffe had gone off of the Vulgate, rather than the original Hebrew and Greek, his translation had its problems. Tyndale set out to correct these problems. He finished his translation and it was smuggled to Protestants all over England. Eventually, he was captured by the Catholics and burned at the stake for his faith.

John Knox

Knox was a Scotsman. He was powerfully converted to Jesus after Protestantism came to his country. He eventually had to flee Scotland due to persecution. Knox experienced all sorts of terrible persecution at the hands of the Catholics, including being made a galley slave for a long time. Knox fled to Geneva to study under Calvin. Calvin then sent him to lead the Reformation in his home country. Scotland was radically converted and would go on to be the most thoroughly Protestant nation on earth for centuries.

The English Reformation

The English Reformation was started by Tyndale, as we have seen. But, it was very small at first under Tyndale. Things drastically changed under the king of England, King Henry VIII. Henry was a very evil man, but like so many we have seen before him,

God chose to use him mightily to advance the kingdom of God. Henry wrote passionately against Luther and approved of the execution of Tyndale. He was hardly a Protestant in his heart and he never showed any evidence of genuine conversion later in life. The problem for Henry was that his wife had not given him a son. She had only given him a daughter named Mary. Therefore, he asked the Pope for an annulment. The Pope said no and Henry left the Catholic Church to become Protestant. And he took England with him. This was the beginning of the Anglican Church and branch of the Christian tree. For more information on the history and teachings of this branch, see my *A Brief Look at the Denominations and Movements within Biblical Christianity Today*.

At first, Henry tried to keep the English Church looking as Catholic as possible so as to not cause too much change in the country. Henry went on to marry another woman, who gave him his second daughter Elizabeth. Henry had her executed and went through a string of wives. Finally, one of them gave him a son, Edward. After his death, his young son began to make the country thoroughly Protestant. He had been raised by true Protestants and became a genuine and fervent Christian from a young age. Under him, the Reformation exploded in England. Unfortunately, he died as a very young man, and was succeeded by his passionately Catholic sister Mary. She brutally persecuted the English Protestants and became known as *Bloody Mary*. She did not sit on the throne long though, as she died of cancer. This led to her sister Elizabeth taking the throne. It is hard to say whether or not Elizabeth was truly saved. And she was a moderate on theological matters. She returned the English Church to the state it had been in under her father for the most part. This angered those that were more in line with the rest of the Protestants in Europe. These Protestants clashed with Elizabeth and the rest of the English Church. They eventually became known as the *Puritans*.

The Spread of Protestantism

The first branch of Protestantism to develop was the Lutheran. They largely followed the teachings of Luther, but later followed Melanchthon concerning the doctrines of grace. The second branch was the Reformed. Over time, they became known as the *Continental Reformed*. They largely followed the teachings of Zwingli,

Calvin, and Tyndale. The third branch was the Anglican, which we discussed. The fourth branch was the Presbyterian. They largely followed the teachings of Knox and were very similar to the Reformed. The fifth branch was the Puritan branch, whom we also discussed. Many of the Puritans moved to the New World in the 1600's and became the Congregationalist branch. For more information on all of these branches, see my *A Brief Look at the Denominations and Movements within Biblical Christianity Today*.

Most of Germany became Lutheran. There were still a lot of Catholics scattered throughout though, and in certain parts, Catholicism was still dominant. Most of Scandinavia also became Lutheran, with the exception of the Netherlands. The Netherlands became Reformed, but still had a lot of Catholics scattered throughout the country. Most of Switzerland became Reformed, but also still had a lot of Catholics in the country. Most of England and Wales became Anglican, but there were still a lot of Catholics and Puritans as well. Most of Scotland became Presbyterian. Portugal; Spain; France; Italy; Ireland; and most of what is today Austria, Poland, and the rest of the central and southern parts of Western Europe, remained Catholic. This was true both from a governmental vantage point and among the people. However, many faithful Protestants spread the word in those countries and saw many converts to Jesus. But, many of these were killed or banished. In France, there was a thriving minority community of Continental Reformed Protestants known as the Huguenots. They were mercilessly persecuted and hundreds were killed in what became known as *St. Bartholomew's Day Massacre*. Most of Eastern Europe remained Eastern Orthodox, and to this day there are not a lot of true Christians in these countries.

The Council of Trent

In the middle of the 1500's, the Roman Catholic Church convened a council at the command of the Pope in order to respond to Protestantism. At this council, the Catholic Church officially condemned Protestantism and the gospel in the process. The Church could have said that while there is a sense in which we are saved by faith alone, the Protestant Church is still wrong on most other matters. Obviously, I would strenuously disagree with them, but we could still consider them brothers and sisters in

Christ. Instead, the Catholic Church called the gospel of faith alone heresy. The Catholic Church officially left the one true church at that point and became an apostate false religion. It has remained so to this day. In fact, it has only gotten much worse over the centuries, especially regarding its blatant worship of Mary. The Eastern Orthodox Church held no council of this nature. However, there were local councils that condemned the Reformation in a similar fashion, and most of the leaders and theologians condemned it as well. Because of this, it too became an apostate false church. It is true that many back then and today do hold to the true gospel of faith alone and are saved. But, these Christians should leave this religion that won't universally proclaim faith alone and also continues to allow most of its leaders and theologians to condemn the gospel.

The Spanish Armada

During the late 1500's, when Elizabeth was Queen of England, the Spanish Armada was launched. The Armada was a massive set of giant ships that had been built by the Spanish Empire. After the Spanish conquered the Muslims in that part of the world, Spain became one of the most passionate Catholic countries on earth. They also had become the strongest empire in the world because of their conquests and exploits in the New World among the American Indians. The Spanish absolutely despised Protestants. The Armada set out to conquer England because it was the most powerful Protestant country. The idea was that if they could conquer England, other Catholic countries would join them and Protestantism could be destroyed. As powerful as England was at this time, they were no match for the Armada. Apart from divine intervention, the English were in trouble. More importantly, so was Protestantism.

The English tried a stall tactic. They brought out their much, much smaller fleet and began to light some of the boats on fire and pushed them towards the Armada. The hope was that some of the Spanish ships would light on fire and throw off the Armada as a whole. Then something completely unexpected happened. God sent a colossal wind that caused the Armada to go into a panic, and more and more of their ships started to light on fire. Almost the entire Armada was destroyed by the time it reached

the shores of England. Protestantism would go on to continue to spread throughout Europe and the New World in the next century.

Doctrinal Developments

There were countless doctrinal developments that took place during the Reformation. Hence, we cannot cover all of them in this work. With that said, some of the major ones were: the Bible alone is the word of God; we are saved by grace alone, through faith in Christ alone; all is for God's glory alone; we should pray to God alone; there is no such thing as purgatory; church government should not be so complicated and there is no need for a Pope; we should be very careful and cautious regarding religious images in church; there is no need for monks and nuns; Mary was one of the most godly people ever to live, but she was not perpetually virgin and she certainly was not sinless; and all Christians should be taught to read and have the Bible for themselves in their own language through a solid translation.

Now we have talked about how the church did have a doctrine of faith alone before the Reformation, but it was very, very muddled. Further, most of the Protestant Church understood that Jesus is not literally and physically present and eaten in the Lord's Supper. And many Protestants during this time adopted most of the doctrines of grace. As a Presbyterian, I of course believe this to be a wonderful development. Other teachers, such as Augustine and Aquinas, had believed in most of them before, but it was not until the Reformation that huge numbers of Christians believed in most of them. Among the early Protestants that believed in most of the doctrines of grace, only the doctrine of limited atonement was somewhat fuzzy at this juncture of church history across the board. Most had come to a strong doctrine of perseverance of the saints, but some were still somewhat fuzzy on that one as well.

Heretical Movements

We have already seen how Roman Catholicism and Eastern Orthodoxy became heretical movements. It is important to note that these two religions were and are

somewhat different from most heretical movements throughout church history. This is because they were apostate movements. This means that they were at one time true Christian movements. This is why on so many doctrines they are similar to Biblical Christianity. It is important not to get confused by this fact. This confusion is one of the reasons far too many good Christians accept them as our brothers and sisters in Christ. This is awful because these people desperately need us to preach the biblical gospel to them.

The other heretical movement that developed during the Reformation era was the Anabaptists. They first developed in Switzerland, but then spread to many other parts of Western Europe. Many later came to the Colonies. Unfortunately, many ignorant Baptists have romanticized this group because they were the first group in church history to reject infant baptism. If you want to be a Baptist, that is totally cool. It is a wonderful branch on the Christian tree. With that made clear, there is no need to be dishonest about the Anabaptists. It is wrong and unhelpful. The Anabaptists embraced all sorts of heretical beliefs and practices. Many denied inerrancy; many embraced Mysticism; many denied the Trinity; many denied that Jesus is fully God; many denied faith alone; many embraced polygamy; and many ran through towns naked screaming all sorts of nonsense. Many others said that “Jesus” was not conceived in the womb of the virgin Mary by the power of “the holy spirit,” but that “he” was conceived in heaven and placed in her womb. This may sound like not that big of a deal, but if Jesus did not take half of his genetic code from Mary, then He was not truly a physical descendant of Abraham and David in fulfillment of prophecy.

Eventually the Anabaptists splintered into a number of different groups, many of which are still around today in small numbers. The most known among these groups are the Mennonites; the Hutterites; and the Amish. Many within these groups have corrected a lot of the heresies of the original movement and are true Christians. However, this is not true of all of them. And most of them also believe in a doctrine of separation from the world, whereby on the whole they do not preach the gospel to the world in fulfillment of the Great Commission. This is heresy. Not all Christians need to regularly preach the gospel, but we should all be part of churches that support those in the church that do have the gift of evangelism. Many Mennonite churches have

corrected this and are true Christians, as said. This is also true of other Anabaptist communities. But, for the most part this heresy is still a big problem in most Anabaptist churches. As should be seen from this paragraph, the Anabaptists are still very much with us today in limited numbers.

Great Christians

Some of the great Christians of the Reformation era were: Katharina von Bora; Martin Luther; Philip Melancthon; Ulrich Zwingli; John Calvin; William Tyndale; John Knox; and King Edward. We have already discussed all of them.

Creeds and Confessions

A large number of Creeds and Confessions developed during the Reformation era as the Protestants explained and clarified to the world how they differed from Roman Catholicism and Eastern Orthodoxy. The Augsburg Confession was produced by the Lutherans. The Belgic Confession and the Heidelberg Catechism were produced by the Continental Reformed. The Scots Confession was produced by the Presbyterians. And the 39 Articles of Faith were produced by the Anglicans. As a Presbyterian, I don't agree with everything in each of these documents. I don't even agree with everything in the Scots Confession. But overall, these are extremely sound and beautiful statements of Christian belief.

Chapter 8: The Protestant Church Part 1

Introductory Remarks

In my estimation, church history should be broken up into 5 major eras. Each of these has sub-eras of course, but I do believe these to be the 5 overarching eras of the

history of the church. These are: the Ancient Church era; the Medieval Church era; the Reformation Church era; the Modern Church era; and the Postmodern Church era. However, because the last era is so short (I believe it started roughly around 2000; hence it is only about 20 years old), it does not work to break up this work according to these eras. Therefore, I have chosen to break up the Modern Church era into the Protestant Church and the Evangelical Church. And I have chosen to include the Postmodern Church with the Evangelical Church. I do think it is important to understand all of this. I believe that the Modern Church lasted from about 1600-2000. However, for our purposes in this work, I am putting the Protestant Church from about 1600-1900, and the Evangelical Church from about 1900 to the present day. I believe that the Modern Church era is made up of the following sub-eras: the Age of War and Piety (approximately 1600-1700); the Enlightenment (1700-1800); the Age of America (1800-1900); and the Age of Missions (1900-2000). The Postmodern Church is too young to have sub-eras. For the purposes of this work, we will look at the first three eras of the Modern Church under the Protestant Church, and we will look at the Age of Missions and the Postmodern era under the Evangelical Church.

The Age of War and Piety

The Catholic-Protestant Wars

Throughout much of the 1600's, Catholic countries and Protestant countries were at war with each other. Horrible atrocities were committed by both sides, but whether Catholics want to admit this or not, for the most part, the Catholic countries were the aggressors as they were trying to reestablish the doctrine and reality of Christendom in Northern and Western Europe. Despite all the persecution and bloodshed, God protected His people and this was actually a wonderful period of orthodoxy and devotion among true Protestants. As certain places became thoroughly Protestant, it was inevitable that dead orthodoxy and cultural Christianity would begin to show up. This is unfortunate, but this is what happens when cultures embrace true Christianity. Despite this very real and unfortunate reality, most Protestants during this time, especially the

Puritans, were some of the most on fire and godly Christians ever to live. This is the reason why some have titled this era *the Age of War and Piety*, and it is why I adopt that title as well. One of the major movements that sought to address dead orthodoxy and cultural Christianity was known as *Pietism*. It was not really a full branch of the Christian tree, but was more of a movement within Lutheranism. It was led by Philip Jacob Spener. But, there were other similar movements in many of the other branches. They made it clear that while orthodoxy is essential, true Christians will also live out the Christian life.

The Puritans

After Elizabeth died, James I of Scotland came to the throne because she had no children. James was the son of Mary Queen of Scots. She was a corrupt woman who claimed to be Catholic. Hence, she persecuted the Presbyterians, but they eventually won over most of the country despite her efforts. She also later in life tried to take the English throne in order to make England Catholic again. She failed and was executed by Elizabeth. James was corrupt like his mother, but he embraced the Anglican Church because he felt he had a much better chance of keeping his throne if he did so. Hence, when he became King of England as well as Scotland, the two countries were joined together, and remain so to this day. This fact was a huge disappointment to the Presbyterians in Scotland as well as the Puritans in England. And both were persecuted by James. This eventually led many Puritans to leave for the New World. The first major group of Puritans to do so came on the famous Mayflower, and signed the equally famous Mayflower Compact in 1620. After them, many more Puritans followed and Puritans settlements were established all over what is today New England.

The Puritans were far from perfect. They could be legalistic and they had racist tendencies. They believed it was ok to buy and keep African slaves, and they largely saw the American Indians as being Pagan like the nations that surrounded Israel during the Old Testament era. They believed that both Africans and American Indians could be saved, but many did not believe that they would be saved in large numbers. There were exceptions though. Some Puritans did extensive missionary work among the American

Indians and saw many genuine converts. And many slaves were truly converted to Jesus because of their Puritan masters. However, often out of fear and misunderstanding, many Puritans did not treat the American Indians fairly. This is so sad and unfortunate. The Puritans also were harsh towards heretical groups as well. They felt that many of the Old Testament commandments against idolaters in Israel applied to these groups as well.

Despite these very real and sinful shortcomings, Puritans for the most part, had godly marriages; they had big families; they diligently taught their children the Scriptures; they worked extremely hard; they were well educated; they built beautiful and thriving homes and farms; they loved to have fun (despite the very wrong stereotypes that say otherwise); and they lived out the Christian life with zeal and sincerity. By the end of the 1600's, most Puritans in England realized they were not going to win over all of England and joined another branch of the Christian tree. And most of the Puritans in America had adopted the congregational form of church government. You can read more about this form of church government in my *A Brief Look at the Denominations and Movements within Biblical Christianity Today* (chapter 2). Thus, the Puritan branch of the tree morphed into the Congregationalist branch by the end of the 1600's. Over time, even most of these Puritans joined the Presbyterians, so the Congregationalist branch is the smallest branch on the tree today. But there are still thriving Confessional Congregationalist churches found all over the world today. Despite the fact that the original Puritan movement died out by the end of the 1600's, true Evangelicals still look at them as an inspiration today, especially those who adopt the doctrines of grace like myself.

Returning to the persecution by James at the beginning of the 1600's, James was looking for a way to try to heal his very bad relationship with the Puritans. He knew that they wanted a new Bible translation, and so he saw this as his opportunity. While the Puritans were very, very grateful to Tyndale for his work, they began to see that a translation should never be done by one man (no matter how godly and scholarly), as had been the case with Jerome, Wycliffe, Luther, and Tyndale. The bias of the sole translator inevitably comes through too much. They realized that an entire committee of biblical scholars was needed to do the job. Therefore, James agreed to fund this effort,

and in 1611 the King James Bible was produced mostly by Puritan scholars. This was one of the best translations ever put forth in the entire history of the church. The English speaking churches all over the world used it until the mid-1900's. It was that good. And all sound translations, regardless of the language, have ever since followed the model of using multiple biblical scholars.

Things got a little better between the Puritans and James after this, but this very superficial peace did not last. After James' death, his successors and the Puritans were at constant odds with each other. This eventually boiled over into the English Civil War later in the 1600's. The Puritans won this war and put together the Westminster Confession of Faith in order to replace the Anglican 39 Articles. The Puritans invited many Presbyterians from both England and Scotland to assist in the creation of the Confession because the two branches had so much in common and got along so well. And of course, the Presbyterians were thrilled to see the English monarchy gone. The Puritan rule did not last very long though, as most of the English people were still Anglican. And because the Puritans mostly died out by the end of the 1600's, it ended up being the Presbyterians who carried on explaining and teaching the Confession. Therefore, the Confession over time became most associated with Presbyterianism despite its Puritan roots. And this is the case to this day. As a Confessional Presbyterian, I do not hesitate to say that I believe it to be the best Confession of Faith ever written by far. I strongly encourage you to read it.

One of the greatest Puritans ever to live was the very famous John Bunyan. He was a rare Puritan as he did not believe in the doctrine of infant baptism. But he was not really part of the Baptist branch (we will discuss them soon) because most of that branch believed in being as separate from the government as possible. Bunyan was a Puritan in that he was a passionate Calvinist and believed in reforming all of England to the glory of God. He is most famous for writing *Pilgrim's Progress*. This is an absolutely wonderful book that is an allegory of the Christian life. It is the most read book by Christians, by far, other than the Bible itself. Bunyan was heavily persecuted for his faith. He spent many years in an awful prison. But he never wavered in his devotion to Jesus and used much of this time to write his superb book. I highly recommend reading

it. If you don't have time to read it, I recommend watching one of the movie adaptations. It is a masterpiece of Christian literature.

The Baptists

Many people, including far too many true Christians unfortunately, have the very mistaken notion that the Baptist movement sprung from the Anabaptists. This is not the case. The Baptists rightfully saw the Anabaptists as heretics for all of the reasons we discussed earlier in this work. The Baptists were orthodox Bible-believing Christians and were accepted as such by most of the true church. Many of them became Calvinists and were welcomed by their fellow Calvinists around the world. Calvinist Baptists are often called *Reformed Baptists*. There are millions of them around the world today and they are amazing brothers and sisters in Christ. The Baptist branch was started in the early 1600's in England by John Smyth. They rejected the doctrine of infant baptism and also felt like the church should be separate from any government as much as possible. They remained a very small branch of the Christian tree until they absolutely exploded during the Great Awakening (which we will discuss soon). They were the sixth major branch on the Christian tree of that time.

Doctrinal Developments

There were not many major doctrinal developments that took place during this era. What did happen was a lot of very precise refining of well established Protestant doctrines. This was especially done by the Puritans (most notably by John Owen). However, Francis Turretin wrote one of the best and most extensive works of theology in all of church history during this era. He was part of the Continental Reformed branch of the Christian tree.

Heretical Movements

Socinianism

This movement was started by the heretic Faustus Socinus in Poland. Even though he mostly lived and started his movement in the late 1500's, it did not really get going until the 1600's. It spread all over Western Europe. This heretical movement denied almost every major essential doctrine of the Christian faith. It denied the omniscience of God; the Trinity; the deity of Christ; original sin; regeneration; as well as others. It was about as blatantly heretical as a movement can get. The movement was mostly gone by 1700, but a lot of the skepticism of this movement carried over into the Enlightenment period.

The Quakers and Shakers

The Quakers were started by the heretic George Fox in England. Many later came to the Colonies. He said that the Bible alone was not the word of God. He said that it must be supplemented by what he called *the inner light*. The Quakers denied the doctrine of church government and mostly went by this so-called inner light that led to all sorts of bizarre doctrines, conclusions, and practices. Many of them would quake and shake in their services as they worshiped their "god." And that is how they got their name. Over time, especially in America, they became more mainstream. However, even these Quakers denied the need for baptism and the Lord's Supper. Quakers are still around today in very small numbers.

The Arminians

This movement was sort of begun by Jacob Arminius. He was actually an orthodox Christian, but he denied the doctrines of grace. The problem was that he lived in the Netherlands and was part of the Continental Reformed church in that country. Hence, his beliefs were rejected by that church and he was forced to leave it. However, Calvinists like myself believe that God used this unfortunate affair for His glory. Calvinists had always been somewhat fuzzy on limited atonement and perseverance of the saints, especially the former. This forced Calvinists not only in the Netherlands, but

all over, to finally fully clarify themselves here. And this led to the Canons of Dort. These canons were the conclusions that were reached by these Reformed Christians at the Synod of Dort. A Synod is a church council. This is when all five of the doctrines of grace were fully proclaimed and clarified. Since that time, those who oppose the doctrines of grace are often called Arminians. But, since most Arminians at the time rejected all five points of Calvinism, many today prefer to call themselves non-Reformed as they do not reject all five.

Another problem here though, is that many early Arminians adopted fully heretical doctrines as the movement grew and advanced. Many held views on the atonement that were out of bounds. This is why it is best to clarify today that our brothers and sisters in Christ who reject Calvinism are technically Evangelical Arminian or non-Reformed. Unfortunately, because most heretical Arminians have died out by today, the naked term *Arminian* often gets used in the church today for all non-Calvinists. I think this is generally fine, but it should be noted that many Christians in the 1600's condemned Arminianism as heretical because so much of the movement was in fact heretical. They were not seeking to condemn actual brothers and sisters in Christ though. Many heretical groups today adopt doctrines on certain points that are very similar to the heretical Arminians. However, the heretical Arminians as a movement died out by around 1800.

Great Christians

Some of the great Christians of this sub-era were: John Smyth; John Owen; Philip Jacob Spener; John Bunyan; Francis Turretin; Anne Bradstreet; John Eliot; and Matthew Henry. We have already looked at each of them, with the exceptions of the last three. All of these last three were famous Puritans. Bradstreet was a poet, Henry wrote the most famous commentary on the Bible in church history (to this day), and Eliot was a passionate missionary to the Algonquian Indians.

Creeds and Confessions

Four major Confessions were drafted during this sub-era. They were the Canons of Dort; the Westminster Confession of Faith; the Savoy Declaration; and the 1689 Baptist Confession. We have already discussed the first two. The third was a Confession drafted by the Congregationalists, and the fourth was a Confession drafted by the Baptists.

The Enlightenment

Overview

The Enlightenment was a huge movement among philosophers during the 1700's in Northern and Western Europe that greatly seeped down to the masses in both Catholic and Protestant countries, especially in the Protestant ones unfortunately. The idea was that people should think for themselves. The accusation was that "religious" people, as they defined the term *religious*, do not think for themselves and allow their pastors, priests, bishops, etc., to do the thinking for them. There is a lot of truth in this accusation, but towards many "religious" people it was a grossly false accusation. Nevertheless, it became a rallying cry among very secular philosophers during this time. The idea was that we do not need special revelation as humans. These philosophers said that humans could go off of common sense and the academic disciplines alone. The problem of course, is that these things alone cannot answer the big questions of life. Why are we here? How did we get here? Where are we going? What is the purpose of life? What is fully required of us in this life? These are the types of questions that common sense and the academic disciplines cannot answer in any fashion.

This is why most people have sought out some form of religion beyond Secular Humanism in order to have these questions answered. See my book on the religions of the world if you don't know what Secular Humanism is. The problem is that people, for the most part, are intellectually lazy. Most people do not seek very diligently. Most people adopt some form of what they were taught growing up and what their culture said as well. People know that life would be meaningless without some explanation of these questions, but they are all too happy to let others answer these questions for

them. And of the few that do seek out answers to these questions on their own, they only seek the answers that will give them the most emotional satisfaction given where they are in their lives at the time. And all of this is taught in the Bible. People will not seek out God for His own sake on their own (Romans 3:11). But, most people still rightfully find it very difficult to live without some overarching explanation of reality, and therefore do adopt some form of religion beyond Secular Humanism. This is true even to this day when fully secular views of reality are more popular and prominent than ever before in history.

Two key things led to many people being very open to this new approach to reality. The first was the Scientific Revolution of the 1600's. I cannot get into all of the reasons this revolution happened when it did, but suffice it to say that it did happen and expanded our knowledge of the natural world exponentially. Because of this, there was great optimism among many philosophers by the 1700's concerning our ability to answer things apart from "religion." The second key factor was the end of the Catholic-Protestant wars. A lot of people in Europe were rather sick of "religion" because of all of the fighting and bloodshed it had caused throughout the previous century. Therefore, "religion" became more and more unpopular in Northern and Western Europe, and even among those that still did attend church (whether Catholic or Protestant), a pervasive cultural Christianity became the norm in most places. Even in the Colonies among the former Puritan strongholds, Enlightenment thinking became more and more common, although it never became as dominant as it was becoming in many parts of Europe.

The Great Awakening

By about 1730, the spiritual state of England was in a terrible place for the reasons stated above. In the Colonies, things were much better, but there was still a notable staleness and cultural Christianity that everyone saw in the churches. Throughout the 1600's, the Puritans and later Congregationalists were dominant. Most people in the Colonies lived in what is today New England or Pennsylvania or Rhode Island. There were a lot of Quakers in Pennsylvania and Rhode Island. Towards the end

of the 1600's and the beginning of the 1700's, many other groups began to come to the Colonies as well. There were some Continental Reformed and Lutherans, but the two biggest groups to migrate to the Colonies were the Anglicans and the Presbyterians. They began to settle in all of the Colonies, but especially in the growing Middle and Southern Colonies. There were now 6 major branches of the Christian tree (Lutheran; Continental Reformed; Anglican; Presbyterian; Congregationalist; and Baptist). The 3 predominant ones in the Colonies in the first part of the 1700's were the Congregationalists; the Anglicans; and the Presbyterians. It should also be noted that a minority of Catholics began to come to the Colonies as well during this time, and mostly settled in Maryland.

It is also important to note a new philosophy that came on the scene around this time that had a serious impact upon Northern and Western Europe, and the Colonies as well. This philosophy was known as *Deism*, and it still exists today in small numbers. It came about in the late 1600's, but really began to gain steam in the early 1700's. Deism basically said, in line with the Enlightenment, that "religion" is unnecessary and unhelpful. However, the Deists realized that the growing popularity of Atheism and Agnosticism was extremely philosophically unsound to say the least. Hence, they tried to push for what they saw as a middle ground position. They said that "god" existed, but that "he" only got things started. After the initial moment of creation, "he" basically allows the universe to run itself.

That is the gist of the philosophy, but it did and still does take many shades. Some said that their "god" does providentially guide all things, but that "he" does not reveal very much to us regarding what all "he" is doing and why with this providence. Others also said that their "god" will reward and punish all people for their behavior in the afterlife. These somewhat more traditional viewpoints tended to be much more common among the Deists in the Colonies where the bulk of the common people were still far more "religious" than in England. And some Deists still called themselves "Christians" and even went to church. This reality was a major precursor to Liberal Protestantism that came about in the early 1800's. However, these Deists were always far from orthodox and Deism as a whole movement never claimed to be a form of "Christianity." This is why I do not include it under the heretical movements that

developed during this time. It is important to note that many of the most famous Founding Fathers were Deists. I know many otherwise well-meaning true Christians in our country try to pretend this wasn't the case, but I'm sorry, they are contradicted by the plain facts of history. Franklin, Jefferson, and Madison, as three key examples, were all Deists.

This was the environment in England and the Colonies during the Great Awakening that took place in the 1730's and 1740's in those regions. Most of the Colonists still claimed to be some form of orthodox Protestant, and many still went to church. But, far, far too many were going through the motions and far, far too many pastors were not trying very hard to correct this. And then came Jonathan Edwards, George Whitefield, and John Wesley. Edwards was a Congregationalist pastor in New England, and the latter two were Anglican evangelists from England. Together they led the greatest revival in church history. A revival is different from a reformation as a reformation often includes revival, but also includes a great deal of theological correction as well. The Great Awakening did not deal with a lot of theology. All of the leaders were orthodox Protestants who were primarily preaching to people who claimed to be orthodox Protestants. Edwards mostly preached in New England, Wesley mostly in England, and Whitefield in both England and the Colonies. Many fake "Christians" in the churches truly gave their lives to Jesus and the churches were strengthened in powerful ways. The Awakening also kept at bay the growing secularization of the church in England and the Colonies.

Wesley would go on to lead the Methodist movement. The Methodist movement was initially basically Pietism in the Anglican Church. It emphasized certain methods and disciplines for growing in our walk with Jesus. Thus, the name. At first, many Methodists were Calvinists and there was even a major Calvinist-Methodist revival in Wales at this time (not to be confused with the later Welsh Revival in the early 1900's). However, Wesley himself was deeply opposed to Calvinism and he also held to an odd doctrine known as perfectionism (not the fully heretical version that we will look at later), which Calvinists have always strongly rejected. Therefore, over time Methodism became less and less Calvinist. After Wesley died, Methodism broke off from the Anglican Church in the late 1700's to become a new (the 7th at that time) branch of the

Christian tree. You can read more about this branch in my *A Brief Look at the Denominations and Movements within Biblical Christianity Today*. Wesley's brother Charles Wesley was an outstanding hymn writer. These hymns were a core part of the Great Awakening. Another great hymn writer of this time was Isaac Watts.

Many historians have pointed out that many of the individual churches did not grow that much during the Great Awakening. They also point out that the percentage of churchgoers also did not go up very much during this time either. They say this in order to try to paint a false picture that the impact of the Awakening has been exaggerated by Christian historians. This is not true though. We have always known that most of the people that were saved during this time had already been attending church for cultural reasons.

Another monumental shift that came about from the Great Awakening was the massive growth of the Baptists and the Methodists in the Colonies. Both the Baptists and the Methodists emphasized keeping Christianity simple. They tended to not emphasize doctrine very much in their churches. They did not deny any essential doctrines, but they did not emphasize the importance of doctrine in general. This was very appealing to a lot of people in the Great Awakening. Hence, many people began to leave Congregationalist, Anglican, and Presbyterian churches in favor of Baptist and Methodist ones, especially in the Southern Colonies. These two branches also continued to grow in America after the Great Awakening as the gospel was taken to the people out on the Western frontier. Many of these people also favored a much more simple Christianity. This is why these two branches were the largest two branches in our country for a very, very long time, especially in the Old South. The Confessional Baptists are still the largest branch in our country today. The Southern Baptist Convention is the largest truly Christian denomination in our country today.

Doctrinal Developments

As a Confessional Presbyterian, I want to be clear that I believe that almost all of the significant doctrinal developments that took place in the church from this time until today have not been good. I believe that the church has not gotten closer to the Bible,

but has strayed from it as it has strayed from the Reformation. During the 1700's, the church became less and less Calvinist. While certainly not all of the Protestant church had been Calvinist before this time, a giant portion of it was. Luther himself was basically Reformed in his theology. He was merely fuzzy on limited atonement and perseverance of the saints, as were many of the other Reformers. Augustine and Aquinas, two of the greatest theologians of all time, also were basically Reformed (although that term was of course not used in their day). They very inconsistently denied limited atonement and perseverance of the saints, but they did believe in the other three doctrines of grace. And on the most core issue that God chooses us rather than the other way around, they were quite clear in their belief that God does the choosing.

You may ask, "How can people who believe in unconditional election not believe in perseverance of the saints? If God chooses us to be with Him forever, then clearly we cannot fall away right?" Those who took this position said that the elect (the chosen ones), only referred to those God had chosen to keep saved until the end. They said that God chose to save some for a time, but then would allow them to fall away later. This is obviously a horrible doctrine, and this is why later Calvinists thoroughly rejected it. But those who took this position felt that there were too many passages that seemed to be saying that true Christians can and sometimes do fall away, and so they were trying to be faithful to Scripture even though it led them to a doctrine that does not make a lot of sense.

Melanchthon originally held to the same doctrine as Luther. But, after Luther's death he changed his mind and rejected the doctrines of grace. The Lutherans followed his lead on this point. Many Anglicans were originally basically Reformed in their theology, but over time this became less and less the case. As we saw, after the Canons of Dort, the Calvinists or the Reformed in their theology, fully embraced all of the doctrines of grace. From that time on, the Continental Reformed; many Anglicans; the Presbyterians; the Congregationalists; and many Baptists (Reformed Baptists); all embraced Calvinism. And these groups made up a very large portion of the church until 1800. By 1800, these groups had become a much smaller percentage of the church. The Lutherans, most Anglicans, most Baptists, and the Methodists all rejected

Reformed theology. And these groups, especially the Methodists and the Baptists, formed the largest percentage of the church by a long way.

Also, more and more true Christians were rejecting infant baptism as the Baptists grew and grew. This trend would only continue on into the 1900's with the rise of Pentecostalism, the Independent Bible churches, and the Charismatic movement. Most of the churches within these movements also rejected infant baptism. Obviously, as a Confessional Presbyterian, I do not see this as a good trend.

Heretical Movements

The two primary heretical movements that developed during the 1700's were the Moravians (not to be strictly equated with the Moravian Church) and the Unitarians. The first group was started by Count Zinzendorf in Germany. The Moravians were actually very orthodox overall, but many embraced the terrible heresy of universalism (the belief that no one will ultimately end up in hell for all eternity). They are still around today in small numbers. The second group was far, far more blatantly heretical.

The Unitarians were started in England and denied almost every single essential doctrine of the Christian faith. There had been heretics in small numbers who had held to the unitarian view specifically on the Trinity before, mostly in Poland. But, the full religion did not start until the late 1700's. The Unitarians were heavily influenced by the Deists and the Enlightenment in general. It was a very skeptical religion. They rejected the core teaching that the Bible is fully the word of God and said that it should be read figuratively and spiritually for the most part.

They earned their name because they were adamant in rejecting the Trinity in favor of the doctrine that their "god" is one "god" and one person. This may sound similar to the Modalists of old, but unlike the original Modalists who believed in most Christian doctrines, the Unitarians rejected the supernatural for the most part (other than their "god" "himself"), and thus rejected almost all Christian doctrines. Further, the Modalists for the most part believed that "Jesus" and "the holy spirit" are "god;" they simply said that these are the same person as each other and the same person as "the father" as well. The Unitarians however, rejected the deity of the Son and the Spirit

altogether. Other heretical groups before them had taken the unitarian position regarding their “god.” The Socinians would be a prime example of this. However, the Unitarians went much further than any other heretical group up to that time in their denials of almost every single core Christian doctrine. The movement later merged with the Universalists to become the Unitarian Universalist Association, which is still with us today. It is a very small organization. However, countless Liberal Protestants accept the unitarian position on “god” and/or universalism today. John Adams was a Unitarian.

Great Christians

Some of the great Christians of this age were: Isaac Watts; David Brainerd; Jonathan Edwards; George Whitefield; John Wesley; and Charles Wesley. We have already looked at all of them except for Brainerd. He was a devoted missionary to the Indians in the Colonies.

Creeds and Confessions

The key Confession that was developed in the 1700’s was the Articles of Religion by the Methodists.

Chapter 9: The Protestant Church Part 2

The Age of America

Introductory Remarks

I love the United States of America. I truly believe that from all objective historical standards, it has been the greatest country the world has ever known. Ancient Israel should have been the greatest, but it often failed to live up to its potential as it so often

rebelled against God so badly. Even amazing countries like Scotland at one time, that was for a while probably the most godly nation on earth, still did not affect the rest of the world for good the way that the United States has done. With all of that said, it is very, very important that we not turn the United States into an idol. The United States has been far from perfect, and today it is a very evil nation in certain respects, especially concerning abortion (although we must utterly rejoice over the reversal of Roe v. Wade). The United States has always been the leading advocate for abortion in the world since the 1970's when much of the world began to be open to this vile and disgusting practice. Even most of the most liberal countries in the world today do not have as loose laws as does our nation on abortion. In many parts of this country one can get an abortion no matter how old the child is in the womb. Our nation also had many sins in its past as well. We will discuss these as we proceed. Therefore, a balanced view of the United States is one where we recognize its greatness, especially in comparison to all other nations today and in the past, while not shying away from remembering that no person; family; church; organization; culture; or nation is without its many horrible sins and the United States is no exception.

With all that in mind, it is important to remember that when we talk about the Age of America as we are going to do in this chapter, this is not at all intended to say that America was a Christian utopia during this time. As stated above, it most certainly was not. It also doesn't mean that God had none of His people in other parts of the world. He of course did. There was still a small, albeit very strong and devout in certain parts, remnant of His Protestant people scattered throughout Northern and Western Europe. God had also started to work in the late 1700's in Canada, Australia, and Polynesia. With all that made clear, God primarily worked through the United States of America from around the late 1700's until the early 1900's. And this is why this period of church history is given the name I have placed upon it.

Slavery and Prejudice

These are not fun topics to discuss, especially as they relate to God's people. But any honest treatment of church history must include them. Two key errors can be

committed on this front. The first is to try to gloss over these sins too much. The second is to exaggerate them and not provide them with the necessary context. I will do my best to avoid both of these mistakes. Slavery as a widespread societal practice is condemned in the Bible. I know many Atheists and other opponents of the true Christian faith will argue that with me. For more discussion on this, please see my *Doctrine: Going Deeper*.

Certain limited forms of slavery were allowed in Ancient Israel. But a lot of things were allowed in Ancient Israel for very specific reasons that God never intended to be universal. And yes, the New Testament does often talk about masters and slaves and how they should treat each other. But, this was only because slavery was pervasive in the Roman Empire. Many new Christians were slaves as they were often the most open to hearing the gospel because of their terrible situation. And some masters in the Roman Empire also became Christians as well as God was powerfully saving people from every aspect of Roman society. And it was not always practical for either the master or his or her slaves to free the slaves right away. With that said, there is strong evidence in the New Testament that Christian masters were expected to free their slaves eventually. In the meantime though, the apostles did often give instructions to these masters as to how to treat their slaves.

Because of these biblical facts, the Christian church never advocated slavery on a wide scale, but it often failed to fully condemn the widespread societal practice as it should have. For most of church history, slavery was primarily something that was associated with Islam and other parts of the world. I cannot emphasize that enough. The idea that slavery was invented by white American Christians who went over to Africa and decided to up and start stealing Africans, is absurd in the extreme. It is not what happened historically at all. I know how common this misconception is among many Americans, and I know how upset many people get when it is challenged, but the historical facts are the historical facts. Slavery only existed in limited and scattered parts of Europe throughout church history. Christians only began to become heavily involved in the African slavetrade in the 1600's. This was because Europeans had discovered most of the rest of the world. Europe and the church became very aware of the already existing and thriving slavetrade that was going on in West Africa.

The church was not sure how to deal with this trade. It was not on its own going to cause it to go away. The church had no military power. And while it could press European countries to try to eradicate the trade, most of these countries did not want to go to war with any African countries. Many in the church spoke out against the practice, but realized this wasn't going to do much to stop it or deal with it. Many others felt that slavery was part of this fallen world and therefore Christians could own these slaves as long as they treated them well as the Bible commands. Many others in the church believed that the slavetrade was an excellent opportunity to bring Africans out of Africa so that they could be immersed in Christian society with the hope of them becoming Christians. This was the view of many Puritans. Because of all of this, many true Christians did buy and own slaves throughout the 1600's and 1700's.

Now to be clear, there were plenty in Europe that took advantage of this situation for wicked purposes. Europe was hardly a Protestant paradise in the 1600's and 1700's. I know many enemies of the faith try to paint it as if everyone in Europe was a true Christian and so the fact that so much evil went on in regard to slavery means that all of Christianity must be bad, but this was not the case. Most of Eastern Europe was Eastern Orthodox and did not become very involved in the slavetrade. And most of Southern Europe was Catholic during this time. In fact, Spain was the first major power to become extremely involved in the slavetrade. Spain made many American Indians slaves in the New World, and they also heavily bought slaves from the African slavetrade. They committed many atrocities along the way. But, that has nothing to do with true Christianity.

And even in Protestant countries, there was a lot of cultural Christianity. Further, as we have seen, by the 1700's (because of the Enlightenment) you had a lot of people who were rejecting any form of "Christianity" altogether. And as more and more Europeans began to move to the New World, what began to happen was that slave ships began to take huge numbers of slaves over to the New World, including the British Colonies, in order to sell them to people there. The problem was that these slave ships became a living hell for those placed in them. The conditions were unimaginably evil as some of the worst people in history ran these slave ships solely for profit. Most Europeans would not discover how bad these slave ships were until the early 1800's.

Because there was so much vast land that was available and needed to be farmed in the British Colonies, by the mid to late 1700's, that is where most slaves were being taken and sold. Many godly Christians did buy these slaves and treated them well. That is not to excuse these Christians; they should have bought them and tried their best to free them over time. But, they were sinful products of their time like the rest of us are. And there were many, including many false professing orthodox Christians, who behind the scenes treated their slaves in barbaric ways.

It must be said though, that most people in the British Colonies did not own slaves. One had to be fairly wealthy in order to have slaves. Many people in the Colonies never even saw a slave or an African American. Many lived on small farms where they only ever saw those in nearby villages or small towns. Most knew about slavery and knew that it was an ugly reality to some extent, but most did not know or understand how bad it was or what all they were expected to do about it. Before we judge the average person at this time too harshly, we must remember that the sex slave industry is booming in the world and in our society right now. How many average Americans fully understand how bad and pervasive this movement is? Not many. How many do very much to try to stop it? Not many. None of this is an excuse. We must all do more. But, most people struggle to get through every day with all of their other responsibilities. And people back then were no different. In fact, they had it far, far harder than most of us do today and we should remember that before we judge too harshly.

By the 1800's, almost all slaves in the United States were sold down to the Southern states as those states were so rural with so much rich farmland. Over time, most of the Northern states began to outlaw slavery. From around 1800 to 1860 (right before the Civil War broke out), a great divide was beginning to develop between the Northern states and the Southern states in the United States. The former became more and more negative towards slavery, while the latter became more and more positive about slavery as they felt that the South could not live without it because they believed it had become too much a part of the culture. With all of that said, it is very important not to oversimplify things. The idea that all Northerners were passionate abolitionists and all

Southerners were passionate defenders of slavery, is ridiculous. The actual reality was unfortunately far more complex.

In the North, there were die-hard abolitionists. Many of them tended to be Quakers. Many of these attacked the Bible's approach to slavery. Because so much of the country was truly Christian, most of these die-hard abolitionists were seen as radicals. And a minority of Northerners held to views on slavery that were pretty similar to most of the South. However, most of the North began to say that American slavery was evil. They did not want to condemn all forms of slavery as the Bible did not seem to do that. Most realized though, that American slavery had gotten out of control and was often very cruel. Over time, more and more orthodox Christians in the North began to see that the Bible does not allow for the widespread societal practice of slavery. However, they were also careful to say that none of what the Bible teaches is wrong, and that not every slaveholder is always sinning in every circumstance. What almost everyone in the North agreed upon by the time of the Civil War was that American slavery needed to go.

Many people in the South really didn't know what to make of slavery. Many felt that it was a necessary evil that God would sort out one day. Many did not praise it, but did not fully condemn it either. Many true Christians felt that it was a purely political issue and that Christians should stay out of politics as much as possible. These true Christians merely emphasized that slaves should obey their masters and that masters should treat their slaves well. For many, the issue was not more complicated than this. Many others in the South, including many true Christians, said that slavery was indeed evil, but that it should be eliminated gradually. They felt that this was best for both the slaves and the society in general. Many others in the South, including many true Christians, said that slavery was evil, but that because whites and blacks were so different from a cultural perspective, there was no other way for the two groups to live together. Finally, there was a minority of people in the South who fully defended the system of American slavery across the board. What almost every person in the South agreed upon by the time of the Civil War was that Southern slavery needed to stay for the time being and that the North should not tell the South how to deal with the issue.

In the two decades before the Civil War, many Northern Christians began to see that it really is heresy to fully defend slavery across the board, whether the American version or any other version. And because there were more and more people along these lines in otherwise orthodox churches and denominations in the South, many denominations split because of this issue. Now this is not to say that all of these Southern churches and denominations embraced heresy and became part of a false religion. Most of these Southern churches and denominations did not fully defend slavery across the board, but took the general Southern view of slavery at the time, which had many sub-views within it as we have seen. But, they refused to condemn those that defended slavery across the board as they should have. Thus, many heretics were unfortunately tolerated in these otherwise godly and orthodox churches and denominations in the South.

The next item we need to address is the prejudice that existed in the church during this time. It must be said that this prejudice stemmed from the previous prejudice that had existed within the church for centuries. The difference was that while this prejudice existed in the church prior to this time, the church for many centuries had primarily been confined to Europe. Therefore, the church for the most part was not able to inflict this prejudice onto others. The key exception to this of course, was sexism, which we will discuss shortly. By the 1800's though, the church was living right next to American Indians, African Americans, and Hispanics. And many of them were joining the church. This led to a lot of tension. Most Europeans, including most true Christians sadly, believed that Europeans were superior to other people groups to one degree or another. Many true Christians believed that because God had almost solely worked through people of European descent for so long, this must mean that God had to some degree cursed other people groups. True Christians of course could never embrace the heresy that such people were not truly humans, or that they could not be saved, or that they should ever be treated with cruelty. Nonetheless, they did believe that these other people groups were inferior and that society and the laws of society should reflect this.

I understand how repugnant this is. I understand that this is probably very hard to read for those who may not know all of this. But, it is very important to understand that most people groups throughout history have held similar views about their own groups

as well. I know you may be asking, “Ok, but aren’t we as Christians supposed to be different? And you said yourself in the third book of your ‘basics’ series that Christians are not allowed to be racist or prejudiced. So, as much as I hate to say this, weren’t these so-called Christians actually heretics?” These are excellent questions. The truth is somewhat nuanced though. The fact is that we cannot call these Christians heretics because the Bible is quite clear that God does sometimes curse and punish people groups. This is in no way an excuse for us as Christians to be prejudiced at all today. For a much fuller discussion of this difficult point, please see my *Doctrine: Going Deeper*. And true Christians were different. True Christians treated their slaves very, very well. True Christians witnessed to American Indians and other groups when most Europeans wanted nothing to do with them. With all of that said, there is no question that many false “Christians” and other Europeans in general treated minority groups horribly in the Colonies and later in the United States.

It must be remembered though, that by the 1800’s, Christians were no longer made up almost exclusively of people who were of European descent. While those Christians were still the majority by far, thousands of American Indians and African Americans were part of the church by the 1800’s. There were many in the 1600’s and 1700’s, but they were always a very tiny minority in the big scheme of things. By the 1800’s, while they were still a minority, they were an extremely sizable minority both in terms of numbers and in the overall percentage of the true church. And many of these Christians were some of the strongest and most on fire for God believers at the time. It must also be noted that most of Polynesia was being converted to Jesus at this time as well.

Next we must discuss the sexism that existed during this time. As said before, this was also something that had existed in the church for a long time before the 1800’s. The problem though, was that as those of European descent began to feel more and more threatened by the presence of the groups around them, the more men of European descent tried to clamp down upon their power. I understand that this statement probably sounds very “woke” given all that is going on in our society today. Rest assured, I am not “woke.” I hate “wokism” and all of the damage it is doing to our

country and to the church right now. For a fuller discussion on this, please see my *Doctrine: Going Deeper*.

With that made very clear, at this time, this problem was a very real problem. Therefore, the sexism in the church grew much worse. I understand that this all must seem like heresy, but again, the reality was more complicated than that. Obviously, anyone who hates women; or is abusive to them; or does not believe they can be saved; or does not believe they are truly human; is a heretic. And that was as true back then as it is today. With that said, most true Christians (myself included), believe that the Bible does teach a form of male headship. This does not mean that women are less than men. For a fuller discussion on this, see the third book in my “basics” series (chapter 4). And many true Christians, including many women actually, felt that as Europe was more and more embracing Liberal Protestantism (a religion we will discuss later), the church needed to clamp down on the doctrine of male headship. And this led to many laws and practices that went far beyond anything the Bible actually teaches. Even most minority groups within the church agreed with this sexism unfortunately.

Once again though, it is important we not be too hard on the church. While the church did not go as far as it should have gone until very recently in church history, Christianity was always far, far more advanced when it came to the rights of women than almost all other societies around the world. Women have always been seen as fully saved Christians by the true church. Women have always been seen as indispensable within the church by the true church. Many women were highly educated as nuns throughout the Middle Ages. And women were not to be abused and were to be treated well in accord with what the Bible commands on many occasions. The church was absolutely instrumental in abolishing the notoriously sexist practices of burning wives alive in India and foot binding in China. And most Protestant churches have always said that women have the full right to divorce their husbands if their husbands commit adultery or leave.

Slavery and prejudice plagued the church during the Age of America. In the next chapter, we will look at many of the more positive aspects to this age of church history.

Chapter 10: The Protestant Church Part 3

The Age of America Continued

The American Revolution

The American Revolution actually took place at the end of the 1700's. I include it in the Age of America as that is where it belongs. I hope that you understand that all of the general dates given for each age and sub-age in this book are only that, they are generalizations. It is not like people in Europe woke up on Jan 1 in the year 500 and said, "Oh look, the Middle Ages have begun!" That is of course not how things happened.

As a comparison, I believe that a major shift took place both in history in general and in church history as well, around the year 2000. I believe that is when most of the world shifted from the Modern Era to the Postmodern Era. And I believe the church can very much be marked by this shift in society as well. I was alive on Jan 1, 2000, and I can tell you that no one woke up that day and thought that the Postmodern Era had officially begun. Yet, as we look back, and as I look back at my own life, we can see very drastic changes taking place in our country and in the world starting in the late 1960's that eventually culminated around 2008 in the Postmodern Era being fully underway. Therefore, for estimation purposes, we say that the Postmodern Era began around 2000. The same is true with the dawn of the Middle Ages. Changes had been taking place within the Roman Empire for almost two centuries, changes that greatly escalated throughout the 400's, so that by around 500, the Roman Empire had collapsed and a clear new age had begun. The Age of America can technically be said to be closer to around 1770 to 1880, but for the sake of estimation, I have said around 1800 to 1900. With all that spelled out, let us look at the actual American Revolution.

Obviously a great deal could be said about the American Revolution. Because this is not a work of world history or even U.S. history, we will have to be brief in our treatment of it in this work. The American Revolution gave the Colonists a number of

crucial rights that had not ever fully been given to any other people before. And since that time, almost every country in the world has followed this pattern to a high degree, showing how monumental the Revolution was. As many horrible sins as the United States has committed, and they are many as we saw, this fact alone demonstrates how amazing America has been in the big scheme of things. These rights were fully spelled out in the Bill of Rights and added to the U.S. Constitution at its inception. I highly encourage you to read that crucial document. Some of these rights had been given to some of the people in some countries to some extent before, going all the way back to the famous Magna Carta. But, the U.S. was the first nation to fully grant all of these rights to most of its people. Obviously slaves and others were not included and this was a despicable form of hypocrisy, but as evil as that was, it still does not change how groundbreaking the U.S. Constitution was at that time.

Many people try to say that the American Revolution was an invention of the Enlightenment. This is not so. The church for centuries had been slowly moving in the direction of asserting these rights for the people going all the way back to the Magna Carta. And one of the chief architects of the American Revolution from an intellectual perspective was a devout and orthodox Bible-believing Christian, John Witherspoon. With that said, as many bad things as the Enlightenment brought forth, it does deserve credit for speeding things along on this front. We must also admit that most of the most prominent Founding Fathers were Enlightenment thinkers and were not orthodox Christians. This fact has caused a lot of debate over whether or not our nation was founded as a Christian nation. This debate is complex and many who engage in it don't understand all of the issues involved. Suffice it to say for here, our nation was established as a Christian nation despite the reality just addressed. For a fuller discussion on this debate, see my *Doctrine: Going Deeper*.

By the time of the Revolutionary War, the Colonies had become far more diverse than they had been during the dominant age of the Puritans. With that said, the largest group in the Colonies by far was the orthodox Protestants. There were a lot of Quakers; Catholics; Deists; Unitarians; and general Enlightenment thinkers as well; but these were all dwarfed by godly Protestants. Together those groups accounted for about half of the Colonial population, but the other half was made up of orthodox Protestants. After

the Revolutionary War, the number and percentage of orthodox Protestants ballooned throughout the 1800's, until orthodox Protestants were the overwhelming vast majority of the population by the time of the Civil War. As said earlier, the two biggest subgroups in the orthodox Protestant population by far were the Baptists and the Methodists.

The Second Great Awakening

One of the key factors in the growth of true Biblical Christianity in America at this time (orthodox Protestantism), was the Second Great Awakening. In some ways, this awakening had a greater impact than the first as it saw a lot more people come to Jesus who had not been in the church at all before. On the other hand, in a lot of ways it was a lot messier than the first awakening. This is because while people did get out of hand in their emotional reactions to the preaching that took place during the first revival, this problem was far more common and far worse throughout this second revival. Further, one of the primary preachers during this revival was a heretic named Charles Finney. Finney was orthodox on most points and generally did not preach heresy in his revival preaching. He for the most part preached a straightforward gospel message. Therefore, thousands were truly converted to Jesus through his preaching and joined true churches. It was not until later in the 1800's that he was fully exposed as a heretic for denying original sin altogether.

Princeton

Today Princeton is an extremely liberal Ivy League University. But, it was not always this way. Princeton was originally established by Presbyterians. And in the 1800's it became a key center of orthodox theology and apologetics. Even though it of course most appealed to Presbyterians, many other Christians relied on it for sound teaching and especially for the excellent defense of the faith it provided against the many intellectual opponents of Christianity in that day. The chief theologian at Princeton during this age was Charles Hodge.

Spurgeon, Kuyper, and Bavinck

CH (or Charles) Spurgeon, Abraham Kuyper, and Herman Bavinck were three key leaders during this age of church history. This may seem odd as none of them were American, but their influence heavily carried over into America where most true Christians were living during this era. Spurgeon was English, and the latter two were Dutch (the Netherlands or Holland). Spurgeon was a famous Baptist preacher in London, and the latter two were remarkable theologians and apologists in Holland. The latter two were part of the Continental Reformed branch of the Christian tree, a branch that had always had a major presence in Holland since the early days of the Reformation. These two led a major resurgence of Biblical Christianity in their nation that had been becoming more and more secular because of the Enlightenment. Spurgeon is probably the best preacher ever to live and his sermons were very popular in America, even though they had to be read by Americans in those days. All three were passionate Calvinists.

The Great Missionaries

During this era, in spite of all the prejudice, the church really began to feel the burden of fulfilling the Great Commission around the world to those who were not of European descent. A huge number of missionaries were sent out from America and England in this effort. While most of these did not see a huge number of converts, they planted the seeds in many countries around the world. Their inspirational efforts led to the Age of Missions in the next century (the 1900's). In the 1900's, many missionary organizations were created to send out large numbers of missionaries. And the Pentecostals took the Great Commission extremely seriously. But, none of this would have taken place if not for this first round of brave missionaries. Some key examples of these missionaries are: William Carey (to India); Adoniram and Ann Judson (to Burma); Mary Slessor (to Nigeria); Hudson Taylor (to China); Robert Jermain Thomas (to Korea); David Livingstone (to Africa); and Henry Townsend (to Nigeria).

Even though she was not technically a missionary, Queen Lily of Hawaii deserves special mention here. She was the Queen of Hawaii during the 1800's. She was an amazingly godly woman and she reigned over a people who had for the most part come to know Jesus. The United States ruthlessly took over the nation of Hawaii and she was persecuted. Despite this treatment, she remained faithful to Jesus and she was an inspiration to Polynesians throughout that region. Polynesia would continue to become more and more Christian until the 1900's when it began to become more and more secular like the rest of the United States.

The African American Church

Up until the 1800's, the African American slaves were a mixed bag as far as religion goes. Many still clung to Nature Religion, and many others were still Muslims. Many did become true Christians, but again, this mixed bag existed until the 1800's. By the 1800's, the overwhelming vast majority had become some of the most sincere and godly Christians on the planet. Many still went to church with their masters, but many smaller African American churches sprouted up during this time as well. And in the North, where many freed African Americans lived, the first major African American denomination was begun. It was begun by the famous Richard Allen. He started the African Methodist Episcopal Church denomination. It is often referred to as the *AME*. It was part of the Methodist branch of the Christian tree and existed to specifically support African American Christians. To this day, it is one of the largest and most important African American denominations in our country.

Another hero of the African American church during this time was Harriet Tubman. Tubman was on fire for God and led the Underground Railroad. This was not a literal railroad, but it was a network of secret safe houses and churches that helped escaped slaves come to the North. She worked for decades at this calling in spite of countless challenges, health problems, and persecution. Remarkably, she was never caught.

Yet another hero of the African American church of this day was Samuel Morris. Morris was a young prince from Liberia in Africa. He was radically brought to know our

Lord and Savior Jesus Christ and eventually came to America to encourage American Christians to send more missionaries to Africa. He also hoped to be trained as a missionary himself so that he could return to his homeland and preach the gospel. Sadly he died shortly after coming to America and was not able to return to Africa. His zeal inspired many American Christians to start taking foreign missions more seriously. Many, many other heroes of the African American church could be mentioned.

Doctrinal Developments

Two major doctrinal developments took place across the board in the church during the 1800's. The first was that the church became more and more non-Reformed. The non-Reformed wing of the church, as we have discussed, was a large portion of the church going back to the Reformation. Many Lutherans and Anglicans did not embrace the doctrines of grace. Later, many Baptists and Methodists would reject them as well. Nonetheless, most of the true church did embrace the doctrines of grace throughout the 1500's and the 1600's (they were not fully clarified until the Synod of Dort as we have discussed). And a solid percentage of the church continued to do so well into the 1700's. However, by the 1800's, the portion of the church that still upheld the doctrines of grace became a minority within the church. As a Confessional Presbyterian, I do not believe this was a good development. I believe the church has only become weaker, more superficial, and doctrinally off ever since.

The second major development to take place during the 1800's had to do with the rise of what is known as *Dispensationalism*. This was originally a heretical movement that was started by JN Darby in Ireland. The movement he started was known as the Plymouth Brethren. They soon spread to England and America. The doctrines of the movement are generally known as Dispensationalism. Darby was very orthodox overall, but he taught the pernicious and extremely dangerous heresy that true "Christians" can live in sin their entire lives. The technical name for this heresy is *antinomianism*. He did not say that "Christians" should live in sin. He said that it was horrible to do so and that "god" would discipline such "Christians" strongly at the final judgment by giving them almost no rewards. However, he did say that it was possible

for true “Christians” to live in sin their entire lives and that this does often happen. He also denied the need for church government.

Things got very messy and confusing because many Christians adopted many elements of Dispensationalism while getting rid of the core heresy of the movement. Darby came to the conclusion that Israel and the Church are completely separate entities and that the end times would be exactly seven years long. He also taught that the second coming of Jesus would be split into two parts. The first part would be *the rapture*, where Jesus would come to take His church to heaven so that it would not have to experience the horrible seven years known as *The Tribulation* or *The Great Tribulation*. The second part was when Jesus would fully come to the earth to defeat His enemies and set up the literal millennial kingdom. None of these doctrines are heretical, but I strongly disagree with them and they were definitely very new in church history.

Many, many true Christians felt that these doctrines were biblical and therefore became “Dispensationalists.” The problem was that these Christians were not actually full Dispensationalists. I have labeled them *Semi-Dispensationalists* or *Evangelical Dispensationalists*. Most did not want to be called by another name because they wanted to try to defend Darby because they did not want to admit that their doctrines were invented by a heretic. This is still a huge problem and controversy among the many Christians in our nation and throughout the world who hold to most of the Dispensational doctrines. In order to do this though, these Christians had to try to soften and misrepresent Darby. And this still occurs to this day. This is dishonest and true Christians should not do this. The Plymouth Brethren did not believe in denominations and so many true Christians joined them and were essentially part of the Independent Bible Churches branch. Many Plymouth Brethren today are true and wonderful Christians that are part of this branch of the Christian tree. Unfortunately, both back in the 1800’s and today, many Plymouth Brethren still embrace the core heresy of Darby. Dispensationalism and Semi-Dispensationalism both remained fairly small movements throughout the 1800’s, but both movements would explode during the 1900’s.

One of the most notable of these Semi-Dispensationalists (he did not call himself by that term though) was DL Moody. He was a powerful American evangelist, who also preached in England as well. He went on to found Moody Bible Institute in the late

1800's in Chicago. This school is still a wonderful Conservative Evangelical institution to this day. Moody was a godly man, but he should have been far more clear in denouncing Darby and the heretical roots of Dispensationalism. His failure to do this led to decades of confusion in much of the church. We will discuss this confusion later in this work.

One minor, but still notable, doctrinal development that took place during this time was the rise of the Episcopalian denominations. Once the United States declared its independence from Great Britain, Anglicans in the new country that sided with the U.S.A. could obviously no longer continue to be part of the Anglican Church. Yet, they still remained thoroughly Anglican in their theology. Hence, they were still part of the Anglican branch broadly speaking, but technically they had to break off from the official Anglican Church. The Episcopal Church in the United States was the first denomination along these lines, but later many other Episcopal denominations along these lines began to sprout up all over the world through missionary efforts. Eventually, most of these denominations joined what is known as the Anglican Communion. This meant that they were joined to the Anglican Church spiritually (and organizationally to some extent as well), without having to take a vow of loyalty to the British crown. The vast majority of churches and denominations that are part of the Anglican branch today are also part of the Anglican Communion.

The Anglican Communion was established in the late 1800's. At first, this was a good thing that was intended to bring about greater Christian unity within this branch of the Christian tree. Over time though, this movement has more and more embraced Liberal Protestantism. Most of the churches within the Communion in England, the U.S., and Australia are part of Liberal Protestantism. Most of the churches within the Communion in Africa are Bible-believing Conservative Evangelical churches. In my opinion, these godly churches should leave this apostate organization. But, they do not agree and believe that it is their duty to try to reform the organization. Despite my strong disagreements with them, I fully accept these dear brothers and sisters in Christ as the wonderful Christians that they are.

One of the saddest realities of this age of church history was the flood of major heretical movements. No other century in all of church history has seen the development of so many large heretical movements. The 400's had quite a few as well, but even that century is definitely second to the 1800's. A whopping ten major heretical movements came on the scene during this century. And 4 of these religions (Liberal Protestantism; Seventh-day Adventism; the LDS Church; and the Jehovah's Witnesses) are still 4 of the largest and most influential heretical movements on the planet today.

The LDS Church

The full name of the LDS Church is the *Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*. Most people know them as the "Mormons." But, the LDS Church no longer likes to be called by that name and we should respect that. They are also not super keen on being called *LDS* or the *LDS Church*, but most understand that the full name is quite a mouthful to always say or write out. Hence, I try my best to avoid the term *Mormon*, but call the religion the *LDS Church*, and the people either *LDS*, or *LDS folks*, or something along those lines. LDS people are some of the nicest, most patriotic, and hard working people on earth. I have very close ties with LDS culture for a number of reasons and I can personally say that the vast majority of the nonsense and slander that is spewed against these people is 110% false.

Because of this, and because of how much we have in common with LDS people from a political standpoint, and even further, because of how much they talk about "Jesus," many true Christians cannot understand why anyone would not call them true Christians. What many true Christians do not understand is that LDS theology is about as unbiblical as it gets. The full theology of the religion is bizarre and blasphemous. It is far worse than most of the heretical movements throughout church history. Their niceness in no way changes this, I'm sorry. If this is something you really struggle with, I recommend to you my essay "Addressing Heresy."

The LDS Church was started by Joseph Smith in New York. Joseph Smith was a known con man in his day. He said that "god the father" and "Jesus" both came to him in

a vision when he was a young teenager. He said that they told him not to join any of the churches of his day because they were all an abomination. He said that they told him he was to be their prophet and was to be used by them to restore the true church on earth that had vanished shortly after the time of the apostles. Smith went on to say that he was repeatedly visited by angels and that there were golden plates buried in a hillside. He said that these plates gave the account of the American Indians and how they saw “Jesus” in the Americas. He said that he was given the power and ability to translate these plates into the Book of Mormon. Thus, the LDS Church believes that the Bible, the Book of Mormon, and other documents are all scripture. However, they only use the King James Version and they say that it has been corrupted. They say that it is only the word of “god” insofar as it has been translated correctly. Wherever the Bible contradicts LDS doctrine, they say that is a point where the Bible has been corrupted.

The LDS Church teaches emphatically that “god,” whom they often call “heavenly father,” is a male human being. This may not sound that bad at first as we believe that Jesus is a man, but they are saying that “god” in his “god” nature is a human being. The LDS Church teaches that “Jesus” and the “holy spirit” (“he” is often called the “holy ghost”) are not “god.” They do often talk about the “godhead,” which can sound like the Trinity to true Christians, but it is extremely important you understand that they are only using this term to say that “god,” “Jesus,” and the “holy ghost” work together with one purpose. The LDS Church is unequivocally clear that “god,” “Jesus,” and the “holy ghost” are three separate beings. Some LDS folks say that “Jesus” and the “holy ghost” are “gods,” but all LDS people are clear that they are separate beings from “heavenly father.”

The LDS Church teaches that in a preexistent world, “heavenly father” produced our spirits. Some LDS Church folks believe that “he” did this with “his” wife or wives. These spirits were then placed in bodies here on earth. Salvation is through faith and good works. The LDS Church talks a lot about grace and this can be confusing to true Christians as this sounds a lot like the gospel. But, in LDS theology, grace merely helps us to be saved. It alone does not save us. And in LDS theology, salvation is far more than simply entering into an eternal and intimate relationship with God. In LDS theology, there are three levels of heaven and almost no person goes to hell. The highest level of

heaven is for the best LDS folks, and there they will become more and more like “god” in being for all eternity. The LDS Church builds huge temples all over the world. In these temples, LDS people perform many rituals, especially baptism for the dead. They do this in order to baptize people in the afterlife that did not have the chance to be baptized in an LDS temple themselves.

Smith and the early LDS people practiced polygamy, and this especially earned him the ire of his fellow Americans. Smith moved the LDS people a number of times and he was eventually killed in Illinois. His successor, Brigham Young, then brought the LDS people to Utah. As most people know, this religion is still very much around today. It is one of the largest heretical groups still in existence. For more information on how to witness to LDS folks, see my “LDS Essay.” It can be found on my website.

The Jehovah’s Witnesses

This religion was started by Charles Taze Russell in the United States. He hated the doctrine of the Trinity and the doctrine of hell as well. Thus, he sought to change the Scriptures to fit with what he wanted them to be saying. This led to the New World Translation. Russell was exposed in an official court of law as a fraud for pretending to have the skills to translate the Bible. It was shown that he barely even knew anything about the original languages. The New World Translation has undergone many changes, but it is still basically the translation of Russell and is the official “Bible” of this religion.

The Jehovah’s Witnesses insist that the name of “god” is *Jehovah*, rather than the Hebrew *Yahweh*. They emphatically deny the doctrine of the Trinity. They say that “Jesus” is not “god,” but is a “god” and is Michael the Archangel. They say that the “holy spirit” is merely a powerful force like electricity. They deny the bodily resurrection of “Jesus.” They deny the existence of hell. They deny the omniscience of “god.” They say that “god” does not perfectly know the future. And they teach that salvation is by faith and good works. This religion is of course still very much with us today. Many of them will often come to your door in order to spread their beliefs.

Christian Science

This religion was started by Mary Baker Eddy in the United States. She wrote the book *Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures*. It is seen as scripture alongside the Bible by this religion. Eddy taught that the physical world and evil are illusions that we must overcome. Because of this, she denied almost every single essential Christian doctrine. Her religion does the same to this day. This religion still exists today in small numbers.

Seventh-day Adventism

This religion was started by William Miller in the United States. They were originally known as *Millerites*. Miller predicted the second coming of “Christ” and when his prediction did not come true, the movement was left floundering. However, the movement was then taken over by Ellen G. White. She was seen as a prophet and to this day her writings are given tremendous authority within the movement. To be fair, the movement says that only the Bible is the word of “god,” but in reality the Bible is interpreted by the writings of White.

This religion states that the Sabbath must be on Saturday. The movement states that not all food is clean for Christians. The biggest heresy of the movement by far is its denial of hell. It teaches that unbelievers will be annihilated and will not suffer eternally in hell as is clearly taught by Jesus and the Bible as a whole. It is true that the religion is orthodox on many points, but that does not negate its heresies. This religion still exists today and is one of the larger heretical movements on earth.

The Heavenly Kingdom

This religion was begun by Hong Xiuquan in China. The church had been slowly growing and spreading in China throughout the 1800’s due to the influence of Hudson Taylor and other faithful missionaries. Into this environment came one of the worst heretics in all of church history. Xiuquan said that he was the younger brother of “Jesus”

and he sought to blend “Christianity” with Taoism and Confucianism. After gaining legions of followers, he sought to lead a violent rebellion against China known as the Taiping Rebellion. This led to a massive and vicious civil war. Around 20 million people were killed. Most Chinese people did not understand the differences between this religion and true Christianity. This disgusting religion has to this day greatly tainted how most Chinese people view Christianity. It was violently stamped out by the end of the 1800’s.

Dispensationalism

We have already discussed Dispensationalism.

Restorationism

This religion was started by Barton Stone and Thomas Campbell in the United States. It was originally often called by its opponents the *Stone-Campbell Movement* or *Campbellism*. The movement was originally very orthodox overall, but its chief heresy was that it said that baptism is absolutely necessary for salvation. This is an overt denial of the gospel of faith alone. To be clear, baptism is a commandment of God. The vast majority of Christians will be baptized out of obedience to God’s commandment as led by the Holy Spirit. However, some Christians are unable to be baptized for health reasons or die before they can be baptized. To say that such Christians go to hell despite their trust in Jesus for their salvation is blasphemous in the extreme.

Eventually, two main sub-branches developed within this movement. These were the Churches of Christ (it should be noted that not every church or denomination that uses the title “Church of Christ” is part of this sub-movement) and the Disciples of Christ. Both of these are still around today. The latter became more and more liberal and eventually joined Liberal Protestantism. The former has remained very conservative, but it is a mixed bag. Many have softened their doctrine on baptism. Many say that baptism is essential, but that God does make exceptions. Therefore, they say that there is a sense in which we can speak of faith alone. While I strongly disagree with

the muddiness of this position, we should accept them as our brothers and sisters in Christ. With that said, far too much of this sub-group still holds to the old heresy on baptism. This movement mostly exists in the Old South today.

Liberal Protestantism

Liberal Protestantism was started by Friedrich Schleiermacher in Germany. Liberal Protestant ideas had been stewing in Northern and Western Europe for over a hundred years because of the Enlightenment, but Schleiermacher brought about the formal movement. By the end of the 1800's, it was the dominant religion in Northern and Western Europe, and was fast becoming the dominant religion in the United States. Today, it is one of the top ten largest worldviews on the planet.

The primary heresy of this movement is the denial of inerrancy. But, this heresy leads many in the movement to deny many other essential doctrines of the faith. In some cases, almost all core doctrines of Christianity are denied. There are many sub-movements within this religion, and the one that is the most popular today is known as *Progressive Christianity* (which we will look at in more depth towards the end of this book). I wrote my book *A False Kind of Christianity* as a refutation of this rapidly growing movement.

Perfectionism

This religion was started in England by those who wanted to take the teachings of John Wesley further. If you remember, Wesley is a hero of the faith, but he taught a very questionable doctrine that was a qualified form of perfectionism. Wesley did not embrace the fully heresy of perfectionism, but many of these later "disciples" did. They said that it is possible for a Christian to live in a state of absolute sinless perfection and became the full religion of Perfectionism. Out of this came the Keswick Movement. This movement is more of a school of thought within the church. For more on the idea of schools of thought within the church, see my *A Brief Look at the Denominations and Movements within Biblical Christianity Today*. Most of the movement adopts some form

of the doctrine of Wesley without adopting all of Methodist doctrine. However, the movement has been far too lax in allowing those who do espouse the full heretical doctrine of perfectionism. The religion of Perfectionism is still around today in small numbers.

The Salvation Army

This is another one where I know a lot of true Christians could get upset with me. I know some might say, “Man, this guy thinks everything is heresy.” That is not true and is unfair. As I’ve said many times, I accept orthodox Lutherans; orthodox Continental Reformed; orthodox Anglicans; orthodox Congregationalists; orthodox Baptists; orthodox Methodists; orthodox Pentecostals; orthodox Independent churches; and orthodox Charismatics. I accept as true Christians those who disagree with me on the age of the earth; on the doctrines of grace; on infant baptism; on church government; on certain end times issues; and the list goes on. I am a passionate Confessional Presbyterian, but I in no way, shape, or form, say that all true Christians must be Confessional Presbyterian. I always try my best to give people, churches, denominations, and organizations the benefit of the doubt. I hate to use the word *heresy* and only do so as often as I do because the Bible takes heresy so seriously. And I only accuse groups of heresy when they have clearly beyond all doubt crossed a serious line. Again, please see my essay “Addressing Heresy.”

It is true that the Salvation Army is very orthodox for the most part and that they do wonderful charitable work, especially around Christmas. There is nothing sinful about giving to their representatives outside stores around Christmas time because it is well known that this money will go to children. Normally I would say you should never give any money to a false religion because you don’t know how it is going to be used, and I don’t recommend giving to the Salvation Army in general. But, I do think an exception can be made to these representatives at Christmas as it is well known that the money is going to help children around Christmas time.

With all that made clear, this religion has always been abundantly clear about the fact that it believes that baptism and the Lord’s Supper are not for “Christians” today.

This is heresy whether we like it or not. God takes symbolic rituals very seriously throughout the Bible. He commanded many of them throughout the Old Testament and often gave many specific details for how they should be performed. And in the New Testament, God plainly commands baptism and the Lord's Supper as a continuation of this principle. It is also clear that these rituals are to be performed by Christians until Jesus returns. Therefore, to say that these rituals are not for "Christians" today is a blatant denial of the authority of the Bible. As most people know, this religion is still around today in small numbers. It was begun in England by William Booth.

Great Christians

Some of the great Christians of this era were: John Witherspoon; Charles Hodge; CH Spurgeon; Abraham Kuyper; Herman Bavinck; William Carey; Adoniram and Ann Judson; Mary Slessor; Hudson Taylor; Robert Jermain Thomas; David Livingstone; Henry Townsend; Queen Lili; Richard Allen; Harriet Tubman; Samuel Morris; DL Moody; John Newton; and William Wilberforce. We have already discussed each of them except for Newton and Wilberforce. These two men from England were relentless in speaking out against the African slavetrade from a biblical perspective towards the end of the 1700's and beginning of the 1800's. They eventually led to the abolishment of the slavetrade in England and were instrumental in convincing many true Christians in the North in the United States to abandon support for slavery in the 1800's. Newton also went on to write the most famous hymn in all of Christian history, *Amazing Grace*.

Creeds and Confessions

No major creeds or confessions came out during this era.

Chapter 11: The Evangelical Church Part 1

Introductory Remarks

The term *Evangelical* comes from the Greek word for *gospel*. It is intended to refer to those who hold to the true biblical gospel. It was first used on a wide scale during the Reformation for those true Christians who were following the lead of Martin Luther, those that would later be called *Protestants*. For much of the Reformation, this was the preferred term of God's people for themselves in order to distinguish themselves from the Catholics, and also from the Eastern Orthodox as well. By the end of the Reformation, most of God's people were calling themselves, and were being called by others, *Protestants*. *Evangelical* was still often used as a secondary term for God's true people for a long time, but it definitely took a backseat to the more prominent and common label of Protestant. That changed to a large extent with the Great Awakening. At that time, the term once again began to be used more and more to describe God's true people in distinction from the growing number of people calling themselves Protestant, but who were really Deist or an early form of Liberal Protestant. However, it was still not a dominant and universal term. And many true Protestants at the time did not like it as they were very wary of some of the excesses that occurred during the revivals of the Great Awakening.

All of this changed during the early 1900's. After the Civil War, Liberal Protestantism became more and more dominant in the United States, until by 1920 it was the predominant religion of our nation. There were still a lot of true Christians and a lot of Catholics left, along with small numbers of Jews, LDS, and other religions, but the culture of America had become thoroughly Liberal Protestant, especially outside of the Old South. Because of this, most true Christians felt that the term *Protestant* was now very problematic due to its close association with Liberal Protestantism. Therefore, more and more true Christians began to use the term *Evangelical* as the primary term to describe themselves. This was all the more fitting because it was in the 1900's that for the first time the true church became truly global. The gospel had been preached all over the world. Today, every single nation on earth has at least some (even if only very few in some cases) true Christians living within it, with the sole exception of Vatican City.

The Age of Missions

As stated earlier, technically the Age of Missions should be seen as a sub-era within the broader era of the Modern Church Age. We have discussed why I am not following that better breakdown in this work. But, the Age of Missions took place during the 1900's at the same time that the church was beginning to primarily call itself *Evangelical*. Therefore, it will make up the core of the next few chapters on the Evangelical Church.

Missions and Evangelism

During the 1900's, the church was inspired and convicted by the sacrificial efforts of the great missionaries of the 1800's. This led to a number of key organizations, missionaries, and evangelists rising up to take the gospel all over the world. This led to the International Missionary Conference in 1910; Christianity Today; Fuller Theological Seminary; Campus Crusade; Prison Fellowship; World Vision; InterVarsity Christian Fellowship; and many other events and organizations. All of these were committed to the work of evangelism both in the United States and abroad to one degree or another. It is very, very sad that Fuller Theological Seminary eventually adopted Liberal Protestantism in the late 1970's, and Christianity Today has adopted Progressive Christianity in the last few years. The evangelistic fervor of the 1900's also led to Billy Sunday; CS Lewis; Gladys Aylward; Amy Carmichael; Richard Wurmbrand; Martyn Lloyd-Jones; Billy Graham; Eric Liddell; and Jim and Elisabeth Elliot.

Sunday was an evangelist in the United States, but he highly influenced the later worldwide evangelist Billy Graham. CS Lewis was a theologian and author (he wrote some of the best Christian fiction for children), but his writings had a huge impact outside of England where he lived. Aylward and Liddell were both famous and effective missionaries to China. Carmichael was a famous missionary to India, primarily working among orphaned children who had been given over to the Hindu "gods." Wurmbrand was a famous evangelist in Romania and was tortured for his work. Lloyd-Jones was a famous pastor, preacher, and evangelist in England. His sermons had a huge impact in

many other parts of the world though. Jim Elliot was a famous missionary to the American Indians in South America, where he was martyred. After his death, his wife Elisabeth became a famous devotional writer.

The most famous person on that list by far is Billy Graham. Graham was from North Carolina and was radically brought to Jesus in his teenage years. He preached the gospel to enormous crowds all throughout the United States and throughout the world. His sermons were often played on the radio and on tv. Millions of people have come to know Jesus directly through his preaching. How many more have come to know Jesus indirectly through those that have been influenced by his preaching is impossible to say. While the Age of Missions is of course far, far bigger than Graham, he was the great symbol of the era as the gospel was being taken to South America, Africa, and Asia. Today the true church is found in large numbers in the U.S.; the West Indies; Brazil; Nigeria; Kenya; Democratic Republic of the Congo; South Africa; China; India; South Korea; and Polynesia. It is true that the percentages may be small in the United States, China, and India, but because all of those countries are so large, there are large numbers of Christians in each of them. And as said earlier, true Christians are now found scattered throughout every single nation on earth, with the sole exception of Vatican City.

The Fundamentalist-Modernist Controversy

After the Civil War, things got pretty ugly in the United States, especially in the Old South for a very long time. The South was in ruins and ashes right after the war. Many in the North held deep resentments towards the South because of the war and how many people it killed. The South utterly detested the North for ruining what they thought was a very good and healthy society in the South. Race relations became beyond horrible. American slavery was a horrible evil. It was based on race. But, most white people in the country did not hate black people, they thought they were inferior. Please don't misunderstand me. This was a terrible, terrible state of things. And there were many, many people, including many slave owners, who behind the scenes took full advantage of the situation and were brutal to their slaves. Slavery needed to end and it

was a wonderful thing that it had ended. But, after the war many whites in the South felt a tremendous amount of anger towards African Americans because they felt African Americans had betrayed the South. I understand how bizarre this sounds to us today, but many whites felt that the South had been very good to African Americans by treating them well (many at that time did not know how pervasive abusive slave owners actually were behind the scenes) and by preaching the gospel to them (most slaves had become true Christians by the time of the Civil War). So, when many of them escaped to the North and in many cases even fought for the North, they felt betrayed.

Many African Americans rightfully felt a lot of animosity towards the white community in the South for the history of slavery. And before, under slavery, a lot (though certainly not all) of African Americans hated the system of slavery but felt a great deal of love for their owners. I know that is not a politically correct thing to say in our day, and this was certainly not the case for countless African Americans that were in abysmal situations under their abusive owners, but the historical fact is that a huge percentage of the slave population did love and respect their owners. That in no way makes American slavery good or desirable. It is only to state a historical fact. Many slaves were considered a part of the family and many felt that way. That social structure was gone after the war (which of course was a very good thing overall), and so now the resentments on both sides festered and grew out of control and race relations were in a putrid state.

Many African Americans had already fled to the North during the war. And many more left the South after the war. The problem was that many Northern whites also still felt that African Americans were inferior to whites. They hated slavery and did not feel that blacks should be enslaved, but they also felt that whites should live separately from blacks. I fully understand how unbiblical such a sentiment was, and many who held it were not true Christians, but it needs to be understood that many true Christians in the North hired African Americans and treated them very well. They simply felt that blacks and whites should not live in the same neighborhoods.

This led many African Americans to band together in neighborhoods in the big cities. The problem was that because of the history of slavery, African Americans were far less educated than whites and thus did not have the same opportunities. This led to

their neighborhoods being very poor and poverty always leads to crime. Even though the vast majority of African Americans were true Christians, all it takes is a small minority of the neighborhood to engage in crime that then begins to ruin and rot away at the neighborhood. This was the beginning of the big city African American ghettos and this is a huge problem our nation has struggled with ever since. And even though these ghettos were not the fault of the African Americans, all of the crime led a lot of Northern whites to believe that African Americans were not only inferior, but were outright dangerous. This led to a great deal of discrimination against African Americans in the North. Even many Northerners, including many true Christians, who felt that all of this separation and discrimination was wrong, still felt that interracial marriage was an unnatural evil.

In the South, whites felt that it was wrong for African Americans to vote because they were seen as inferior. This in turn led to white terrorist groups developing to keep African Americans from voting. Many of these terrorist groups would also engage in vigilante justice. Often, if an African American in the South committed a crime, it was seen as wrong to wait for the justice system. Hence, these terrorist groups would often lynch African Americans accused of heinous crimes, or of trying to vote, or of trying to help other African Americans to vote. Many people, both white and black, in both the North and South, spoke out against this, but this only made many whites in the South all the more defensive and angry. This in turn led to many false accusations and many African Americans (especially men) were lynched who hadn't even committed a crime at all. The worst of these terrorist groups was the infamous Ku Klux Klan, often abbreviated as the KKK.

Because of all this chaos, most whites in the South, especially most true Christians that were white, felt that blacks and whites should not live together. Unlike the North though, this did not lead to big city ghettos for the most part (although many did develop later in our history in the South). This was because there were too many blacks still living in the South to make that work, and also because there were not nearly as many big cities in the South as in the North. This eventually led the South to make segregation (keeping whites and blacks separate) a matter of law and not merely one of culture as was the case in the North. This led to not only separate neighborhoods, but to

separate bathrooms, separate water fountains, separate areas in restaurants and on buses, etc. As you can imagine, the white facilities always had a lot more money poured into them and so they were much nicer.

Right now you are probably saying to yourself, “How on earth could the true church allow all of this?” This is a great question. A number of things must be said in order to adequately answer this question. First, as has been said a number of times in this work, people are a product of their time and culture. Many people still went to true churches for cultural reasons that were not truly saved. This was especially true in the South at this time. And as for the white Christians that were truly saved, it is important to understand that they were taught from a very young age that black people were inferior and dangerous. These true Christians still loved black people and treated them well on a personal interaction basis, but they still believed that a lot of the social structures of the time were good. Many of them did speak out against the horrors of the terrorist groups, but many still felt that these groups served a good purpose on some level. They often felt that they did the work that the police were often too slow to do. I know how repugnant this is, but it is important to understand that many of these Christians greatly feared African Americans because of their upbringing.

You may say, “Why not just call them heretics then? You certainly don’t seem to have a problem calling others heretical.” A heretic is someone that refuses to believe something that the Bible teaches beyond all doubt. And as much as we might not like it, the Bible does teach that sometimes God curses certain people groups and that they must be treated differently. These white Christians were dead wrong in applying this truth to African Americans at that time as there was no real evidence that God had done this with African Americans. There still is no evidence of this. With that made very clear, these Christians were taught from a very young age that God had cursed the African American people and they saw from their Bibles that sometimes God does in fact do this. Hence, we cannot call them heretics as much as their actions and beliefs disgust us today. And as we will see, white Christians have not been the only Christians with racist tendencies despite the fact that this is often how things are represented by many today in our nation.

Further, it is so important to remember that white Christians were hardly the only true Christians in our nation at this time. African Americans made up a giant percentage of the true church at this time. Even though they were a minority of the overall American population, many white people were leaving the true church, and as said, many in the true churches were not actually walking with the Lord and were truly racist in a hateful sense. And most of the African American population was sincerely walking with Jesus. Due to these realities, they made up a very large percentage of true Christians in our country at this time. And these Christians were heroes of the faith. They were some of the most devout Christians in all of history and they often endured horrible prejudice and discrimination. In spite of this, they showed immense amounts of love and grace to white people. They persevered in their walk with God and their unshakeable belief in the Bible in the face of all of this bad treatment.

Because of all of this mess across the board in our country, many people became very distrustful of the true church in our country. They felt that it was the root of many of these problems. There was some truth to this, but it was of course a very overly simplified view of the long and complicated history that had led to this point in our culture. Regardless of that fact, many people left the church in favor of No Religion or Liberal Protestantism. Most chose the latter and by 1920 it was the largest religion or worldview in our nation. There were still a lot of true Christians (Historic Protestants) left, and there were also now a lot of Catholics in our country as well due to a massive amount of immigration in the late 1800's and early 1900's. So, not everyone was Liberal Protestant by a long shot, but they did hold a lot of power and sway in our country by 1920.

This was all amplified by the fact that during the early 1900's, the Progressive political movement took place, which was very popular among the American people. Most Liberal Protestants joined this movement and this led to the Social Gospel doctrine, which was also very popular among many Americans at that time. The Social Gospel doctrine basically said that the primary doctrine of "Christianity" is to help people with social issues. Obviously, helping people with social issues is an extremely important point of true Christianity, but it is not the primary doctrine by a long way. All of this though, only led to Liberal Protestantism becoming more and more popular.

One of the biggest problems with the rise of Liberal Protestantism was the fact that the Liberal Protestants were not interested in starting their own churches or denominations. They infiltrated and slowly took over the true denominations. This led to countless divisions and battles within denominations as the true churches tried to get rid of the liberal ones and the liberal ones tried to get rid of the orthodox churches. Finally, all of this exploded into a full controversy around 1920. The Liberal Protestant churches were called the Modernist churches or the Modernist movement within the church, and the true orthodox churches began to be called the Fundamentalists or Fundamentalist churches. The orthodox churches were given this name because they insisted that true Christians must hold to the essential or *fundamental* truths that are taught in the Bible.

The leader of the Fundamentalists was a conservative Presbyterian scholar from Princeton. His name was J Gresham Machen. He was a brilliant scholar and Christian apologist. He wrote a number of works during this time, but his best and most famous by far was *Christianity and Liberalism*. It is a wonderful work and I highly recommend you read it if you ever get the chance. Despite his efforts and the efforts of so many other great Christian leaders, he (and they) were not able to save the denominations. Most of them fully embraced Liberal Protestantism and the true Christians and true Christian churches were forced to leave these denominations. Many true churches did stay within these denominations in order to try to save them. To this day there are still remnants of true churches in a number of the older Liberal Protestant denominations. These denominations have only gotten worse and worse since the 1920's, and so in my estimation these churches should leave these denominations.

The great exodus from the older denominations led to the development of a number of new Fundamentalist or orthodox Protestant denominations. However, countless true Christians were fed up with denominations after what had happened. This led to millions of true Christians joining the Independent Bible branch of the Christian tree. This branch had its beginnings going back to the Plymouth Brethren that were true Christians who left the heretical roots of that movement. This branch remained very small though and did not truly become a major branch on the Christian tree until this time after the Fundamentalist-Modernist controversy. This branch, largely due to the Plymouth Brethren influence, for the most part held to Semi-Dispensational

theology; rejected infant baptism; rejected the doctrines of grace (except for perseverance of the saints; although most did not like that term and preferred to call this doctrine *eternal security*); were passionate advocates of the young earth position; and of course, believed in independent churches. This branch became very popular among white Christians in our country, especially in the South. The movement became so popular among white Christians in our country that Semi-Dispensational doctrine began to seep into many of the orthodox denominations that developed after the Fundamentalist-Modernist controversy. It also began to seep into many of the true churches that remained in the older denominations.

The Fundamentalist movement eventually unraveled as it became extremely anti-intellectual. The reason the movement became so anti-intellectual in spite of initially being led by great scholars like Machen was because far too many white American Christians associated academics with liberalism at that time. This was because it was usually heretical professors in the Christian universities and Bible colleges that were leading the push to move the church towards Liberal Protestantism. Many true Christians, especially poor white ones, in our country felt that all Christians needed was their Bibles. This led many Christians to abandon belief in the full-blown theory of evolution. This in my strong estimation was a very good thing in itself. The problem was that many true Christians began to think that science itself was a bad thing. This led to the Scopes Trial. I am not going to get into all of the details regarding this trial in 1925 as it is rather complex and beyond the reach of this book. I encourage you to research it if you would like. Suffice it to say for here that this trial was a catastrophic embarrassment for the church. The church did not look like it only disagreed over certain important points of science, it looked like it did not believe in science at all. To an extent, it looked like it did not believe in academics at all. To this day, the church in America is often seen in this light. This is so sad because this is not biblical and it is not how the church has gone about things for two thousand years.

Because of this debacle, many true Christians in this nation rejected the *Fundamentalist* label. But, many no longer liked the label *Protestant* either because of its association with Liberal Protestantism. Hence, many tried to bring back the label *Evangelical* from the roots of the Reformation. Because that label had still been around

in the true Protestant world for so long, many Fundamentalists still used it as a secondary term for themselves as well. In order to avoid confusion here, many true Christians in our country started to use the term *Neo-Evangelical* in order to distinguish themselves from the Fundamentalists. And that term was very popular for a while after the Scopes Trial, all the way up until the 1970's in some circles. By the 70's though, the vast majority of true Christians, not only in our country, but around the world (due to the Age of Missions that is going on at the same time as all of this), began to refer to themselves as *Evangelicals*.

The term *Fundamentalist* hung around for a while, especially among white Christians in the South. Over time, a huge chunk of the true Christian population that was white in the South became part of the Southern Baptist Convention denomination. This denomination was already large at the time of the Fundamentalist-Modernist controversy, and many true Christians in the South were already part of the Baptist branch to one degree or another. But, this denomination became dominant among white Christians in the South during this time. Many of these Christians called themselves *Southern Baptist* and left it at that. Many Southern Baptists preferred the term *Fundamentalist*, many preferred *Neo-Evangelical*, and many preferred *Evangelical*. Some used a combination of these terms. Over time though, the Southern Baptist Convention saw itself as Evangelical. A number of Liberal Protestants did infiltrate the denomination and this became a big problem in the 70's, but the denomination did the right thing and thoroughly kicked them out of the denomination.

As all of this transition was taking place in our nation throughout the middle portion of the 1900's, many Fundamentalists were true Christians. However, a shift began to take place within the movement towards heresy on a number of fronts. First, many began to deny the human element of Scripture. God fully wrote the Bible. No question about that. But, He did so through His prophets and apostles. He did not dictate the Bible to them. Sure, there were times where God revealed what He wanted His prophets to say word for word. But, this was not His normal way of doing things, especially when the prophets and apostles wrote the word of God. Paul's personality is very different from the personality of Peter, for example, and this comes across very clearly in their writings. Thus, it is quite clear that God did not dictate the letters of Paul

to him, and the same is of course true for Peter as well. Many Fundamentalists were denying this obvious truth from the Bible.

There was also a major push towards only accepting the King James Version of the Bible. This controversy came about because the King James Version had served the English speaking church for centuries at that point. The problem was that English had changed so much that many English speakers really struggled to understand this version. And the church was of course expanding all over the world due to the Age of Missions, and so there was a huge push (rightly so) to translate the Bible into as many languages as possible. Hence, the King James was losing its former prominence in the church. And Fundamentalists became very opposed to this. It was similar to how the Catholic Church clung to the Vulgate as if it was the only translation God could use in the Middle Ages.

Now to be clear, to this day many true Christians still prefer the King James. That is not heretical. Many believe that it is still the best version in the English language and that other versions are very problematic. That also is not heretical. And many Fundamentalists at this time held very similar views. What is heresy is to say that the King James Version is inspired by “god” and is the only view that can be allowed for English speaking “Christians.” This heresy developed into its own small heretical movement known as the King James Only position. I do not include this heresy among the major heretical movements as for the most part it is a part of the current heretical Fundamentalist movement, but there are some that hold to this position that would not be considered Fundamentalists in other areas. With all of that clarified, this movement has been rabid and nasty in its denunciation of anyone who would dare defend any other translation of the Bible in the English language. Some go so far as to say that other Christians in other parts of the world must learn English and only use the King James. This is legalistic garbage and must be firmly rejected by all true Christians.

The Fundamentalist movement also began to become blatantly legalistic across the board. The movement in many circles began to condemn all alcohol; tobacco; dancing; movies; tv; cards; and other activities. None of these positions were in themselves heretical and have been held by other orthodox Christians. However, collectively they produced a feeling of rules, rules, rules that is not in keeping with the

Bible, especially the New Testament. The movement also began to highly downplay the role of general revelation (the revelation and knowledge we receive from God outside of the Bible from common sense, nature, and the study of the world). Today, many Fundamentalists believe in a flat earth; deny the existence of the universe beyond the sky of our planet (they say that the sun, moon, and stars are all actually in the sky itself); and deny that dinosaurs ever existed. Many are part of far-right extremist groups and believe in all sorts of political conspiracy theories.

The biggest heresy that developed in the movement was antinomianism. That may sound very odd at first when they were all about good works and rules, but remember, antinomianism does not say that “Christians” should live in sin. It says that this is terribly unwise and will be punished by “god” both in this life and at the final judgment through the lack of rewards. However, the heresy does state that one can by choice live in sin and still be saved. This heresy developed in the movement because the movement had become so closely tied to Semi-Dispensational theology early on. However, a lot of pastors and leaders within the movement became so enamored with Dispensational thought that they began to fully adopt original heretical Dispensationalism.

Therefore, by the 1980’s, very few true Christians were continuing to call themselves Fundamentalists as the original godly movement had become thoroughly heretical by that time. It is true that some true white Christians in the South (and very few elsewhere; although they do exist) still retain the title in the older sense of the term. We should accept them as our brothers and sisters in Christ, while still gently telling them that we believe they are making a big mistake by still using that label when the label is now so associated with a heretical movement. Further, the actual heretical Fundamentalist movement still exists in pockets of the South. I would say that about 5 million people are still part of what has become this heretical and apostate movement.

One of the most frustrating, annoying, and sinful aspects of Liberal Protestantism is the way it stole the labels *Protestant*, *Evangelical*, and so many of the denominational labels that had existed within true Protestantism for centuries, such as *Lutheran*; *Reformed*; *Anglican*; *Episcopalian*; *Presbyterian*; *Congregationalist*; *Baptist*; and *Methodist*. When Protestantism came on the scene, it continued to use the terms

catholic and *orthodox* for themselves, but it understood that it needed to do so rarely and only when speaking technically. It used the terms in the lower case and it did not label any of its churches or denominations by those labels in order to avoid confusion with the Catholic Church and Eastern Orthodoxy. Liberal Protestantism had no such respect. It tried to take over the old labels altogether. And this has led to tremendous amounts of confusion for people, including millions of true Christians.

One of the primary ways that true churches combated this reality was to emphasize the creeds and confessions of the true historic church down through the ages. And this is why I usually refer to the various branches on the Christian tree today as being *Confessional*. I discuss this much further in the first book of my “basics” series (final chapter).

It is also very important to carefully define the terms *Protestant*, *Evangelical*, and *Fundamentalist* today. Ever since the Fundamentalist-Modernist controversy, many people use these terms extremely loosely and often in very lazy ways. This causes a great deal of confusion for many people, including many true Christians. It also often causes our Lord Jesus and His true church to be terribly misrepresented and misunderstood. Many people will often use the term *Protestant* to refer to almost any claim to Christianity that is not Catholic or Eastern Orthodox. This means that even the LDS Church is often classified as being within “Protestantism” despite rejecting almost all of the core doctrines of the Reformation! And of course the term has now been associated with Liberal Protestantism (which is a contradiction in terms) for a long time now. Hence, it is best not to use the naked term *Protestant* too often when speaking of the true church today, but to use terms such as *orthodox Protestant*, *Historic Protestant*, *Traditional Protestant*, etc.

The term *Evangelical* also suffers from a great deal of misuse as well. Many Liberal Protestant people, churches, and denominations will use this term of themselves, although many hate to be associated with it. Progressive Christians (a sub-group within Liberal Protestantism) have been very aggressive in their efforts to take over Traditional Evangelicalism. Like the Liberal Protestants during the Fundamentalist-Modernist controversy, they seek to take over true churches; denominations; Bible colleges; seminaries; and institutions. Many hate the label

Evangelical and are very critical of true Evangelicals, while others use the term and say that those who want to hold on to a more traditional understanding of it are living in the past and are basically bigots. And on many websites, many secular people use the term in all sorts of confusing ways. Many will only use the term for those that primarily go by that term. Hence, if someone is a Southern Baptist for example, they won't classify this person as an Evangelical but as a Baptist. The problem is that most Southern Baptists are Conservative Evangelicals. Others will only classify people as Evangelicals who are Evangelical and are part of non-denominational churches.

Hence, if you look up the religious breakdown of a nation for example, you may see a list that says the percentage of Muslims; the percentage of Catholics; the percentage of Baptists; and the percentage of Evangelicals. But, this is often highly misleading. This is because many in the "Evangelical" category are often part of the Pseudo-Pentecostal/Charismatic Movement, or are part of Progressive Christianity, or are part of another heretical group. And many within the "Baptist" category are in fact true Evangelicals, while many others would be Liberal Protestants. You should be very aware of these problems if you do your own research on these matters. All of this is why it is best today to not use the naked term *Evangelical* very often any longer for the true church of the present time. Terms such as *Conservative Evangelical*, *Historic Evangelical*, *Traditional Evangelical*, *orthodox Evangelical*, and *true Evangelical* are much better. Now, a lot of really good Christians still use the naked term and we should not condemn them for that. We should gently offer correction here when appropriate.

Because the Fundamentalist movement eventually became very rigid, legalistic, and anti-intellectual, the term *Fundamentalist* took on a very, very negative connotation in our culture and to a large extent rightfully so. However, now many secular people will use the term to describe almost any "religious" (as they define that term) person who is trying to hold to the longstanding traditional and historic beliefs of his or her "religion." Therefore, you will often hear about Fundamentalist Catholics; Fundamentalist Mormons; Fundamentalist Muslims; Fundamentalist Hindus; etc. Many times people will toss the term around to describe any "religious" group they don't like.

The problem is that because the term was a godly term that was used of true Christians at the beginning of the 1900's, many secular folks like to trap true

Evangelicals with the term. They will often use the term for us in a negative way to try to scare people away from the true church as most people don't want to think of themselves as dumb or legalistic, but when we point out that we are not Fundamentalists in the modern sense of the term, they will turn around and say things like, "So, you don't believe in the fundamentals of Christianity as laid out by the original Fundamentalists?" When we say yes, of course we do, they will say, "See, you are Fundamentalists." This is a terribly dishonest form of bait and switch. They are using the term in two different ways. This is known as equivocation and when it is done intentionally, it is deceptive. I always tell people that if they want to call me a Fundamentalist along the lines of Machen, thank you so much for the compliment. But, if you want to call me a Fundamentalist along the lines of how that term is usually understood and used today, I reject the label. I am a Conservative Evangelical and that is not the same thing as a Fundamentalist as that term is usually understood today.

Another way that many secular folks will try to trap true Evangelicals or any traditional "religious" person is by saying that a Fundamentalist is anyone who takes their scriptures literally. This is their way of trying to get traditional "religious" folks to change their minds about certain social issues that tend to be extremely important to secular people. Many secular people don't care that much if you are "Christian;" or Muslim; or LDS; or Hindu; or whatever; as long as you agree with them on LGBT+ issues; abortion; immigration; gun control; and other political matters. They know the problem is that many of these religions/worldviews take positions on these matters that are contrary to the secular positions. So, they say that one should not read one's scriptures literally because to do so is Fundamentalist and most people in our culture know that to be labeled a Fundamentalist is bad.

This is also very deceptive. No traditionally "religious" person takes all of his or her scriptures completely literally. Every religious scripture contains figures of speech; hyperbole; metaphors; analogies; parables; etc. These things are not meant to be taken literally. So to act like traditionally "religious" people are too dumb to realize that such things should not be taken literally is insulting and condescending in the extreme. But, this tactic often works because a lot of people who were raised in traditionally "religious" homes that often did not pay very close attention to things growing up, can easily be

deceived into thinking that they would be an idiot to continue to take their scriptures literally. And so they begin to not take literally the portions that are intended to be taken literally and this allows them to take a more liberal or secular view on certain political matters while in their own minds still remaining part of their “religion.” Don’t be deceived by this nonsense. As true Christians, when we say that we take the Bible literally, we only mean that we use common sense and interpret it in a straightforward manner. We don’t try to make it say things it clearly is not saying. We interpret it literally except for the many parts that are clearly not literal or that give us good reasons to think that it might not be meant to be taken literally in a certain instance. When certain portions seem to conflict, we seek to harmonize them in the smoothest way possible.

Before plowing forward, I want to quickly clarify how I have been using the term *secular* in the last few paragraphs. I have been using the term in a fairly imprecise and broad fashion. For a more precise understanding of how I usually use the term, see the first book in my “basics” series (2nd chapter). With that definition in mind, it is important to say that many secular people vote conservative politically. Most are liberal theologically, but that is not true for all as I have defined the term. And many others are unaware of many of their religion’s teachings and so will actually change their minds on certain political matters when this has been made clear to them. Others are conservative both politically and theologically, they simply don’t practice their religion very diligently themselves. With all that made clear, most secular people tend to vote liberally, especially in our culture, and that is how I have been using the term *secular* in the last few paragraphs.

Finally, before wrapping up this section I want to address the question that many of you may have about now. And that is, “Do I have to explain all of these very complicated nuances every time someone asks me what my religion is or what I believe? Because this is all going to be hard to remember.” No you absolutely do not. All you need to say is, “I am a Bible-believing Christian.” If someone desires more details from you as to what all that entails, I recommend following the advice I give in my essay “Tips for Witnessing.” It can be found on my website.

As glorious as the gospel going throughout the world was, it did come with a heavy price tag. Just as the church had been persecuted by the Jews; then by the Romans; then by the Muslims; then by the Vikings; then by the Catholics; the church throughout much of the world during the 1900's found itself being horribly persecuted by many Catholics; Muslims; Hindus; and Communists. This is not to say that everyone in these groups are bad people. Far from it; most are wonderful people who do not support persecution. However, in certain parts of the world during this time, many within these worldviews brutally persecuted the church. As always though, God has only used this to strengthen His beloved people.

Chapter 12: The Evangelical Church Part 2

The Age of Missions Continued

Doctrinal Developments

Pentecostalism

At the beginning of the 1900's, the Pentecostal movement developed. It eventually became the Confessional Pentecostal branch on the Christian tree and in over 100 years it has become the largest branch on the true Christian tree today. It was the 8th major branch at the time. I have my strong disagreements with this movement on certain very important theological positions, but this movement deserves a lot of credit as it was one of the key components in the success of the Age of Missions. Pentecostals take the Great Commission extremely seriously and they have been instrumental in bringing large numbers of people to Christ throughout the world, especially in South America, Africa, and Asia.

The Pentecostal movement has its roots in the Holiness movement. This movement was a sub-movement that developed within Methodism during the Second Great Awakening revivals of the 1800's in the United States. If you recall, one of the key teachings of John Wesley (the founder of Methodism) was the doctrine of a second work of grace by the Holy Spirit. He taught that the Spirit does change the believer at the moment of salvation, but he said that for those Christians who seek it, the Spirit will grant a second work of grace wherein the Spirit makes the Christian "perfect." Now Wesley did not teach that the Christian becomes absolutely perfect here as that is heresy. He said that the Christian only becomes perfect in a manner of speaking. The Holiness movement picked up on this theme and tied it into a lot of the revivalism that was going on at the time in the 1800's. The movement emphasized passionate preaching, lively worship services, and this second work of grace. Some taught something similar to Wesley in regard to this second work of grace, while others said it had more to do with a greater fullness of the Spirit (and would not have used the language of "perfection"). As far as those who used the language of a greater filling, there was a diversity of opinion concerning what exactly this meant. Some felt this primarily only referred to holiness; some felt it primarily referred to the reception of spiritual gifts; some felt it referred to greater boldness for Jesus; some felt it had to do with speaking in tongues; and many said it had to do with a combination of these gifts.

In the early 1900's, a man by the name of Charles Parham believed that this second work of grace most specifically had to do with speaking in tongues. He started a movement on this basis, but he personally adopted a number of heresies. William Seymour was the true founder of Pentecostalism. He was a godly and passionate African American man who at first followed the teachings of Parham. He eventually led a huge revival in Los Angeles (known as the *Azusa Street Revival*) and got rid of the heresies of Parham. From there, the Pentecostal movement spread rapidly throughout our country and then to the rest of the world. One of the most beautiful aspects of the Pentecostal movement was the fact that it was interracial from the beginning. Most of the other branches had white Presbyterian churches and black Presbyterian churches in the United States, or white Baptist churches and black Baptist churches, etc. While things were hardly perfect and often individual churches still unfortunately tended to be

predominantly white or black, there was never an official divide within Pentecostalism. Many churches had both white and black Christians and set a wonderful example for the rest of the church.

Some of the key beliefs of Pentecostalism are that miracles still take place today; God gives revelations beyond the Bible today; worship services should be lively and passionate; the baptism of the Holy Spirit is a second work of grace wherein the believer is given a fuller measure of the Spirit, most of his or her spiritual gifts, and greater boldness for Jesus; all who have been baptized by the Spirit are given the gift of speaking in tongues at that moment and this is the evidence that the believer has now been baptized in the Spirit; and that the baptism of the Holy Spirit is open to all Christians if they seek it out.

To be clear, most true Pentecostals have been true Evangelicals and have believed that the revelations that come to those with the gift of prophecy are not the pure word of God. Most say that these revelations can be wrong in the articulation by the one with the gift and therefore must always be carefully interpreted in light of the Bible. A very small number of Pentecostals say that these revelations are the pure word of God and thus reject the key doctrine of *sola scriptura*. This is a terrible shame in my opinion, but as long as these true Christians are always careful to say that these revelations must always be interpreted in the light of the Bible, we should accept them as our brothers and sisters in Christ. Thankfully, as said, their number is very small. Now, there are many who claim to be “Pentecostal” that also believe that their “revelations” are the pure word of “god” beyond the Bible, but they also take these alleged “revelations” to heretical lengths and are not part of the true church. Some of the beliefs on the above list had been believed by many Christians before Pentecostals, but the specific belief that was so unique to them was the belief that the baptism of the Holy Spirit is a second work of grace that always results in speaking in tongues.

The Independent Bible Churches

We have already looked at the development of the Independent Bible Churches branch of the Christian tree in connection with the Fundamentalist-Modernist

controversy. A few more things must be said about it here though. In some ways this branch of the true Christian tree predates the Pentecostal branch. However, I usually place it after as it did not really get cooking in a large way until after the Fundamentalist-Modernist controversy. Once it really got rolling it became the 9th branch on the true Christian tree. This branch has done a tremendous amount of good over the past 100 years or so. It has produced countless churches that are filled with people who are on fire for God.

However, it has not been without its very real problems and issues. Many of these churches, especially in the South, have had strong Fundamentalist tendencies even if they don't fully embrace the heresies of the current apostate movement. This branch also led to the seeker-sensitive movement, largely in reaction to Fundamentalism (despite the fact that so many churches with strong Fundamentalist tendencies remain within this overall branch). This seeker-sensitive movement was orthodox on paper and many people within it were truly saved, but it basically turned church services into entertainment and led to a lot of people coming to church only for that entertainment and not for Jesus. Many of these people end up leaving the church once they get bored with the entertainment and most of them end up having very bad things to say about the church because of how shallow and superficial Christianity seemed to them as that is all they were presented with in many of these churches.

This movement eventually led to the megachurch movement. This movement had massive seeker-sensitive churches with celebrity pastors. Often these churches had very little accountability and so they have led to endless corruption behind the scenes and in open scandals. Many of these churches incorporated New Age practices (I will discuss the New Age more fully later in this work). These churches were not heretical, but often simply unknowingly adopted practices that they thought were harmless, such as yoga, meditation, prayer labyrinths, etc. The pastors of these churches were often so concerned with being hip and up to speed on trends in our culture, that they often did not fully educate themselves on the background to these practices. This is not to say that these practices are never found in smaller churches or denominational churches in our country. They certainly are. But, this was by far most seen in Independent Bible churches, especially in megachurches. This seeker sensitive

movement also led to the booming popular Christian music industry in our country. While this industry has produced some very godly music, bands, and Christians, it has also led to a number of scandals and many, many cases of apostasy. This has been a terrible black eye upon God's true church.

Many of these seeker-sensitive churches have collaborated with Catholics, Progressive Christians, and those in the Pseudo-Pentecostal/Charismatic Movement because they are desperate not to seem too dogmatic or judgmental to their people. This has been one of the prime reasons that the Progressive Christian movement has been so successful at taking over so much of what was once Conservative Evangelicalism, especially in our country. Hardly a day goes by without some major celebrity pastor or "Christian" rock star leaving the faith. Hardly a day goes by without a new scandal from this world. Hardly a day goes by without another church or Christian organization repudiating its long held stances on inerrancy and/or LGBT+ issues. Many have abandoned their stance on abortion as well.

Another huge problem has been the lack of accountability doctrinally. I fully understand that denominations are hardly perfect. They almost always lead towards liberalism and this is so frustrating and evil. But, this almost always takes decades or longer to fully develop because of the restraints that are in place in denominations. Far too often, non-denominational churches will fall into bizarre doctrines and heresies because there is nothing to stop a wayward pastor from leading his or her church astray. This has especially been a problem on the foreign mission field throughout the Age of Missions. Non-denominational churches in America do tend to be far more healthy doctrinally, at least on paper, because of the Historic Evangelical foundation of our nation. Bad churches usually get called out eventually by sound churches in our country.

Unfortunately though, in many other parts of the world where any form of "Christianity" was a minority religion, this was not the case. This is why almost anywhere in South America, Africa, and Asia where the church has been growing so rapidly over the past 100 years, legions of false churches have grown up right beside the true church. And often true Christians are left very, very confused by all of this chaos. Most of these false churches belong to the Pseudo-Pentecostal/Charismatic

Movement, but there are also vast numbers of individual churches that hold to their own batch of heresies. Those individual churches are not part of the Independent Bible branch, but they have very much been facilitated by that branch.

One of the biggest problems the church ran into during the Age of Missions, despite its unquestioned greatness, is that of syncretism. Many people in South America, Africa, and Asia who were open to Christianity still wanted to keep polygamy and many Pagan rituals and practices in their lives. Many times people truly converted to Jesus and still wanted to keep practices that were not truly heretical but that made the missionaries nervous. These are debatable issues to this day in these parts of the world. And we have to admit that on some of these things we as white Christians might be wrong and may be reading our European biases into our own Christianity. However, without question, there were and still are many people who have embraced outright syncretism in a fully heretical sense in many of these parts of the world. Most of these churches and groups have over time joined the Pseudo-Pentecostal/Charismatic Movement. But, many are independent churches who believe they are following the example of other independent churches. One of the biggest problem areas in this regard has been among the indigenous churches. I will discuss them more below when we will fully discuss the Pseudo-Pentecostal/Charismatic Movement.

The Continuation of the Black Church in America

Despite all of the prejudice, discrimination, and problems that the African American church faced in our nation, often even at the hands of other true Christians to a large extent, the church continued strong throughout the 1900's. In fact, it became more organized, more educated, and more orthodox in this century. The AME continued strong and two other key denominations were added to the church. These were the National Baptist Convention and the Church of God in Christ. The first was part of the Confessional Baptist branch of course, and the latter was part of the Confessional Pentecostal branch. It should also be said that many African Americans were a part of the Assemblies of God denomination, a major Confessional Pentecostal denomination with mostly white Christians, but also a large percentage of African American, Hispanic

American, and eventually Asian American Christians as well. Even further, many African Americans were part of smaller denominations and independent churches as well. The AME and the Church of God in Christ are still excellent orthodox denominations today. The National Baptist Convention is overall still a solid denomination and most of the churches within it are true churches. However, it does allow far too many Liberal Protestant churches and this is very wrong and unfortunate.

The African American church was instrumental in driving forward the Civil Rights movement of the 1900's. And this was absolutely crucial in causing the church as a whole in America to come to terms with its racist past and tendencies. We still have a long way to go in the American church today, but we have come a very long way. One of the difficult challenges that the African American church faced in its involvement with the Civil Rights movement was that it was forced to work with many non-Christian organizations. We cannot fault them for this as equality needed to happen both in our country and in the church. However, this did come with certain consequences. One of the biggest ones was that two of the most prominent leaders of the movement were not believers. These were Malcolm X and Martin Luther King Jr. Malcolm X was Muslim and King was Liberal Protestant. King did not even believe in the resurrection of Jesus, something that even many Liberal Protestants still believed in at the time. It has also come out that King was a chronic adulterer. These truths have left a bad taste in the mouths of many Christians regarding the Civil Rights movement. But, it must be remembered how important this cause was from a biblical perspective and so overall the African American church did the right thing.

Another consequence of these alliances was that the African American church became very tied to the Democratic Party. This is a long and complicated history, which cannot be fully explained in this work, but suffice it to say that the Democratic Party supported King through JFK early on in King's work. And this led most African Americans, including most African American Christians, to become very loyal to the Democratic Party. And this loyalty is still very strong to this day. The problem is that over time the Democratic Party has become more and more anti-Christian. Today, it overtly supports abortion, the LGBT+ movement, and policies that are far too Socialist in nature. Obviously true African American Christians strongly oppose these elements of

the Party, and believe that the Republican Party does not do enough to help African Americans, other minorities, and the poor in general. Many believe that they can reform the party over time. However, so far, this goal has not been reached as the party has only become more and more cemented in its anti-Christian views. Because of this, many African American Christians are leaving the Democratic Party to become Republicans or Independents. But, many remain very loyal. This situation is very sad because most white Christians in America, especially in the South, vote Republican, while most African American Christians still vote Democrat. This does not show to the world a united front in the church on political matters.

None of this is to suggest that almost all African Americans that attend church go to orthodox churches. Before Martin Luther King Jr. there were very few Liberal Protestant black churches. However, after the Civil Rights movement, that began to radically shift. And that trend has only gotten much worse in our day as our culture has become more and more liberal and secular. With that said, it is important to note that the vast majority of predominantly white churches that openly support the Democratic Party are Liberal Protestant. And that same reality is not present in predominantly black churches. Almost all predominantly black churches in our nation support the Democratic Party, but many are Liberal Protestant and many are Conservative Evangelical. It should also be said that many predominantly African American churches have been sucked into the Pseudo-Pentecostal/Charismatic movement as well.

And Donald Trump only made matters worse on this front. I understand that Trump was surprisingly (at least to me and many others) a very good President, and that Biden has been appallingly bad. Even many African Americans admit this right now. But, Trump did have a racist past and said some awful things during his 2016 campaign and during his Presidency from a racial standpoint. This only caused many African Americans, including many true Christians, to become even more calcified in their opposition to the Republican Party. Let us pray that the church can continue to heal and become more united when it comes to race relations and on political matters.

The Charismatic Movement

The Charismatic movement was started by Dennis Bennett in the 1960's. He was an orthodox Episcopal priest. He and his movement branched off from the Pentecostal movement. Orthodox Charismatic theology is very similar to Pentecostal theology. The primary difference is that Charismatic theology does not say that speaking in tongues always accompanies the baptism of the Holy Spirit. They say that it often does, but they say that many Christians are baptized in the Spirit and do not receive this gift.

The movement at first was not really its own distinct branch. Most of the movement was found in denominational churches. So, you had Charismatic Presbyterians, Charismatic Episcopalians, Charismatic Baptists, etc. Later, it also started to crop up among many independent churches. Two key movements caused it to become a full-fledged branch. These were the Vineyard movement and the Calvary Chapel movement. Both movements started out as part of the Independent Bible Churches branch. Both planted a number of independent churches. However, over time they both morphed into denominations and thus became Charismatic denominations, thus establishing the Confessional Charismatic branch of the Christian tree. This branch is the 10th and final major branch on the true Christian tree today. Calvary Chapel still does not like to think of itself as a denomination, but it is an official organization that functions as a denomination.

Despite my strong disagreements with the Calvary Chapel movement on certain very important doctrines, overall it has been a fantastic force for good in the church. I have more to say about it below. The Vineyard movement on the other hand, has been a mixed bag. It was started by John Wimber. Wimber was a believer, but he had a lot of issues. From day one, the Vineyard movement was made up of true churches and churches and sub-movements that were part of the Pseudo-Pentecostal/Charismatic Movement. Today, the movement has for the most part cleaned up this poisonous mixing and is a very solid Bible-believing denomination.

There are about 5 million Christians in this branch of the tree today. If you look online, be aware of the fact that you will see much, much higher numbers given. It is important to know that many people who claim to be "Charismatic" are actually Roman Catholic or Liberal Protestant. It is also important to know that many true Christians that are Charismatic in theology are better classified under one of the other branches

because they are part of one of those branches while adopting Charismatic doctrine. With that said, there are denominations that are Charismatic as their core distinctive. Collectively they make up the Confessional Charismatic branch of the true Christian tree according to my system of classification.

The Creationist Movement

One of the primary ways Satan has attacked the church over the past two hundred years has been through the theory of evolution. This theory was first fully advanced by Charles Darwin in England in the mid-1800's. It has become the viewpoint of almost all educated people all around the world, regardless of worldview. For many it is scientific fact. It is true that it is barely possible to hold to the theistic evolution position or the old earth position (for further definitions of these positions see the second book of my "basics" series [chapter 1]) as a true Christian, but in my estimation and the estimation of most Bible-believing Christians, these positions are a major stretch. However, because evolutionists were so insistent that the full theory of evolution is a fact, and because of the Scopes Trial as well, most Christians after the Scopes Trial believed in theistic evolution until the rise of the Creationist movement in the 1960's. For the first time, non-Fundamentalist true Christian theologians said enough is enough and started to fight back against the theory of evolution and all of the compromises with it in the church.

The movement was started by Henry Morris. He tirelessly fought for the young earth position, the position that had been held by the overwhelming vast majority of Christians for all of church history and that certainly seems to be the biblical teaching on the matter, for the rest of his life. A number of organizations developed after Morris in the Creationist movement. For a long time the most notable was ICR (the Institute for Creation Research). However, towards the end of the 1900's and through to today, the biggest and most influential Creationist organization has been Answers in Genesis. This organization was started by Ken Ham, who still leads it to this day. They provide videos; documentaries; conferences; articles; debates; seminars; a museum; and a full replica of the Ark. I don't agree with everything they say, but they have been absolutely

foundational in turning most of the church back to what I believe is the clear biblical position on the full doctrine of creation. They are not part of any one branch of the Christian tree, but seek to serve the church across the board and they have done a superb job of this.

Before moving forward, it should be said that sometimes the term *Creationist* is used very broadly. Sometimes it is used to describe anyone who believes God created everything. Hence, sometimes certain evolutionists will use it to describe all Christians, even theistic evolutionists. This is why it is often good to use the phrases *young universe* or *young earth* when talking about the position of the movement under discussion in this subsection. With that said, usually the term *Creationist* is understood to be referring to young universe or young earth Creationists.

The Calvary Chapel Movement

The Calvary Chapel Movement was started by the godly Chuck Smith in the 1960's in Southern California. It came about because of the Jesus Movement that was going on in California at the same time. The Jesus Movement was a mighty move of God among the hippie culture of that time. Many true Christians in America at the time, both white and black, felt that the hippie movement was so anti-God that little could be done to try to reach them. They were wrong. The Spirit moved mightily among the hippies on the West Coast, and from there the movement spread all over America and into other parts of the world. At first, the churches that sprang from the movement were mostly independent churches. But, over time many began to move into denominational churches as they grew older. Smith had been a traditional Confessional Pentecostal pastor and was reluctant to reach out to the movement. However, his wife and daughter both encouraged him to do so. Smith left his Pentecostal denomination and became the pastor of an independent church, the first Calvary Chapel church. Smith was one of the best Bible teachers ever to live and countless new Christians from the Jesus movement flocked to hear him speak. The movement has grown extremely fast in 50 years. It now has churches all over the country and in many pockets of the world.

As stated above, the Calvary Chapel movement eventually became a key part of the Confessional Charismatic branch. The movement differed from the Vineyard in that it was much more firm on certain positions that are not essential to being Charismatic. The movement strongly holds to the young earth view; it adopts Semi-Dispensational theology; it specifically (within Semi-Dispensationalism) is passionately in favor of the pre-trib rapture doctrine; and it is against Reformed theology. Also, while their services tended to be more lively than most denominational services when the movement first started, they were far more cautious about how lively things should get compared to many true Pentecostal and Charismatic churches. Today, their services do not look much different than many services in Conservative Evangelical churches all over the country.

Another key player in the movement has been Greg Laurie (who is still very much alive today and preaching the gospel all over the world). Laurie is one of the greatest preachers and evangelists of all time. While he has since left the Calvary movement, he started out in it and was a huge part of its eventual success.

The Lordship Controversy

As I've said, Semi-Dispensational doctrine became very popular among white Christians in America during the 1900's after the Fundamentalist-Modernist controversy. And this has remained the case even to this day. While the numbers and percentages have waned considerably, there is no question that most true white Christians in America, especially in the South, still hold to Semi-Dispensational doctrine, especially concerning the end times. This is why the Scofield Reference Bible was so popular at the beginning of the 1900's, and also why the *Left Behind* book series was so wildly popular at the end of the 1900's. Another fruit of this reality was the establishment of Dallas Theological Seminary. This seminary was specifically established to train up pastors who would hold to Semi-Dispensational doctrine. Most of the pastors go on to pastor non-denominational churches, but a number pastor churches within denominations where Semi-Dispensational theology is allowed. This seminary has

overall been a wonderfully godly institution that has been used mightily by God. But, it has not been without controversy.

In the 1980's, the Lordship controversy developed among those that held to Semi-Dispensational theology. The controversy began because certain teachers were saying that one can accept Jesus as Savior but not as Lord. This went strongly against what the church had always taught and certainly sounded like full-blown Dispensational antinomian heresy. However, those who said this were careful to say that the true Christian will accept Christ as Lord eventually and will live most of his or her Christian life in submission to Jesus and His holy commandments. Therefore, this position is not heretical, but it is very dangerous in my estimation and in the estimation of most other Christian theologians.

The best advocate of this position was Norman Geisler. Geisler was one of the best theologians and apologists the church has ever known. Despite my strong disagreements with him in certain areas, especially on this Lordship question, many of his works are absolutely superb. And most of his *Systematic Theology*, especially Volume 1, is a masterpiece. The most vocal and popular opponent of this new position on Lordship was John MacArthur (who is still alive and very influential today). MacArthur is part of the Independent Bible Churches branch of the Christian tree. He is basically a Reformed Baptist who holds to Semi-Dispensational theology and is a staunch defender of the young earth position. However, he does not believe in denominations and so he has never joined a Baptist church.

One of the biggest problems of this controversy was the fact that some on the side of Geisler would articulate themselves in orthodox ways at times, but at other times would sound like full Dispensationalists. This especially became a problem at Dallas Seminary. Most of the professors were orthodox and excellent Christian theologians. However, some, most notably Zane Hodges, were not. Dallas defended Hodges because at times he would sound very orthodox. The problem was that far too often he did not. In my opinion, and in the opinion of many theologians, he was a heretic. The debate has mostly died out and most theologians today agree that a Christian must accept Christ as both Lord and Savior the moment he or she is saved. And of those who don't, they are very careful to explain that a Christian will do so eventually and will live

most of his or her Christian life in submission to Jesus. With that made clear, far too many white Christians in the South still tend to be very confused on the doctrine of sanctification (see the 4th chapter of the second book of my “basics” series for more details on this doctrine). This is one of the reasons that cultural Christianity is such a problem in the South today.

The Born Again Movement

This movement was launched by Chuck Colson. He was originally a criminal who was sent to prison for his part in the Watergate scandal under President Nixon in the early 70's. He was radically converted to Jesus. Because he was a well known figure, he used his platform to preach the gospel and he also became an apologist. He was part of the Independent Bible branch, but his big emphasis was that every Christian, regardless of denomination or church, must be born again as Jesus says in John 3. This led to the Born Again movement in the 80's where many true Evangelicals also called themselves Born Again Christians to emphasize that they had truly been converted to Jesus. I even used this language for a time when I was first saved. However, over time the term *Born Again* was used by just about everyone. I even heard people talk about Born Again Mormons. Hence, it is no longer wise to use the term other than when speaking technically and theologically about the fact that true Christians are indeed born again of the Spirit. That fact in no way changes the fact that Colson was an excellent apologist and inspiring example of the extent to which Christ changes sinners.

The Reformed Resurgence

While I certainly appreciate the zeal and impact of all of the movements we have examined in this section on the doctrinal developments of the Age of Missions, it goes without saying that as a Confessional Presbyterian, I have strong disagreements with many of them. Hence, as I've said earlier, I believe that most (though certainly not all; especially not the Creationist movement) of the doctrinal developments that have taken place in the church (the 1900's very much included) since the time of the Reformation

have not been in an overall positive direction. The drift away from Reformed theology is especially saddening to me. This is why the Reformed resurgence that took place towards the end of the 1900's is such a bright spot for me. While this resurgence did not cause the Reformed wing of the church to become dominant again as it had been during the late 1500's and 1600's, it did cause what was a tiny remnant at the time to become a far bigger and more impactful part of the true church. This resurgence was led by RC Sproul and John MacArthur (whom we have already discussed).

Sproul was a Confessional Presbyterian and one of the greatest teachers of the Bible and sound doctrine the church has ever known. Earlier in the 1900's, AW Pink spent years diligently writing works on theology for the average Christian. He was a brilliant and passionate Reformed Baptist. He was largely unknown in his day, but later in the 1900's more and more Christians began reading him and the Reformed resurgence started to brew. Sproul came along and picked up on this steam and the movement, along with many other great leaders and teachers, really got going. Then MacArthur joined forces with Sproul and the movement really took off. MacArthur had been a very popular preacher and author for a long time, but many Christians listened to him in spite of his Calvinism. Now, many Christians were embracing his Calvinism. The resurgence primarily took place in the American church, but it has spread to other parts of the world as well. Today, I would say that there are approximately 50 million Christians worldwide that subscribe to Reformed theology. While the movement is mostly found among Confessional Presbyterians and Reformed Baptists, many independent churches also adopt it and it is found to some degree in almost all of the other branches of the Christian tree, with the exceptions of the Confessional Lutheran and Confessional Methodist.

Overcoming Prejudice

The church throughout the 1900's overcame a lot of prejudice, both in terms of racism and sexism. However, because this is such a complicated topic, I cannot cover it here in this work. I discuss it more in my *Doctrine: Going Deeper*. In that work I also discuss the difficult topics of Colonization and the Holocaust. I strongly encourage you

to read it. The one very important thing to say here is that despite so much of the stereotyping today in our culture, white people have not been the only people that have struggled with racism. I understand how politically incorrect that is to say in our “woke” environment today, but that is a historical fact. And as the church grew throughout the world, many tribes and people groups still held deep prejudices towards other tribes and people groups even after receiving the gospel. Many still clung to views on women that were horribly sexist. This was yet another monumental challenge of the Age of Missions. And the church today is still dealing with many of these challenges across the world.

Chapter 13: The Evangelical Church Part 3

The Age of Missions Continued

Heretical Movements

“Christian” Fundamentalism

We have already discussed this heretical movement.

The Pseudo-Pentecostal/Charismatic Movement

This wicked religion started in the early part of the 1900’s. It had its roots in smaller heretical movements that preceded it. I am going to spend a lot of time on it here, far more than I have for other heretical movements in this work, because of how dangerous this movement is today.

Despite my very real disagreements with the Confessional Pentecostal and Confessional Charismatic branches of the true Christian tree as a Confessional Presbyterian, they are godly movements. Both of them have been zealous to spread the

gospel around the world and have been very effective at doing so, and so they deserve the thanks of all true Christians. The heretical movement under discussion here is diverse and can be split up into a number of subgroups. With that said, what unites all of them in spirit is a desire to corrupt the godly movements above for their own wicked ends. They know that many people are drawn to the godly movements above because of the strong belief in miracles today and the passionate worship of God through intense worship music found in those godly movements. Hence, they know that if they can look and sound “Pentecostal” and/or “Charismatic,” they will draw in a lot of followers and that is precisely what they have done. Because they claim to be “Pentecostal” and/or “Charismatic,” this movement, like Roman Catholicism and Eastern Orthodoxy, does hold to many true Bible teachings on paper. That fact though, only makes the deception of the movement all the more effective. No one leader started this movement; there has always been a number of false teachers associated with this movement from its inception around the start of the 20th century when Pentecostalism first came on the scene.

It should be said that I am using the term *movement* to describe this religion only because that is how they see themselves. They do not see themselves as a separate religion the way many heretical groups do. They see themselves as part of the broader Christian church and do all in their power to convince true Christians of this so that we will compromise with them and so that many will be more open to their teachings and practices. If you look up this movement online, it may not come up. This is because the title I have given it is my own. Others have given it titles such as *Hyper Pentecostal* or *Hyper Charismatic* or the *Prosperity Gospel/Theology/Movement*. Other names are also often used. There is no uniform way of describing the religion among godly scholars and theologians within the true church and you should be aware of this. Many of the names are not the best because they only focus upon one large facet of the movement. Many godly scholars and theologians in the true church do not even classify this religion as a separate religion because they do not understand how big it has become. Many will only talk about it as a dangerous cancer upon many wings of the church. But, they are mistaken and this is beginning to change, especially due to the *American Gospel* (1) documentary. I highly recommend this documentary to you.

And the movement itself calls itself “Pentecostal” or “Charismatic” or both. But, it is a religion and an extremely false and dangerous one at that. You should also be aware of the title *Neo-Charismatic* and similar titles as well. These titles should be avoided though, as they are used far too broadly. Far too often both good Christians and heretics get lumped together under the umbrella of that title. For more information on the title I have given this religion and the titles discussed in this paragraph and the previous paragraph, please see my *Doctrine: Going Deeper*.

The leaders of this movement are some of the worst wolves in sheep’s clothing in all of the history of the church over the past two thousand years. The movement often spreads right alongside the true church, especially in parts of South America, Africa, and Asia. Many people who have been raised in cultures that have not been extremely exposed to true Biblical Christianity often cannot tell the difference between this movement and the true church. This religion has grown to around 100 million people and continues to grow rapidly. It is the most dangerous movement on the planet today.

I cannot cover all of the heresies of this religion in this book and I have a lot more to say about it in my book *Doctrine: Going Deeper*. What we will do here is cover some of the more basic heresies that are found in the movement. It is important to note that not all churches in the movement hold to all of the heresies I will detail here, although some indeed do. But all churches in this false religion hold to at least one of the false doctrines I will describe now.

Many in this movement deny the essential doctrine of the Trinity. As true Christians, we worship the one and only true Triune God of all things. Most within this religion fall under the Inconsistent Trinitarian category, but some fall under the Basic Unity category because of their denial of the Trinity. For more information on these categories, see my book on the major religions of the world (chapter 1).

Many in this movement teach that “god” wants all of “his” children to be healthy and wealthy at all times. They teach that if we as “Christians” are not healthy and wealthy, this must be the result of disobedience or a lack of faith or both. Many in this movement teach that as “Christians” we are little “gods” because we are sons and daughters of “god.” They say that because of this we can perform “godlike” actions if we have enough faith. Some even go so far as to say that “god” “himself” works according

to faith and that “he” created the world by “his” faith, and so we are to model ourselves after this. Many will say that if you name and claim something you want, no matter how extravagant, if you have enough faith it will be given to you. Some have even gone so far as to say that we as “Christians” are as much an incarnation of “god” as “Jesus.” It is honestly hard to get more blasphemous than that. Many teach that “Jesus” put aside all of “his” divine attributes in the incarnation and only functioned in “his” human nature with the power of the “spirit.” They say that because “Jesus” is our ultimate example, we can therefore do the same things “he” did, including reading the minds of people, clearly something Jesus could only do because He is God.

Many teach that worship services should be absolutely out of control. Many advocate making animal noises; convulsing uncontrollably; laughing uncontrollably; running around; being thrown down or “slain” in the “holy spirit;” and that miracles should be happening all the time. In order to fulfill that last point, they will often have con men as pastors and/or worship leaders, who engage in deceptive practices to make it look like miracles are taking place. Many tv preachers are a part of this movement and many of them have been exposed for this very thing. When people who are paralyzed or have similar ailments are brought to these services, they are carefully kept away from the front so that these con men will not be exposed as they are always unable to heal such people. Many place far more emphasis on the “revelations” that are given to these leaders than they do on the Bible. Many of these leaders say that they have visited heaven or hell or both.

Many leaders in this movement are anti-intellectual, push conspiracy theories, and do not emphasize the importance of going to church. Many followers of this movement do not make any attempt to be part of a local church on any level, and only watch their favorite tv preachers. Because the leaders of this movement claim to be “Evangelical” or “Pentecostal” or “Charismatic,” or some combination thereof, many in the world believe that true Christians are united with these false teachers and false churches. Because of this, this movement has brought horrific embarrassment and shame upon God’s true people.

Another huge problem is the many indigenous churches throughout the world, especially in parts of South America, Africa, and Asia. Africa is the biggest problem and

many of these churches are called African Initiated churches. *Indigenous* refers to churches that were started by natives rather than by missionaries. Obviously, these original natives had contact with missionaries or others who had contact with them as that is how they first heard about Christianity, but the actual churches and movements were not started by missionaries themselves. Before diving into this subcategory, it is important to dispel the myth that orthodox Christians are only against these churches because we are white. I grow so sick and tired of this narrative. While I am white, there are millions of orthodox Christians in this country and all around the world that are not white. Hence, this accusation is nothing but slander. Countless orthodox churches around the world are indigenous. Most tend to be part of the Confessional Pentecostal, Confessional Independent Bible, or Confessional Charismatic branches of the Christian tree. I couldn't care less if a church is indigenous as long it is Bible-believing.

The problem is that many of these indigenous churches and movements are taking advantage of the fact that many people in these regions are very new to Christianity. They also take advantage of the Pentecostal and Charismatic beliefs that God does provide certain revelations today beyond the Bible. This allows the leaders to say that "god" told them all manner of nonsense. Many place almost all of the focus on the "holy spirit," and many have said that one or more of their leaders is an incarnation of the "holy spirit." Many of these groups practice polygamy and incorporate blatant Pagan beliefs and worship practices into their faith. Many of these groups did not originally have any connection to Pentecostal or Charismatic beliefs, but today countless ones have incorporated and abused beliefs from these movements and have thus become part of the overarching heretical movement under discussion in this section.

Now, many of these indigenous churches and movements do not have any connection to Pentecostal or Charismatic theology and are therefore not a part of this broad heretical movement, but are smaller stand alone heretical movements that won't be covered in this work. And the reason Africa is such a problem has nothing to do with my alleged personal prejudice or the alleged personal prejudice of any other white Christian. Christianity has grown extremely rapidly in Africa over the past 100 years. The largest percentage of true Bible-believing Christians is in Africa today and this is a

wonderful and beautiful reality and fulfillment of God's promises. Not surprisingly though, Satan is working over time in this part of the world to try to counter the amazing work of God there.

You may ask, "Ok, but are you not still being a little prejudiced when you did not fully condemn all of the syncretism of the medieval church in Europe?" This is a very fair question. But, if you go back and read what I said carefully, I do say that a lot of heretics had in fact infiltrated the church with their full-blown syncretic heresies. I merely said that the medieval church as a whole never formally and dogmatically embraced the worst of the syncretism. It is true that certain very false and dangerous doctrines in my estimation were adopted, such as praying to the "Saints." As bad as that doctrine is though, there is at least some minor biblical justification for it. The Bible does talk about how we are one as Christians and how the souls of many Christians are now in heaven. This doctrine is not the same as the fully Pagan doctrines of many of these indigenous churches. And as I said in the previous chapter, there are thousands of true churches that struggle with certain forms of syncretism that I would not label as heretical. I am trying to be as gracious and fair as possible. With that said, there is no question from a biblical standpoint that many of these indigenous churches and movements are blatantly out of bounds.

Finally, many in the Pseudo-Pentecostal/Charismatic religion have said that "apostles" are still in operation today. Therefore, these "apostles" are given tremendous amounts of authority in these churches as the true apostles were given in the early church. Their "revelations" are given huge amounts of authority and emphasis in their churches. And some in this movement have even produced a Bible translation based upon this alleged authority, the Passion Translation. This is not a normal Bible translation where scholars get together and try to translate the Bible into the common English of our day as best they can. These false teachers say that this translation is being done through "revelation" and therefore it makes this translation have a higher authority than other translations. The problem is that this translation gets things wrong from the original biblical languages all the time, but in the minds of many in this movement, we cannot question this translation because it is being produced by "revelation."

Before moving forward to the next section, I want to make it clear that many true Christians, not only Confessional Pentecostals and Confessional Charismatics, do believe that in revivals or in certain services, Christians can get pretty lively. They are often ok with some of the behavior I described earlier, such as out of control laughter. There are times when we feel so overwhelmed by the Holy Spirit, it can cause us to act in ways we would not normally act. In such moments I have had shivers, and I have wept with joy despite the fact that I'm not normally much of a crier. But these true Christians are always careful to say that such experiences are not the norm and should never be manufactured. Hence, when the false teachers get up and start to lead their church in "holy laughter" or "holy barking," this is plainly heresy.

And many true Christians do emphasize such things as miracles, dreams, visions, and even certain revelations today. However, they do not try to force these things and they are not deceptive about them. Further, they don't allow such things to become the focus. The focus of these true churches is always on God, Jesus, the gospel, and the Bible. And the overwhelming vast majority of these true churches are careful to say that their revelations are not the full word of God. And even the very rare true churches that would say that some of their revelations are on the same level as the Bible, are still extremely careful to say that all such revelations must be interpreted in the light of the Bible, and that any supposed "revelations" that contradict the Bible must be immediately rejected. The false teachers are not careful in these ways.

Many true Christians also believe that apostles still exist today in the sense of church planters or evangelists or something along those lines. But, they do not believe that anyone exists in the church today along the lines of the official apostles of the early church. They understand that no one today has that level of authority. The false teachers say and/or act otherwise. This movement is absolute poison and you should be very aware of it. In my *Doctrine: Going Deeper*, I break down this movement in more detail.

Great Christians

Some of the great Christians of this age were Billy Sunday; CS Lewis; Gladys Aylward; Amy Carmichael; Richard Wurmbrand; Martyn Lloyd-Jones; Billy Graham; Eric Liddell; Jim and Elisabeth Elliot; J Gresham Machen; William Seymour; Dennis Bennett; Henry Morris; Ken Ham; Chuck Smith; Greg Laurie; Chuck Colson; AW Pink; RC Sproul; John MacArthur; Norman Geisler; Corrie Ten Boom; and Watchman Nee. We have already discussed each of these, with the exceptions of Ten Boom and Nee. Ten Boom was an amazing Dutch Christian woman during the holocaust who secretly housed Jews from the Nazis during World War II. She was eventually found out and sent to an internment camp. No matter how bad things became, she never lost her faith. After the war, she spoke around the world about her experiences, preaching the gospel along the way. She is one of the most inspiring Christians in all of church history.

Nee was the greatest leader of the Chinese church during the Age of Missions. Despite a great deal of chaos from the Age of Missions that has already been discussed, and the glaring stigma that still existed in China at the time towards any version of Christianity from the Heavenly Kingdom cult of the 1800's, many Chinese people in China became true Christians throughout the 1900's. Later in the 1900's, these amazing Christians were heavily persecuted by the Chinese government as it adopted full Communism. To this day, many restrictions are placed upon the true church in China. Most, but certainly not all, Chinese Christians are part of the Independent Bible Churches branch of the Christian tree. Most of these are part of the Three-Self Patriotic Movement. This is not really a movement any longer though as it is an official organization. I am hesitant to call this organization as a whole a true Christian organization across the board as it is too closely tied with the Chinese government. However, many individual churches within this organization are genuine churches of God and the organization is orthodox on paper. But, most of these churches do function like independent churches and are only a part of this organization as they feel they have no other choice in order to avoid persecution by the Chinese government.

Nee promoted truly independent churches as he was part of the orthodox wing of the Plymouth Brethren movement. But, he was an inspiration to all Chinese Christians. Nee is most known for his sincerity and deep devotion to Jesus. This comes across very clearly in his writings. Now it is important for me to say that Nee did at times teach some

very questionable things. If you see these critiques on the internet, they are not completely wrong. You should be aware of this. Some would go so far as to call him a false teacher, but I think this is very unfair. Nee lived at a time when Christianity was very, very new to China and he did come under some bad influences doctrinally speaking. And Nee is often hard to fully understand as he was coming from such a different place culturally than us as American Christians. Nee seemed to have a very teachable spirit (I think too teachable), and so I believe that if he had been given better training in Bible studies that he would not have taught some of the things that are debatable. But, he did not fully advocate any overt heresies and so I think he should be given the benefit of the doubt.

Creeds and Confessions

The key confessions or statements of faith of this era were the Assemblies of God Statement of Fundamental Truths and the Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy. The first was the statement of faith for the Assemblies of God denomination, the largest and most sound Pentecostal denomination in the world. Many true Pentecostals all over the world agree with the statement even if they are not part of the Assemblies of God denomination. The second was a statement put out by the church as a whole on inerrancy in order to combat the steady attacks on the doctrine that had come from Liberal Protestants for decades in the 1900's.

Chapter 14: The Evangelical Church Part 4 and Conclusion

The Postmodern Era

Overview

Historians debate when the Modern era began exactly. I believe that it began around 1600. This era was the era that developed in Western civilization after the Middle Ages. And I believe that the Reformation era (the 1500's) was the transition between the two eras. The Modern era emphasized the mind over emotions; logic; rationality; objectivity; science; the individual; human rights; and human progress. This eventually led to the Scientific Revolution (during the 1600's), which in turn led to the Enlightenment. While there were movements, such as Romanticism, that challenged the Modern era, for the most part it reigned supreme for a very long time. All of that began to change in the 1960's in the United States. A lot of people think that the "hippies" were a bunch of silly teenagers rocking the boat. What they don't realize is what a monumental historical shift was going on at that time. The hippie generation was not only challenging their parents or America, they were challenging the Modern era way of looking at things that had dominated Western civilization for centuries.

Obviously, I am grossly over simplifying things because this is a non-technical work on church history for new Christians or Christians who are starting to take seriously the command to love God with our minds. But, by the year 2000, not only in America, but in Northern and Western Europe, and to a large extent in huge portions of the rest of the world, the Modern era had passed. This did not mean that everything about that era was dead and gone. Just like a great deal of medieval culture still carried over into the Modern era in Western civilization, a lot of the Modern way of thinking is still with us today. However, it is no longer dominant. Postmodernism emphasizes mystery; paradox; subjectivity; experience; emotions; community; group rights; complete tolerance; and relativism.

The Modern era outlook was a threat to Christianity in that it tried to eliminate the supernatural. The Postmodern outlook is a threat to Christianity because it says that there cannot be one ultimate truth, which is the unflinching claim of true Christianity. Thankfully, the church is growing the fastest in the world right now in places where Postmodernism has not fully taken over. However, in the United States, where it has fully conquered, most true Christians don't realize how infected they have been by this philosophy. We as American Christians tend to think that syncretism is only a problem for Christians of the past or for Christians in other parts of the world. But, we are every

bit as prone to being influenced by the wicked philosophies and religions in our own culture as any other Christians, past or present. Even many true Christians in our nation that tend to be very conservative both theologically and politically, still tend to be very blind to all of the ways that their thinking is not biblical across the board because of Postmodernism. Please see my essay “Addressing Heresy,” where I more fully speak to all of the ways this tends to be the case.

Doctrinal Developments

No major doctrinal developments have taken place during this short era. But, it must be said that so far this era of church history has been marked by lukewarmness; apathy; softness; compromise; scandal; and immorality. The church today has grown to 200 million people at the least, and probably more than that. It is made up of all races and people groups. It is found all over the world. We must rejoice and praise our great God for these things. Having said that, the church across the board is in a very poor place. It is almost as bad as it was right before the Reformation. Progressive Christianity and the Pseudo-Pentecostal/Charismatic Movement are wreaking havoc on the church all over the world, especially the latter. Immorality, scandals, and cultural Christianity plague the church, especially in America. Far, far too many true Christians accept Catholics; Eastern Orthodox adherents; Progressive Christians; LDS folks; and those in the Pseudo-Pentecostal/Charismatic Movement as our brothers and sisters in Christ. This has led to endless compromise and confusion in the church. Far, far too many churches, especially in America outside of the South, incorporate certain New Age practices.

Hillsong, Bethel, and Elevation worship are all very, very common in the true church and all three of these groups are part of the Pseudo-Pentecostal/Charismatic Movement. Hillsong has been plagued by scandal and Discovery recently did a full documentary exposing the movement. Because the movement is so associated with Conservative Evangelicalism (even though it shouldn't be), it has been a disgusting stain upon the church. One will hear songs from these groups, along with songs from artists such as Lauren Daigle (who has refused to say that homosexual acts are sinful),

on Christian radio all throughout the day. Many of these songs and artists win awards at Christian music award ceremonies. In other parts of the world, the church is often deeply infected by all of the heresy and syncretism that surround it. We must humbly seek the Lord for true revival and reform in our day.

Heretical Movements

Progressive Christianity

Technically, Progressive Christianity is a sub-branch within Liberal Protestantism. It is Liberal Protestantism with Postmodern philosophy added along. Liberal Protestantism for the most part has been committed to the Modern era outlook. Progressive Christianity has radically changed that. Also, many (though not all) Progressive Christians have also added New Age thought into their belief system as well. Even though Progressive Christianity is not its own new heretical movement, it often is so aggressive today that it functions as one. And this is why I have included it here.

Before plunging forward, it is important to discuss the New Age movement since I referenced it above. The New Age movement took our country by storm with the hippie generation spoken of above. By the early 70's it was extremely popular among those under 30. As this generation became adults and the leaders of our society, the movement has spread to every corner of our culture. Almost all Americans hold at least some New Age beliefs. Even the most conservative that don't look like they have any connection to the hippie movement of the 60's, still often hold to one or more New Age beliefs. This tends to be very true of those in the No Religion category in our country, but it also tends to be true to a lesser extent among Liberal Protestants (especially Progressive Christians) and nominal Catholics in our nation as well.

New Age beliefs and practices are very complicated and difficult to fully define and explain because the religion (if it can be called that; and many would not like it being called that) is the ultimate Postmodern religion. The movement emphasizes that there is no one ultimate truth and therefore almost anything goes. With that said, we can

still say some very broad things that tend to be true of the movement. The movement has its roots in Eastern philosophy and religion. This was one of the reasons it was so popular with the hippie movement as that movement was trying to break away from Western philosophy and religion. While Hinduism is by far and away the largest and most influential of the Eastern philosophies and religions, there are many other much smaller ones in existence as well. And Eastern philosophy tends to be either Monist, Pantheist, or Panentheist. Therefore, most in the New Age movement tend to emphasize spirituality over formal religion, and tend to emphasize humans being one with each other and one with the divine (however the divine is understood and defined by the individual). And most in the New Age tend to engage in all sorts of rituals and practices in order to achieve this oneness. But, it is important to understand that most in the New Age do not say that these rituals or practices are universal. Each person has to discover what works best for him or her.

Some of these practices include meditation; seances; yoga; drugs; tarot cards; palm readings; crystals; and many others. These practices are often associated with what is known as the *occult* (not to be confused with the term *cult*; although many so-called “cults” do engage in occultic practices). The term *occult* has to do with tapping into magic forces or powers. The problem with this term in my estimation is that it is used far too broadly.

It should be understood that some forms of “magic” are not unbiblical. If a young kid, for example, learns how to do some fun sleight of hand tricks for his or her family, and he or she and the family fully understand that this is just for fun and only the use of sleight of hand is taking place, there is nothing harmful about this. That is not what people mean when they refer to the occult though. They are talking about trying to tap into alleged forces or powers in the universe. Now some would call any of these attempts part of the occult. When so defined, a huge number of religions include the occult as part of their belief system. Others however, would only include those practices where the person explicitly understands these powers to be evil. True Christians would still say of course that those who attempt these practices and do not understand them to be evil are deceived. These practices are tapping into evil forces even when such people don't know it. But, many would still not call such practices occultic. Because of

this ambiguity, I tend to avoid the term, but you should understand that it is a common term in many Christian circles to describe the practices of many religious groups.

New Age thought has seeped out beyond the boundaries of America and is today found all over the world. With that said, most people do not consider themselves part of the New Age, but tend to only dabble in certain beliefs and practices associated with the movement. One of the beliefs that is very common in the movement that has also become very common among many who only dabble in the movement is that of reincarnation. One of the practices that is very common in the movement that has also become very common among many people in our nation and elsewhere is that of yoga. I know many true Christians believe that yoga is harmless, but they are wrong, it is a Pagan practice that must be avoided. You should also understand that many forms of the New Age borrow language and concepts from the Bible. This can be very confusing to new Christians. Some forms even just call themselves a form of "Christian." This is one of the reasons that many Liberal Protestants and nominal Catholics find it easy to incorporate certain language from the New Age movement.

Despite the fact that New Age thought is diametrically opposed to a biblical worldview, most Progressive Christians today embrace much of the New Age way of thinking. To some extent this is understandable as the undergirding philosophy of Progressive Christianity is Postmodernism. Nonetheless, so much of the New Age is so opposed to the Bible that Progressive Christians really have to strain things in order to try to combine the two on any level. But they still try. I wrote my book *A False Kind of Christianity* as a refutation of Progressive Christianity. One of my biggest regrets is that I did not include at least a little bit about the New Age elements found within so much of Progressive Christianity. I chose not to at the time because I was trying to focus only on the elements that tend to be universal in the movement. However, because the New Age has become so pervasive in the movement, especially through the influence of Richard Rohr (and this influence has only grown exponentially since I published the book in 2017), I feel compelled to include a discussion on it here. I now realize that one must include at least some discussion of the New Age when presenting the Progressive Christian movement.

“Jesus” is usually incorporated into New Age thought to one degree or another. And “he” tends to be defined in all sorts of different ways. But, some in the New Age do not put a lot of emphasis on “him.” Obviously, Progressive Christianity specifically says that it is all about “Jesus.” It is important to understand that Progressive Christianity is Liberal Protestantism with Postmodernism added to the mix, and in many (but not all) cases the New Age gets lumped in as well.

Many (but certainly not all) Progressive Christians also embrace a number of other heresies. Some of these are: Open Theism; universalism; and “Christian” LGBT+. Open Theism is a small heretical movement that cropped up in the late 1900’s. It says that “god” does not know all things and that “he” changes. We have already discussed universalism. It should be said though, that some versions of universalism do not teach that all people will eventually spend eternity with “god.” Some teach that “god” annihilates unbelievers at the final judgment. This is still a form of “salvation” though, as it saves these unbelievers from eternal hell. In that sense it is a form of universalism. This is the doctrine of the Seventh-day Adventists for example. Universalism has been held by various heretical groups (many small ones) down through the ages. There was an official Universalist group at one time, but they eventually joined with the Unitarians. And as the name implies, “Christian” LGBT+ says that one can be a true Christian and live a gay or lesbian or bisexual or transgender lifestyle.

Open Theism is not part of Liberal Protestantism because it says that it believes in inerrancy and tries (but fails miserably) to defend its doctrines from the Bible. And universalism is a heresy that has been embraced by a number of different groups. And there is a small group that believes in “Christian” LGBT+, that also says they believe in inerrancy. Thus, they are not part of Liberal Protestantism, but are their own group. Most of these separate groups are small, but these heresies are embraced in large numbers because so many Progressive Christians also hold to them as well. But, Progressive Christians hold to them within the overarching framework of Liberal Protestantism.

There are two other heresies that are adopted by many within Progressive Christianity (although to a much lesser extent than the ones we examined above) that you should be aware of. These are full preterism and unitarianism. Full preterism is the

belief that everything the Bible says about the end times was fulfilled in AD 70. This heresy is not to be confused with the belief of many true Christians that a lot of what the Bible says about the end times was fulfilled in 70. Full preterism states, for example, that the entire return of “Jesus” took place in 70. That is overt heresy. While this heresy is mostly found in Liberal Protestant circles, it is important to note that there are small groups of people that hold to it that also say they believe in inerrancy. Therefore, these small groups are by definition not part of Liberal Protestantism. With all that said, many Progressive Christians adopt this heresy.

The unitarian heresy is the doctrine that “god” exists only as one person and that this person is “the father” alone. It is distinguished from Modalism in that Modalism is the belief that “god” exists as only one person, but that the persons of the “godhead” are all technically this one person. The titles of each person are merely names or titles for the different roles of the one person that is “god.” The specific heresy of unitarianism is not to be strictly equated with the full religion of Unitarianism. The full religion denied almost all aspects of the supernatural. It did embrace the unitarian heresy and highly emphasized this heresy, which is why it was given its name, but the heresy does exist beyond this religion. Many who hold to this heresy are far more orthodox on many other matters than the religion of Unitarianism, and many even say they believe in inerrancy. Thus, there are small groups of “Christian” unitarians out there that are not technically part of Unitarianism or Liberal Protestantism. If you are wondering why Unitarianism is not included within Liberal Protestantism, it is because it had no interest in being considered “Protestant” on any level. The same is true of many “Christian” unitarians today. Many of these “Christian” unitarians, though small in number, have become very vocal online, especially on YouTube. Hence, you should be aware of them. With all of this made clear, you should know that a small number of Progressive Christians embrace the heresy of unitarianism within an overall Liberal Protestant framework. But, it should also be noted that this is rare. Most Progressive Christians say that they believe in the doctrine of the Trinity.

Progressive Christianity started in the 70’s, but remained fairly small and not very influential until around 2008. Around the year 2000, a new movement known as the Emergent movement arose within the true church. This movement came about largely

as a reaction to so much of the superficialism that had infected the church in America due to the seeker-sensitive movement. However, over the next 8 years or so, a wing of this movement started to become more and more liberal and eventually joined forces with the Progressive Christian movement. And this is when the Progressive Christian movement absolutely exploded. Today, it is massive within the United States and it continues to grow around the world as well. It has been extremely aggressive and successful at winning over young converts who were raised Conservative Evangelical.

One of the biggest objections Progressive Christians have towards us Conservative Evangelicals is that we are allegedly unwilling to change. They say that we are hypocrites for hailing the Reformation when the Reformation was all about bringing change to the church. And they say that all they are trying to do today is reform the church as the great Reformers of old did in the 1500's. None of this is true and I respond to all of this in my *Doctrine: Going Deeper*.

Great Christians

Some of the great Christians of this short era are or have been: Luis Palau; Nabeel Qureshi; Voddie Baucham; and Conrad Mbewe. Palau was an inspiring evangelist from Argentina. He preached the gospel all over the world. But, he also preached all over America. This is indicative of what we have seen in our country over the past 20 years. Not only are huge numbers of Hispanics coming to Christ in other parts of the world, but over the past 20 years we have seen huge numbers of Hispanic Americans leave the Catholic Church to become true followers of Jesus. This has been absolutely wonderful to see.

Qureshi was a Muslim American whom God powerfully saved while he was in high school. He was of Pakistani descent. He was raised in a devoutly Muslim home and so this was a painfully difficult decision for him. He became a sought after speaker all over the world and engaged in debates with Muslim apologists. He was an inspiration to Christians all over the world, especially to Muslim converts. He eventually was afflicted with cancer, but he clung to Jesus faithfully to the end. He died at only 34. Baucham is an African American preacher; teacher; evangelist; apologist; and

theologian. He is a Reformed Baptist and he has been on the frontlines of almost every important debate with the enemies of the faith for the past 20 years. Today, he lives and serves the Lord in Zambia. Mbewe is from Zambia and is a pastor there as well. He has been a speaker on Christianity and Reformed theology all over the world for decades now. He and Baucham have worked relentlessly to try to help the African church become more sound and orthodox.

Creeds and Confessions

The key doctrinal statements of this era have been the Nashville Statement and the Dallas Statement. The first fully clarifies the true church's position on LGBT+ issues, and the latter clarifies the true church's position on the "woke" filth that has permeated our culture today.

Conclusion

The first item I want to address in this conclusion is the fact that I understand that all of the heretical movements are discouraging and can be confusing. As far as the discouragement goes, try to remember how many in Israel during the Old Testament era were constantly bringing in false gods and trying to mix them with God's true faith. Things were often a confusing mess because of this. And throughout the New Testament we see a number of heretical groups arising and causing all sorts of problems. So, to some extent this is to be expected and we must continue to look to God for strength in the midst of this frustrating reality. As far as the confusing factor goes, let me try to simplify things a bit. We looked at 36 major heretical movements in this work. I understand that at first glance this seems like a lot. But, take a moment to think about it. Over the course of 2 thousand years, God has only allowed 36 major heretical movements. In the big scheme of things, that is actually not that many. I list all 36 below, along with the century when they first fully developed.

1.) The Ebionites (1st Century)

- 2.) The Gnostics (1st Century)
- 3.) The Marcionites (100's)
- 4.) The Montanists (100's)
- 5.) The Adoptionists (100's)
- 6.) The Modalists (100's)
- 7.) The Arians (300's)
- 8.) The Pelagians (400's)
- 9.) The Donatists (400's)
- 10.) The Nestorians (400's)
- 11.) The Monophysites (400's)
- 12.) The Monothelites (400's)
- 13.) Mysticism (400's)
- 14.) Syncretism (400's)
- 15.) The Iconoclasts (700's)
- 16.) The Cathars (1100's)
- 17.) The Roman Catholics (1500's)
- 18.) The Eastern Orthodox (1500's)
- 19.) The Anabaptists (1500's)
- 20.) The Socinians (1600's)
- 21.) The Quakers (1600's)
- 22.) The Arminians (1600's)
- 23.) The Moravians (1700's)
- 24.) The Unitarians (1700's)
- 25.) The LDS Church (1800's)
- 26.) The Jehovah's Witnesses (1800's)
- 27.) The Christian Scientists (1800's)
- 28.) The Seventh-day Adventists (1800's)
- 29.) The Heavenly Kingdom (1800's)
- 30.) The Dispensationalists (1800's)
- 31.) The Restorationists (1800's)
- 32.) The Liberal Protestants (1800's)

- 33.) The Perfectionists (1800's)
- 34.) The Salvation Army (1800's)
- 35.) The Fundamentalists (1900's)
- 36.) The Pseudo-Pentecostal/Charismatic Movement (1900's)

Out of these 36, only 21 of them are still with us today (#'s 10-11; 13-14; 17-19; 21; 23-28; 30-36). It is true that many of the specific heretical teachings of the extinct groups are still around today, but the extinct groups as official groups are gone. Of the 21 remaining groups, only 12 still exist in large numbers today (#'s 11; 13-14; 17-18; 25-26; 28; 31-32; 35-36). Of those 12, only 11 exist within the United States in large numbers (all except for #11). Therefore, if you can have a basic idea of these 11, you will be in very good shape. You don't need to know a lot about these groups either, only the basics. And if you forget anything, you can quickly look them up in this book. If you come across one of the other groups on the above list, you can review them in this book as needed. And if you come across a much smaller group that I was not able to address in this book, you can research that group and you should have a pretty good idea of how to respond to them from this book and my other books and essays for beginners if you are interested. If you don't feel confident in fully witnessing to someone, again, I recommend using the advice I give in my essay "Tips for Witnessing."

The next item I want to address in this conclusion is the fear of many that church history lacks diversity. There is no question that church history seems to overly focus on men of European descent. This should be a concern for people and not just because of our current cultural climate. A number of things must be said in answer to this dilemma. The first is that because God has ordained that only men should be pastors (in my strong estimation), it is only natural that there are going to be more men that stick out as far as the great Christians God has used. But, this in no way means that women are inferior. God does not go about things in the way we would often expect. And we have to be ok with that. God always evens things out in the long run, but we often don't like that God does not do things in predictable ways at all times. The fact of the matter is that there has always been far more true Christian women in the true church than men. That is true today and that has been true all throughout church history. God has chosen

to save more women than men and we should not overlook that fact. In that all important sense, women are far more privileged than men. And it must be said that while they are far less in number, I have rightfully included a number of amazing Christian women as part of the lists of great Christians throughout church history.

As far as the focus on Europeans goes, it must be said that God primarily worked through Europeans for centuries. That was His choice and we are not to question God. With that said, this in no way means that people of European descent are superior to any other group. It is so pathetically sad that so many Christians of European descent came to this conclusion for so long. This is not a biblical way of looking at things. God primarily worked through the Jews for centuries before He started working among the Gentiles. And the Bible is quite clear that this was not in any way because the Jews were superior.

Plus, it must be remembered that even though God worked first among the Jews and for a much longer period of time, the number of saved Jews was enormously less than the number of Gentiles God was eventually going to save. The same basic principle applies to Europeans vs. non-Europeans. At the end of the 1600's, there were only about 10 million Protestants worldwide. Today, the church is at least about 200 million strong, and probably bigger than that. And the vast majority of that number is made up of people who are not of European descent. Therefore, it looks like in the final analysis when we are in the eternal state, most of God's people will be women from groups that are not European in descent. And the longer God tarrys in His return, the more this will be the case if current trends hold. If God does indeed tarry for a while, the number of non-Europeans on the list of great Christians will only continue to grow.

And I did rightfully include on my lists a number of great Christians who were not of European descent. It is true that most of these were/are of African descent as God chose to start working among that people group for a long time before truly taking the church worldwide. With that said, some of the great Christians that do not fall into that category that I rightfully discussed were Queen Lili; Watchman Nee; Luis Palau; and Nabeel Qureshi. And as said, I have zero doubt that if God chooses to tarry, that number will only grow and grow.

Finally, I understand how messy and ugly church history can be in some respects. All of the sin; compromise; prejudice; bad doctrine; the need to fight so much heresy; and at times violence; can all be very hard to grapple with. What is so important to remember is that the history of God's people that we find in the Bible is no different. And just as God was always working to advance His kingdom throughout the history of the Bible, He has always been doing the same throughout church history. God's redemption cannot be thwarted; not by the world, not by heretics, and not even by the many sins and shortcomings of His own people. God has promised to truly save a remnant of humankind through all of the ugliness of this dark world. Church history is the fulfillment of that promise and if you are truly saved, you should look to see God working in church history and not overly focus on the dark parts as the world does. I so hope this work is able to help you in that regard!