



Village Missions  
Contenders Discipleship Initiative

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## Church History

Ecclesiology

Church History

History of Christian Doctrine

Village Missions  
Contenders Discipleship Initiative

# Church History - Ecclesiology and the History of Christian Doctrine Instructor's Guide

TRAINING MODULE SUMMARY	
Course Name	Church History
Course Number in Series	5
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**Copyright Note**

Contenders Bible School is a two-year ministry equipping program started in 1995 by Pastor Ron Sallee at Machias Community Church, Snohomish, WA. More information regarding the full Contenders program and copies of this guide and corresponding videos can be found at <http://www.vmcontenders.org> or <http://www.vmcdi.com>

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## CHURCH HISTORY

### Fifth Course in CDI Program

They are:

1. Bibliology and How to Study the Bible
2. Doctrine
3. New Testament
4. Old Testament
5. Church History
6. Evangelism, Teaching and Preaching

## HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

This teacher’s guide is your blueprint for the class and is to be used to support the effective presentation of the New Testament Survey.

As a first step, you must review the program materials online at the Contenders website: <http://www.vmcontenders.org>

This instructor’s guide is designed to be used as you teach a classroom or as an adjunct to the online program. As the pastor/mentor, this guide can help you in five ways:

- 1. Gain familiarity with the program:** Reviewing this guide is a convenient way to familiarize you with the curriculum.
- 2. Prepare lessons:** Prior to class, use this teacher’s guide as a resource for preparing your lesson plan. It will provide you instructions, notes, activities, and reviews as you teach the class.
- 3. Utilize worksheets:** The instructor’s guide includes activity worksheets which allow your students to apply what they have just learned. A teacher’s copy of each worksheet, including answers and hints, follows the students’ worksheet.
- 4. Extend or modify lessons:** The guide features suggested teaching tips. Use these tips to extend or modify the unit objectives to best meet the needs of your students.
- 5. Assess progress:** Finally, this guide includes an assessment that students can use to test their knowledge.

For more teaching tips go to <http://www.vmcontenders.org/teachingtips.html>

Prior to class discussions or exercises, you will find Instructor Notes that detail the class exercises. Below your instructions, you will find the student’s section with space for notes. Please tailor this information to suit your class.

### **How the Guide is Organized**

This guide is broken into sessions that follow along with the course videos. Also in this guide are learning objectives, reviews, and a glossary of terms. The curriculum is designed to be presented in Session and Part sequence.

### **Special Note**

*Church History* was taped during a one-week session at Machias Community Church for the express use with this course.

These sessions, as presented in the Contenders Discipleship Initiative, have been broken into smaller segments for pastor/mentor-led classes as well as independent distance learners. Distance learners may want to download both the Instructor’s Guide and Student Guide so they have access to answers for the quizzes, etc.

## **CLASSROOM REPORT FORM**

Please fill out the Classroom Report prior to the beginning of class to alert the CDI program director that you plan on teaching a class, the time the class will begin, the expected number of students and any resources you may require. A copy is sent to the director and you will also receive an e-mail copy. The Classroom Report Form is found on the CDI website at: <http://www.vmcontenders.org/classreport.html>

## **PROMOTING THE CLASS**

Once you have decided to teach this program to your congregation and have begun to make the necessary contacts to your church and in the larger community, you are ready to set a date for your training and to promote your class start date. You will need to announce this information not just once, but several times to ensure you get the information out.

You will want to promote the course to meet the different reasons why people want to attend. Some people will want to learn more about their faith, others feel called to become pastors, others still might not yet be members of your church and are looking for a way to join. Remember to take advantage of the media outlets available, including social media, your own church website, and bulletins. You may want to make copies of the CDI brochure and flyers available on the Resources page of the CDI website and print or email them.

You will find a promotional presentation, brochure and flyers at:

<http://www.vmcontenders.org/resources.html>

## **REPORTING ERRORS CONCERNING COURSE MATERIAL**

Every effort has been made to ensure the guide and videos are correct. However, if you do see something you believe is in error, please use the web form at:

<http://www.vmcontenders.org/feedback.html>



## CLASSROOM SETUP

Visual aids for this course consist of the videos and printed Instructor and Student Guides. All equipment should be placed in the room and be checked at least one hour prior to the class. The following audiovisual equipment checklist will help you prepare for this course:

- Device with audio capabilities connected to the Internet. This could be a PC, Tablet, or Smart TV. If you wish, you can download the video content prior to your class so you are not dependent upon a poor Internet connection speed.
- DVDs may also be available of the class video content, please email [info@vmcontenders.org](mailto:info@vmcontenders.org) for more information.
- If you are not using a Smart TV to show the video, then having an LCD projector compatible with your device, plus the required cables for proper connection (e.g., InFocus or similar make) is optimal. If you create your own set of slides, a projector is useful.
- Spare projector bulb, if using a projector.
- You must have access to a computer, a browser, and Microsoft™ Office software.
- You must have Adobe Acrobat Reader installed to view and print the guide books.
- Projection screen (at least 6’ x 6’) or any white or blank wall to project the video and slides.
- Pointer (preferably laser type), if desired.
- Twenty-foot or longer extension cord.
- Whiteboard with dry erase pens and eraser, if available.
- Flip chart with markers.
- Power strip.

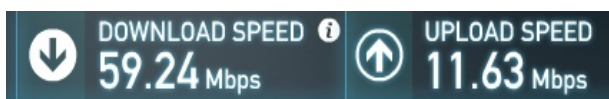
## VIDEO TROUBLESHOOTING TIPS

What to do if the video is “choppy” while viewing.

1. Let the video buffer before you view it. (Buffering is a way of preloading the videos you watch.) When you play a video, a light gray bar moves to show you how much of your video has been buffered. If you're experiencing choppy playback (video/audio out of sync), pause the video and allow the video to buffer for a few moments, and then start your video again. You may have to click on the play and stop button a couple of times.
2. Close other browser tabs and windows.
3. Make sure you have the latest version of your browser or switch to another browser to see if that helps. Visit the CDI website for a complete list of technical requirements.
4. Hold down the shift button on your keyboard and push the reload button on your browser. This will reset the cache in your browser, which may clear up the problem. Also, you may want to clean your cache in your browser, if you don't already do this on a periodic basis. Each browser is different; please refer to the Help section in your browser for instructions.
5. If these tips don't work, try again! Sometimes the best way to fix a problem is just try it again.

### Internet Speed Check

Although these videos will play on your tablet, Smart TV or computer, they do require Internet speed or bandwidth to play correctly. You can check your bandwidth by clicking this link <http://www.speedtest.net> and clicking the Begin Test button. See the example below.



If your speeds are not fast enough, or if you cannot connect to the Internet, you may want to download the videos to your device prior to class and view them directly from your computer. Another option is to have all the videos on DVD. Contact [info@vmcontenders.org](mailto:info@vmcontenders.org) for more information.

## GENERAL CLASSROOM TRAINING TIPS

1. Arrive early. Give yourself plenty of time to get organized.
2. Collect all registration forms your students may have already entered via the website. If they have not, pass out the hardcopy registration form and make sure they have signed up for class. Online Registration Forms can be found at: <http://www.vmcontenders.org/registration.html>
3. Start on time and stay on track. Always start on time, even if only one participant is in the room. Keep exercises within their time limits. End discussions when they cease to be productive. Lead participants away from digressions and tangents and return to the lesson.
4. Be available during breaks and after class for questions.
5. Mentor participants during the activities. Walk among groups in class as they work on their activities, and answer questions and offer guidance as appropriate. Ensure participants are on track as they work. Give constructive feedback during the presentations and discussions.
6. Review Questions: Review the content of each lesson throughout the course to reinforce the learning outcomes for that lesson and to connect to upcoming material. As a rule, review or discussion questions should be asked every 6-8 slides. Avoid YES or NO questions and try to use open-ended questions to draw participants into the material. Sample review questions are available in the instructor's guide; however, you should develop additional questions, as appropriate. Make sure all questions directly relate to and support the learning outcomes.
7. Lesson Outcomes: At the beginning of each lesson, review that lesson's outcomes. Make sure participants are fully aware of the topics to be addressed in the lesson. At the end of each lesson, review the outcomes once again using review questions or an activity/exercise to ensure the outcomes were met.

## **ESTABLISHING GROUND RULES**

Prepare the following ground rules on a flip chart page and leave it covered until you review it during the class. (Then post it on the wall so it is visible during the entire course.) In training sessions, the term “parking lot” is used when you want to capture questions that cannot be answered during class.

These questions are written down on the flip chart and then followed up with the participants with the answers later. This way class time is not taken up with questions that are of interest to the class, but may not be vital to the course material.

### **GROUND RULES**

- Be on time.
- Stay on task.
- Share responsibility for training.
- Do reading, homework.
- Participate in activities.
- Listen when others talk.
- Turn off cell phones.
- Some questions will be placed in parking lot on flip chart.

## **INSTRUCTOR’S NOTES: NOTE TAKING, REVIEW MATERIAL**

While some note taking is beneficial, too much note taking can keep students from paying active attention to the lecture. Student notebooks have been designed to strike a balance between required note taking and materials already supplied.

All tests and quizzes are open note / open book / open Bible.

Before each class session, review the session notes and material to be presented, and have a good grasp on the subject.

## STUDENT EVALUATIONS

Contenders Discipleship Initiative uses a narrative evaluation approach rather than issuing grades during a student’s course of study. A narrative evaluation is written feedback after the course that states what a student has learned. The Contenders Discipleship Initiative Narrative Evaluation consists of two written evaluations: one from the pastor for each student attending a course, and one from the student giving a self-assessment.

Each of your evaluations should be no more than two pages in length, and include one or two brief paragraphs describing the course content and requirements followed by an assessment of the student’s performance during the course. You should address the student’s understanding of the course material, completion of tasks or assignments, attendance, and participation in discussion. The pastor assessment can be found at:

[http://vmcontenders.org/pastor\\_assessment.html](http://vmcontenders.org/pastor_assessment.html)

The student’s own evaluation is likewise two pages. It summarizes his or her accomplishments while taking the course, any new understandings achieved, and the student’s goals for the future. Go over the assessment form during the first class.

The student assessment form can be found at:

[http://vmcontenders.org/student\\_assessment.html](http://vmcontenders.org/student_assessment.html)

The CDI asks that pastors keep a copy of the Student Evaluation together with the Pastor Evaluation for each course in a student file. Students should also be given a copy of the Pastor Evaluation and asked to keep these records. Students who subsequently apply to Village Missions will be required to submit copies of these evaluations to Village Missions for each course taken.

## INSTRUCTOR CHECKLIST FOR OLD TESTAMENT COURSE

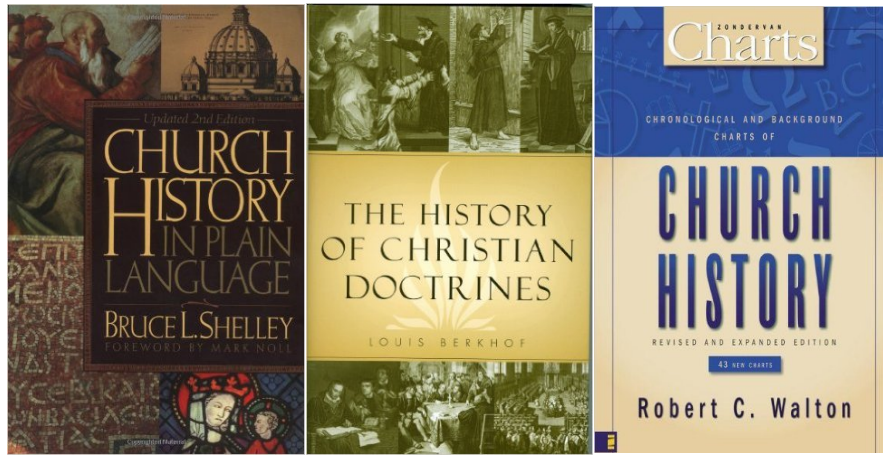
As you move closer to the actual class date, use this checklist to make sure you are prepared. Don’t forget that after the class, your work is not finished. The important task of mentoring has just begun.

On the next page is a suggested guideline; adjust it as needed.

Instructors Checklist				
One Month Prior	Two Weeks Prior to Class	One Week Prior	Class	Ongoing After Class
		Answer questions		
Review course work Create own material, as needed Promote course Announce schedule Send classroom report <i>available on website</i>				
	Gather registrations Contact students Send reminders Have students order books Order materials Print course materials Test Internet speed Ensure PC is virus free			
		Gather materials for activities Set up training room Test equipment Test or download videos		
			Conduct classes Conduct quizzes Write assessments Answer class Questions and e-mails	
				Follow-up mentorship Answer e-mails Prepare for next course

## INSTRUCTOR’S NOTE: BOOKS FOR THIS CLASS

Copy and bind the Student Guide for each person (you will find them on the CDI website) and have your students order copies of the required text books:



*Church History in Plain Language* by Bruce Shelley (4<sup>th</sup> edition)- ISBN 978-1-4016-7631-5 (Note: other editions may have different page numbers than used in this course)

*The History of Christian Doctrine* - by Louis Berkhof (2009) - ISBN 978-0-85151-005-7

*Chronological & Background Charts of Church History* - Robert Walton  
– ISBN -978-0-310-25813-1

## CHURCH HISTORY COURSE SYLLABUS

This course gives students knowledge, perspective and resources to help them understand what the Bible teaches about The Church, as well as how The Church and Christian doctrine have developed through the years.

Upon completion of this course, you should have a solid foundation and understanding of God’s purpose for the Church, as well as how the Church should function. You should see that the Church has always needed reform and in the midst of our humanity and failure, Jesus Christ has and will continue to build His church.  
Matthew 16:18

As we see the struggles and the sacrifices made by those who contended for the faith and did the hard work involved in developing the doctrines into the form we have today; you will have a great appreciation for their work and for God’s sovereignty in preserving the truth for us.

There is a famous saying related to progress, reform and the study of history:  
“Progress, far from consisting in change, depends on retentiveness. When change is absolute, there remains no being to improve and no direction is set for possible improvement: and when experience is not retained... infancy is perpetual. **Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it.**”  
“The Life of Reason (1905-1906) - Vol. I. Reason in Common Sense” by George Santayana



## **Ecclesiology**

Introduction - Understanding the Church  
Pictures of The Church  
What is The Church to Do?  
The Church’s Organization

## **Church History**

The Age of the Apostles & Catholic Christianity – 6 BC-312 AD  
The Age of the Christian Roman Empire – 312 - 590 AD  
The Christian Middle Ages – 590 - 1517 AD  
The Age of the Reformation – 1517-1648 AD  
The Age of Reason and Revival – 1648-1789 AD  
The Age of Progress – 1789-1914 AD  
The Age of Ideologies -1914-1989 AD  
The Age of Global Expansion and Relocation 1900+ AD

## **History of Christian Doctrine**

Introduction and Preparatory Doctrinal Development  
The Doctrine of the Trinity and The Doctrine of Christ  
The Doctrine of Sin and Grace and Related Doctrines  
The Doctrine of the Atonement of The Work of Christ  
The Doctrine of the Application and Appropriation of Divine Grace  
The Doctrine of the Church/The Sacraments and of the Last Things

## **Classroom Sessions Involve:**

- Lectures
- Class Discussions
- Student Presentations

## **Outside Assignments**

- Scripture memorization.
- Outside reading with chapter summaries.
- A chart cataloging the seven churches in Revelation 2 & 3.
- The final assignment will be a paper, detailing your learning experience in this class: what you learned, what was especially beneficial to you and how this has affected your attitude and view of the Church.

## COURSE READING SCHEDULE

The class is designed to meet once a week for 2 hours, however, it can be altered depending upon your local pastor/mentor. Please note, there is a lot of reading and written assignments in this class that must be done prior to the beginning of the Session indicated on next page.

### **Required Text Books:**

*Church History in Plain Language* by Bruce Shelley (4<sup>th</sup> edition) / ISBN 978-1-4016-7631-5 (Note: other editions may have different page numbers than used in this course)

*The History of Christian Doctrine* - by Louis Berkhof (2009)  
ISBN 978-0-85151-0056-9

### **Recommended Text Book:**

*Chronological & Background Charts of Church History* - Robert Walton  
ISBN -978-0-310-25813-1

Session	Subject	Assignments
1	Ecclesiology Part 1 Introduction Part 2 Understanding the Church	What is your current view of the Church? Prepare a chart comparing the Churches in Revelation 2-3
2	Ecclesiology Part 1 Pictures of the Church	Work through the Scriptures that present the pictures of Christ and the Church (individually or in groups)
3	Ecclesiology Part 1 What is a Church to do?	Examine and discuss the Scriptures: - What is a church to do? ( Acts) - Where did the church gather? - “One Another” Passages. - Church Discipline.- Accountability
4	Ecclesiology Part 1 The Church as an Organization	Discuss the three main duties of the Church and the unifying principle. Discuss the various forms of Church government Discuss Church officers, qualifications and Ephesians 4:11-16
5	Church History Part 1 The Age of Jesus, The Apostles & Catholic Christianity	Read and write a summary of chapters 1-8 of Church History in Plain Language
6	Church History Part 1 The Age of the Christian Roman Empire	Read and write a summary of chapters 9-16 of Church History in Plain Language
7	Church History Part 1 The Christian Middle Ages	Read and write a summary of chapters 17-23 of Church History in Plain Language
8	Church History Part 1 The Age of the Reformation	Read and write a summary of chapters 24-31 of Church History in Plain Language

Session	Subject	Assisgnments
9	Church History Part 1 The Age of Reason and Revival	Read and write a summary of chapters 32-35 of Church History in Plain Language
10	Church History Part 1 The Age of Progress	Read and write a summary of chapters 36-41 of Church History in Plain Language
11	Church History Part 1 The Age of Ideologies & Global Expansion	Read and write a summary of chapters 42-48 of Church History in Plain Language
12	History of Doctrine Part 1 Introduction & Preparatory Doctrinal Development	Read and write summaries of the 11 Roman numeral subjects in pages 15-79 of The History of Christian Doctrines
13	History of Doctrine Part 1 The Trinity	Read and write summaries of the 4 Roman numeral subjects in pages 83-123 of The History of Christian Doctrines
14	History of Doctrine Part 1 Sin, Grace & Related Doctrines	Read and write summaries of the 5 Roman numeral subjects in pages 127-160 of The History of Christian Doctrines
15	History of Doctrine Part 1 The Atonement – to the Reformation Part 2 The Atonement – from the Reformation	Read and write summaries of the 4 Roman numeral subjects in pages 165-198 of The History of Christian Doctrines
16	History of Doctrine Part 1 The Application & Appropriation of Divine Grace	Read and write summaries of the 3 Roman numeral subjects in pages 203-223 of The History of Christian Doctrines
17	History of Doctrine Part 1 The Doctrine of the Church Part 2 The Doctrine of the Sacraments Part 3 The Doctrine of the Last Things	Read and write summaries of the 6 Roman numeral subjects in pages 227-269 of The History of Christian Doctrines

## **SESSION 1, PART 1 – INTRODUCTION/DOCTRINE OF INSPIRATION**

*It is best to discuss the objectives prior to starting the video, so your students can focus on the key points of each session.*

After this session, you will:

- Know the importance of the study of Church History.
- Identify three lessons that will help keep you from repeating the mistakes of the past. (Keep Balanced; Not this way among you = not the way of the Gentiles. Mark 10:43; Contend for the faith = not our culture or traditions.)

You will KNOW:

- How Martin Luther defended his teachings about the Church.

You will be ABLE TO:

- Understand the blessings that come as you gain knowledge and understanding about God’s Word, will and Church.

You will THINK ABOUT:

- Why the study of church history is necessary?

### **Begin video.**

#### **Introduction**

- Course title; “Church History, Ecclesiology and the History of Christian Doctrine.”
- Goal in this course is NOT to memorize dates, names and events.
- You will gain knowledge, perspective and resources to help you understand what the Bible teaches about the Church, as well as, the how and why the Christian Church and Christian doctrine developed through the years.

#### **Ecclesiology: The Study of the Church**

- You will look at what the Church is, what the Church is like, where the Church met, how the Church is to function and what the Church is to do.

#### **Church History and History of Christian Doctrine**

You will:

- See the struggles and the sacrifices made by those who contended for the faith and did the hard work involved in developing the doctrines into today’s form.
- Gain a great appreciation for their work and for God’s sovereignty in preserving the truth for us.

### **Upon Course Completion**

You will have:

- A solid foundation for further study of these subjects.
- An understanding of God’s purpose for the Church.
- An understanding of how the Church should function.

You will develop:

- Develop a deep and lasting love for “the Church of God, which He purchased with His own blood.” Acts 20:28

You will understand:

- The Church has always needed reform and that amid our humanity and failure, Jesus Christ has and will continue to build His Church. Matthew 16:18

### **Progress, Reform and Study of History**

“Progress, far from consisting in change, depends on retentiveness. When change is absolute, there remains no being to improve and no direction is set for possible improvement: and when experience is not retained... infancy is perpetual. Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to **repeat it.**” *The Life of Reason (1905-1906) - Vol. I. Reason in Common Sense* – George Santayana

### **Why is it Important to Study Church History?**

- Study Church History so that we are not condemned to repeat the failures of others.
- Remember the toil, sacrifice and prayers of those who have led the way in the past.
- Follow them as they followed Christ, in the paths of humility, service and victory – even at the cost of their lives.

### **Course Structure**

- Rigorous, challenging and profitable.
- Reading, writing and memorization.
- Memorize Ephesians 4:11-16.
- Pray daily that the Lord will sustain you and teach you.
- Apply your heart to discipline and your ears to words of knowledge. Pro 23:12

### **Knowledge**

- Blessings that come as we gain knowledge and understanding about God’s Word, will and Church.
- Be on guard against pride or arrogance because of our knowledge.
- Scripture warns us that knowledge can “puff us up.”

- Be aware that knowing and doing are, far too often, separate things in our experience.
- We are called to be those who hear (who learn) and those who do as well.
- Consider the times, conditions, limitations and challenges that those in the past faced in this battle for truth.
- So much of what we have – they did not have.

### **Consider Your Own Growth**

- Consider your own history and growth in Christ.
- We all have made great changes from our early days of following Jesus and might be a little embarrassed if everyone knew what we were like then.

### **Three Key Points**

- First - Keep Balanced:
  - There are balancing truths throughout Scripture.
  - It will become increasingly apparent that the hardest thing to do is to keep balanced; in doctrine, in practice, in lifestyle – in fact, in any and every area of our lives.
- Second - Not This Way Among You:
  - Mark 10:41-45, Jesus points His disciples to the way that the Gentiles build kingdoms and then tells them, "But it is not this way among you, but whoever wishes to become great among you shall be your servant;" Mark 10:43 (NASB).
  - The church has often ignored this command and has failed to build His kingdom or bring glory to our Lord and Savior.
  - Even today, we have forgotten our Lord’s command and have sought to build His kingdom (or more accurately – our own kingdoms) the way Gentiles build kingdoms: by force, by abusive authority, by self-promotion and by laws; rather than by changed lives through the power of God’s Spirit and God’s Word.
  - Matthew 13:24-30 and 36-43.
- Third - Contend for the Faith:
  - The churches, individually and collectively, have often failed to “contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all handed down to the saints.” Jude 1:3
  - Too many times, we have contended for our culture, our unbalanced teaching or for our positions of authority and influence, rather than for the truth entrusted to us.
  - When the Church faced challenges to her authority or teachings, from those inside or outside of the Church, we generally played the authority card. We responded by saying: “Because I said so!”

- What was needed was a consistent, well-reasoned and biblical response.
- There were significant times when the Church did just that, to our great benefit today.
- However, we see the Church repeatedly using its power to try to crush any opposition or reform.

### **Martin Luther**

- Quote from Martin Luther shows the Church the proper response.
- In April 1521, he appeared before Emperor Charles V to defend what he had taught and written.
- “My conscience is captive to the word of God. Unless I am convinced by proofs from Scriptures or by plain and clear reasons and arguments, I cannot and will not retract, for it is neither safe nor wise to do anything against conscience. Here I stand. I can do no other. God help me. Amen.”
- Luther also said, “Peace if possible, truth at all costs.”

### **Review**

- We looked at the importance of the study of Church History.
- We discussed the balancing truths throughout Scripture.
- We found the church has often failed to build His kingdom or bring glory to our Lord and Savior.
- We saw that churches, individually and collectively, have often failed to “contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all handed down to the saints.” Jude 1:3.

### **In the Next Session**

- We will look at the use and meaning of the words: ekklesia and church.



## INSTRUCTOR’S NOTES: SEVEN CHURCHES CHART

Review the schedule and the assignments for this course with your students.

In class, or as an outside assignment, have your students write a summary of their current ideas, attitudes and understanding of the Church, so that, later they can compare them to their views at the end of this course. They need to be prepared to discuss how they may have changed at the end of the sessions on Ecclesiology (at the instructor’s discretion) and in their final paper.

In class, or as an outside assignment, have your students put together a chart comparing the seven churches in Revelation 2-3. The purpose of the exercise is to realize that the Church has always needed reformation.

Place on the Chart:

- How Jesus Christ is pictured?
- What does He know about each church?
- What commendation and/or rebuke is given to the churches?
- What are they commanded to do?
- What is the warning and/or promised blessing?
- What is the one thing that is said to all the churches.

By the end of the course: Memorize Ephesians 4:11-16 and recite it for 3 separate individuals or groups, on 3 separate occasions.

Reading assignments: **Students will want to begin work on these assignments right away.**

“In Church History in Plain Language,” students need to come to class having read the chapters to be covered and having written a summary of each chapter in the section. The lengths of the summaries are at the discretion of the student and they need to be ready to share their summaries in the class discussion.

In “The History of Christian Doctrines,” students need to come to class having read the sections to be covered and having written a summary of each Roman numeral subject in the section(s). The lengths of the summaries are at the discretion of the student and they need to be ready to share their summaries in the class discussion.

### Comparing the Seven Churches in Revelation 2-3 Chart

	<b>EPHESUS</b> Rev. 2:1-7	<b>SMYRNA</b> Rev. 2:8-11	<b>PERGAMUM</b> Rev. 2:12-17	<b>THYATIRA</b> Rev. 2:18-29	<b>SARDIS</b> Rev. 3:1-6	<b>PHILA - DELPHIA</b> Rev. 3:7-13	<b>LAODICEA</b> Rev. 3:14-22
<b>How is Jesus Christ portrayed ?</b>	7 stars in hand  Walks among lampstands	1 <sup>st</sup> & Last Dead & now alive	The One with the sharp two-edged sword	Son of God eyes like fire feet like bronze	Has the 7 Spirits of God & 7 stars	Holy, True, Has the key of David, Opens/Shuts	The Amen, Faithful & True Witness Creator
<b>What Jesus knows about the church</b>	Deeds Perseverance Against false teachers Endured Hate evil deeds	Suffering Tribulation Poverty -- though rich Blasphemy vs. you	Worldly Where they live, their faithfulness	Wrong Doctrine Deeds, love, faith, service, persevering, progress	Spiritually Dead Deeds & reputation	Spiritually Alive, Deeds Opportunity A little power & kept My word, did not deny	Complacent Deeds You don't know how bad it is
<b>Condemnation or Rebuke</b>	You have forsaken the love you had at first.		Tolerate false teacher & teaching	Tolerate false teacher & teaching	“alive: but dead” Incomplete deeds		Deeds not hot & not cold = lukewarm
<b>Command</b>	Remember Repent and do earlier works	Don't fear, remain faithful even when facing prison, persecution or death	Repent	Repent, hold on to what you already have until I come Overcome & keep My deeds	Wake up Strengthen what little faith remains. Repent, be alert, remember	Keep on enduring, hold on to what you have	Turn from indifference and repent! Get what you need from Me Be zealous & repent
<b>Warning and/or promised blessing</b>	Lampstand can be removed  Given the right to eat from the tree of life	Be faithful to the death and receive the crown of life. Overcome and not hurt by the 2 <sup>nd</sup> death	Or else I will come and make war vs. false teachers Overcome = hidden manna, white stone & new name	Judgment of false teachers & followers  Receive authority over the nations & the morning star	I'll come like a thief  Those who = clean will walk w/Me in white Name not erased but confessed	Enemies will come and honor you Keep you from the hour of testing	Spit you out of My mouth Those I love I reprove & discipline Overcome & sit with Me on the throne
<b>Said to all the churches</b>	He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.						

## SESSION 1, PART 2 – UNDERSTANDING THE CHURCH

After this session, you will:

- Know the use and meaning of the words: ekklesia and church.

You will KNOW:

- That the Church is an assembly of Christians gathered for worship in a religious meeting.

You will BE ABLE TO:

- Discuss that the concept of the Church began with Jesus Christ.

You will THINK ABOUT:

- Why the term ekklesia is used by Jesus in only two passages of Matthew? Matthew 16:18; 18:17

### In the Last Session

- We looked at the importance of the study of Church History is so that we will not be condemned to repeat the past.
- You also learned the three lessons that will help keep you from repeating the mistakes of the past.
  - Keep Balanced
  - Not this way among you = not the way of the Gentiles. Mark 10:43
  - Contend for the faith = not our culture or traditions.

### Begin video.

### Understanding the Church

- Church - The Greek word that is translated “church” or “churches” is: (Strong’s Number G1577). Ecclesia – ekklésia (ek-klay-see’-ah) a gathering of citizens called out from their homes into some public place, an assembly.

### The Church in the New Testament

- Church in the New Testament describes:
  - An assembly of the people convened at the public place of the council for the purpose of deliberating.
  - The assembly of the Israelites.
  - Any gathering or throng of men assembled by chance, tumultuously.

- In a Christian sense, church is used to signify:
  - An assembly of Christians gathered for worship in a religious meeting.
  - A company of Christians hoping for eternal salvation through Jesus Christ, to observe their own religious rites, to hold their own religious meetings, and to manage their own affairs, according to regulations prescribed for the body for order's sake.
  - Those who anywhere, (in a city or village), constitute such a company and are united into one body.
  - The whole body of Christians scattered throughout the earth.
  - The assembly of faithful Christians already dead and received into heaven.

### **Ekklesia Was a Political Term**

- In classical usage ekklesia was a political term, meaning "an assembly of duly summoned citizens."
- In the Greek city-state, the trumpet of the herald summoned the citizens to the ekklesia (assembly) to hear of and deal with the business of the city.
- Ekklesia is often seen as an exclusive term, connecting its meaning with the fact that only citizens were being called to the meeting.
- In common usage, ekklesia was an inclusive word. Comes from the verb, "to call out or call forth."
- Herald calling the people living in a certain place, to come to a meeting. The "assembly of duly summoned citizens" eventually became just "an assembly."

### **The Jewish Background**

- The use of ekklesia in the Septuagint, the Greek translation of the Old Testament, can be instructive.
- Occurs about 80 times in the Septuagint, translating the Hebrew word qahal (kha-hale) or words from the same root.
- Qahal is one of the primary words for a gathering or assembly.
- The assembly gained meaning from the context, from the people or purpose of the meeting. It is rarely, if ever translated by the Greek word: "synagogue." 'Edah (ay-daw) is the word most often translated by synagogue in the Septuagint.
- When applied to Israel, 'edah came to indicate the society itself, whether assembled or not.
- It is used of the children of Israel, during their journey from Egypt to Canaan.
- 'Edah assumes a sort of technical status as the People of God, but qahal continues to denote only the actual assembly or meeting.

- By the first century, the word synagogue had assumed too much of a technical status, to use among the Christians, since it most often identified the religious assemblies of the Jews, the Jews themselves and the places where they assembled.

### **Ekklesia in the New Testament**

- The pre-Christian history of the ekklesia presented the new institution of Jesus Christ with an easily adaptable word to describe that institution.
- A neutral term, devoid of any special doctrinal significance.
- This word that meant “assembly” now included the people who assembled, whether in an assembly or not.
- This assembly was something real; the first and most common usage was of a local church, e.g., where there was an assembling of the people.
- This usage is typical of the New Testament and of many of the passages in the Apostolic Fathers.
- It had become in most of these passages the technical term to designate this new institution.
- There developed a wider, non-local use. The church, after spreading out from Jerusalem, was still in all these places the same institution of Jesus Christ. The word ekklesia did not lend itself to this non-local usage.
- To emphasize the oneness of these churches, the singular was used and so the idea of assembly was no longer exclusive.
- The concept of the Church began with Jesus Christ. The word ekklesia became what it was because of Jesus Christ; for it became the technical term of that institution which assembled in His name, and which was composed of people who sustained a certain relationship to Him, e.g., people “in Christ.”
- Jesus taught about and preached the Kingdom of God.
- *When the modern conflict between The Kingdom and The Church is removed, the ekklesia is a realization of this teaching.*
- Church does not exhaust the meaning of the Kingdom of God (the sovereignty or reign of God).
- One anonymous author stated it this way: “The Kingdom creates a community, and uses a community as an instrument. Those who enter the Kingdom are in the Church; the Church lives beneath the Kingly Rule of God, acknowledges it, proclaims it, and looks for its final manifestation; but the Church is not itself the Kingdom.”

### **Where Did We Get the Word Church?**

- The English word “church” comes from the Greek adjective: “kyriakos” (kooi-ah-`khaus) which means: “the Lord’s” (e.g., belonging to or related to the Lord.)
- It may refer to the Lord’s people in general or to any group of the Lord’s people.
- From the third century, it began to be used to refer to the building in which the Lord’s people worship.
- This word does not appear in the New Testament in any context in which it can be translated church.
- It occurs only twice: 1 Corinthians 11:20 – “The Lord’s supper” and in Revelation 1:10 – “the Lord’s day.”
- It is easy to see that those in an assembly would want to clarify and distinguish themselves from a political rally or some generic gathering of a crowd – “we are the ekklesia Kyriakos” = the gathering of the Lord’s people.
- It may have been the intention of the early church to use “the Lord’s” to designate the Church as “those who belong to Jesus Christ” and even to emphasize that our “citizenship is in heaven.” Phil 3:20
- Words tend to adjust or adapt over time and the original meaning changes into something more generic or functional; so that now – for many people – “church” means a building, a worship service, or a religious group of any kind.
- Pastor Ken Ainsworth gave us a simple definition of the Church in our Christian Doctrine class.
- Use his definition of the local church for our baseline. Other definitions are included with your notes.
- “The local Church (visible) is a group of believers called to assemble, to worship and to minister (serve) in a single community.”
- This simple foundation is a good place to begin building our understanding of the Church.

**Review**

- The “Ekklesia” are citizens who are called together to deal with the business of the kingdom and is used to describe those called together by Christ to take care of His business.
- The “Church” are those who are identified as “belonging to the Lord.”

**In the Next Session**

- We will look at the descriptions or pictures of the Church in the New Testament.
- We will look at some word pictures used in the New Testament that describe the relationship between Christ and His church.
- We will also be able to explain the significance of those pictures.

## INSTRUCTOR’S NOTES: UNDERSTANDING THE CHURCH

If they have not already done so, have your students finish the chart of the seven churches in Revelation 2-3 (part of the purpose of the assignment is to reinforce the idea, that the Church is always in need of reformation and course correction).

Conduct the following class discussion. Throughout this guide book many of these questions have the answers underneath to help you guide the discussions. But many times, these questions are not answered, hoping the course materials and the required reading will help you guide the discussions.

**When I teach this class, I don’t always have prepared answers, because I am always hoping for answers I have not thought of come out during discussion! However, I have included my thoughts for many of the questions to help guide the discussion. Please take time prior to each session to read the questions to help with your discussions.**

### **1. What is the use and meaning of the words: Ekklesia and Church?**

**The “Ekklesia” are citizens who are called together to deal with the business of the kingdom and is used to describe those called together by Christ to take care of His business.**

**The “Church” are those who are identified as “belonging to the Lord.”**

### **2. Read these definitions and be prepared to discuss. What are the common elements used and what are the differences? What, if any, are the elements that you believe are neglected? Unnecessary?**

David Hocking: The church is a universal body of believers, which manifests itself through various local assemblies of believers. (*The World’s Greatest Church* – page 97)

John MacArthur: The Church is an assembly of called out ones. Those who love Jesus Christ constitute the true church, the Body of Christ. We belong to the collective Body of Christ, whether we are alive or in glory. The church is made up of people called by God to be His children. We have become united with all other believers by faith in Christ. – The world cannot detect the invisible church of real Christians. They see only the visible church, which includes those who only profess to be Christians. The Lord intended to establish a visible church for a testimony to the world. In the book of Acts the invisible church became more visible. (*The Master’s Plan for the Church* - pages 81-82)



Charles Ryrie: Taking together the features of local churches we see in the New Testament, we might propose the following definition: A local church is an assembly of professing believers in Christ who have been baptized and who are organized to do God’s will. (*A Survey of Bible Doctrine* – page 141)

The universal church is that spiritual organism of which Christ is the Head and believers from Pentecost to the rapture are the members.  
(*A Survey of Bible Doctrine* – page 154-155)

J. Oliver Buswell: - “The visible church, which is also catholic or universal...consists of all those throughout the world that profess the true religion together with their children; and is the kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ, the house and family of God out of which there is no ordinary possibility of salvation.”

“The catholic or universal church which is invisible consists of the whole number of the elect that have been, are, or shall be gathered into one, under Christ the Head thereof; and is the spouse, the body, the fullness of Him that filleth all in all.”  
(Both taken from the Westminster Confession of Faith XXV) (*A Systematic Theology of the Christian Religion Vol.1 Chapter 6* – page 418 & Vol.2 Chapter 8 page 216)

**3. In the Gospels, Ekklesia is found only in Matthew, and in only two passages in that gospel (16:18; 18:17). What did Jesus say about the Ekklesia in Matthew 16:18?**

**I will build My church (The Promise)  
I will build My church (The Identity)**

**4. Why is it used only twice in the gospels?**

**(Two possible answers are below. Can you think of any other possible answers? – see Ephesians 3:1-13). This term seems to be generally reserved for the time after the resurrection-ascension of Jesus Christ. Note, for instance, that in Luke-Acts ekklesia never occurs until after the events of Pentecost. There is an understanding that ekklesia is, strictly speaking, a post-resurrection institution.**

**Another possibility is that Jesus himself gave the term ekklesia its new significance, either on this occasion (Mt.16:18), or elsewhere in his ministry. A definition in Messianic terms would give it the depth of meaning expected in this passage. The connection of church and kingdom in Mt. 16:18-19 might suggest that Jesus made such a definition.**

**5. Where is the word ekklesia used most often in the New Testament? Review the information on the use of the word ekklesia in the rest of the New Testament and discuss how this should affect our view of the Church.**

In the book of Acts, ekklesia is used 23 times. In two instances (19:32, 40) it refers to the mob of people at Ephesus. In this passage (19:39) it is also used to refer to the assembly which met regularly or lawfully at Ephesus. Once ekklesia is used in the speech of Stephen (7:38) to designate the children of Israel gathered at Sinai.

It comes closest to its classical usage in 14:27 where the assembly is gathered at Antioch to hear Paul and Barnabas. In the remaining passages, ekklesia means more than the actual assembly, it means the people who assemble. For example, we read "great fear came over the whole church" in Jerusalem (5:11); a "great persecution began against the Church in Jerusalem" (8:1) and "Saul began ravaging the Church, entering house after house" (8:3). In nearly every case, ekklesia is used in a local sense: it is the assembly (assembled or not) at Jerusalem (11:22; 12:1, 5; 15:4, 22), at Antioch (11:26; 13:1; 14:27; 15:3), at Caesarea (18:22), and at Ephesus (20:17, 28). This local use is emphasized using the plural, ekklesiai, when referring to churches in a larger area: in Syria and Cilicia (15:41) and in areas of Asia Minor (16:5).

The possible exceptions to the local use: "churches" is the statement in 9:31: "So the Church throughout all Judea and Galilee and Samaria enjoyed peace, being built up" and in 15:41, where a textual variant has the singular: "Church." This is the beginning of another development in the meaning of ekklesia: the universal usage. If the singular reading is correct, and ekklesia is used in a universal sense, then we have the local and universal usage here side by side in the book of Acts. In this development, ekklesia can mean any portion of Christians: from a local group to those in a larger geographical area, and, by extension, to those throughout the world.

It is in Paul's letters to the Ephesians and Colossians that ekklesia received its fullest doctrinal expression. We have seen ekklesia used to designate the people, whether assembled or not. However, in

**most cases, the use was still local; these people could and were assembling. Nevertheless, in Ephesians and Colossians the use of ekklesia is about the people without respect to the possibility of assembling.**

**The term itself was rather neutral - not particularly expressive of the doctrine concerning that institution. In the letters to Ephesus and Colossae ekklesia is grounded into the doctrine of the Church and made to carry the doctrinal implications. Paul did this by using two important parallel terms, the body and the wife.**

**6. Read the paragraphs below and discuss the benefits or problems of using the word “Kyriakos,” which we translate as: “Church.”**

The English word: “church” comes from the Greek adjective: “kyriakos” (koo-ri-ah-khaus) which means: “the Lord’s” (e.g., belonging to or related to the Lord.) It may refer to the Lord’s people in general or to any group of the Lord’s people. From the third century, at least, it began to be used to refer to the building in which the Lord’s people worship. This word does not appear in the New Testament in any context in which it can be translated “church.” It occurs only twice: 1 Corinthians 11:20 – “The Lord’s supper” and in Revelation 1:10 – “the Lord’s day.”

It is easy to see that those in an assembly would want to clarify and distinguish themselves from a political rally or some generic gathering of a crowd – thus, “we are the ekklesia Kyriakos” equals the gathering of the Lord’s people.

It may have been the intention of the early church to use “the Lord’s” to designate the Church as “those who belong to Jesus Christ” and even to emphasize that our “citizenship is in heaven.” Philippians 3:20

However, words tend to adjust or adapt over time and the original meaning changes into something more generic or functional; so that now – for many people – “church” means a building, a worship service, or a religious group of any kind.

## SESSION 2 – PICTURES OF THE CHURCH

At the end of this session you will:

- Know some of the word pictures used in the New Testament to describe the church.
- Be able to explain the significance of those pictures.

You will KNOW:

- New Testament word pictures tell us much about our Savior and about ourselves.

You will BE ABLE TO:

- Understand that things that are true about the individual disciple are generally true about the Church.

You will THINK ABOUT:

- The relationship the church has with our Savior.

### **In the Last Session**

- The “Ekklesia” are citizens who are called together to deal with the business of the kingdom and is used to describe those called together by Christ to take care of His business.
- The “Church” are those who are identified as “belonging to the Lord.”

### **Begin video.**

### **New Testament Word Pictures**

- New Testament word pictures tell us much about our Savior and about ourselves.
- They focus on our relationship with Jesus Christ and of our role in this world.
- Perhaps you have seen some of these pictures in the past and have thought of them only on a personal level, of your own relationship to Jesus.
- The things that are true about the individual disciple are generally true about the Church.

### **Eleven Pictures into Four Groups**

- We will look at eleven of the word pictures in the New Testament that relate to the Church. (There are certainly more) I have separated these eleven pictures into four groups.
- The first group speaks of the Connection to our Savior. Here, the Church is pictured as:
  - A Flock of Sheep with a Shepherd
  - Branches on a Vine
  - A New Creature/Creation with the Last Adam
- The second group speaks of the Intimacy with our Savior. Here, the Church is pictured as:
  - A body with a Head
  - A bride with a Bridegroom
  - A household or family with a Father
- The third group speaks of the Influence we have through our Savior. Here, the Church is pictured as:
  - Citizens of a Kingdom
  - Salt of the earth
  - Light in the world
- The fourth group speaks of the Worship we give to our Savior. Here, the Church is pictured as:
  - A building or temple for worship
  - A group of priests serving God
- We will start by looking at the first of the three pictures that speak of the Connection to our Savior.

### **The Shepherd and the Flock of Sheep**

- John 10:1-18, 25-30; Acts 20:28-31; 1 Peter 5:1-4
- The BIG picture here is of our Savior’s protection and of our following the Lord, as a Shepherd. This is a consistent theme throughout the Scriptures.
- In John 10 for instance, Jesus declares Himself “the Good Shepherd” and the true Shepherd who enters the sheepfold by the door.
- Jesus changes the picture for a moment and declares that He Himself is the door. Then He returns to the original picture, where the doorkeeper grants Him entry.
- There is further evidence of His legitimacy as He calls His own sheep by name, they know His voice and they follow Him as He leads them out to find pasture.
- He protects them, keeping them alive forever.
- He also tells this flock that there are other sheep (referring to Gentiles) who are not of this fold (referring to the Jews) who will be gathered into one flock (referring to the Church).

- The sheep face great danger, since they are not known for their:
  - Fierceness
  - Sharp teeth
  - Dangerous hooves
  - Blinding speed
- They are in danger of:
  - Thieves and robbers breaking into the sheepfold to take them away.
  - Listening to the voice of another shepherd, not their own, and being deceived, they willingly follow him (or her) into the wilderness.
  - Wolves doing what wolves do – snatching some and scattering others, because the one who is supposed to be guarding them is not their owner, he is just a hired hand who did not sign up to do battle with wolves.
- The Sheep are not known for their street smarts, so they have two very simple jobs.
  - The first is to know Christ, their Shepherd, listening to Him so that they can recognize His voice.
  - The second is, to follow Christ, their Shepherd, following Him wherever He leads.
- This seems simple enough. However, knowing and doing are too often, different things in our experience.

### **Trilogy Regarding the Shepherd**

- There is a trilogy regarding the Shepherd found in the Psalms and in the New Testament.
- In Ps 22, we see The Shepherd’s death, the suffering and anguish of the Messiah.
- In John 10:11 Jesus declares Himself to be the Good Shepherd who lays down His life for the sheep.
- In Psalm 23, we see the Shepherd’s on-going care for His flock. In Hebrews 13:20-21, Jesus is called the Great Shepherd risen from the dead who equips believers to do God’s will.
- In Psalm 24, we see the Shepherd-King returning to claim, that which is rightfully His.
- In 1 Peter 5:4 Jesus is called the Chief Shepherd who is returning in triumph to reward His servants.
- Good Shepherd - John 10:11 - His death (Psalm 22)
- Great Shepherd - Hebrews 13:20 - His resurrection and present ministry (Psalm 23)
- Chief Shepherd - 1 Peter 5:4 - His second coming (Psalm 24)

*Those taking this course as independent distant learners will need to examine the other ten pictures and then gather a few friends to discuss and share your insights.*

### **Review**

- The first group speaks of the Connection to our Savior.
- Here, the Church is pictured as:
  - A Flock of Sheep with a shepherd
  - Branches on a vine
  - A New creature/creation with the last Adam
- The second group speaks of the Intimacy with our Savior.
- Here, the Church is pictured as:
  - A body with a head
  - A bride with a bridegroom
  - A household or family with a father
- The third group speaks of the Influence we have through our Savior.
- Here, the Church is pictured as:
  - Citizens of a kingdom
  - Salt of the earth
  - Light in the world
- The fourth group speaks of the Worship we give to our Savior.
- Here, the Church is pictured as:
  - A building or temple for worship
  - A group of priests serving God

### **In the Next Session**

- We will answer the question: What is a church to do?

## INSTRUCTOR’S NOTE: PICTURES OF THE CHURCH

Now, for the rest of this session, examine the other 10 pictures and see what they tell us about our Savior, about ourselves as the Church and about our responsibilities.

Have your students work in groups. How you assign your students is up to you. You can assign all pictures, or have your students work on one of the four groups, or on one picture. Then lead the class in a discussion of to discuss their findings.

<b>Group 1</b>	<b>Connection to our Savior</b>
<b>Picture 1</b>	<b>A Flock of Sheep with a Shepherd</b>
<b>Picture 2</b>	<b>Branches on a Vine</b>
<b>Picture 3</b>	<b>A New Creature/Creation with the Last Adam</b>
<b>Group 2</b>	<b>Intimacy with our Savior</b>
<b>Picture 4</b>	<b>A body with a Head</b>
<b>Picture 5</b>	<b>A bride with a Bridegroom</b>
<b>Picture 6</b>	<b>A household or family with a Father</b>
<b>Group 3</b>	<b>Influence we have through our Savior</b>
<b>Picture 7</b>	<b>Citizens of a Kingdom</b>
<b>Picture 8</b>	<b>Salt of the earth</b>
<b>Picture 9</b>	<b>Light in the world</b>
<b>Group 4</b>	<b>Worship we give to our Savior</b>
<b>Picture 10</b>	<b>A building or temple for worship</b>
<b>Picture 11</b>	<b>A group of priests serving God</b>



## SESSION 3 – WHAT IS A CHURCH TO DO?

After this session, you will:

- Be able to explain the main duties of the church as well as the unifying principle that binds them together.
- Understand why it is important for believers to meet regularly.

You will KNOW:

- That the church met in a variety of locations, had a variety of activities in those meetings and a variety of responsibilities to one another.

You will BE ABLE TO:

- Discuss the three main duties of the church.

You will THINK ABOUT:

- Where to find the answer to the question by looking at what the churches did in the New Testament.

### **In the Last Session**

- You studied eleven of the word pictures used in the New Testament to describe the Church.
- You are now able to explain the significance of those pictures.

### **Begin video.**

### **What is a Church to Do?**

- One of the ways for us to answer the question of what a church is supposed to do is to look and see what churches did in the New Testament.
- The Church was born on the Day of Pentecost, as recorded in Acts 2. Peter had preached to the crowd that had gathered, explaining what was happening.
- About 3,000 men who believed in Jesus, were baptized and added to the Church that day. Acts 2:42 tells us about the activities and commitment of those early disciples.
- They were continually devoting themselves to:
  - The Apostles’ teaching
  - Fellowship
  - The breaking of bread
  - Prayer

- Day by day, they faithfully met together in larger, public gatherings as well as in smaller groups from house to house:
  - They met with a common focus as they were devoting themselves to the instruction of God’s Word and the teachings of Jesus, by the Apostles.
  - They continually shared meals and resources, remembered the Lord’s sacrifice through the Lord’s Supper and they prayed together.
  - They were also fruitful in their witness, in their love and in their gathering for instruction, fellowship, worship and prayer.
- These were not the only things the Christians in the New Testament did, or were instructed to do, as they met together. Later in this session, you will spend some time looking at the variety of activities the Church was involved in, the places the Church met and their responsibilities to one another.

### **Three Main Duties of the Church**

- The focus on the three main duties of the Church and of each individual Christian.
- **First –To Glorify God** – Romans 11:36, 1 Corinthians 6:20
  - 1 Corinthians 10:31– “Whether, then, you eat or drink or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.”
  - In the Westminster Shorter Catechism, the first question is - “What is the chief end of man?”
  - The answer we are to give is - “Man’s chief end is to glorify God and fully to enjoy Him forever.”
- We are to glorify God in:
  - Our worship – individual and corporate praise and thanksgiving
  - Our witness – individual and corporate proclamations of the excellencies of Christ
  - Our work – individual and corporate faithfulness in that which He has given us to do
- **Second – To Evangelize** – Mark 16:15; 2 Timothy 4:5
  - Acts 1:8 – “but you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth.”
  - Individually and corporately, we are to proclaim or preach the good news to others.
  - We are to be messengers of the gospel, the good news about Jesus Christ, His death and resurrection, the forgiveness of sins and the hope of eternal life.
  - This is the command of our risen Lord who has all authority in heaven and on earth.

- In another CDI class, Evangelism, Teaching and Preaching, Pastor Rob Dore will help equip you in these skills so that you will be able to glorify God through your obedience to evangelize.
- Third – **To Edify the Saints** (fellow believers) – Ephesians 4:11-16 is the passage of Scripture that you are memorizing for this class and that gives us the clearest understanding of how we are to build up one another in our faith.
  - Individually and corporately, we share in this responsibility to build up the body of Christ.
  - The provision is made by the gifts given to each believer.
  - The process involves equipping each believer for the work of serving others.
  - The purpose is the building up of the body of Christ in love.
  - The product would be maturity and stability for all in doctrine, life and love.

### **One Unifying Principle**

- We can combine these three duties, which describe how we can glorify God, into one unifying principle – Make Disciples.
- The key passage for this principle is Matthew 28:18-20, where Jesus commands His original disciples to make more disciples.
- The main verb here is “make disciples” (the KJV translates it as “teach”) and the participles that describe this process are:
  - “go” (literally- as you are going)
  - “baptizing”
  - “teaching”
- We know that this applies to all believers because the original disciples were to make disciples, who would follow Jesus and obey all that He has commanded them.
- If those original disciples were faithful and fruitful, then they produced disciples who would do the same thing – they would make disciples.
- We also know that this command applies to all followers of Christ, in all places and throughout all time because disciples are to be made, of all nations and Jesus promises His personal involvement to the end of the age.
- It is easy to see that the three main duties of the Church are summed up in this simple command to make disciples.

### **The Process of Making Disciples**

- Starts with evangelization or proclamation of the good news. We must tell others about Jesus.
- Then, as they put their faith in Jesus, we baptize them as a symbol of their new life and commitment to follow Christ.

- Then we begin to edify or build them up as we teach them to observe, or obey, all that He has commanded us.
- The result is that God is glorified when we produce fruit and prove that we are disciples of Jesus Christ (John 15:8).

### **Discipleship is not a Program**

- We need to understand that disciple making, or discipleship is not a program – though there needs to be accountability and purpose.
- Being a disciple is a life-long experience, not a class that we complete after so many lessons.
- The curriculum is God’s Word – teaching them to obey all the things that Jesus has commanded us.
- Finally, the process involves a mutual life on life connection as we disciple one another. There will be those who lead us and set the example for us to follow, but in each of our relationships there will be – or should be – mutual, loving accountability.
- Included in this guide under “For Further Study,” you will find notes that may help you.

Now I’d like you to spend some time surveying New Testament Scriptures included in your guide book that will help us expand our understanding of the life of the Church.

### **Review**

- Three Main Duties of the Church:
  - Glorify God
  - Evangelize
  - Edify saints
- One Unifying Principle
  - Make disciples

### **In the Next Session**

- We will see there is a need for organization in the local church.
- We will see there is a clear Biblical structure, which also includes clear instructions as to the qualifications for those who should lead the Church.
- We will know God has blessed churches regardless of their form of government.

## INSTRUCTOR’S NOTES: WHAT IS A CHURCH TO DO?

There are a series of questions or assignments numbered and in bold letters. Because of time constraints, use your discretion regarding which of these you would like to have your students work on and discuss as a group. You can lead these discussions yourself or assign some of them to individuals or groups and have them make a presentation or lead the discussion.

- 1. Compare these two passages from Acts and note the words that describe the obedience, the intensity, the unity, the focus, the fruitfulness and the camaraderie of the believers.**

Acts 2:41-42 -So then, those who had received his word were baptized; and that day there were added about three thousand souls. They were continually devoting themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer.

Acts 2:46-47 - Day by day continuing with one mind in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they were taking their meals together with gladness and sincerity of heart, praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord was adding to their number day by day those who were being saved.

- 2. Using the book of Acts, list the places where the Church gathered.**

**The Upper Room - Acts 1:12-15**

**Homes/Houses - Acts 2:1-2; 5:42; Romans 16:5; 1 Corinthians 16:19**

**The Temple area - Acts 2:46; 5:12**

**Down by the river – Acts 16:13-18**

**Synagogues – Acts 19:8**

**School (Rented?) – Acts 19:9-10**

**3. Using the book of Acts, state what the Church did and how they lived and served.**

**Acts 2:41-47 – Unity, Worship, Favor & Sharing Resources**

**Acts 4:23-37 – Prayer, Bold Proclamation & Sharing Resources**

**Acts 6:1-7 – “Deacons”**

**Acts 8:4 – Those scattered preached the word.**

**Acts 11:19-30 – The church at Antioch**

**Acts 12:5 – Prayer**

**Acts 13:1-3 – Prophets, Teachers & Missionaries from Antioch**

**Acts 14:19-23 – Elders appointed for them in every church**

**Acts 14: 24-28 – Reported to their sending congregation**

**Acts 15 – Council of the Apostles and Elders – with letters sent out**

**Acts 18:27-28 – letters from Ephesian church for Apollos to Achaia**

**Acts 20:7-12 – Church at Troas long, late night meeting with Paul**

**Acts 21:3-14 – Various prophets & prophetesses**

**Acts 21:7-26 – Paul submitted to leaders of the Church in Jerusalem**

**see also Galatians 2 re: a meeting with the leaders @ Jerusalem and a confrontation between Paul & Peter at Antioch.**

**4. Take turns reading (aloud) through the “ONE ANOTHERS” in the New Testament (below) and discuss what impressed you as you read and listened.**

Mark 9:50 – “Salt is good; but if the salt becomes unsalty, with what will you make it salty *again*? Have salt in yourselves, and be at peace with one another.”

John 13:34-35 - “A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you, that you also love one another. 35 By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.”

Romans 12:10 – “Be devoted to one another in brotherly love; (a)give preference to one another in honor;”

Romans 12:16 – “Be of the same mind toward one another; do not be haughty in mind, but associate with the lowly. Do not be wise in your own estimation.”

Romans 13:8 – “Owe nothing to anyone except to love one another; for he who loves his neighbor has fulfilled the law.”

Romans 14:13 – “Therefore let us not judge one another anymore, but rather determine this--not to put an obstacle or a stumbling block in a brother's way.”

Romans 14:19 – “So then we pursue the things which make for peace and the building up of one another.”

Romans 15:5 – “Now may the God who gives perseverance and encouragement grant you to be of the same mind with one another according to Christ Jesus,”

Romans 15:7 – “Therefore, accept one another, just as Christ also accepted us to the glory of God.”

Romans 15:14 – “And concerning you, my brethren, I myself also am convinced that you yourselves are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge and able also to admonish one another.”

Romans 16:16 – “Greet one another with a holy kiss. All the churches of Christ greet you.” See also: 1 Corinthians 16:20; 2 Corinthians 13:12; 1 Peter 5:14

1 Corinthians 12:25 – “so that there may be no division in the body, but that the members may have the same care for one another.”

Galatians 5:13 – “For you were called to freedom, brethren; only do not turn your freedom into an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another.”

Galatians 5:26 – “Let us not become boastful, challenging one another, envying one another.”

Ephesians 4:2 – “with all humility and gentleness, with patience, showing tolerance for one another in love,”

Ephesians 4:25 – “Therefore, laying aside falsehood, SPEAK TRUTH EACH ONE of you WITH HIS NEIGHBOR, for we are members of one another.”

Ephesians 4:32 – “Be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving each other, just as God in Christ also has forgiven you.”

Ephesians 5:19 – “speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody with your heart to the Lord;”

Ephesians 5:21 – “and be subject to one another in the fear of Christ.”

Philippians 2:3 – “Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind regard one another as more important than yourselves;”

Colossians 3:9 – “Do not lie to one another, since you laid aside the old self with its evil practices,”

Colossians 3:13 – “bearing with one another, and forgiving each other, whoever has a complaint against anyone; just as the Lord forgave you, so also should you.”

Colossians 3:16 – “Let the word of Christ richly dwell within you, with all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with thankfulness in your hearts to God.”

1 Thessalonians 4:18 – “Therefore comfort one another with these words.”

1 Thessalonians 5:11 - Therefore encourage one another and build up one another, just as you also are doing.

1 Thessalonians 5:15 - See that no one repays another with evil for evil, but always seek after that which is good for one another and for all people.

Hebrews 3:13 – “But encourage one another day after day, as long as it is still called “Today,” so that none of you will be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin.”

Hebrews 10:24-25 – “and let us consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds, not forsaking our own assembling together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another; and all the more as you see the day drawing near.”



James 4:11 – “Do not speak against one another, brethren. He who speaks against a brother or judges his brother, speaks against the law and judges the law; but if you judge the law, you are not a doer of the law but a judge of it.”

James 5:9 – “Do not complain, brethren, against one another, so that you yourselves may not be judged; behold, the Judge is standing right at the door.”

James 5:16 – “Therefore, confess your sins to one another, and pray for one another so that you may be healed. The effective prayer of a righteous man can accomplish much.”

1 Peter 4:9-10 – “Be hospitable to one another without complaint. As each one has received a special gift, employ it in serving one another as good stewards of the manifold grace of God.”

1 Peter 5:5 – “You younger men, likewise, be subject to your elders; and all of you, clothe yourselves with humility toward one another, for GOD IS OPPOSED TO THE PROUD, BUT GIVES GRACE TO THE HUMBLE.”

**5. How does the idea of church discipline (see Scriptures below) fit with the duties and unifying principle of making disciples? Is there danger if we do not follow these scriptures? Are there potential problems if we do follow these scriptures?**

Matthew 18:15-20

Acts 5:1-11

1 Corinthians 5 & 2 Corinthians 2:5-11

Galatians 6:1

1 Timothy 1:20, 5:1-2, 19-22

2 Timothy 2:20-26

Titus 3:9-11

**6. What are the three main duties of the Church?**

- 1. To glorify God - (Ephesians 1:5-6, 12, 13-14, 3:8-10; 1 Corinthians 10:31; John 15:8)**
- 2. In worship -- individual and corporate praise & thanksgiving.**
- 3. In witness -- individual and corporate proclamations of the excellences of Christ.**

**7. What is the chief and highest end of man?**

**Man’s chief and highest end is to glorify God, and fully to enjoy him forever. (Romans 11:36; 1 Corinthians 6:20, 10:31; Psalm 16:5–11, 73:24–28, 86:9,12; John 17:21–23; Revelation 21:3–4)**

## FOR FURTHER STUDY

Use these notes to help your students to focus on areas of further study.

### Three Main Duties of the Church

1. To glorify God - (Ephesians 1:5-6, 12, 13-14, 3:8-10; 1 Corinthians 10:31; John 15:8)

In worship -- individual and corporate praise & thanksgiving

In witness -- individual and corporate proclamations of the excellences of Christ

2. To evangelize (Matt 28:19-20; Mark 16:15; Acts 1:8) Individual & Corporate Authority: The risen Lord has all authority in Heaven and on earth. Christians have authority to evangelize. The essence is, to make disciples.

The main verb is, "make disciples" and the infinitives are, go," "baptize" and "teach."

3. To edify the saints (Matt 28:19-20; Ephesians 4:11-16)

### Individual & Corporate

Provision: gifts to each one /all believers (1 Corinthians 12:4-7; Ephesians 4:7, 11)

Process: to equip the saints for the work of service for building the body (Ephesians 4:12, 16 – by what every joint supplies)

Purpose: until we all attain to (Ephesians 4:13-16):

- the unity of the faith (doctrine)
- the knowledge of the Son of God
- maturity (the fullness of Christ is the standard)

Product:

- stability in doctrine & life
- speaking the truth in love
- functioning in love – the whole body

The Unifying Principle "Make Disciples":

- Strong's G3101 - mathētēs - a learner, pupil, disciple – translated: disciple or disciples 268 times in 258 verses in the New Testament – vast majority referring to disciples of Jesus.

Discipleship is:

- A process not a program – though there needs to be structure & purpose.
- Life-long not a class – though there are phases & goals.
- Life on life not just a curriculum – though there must be clear content.

Our purpose is to glorify God by observing the command of Jesus Christ to make disciples through worship, instruction, obedience to God’s Word, fellowship and evangelism.

### **Come and See - Spiritual Seekers to Growing Believers**

In order to become a disciple, a person must understand who Christ is, why He came, what He accomplished and gain assurance of salvation by putting their faith in Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord. Then as a disciple, one begins to walk by faith and is willing to seek spiritual growth through God’s Word.

John 1:35-39 – vs. 39 – “He said to them, “Come, and you will see.” So, they came and saw where He was staying; and they stayed with Him that day, for it was about the tenth hour.”

### **Follow Me - Growing Believers to Faithful Followers**

As a disciple, one is trained by developing spiritual disciplines in the areas of prayer, study of God’s Word, faithful service and loving accountability. Then as a disciple, one will be equipped for the ministry of disciple-making.

Matthew 4:18-22 – vs. 19 – “And He said to them, Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men.”

### **Be With Me - Faithful Followers to Motivated Ministers**

As a disciple-maker, one will take an active role in the ministry of disciple-making - through ministry and service and/or leadership, by apprenticeship and training, continuing to grow in spiritual discipline and character.

Mark 3:13-14 - And He went up on the mountain and summoned those whom He Himself wanted, and they came to Him. And He appointed twelve, so that they would be with Him and that He could send them out to preach.

**Remain (Abide) In Me - Motivated Ministers to Lifelong Disciple-Makers**

A lifelong disciple-maker will pursue a deeper understanding of God’s character and God’s Word, through spiritual disciplines and ministry, enabling disciples and disciple-makers.

John 15:4 – “Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself unless it abides in the vine, so neither can you unless you abide in Me.”

## SESSION 4 – THE CHURCH AS AN ORGANIZATION

After this session, you will:

- Know the basic structures of, and reasons for, church organization and government.

You will KNOW:

- The basic structures used for church organization and government.

You will BE ABLE TO:

- Explain the reasons why church organization and government are needed.

You will THINK ABOUT:

- The scriptures that relate to church organization and government.

### **In the Last Session**

- You learned where the Church met and what the Church did.
- You are now able to explain the three main duties of the Church and the unifying principle that binds them together.
- You learned why it is important to meet together regularly.

### **Begin video.**

### **Definition of the Local Church**

- Remember the definition Pastor Ken Ainsworth established for us in the Christian Doctrine class:
- “The local Church (visible) is a group of believers called to assemble, worship and minister (serve) in a single community.”
- The usage of the word "ecclesia." In reference to a local church, carries with it the idea of organization for:
  - fellowship
  - worship
  - united effort, and
  - edification.
- Disciples were not meant to be disjointed, isolated individual particles but those who would meet in common faith and effort to carry out the great commission and strengthen one another.
- Paul writes to the Church at Corinth, in 1 Corinthians 14:40 – “But all things must be done properly and in an orderly manner.” (see also Judges 17:6, 21:25; Deuteronomy 12:8)

### **The Basic Systems of Organization**

- How were the churches in the New Testament organized to make disciples, to glorify God and fully enjoy Him forever?
- Before we try to answer that question, we need to look at the basic systems of organization that we have today.
- The present forms of church polity or government come from various interpretations of the New Testament’s teaching regarding the Church’s officers and their functions, as well as from tradition and culture.
- Much of what developed over the years has come, at least partly, through the confusion generated by designating the terms “elder” and “overseer” (or “bishop”) as two different offices rather than seeing “elder” as the title and “overseer” as the function.

### **Different Forms of Church Government - By Dr. Erwin W. Lutzer**

- Biblically, we can describe the Church in numerous ways.
  - On one hand, we observe that the local church is a living organism—an expression of the body of Christ.
  - On the other, we know that the Church is an organization set up by Christ and regulated by the guidelines commanded throughout the Scriptures.
- As a divinely commissioned organization, God has ordained leadership to spur on:
  - growth,
  - purity,
  - outreach, and
  - holiness.
- Throughout history, these primary systems of church government have dominated the ideological spectrum of Christian leadership.

### **Episcopal Government**

- As early as the Apostolic Father Ignatius (the Bishop of Antioch until the beginning of the 2nd century AD), solitary leadership structures flourished, and bishop-oriented churches spread throughout the Christian world.
- The church has frequently mimicked the political constructs of the presiding culture, with its strengths and flaws.
- Evidenced by the numerous writings of the Church fathers, solitary church leadership (also known as Episcopal Church government) strongly correlated with the Roman Empire’s leadership.
- As the emperor was supreme over the physical, the bishop/elder/pastor was supreme concerning the spiritual, presiding over all others (deacons and members).

- Episcopal-style churches still abound today, primarily throughout the Roman Catholic Church.
- While this form of government does prove efficient, corruption is always a danger, and the hierarchy and territorial aspects of this polity can be troublesome.

### **Congregational Government**

- With a renewed emphasis on the priesthood of every believer, congregational church government has dominated the Protestant church.
- This form of church government, most often found in Baptist churches, usually maintains the presence and title of elders/pastors and deacons/trustees, but the power resides with the members of the congregation, who vote concerning yearly budgets, church programs, and leadership appointments.
- Divisiveness can be a negative result of this format, but the added accountability can stave off blatant corruption.
- (An interesting side note - is that we have many examples in the Bible to show us that the majority is often wrong. That is something to consider.)

### **Presbyterian Government**

- One other popular system is the Presbyterian Church government.
- This simply means that the Church is led by the eldership (supported by the deacons).
- The church body may have limited say into the major decisions of the Church, but those who meet the biblical qualifications for leadership share the weight of power and responsibility.
- Though this system can foster a “them and us” attitude between the congregation and the elders, it produces a balanced level of efficiency and accountability.
- The church government described and commissioned in the early church was marked by a plurality of elders.
- Many churches maintain a system somewhat like a Presbyterian-style of church leadership because they believe that this structure is biblically preferable.
- They limit the structure to the local church only, using the terms elder and bishop interchangeably.



### **Biblical Eldership**

- Another writer, Alexander Strauch, in his book: “Biblical Eldership” has some strong words about the problems he sees, that some forms of church polity have generated.
- “Some of the worst havoc wrought to the Christian faith has been a direct result of unscriptural forms of church structure.

Only a few centuries after the apostles’ deaths, for example, Christian churches began to assimilate both Roman and Jewish concepts of status, power, and priesthood. As a result, church government was clericalized and sacralized. (this means priests and ceremonies began to dominate church life)

Under Christ’s name, an elaborately structured institution emerged that corrupted the simple, family structure of the apostolic churches, robbed God’s people of their lofty position and ministry in Christ, and exchanged Christ’s supremacy over His people for the supremacy of the institutional church.”

“Biblical Eldership” – Alexander Strauch – page 101

### **The Need for Reformation**

The Church has always been, and in this world will always be, in need of reformation.

- The struggles with the world, the flesh and the devil put constant pressure on us, seeking to distract or discourage us from fulfilling our Lord’s commission. I am certain you saw that in your study of the seven churches of Revelation.
- There has never been a perfect church. However, one day the Lord will “present to Himself the Church in all her glory, having no spot or wrinkle or any such thing; but that she would be holy and blameless” (Ephesians 5:27). Oh, what a day that will be!
- It is one of the most amazing things in history, to see that the Lord Jesus Christ has:
  - built His church through all of these years,
  - rescued fallen people and preserved His truth,
  - despite the failures of His followers, and
  - regardless of the form of the governmental structure.
- Make no mistake about this, He will continue to build, purify and reform His Church until He returns to take us to His Father’s house.
- Should we just abandon the idea of church government?
- Should we forget about trying to determine and implement a biblical structure of church government?
  - The answer to both questions is “NO!”

- In God’s Word we have, what I believe, are very clear principles for the structure and government of the local church.
  - Our thinking should be about long-term reform versus short-term fixes.
  - Our focus needs to be on making disciples and growing in maturity before we focus on structure.
  - If we do not have qualified leaders who are mature disciples of Jesus Christ, it will not matter how “correct” our form of government might be.
- We need to heed the words of our Lord:
- Mark 10:42-45 - Calling them to Himself, Jesus said to them, "You know that those who are recognized as rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them; and their great men exercise authority over them. **But it is not this way among you,** but whoever wishes to become great among you shall be your servant; and whoever wishes to be first among you shall be slave of all. For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many."

For the rest of this session, you will spend time examining the passages in God’s Word that talk about who should lead in the Church, as well as what they should be doing.

### **Review**

- There is a need for organization in the local church.
- There is a clear biblical structure, which also includes clear instructions as to the qualifications for those who should lead the Church.
- God has blessed churches regardless of their form of government.

### **In the Next Session**

- Next time we will begin our study of the History of the Church called Introduction, Jesus and the Apostles and The Age of Catholic Christianity.
- We will begin to understand the great challenges the Church faced in its early years.

## **INSTRUCTOR’S NOTES: THE CHURCH AS AN ORGANIZATION**

Have your students continue to read in the Church History book (or History of Christian Doctrines book) according to the reading schedule and keep writing their chapter (or section) summaries.

Ask them to memorize Ephesians 4:11-16. At any time during the course ask your students to recite these verses in class.

For the rest of this session you will spend time examining the passages in God’s Word that talk about who should lead in the Church, as well as what they should be doing.

There are a series of questions or assignments numbered and in bold letters. Because of time constraints, use your discretion regarding which of these you would like to have your students work on and discuss as a group. You can lead these discussions yourself or assign some of them to individuals or groups and have them make a presentation or lead the discussion.

### **Classroom Discussion: Who Should Lead in The Church?**

#### **The Church as an Organization (The Local Church)**

Definition:

A local church is an assembly of professing believers in Christ who have been baptized and who are organized to do God's will. "A Survey of Bible Doctrine" by Ryrie p.141, 142

The very idea of the local usage of the word "ecclesia" carries the idea of organization: for fellowship, worship, united effort, and edification. They were not to be disjointed, isolated individual particles but meeting together in common faith and effort to carry out the great commission and to strengthen one another.

#### **1. Consider the need for structure and leadership from the following passages of Scripture:**

Judges 17:6; 21:25

Deuteronomy 12:8

1 Corinthians 11:17-19

**2. After reading about the various forms of Church Government (below), discuss the forms that you have experienced. What were the strengths and weaknesses that you have seen in the Church government you have experienced?**

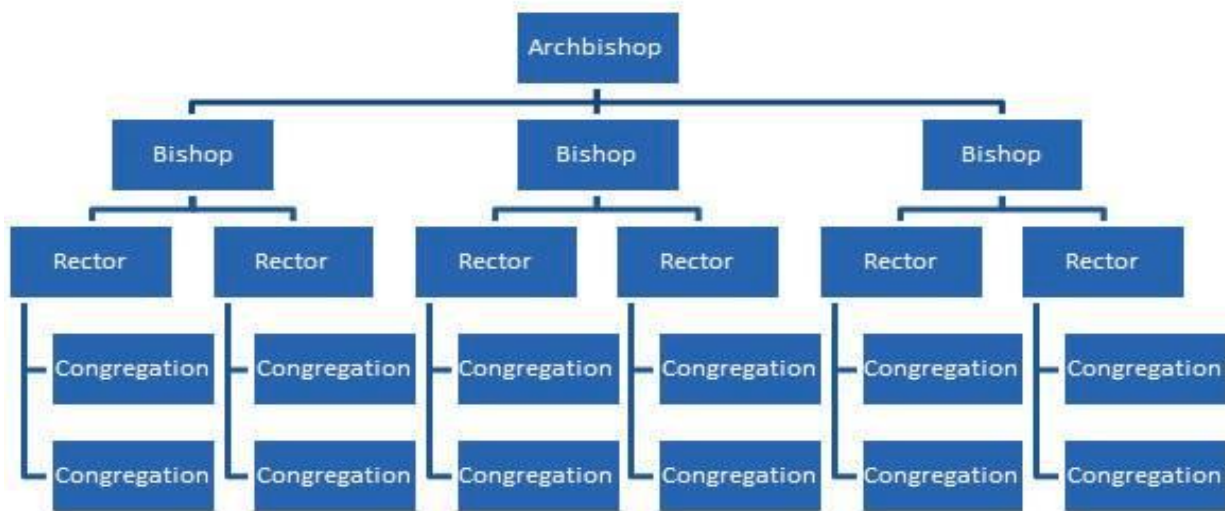
**Organization: Church Polity (Government)**

The present forms come from various interpretations of the officers and their functions in the New Testament (plus traditions & culture).

**Hierarchical or Episcopal**

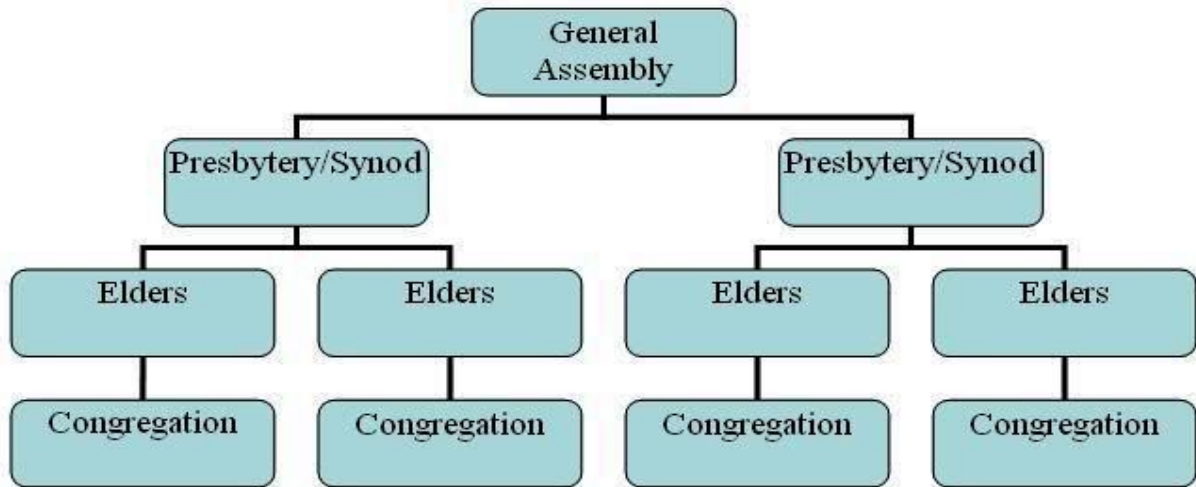
From the Greek "episkopē" – bishop or "overseer" - Hence, from or of the bishop; a government by bishops. In the Episcopalian form of church government, the archbishop (and there are several) has authority over the bishop who in turn presides over a diocese, e.g., several churches, which are cared for by the rector or vicar (pastor). The archbishop, bishop, and rectors are all ordained priests within the Episcopal system of church government. This form of government can be seen in the Methodist, Anglican, and in its most hierarchical form (i.e., many levels of bishops), in the Catholic church. Historically, there was no distinguishing between New Testament bishops and elders until Ignatius did so in the early second century.

Clearly, the hierarchical church is a post-biblical development.



**Federal or representative – Presbyterian & Reformed Churches**

Various denominations employ the Presbyterian form of church government where the local church elects certain elders to the “session,” (Presbyterian) or “consistory” (Reformed Church), some (or all) of whom are members of a higher governing body called the “presbytery” (Presbyterian) or “classis” (Reformed). Some of the members of the presbytery or classis are chosen by the presbytery or classis to form a synod. There is yet a higher governing body in the Presbyterian Church, referred to as the General Assembly which itself is composed of lay and clergy representatives from the presbyteries. The General Assembly may be responsible for churches in a region or country.



**Congregational - Baptists, Evangelical Free, Disciples, independent churches**

In the Congregational form of church government, both the autonomy of the local church (under Christ, however) and the rights of its members are stressed, through a democratic form of government. The conviction in this system is that there is no evidence in the NT that churches were controlled by other individuals or other churches. In fact, Paul told Titus to establish leaders in the churches from among the people in Crete (Titus 1:5). There is no mention that these leaders were responsible to outsiders for their budget or day-to-day practical considerations. The priesthood of believers is held in high regard in this system, though in most forms of this government, a leader or leaders are chosen (in extreme cases they are not), but they must in no way replace the ministry and involvement of the members.

Parenthetically, a distinction needs to be made here between modern day congregationalism and the form of congregationalism taught in the Savoy Declaration (1658) and the London Baptist Confession (1689). The framers of these Confessions held to a Presbyterian form of individual church government without the necessity of a broader court system.



### **Benevolent Dictator**

There is another form of church polity, which is not official but is sadly too common. The (not so) “Benevolent Dictator” model. This can be seen in just about any form of Church government. The “benevolent” dictator can be the pastor/bishop or it can be just about any other person in the Church, including a group or family that is not “officially” in charge but is in reality. Sadly, they are rarely benevolent and they inoculate many against Christianity and the Church.

**Different Forms of Church Government** - by Dr. Erwin W. Lutzern (Reprinted with permission.)

Biblically, the Church is described in numerous ways. On one hand, we observe that the local church is a living organism—an expression of the body of Christ. On the other, we know that the Church is an organization set up by Christ and regulated by the guidelines commanded throughout the Scriptures. As a divinely commissioned organization, God has ordained leadership to spur on growth, purity, outreach, and holiness. Throughout history, three primary systems of church government have dominated the ideological spectrum of Christian leadership.

### **Episcopal Government**

As early as the Apostolic Father Ignatius (the bishop of Antioch until the beginning of the 2nd century AD), solitary leadership structures flourished, and bishop-oriented churches spread throughout the Christian world. The church has frequently mimicked the political constructs of the presiding culture, with its strengths and flaws.

Evidenced by the numerous writings of the Church fathers, solitary church leadership (also known as episcopal church government\*) strongly correlated with the Roman Empire’s leadership. As the emperor was supreme over the physical, the bishop/elder/pastor was supreme concerning the spiritual, presiding over all others (deacons and members). Episcopal-style churches still abound today, primarily throughout the Roman Catholic Church. While this form of government does prove efficient, corruption is always a danger, and the hierarchical and territorial aspects of the polity can be troublesome.

### **Congregational Government**

With a renewed emphasis on the priesthood of every believer, congregational church government has dominated the Protestant church. This form of church government, most often found in Baptist churches, usually maintains the presence and title of elders/pastors and deacons/trustees, but the power resides with the members of the congregation, who vote concerning yearly budgets, church programs, and leadership appointments. Divisiveness can be a negative result of this format, but the added accountability can stave off blatant corruption.

### **Presbyterian Government**

One other popular system is the Presbyterian church government. \*\* As indicated below, this simply means that the Church is led by the eldership (who are supported by the deacons). The church body may have limited say into the major decisions of the Church, but those who meet the biblical qualifications for leadership share the weight of power. Though this system can foster a “them and us” attitude between the congregation and the elders, it produces a balanced level of efficiency and accountability.

At the Moody Church, we maintain a system somewhat like a Presbyterian-style of church leadership because we believe that this structure is biblically preferable. Using the terms elder and bishop interchangeably, the Church government described and commissioned in the early church was marked by a plurality of elders (Titus 1:5-7; Acts 11:30, 14:23, 20:17-18; Phil 1:1). However, we must not insist that all other churches be like ours, but rather acknowledge the rich history and continuing value of churches which adhere to other systems of leadership.

\* The word “episcopal” is a derivative of the Greek word that translates into English as “bishop.” The use of this term should not be confused with the Episcopal denomination, a particular branch of Protestant Christianity that employs an Episcopal Church government.

\*\* “Presbyterian” is a derivative of the Greek word for “elder.” Many churches, besides the Presbyterian denominations, employ a Presbyterian Church government.  
Scripture: Acts 11:30; Acts 14:23; Acts 20:17-18; Phil 1:1; Titus 1:5-7

**3. What are the qualifications for those who would lead the Church? Compare the lists in 1 Timothy 3:1-13 & Titus 1:5-9 (see qualifications below) and discuss the barriers of becoming a qualified leader.**

**Qualifications**

Consider the thought that the qualifications are not as much about an attainment and maintaining of a status but about direction, a goal for which you strive. Does that change your expectations of yourself or others?

1 Corinthians 11:1; 1 Thessalonians 1:5-7

How many churches openly sin by not intentionally developing leaders? How many objectively select leaders?

Paul solemnly tells us to develop leaders, because it guards the Church and makes ministry more effective.

Without a clear objective, a training program, and an impartial screening program that measures objective character and skill qualities, the Church has not taken seriously the charge to develop leaders.

All that is left is the “good ol’ boy” system, filled with favoritism and partiality. Real leadership development requires that we follow Paul’s instructions.”

Bill Hull in “The Disciple Making Church” pages 183-184

**4. For further study and discussion, see the material below for information about church leadership.**

Officers (local) mentioned in the New Testament (Elder, Deacon, Deaconess)

Elder (central passages 1 Timothy 3 & Titus 1)

Titles - 1 Timothy 3

Overseer (“bishop”) - office and duty (Episcopos) overseer

(Acts 20:28)

Elder - office and dignity (Presbuteros) (Acts 20:17; Titus 1:5)

Shepherd (pastor-teacher) - duty and concern and title (Poimaino)

(Acts 20:28; Ephesians 4:11; 1 Pet 5:1-4)



Qualifications (summary term: blameless or above reproach)

Personal (1 Timothy 3:2-3; Titus 1:7-8)

Family (1 Timothy 3:4-5; Titus 1:6)

Social (1 Timothy 3:6-7)

Doctrinal (Titus 1:9)

Number -- difficult to determine, sometimes, whether its usage is singular or plural.

There was more than one elder in each city and possibly more than one in each church.

1 Timothy 3:1-7 "Bishop/Elder" is singular

1 Timothy 3:8-13 "deacons" is plural

Acts 20:17 implies that there was more than one elder at each church (also James 5:17).

Duties: Acts 20:28-31; Ephesians 4:11-12; Titus 1:9-11;

1 Timothy 3:1-7, 4:14, 5:17-22; Hebrews 13:7,17; 1 Pet 5:1-4

Shepherd (1 Peter 5:2; Acts 20:28; Ephesians 4:11)

Preach & Teach (1 Timothy 5:17; 1 Peter 5:2)

Preside, guide (1 Timothy 3:5, 5:17; "rule"; Hebrews 13:17)

Protect (Titus 1:9-11; Acts 20:28-31)

Be examples (1 Peter 5:3)

Pray for sick, etc. (James 5:14)

Handling of finances (Acts 11:30)

Deacon (central passage 1 Timothy 3:8-13)

Title - Acts 6:1-7; 1 Timothy 3:8 - Helpers of elders; deacon - servant -"diakonia" - minister, service, and most of the time when without specific designation - servant.

Qualifications - 1 Timothy 3:8-13 - Similar to elders in addition to not being a gossip.

Duties:

They are helpers to rulers and teachers - Acts 6

No reference to teaching as a duty

No reference to ruling in church

Deaconess - Two possible passages for support.

Romans 16:2 - Phoebe – “a servant of the Church” possibly means a servant in an unofficial sense.

1 Timothy 3:11 – “wives” or simply “women” possibly a “deacon's wife.”  
Though there are “qualifications” for something; some think it is doubtful that such an office existed in the N.T.

Maybe the widows, not less than 60 years old, 1 Timothy 5:9-10.

The New Testament seems to support most fully the idea of a plurality of elders at any one location (Acts 14:23; 20:17; 1 Timothy 4:14; Titus 1:5; James 5:14; Hebrews 13:17; 1 Peter 5:1-2), but not the idea of a developed hierarchical structure beyond this. In Acts 20:28 the same men are called “episkopos” (overseers) who were in Acts 20:17 called “presbuteros” (elders).

The idea of leaders from various churches gathering in council to work out difficulties and doctrine is modeled in Acts 15 and is seen in church history with varying degrees of success.

The very lack of any clear, rigid, complete outline of government is an indication that the Church was not to be a stereotyped legalistic body; but rather a spiritual body ruled as the Head sees fit. Most of the Doctrine we can build of church government in the New Testament must be illustrative rather than legislative. We may deduce how they organized but had room for much charity toward those who differ.

### **Ephesians 4:11-12**

There were three general officers serving the whole church, and not of any local appointment or election. They carried divine credentials, and were separated first by the Holy Spirit to their office. These were “first” apostles, “secondarily” prophets, then evangelists, lastly to these, may be added a fourth - the “teaching shepherds” who were given to the whole church, and not just locally since they could be called of Christ to change their field of labor. This list is given in Ephesians 4:11. The “He” is very emphatic in the Greek - “He, Himself, and no other” is the one who gives these officers to the Church.

### **The Apostles - Personal delegates of Christ, Galatians 1:1**

The word Apostle means "a personal delegate," or "sent one." There is absolutely no record of any succession of this office to others. The two prime credentials of the office seem to have been: "signs of an Apostle" (special miracles) 2 Corinthians 12:12; and having seen Christ in the flesh - so a personal commission from Christ in the flesh.

- Both are linked in Hebrews 2:3-4.
- 1 Corinthians 9:1 "Am I not an Apostle, have I not seen Jesus Christ our Lord?"
- Revelation 2:2 shows Ephesus had tried those who said they were Apostles and were not.
- Others called apostles:
  - Barnabas (Acts 14:14) Andronicus and Junias (Romans 16:7).

Along with the prophets they formed the "foundation of the Church," (Ephesians 2:20), and are ranked first by Paul in every catalogue. From the many inferences, they carried the gift of inspiration in the utterance of God's message and the writing of the New Testament. Since they were the chief part of the foundation, they were responsible for:

- The care of the churches (2 Corinthians 11:28).
- Personal superintendence and the authority of Christ (1 Corinthians 5:4-5).
- Founding and organizing of the churches (Acts 14:23).
- Formulating of the doctrine for the Church (Acts 2:42).
- Carrying the same inspiration as the rest of the Scriptures (2 Peter 3:16).

### **Prophets**

Like the Apostles, there is no reference anywhere of their having been elected; they were called of God and given to the Church by Christ.

Ephesians 4:11. In the book of Acts an ability to foretell the future marked many of the prophets (Acts 11:27, 21:7-14; 23:10). Silas and Judas were prophets (Acts 15:32).

They were (it was) a gift of the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 12:28, Romans 12:6). It seems more of a gift than an office, and covered more exhortation, edification and comfort than foretelling of the future (1 Corinthians 14:3). As a gift, it was temporary in nature – along with the gift of tongues & knowledge (1 Corinthians 13:8).

## **Evangelists**

Among the most prominent in the New Testament was Philip (along with four daughters who were prophetesses) (Acts 21:8-9) and Timothy was instructed to do the work of an evangelist (2 Timothy 4:5). They were distinctly given to the Church by Christ (Ephesians 4:11). We could, in reading of 1<sup>st</sup> & 2<sup>nd</sup> Timothy, arrive at a concept of an evangelist as:

- A delegate of the Apostle
- Carrying His authority
- As they carried His message and ministry
- Where He could not be

## **Pastor/Teacher - Ephesians 4:11-12**

The Greek here is shepherds **and** teachers--equals "Teaching Shepherds."

- The words of Christ to Peter, "Feed my sheep," John 21:16.
- Linked with the admonition of Peter himself in his 1 Peter 2:2.
- "Desire the sincere milk of the Word that ye might grow thereby."
- Paul's charge to Timothy, 2 Timothy 4:2 - "Preach the Word."

These words for the pastor-teacher, give us the idea that there is but one food for the New Man - the Word of God. Therefore, it is necessary, for those who shepherd a flock, to see to it that the sheep get the right diet from the Word of God.

It is evident that in the early church, this pastor-teacher came from among the elders and there were a chosen number in each church. However, in any number of associated people, there must be a leader to take charge and keep order.

## **5. Consider the implications, for our leaders and ourselves, of the word pictures in 2 Timothy 2.**

In 2 Timothy 2 Paul uses seven different metaphors to describe the rigors of leadership. He pictures the minister as:

- A Teacher – vs. 2
- A Soldier – vs. 3
- An Athlete – vs. 5
- A Farmer – vs. 6
- A Workman – vs. 15
- A Vessel – vs. 20-21
- A Slave – vs. 24

“Each of these images evokes ideas of sacrifice, labor, service and hardship. They speak eloquently of the complex and varied responsibilities of spiritual leadership. Not one of them makes out leadership to be glamorous.”

**“The Master’s Plan for the Church” – John MacArthur, Jr. page 15**

“Some of the worst havoc wrought to the Christian faith has been a direct result of unscriptural forms of church structure. Only a few centuries after the apostles’ deaths, for example, Christian churches began to assimilate both Roman and Jewish concepts of status, power, and priesthood. As a result, church government was clericalized and sacralized. Under Christ’s name an elaborately structured institution emerged that corrupted the simple, family structure of the apostolic churches, robbed God’s people of their lofty position and ministry in Christ, and exchanged Christ’s supremacy over His people for the supremacy of the institutional church.”

**“Biblical Eldership” – Alexander Strauch – page 101**

Mark 10:42-45 - Calling them to Himself, Jesus said to them, "You know that those who are recognized as rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them; and their great men exercise authority over them. **But it is not this way among you**, but whoever wishes to become great among you shall be your servant; and whoever wishes to be first among you shall be slave of all. For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many.”

## **SESSION 5 – JESUS, APOSTLES & AGE OF CATHOLIC CHRISTIANITY**

After this session, you will:

- Understand the great challenges the Church faced in its early years.
- Be able to explain the extraordinary spread of the Gospel in the age of Catholic Christianity.

You will KNOW:

- The value of studying church history.

You will BE ABLE TO:

- Explain the extraordinary spread of the Gospel in the age of catholic (universal) Christianity.

You will THINK ABOUT:

- The benefits and challenges in studying church history.

### **In the Last Session**

- You gained an understanding of the basic structures used for Church organization and government.
- You examined the Scriptures that relate to church organization and government. Are now able to explain the need for Church organization

### **Begin video.**

### **Historical Amnesia**

- Bruce Shelley asserts, in the prologue of our text, “Church History in Plain Language” – “Many Christians today suffer from historical amnesia.”
  - I would ask, “Is it amnesia or ignorance?”
- Let me refresh your memory of a statement I shared with you at the beginning of this course.
  - “Progress, far from consisting in change, depends on retentiveness. When change is absolute, there remains no being to improve and no direction is set for possible improvement: and when experience is not retained... infancy is perpetual. Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it.”
- The good news is that you do not have to remember every person and every date to remember the past. You just need to gain a foundation and a perspective that is provided by the study of Church history.

### **Benefits from the Study of Church History**

- One benefit could be described as – an explanation of the present.
  - We gain an answer to the question: How did we get here?
  - History gives us context and context is king – not only in our study of the Scriptures, but in all of life.
  - When we learn of the sacrifices and struggles of our fellow believers through the ages, we gain an appreciation of their efforts.
  - In humility realize that we are where we are because of their work and their prayers.
  - We stand on their shoulders to see what we see.
- When we study Church history or any history, we gain a confirmation of God’s presence throughout history.
  - If we are not considering the work of God in the affairs of men, then we are missing the point.
  - Perhaps you have heard this true saying, “History is really His Story.”
- An ability to recognize and correct reoccurring error comes to us when we study history.
  - I can think of nothing we face today, in relation to error and truth that the Church has not already faced in the past.
  - Solomon said it well: Eccl 1:9 – “That which has been is that which will be, and that which has been done is that which will be done. So, there is nothing new under the sun.”
  - The question we must ask is – What did the Church do or say about that?
- There is an encouraging edification as we discover how God has worked in the lives of believers throughout history.
  - God did that for them and He did, or will do, the same kind of thing for us.
  - When we see God’s power, grace and work in others, we are encouraged and hopeful.
- The church has had an amazing influence on this world. We have not always done what we should but it is not hard to imagine what this world and our culture would be like without the Church – without salt and light.
- In our next section, on the development of Christian doctrine, the foundation of the history of the Church will be invaluable to our understanding of the process and the pressures that helped the Church wrestle with the truth and deliver it to our generation.
- Anytime we study history, we have the benefit of compressing time.
  - In today’s session, we are going to cover 300 years of history.
  - Consider what has happened in our country over the past 300 years.
  - The complexity and volume of information is overwhelming but as we gain understanding, we can summarize the essentials and learn the lessons of history.

- As we learn from the failures and successes of others, we gain the opportunity to correct our own course, get ourselves back on track, not only as an individual but hopefully also, as a church.

### **Several Branches of Church History**

There are also several branches of church history that would yield good fruit.

- The branch of Politics would show us how the relationship between Church and State has played out over the years and make us aware of the dangers involved.
- The branch of Polity, the study of the structures of church government will reveal many lessons that would help us govern the Church today.
- The branch of Propagation, the when, where and how of the spread of Christianity would be a treasure trove of lessons and of gratitude that it spread to us.
- The branch of Persecution, the history of Christian martyrs – that continues to this day – produces a fruit that seems bitter but eventually becomes sweet and gives us strength.
- The branch of Polemics produces a fruit that strengthens our faith as we relish the development of doctrine and the answers given to combat heresies.
- The Praxis (practical or practice) branch of history helps us move forward as we see how the Church has influenced each culture and the world over all. The example of good works and sacrificial love stimulate us to follow their example.
- The branch of Presentation shows us the old ways and fresh ways to express our worship, which should result in a church filled with those who worship in spirit and in truth.

### **Questions**

- Our interpretation of church history should consider the geography and political situation of each area. We must also answer several questions.
  - Who are the people who were prominent during any era?
  - What was the society or culture like?
  - What was the availability and level of education of the people?
  - What was the financial status of the people, the state, and the Church?
  - Were the Scriptures readily available?
  - Was the Bible in a language that people could easily understand?



## **Issues**

- In any study of history, we should address a few problem areas, or issues, as well.
- There is the issue of what material do you consider.
- The subjective selection of authors to read, events to cover and people to highlight all come into play.
  - When I taught this class the first time, one of the students had just finished a church history class at a local Christian college. The people and events that we covered were not the ones she covered in her class. We cannot cover everything.
- There is also the issue of information degradation.
- There is a constant re-writing and re-interpreting of historical events, which can clarify the truth or muddy the waters.
- There is the mixture of tradition with reality.
- Tradition is not necessarily wrong, it is just not certain.
- The only history that we can have complete confidence in is the history recorded in the Bible.
- Only God knows absolute objective history.
- We also should realize that all of us take the information we learn and then filter it through our background and experiences and sometimes come to some very subjective conclusions.
- One of the benefits of discussing what we have learned in our study is that it tends to sharpen our perspective and understanding.
- Proverbs 27:17, “As iron sharpens iron, so one man sharpens another.”

## **Three Negative Factors**

Finally, I want us to consider Three Factors that have affected the Church in a negative way.

- First - the Secularization of the Church:
  - The union of the Church and the State under Constantine was thought to be a great opportunity for the Church but the subjugation of the Church to the State turned out to be disastrous.
  - When multitudes of citizens were baptized as Christians, without the work of the Holy Spirit, true Christianity and the Church were seriously compromised.

- Second - the Paganization of the Church:
  - The term often used is: “syncretism.”
  - Syncretism refers to the attempted reconciliation or union of different or opposing principles, practices, or parties, as in philosophy or religion.
  - One example was the Church’s accommodation of these new, non-Christian church members by taking their pagan “holy” days and dressing them up as Christian holidays. Perhaps most damaging was the introduction of idols, icons and relics.
- Third – the Sacramentalization of the Church:
  - The church adopted ceremonies and sacred acts that they taught would confer grace to the Church member, when administered by the duly ordained priest.
  - These were considered efficacious or powerful in and of themselves and some were considered necessary for salvation.

For the rest of this session, you will spend time discussing what you’ve learned and what you’ve written in your summaries of each of the eight chapters in the Age of Jesus and the Apostles and the Age of Catholic Christianity.

You will not only have the opportunity to share your insights, but you will also gain from the insights of your classmates.

### **Review**

- Do we face historical amnesia or ignorance? The benefits of studying history:
  - Understanding the Present
  - Seeing God’s Presence
  - Recognition of Error
  - Encouragement
  - Perspective

### **In the Next Session**

- Next time we will be discussing the eight chapters in The Age of The Christian Roman Empire.

## INSTRUCTOR’S NOTES: AGE OF CATHOLIC CHRISTIANITY

Don’t forget to ask your students to recite Ephesians 4:11-16 at any time during this course.

**The plan for this class is that it would be filled with discussion and interaction. I would encourage you to have your students share their summaries with the class. This will give them the experience of “being up front” or at least speaking in public.**

Time constraints, the number of students and the length of their summaries may limit the number who could share regarding each chapter. I have also included a few questions connected with certain chapters. They are intended to advance discussion and help us make application to our own lives and ministries. I have included my summaries of each chapter as an example – not as the perfect example. These summaries help with the learning process. The students will have read the chapters before class. Then they will come to class having written their own summaries. In the video, I will review the section to be covered in each class. Finally, you and the class will review and discuss the summaries they (& I) have written. Repetition with variety is essential to learning. Four times: reading, writing, hearing and discussing should give them a good grasp of the information available. If you get through the discussion early, that is acceptable – as long as the material is covered.

### **Summaries for: The Foreword, Prologue and Chapters 1-8**

Church History in Plain Language

by Bruce Shelley

#### **Foreword – by R.L. Hatchett**

##### **A General Overview**

“Progress, far from consisting in change, depends on retentiveness. When change is absolute, there remains no being to improve and no direction is set for possible improvement: and when experience is not retained... infancy is perpetual. Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it.”

*The Life of Reason (1905-1906) - Vol. I. Reason in Common Sense* – George Santayana

### **Branches of Church History**

- Politics - Church & Government
- Polity - Church government
- Propagation - The spread of Christianity
- Persecution - History of Christian Martyrs
- Polemics - Fighting Heresy / Developing Doctrine
- Praxis - Practical Christianity influencing society
- Presentation - Developing forms of worship

### **Schemes of Interpretation**

- Geographical
- Political
- Biographical
- Sociological
- Educational
- Financial
- Biblical

### **Trends in the Developing Church:**

Reaction to heresy from without

Reaction to Impurity from within

Focus: External Unity

Focus: Internal Purity

Monarchical: Bishop

Montanus –2<sup>nd</sup> Century – page 71  
= roots of “Pentecostal/Charismatic movement”  
disorder/new revelations / super spirituality

Ecumenical: Domination

Novatian - 3<sup>rd</sup> Century - page 82  
= roots of “holiness movement”

Roman: Supremacy

Donatus –4<sup>th</sup> Century - page 136-137  
= “church is not to be a mixed-multitude;  
immoral bishops rejected; local vs. catholic.”

Sacraments = Salvation

Salvation = Communion (Relationship)

**Some of The Early Church Fathers:**

**Clement of Rome - AD 97**

- Wrote to inspire UNITY in Local Church (Corinth)
- Visible Church expressed as Local Church
- Invisible Church created before Sun and Moon

**Ignatius - AD 100 - Bishop of Antioch**

- Visible Local congregation presided over by a Bishop
- Coined: “the katholike ekklesia” The Catholic Church
- His writings use “ekklesia” 77% as Local

**Irenaeus - AD 170 - Bishop of Lyons**

- Universal Church as Divine Custodian of Truth
- Succession of Bishops from Christ
- Salvation only within Catholic Church
- In “Against Heresies” used “ekklesia” 83% as Universal

**Cyprian - AD 250 - Bishop of Carthage**

- Unity of Universal Church and Authority of Bishops
- Doctrine of Episcopacy - congregation of Bishops
- “You cannot have God for Father unless Church is Mother”
- Roman Bishop prime among equals (Peter as rock)

**Augustine - AD 400 - Bishop of Hippo**

- ekklesia rarely used as local
- Reinforced Sacramental System
- Baptism in Catholic Church necessary for Salvation
- “Corpus Mixtum” (A Mixed Body) from the “wheat/tares parable.”

### **Three Factors that Brought about the Degeneration of the Church:**

1. The Secularization of the Church  
Union of Church & State under Constantine  
Dilution of true Christianity with unbelievers
2. The Paganization of the Church  
Accommodation of pagan ‘holy’ days  
Introduction of idols, icons & relics
3. The Sacramentalization of the Church  
Sacred acts believed to confer grace  
administered by the priesthood  
efficacious in and of themselves  
some necessary for salvation  
Instead of: Memorials that commemorate grace  
outward, symbolic, participatory  
observed by those who are saved

### **The Seven Sacraments of Roman Church**

1. Mass: a re-sacrificing of Christ by the priest.
2. Baptism: washes away original sin.
3. Marriage: under the control of the Church.
4. Ordination: widens the gulf between clergy & laity.
5. Confirmation: giving the gifts of the Holy Spirit.
6. Penance: payment imposed for the forgiveness of sins.
7. Extreme Unction: final rites for dying grace.

### **Chapter (Section) Summaries and Notes for Discussion**

Foreword: (R.L. Hatchett)

The stated purpose of our textbook: “Church History in Plain Language” by Bruce Shelley, is to lead evangelical readers to engage their own story and to encounter the larger Christian world.

It is written for a popular audience, rather than an academic audience. He elected to tell representative stories that will give the reader a sense of the larger picture. If you are interested in any particular era, personality or movement, you will find suggestions for further reading at the end of each chapter. There is considerable information available on the internet.

The major differences between this and previous editions of the textbook are the various “highlighted” sections, added to provide extra information. In addition, the focus and the content of the final three chapters are significantly different.

The author of the foreword hopes that no reader will miss the point that American evangelicals need a larger frame of reference to participate in the great kingdom work flourishing in the world today (outside of the West).

**Prologue – (Bruce Shelley)**

“Many Christians today suffer from historical amnesia.” Perhaps it would be more accurate to say: “historical ignorance”? Because of this forgetfulness, or ignorance, we find believers vulnerable to the appeals of cultists and false teaching. Far too often, we have welcomed distortions of Christianity as the real thing.

On the other end of the spectrum, we find that, without the advantage of a broader context for our work, we can develop a bad case of spiritual pride and simply repeat the same mistakes of previous generations.

We must answer the question, “Is the church a movement or an institution?” In this book, and I believe it is both. Some may not be happy with Bruce Shelley’s failure to set limits with a strict definition of the term “church.” However, we live in a tension between the ideal (the universal communion of the saints) and the specific (the particular people in a definite time and place).

The church’s mission in time calls for institutions. However, when institutions themselves obstruct the spread of the gospel, rather than advance it, then movements of renewal arise to return to the church’s basic mission in the world. These pages will illustrate how often that has happened.

**1. Discuss the dangers we face by not knowing the history of the Church and the benefits we gain from studying Church history.**

**“Many Christians suffer from historical amnesia.” – Or is it just plain ignorance?**

- **Vulnerability to false teaching**
- **Tendency for spiritual pride**
- **Ministry without a broader context**

**We need to develop the ability to separate the transient from the permanent; the fads from the basics.**

**Value of Church History**

- **Explanation of present**
- **Confirmation of God’s presence**
- **Correction of recurring error**
- **Edification of believer in relation to early believers**
- **Illustration of Church’s role in human history**
- **Foundation of Systematic Theology**
- **Time compression**
- **Course correction**

**Problems in the Study of History**

**History - GK: “historia” - knowledge, understanding learned by inquiry or narrative**

- **Subjective Selection - We cannot cover everything**
- **Information Degradation - Only God knows absolute objective history**
- **Subjective Conclusions**



## **Section 1 - The Age of Jesus and the Apostles**

### Chapter 1 – Away with the King!

Christianity finds its roots in Jewish history. Chapter 1 covers the back story of the Church, including the life, teaching and crucifixion of Jesus. It includes the Jewish expectation of the Messiah, the Jewish resistance to Roman rule and the Jewish religious system’s rejection of Jesus as the Messiah.

This chapter covers most of what we generally know from the Gospels, along with information regarding the political and religious tensions that form the context of Jesus’ ministry, rejection and death.

### Chapter 2 – Wineskins: Old and New

Chapter 2 takes us from the resurrection of Jesus to the destruction of Jerusalem. At first, the only Christians were Jewish and the Church faithfully lived and proclaimed the gospel with success, even amid persecution.

“The Way” was one of the names used to describe this movement but they also used the Greek word: “ekklesia,” which means, “the assembly, or gathering” (of the followers of Jesus).

There were several social, racial and cultural barriers to overcome in getting the message from Jerusalem and Judea to Samaria and to all the nations. (Acts 1:8; Matthew 28:19-20). The first struggle was between the “old school” Jews and the “Hellenistic” Jews, who were heavily influenced by the Greek culture and language. Then they had to cross over to the Samaritans (another semi-Jewish group) and then eventually to the Gentiles, and thus to the nations. (See the book of Acts)

The revolt against Rome and the destruction of Jerusalem, along with the dispersion of the Jews throughout the empire, closed Jerusalem as the center of Judaism and Christianity.

When the leaders of the Jerusalem church fled the city before its destruction, pious Jews considered their escape as an act of treason and for the most part closed the door to the Church’s inroads into the Jewish world.

**Prologue:**

The Age of Jesus and The Apostles – 6 BC / AD 70

Away with The King:

- The Jewish expectation of The Messiah
- The Jewish resistance to the rule of Rome
- The Jewish Hierarchy & Religious System
- Jesus’ Message & Ministry – The New Covenant
- The Rejection of Jesus as the Messiah
- His Trial & Death

Wineskins: Old & New:

- Pentecost – The Birth of The Church
- The First Community: Unity, Baptism, The Lord’s Supper
- The Pressure on the Apostles
- The Stoning of Stephen
- The Persecution of the Church
- The Conversion & Ministry of Saul-Paul
- The Revolt & Destruction of Jerusalem

**The Age of Catholic Christianity: 70 – 312 AD**

Only Worthless People

- “Catholic Christianity”
- The Spread of the Faith: West of Antioch & Into North Africa
- Villages were in most areas largely untouched!*
- The Social Impact of the Gospel

Quote by Celsus: page 35

“Far from us, say the Christians, be any man possessed of any culture of wisdom or judgment; their aim is to convince only worthless and contemptible people, idiots, slaves, poor women, and children...These are the only ones whom they manage to turn into believers.”

**The Apologists: Reason & Scripture – books & letters**

Reasons for The Gospel’s Spread

- A burning conviction re: the redemption of mankind by the Christians
- A felt need in the hearts of people (Stoicism (self-control) with Grace)
- The practical expression of Christian love – for their own & for others
- Persecution – martyrdoms (see chart #20)

**2. Discuss the implications of the reasons presented (above) for the spread of the gospel. How should this affect our service and ministry?**

If the Tiber Floods

- A noble army of martyrs
- Rome’s policy
- Reasons for persecution
  - Distinctive life-style
  - Rejection of pagan gods & pagan social events
  - Disasters blamed on the Christians
  - Sex & Slander
  - Refusal: “Caesar is Lord”

Arguing About the Event

- Christian Behavior without Christian Beliefs
- Orthodox? Faith & Theology (see page 50-51)
- False Gospels – irreconcilable differences through the doctrine of Christ – Ebionites & Docetism (“*Seemism*”)
- The Dangers of Gnosticism (*dualism*)
- C.S. Lewis: “There is no good trying to be more spiritual than God.”

**3. Discuss the C.S. Lewis quote above and the balance between seeking to live as a Christian and avoiding legalism.**

**The Rule of Books – See charts 17 & 18 in Charts book**

- The suppression of Christianity demanded the destruction of the Scriptures
- How we got the Bible (Biblia = plural vs. Bible = singular)
- The Apocrypha vs. The Canon
- Self-evidencing
  - Used in Christian Worship
  - Ties to an Apostle
- Marcion, with his rejection of all but Paul, & Montanus, with his ecstatic prophetic utterances, forced the churches into thinking about closing the canon – (see chart on page 73)

### **The School for Sinners**

- Forgiveness of sins after salvation & baptism?
- Sin among the leaders (Bishops)
- Bishops & Elders (Pastors) & Deacons
- Intentional, willful, sinful departure from the divinely authorized pattern
- Exercised liberty in the absence of any divinely authorized pattern
- Directed by the Holy Spirit, even as earlier leaders were proof of the Spirit's power, not in the office, but in the life!
- Athenagoras: (page 79)  
"Among us are uneducated folk, artisans, and old women who are utterly unable to describe the value of our doctrines in words, but who attest them by their deeds."
- Unforgivable sins by the church?
  - Sexual immorality
  - Murder
  - Denial of the faith
- Martyrs, Confessors & Saints
- System for readmission/forgiveness – by the Bishop? (penance)

### **Apostles to Intellectuals**

- Jerome - Ciceronian vs. Christian
- Tension of separation from and penetration of the world
- Clever, eloquently defended heresy vs. dull, narrow-minded orthodoxy
- Clement & Origen confronted the philosophy of their age with the truth of God's Word.
- Page 91: The persistent tendency of heresy, whether ancient or contemporary, is to lay hold upon a few impressive texts and to wrench some rigid and erroneous interpretation of from these. This Origen would not allow. He wanted the whole Bible to speak, because he knew that what the Bible taught in its entirety are the central Christian truths of catholic Christianity.

**4. Discuss the work of Origen & Clement as they wrestled with the tension of separation from and penetration of the world. What did they do that we should be doing? What did they do that we should not be doing? (pages 86-93)**

**Tertullian of Carthage took Paul's words in Colossians 2:8 to heart: "See to it that no one takes you captive through philosophy and empty deception, according to the tradition of men, according to the elementary principles of the world, rather than according to Christ."**

**Clement & Origen of Alexandria also sought to follow Paul's teaching and example in 1 Corinthians 9:19-23. Verse 22 – "...I have become all things to all men, so that I may by all means save some." We certainly should be on guard according to Colossians 2:8 as we live and minister in this fallen world.**

**I should be more interested in winning people to Christ than an argument!**

**I should not give in to speculation, trying to answer questions or issues when I have no sure light. Remember Deuteronomy 29:29!**

## **SESSION 6 – AGE OF THE CHRISTIAN ROMAN EMPIRE 312-590 AD**

After this session, you will:

- Understand the benefits and consequences of the union between Church and State in the Roman Empire.

You will KNOW:

- The benefits and consequences of the union between Church and State in the Roman Empire.

You will BE ABLE TO:

- Discuss the pull and the peril of the Monastic Ideal.

You will THINK ABOUT:

- The importance and the challenges of the Church councils in establishing orthodoxy.

**Begin video.**

### **In the Last Session**

- You learned the value of studying church history.
- You are now able to explain the extraordinary spread of the gospel in the age of catholic Christianity.
- You thought about and discussed the benefits and challenges in studying church history.

### **Persecuted Minority to State Church**

- The movement that started the 4th century as a persecuted minority; ended the century as the established religion of the empire.
- Thus, the Christian Church was joined to the power of the state and assumed a moral responsibility for the whole society.
- Before we can understand the Church’s willing union with the State, we must look back at the Church’s rejection and persecution by the State.
- The intense persecution by Diocletian and Galerius ended when Constantine gained control of the empire by what he believed was the intervention of the Christian’s God through a dream.
- His victory was proof of the power of Jesus Christ and the superiority of the Christian religion.
- The move from persecuted, to favored, to official was gradual.
- Constantine ruled Christian bishops as though they were civil servants and pushed church leaders to resolve doctrinal controversies and maintain unity.

- Before Constantine’s conversion, the Church consisted of convinced believers who were willing to bear the risk of being identified as Christians, even at the cost of their lives.
- Now, many came who were politically ambitious, religiously disinterested and still half-rooted in paganism.
- This produced shallowness and pagan superstition, along with the secularization and misuse of Christianity for political purposes.
- By 380, the rewards for being a Christian gave way to penalties for non-Christians. Emperor Theodosius made belief in Christianity a matter of imperial command.
- Perhaps we should heed the words the English poet Samuel Butler – 1612-1680: “By this the fool commands the wise, the noble with the base complies ...He that complies against his will, is of his own opinion still.”
- Better still, we should pay attention to Jesus’ instructions to His disciples in Mark 10:41-45.
- Jesus points His disciples to the way that the Gentiles build kingdoms and then tells them, in verse 43 - "But it is not this way among you, but whoever wishes to become great among you shall be your servant;"

### **Church Councils**

- During this era and under the urging of Constantine, and other emperors, the Church met in Council to wrestle with the great doctrines of The Trinity and The Nature of Jesus Christ.
- The great merit of the creeds is that they left the mystery intact.
- Fifteen hundred years after the event we may wish for more understandable terms but we dare not say less than the Church said then.
- It is also important for us to remember Dt 29:29 - “The secret things belong to the LORD our God, but the things revealed belong to us and to our sons forever, that we may observe all the words of this law.”

### **The Monastic Ideal**

- The Monastic Ideal was a natural development that echoes a Jewish saying: “If you seek wisdom, go to the wilderness.”
- There is a longing, born from our frustration with our own failure and the failure of those who are members of the Church to be truly committed, truly spiritual.
- In that longing for holiness and practical sanctification, we look for a path that will lead us to a “more spiritual” life.
- C.S. Lewis said, “There is no good trying to be more spiritual than God.”
- Luther, and others, condemned the Monastic Ideal because it encouraged the idea of two roads to God, a higher and a lower.
- This concept has plagued the Church in every generation.
- Why would we try to discourage a sold-out commitment to Jesus Christ?
- Because too often it is not a commitment to Jesus Christ; but a commitment to a false shepherd and a set of rules that are at best misunderstood and at worst distortions of the truth that lead to spiritual pride and alienation from the very people Jesus has sent us to bear witness to.
- It is an unnatural concept of the Christian life. There is only one way to God and that is through faith in Jesus Christ.

### **Review**

- There is danger in being persecuted.
- There is danger in being the “State Church.”
- There is danger in “trying to be more spiritual than God.”
- God, in His sovereignty, used the Emperors to push the Church to deal with doctrinal differences.

### **In the Next Session**

- Next time we will be discussing the seven chapters in The Christian Middle Ages.



## INSTRUCTOR’S NOTES: THE CHRISTIAN ROMAN EMPIRE

For the rest of this session, you will spend time discussing what your students have learned and what they have written in their summary of each of the eight chapters in “The Christian Empire.” They will not only can share their insights, but they will also gain from the insights of their classmates.

There are a series of questions or assignments numbered and in bold letters. Because of time constraints, use your discretion regarding which of these you would like to have your students work on and discuss as a group.

You can lead these discussions yourself or assign some of them to individuals or groups and have them make a presentation or lead the discussion. One suggestion would be to have at least one student (or more, depending on your situation) share their summary as you cover each of the chapters in the notes below.

### **Chapter (Section) Summaries and Notes for Discussion**

Church History in Plain Language

by Bruce Shelley

#### **The Age of the Christian Roman Empire – 312-590 AD**

The movement started the fourth century as a persecuted minority; it ended the century as the established religion of the empire. Thus, the Christian Church was joined to the power of the state and assumed a moral responsibility for the whole society.

#### Chapter 9 - Laying Her Scepter Down – The Conversion of the Empire

With the Christianization of the empire, the imperial interference in the affairs of the church begins. Even today we can detect the fallout of these two developments.

#### **Turning Around an Empire**

The Roman Empire was crumbling. Thirty emperors had claimed the throne in the 3<sup>rd</sup> Century and many others had tried. Most thoughtful Romans were in despair.

#### **Christians To the Flames (see chart 20)**

As emperor, Diocletian (284-305) inherited anarchy, instability and chaos. At the end of his 20-year reign he passed on a revived empire to his successors. For some unknown reason, after 18 years of ignoring Christians, he suddenly ordered the most vicious of all persecutions against them – even though his wife and daughter were considered Christian.

He purged his court and army of Christians, ordered church buildings destroyed, prohibited Christian worship and had the Christian Scriptures burned. Bishops were rounded up, imprisoned and many were executed.

In 305, according to his plan, Diocletian abdicated the throne. His replacement, Galerius pushed ahead with the goal of exterminating Christianity. Many Christians believed that Galerius had been the instigator of the purge from the beginning.

Thousands of terrified Christians had recanted but thousands of others stood fast. The Bishop of Carthage demanded that those who needlessly rushed into martyrdom should not be considered martyrs.

Eventually, public opinion throughout the empire turned against the torture, maiming and killing. As one of his last official acts, Galerius reluctantly issued an edict of toleration, and for all practical purposes, the last and worst persecution of Christians by the Roman State came to an end.

Constantine (312-337) became the emperor after defeating his rival, in what he considered the power of Christ. From that day on he favored Christianity and brought about many positive reforms. The advantage for the Church was real, but there was a price to pay. Prior to Constantine’s conversion, the Church had consisted of converted believers, willing to risk being identified as Christians. Now, many came who were politically ambitious, religiously disinterested and still half-rooted in paganism.

By 380, rewards for Christians had given way to penalties for non-Christians. Emperor Theodosius made belief in Christianity a matter of imperial command.

**1. Discuss the parallels between the situation that Christians faced in Rome and those that we face in our culture today. See “Care for the Dying” (page 101). What were the advantages and disadvantages of Christianity becoming the State Church?**

**There are few of us who face physical persecution in the West but we are certainly out of sync with our culture and face a certain hostility and rejection. The Roman culture was certainly as depraved, if not more so than our own. – Perhaps we should consider how we can care for those that our culture rejects and abandons – Care for the Dying. – The main advantage for the church was no more martyrdom! Being favored brought more people to at least hear the Gospel. Becoming the State Church though, sowed tares in abundance and with the Emperor as the head of the Church, it seems as if resistance was futile.**

Chapter 10 - Splitting Important Hairs – The Doctrine of the Trinity

Constantine was troubled by reports from all quarters, of the bitterness Christians were displaying over theological issues. A divided, quarreling Christianity could not hold the crumbling empire together. (Consider 1 Corinthians 11:19)

**Making Sense of the Mystery**

Progress toward appreciating the doctrine of the Trinity can be made by understanding what it is not. The early Church typically believed the Trinity to be a mystery that was to be honored or respected and not simply a riddle to be solved or explained by some logical exercise.

However, everyone was not on board. Arius openly challenged the teachers in Alexandria, asserting that the Logos was a lesser god and had a different nature than God (The Father). This teaching appealed to many “pagan Christians,” since it was like the religion of their youth. Bishop Alexander called for a synod (320), assembled churchmen and together they condemned Arius’ teachings and excommunicated him.

Constantine called for the Council of Nicea in 325, opening the council with the declaration, “division in the Church is worse than war.” Having made his point, he committed the resolution of the conflict into the hands of the church leaders.

Arius’ teachings were loudly rejected. All but two Bishops signed on to the Nicene Creed. They, along with Arius, were sent into exile.

After Nicea, Constantine and his successors stepped in again and again to banish churchmen, depending on which group of advisors had the upper hand in the palace or which emperor was in charge.

**2. Read and discuss this statement: Rejected Trinitarian Schemes (Pages 106-107) and Why is the Trinity Important? (Pages 111-112) (See also chart 28 and page 123 in textbook)**

**Christians have often appealed to the natural realm to try to illustrate the concept and reality of the Trinity. The yolk, white and shell of an egg, the root, tree and fruit of a plant or even water in its three forms: ice, liquid and vapor. However, they all completely miss the personal element in the Christian doctrine of the Trinity. At some point in our process of trying to understand or explain the doctrine of the Trinity, we should accept the scriptural teaching and submit our understanding or comprehension to Deut. 29:29 – The secret things belong to God; the things revealed belong to us and to our sons forever.**

Chapter 11 - Emmanuel! – Christ in The Creeds

The Word Became Flesh is central to Christian worship

J.S. Whale: “A deep instinct has always told the Church that our safest eloquence concerning the mystery of Christ is in our praise. A living Church is a worshiping, singing Church; not a school of people holding all the correct doctrines.”

**3. Is it “Either/Or?” Or “Both/And?”**

**Why does it have to be one or the other? Why can’t we sing and worship AND hold to true doctrine at the same time?**

**4. Discuss the major heresies about Christ – page 123 in textbook & Chart 26.**

Major heresies about Christ forced the churches to clarify: “Who is Jesus Christ?” (1 Corinthians 11:19) They also forced the churches to establish the boundaries of truth!

<u>Apollinarian</u> =	Only the body represented Christ’s human nature - rejected @ 2 <sup>nd</sup> Council @ Constantinople – 381
<u>Nestorius</u> =	the merging of wills vs. an essential union – mostly misunderstood = rejected at Council of Ephesus 431
<u>Eutyches</u> =	“monophysitism” defended the one nature of Christ, combining the two so intimately that the human nature was absorbed completely, lost and dissolved by the divine nature. = rejected @ 4 <sup>th</sup> Council @ Chalcedon – 451

In the Chalcedonian statement, the churches declared: In Jesus Christ, true deity (against Arius) and full humanity (against Apollinaris) are indivisibly united in One Person (against Nestorius) without being confused (against Eutyches).

To state it another way: So, against Arius the church affirmed that Jesus was truly God, and against Apollinaris, that He was truly man. Against Eutyches it confessed that Jesus’ deity and humanity were not changed into something else, and against Nestorius, that Jesus was not divided but one person.

The merit of the Chalcedonian statement lies in the boundaries it established. In effect, it erected a fence and said: “Within this lies the mystery of the God-man.”

Fifteen hundred years after the event we may wish for more understandable terms, but we dare not say less than the church said then.

### Chapter 12 - Exiles from Life – The Beginnings of Monasticism

There is a Jewish saying: “If you seek wisdom, go into the wilderness.” This advice was most certainly meant as a temporary retreat, rather than a lifestyle.

Monasticism (monks and nuns) is a religious way of life in which one renounces worldly pursuits to devote oneself fully to spiritual work. Monastic life plays an important role in the Catholic and Orthodox traditions, as well as in many non-Christian religions. The word comes from the Greek word for “alone” and describes those who live alone, completely isolated from others and the world. It also describes those who would live alone together, with a wide variety of rules and regulations. They were generally seeking spiritual perfection and perceived physical comforts, as well as other people, to be hindrances to that spiritual perfection.

Catholics and Protestants generally disagree over the “Monastic Ideal.” Catholics say that the church has to make room for the ascetics, who strive for spiritual perfection through self-denial, isolation, prayer and self-abasement; as well as make room for weak, sinful members who show few signs of grace.

It is true that we are all in process of becoming more like Christ (Romans 8:28-29). However, Martin Luther, who himself had lived as a cloistered (isolated) monk, realized that Monasticism encourages the idea of two roads to God, a higher and a lower.

One form of the Monastic Ideal was the lonely hermit, who fled to the desert or wilderness to protest the corruption of the Church and the corruption of the world.

Yet, somehow, temptations followed them into the desert and behind the walls. They were led into the dangers of pronounced individualism and the temptations of pride, rivalry and eccentricity.

The Monastic Ideal eventually moved from hermits to communal life with fixed hours of manual labor, uniform garb and strict discipline. This addressed the hermits dangers of idleness and eccentricity. It also brought some restraint to the excesses of the Monastic Ideal and provided a realistic opportunity for women to pursue this ideal.

Pachomius instituted the 1<sup>st</sup> Christian monastery about 320 AD. He had the right idea: “To save souls you must bring them together.” The process of sanctification happens best in community. This was another example of an attempt to reform the Church, which was not providing the community that would move us along in our becoming more like Christ.

In the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Centuries the Monastic Ideal swelled into a movement that affected all levels of the Christian population. Many found the \*ascetic way (\*the practice of severe self-discipline and abstaining from all forms of indulgence) to be an acceptable substitute for the spiritual heroism of the days of persecution.

Monks and nuns transformed the spirit of martyrdom into the full commitment to God and the imitation of the sufferings of Christ. They pursued this full commitment to God with vows of poverty, chastity and obedience to the rules of the monastery and the monastery leaders.

In the 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> Centuries, practically every leader in the church was either a monk or closely linked to monasticism. The monastic cell became a study and the monks became scholars.

Benedict of Nursia (Italy – 480-543) was no scholar but he had a genius for administration and a profound knowledge of people. He made discipline a fundamental, yet he saw that it must not be too heavy a yoke. Benedictine Rules showed a remarkable restraint with some degree of freedom. A Benedictine monastery was a little world in itself. They had a strenuous life of worship, vigorous labor and serious reading.

### **The Monastic Ideal**

The monasteries helped provide stability during the collapse of the old Roman civilization. They provided an opportunity for the Scriptures to be copied and studied. They eventually sent out a large number of missionaries into often hostile countries.

However, the vow of poverty did not extend to the monastery itself. Eventually the original rigor of the monasteries declined and there were constant efforts to reform the local church substitute. Above all, the Monastic Ideal and the monastery system had an unnatural conception of the Christian life and an erroneous, unbiblical view of humanity.

**5. What are some ways that the church today may be exiles from life? What are our motivations? What do we hope to gain? What are the pitfalls?**

**Consider Col 2:18-23 in connection with the Monastic Ideal. Perhaps, many of us can identify with being frustrated with the church, or those in the church who do not seem to be as committed to the Lord as we think they should be. I, for one, experienced a severe case of spiritual pride in my high school days. I saw myself as superior to most of my fellow youth group members and many adults in our church as well. Thankfully the Lord exposed my hypocrisy and many of my fellow church members were very gracious and forgiving.**

### Chapter 13 - The Sage of The Ages – Augustine

Aurelius Augustinus (Augustine) from Algeria born 11/13/354 – 430. His father was an easy-going heathen and his mother was an eager Christian. They determined to provide him with the best education available. This ultimately took him to Carthage, the North African capital. (Today it is in Tunisia).

Augustine struggled, but consistently lost, with sexual temptation. He considered this to be his defiling passion. It marked his conception of sin and the depravity from which he later felt himself rescued by God’s grace.

Augustine, in his search for deliverance, tried Manicheanism for several years. The fundamental belief of the religion pictured an eternal conflict between two powers: good and evil, with the spiritual part of humanity being the good and the physical part being evil. Victory can be attained by prayer and abstinence from all enjoyments of evil: riches, lust, wine, luxurious houses, among other physically pleasing things. Like Gnosticism, it taught that Jesus had no material body and did not actually die. They held that much of the New Testament was true, but rejected all of it that suggested that Christ’s sufferings were real. They also rejected all the Old Testament.

When Augustine was 30, he began teaching at the University of Milan where he was moved by the powerful preaching of Bishop Ambrose and the personal example of the monks. His sense of sin and powerlessness were stirred. One day, as he walked through his garden, he heard a child sing: “Take up and read.” He picked up a New Testament and read Romans 13:13-14 – “...put on the Lord Jesus Christ and make no provision for the flesh, to fulfill its lusts.” Instantly he experienced the light of peace poured into his heart and all shadows of doubt faded away.

He was baptized in 387 by Ambrose in Milan and then returned to Africa. In Three years later at Hippo, he was ordained a priest, against his will, and was assigned to be the assistant Bishop. Then one year later he became the Bishop at the age of 43. North Africa was during a conflict between the Catholic Church and the 100-year-old Donatist Movement. Donatus (313-355) had been the Bishop of Carthage. The movement stood for a holy church, church discipline and resistance of unworthy bishops. He felt those who had surrendered the Scriptures to be burned during the Diocletian persecution (303-311) were guilty of apostasy and should be disqualified as bishops, as well as those who ordained them. He believed that the validity of the sacrament depends upon the moral standing of the minister.

Augustine rejected the Donatist’s views of a pure church. He believed that the church would be a mixed-multitude until the day of judgment. He supported this view with Jesus’ parable of the Wheat and The Tares – Matthew 13:24-30. He also viewed the sacraments as belonging to Christ, not the priests. All that is required of the priest is an awareness that he administers God’s grace for the whole church. This controversy led Augustine to support the use of force in the suppression of rivals and was used later to justify the Inquisition.



Augustine also stood against the British monk Pelagius and his teachings. Pelagian teaching denied the doctrine of inherited sin from Adam. They taught instead, that humans are free to act righteously or sinfully. He also taught that death is not a consequence of Adam’s sin. Adam’s introduction of sin into the world was just a corrupting example. He also taught that God predestinates no one – He foresees their choices. He also taught that forgiveness is by faith alone; once forgiven man has the power of himself to live pleasing to God.

### **The City of God on the Ruins of Rome**

Augustine wrote: The City of God – dealing with the relationship between earthly cities that are temporary and the Heavenly City which is everlasting. This influenced, directly or indirectly, the thought of Christians on what they owed to God and what to Caesar over the next 15 centuries.

### Chapter 14 - Peter As “Pontifex Maximus”- The Beginnings of the Papacy

Attila the Hun, “The Scourge of God” came to attack Rome June of 452 and Bishop Leo was sent to ask that Rome might be spared. His success, which had more to do with the fact that Attila had already decided to abandon further invasion and to return home, resulted in the Bishop of Rome assuming a new role as a world leader. The Roman Catholic Church claimed that Jesus Christ had established the papacy with the Apostle Peter. They also claimed that the Bishop of Rome, as the successor of Peter, has supreme authority over the whole church. This was not officially defined until the 1<sup>st</sup> Vatican Council in 1870.

Pope, or papa, originally expressed the fatherly care of any and every bishop for his flock. There is abundant evidence of Rome’s prominence among the churches of the western regions of the Roman Empire. There are several reasons for this prominence. Rome was the capital of the empire and the Church of Rome was the largest, and wealthiest church. It also had gained a reputation for orthodoxy and charity. Also, despite persecutions of all kind, the congregation in Rome grew in numbers and significance. By the middle of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Century its membership was about 30,000. Then, as now, size meant influence.

Rome had gained influence through Church Councils and the overall church structure that gave certain bishops authority over other bishops. Bishops from churches established or served by the Apostles had an informal prestige. Regular General Councils began to control more and more of the local church ministry and day to day affairs.

The move from Rome to Constantinople as the capital city set up a conflict and division that ultimately divided the church into Catholic and Orthodox.

Leo’s argument for Rome’s Primacy was based on three scriptures - Matthew 16:13-19; Luke 22:31-32; John 21:15-17 – but this concept faced several difficulties that have never been adequately addressed. Among Catholics, this seems to have never been a problem.

First, the Gospels make it very clear that preeminence among the followers of Christ was never to be according to the pattern of the princes of the world; not like the Gentiles, who exercise authority and lord it over those under their authority. Humble service is to be the standard.

Second, Peter continued to be notoriously unstable throughout the Gospels and even in the book of Acts (see Gal 2:11-14).

Third, the theory of papal authority assumes that the grant of authority was not to Peter (and the Apostles?) personally but to his office as Bishop of Rome. However, his identification of authority with a particular office is found nowhere in the Scriptures.

Just three years after Leo had successfully negotiated with the Huns, he stood at the gates of Rome, negotiating with the Vandals. This was not nearly as successful. However, the city was not burned, massacre had been avoided and Christian churches had not been plundered. Leo had for a second time saved the city. Now he assumed the old heathen title: “Pontifex Maximus” – he was the High Priest of Religion throughout the empire. Leo, not the emperor had taken responsibility for the city. The Pope had come to power.

**6. Read “Important Events in Early Orthodoxy” (page 151) to refresh your understanding of the Orthodox Church.**

Chapter 15 - Somewhere Between Heaven and Earth – Eastern Orthodox

The key to understanding Eastern Orthodoxy (and all the varieties of this branch of the church) is found in its holy images, called icons.

Those images of Jesus, Apostles and others are not seen as works of men but as manifestations of the heavenly ideal. Through the icons, the heavenly beings manifest themselves to the worshiping congregations and unite with them in worship.

The great theme of Orthodoxy is the incarnation of God and the re-creation of man. When a man sins, he does not violate the divinely established legal relationship, he

reduces the divine likeness and inflicts a wound in the original image of God. So, salvation consists of the perfection or completion of the full image of God in man.

This process is called “theosis” or “deification,” becoming gods. They maintain, that they are not saying believers become Father, Son or Spirit. They say, believers are transformed into fit companions for an eternal communion with the Triune God.

With the conversion of the Emperor, he became the servant of God and the State became the bearer of the Christian religion because it directly reflected God’s will for the world in human society, since it was the only community established by God. A divided Christianity, over traditions of doctrine and practice was not acceptable. Therefore, Constantine and the emperors who followed, made every effort to secure agreement about the Christian faith.

The conflict over icons was really a disagreement over which things were sacred or holy enough to deserve worship. Some said the Christian clergy, set apart by ordination, are holy. Church buildings are set apart by dedication and they are holy. The martyrs and heroes of the faith are set apart by their deaths and called “saints,” so they too deserve the same reverence as the clergy.

The icons proved problematic over the years as the uncontrolled multiplying of icons and holy men would lead people to confine their Christian devotion to local shrines and figures. Many failed to distinguish between the object or the person and the spiritual reality it stood for and fell into idolatry.

Emperor Leo III (717-741) attacked the use of icons. He was motivated by the thought that the defeats of the last century, along with a great earthquake early in his reign, were intended to ring God’s people to their senses.

John of Damascus (730-760) was considered by the Orthodox Church as the last of the early Church Fathers. His argument in favor of icons was based on the idea that the image is never of the same substance as the original. An icon’s significance was to only serve as a reminder of the original.

The differences of doctrine and practice between the Orthodox Church in the East and the Roman Catholic Church in the west widened year after year. Everything from the wording of the creeds, to the different practices required in celebrating Lent, to the type of bread used to celebrate the Eucharist, served to push the two churches apart.

In 1054, Pope Leo IX sent Cardinal Humbert to the Patriarch of Constantinople, Michael Cerularius, with the Pope’s Bull of Excommunication (Bull = an official

statement from the Pope) and the Great Schism was complete. Now there were two Churches, the Greek Eastern Church (Orthodox) and the Latin Western Church (Catholic).

#### Chapter 16 - Bending the Necks of Victors – Mission to the Barbarians

The year 476 usually marks the end of the Christian Roman Empire in the West. This was the year that rule by German leaders began, after 150 years of chaos.

Rome’s relationship with the Germans was adversarial at times but for the most part cordial. By the end of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Century many Barbarians (Germans) had settled within the empire. By the end of the 4<sup>th</sup> Century most the Roman army and its Generals were German. The task of converting the Barbarians was enormous. Bringing them to nominal adherence was not so difficult because they wanted to be a part of the Roman Empire.

The conversion of the Franks was the first of many mass conversions during the Middle Ages. This practice raised important questions about the paganizing of Christianity. Mass conversion was the method used to “connect” the European continent. When kings embrace Christianity, their people followed them. There was little instruction prior to baptism, so they generally brought with them their superstitions and unconverted behavior. Despite the shallow impact of the gospel among the Franks (France), their “conversion” provided a path to Great Britain.

The initiative for the conversion of the English came from Rome. In 596, Pope Gregory the Great sent Benedictine monks under the leadership of Augustine (not THE Augustine, this one eventually became known as Augustine of Canterbury). The mission was so successful that eventually Anglo-Saxon England began sending missionaries back to the Continent.

## SESSION 7 – THE CHRISTIAN MIDDLE AGES 590-1517 AD

After this session, you will:

- Gain an appreciation for those who stood for the truth of God’s Word, at the cost of their lives.
- Why the popes gained their power.
- Understand the motivations for the Crusades.

You will KNOW:

- How and why the popes gained so much power during the Middle Ages.

You will BE ABLE TO:

- Explain the motivations for the Crusades, as well as their scope and sequence.

You will THINK ABOUT:

- The challenges faced by the Church during the Middle Ages.

### **In the Last Session**

- We discussed the benefits and consequences of the union between Church and State.
- Learned the importance and the challenges of the Church councils in establishing orthodoxy.
- Talked about the pull and peril of the monastic ideal.

### **Begin video.**

### **The Christian Middle Ages**

- Often referred to as “The Dark Ages,” covered nearly 1,000 years of church history.
  - *Though this section in our textbook has only seven chapters and 72 pages of reading, many of my students have expressed the sense that it seemed to be extremely long – they thought they would never get to the end. It created in them a great appreciation for the Reformation that followed.*
- The Middle Ages began as a time of great turmoil, instability and change.
- The Church sought to establish order and security in the West – to reestablish the Roman Empire as the “Holy Roman Empire.”
- Students of the history of the Church in the Middle Ages are not the only ones who felt the darkness.
- Before the Reformation gained strength and acceptance, there were many voices crying out to God and calling upon the Church for change.

- Europe, along with the rest of western civilization, owes more to the Christian faith than most people realize.

### **Christendom (the Kingdom of God on Earth)**

- When the barbarians destroyed the Roman Empire in the West, it was the Christian church that put together a new order called Europe.
- The church took the lead in rule by law, the pursuit of knowledge and the expressions of culture.
- The underlying concept was Christendom (the Kingdom of God on earth), which united empire and church.
- It began under Charlemagne in the 8th century, but the popes slowly assumed more and more power until Pope Innocent III, at the beginning of the 13th century, taught Europe to think of the popes as world rulers.
- In later centuries, we see the popes corrupted by power and false teaching.
- We also see increasingly militant reformers cry out for change.
- The popes, as the leaders of the Church, were facing a time of chaos.
- With no central government in place, things were changing and we all know how much the Church resists change – even in our day!
- There was a longing for the “good old days” and for the unity of the Roman Empire, which had a powerful appeal to most people.

### **What Did Christianity Bring to the Devastation?**

- What did Christianity bring to the devastation, to bring order out of the chaos and help erect a new order called Christian Europe?
- Well, the Church was the only surviving vestige of organized civilization in the West; it was the anchor for the empire.

### **Gregory, The Reluctant**

- Into this turmoil, an unlikely monk named Gregory was elected as pope in 590 AD.
- Gregory “the Reluctant” eventually became Gregory “the Great.”
- His gifts for administration were invaluable in stabilizing the Church and the region, but his practical approach to the “defense of orthodoxy” led him to include unbiblical teachings, even crude, superstitious and pagan notions of the illiterate populace in what he would declare to be “the faith.”

### **Charles the Great – Charlemagne**

- One hundred sixty years later, Charles the Great – Charlemagne – became the emperor and restored the Christian Empire to the West.
- He had three goals:
  - military power to crush his enemies
  - religious power to direct his people’s souls
  - intellectual power to instruct both souls and minds
- This reunion of Church and State affected the course of European politics and Christianity for centuries.

### **Islamic Conquest**

- About this same time the Muslim prophet, Muhammad died and the Islamic conquest began of the Middle East, North Africa, present day Turkey and Spain.
- This eventually caused problems for pilgrims visiting the Holy Land and raised fears that Muslims might even conquer Europe.
- *This contributed to the creation of the Crusades.*
- By the 8th century, 50% of all Christians lived under Islamic rule.
- Charts 38 and 39 in our Charts book provide a good summary of the scope and sequence of the crusades and the Muslim conquests.
- Unfortunately, the popes never held two basic truths:
  - First, Christianity’s highest satisfactions are not guaranteed by possession of special places or things (relics).
  - Second, the sword is never the way God extends Christ’s church. (See Mark 10:42-45)

### **The Scholars and Scholasticism**

- As the Church entered the second millennium, the Church also entered the era of Scholasticism.
- The schools in the cathedrals (initiated by Charles the Great) gave birth to medieval universities, with the supreme task of understanding and explaining the light of revealed truth.
- Scholasticism was a distinctive method of scholarship combined with the unique theology of the Middle Ages.
- The purpose was to reconcile Christian doctrine with human reason and arrange the teachings of the Church in an orderly system.
- However, the free search for truth was never in view, since the chief doctrines of the Christian faith were regarded as fixed.
- The purpose of the discussion was to show the reasonableness of the doctrines and to explain their implications.

- Living religiously in a studious manner was a hallmark of medieval education.
- The curriculum of the cathedral school was limited to the seven liberal arts:
  - Grammar
  - Rhetoric
  - Logic
  - Arithmetic
  - Geometry
  - Music
  - Astronomy
- They were called the “liberal” arts because they were originally reserved for men who were liberal, that is, liberated, free, not slaves.
- Scholasticism came to stand for painstaking arrival at logical conclusions through:
  - Questioning
  - Examining
  - Arranging details into a system of logic.
- As students learned to think, unquestioning acceptance of traditional authorities was no longer assured but the conclusions had to agree with Christian doctrine.
- That which had been put forward as the truth of God was now being tested by fire, with the wood, hay and stubble starting to burn.

### **An Opportunity**

- Here was an opportunity to provide a biblical, reasoned response to just about any issue.
- It was also an opportunity to sort through what was truly Christian doctrine and what were the doctrines of men.
- There were a growing number of teachers, monks and others who were responding to the abuses and excesses of the Church with new movements and teachings towards a renewal, a reform for the Church.
- The medieval poverty movement, for one example, is a timeless reminder that political Christianity is, at best, only partial Christianity – and some might justly say, “Is not Christianity!”
- Some of these movements were indeed misguided, even heretical in their theology and practices – but not all.



### **Weapons of War?**

- What were weapons the Catholic Church could use, to deal with these renewal and reform movements?
- There were three solutions:
  - Preach the word to return to the truth.
  - Lead a crusade to crush all hardened resistance.
  - Establish the Inquisition to uproot heresy completely.
- The Inquisition was their primary response.

### **An Unstable Foundation**

- The philosophical framework supporting a papal monarchy was built on an unstable foundation of canon law and a systematic statement of Christian theology that had very little Scriptural support.
- “Canon law” simply refers to “Church law.”
- The rules, regulations and practices established by the Church. We could compare it to the by-laws in our church constitutions.
- The craving to control, the zeal to reach every aspect of life disguised the fatal flaw in Christianity by law.
- It tried to reduce human freedom to a miserable minimum and forgot that God designed freedom as the forerunner for the coming of true faith.
- Like the crusades, scholastic theology reached too far and claimed too much for itself and the Church.
- The reformers were soon to become protestors – Protestants.

### **Review**

- The Middle Ages were the Dark Ages because of the chaos in the Empire and the chaos in the Church.
- The Church was trying to restore the stability of the Empire and maintain power for itself.
- The unstable foundations and the indefensible teachings were being tested and exposed for what they were – man’s work and ideas, not God’s.

### **In the Next Session**

- Next time we will be discussing the eight chapters in “The Age of The Reformation.”

## INSTRUCTOR’S NOTES: THE MIDDLE AGES

For the rest of this session your students will spend time discussing what they have learned and what they have written in their summary of each of the eight chapters in “The Christian Empire.”

They will have the opportunity to share their insights, but they will also gain from the insights of their classmates.

There are a series of questions or assignments numbered and in bold letters. Due to time constraints, use your discretion regarding which of these you would like to have your students work on and discuss as a group.

You can lead these discussions yourself or assign some of them to individuals or groups and have them make a presentation or lead the discussion. One suggestion would be to have at least one student (or more, depending on your situation) share their summary as you cover each of the chapters in the notes below.

### **Church History in Plain Language**

**by Bruce Shelley**

#### **The Christian Middle Ages – 590-1517 AD**

Europe, and Western Civilization, owes more to the Christian faith than most people realize. When the barbarians destroyed the Roman Empire in the West, it was the Christian church that put together a new order called Europe. The church took the lead in rule by law, the pursuit of knowledge and the expressions of culture. The underlying concept was Christendom, which united empire and church. It began under Charlemagne in the eighth century, but the popes slowly assumed more and more power until Innocent III (1198-1216) taught Europe to think of the popes as world rulers. Later centuries, however, saw the popes corrupted by power (*and by false teaching*) and increasingly militant reformers cry out for change.

- 1. What did Christianity bring to the devastation, to bring order out of the chaos, to erect a new order called Christian Europe?**

**See above: plus – the papal office provided a stable structure for administration and the ideals of Augustine’s theology provided a framework of spiritual meaning.**

### Chapter 17 - God’s Consul (Ambassador) – Gregory the Great

Gregory I or Gregory the Great (*or Gregory the Unwilling?*) was a gifted administrator. He stressed that the spiritual leader should never be so absorbed in external cares as to forget the inner life of the soul, nor neglect external things in the care for his inner life. **(“The hardest thing to do is to keep balanced.”)**

He once said: “He, who, by the necessity of his position, is required to speak the highest things, is compelled by the same necessity to exemplify the highest.”  
**(“If you are going to talk the talk, you had better walk the walk!”)**

When he was called “The Universal Pope,” he strongly repudiated the title, saying: “I have said, that neither to me, nor to anyone else, ought you to write anything of the kind. Away with words which inflate pride and wound charity!”

Gregory formulated the common faith of his day and handed it on to the Catholic Church of the Middle Ages. This faith embraced not merely the official pronouncements of the councils and the teachings of the Fathers, but **(unfortunately)** also the notions of the illiterate populace often crude and superstitious, at times even pagan. To this mass of material, he lent the weight of his authority and consequentially it became an integral part of the faith of the Western Church. This included the teachings such as: Merit for good works, penance needed for sins after baptism – meritorious works, the intercession of the saints for us, the benefit & use of holy relics, the atoning of sins in/through purgatory, the divine power of the Holy Eucharist, especially to free souls from purgatory.

### Chapter 18 - The Search for Unity - Charlemagne

Charles The Great, aka: Charlemagne, drawing upon Augustine’s vision of the “City of God,” engrafted the Christian concept of a universal, Catholic Church on the stock of the traditional Roman view of empire and gave to the medieval world Christendom, a unified society mingling religious (or eternal) concerns with earthly (or temporal) affairs.

#### **2. How could/did the kingdom that Jesus said was “not of the world” become such a part of worldly power?**

**There was the residual influence of the historical unity of the Roman Empire, a longing for “the good old days.” The residual influence of the historical unity of the Empire was a powerful appeal. There was a practical necessity for governmental protection, the Pope needed protection and Charles needed divine sanction.**

Charlemagne had three goals for his kingdom: Military power to crush his enemies, religious power to direct his people’s souls and intellectual power to instruct both souls and minds.

The Church tried to make a difference in the culture of the State by adding Christian virtues to military codes of conduct, establishing closed seasons on warfare and by refusing sacraments to those who refuse to spare non-combatants.

The pope and the emperor were contestants, seeking to control the culture and the empire.

**3. Should the church rule the state, or the state control the church?  
What is your opinion?**

**Setting in Order the House of God**

The Cluniac reformers sought to free the entire church from secular control. Gregory VII (1073-1085) put forward his vision of the ideal commonwealth, which would be under papal control. Many of his plans were incompatible with biblical teaching. However, he did stand for two principles that Christians would firmly support. First, in the loyalties of men, the spiritual has the primacy over the secular. Second, the families of men can find true unity only in Christ and in obedience to the Word of God.

Chapter 19 - Lifted in A Mystic Manner – The Papacy and the Crusader

What can Christians hope for in human society? If God’s will be done on earth as it is in heaven, what would earth look like? Believers in every age have asked that question, but no age has reached for the stars quite like the so-called High Middle Ages.

The papacy ascended on the fading glory of the empire. It emerged as the most powerful office in Europe, steadily becoming completely centralized. Innocent III (1198-1216) = the “administrator-pope,” held an exalted view of his office. He described it, (the Pope as) “The successor of Peter, the Vicar of Christ: he has been established as a mediator between God and man, below God but beyond man; less than God but more than man; who shall judge all and be judged by no one.”

The chief weapons in support of papal authority were spiritual penalties, the management of the grace to get to heaven and avoid hell. He could excommunicate individuals and deny sacraments for whole nations.

Muhammad (570-632 AD) at the age of 40 began to practice extended periods of contemplation and meditation. After one of these sessions, he told people that an angel told him to “recite” (and write). From that reciting came the Koran. Koran means “To Recite.” By the 8<sup>th</sup> Century, one half of all Christians lived under Islamic rule, as the Muslims invaded and conquered the Eastern Empire.

Stories of Muslim (Turkish) mistreatment of Christian pilgrims spread throughout Europe, even though there was evidence that the stories were propaganda, the rumors were enough to inflame men’s minds against these infidels. Augustine had established the principles of a “just war” conducted by the state but those ideas evaporated in the heat of a holy cause. The 1<sup>st</sup> Crusade was proclaimed in 1095.

Over the next 200, years the Popes, through the state, launched seven crusades. The Crusades are listed below: (See charts 38 and 39, and page 201 in textbook for a timeline).

- 1<sup>st</sup> - 1095-1099 - most successful – capturing Jerusalem.
- 2<sup>nd</sup> - 1147-1148 - called for by Bernard of Clairvaux – accomplished nothing. Indulgence – complete remission for sins granted to crusaders or for those who contributed to the cause.
- 3<sup>rd</sup> - 1189-1192 – gained 3 yr. truce w/access to Jerusalem by pilgrims. (Fredrick Barbarossa, Philip Augustus & Richard I)
- 4<sup>th</sup> - 1200-1204 – side-tracked by Venetian shippers, the Christian town of Zara and then Constantinople were taken. The crusaders were excommunicated, so they set up for the Latin Empire of Constantinople – so much for taking up the cross! Children’s Crusade = 1212 – utter disaster.
- 5<sup>th</sup> - 1219-1221 – succeeded in taking Damietta in Egypt, but soon lost it again.
- 6<sup>th</sup> - 1229 – Crusaders made a treaty with the Sultan, giving Fredrick control of Jerusalem. He was excommunicated for this.
- 7<sup>th</sup> - 1248 – Crusaders defeated in Egypt.

Overall the Crusades were generally unsuccessful and any gains of territory were temporary at best. The Holy War was the papacy reaching for universal sovereignty and one united Church.

Unfortunately, the popes never held two basic truths: First, Christianity’s highest satisfactions are not guaranteed by possession of special places and Second, the sword is never God’s way to extend Christ’s church. This fault assured the religious collapse of the whole structure. (See Mark 10:42-45)

Calling them to Himself, Jesus said to them, "You know that those who are recognized as rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them; and their great men exercise authority over them. "But it is not this way among you, but whoever wishes to become great among you shall be your servant; and whoever wishes to be first among you shall be slave of all. "For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many."

**4. Discuss the Crusades and consider what our answers should be to those who challenge Christianity's hypocrisy because of the Crusades.**

**Note that the Church long ago rejected those actions as not in keeping with the Christian faith or the clear teachings of Jesus, we have confessed the sins of our fathers, seeking the forgiveness of those we offended and have not continued with these kinds of actions since.**

Chapter 20 - The Nectar of Learning - Scholasticism

Humanity has always described our need in terms of reach, and God's truth in terms of descent. The Cathedral Schools gave birth to universities with the supreme task of understanding and explaining the light of God's revealed truth.

Scholasticism was a distinctive method of scholarship combined with the unique theology of the Middle Ages. It came to stand for painstaking arrival at logical conclusions through questions, examining and arranging details into a system that was logical.

The goal was to reconcile Christian doctrine with human reason and arrange them in an orderly system. However, the free search for truth was never in view since the chief doctrines of the Christian faith were regarded as fixed. The purpose of discussion was to show the reasonableness of the doctrines and to explain their implications.

Living religiously in a studious manner was a hallmark of medieval education. The curriculum of the cathedral school was limited to grammar, rhetoric, logic, arithmetic, geometry, music, and astronomy. These were called the seven liberal arts (reserved for “freemen”)

**5. What was missing from the cathedral school curriculum of grammar, rhetoric, logic, arithmetic, geometry, music, and astronomy?**

**Bible? Theology?**

Eventually, students learned to think. Unquestioning acceptance of traditional “authorities” was no longer assured, but the conclusions had to jibe with Christian doctrine.

The Popes tried to build a new philosophical framework supporting the papal monarchy on a new formulation of canon law and on a systematic statement of Christian theology. Thomas Aquinas (1224-1274) wrote the book that captured the summation of the theological knowledge of the Scholastics: “Summa Theological.”

The craving to control, the zeal to reach every aspect of life, may have disguised the fatal flaw in Christianity by law. It tried to reduce human freedom to a miserable minimum and forgot that God designed freedom as the forerunner for the coming of true faith.

**6. Discuss the difference between “Christianity by law” (Legalism or State Religion would be Christianity by law) and “Human freedom as the forerunner for the coming of true faith.”**

**The freedom of religious belief is the only way to assure genuine conversions?**

Like the Crusades, scholastic theology may have reached too far, claimed too much for itself and the church. A clue to the heights of arrogance lies in Innocent III’s claim that the pope is the judge of the world, “set in the midst between God and man, below God and above man.” The boast did not go unchallenged. A growing host of unlettered laymen remembered the apostolic testimony: “There is one God and one Mediator.”

Chapter 21 - A Song to Lady Poverty – The Apostolic Lifestyle

The Medieval Poverty Movement is a timeless reminder that political Christianity is only partial Christianity. The movement drew its strength from a deep and

widespread resentment of a corrupt and neglectful priesthood. It was often allied with political and economic restlessness, in a rapidly changing and expanding society. However, the heart of the movement was the spiritual hunger of the people. Christians of this era did not consider faith as strictly private. Faith was the cement of society, so, to deny a single article was not only heresy but also treason. The church had two objectives in dealing with heretics. The first was the conversion of the heretic and the second was the protection of Christendom – Christian Sovereignty.

**7. The Medieval Poverty Movement is a timeless reminder that political Christianity is only partial Christianity. This movement remains as a challenge to the Church (any church) that is characterized by wealth and power.**

**What does the church do with its wealth and with its power?**

**In what sense, is political Christianity only partial Christianity?**

**Does this mean that Christians should not be involved in politics, or serve in positions of government?**

**Does it mean that we should not strive for “righteous” laws?  
Consider Mark 10:42-45 (Keep Balanced)**

The search was on, to find the one, pure church. Where would it be found? In the papal palace of Rome? In the blood of crusading armies or in the sale of indulgences? Or will it be found where the hungry find bread, the naked are clothed and the stranger finds rest?

Some insisted that clerical vice was a result of the church’s attempt to control the world. They advocated that the church should surrender its property and secular dominion to the state. They also called for the true Church and its ministers to share wealth and power.

Francis of Assisi (later a saint) was part of the Catholic Church’s answer to the radical reforms of the Poverty Movement.

There were three solutions proposed to crush heresies:

- First, preach to return to the truth.
- Second, launch a crusade to crush all hardened resistance, and
- Third, use the Inquisition to uproot heresy completely. (They chose #3)



This get-tough policy pushed the Dominicans to the side, along with their preaching and lifestyle of poverty. Bishops were required to “inquire” into the beliefs of their subjects (“not sheep of their pasture?”). Heresy, or harboring a heretic, brought immediate excommunication.

Thirty years later, the church provided for the State to punish heretics. This could mean loss of property or excommunication. However, complete forgiveness would be granted for cooperation in exposing the heretics.

Five years later, the Dominicans were returned to a prominent position of leading the Inquisition. After 32 years of not being able to break the opposition, pope Innocent IV authorized torture as a means of getting information and confessions.

#### Chapter 22 - Sleeping Men and The Law of Necessity – The Decline of the Papacy

##### **Sleep and Change in The Kingdom**

- 1300-1500 - the age of the decline of the Middle ages.
- The idea of “Christendom” was under vigorous attack.
- The significance of the 14th & 15th centuries lies not only in the further decline of the empire, but in the dramatic loss of papal prestige.

##### **A New Voice in Christendom**

- Philip the Fair of France vs. Pope Boniface VIII.
- “My master’s sword is made of steel; the pope’s is made of words.”

##### **The Captivity of the Holy Father**

- The election of Pope Clement V – never set foot in Rome and marked the start of the 72 year Babylonian Captivity of the Papacy
- The Great Papal Schism - 39 years
- Urban ruling from Rome & Clement from Avignon
  - Who was the “true” pope?
  - Only the Pope could call for a general council to decide.

##### **A New Pope Elected**

- 1409 - A majority of the cardinals from both camps agreed to meet at Pisa.
- They deposed both “popes” & elected Alexander V.
- The two deposed “popes” would not accept the cardinals’ decision.
- So now there were THREE “popes.”
- With one calling for a crusade vs. the other and selling indulgences to finance the war!
- Eventually decided by a convention of nations – with each country getting one vote.

- One incumbent stepped aside and the council deposed the other 2 and elected a different man: Martin V.
- When Martin V became pope – he repudiated all acts of the council, except the one by which he ruled.
- Who is greater: a general council that creates the pope or the pope who claims supremacy over councils?

Is it any wonder that the stage was set for The Protestant Reformation?

### Chapter 23 - Judgment in the Process of Time

Time has a way of sifting and testing human achievements...their social and political systems...and we wonder why those who lived under them should ever have defended them or valued them so highly.

In the course of time, it is human nature that turns a good thing into an abuse.

### **The English Zealot, John Wyclif**

- Studied & taught at Oxford – circa, 1372
- Teaching regarding: lordship over men
  - Every man holds an equal place in the eyes of God.
  - “Dominion founded in grace”
  - Coincided with Great Papal Schism 1378
  - He came to believe the pope was the Antichrist

### **From Reformer to Protestant**

- The Ancient division of the church:
  - One triumphant in heaven
  - One militant here on earth
  - One asleep in purgatory
- He challenged the whole range of medieval beliefs and practices but retained belief in purgatory and extreme unction, though he admitted that he looked in vain in the Bible for the institution of extreme unction (what about purgatory?)
- Preaching is of more value than the administration of any sacrament.
- Neither the testimony of Augustine nor Jerome nor any other saint should be accepted except in so far as it was based upon Scripture.
- His denial of the doctrine of transubstantiation was what aroused the hostility of The Catholic Church.
- He led a handful of scholars at Oxford in the translation of the Latin Bible into the English language.
- He was driven from the university and died in 1384.

### **The Passage to Bohemia**

- John Hus studied at the University of Prague - Circa.1396
- He read Wyclif’s philosophical writings in college and his religious writings after his ordination & assignment to ministry
- He circulated Wyclif’s teachings & criticisms of the pope
- Faced an inquisition

### **Away with Heretics**

- Hus was willing to yield himself to the teaching of the church, when instructed by Scripture in what way his teaching was wrong.
- He spent 8 months in prison (tested himself re: being burned at the stake by putting his hand over a candle...and could not endure it.)

“O most holy Christ draw me, weak as I am, after Thyself, for if Thou dost not draw us we cannot follow Thee. Strengthen my spirit, that it may be willing. If the flesh is weak, let Thy grace precede us; come between and follow, for without Thee we cannot go for Thy sake to cruel death. Give me a fearless heart, a right faith, a firm hope, a perfect love, that for Thy sake I may lay down my life with patience and joy. Amen.” – John Hus

July 6, 1415 – the day of his burning – “God is my witness that the evidence against me is false. I have never thought or preached except with the one intention of winning men if possible, from their sins. In the truth of the gospel I have written, taught and preached; today I will gladly die.”

**8. Consider the examples of Wyclif and Hus. What keeps us from this kind of boldness and righteous defiance? Our rights? Our fear of what? Discuss the things for which Christians are persecuted in the West and in the rest of the world.**

## **SESSION 8 – THE AGE OF THE REFORMATION 1517-1698 AD**

After this session, you will:

- Gain an appreciation for the religious freedom we enjoy and the denominational system.
- Know the four major traditions of early Protestantism and their leaders.
- Understand the dangers of taking the gospel to those in our own culture, as well as to other cultures.

You will KNOW:

- The four major movements marked by early Protestantism. (Lutheran, Reformed, Anabaptist, and Anglican)

You will BE ABLE TO:

- Identify the leaders of the Reformation.

You will THINK ABOUT:

- Different solutions to Catholic problems.

### **In the Last Session**

- You saw how and why the popes gained so much power during the Middle Ages.
- You gained understanding of the motivations for the Crusades, as well as their scope and sequence.
- You gain appreciation for the challenges faced by the Church during the Middle Ages.

### **Begin video.**

### **The Age of the Reformation**

- The spirit of reform broke out with surprising intensity in the 16th century, giving birth to Protestantism and shattering the papal leadership of western Christendom.
- Four major traditions marked early Protestantism:
  - Lutheran
  - Reformed
  - Anabaptist
  - Anglican
- After a generation, the Church of Rome itself, led by the Jesuits, recovered its moral fervor.
- Bloody struggles between Catholics and Protestants followed, and Europe was ravaged by war before it became obvious that western Christendom was

permanently divided and a few pioneers pointed toward a new way: the denominational concept.

### **Different Solutions to Catholic Problems**

- One writer describes Protestantism as “a modification of Catholicism in which Catholic problems remain, but different solutions are given.”
- The four questions that Protestantism answered in a new way are:
  - How is a person saved?
    - Protestants say that a person is saved, not by works, but by faith alone.
  - Where does religious authority lie?
    - Protestants say that religious authority does not reside in the visible institution called the Roman church but in the Word of God found in the Bible.
  - What is the Church?
    - Protestants would say that the Church is the whole community of Christian believers, since all are priests before God.
  - What is the essence of Christian living?
    - Protestants would answer that the essence of Christian living is serving God in any useful calling, whether you are “ordained” or a “layman.”

### **Leader of The Reformation?**

- Many see Martin Luther as the leader of the Reformation. However, the fuel piled up for years before Luther merely lit the spark that ignited it (see chart 48).
- His conversion came at the end of a long spiritual struggle when he read Galatians 3:11, where Paul quoted Hab. 2:4 – “The righteous man shall live by faith.”
- Later, on October 31, 1517, he posted his 95 Theses (95 propositions for theological debate) on the Castle Church door in Wittenberg. And so, it began.
- Three and a half years later, in April 1521, Luther appeared before Emperor Charles V to defend what he had taught and written. Before he was declared a heretic, expelled from the Church and condemned to death, he was offered the opportunity to recant his writings. His response is a perfect example of submissive defiance.
- He said, “My conscience is captive to the Word of God. Unless I am convinced by proofs from Scriptures or by plain and clear reasons and arguments, I cannot and will not retract, for it is neither safe nor wise to do anything against conscience. Here I stand. I can do no other. God help me. Amen.”

- Luther’s original intention was to reform the Catholic Church, not start a new one, but Lutheranism was the response to the Catholic Church’s rejection of this call.

### **John Calvin**

- John Calvin’s leadership shaped the third reformation tradition.
- Today we call this tradition Reformed or Calvinistic Christianity.
- Luther’s central doctrine was justification by faith, and Calvin’s focus was the sovereignty of God.

### **Ulrich Zwingli**

- Ulrich Zwingli led the Anabaptist movement.
- Their central focus was true discipleship and their opposition to infant baptism, insisting that baptism should be the act of obedience of one who has placed their faith in Jesus Christ.
- Anabaptist: The prefix “ana” means “do-over” – the Anabaptist taught that those who were baptized as infants needed to “do it over” as believing adults.
- They preferred the name Baptists to Anabaptists.
- They came out of the Reformed tradition and felt called of God to reform the reformation!
- They demonstrated that those who live most devoutly for the world to come are often in the best position to change the present.
- It is interesting how people often turn that around, declaring that some Christians are “so heavenly minded that they are of no earthly good.” I am convinced that if we are truly heavenly minded, we will be and do earthly good.
- Where Luther would allow whatever the Bible did not prohibit, Zwingli rejected whatever the Bible did not prescribe. In England, this approach was called “puritanism.”
- If the Lutheran reformation began in a monastic cell, the Anabaptist reformation in a prayer meeting and the Calvinistic reformation at a scholar’s desk, then the English reformation began in the affairs of state, specifically with the problem of succession to the royal throne.

### **Henry VIII**

- The English or Anglican reformation was primarily a revolt against the Pope as the head of the Church.
- The Pope was unwilling to grant Henry the VIII an annulment of his marriage and approval to marry another woman.
- Protestantism had led the way for other kings and countries to avoid excommunication and “the ban” by establishing their own “state church.”

- The Anglican Church has been described as “the most Catholic a church can be and still be protestant.”
- Henry the VIII wanted a son as an heir to the throne and a new wife to help provide him that son.
- He changed the Church **IN** England to the Church **OF** England, establishing himself as the head of the Church and the defender of the Faith.
- Henry VIII suppressed the monasteries and published the English Bible for use in the churches.
- His son, Edward VI allowed priests to marry and replaced the old Latin service with “Crammer’s Book of Common Prayer” in English.
- John Foxe’s “Book of Christian Martyrs,” published in 1571, helped reinforce England’s break with Catholicism as he recounted the stories of the martyrs of Christianity – including the horrific persecution of Protestants by the Catholic Church during the Inquisition.
- During the reign of Elizabeth I the Anglican Church assumed its distinctive character, neither Roman nor Protestant. This certainly did not set well with the reformers returning from exile – the Puritans.

#### **Four Movements**

- These four movements faced different needs and emphasized different Christian solutions, all built on the same foundation with different structures of doctrine and practice. (See charts 70, 71 & 72)

#### **The Counter Reformation**

- Meanwhile, back in Rome, it did not take long for the Catholic Church to respond to the Reformation movement.
- Ignatius Loyola founded the Jesuits in 1534, which became both a Counter Reformation movement and a Catholic Reformation movement.
- Loyola is the author of a well-known statement: “Pray as if everything depended on God alone; but act as though it depended on you alone whether you will be saved.” (We usually drop that last line.)

#### **Religious Wars**

- From 1524-1648 there were several religious wars in various countries featuring Catholic vs. Protestant and Protestant vs. Catholic. (See chart 69)
- As the Church expands, Protestant and Catholic, it has always been in danger of identifying the Gospel with cultural norms and then insisting upon the expression of the faith in that cultural norm. Style of music would be one example of a cultural norm becoming attached to the Gospel.
- Do we establish Christianity by law or by love?
- Do we establish Christianity by force or by words and deeds?

- It is sad to say, that conquest and evangelization slowly intertwined and too few recognized the difference, whether Catholic or Protestant.
- What was it that Jesus said? Mark 10:42-43 “...You know that those who are recognized as rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them; and their great men exercise authority over them. But it is not this way among you...”
- One of the lessons learned from the 30 Years War was that the price of enforced religious conformity is excessively high.
- A lesson that should have been learned from God’s Word is that enforced religious conformity is non-Christian.
- Eventually, the goal of building a holy city that nurtures holy men was amended to, building a city where people could be holy.
- In America:
  - the waves of newcomers
  - the indifference of the second generation
  - the wide-open frontier all weighed against a religious uniformity

### **The Denominational Theory**

- The Reformers had planted the seeds of the denominational theory of the Church, insisting that the identity of the true church could never be exclusively with a particular institution.
- The denominational theory looked for Christian unity in some inward religious experience and allowed diversity in the outward expressions of that personal faith.
- This tolerant attitude was not born of doctrinal indifference but was extended to those who shared a common understanding of the core doctrines of the Christian faith.
- In the end, the denominational form of the Church, though not ideal, is better than any alternative the years have offered.

### **Review**

- The Reformation was remarkably swift.
- The Religious wars were certainly a black mark on the Reformation.
- The Reformation was somewhat side-tracked by holding on to the idea of a marriage between Church and State.

### **In the Next Session**

- We will be discussing the four chapters in The Age of Reason and Revival.



## INSTRUCTOR’S NOTES: THE REFORMATION

For the rest of this session your students will spend time discussing what they have learned and what they have written in their summary of each of the eight chapters in “The Age of the Reformation.”

Have your students share their insights in class.

There are a series of questions/assignments numbered and in bold letters. Because of time constraints, use your discretion regarding which of these you would like to have your students work on and discuss as a group. Either lead these discussions yourself, or assign them to individuals/groups to make a presentation or lead the discussion. One suggestion would be to have at least one student (or more, depending on your situation) share their summary as you cover each of the chapters in the notes below.

Review the Class Assignment Schedule and remind them to read their Church History book (or History of Christian Doctrines book).

### **Chapter (Section) Summaries and Notes for Discussion**

Church History in Plain Language

by Bruce Shelley

#### **The Age of the Reformation – 1517-1698 AD**

The spirit of reform broke out with surprising intensity in the sixteenth century, giving birth to Protestantism and shattering the papal leadership of western Christendom. Four major traditions marked early Protestantism: Lutheran, Reformed, Anabaptist and Anglican. After a generation, the Church of Rome itself, led by the Jesuits, recovered its moral fervor. Bloody struggles between Catholics and Protestants followed, and Europe was ravaged by war before it became obvious that western Christendom was permanently divided and a few pioneers pointed toward a new way: the denominational concept.

Chapter 24 - A Wild Boar in The Vineyard – Martin Luther & Protestantism (in Germany) (See chart 48 for the list of Forerunners of the Reformation)

Ernst Troeltsch described Protestantism as “a modification of Catholicism in which Catholic problems remain, but different solutions are given.”

There are at least four questions that Protestantism answered in a new way:

1. How is a person saved? The Protestants answer: Not by works but by faith alone.
2. Where does religious authority lie? The Protestants answer: Not in the visible institution called the Roman church but in the Word of God found in the Bible
3. What is the church? The Protestants answer: The whole community of Christian believers, since all are priests before God.
4. What is the essence of Christian living? The Protestants answer: Serving God in any useful calling, whether ordained or lay.

**1. Discuss the significance of the answers to these four questions. Would you want to expand the answers to any of these questions? Would you want to add any other questions, to clarify the differences between Catholic and Protestant? Would you eliminate any of these questions?**

Martin Luther (1483-1546) was called, “The Wild Boar in the Lord’s Vineyard.” Luther’s response was to live up to this identity by publicly burning copies of the Canon (Church) Law, the works of some medieval theologians, as well as a copy of the Bull of Condemnation (the official document from the pope).

**Luther’s Attack Upon Papal Authority**

Luther also attacked Papal authority by challenging the sale of indulgences. Indulgences offered forgiveness for the sinner and exemption from acts of penance by drawing upon the “treasury of merits”; which consisted of the grace accumulated by Christ’s sacrifice on the cross and the meritorious deeds of the saints.

Luther opposed the selling of indulgences and posted his 95 Theses (propositions for theological debate) on the Castle Church door in Wittenberg on October 31, 1517. This is considered, by many, to be the “the spark that ignited the Reformation.”

Some of Luther’s ideas for reform included:

- A council may sometimes err. Neither the church, nor the pope can establish articles of faith. These must come from Scripture.
- He called for the princes to correct abuses within the church, to strip bishops and abbots of their wealth and worldly power, and to create, in effect, a national German Church.
- Valid sacraments had to be instituted by Christ and exclusively Christian – retaining only Baptism & the Lord’s Supper.
- He called for a return to the early Christian view of the church as a community of Christian believers in which all believers are priests called to offer spiritual sacrifices to God.
- He also changed worship from Latin to German, and the celebration of the Mass to the preaching and teaching of God’s Word.

**2. Consider the “Important Theological Themes for Luther” pages 251-253 in the textbook. He was contending for these things. What are the things for which you contend? Considering other information you have learned about Luther, do you see any molehills made into mountains or any mountains made into molehills?**

**The textbook lists: Righteousness Imparted or Imputed, The Law & the Gospel Systems and The Theology of The Cross – consider also his anti-Semitism, his treatment of the serfs and the ideas listed above.**

### **Heretic, Outlaw and Hero**

January 1521, Luther was declared to be a heretic and expelled from the “one holy, catholic and apostolic Church.” He was condemned to death at the Diet (assembly) at Worms. His response to this verdict is reported to have been:

“My conscience is captive to the Word of God. I will not recant anything, for to go against conscience is neither honest nor safe. Here I stand, I cannot do otherwise. God help me. Amen.”

### **Luther’s Lasting Influence**

The personal defects of the aging rebel should not in any way detract from the grandeur of his achievement, which ultimately transformed not only Christianity but all Western civilization.

## Chapter 25 - Radical Discipleship – The Anabaptists (In Switzerland)

### **The Anabaptist (no infant baptism – one who baptizes over again)**

Like the Benedictine monks of an earlier day, the Anabaptists demonstrate that those who live most devoutly for the world to come are often in the best position to change the present. *(This contrasts with the popular saying that "some Christians are so heavenly minded, that they are no earthly good.")*

### **Basic Beliefs of Anabaptists**

The Anabaptists were those who believed that baptism and church membership were only valid for those who can make a conscience decision of faith in Christ. They opposed the concept of infant baptism and taught that those baptized as infants should be baptized again, when they trusted in Christ for themselves.

They rejected all thoughts of “rebaptism” because they never considered the ceremonial sprinkling in infancy as valid baptism. They also preferred “Baptists” as a designation.

They also rejected the concept of Christendom, the alliance of Church and State. Generally, they were pacifists and refused to hold political office or take oaths.

### **Radicals in The Swiss Alps**

Ulrich Zwingli (1484-1528) led this radical wing of the reformation movement, as they sought to reform the reformation. The movement was launched by preaching biblical sermons from the pulpit.

Zwingli and Luther had a fundamental difference in their application of the Scriptures to life. Luther would allow whatever the Bible did not prohibit and Zwingli rejected whatever the Bible did not prescribe. This same view was at the heart of the Puritan movement in England.

### **3. What are some pitfalls that come with Luther’s and Zwingli’s positions:**

- **Allowing whatever the Bible does not expressly prohibit**
- **Rejecting whatever the Bible does not expressly prescribe**

### **Kingdom Building Gone Mad**

The (Ana) Baptists sought to establish a church that was free from the state and composed of true disciples.

Some within the movement sought to establish an earthly kingdom for Christ in the city of Munster in the 1530’s. They were hoping that this would prompt the return of Christ. Chiliasm was the belief in a thousand-year earthly kingdom of Christ (in Munster?) aka: Millennialism. Because of the Munster rebellion and the unbalanced, heretical teaching and lifestyles, “Anabaptist” became associated with “wild-eyed,” religious fanaticism.

### **Pioneers of Modern Christianity**

The first “synod” (Church Council) of the Protestant Reformation took place in 1527 at Schleithem, on the Swiss-German border. They produced the “Brotherly Union” aka: “Schleithem Confession.”

<http://www.anabaptists.org/history/the-schleithem-confession.html>

Some of the seven convictions included:

- The necessity of discipleship - The Christian’s relationship with Jesus Christ must go beyond inner experience and acceptance of doctrines. It must involve a daily walk with God, in which Christ’s teaching and example shape a transformed style of life.
- The principle of love – including pacifism, mutual aid and redistribution of wealth.
- Congregational view of church authority.
- Separation of Church & State - In their search for a pure church, they often became legalistic (unbalanced as is often the case).

### Chapter 26: Thrust into the Game – John Calvin (1509-1564)

John Calvin’s leadership in “the game” shaped a third reformation tradition. Today we call it Reformed or Calvinistic Christianity.

### **The Meaning of Reformed Christianity**

Calvin and Luther shared the core Protestant beliefs but Calvin was 25 years younger, from a different land and had a distinctly different personality. They were impressed by different needs and emphasized different Christian solutions, built on the same foundation with different structures of doctrine & practice. Where Luther’s central doctrine was justification by faith, Calvin’s was the sovereignty of God.

Calvin built upon the work of Zwingli, seeking to bring some balance to the more radical elements of the movement. In March of 1536, Calvin published the first edition of his highly influential *Institutes of the Christian Religion*.

### **Geneva: Home of Calvinism**

Christendom was still in play for Calvin. When he was offered (and he accepted) the position as Professor of Sacred Scriptures in Geneva, he prepared a confession of faith to be accepted by everyone who wished to be a citizen.

Eventually, he & William Farel were asked to leave Geneva but they returned 3 years later and the city accepted the church constitution that put many of Calvin’s leading ideas into practice.

### **The Sovereignty of God**

Calvin did not profess to know absolutely who were God’s elect, but believed that three tests provided a good yardstick to judge who might be saved:

- Participation in the two sacraments of baptism & the Lord’s Supper
- An upright moral life
- A public profession of the faith

The consequence of faith to Calvin is the strenuous effort to introduce the kingdom of God on earth. His views that the church is not subject to secular government, except in obviously secular matters and the church’s obligation to guide the secular authorities in spiritual matters, led many of his followers throughout Europe in a spiritual conspiracy seeking the overthrow of false religion and restrictive governments.

### **John Knox’s Scotland**

Meanwhile in England, John Knox (1514-1572) was a restless activist who had tried earlier to point England in the direction of Calvinism. He escaped the persecution led by Mary Queen of Scots (AKA “Bloody Mary”) and developed the theory that Protestants had the right to resist, by force if necessary, any Roman Catholic ruler who tried to prevent their worship and mission. (Further than Calvin was willing to go.)

**4. Calvin, and others, sought to establish the Kingdom of God by political means, by establishing laws and some even by the violent overthrow of existing governments. What influenced this thinking? Is it a biblical approach? Do we see this concept used in our present day? Is there a balanced approach?**

## Chapter 27 - The Curse Upon the Crown – The Church of England

If the Lutheran reformation began in a monastic cell, the Anabaptist reformation in a prayer meeting and the Calvinistic reformation at a scholar’s desk, then the English reformation began in the affairs of state, specifically with the problem of succession to the royal throne.

England had two reformations: A constitutional one under King Henry VIII (1509-1547) and a theological one under the Puritans almost a century later.

### **England’s Break with Rome**

Henry VIII – King of England – revolted against the pope because he passionately desired Anne Boleyn, to replace Catherine his wife of 18 years, who had failed to provide him with a son, which he also desired. Pope Clement VII refused to declare the marriage invalid, to allow Henry to re-marry.

In 1534, in the Act of Supremacy, Henry declared:

“The King’s, majesty justly and rightly is and ought to be and shall be reputed the only supreme head in earth of the Church of England called ‘Anglican Ecclesia.’”

The establishment of the Anglican Church, the 4<sup>th</sup> Reformation Church was not primarily doctrinal, but political.

### **Henry’s Dual Policy**

The sole religious issue in England’s constitutional reformation was papal supremacy. He intended no break with the old faith, for he still considered himself to be the “Defender of the Faith.” The two serious changes within the Church of England were the suppression of the monasteries and the publication of the English Bible for use in the churches’.

### **William Tyndale’s Bible**

William Tyndale was a pioneer in the translation of the English Bible with a zeal to place the English Scripture into the hands of the common man. After 17 months in prison he was burned at the stake. His dying prayer: “Lord, open the king of England’s eyes.”

### **The Swing to Protestantism**

When Henry’s son, Edward, took the throne there was a swing towards Protestantism. Priests could marry and the old Latin service was replaced by Crammer’s “Book of Common Prayer” in English.

Mary, Queen of Scots tried to lead England back to the ways of Rome. During her four-year reign, she sent nearly 300 protestants to the burning stake.

Later, John Foxe’s, *Book of Christian Martyrs* (1571), incited the English people to a longstanding horror of Catholicism. Eventually, Elizabeth’s compromise for peace tried to sound Protestant enough to satisfy the Protestants but worded in such a way that would satisfy both Catholics & Protestants. This did not set well with the returning reformers: Puritans – preachers of personal and national righteousness.

Chapter 28 - “Another Man” At Manresa – The Catholic Reformation (See chart 68)

Meanwhile, back at the Catholic Church, a counter-reformation was taking place. Ignatius Loyola (1491-1556) with an immense breakthrough to spiritual enlightenment in a wave of ecstatic illumination he became “another man.” Eventually, he founded the Jesuits, who became both a Counter Reformation movement and a Catholic Reformation movement.

**5. Read: Facets of the Counter Reformation (page 283 in textbook) discuss briefly: what was positive in this movement and what was negative.**

**Return to the Spiritual**

Even before Luther posted his thesis on the church door, there were those who sought reform within the Catholic Church but the church was slow to respond because of politics.

The initial push for reform gained traction after Emperor Charles attacked Rome (1527) and imprisoned Pope Clement VII. When Pope Paul III (1534-1549) took office, he did exactly what politically minded leaders do; he started appointing several champions of reform to the College of Cardinals. Then he appointed 9 of the new Cardinals to a Reform Commission.

After a wide-ranging study, the Reform Commission presented some solid “advice...concerning the reform of the Church.” This report included the revelations that: the papal office was too secular, both popes and cardinals needed to give more attention to spiritual matters and stop flirting with the world, there was bribery in high places, there was abuse of indulgence and evasions of church law and there was prostitution in Rome.



### **Call for A General Council**

Pope Paul called for a General Council of the Church in Trent, Italy. The Council of Trent was delayed for 8 years by Pope Francis I – not wanting Charles V to strengthen his authority. However, some steps were taken that produced a new austerity and built new walls around Fortress Roman Catholic Church.

### **Ignatius Loyola and The Society of Jesus**

Ignatius survived imprisonment and the Inquisition, and in 1540, the Pope approved the Society of Jesus – the Jesuits, as a new religious order. Their aim was simple: Restore the Roman Church to the position of spiritual power and worldly influence it had held 3 centuries earlier. (*Ah, the good old days!?*)

### **The Shape of Modern Catholicism**

In 1545, the Council of Trent finally took place. Everything the Protestant Reformation stood for was vigorously and violently rejected at Trent (See chart 89). The decisions of this Council significantly shaped Roman Catholicism, even today.

Ignatius is credited with a quote many Protestants (including Evangelicals) have used, in a modified form: “Pray as though everything depended on God alone; but act as though it depended on you alone whether you will be saved.” We usually leave that last phrase off the quote.

### Chapter 29 - Opening the Rock – America and Asia

In the years of discovery and global expansion (1500-1650), the Catholic and Protestant missionaries had opportunities to take their gospels to the inhabitants of these new lands. Surprisingly, to us, they struggled with the question: Should the natives be won to the “holy faith” by love or by force?

**6. Should the natives be won to the “holy faith” by love or by force?  
HOW IS THIS EVEN A QUESTION? What is the answer?**

## **The Gospel and Culture**

The church is often in danger of identifying the gospel with some cultural form in which the faith has found a home. They felt constrained to insist upon the expression of the faith in only one way.

### **7. Is this a danger that we also face in our culture? What cultural forms have been or currently are attached to the proper expression of faith?**

Islam’s rise cut the Christian west from the Christian east and the crusades were Christian Europe’s attempt to batter down the barriers of Islam by military force. Conquest and evangelization were slowly intertwined and few recognized a difference.

### **Spaniards in The New World**

Within 50 years of the first sighting of San Salvador, the Spaniards had plundered & conquered the New World from California to the tip of South America (In Martin Luther’s lifetime). Dominicans, Franciscans, Augustinians or Jesuits sailed on nearly every ship – eager to convert the heathen.

### **Champion of The Oppressed**

Bartholomew de Las Casas was one champion of the oppressed Indians in the New World. He met resistance and was considered a danger, a menace to New Spain. He subscribed to the philosophy of ministry that said: The only way to convert them was by peaceful preaching of the Word and by example of holy living. (*Sounds a little like the motto of Village Missions: Preach the Word & Love the People.*)

### **Francis Xavier (1506-1552) and The Door to China**

Francis Xavier was praised for his missionary zeal and personal charm but was a man of his time, in that he shared the religious intolerance of his age. His years in Japan changed his views regarding Christian missions and he developed a quality of compromise in religious matters – adapting to local customs and values in every way they could.

In the East, Japan and China, the Roman Catholic missionaries often sought to compromise and adapt to local customs and values in every way they could. Too often this led to including customs, ideals and teachings that were contrary to biblical teaching. At one time, there were almost 270,000 Catholic Christians in China but the work was mostly abandoned because of disagreement as to whether the adaptations had gone too far.

### Chapter 30 - The Rule of The Saints – Puritanism

To the Puritans, spiritual conversion was essential to Christianity. They saw themselves as the covenanted people of God and their divine mission in the world was to establish God’s Kingdom in the New World.

### **Puritanism: New Life and New World**

In England the Puritans had, under Queen Elizabeth (1558-1603), tried to purify the Church of England along the lines of Calvin’s work in Geneva. Under James I and Charles I (1603-1642), they had also suffered for resisting the pressure from the monarchy to conform their worship to a “High-Church” style. Finally, during England’s civil war & Oliver Cromwell’s rule (1642-1660) they had a chance to shape the national church in England but failed because of their own internal dissensions.

### **The People of the Book**

The Puritans were certainly influenced by John Foxe’s “Book of Christian Martyrs.” However, the book they were most passionate about was the Bible. They were especially passionate about the English version of the Geneva Bible. They also had a new style of preaching – a message that aimed at the heart, not at the head.

## **8. Does it have to be one or the other? Can it be both?**

### **Conflicts with The King**

When James I became King, the only demand he consented to with the Puritans was to have a new translation of the Scriptures made in English. Thus, the King James Bible, the Authorized Version, was produced.

Some Puritans became impatient for change in the Church of England and began to meet for worship as they felt the Bible taught them, not according to bishops and prayer books. This move, to build a separate Church in England, gained them the name Separatists. The Separatists eventually moved to Holland for safety and freedom of worship. After 10 years in Holland, they heard there was an English colony in Virginia. Out of concern for their children growing up out of touch with their homeland and forgetting their native language, the group headed for the New England on the Mayflower. Perhaps, the new American Continent would be their solution?

### **Attack Upon the Lord’s Anointed**

Most Puritans saw separation from the Church of England was too drastic. They hoped for some alternative to division. However, civil war broke out (1642-1648) after Charles I tried to enforce his version of the “divine right of kings” and his “High-Church” brand of Anglican religion upon the Scots. The Parliament fought his reforms and eventually he fled, to gather his army.

The government called scores of Puritan theologians to Westminster and assigned them the task of creating a new form of worship and church government for the Church of England. The Westminster Assembly met from 1643-1649 and produced the Westminster Confession of Faith, as well as the Larger and Shorter Catechisms.

### **The Rule of the Saints**

In the English Civil War, Oliver Cromwell (1559-1658) became a towering figure in Christian history. He led Parliamentary armies to victory over the King’s forces and then filled the office of Lord Protector (Military Dictator). Cromwell’s rule lasted about 9 years. Just 2 years after his death, the country welcomed the return of the monarchy to England and the rule of the saints was at an end. However, tens of thousands of the saints were happily settled in New England where they were devoutly trying to erect the Kingdom of God in the American wilderness.

### Chapter 31 - Unwilling to Die for An Old Idea Denominations

#### **Suppression of The Nonconformist**

The simple fact is Christians are divided today, in part at least, because they have the freedom to differ. In earlier centuries, they did not. Considering the Reformation, dissent was neither a Christian virtue nor a human right. Unfortunately, the Reformers were as eager as Catholics to suppress nonconformity, because both camps believed that Christian truth held societies together.

The first attempt to end religious wars, was to adopt the “Territorial Principle” in the Peace of Augsburg (1555). This principle simply gave the ruler in each region the power to decide the faith of his subjects, Lutheran or Catholic (Calvinism and others had not been considered).

In some situations, “The Territorial Compromise,” in the Royal Edict of Nantes – 1598, allowed for the setting aside of certain parts of the ruler’s territory for the Huguenots (French Calvinists) while the rest of the country remained Roman Catholic.

### **The Thirty Years War (1618-1648)**

This compromise proved to be unsatisfactory. All the previous conflicts were merely a bloody prelude to the most devastating of the so-called wars of religion. (See chart 69)

What started as a religious struggle with political overtones ended as a barbarous political power struggle with religious overtones. Out of sheer futility, the religious zeal of Catholics and Calvinists cooled, and men began to question the religious-territorial idea. Eventually, denominationalism was considered as an alternative.

In the Treaty of Westphalia (1648), the way was cleared for Calvinists, Lutherans and Catholics (recognized expressions of the Christian Faith) to exist within the territories of the Princes, if the Princes chose to allow it. This was to be decided without papal interference!

### **The New Way in America**

The Lesson of the 30 Years War was that the price of enforced religious conformity is too high.

Meanwhile, in America, the goal of building a holy city (State) that nurtures holy men, was amended to building a city (State) where people could be holy. The promise of religious toleration was a powerful incentive to brave the hazards of life in the American colonies.

Waves of newcomers, the indifference of the 2<sup>nd</sup> generation and the wide-open frontier all weighed against a religious uniformity.

The main exception to this general policy of religious toleration was the Congregational Puritans in Massachusetts Bay who were determined to establish a new Zion in the American wilderness: a “due form of government both civil and ecclesiastical” is the way Governor John Winthrop put it.

### **The Idea of Denominations - Denominationalism vs. Sectarian**

The denominational theory of the Church uses the word “denomination” as an inclusive word. A Sect or those who are sectarian are exclusive. Denomination implies that the Christian group called or “denominated” by a name is but one member of a larger group, the church, to which all denominations belong.

The Reformers had planted the seeds of the denominational theory of the church when they insisted that the True Church could never be identified in any exclusive sense, with a particular institution.

The Dissenting Brethren of Westminster articulated the denominational theory of the church in several fundamental truths:

- Considering man’s inability to always see the truth clearly; differences of opinion about the outward form of the church are inevitable.
- Even though these differences do not involve fundamentals of the faith, they are not matters of indifference. Every Christian is obligated to practice what he believes the Bible teaches.
- Since no church has a final and full grasp of divine truth, the true Church of Christ can never be fully represented by any single ecclesiastical structure.
- The mere fact of separation does not of itself constitute schism. It is possible to be divided at many points and still be united in Christ.

Thus, the denominational theory of the church looked for Christian unity in some inward religious experience and allowed diversity in the outward expressions of that personal faith.

This tolerant attitude was not born of doctrinal indifference. The Independent had no intention of extending Christian unity to all professions. The identity of the “one true church” was restricted to those who shared a common understanding of the core of the Christian faith.

In the end, the denominational form of the church has marked the recent centuries of Christian history; not because it is ideal, but because it is better than any alternative the years have offered.

**9. A group of pastors from a variety of denominations and independent churches who prayed together regularly, described their differences as flavors of Christianity – like Baskin-Robins 31 flavors of ice cream. Is this a fair comparison? Discuss the information above regarding denominations. What are some of your agreements or disagreements with this approach? Does your Church Doctrinal Statement reflect the core beliefs of Christianity? Are there distinctive doctrines in your church doctrinal statement, that might not appear in those of other churches?**

## **SESSION 9 – THE AGE OF REASON AND REVIVAL 1698-1789 AD**

At the end of this lesson, you should:

- Know the fundamental differences between the Reformation and the Renaissance.
- Be able to understand the importance of a humble, reasoned and biblical response, to attacks against Christian teaching and practice.
- Think about the impact of the Great Awakening on the United States – the Church and the society.
- Understand the motto of Village Missions: Preach the Word and Love the People (OR) Love the People and Preach the Word.

You will KNOW:

- The Age of Reformation was marked by debate among Christians about the way of salvation

You will BE ABLE TO:

- Understand the biblical responses to attacks against Christian teaching.

You will THINK ABOUT:

- How the Age of Reason was the birth of secularism

### **In the Last Session**

- You learned the four major movements of early Protestantism and their leaders.
- You learned the dangers the Church has faced from the beginning as we sought to take the Gospel to those in our own culture, as well as to other cultures.
- You gained an appreciation for and the ability to explain the denominational form of the Church that dominates Christianity even today.

**Begin video.**

### **The Age of Reason and Revival**

- The Age of Reformation was marked by debate among Christians about the way of salvation.
- The Age of Reason and Revival was highlighted by the denial of any supernatural religion.
- Respect for science and human reason replaced the Christian faith as the cornerstone of Western culture. Many Protestants met this crisis of faith, not by arguments, but by the experience of supernatural conversion. Faith was less dogma and more experience.
- This evangelical Christianity spread rapidly by the power of preaching alone.

### **Religious Freedom**

- Many Christians came to see that state support was no longer essential for Christianity’s survival.
- Modern Christians could accept religious freedom.

### **The Age of Reason**

- The Age of Reason was the birth of secularism.
- Secularism is a social and political philosophy that seeks to separate the Church from the State. In fact, it rejects any influence of religion, faith and worship. Ultimately it seeks to destroy all influence of Christianity.
- This is the foundation for the idea that anything except religion, especially Christianity, is tolerated, promoted and glorified.
- Religion, however, must be banned from the public square.
- Some showed high regard for the religion of Jesus but had profound contempt for Christianity’s social failures.
- Questions of dogma seemed unimportant, hardly worth fretting about.
- What was immensely more important was behavior.
- Even the age of the Reformation had proved again that faith and power are a potent brew. If Christians had access to power, they used it to compel conformity to their version of the truth: Catholic, Lutheran or Reformed.

### **Difference Between the Renaissance and Reformation**

- The Enlightenment or Renaissance – was seen as a rebirth.
- This was a philosophical movement, characterized by belief in the power of human reason and by innovations in political, religious, and educational doctrine.
- The seeds of this movement probably lie in the Reformation era itself.
- It involved the rebirth or recovery of the values of classical Greek and Roman civilization expressed in literature, politics and the arts.
- Many of the Reformers, Luther in particular, had cautioned against traveling down this path because it could lead to the imbalance of a humanistic focus.
- The differences in the Reformation and the Renaissance lie in their view of man:
  - The Reformers preached of the original sin of man and looked upon the world as “fallen” from God’s intended place.
  - The Renaissance had a positive estimate of human nature and the universe itself; that they are basically good.
- The English Civil War, the persecution of the French Huguenots and the Thirty Years War in Germany caused people to cry out against the power of fanatical clerics.
- Religious prejudice seemed like a far greater danger than atheism.



- There was also a new faith in law and order – particularly in modern science.
- It is ironic, that most of those early scientists were men of faith who believed that the God of the Bible was the God of creation.

### **The Church’s Failure**

- The Church’s mishandling of Scripture and over reaction to what they perceived as danger and heresy caused the Church to abandon one of the more powerful evidences of the existence and nature of God – His glory declared by all of creation.
- In this era, Christianity was certainly on trial.
- The most powerful charges leveled against the Church were the thousands upon thousands of victims of Christianity’s intolerance.
- Christianity’s critics measured Christian behavior by standards that were actually the legacy of Christian teaching.
- These attacks upon Christian convictions demanded that the Church respond with:
  - a humble confession of wrong
  - genuine repentance
  - a vigorous and well-reasoned response from orthodox Christians – proclaiming the truth.
- The response was woefully inadequate.
- The first response was to appeal to secular authorities to censor the dangerous books, without regard to the primary issues the scoffers raised.
- One writer that did respond reasonably, with a great impact upon the debate, was Bishop Joseph Butler of England, who wrote his monumental work “The Analogy of Religion.”
- Butler was able to settle the fundamental issues with this book, though skirmishes continue to this day.
- Deism, the belief in a God who created the world but has since remained indifferent to it, ultimately collapsed from its own weaknesses; but the negative work of the Age of Reason endured.
- Men made a deliberate attempt to organize a religiously neutral civilization, where faith had to be confined to the home and the heart.

### **The Thirst of the Soul**

- Even in the Age of Reason, the thirst of the soul could not be ignored.
- An important new movement called Pietism arose as a reminder of that fact.
- Three men Philip Jacob Spener, August Hermann Francke and Count Nikolaus von Zinzendorf highlight the history of Pietism.
- Any religion that becomes the religion of the majority and slowly turns into a social habit tends to grow humdrum and flat, regardless of its original glow of enthusiasm.
- The Christian life, in German Lutheranism, was less a personal relation to Christ and more a matter of membership in the state church.
- Pietism arose as a response with a twofold aim:
  - First, was the importance of personal faith – a personal experience of God’s grace in the believer’s heart.
  - Second, was to shift the center of the Christian life from the state churches, to intimate fellowships of those with a living faith in God.
- Pietism made an enormous contribution to Christianity worldwide.
- Pietists were those who brought a disciplined and emotional devotion in their practice of Christianity:
  - They shifted the emphasis from avid controversy to the care of souls.
  - They established preaching and pastoral visitation as central concerns of the Protestant ministry.
  - They enriched Christian music, bringing an experiential and personal flavor to their hymns.
  - Their dominate theme of regeneration made Pietism the fountain of all modern revivals.
- As Evangelicals, we inherited two important traits from Pietism:
  - Emotion as the major response to the mysteries of faith, sometimes to the endangerment of reason and
  - The shift from the traditional state churches to intimate fellowship groups or voluntary associations of believers.
- The evangelical movement saw three geographic regions significantly changed:
  - Germany by the rise of Pietism,
  - The British Isles by the preaching of the Methodists, and
  - The American Colonies by the impact of the Great Awakening.

### **The Great Awakening**

- We could find most of the basic beliefs of the evangelicals in Puritanism.
- The Puritans were a group of Protestants that arose in the 16<sup>th</sup> century within the Church of England. They demanded the simplification of the doctrine and worship. They also called for greater strictness in religious discipline.
- During part of the 17th century, the Puritans became a powerful political party. They were more concerned with politics, trying to create the holy commonwealth, the true Bible society first in England and then in America.
- Their attempt to legislate Christianity is one of the reasons that Americans tended to hate, or at least have a low opinion of, the Puritans.
- The evangelicals were not detached from politics, as the Pietists were, but their controlling passion was the conversion of the lost.
- No event marked the new order for Christianity more clearly than the religious explosion, we call the Great Awakening, the first in the long history of American Revivals.

### **Whitefield and Wesley**

- George Whitefield and John Wesley were instrumental in spreading revival and turning many to Christ in America and England, as they preached in churches, jails, inns, on ships and in the open air.
- John had a gift for administration and established the Methodist structure of Societies divided into smaller groups of twelve members, called classes, to share testimonies, prayer and spiritual encouragement.
- It is interesting to note that God greatly blessed and used both these men though George Whitefield was a strong supporter of Calvinism and John Wesley was staunchly Arminian in his theology.
- What do you think that tells us? This would be a good question to discuss later.

### **Isaac Backus**

- As an advocate of religious freedom, Isaac Backus played a significant role in American history.
- He helped formulate and publicize the evangelical position of church and state that was ultimately to prevail throughout America.
- His fundamental assumption was that “God has appointed two different kinds of government in the world which are different in their nature and ought never to be confounded; one is civil the other ecclesiastical.”
- Backus said, “Religion is a voluntary obedience unto God which force cannot promote.”
- Thomas Jefferson agreed, “Coercion of opinion by the state in the interest of uniformity, has served only to make one half the world fools, and the other half hypocrites”

### **The Kingdom of God in America**

- The Kingdom of God would come to America if a majority of the citizens could be persuaded to submit voluntarily to the laws of God.
- Revivals were God’s means to that end.
- The American view of church and state is rooted in the conception of the Church as a spiritual body existing for spiritual purposes and moving along spiritual paths.
- It never occurred to the average American that there is any reason why state churches should exist.
- Compulsion of any kind is contrary to the nature of such a body. It desires no state help. It does not seek for exclusive privileges. Nothing in the new order of the ages was newer than that!

### **Review**

- The Church faced a new challenge because of the loss of “political power.” However, the power of the gospel to change lives came to the forefront in times of revival.
- The pursuit of our own hearts and ways never satisfy the soul. This is important for us to remember.
- Proclaim the gospel – speak the truth of God’s Word. Not just with our voice but especially with our lives and our character.

### **In the Next Session**

- Next time we will be discussing the chapters in The Age of Progress.

## INSTRUCTOR’S NOTES: THE AGE OF REASON

For the rest of this session spend time discussing what your students have learned and written in their summary of each of the four chapters in “The Age of Reason and Revival.”

There are a series of questions or assignments numbered and in bold letters.

Because of time constraints, use your discretion regarding which of these you would like to have your students work on and discuss as a group. You can lead these discussions yourself or assign some of them to individuals or groups and have them make a presentation or lead the discussion. One suggestion would be to have at least one student (or more, depending on your situation) share their summary as you cover each of the chapters in the notes below.

### **Chapter (Section) Summaries and Notes for Discussion**

Church History in Plain Language

by Bruce Shelley

#### **The Age of Reason and Revival – 1648-1789 AD**

The Age of Reformation was marked by debate among Christians about the way of salvation. The Age of Reason was highlighted by the denial of any supernatural religion. Respect for science and human reason replaced the Christian faith as the cornerstone of Western culture. Many Protestants met this crisis of faith, not by arguments, but by the experience of supernatural conversion. Faith was less dogma and more experience. This evangelical Christianity spread rapidly by the power of preaching alone. In addition, many Christians came to see that state support was no longer essential for Christianity’s survival. Modern Christians could accept religious freedom.

#### Chapter 32 - Aiming at The Foundations the Cult of Reason

In America and Europe, questions of dogma seemed unimportant, hardly worth fretting about. What was immensely more important was behavior. Do our beliefs make us more tolerant, more respectful of those who differ with us, more responsive to the true spirit of Jesus?

The Age of the Reformation proved again that faith and power make a potent brew. As long as Christians had access to power, they used it to compel conformity to the truth: Catholic, Lutheran or Reformed. Do our beliefs make us more tolerant, more respectful of those who differ with us, more responsive to the true spirit of Jesus?

#### **The Spirit of the Age of Reason – aka: “The Enlightenment”**

What is referred to in this book as "The Age of Reason," is also known as, "The Enlightenment." This "Enlightenment" or "Age of Reason" was an intellectual revolution and the birth of secularism. (Secularism is the principle of separation of the state, if not the culture, from religious institutions.)

It was a time when "national interests and mental relaxations combined to exclude metaphysics\* from culture."

\*metaphysics = the branch of philosophy that deals with first principles and seeks to explain the nature of being/reality and of the origin/structure of the universe."

The spirit and purpose of the Enlightenment were well express by Baron von Holbach: "Let us endeavor to disperse those clouds of ignorance, those mists of darkness, which impede Man on his journey...which prevent his marching through life with a firm and steady step. Let us try to inspire him...with respect for his own reason – with an inextinguishable love of truth...so that he may learn to know himself...and no longer be duped by an imagination that has been led astray by authority....so that he may learn to base his morals on his own nature, on his own wants, on the real advantage of society...so that he may learn to pursue his true happiness, by promoting that of others...in short, so that he may become a virtuous and rational being, who cannot fail to become happy."

### **The Renaissance – aka: "rebirth"**

How did this spirit take root and grow? Its seeds probably lie in the Reformation era itself; in a movement historians call "The Renaissance." Renaissance means, the rebirth, and refers to the rebirth or recovery of the values of classical Greek and Roman civilization expressed in literature, politics and the arts.

The primary difference between the Reformation and the Renaissance lie in their view of man. The Reformers preached the original sin of man and looked upon the world as "fallen" from God's intended place. The Renaissance had a positive estimate of human nature and the universe itself; that they are good.

In the Age of Reason, the English Civil War, the persecution of the French Huguenots and the Thirty Years War in Germany caused people to cry out against the power of fanatical clerics. Religious prejudice seemed like a far greater danger than atheism. There was also a new faith in law and order – in particularly in "modern science."

Ironically, it was men of faith who set the stage for this hope by their discoveries. Copernicus (1473-1543) showed that the sun, not the earth was the center of our universe. Johann Kepler (1571-1630) revealed that the sun emitted a magnetic force that moves the planets in their courses. Galileo Galilei (1564-1642) made the telescope, examined the planets and proved that the acceleration of falling bodies is constant. Finally, Isaac Newton (1642-1727) united all these discoveries under the law of gravitation. (See chart 77)

### **The Wonder of the World-Machine**

This sudden access to the mysteries of the universe seemed to magnify the role of human reason. This fundamental idea – that man can find the truth using his senses and reason – gave rise to the label: Age of Reason.

Some believers tried to harmonize reason and faith, saying that some truths come by reason and some by revelation, the witness of Scripture. John Locke (1632-1704) in defending Christianity’s rational, reasonable character stripped it of its mystery & emotion – dismissing all but Jesus as Messiah and ethical behavior as righteousness.

**1. There is a need for balance. Is Christianity rational and reasonable? Is there mystery and emotion in Christianity? Are they mutually exclusive?**

### **The Rise of the Radicals (See chart 78)**

What the previous generation accepted in moderation, many in the next generation excused in excess. They felt fewer obligations to the Christian past, so instead of trying to harmonize nature and Scripture they simply set aside revelation; especially in France.

Some radicals gave a nod to God in the form of Deism. They compared God to be like a watchmaker, who put the world together, wound it up and left it on its own to run.

Voltaire (1694-1778) was the most influential propagandist for deism. He popularized Newton’s science, fought for personal liberty, freedom of the press and spread the cult of reason.

Denis Diderot (1713-1784) – edited the 17 volumes of the French Encyclopedia. His article on Christianity professed high regard for the religion of Jesus, but its effect was to stir the reader to a profound contempt for Christianity’s social failures.

**2. Consider Mt 5:13-16. I believe that the Church is often rejected, not because of our failures, but because we refuse to humble**

**ourselves, acknowledge our failures and repent. What keeps us from doing this? Consider Josh 7:19.**

### **Christianity on Trial**

In Paris, a group of these radicals called themselves, “The Philosophes.” They insisted that Christianity was a pernicious plot, designed to turn the earth over to the oppressive powers of a priestly caste. Voltaire liked to refer to Christianity as the “infamous thing.”

Their standards of “truth” ruled out Christian doctrine from the start. When the orthodox tried to reason from their basic premises, the infidels only scoffed because they refused to allow arguments drawn from authority or tradition embodied in the Bible or the church. They simply were not reasonable.

### **The Futility of Empty Confidence**

These attacks upon Christian convictions demanded a vigorous and well-reasoned response from orthodox Christians. Unfortunately, in Catholic countries, like France, the reaction was woefully inadequate. They appealed to secular authorities to censor the dangerous books, but were unfamiliar with the primary issues the scoffers raised.

In England, Bishop Joseph Butler (1692-1752) wrote, *The Analogy of Religion* and virtually ended the debate for thinking people. He did not try to prove the existence of God; nor did he reject reason; he simply challenged reason’s sovereignty, pointing out that it can only offer probabilities.

Deism ultimately collapsed from its own weaknesses; but the negative work of the Age of Reason endured. Men made a deliberate attempt to organize a religiously neutral civilization, where faith had to be confined to the home and the heart.

### Chapter 33 - The Heart and its Reasons Pascal and The Pietists

Even in the Age of Reason the thirst of the soul could not be ignored. An important new movement called Pietism arose as a reminder of that fact. Pietists included some Roman Catholics, but included those from all the Reformation churches.

### **Appeals to “Cheap Grace”**

As confessors, the Jesuits were lenient, very lenient regarding what was mortal sin, venial sin or no sin at all. They were skilled in the art of \*Casuistry. (CASUISTRY - kash’oo is tree - \*Subtle but misleading or false reasoning; often specifically about moral issues.)

**3. Review: “Mental Reservation and Probabilism” on page 336 in textbook.**



Cornelius Jansen (1518-1638) and the Jansenism movement sought to defend Catholicism against the Calvinist challenge and the easy-going ethics of the Jesuits, was to return to the teachings of Augustine and establish a rigorous moral code for the Catholic clergy.

### **Jansenism at Port-Royal**

Antoine Arnauld II assumed the leadership of Jansenism and blasted the Jesuits, without naming them, challenging the idea that frequent confession could compensate for frequent sinning. The Jesuits appealed to the pope that Jansenism was just Calvinism in Catholic garb.

### **Certainty, Joy, Peace**

Blaise Pascal (1623-1662) exposed the Jesuit theology and practices in eighteen “Provincial Letters.” Those letters were condemned by the pope but were read by all educated France. After Pascal’s death, the combined opposition of the Catholic Church and King Louis XIV forced Jansenism out of France; Port Royal was destroyed and the movement took refuge in Holland.

Any religion that becomes the religion of the majority and slowly turns into a social habit tends to grow humdrum and flat, regardless of its original glow of enthusiasm.

The Christian life, in German Lutheranism, was less a personal relationship to Christ and more a matter of membership in the state church.

**4. Review and discuss “Protestant Scholasticism” on page 340 in textbook. What does this tell us about how we should approach Scripture?**

**Note: Every decline regarding the truth and authority of God’s Word, in every denominational group, has occurred because of the teaching of the schools who trained their ministers and congregants.**

Pietism arose as a reaction (***or was it a proper response?***) with a twofold aim. First was the importance of personal faith, a personal experience of God’s grace in the believer’s heart. The second was to shift the center of the Christian life from the state churches, to intimate fellowships of those with a living faith in God.

### **The Soul’s Return to Life**

Philip Spener (1635-1705) was a pastor in Frankfort who was influenced by the English Puritans. He abandoned the prescribed texts (from denominational leaders) and began to preach from the whole Bible calling for repentance and discipleship. For several years nothing earth-shaking happened, then in 1669 he preached from the Sermon on the Mount and the response was sudden and surprising. People were converted and family life changed.

Spener gathered a little company of dedicated believers in his house twice weekly for reading of Scripture and religious conversation. These were scorned as “gatherings of the pious” and “pietism” was born. In his published sermons, “Pious Desires” he recommended the establishment of Bible study groups for spiritual development, a strenuous, rather ascetic, Christian life, greater care for the Christian character of theological students and simpler, more spiritual preaching.

August Herman Francke (1663-1727) was a Pietist and university professor at the University of Halle (in Wittenberg, Germany). While there, he pioneered an array of spiritual and social ministries. These included a school for the poor, an orphanage, a hospital, a Latin school for talented boys, a house for widows, a house for unmarried women, a medical dispensary, a book depot, a printing establishment and a Bible house.

### **The Carpenter and The Count**

Count Nikolaus von Zinsendorf (1700-1760) gave refuge to the Bohemian Brethren led by Christian David, they were also known as “The Moravians.” They established a community called, Herrnhut (The Lord’s Watch) and sought a town inhabited only by Christians with a free and social monasticism without celibacy. They sought to live the Christian life under peculiarly favorable conditions and apart from grosser temptations. Under Nikolaus’ leadership, they became the first large-scale Protestant missionary force.

### **View from The Rearview Mirror**

Pietism made an enormous contribution to Christianity worldwide. They shifted the emphasis from avid controversy to the care of souls and established preaching and pastoral visitation as central concerns of the Protestant ministry. Another major contribution was their enrichment of Christian music, bringing an experiential and

personal flavor to their hymns. The dominate theme of regeneration made Pietism the fountain of all modern revivals.

Evangelicals inherited two important traits from Pietism; emotion as the major response to the mysteries of faith, sometimes to the endangerment of reason and the shift from the traditional state churches to intimate fellowship groups or voluntary association of believers.

**5. Discuss the influence of Pietism on the Church today. Are their practices and ideas that we, perhaps take for granted in our churches?**

**Home Bible studies, small groups, ministries to the disadvantaged and purposeful outreach to name a few.**

#### Chapter 34 - A Brand from The Burning - Wesley and Methodism

##### **The Evangelical Awakening**

The rise of Pietism sparked a dramatic spiritual renewal in Western Christianity called “The Evangelical Awakening.” There were three regions significantly changed; Germany by the rise of Pietism, the British Isles by the preaching of the Methodists and the American Colonies by the impact of the Great Awakening.

Most of the basic beliefs of the evangelicals could be found in Puritanism – but Puritanism was more concerned with politics, trying to create the holy commonwealth, the true Bible society in England and America.

The evangelicals were not detached from politics, as the Pietists were, but their controlling passion was the conversion of the lost. That is what John Wesley lacked in Georgia, but when he found it, all England knew it.

The established church – Anglican, as well as the Nonconformist denominations (Baptist & Congregational) held to: “moderation in all things” as the order of the day.

The Latitudinarians – a large group within the Church of England, led by the Archbishop of Canterbury vigorously denounced “religious enthusiasm,” any emotional expression encouraged by fervent preachers.

### **The Little Giant**

John Wesley (1703-1791) was raised in a home with the combined influences of Anglican and Nonconformist piety (his father was an Anglican minister and his mother was the daughter of a Nonconformist minister).

He learned from the “early Greek fathers” that the goal of the Christian life was “perfection,” a process of disciplined love, rather than a religious state. Wesley’s involvement with the “Holy Club” at Oxford revealed to them the impossibility of self-reform. They practiced all sorts of Christian disciplines and accountability but had no inner peace. “These men convinced me of the absolute impossibility of being half a Christian. I determined, through His grace to be all devoted to God.”

### **The Holy Heart Warming**

His mission trip to Georgia only revealed his spiritual bankruptcy. His acquaintance with the Moravian (Pietist) missionaries increased his desire to learn the secret of their spiritual power.

On May 24, 1738 as he listened to Luther’s preface to *The Epistle To The Romans*, describing the change, which God works in the heart through faith in Christ, he felt his heart strangely warmed. He did trust Christ alone for salvation and received assurance that his sins were forgiven.

Influenced by reading Jonathan Edward’s accounts of conversions in the Great Awakening in America, he joined with George Whitefield (Whit-field) to violate the rules of the Church of England, by preaching outside of the churches, even in open fields. John’s brother Charles, opposed this activity at first.

### **To the Fields, To the World**

Edwards & Whitefield had shown John Wesley that the Word rightly preached bears visible fruit. He was determined to carry the Gospel to the poor, wherever they were willing to listen: “I look upon all the world as my parish; I judge it my bounden duty, to declare unto all that are willing to hear, the glad tidings of salvation.”

He preached in jails, inns, ships and one time in a churchyard on his father’s tombstone. However, in the early years, the crowds were not always friendly.

Wesley stressed Arminian beliefs, which were Jacob Arminius’ (1560-1609) attempt to modify the Calvinism of his time. His primary opposition was to Calvin’s doctrine of predestination. Whitefield was strongly Calvinistic, yet they worked together for the gospel of Christ and God blessed both in their ministry.

**6. What are the implications of the fact that God used both Whitefield and Wesley and blessed their ministries greatly – though they held firmly opposing doctrines? What does their example of friendship and ministry tell us?**

**Here are some suggestions: That God’s blessing is not tied directly or exclusively to either of these two doctrinal positions. (?) That God’s blessing is tied to the Gospel. That we can and should work together with others, if we hold to the core doctrines of Christianity. That it is okay for us to have opposing doctrinal views if we share the core doctrines. That God is gracious!**

### **The Methodist Structure**

Whitefield had no real taste for organization, but Wesley was an administrative genius. John, and his brother Charles, founded Methodist societies which became the center of Christian experience for those who attended.

Societies were divided into smaller groups of 12 or so members called classes, where they would confess their sins to one another, submit to the discipline of their leader, share testimonies and join in prayer and song. They would also donate a penny a week for financial support of the ministry.

The Methodists became a church within the Anglican Church until the establishment of the Methodist Church in America in Baltimore, Maryland in 1784. The Methodists became a separate church in England after Wesley’s death in 1791.

### Chapter 35 - A New Order of the Ages – The Great Awakening – 1725-1760

No event marked the new order for Christianity more clearly than the religious explosion, we call the Great Awakening, the first in the long history of American Revivals. What was the Great Awakening and why was it crucial to the development of Christianity in America?

### **New Order for the Churches**

In the American colonies, the Christian churches were unanimous on one thing, each wanted the complete freedom to proclaim its own view. It became obvious that the only way each group could get such freedom for themselves was to grant it to all the others.

“Voluntarism” was the name given to this idea, because the churches were deprived of state support and were compelled to maintain their mission of preaching and teaching on a voluntary basis. The Great Awakening proved it could work.

### **God’s Will in Society**

The Puritans in Massachusetts aimed to knit together the whole community according to God’s design – through their civil covenant. Their experiment blended belief in a church of the truly converted with the idea of a Christian state. God’s will was embodied in “wholesome laws,” drawn from Scripture and that which advances the public good. It seemed destined to fail almost from the start. (Wheat and tares? Mt 13:24-30, 36-43)

As the zeal of the founders faded over the years, fewer men and women could boldly testify of experienced grace. To keep membership from shrinking drastically, many churches in 1662 had to settle for the “Half-Way Covenant.” The “unawaken” could enjoy partial membership – for political and social purposes; at least until church membership was no longer required to be able to vote. (*Was it a Calvinism that was out of balance with itself that had left people without hope of assurance?*)

The Great Awakening knew both the frown and the smile of God. It restored both the tears of repentance to colonial Christianity and the joy of salvation. For twenty years (1720-1740) the awakening appeared as a series of regional breezes. These breezes moved through the ministry of preachers in many different churches and many different denominations. In December 1734 – Northampton, Massachusetts – Jonathan Edwards records, that “the Spirit of God began extraordinarily to set in. There was a great and earnest concern about the great things of the eternal world that swept the town. The work of conversion was carried on in a most astonishing manner; souls did, as it were, come by flocks to Jesus Christ.”

Believe it or not, there were those who opposed the revival!

### **The Great Revivalist**

George Whitefield added his voice with other faithful preachers throughout all New England. Whitefield left New England after a month, but the regional awakenings were no longer refreshing breezes. They had churned up a spiritual hurricane called the Great Awakening. The faithful proclamation of God’s Word brought results as God’s Spirit brought light and life to multitudes, as well as great changes to churches, families and communities.

### **Advocate of Religious Freedom**

Isaac Backus eventually joined the ranks of faithful preachers in the Great Awakening. He, with a handful of others, formed the 1<sup>st</sup> Baptist Church of Middleborough, Massachusetts. He played a significant role in American history as an advocate for religious freedom; formulating and publicizing the evangelical position of church and state that was ultimately to prevail throughout America.

His fundamental assumption was that "God has appointed two different kinds of government in the world which are different in their nature and ought never to be confounded"; one is civil the other ecclesiastical. "Religion is a voluntary obedience unto God which force cannot promote." The kingdom of God would come to America if a majority of the citizens could be persuaded to submit voluntarily to the laws of God. Revivals were God's means to that end. Whosoever will, may come and whosoever won't may not.

The depth of the Awakening's break with the past lies in the revivalists' message. Concentrating on the individual's need for salvation, they tended to neglect the political and social implications of the gospel. The perspective shifted from a "holy commonwealth" to the American people's struggle for "liberty."

The American view of church and state is rooted in the conception of the Church as a spiritual body, existing for spiritual purposes and moving along spiritual paths. It never occurred to the average American that there is any reason why state churches should exist. Compulsion of any kind is contrary to the nature of such a body. It desires no state help. It does not seek for exclusive privileges. Nothing in the new order of the ages was newer than that!

**7. "A spiritual body, existing for spiritual purposes and moving along spiritual paths." Does this idea preclude or exclude practical involvement in the culture or society? Does this concept exclude churches from proclaiming God's Word outside of churches?**

## **SESSION 10 – THE AGE OF PROGRESS 1789-1914 AD**

At the end of this lesson, you will:

- Know the impact of the French Revolution on the Church and the West.
- Be able to understand how the Protestant Church was able to experience a great era of worldwide expansion.
- Think about and discuss the problems caused by having a fortress mentality rather than an invasion mentality.
- See again the marriage between good works and the good news.
- Be encouraged to make the proper response to the dangers, challenges and opposition that confront the church in every generation and in every culture.

You will KNOW:

- Without the traditional support of the State, many Protestants turned to voluntary societies to minister to the poor and the oppressed, as well as to carry the gospel to foreign lands.

You will BE ABLE TO:

- Articulate how 10,000 people telling a lie does not turn the lie into truth.

You will THINK ABOUT:

- How 10,000 people telling a lie does not turn the lie into truth.

### **In the Last Session**

- You learned the fundamental differences between the Reformation and the Renaissance.
- You gained an understanding of the importance of a humble, reasoned and biblical response, to attacks against Christian teaching and practice.
- You also thought about the impact of the Great Awakening on the United States – the Church and the society.
- You also gained an appreciation of how the Lord was building His Church even in the midst of the Age of Reason.

**Begin video.**



### **The Challenges of the Age of Progress – 1789-1914 AD**

- The French Revolution unleashed new hopes for the common person, just as science raised new questions for traditional Christians.
- Power seemed to be within the reach of the masses.
- For Christianity, this meant that new social unrest was added to the challenge of intellectual doubts.
- How are Christians supposed to meet the needs of the urban masses?
- Was man simply a product of evolutionary forces?
- Christians were seriously divided over ways to face these problems.
- Without the traditional support of the State, many Protestants turned to voluntary societies to minister to the poor and the oppressed, as well as to carry the gospel to foreign lands.

### **The French Revolution**

- The supposedly firm ground of popular belief in the new era was the doctrine of human progress.
- The human race was getting better and growing happier – that was the new creed.
- The democratic gospel of the French Revolution rested upon the glorification of man rather than God.
- The Catholic Church recognized this and struck back at the heresy – as she had always done, trying to use her power. She saw more clearly than did most Protestant churches that the devil, when it is to his advantage, is democratic.
- Ten thousand people telling a lie do not turn the lie into truth.
- This is an important lesson from the Age of Progress for Christians of every generation.
- The Bible clearly teaches us, that the majority is often wrong.
- Inspired by the American Revolution, the sordid facts of what happened on July 14, 1789, were speedily transformed into the heroic deeds of the French Revolution.

### **Liberty, Equality and Fraternity**

- Liberty, equality and fraternity were not only the call of the French Revolution; it was the spirit of the age.
- Augustine had taught, more than 1000 years before, that liberty comes by grace and not grace by liberty.
- Christianity understands that to be properly free man must be in a state of salvation, so throughout these centuries Christians had little enthusiasm for the idea of man’s improper, unchecked freedom. Here is another example of our need to keep balanced.

- The idea that everyone ought to be as free as possible was summed up in the statement: “The liberty of each is limited by the liberty of all.”
- In practice, this meant a constitutional government that guaranteed civil liberties to all, including the freedom to worship according to personal choice.
- This meant resistance to a return to monarchies (including a “pope-king”).
- By 1848 the liberal revolution had triumphed, at least temporarily, in almost every capital in Europe.
- Ironically, the year 1870 not only marked the end of the Papal States after 1,000 years; it also signified the declaration of the supreme authority of the Bishop of Rome and the doctrine of papal infallibility.

### **The Fortress Mentality**

- One of the lessons the Church should learn from our history is the danger of a “fortress mentality.”
- Fortresses have a decided disadvantage.
- They grow stuff. They allow no enlargement of thinking and after a time you begin to imagine that the only world of any importance lies within the walls.
- Luther’s hymn is entitled: “A Mighty Fortress Is Our God,” not “A Mighty Fortress is the Church.” That is not a Biblical picture of the Church.

### **Into the World**

- The evangelical movement in England, sparked by Whitefield and the Wesleys, moved the Church to fulfill our two-fold commission.
- God has sent His people INTO the world to proclaim salvation and to serve the needy.
- God has called his own FROM the world to worship and learn of Him.
- Mission without worship can produce empty service, just as worship without mission can lead to careless religion.

### **Voluntary Religious Societies**

- Because of their freedom, Christians could form a variety of religious societies that were not churches in the traditional sense but involved Christians from various churches working together for some specific objective.
- Some Evangelicals were from “High Churches” with an emphasis on sacraments and the styles of rituals.
- Others were from “Low Churches” who considered the preaching of the gospel as most important.
- Each was loyal to their church but willing to work together for the fulfillment of the twofold commission.

- The Clapham Community, with William Wilberforce as their leader, is an example of one of these groups that tackled many issues by setting up organizations to work on a variety of causes. Among them were:
  - The Church Missionary Society.
  - The British and Foreign Bible Society.
  - The Society for Bettering the Condition of the Poor.
  - The Society for the Reformation of Prison Discipline.
  - Their most famous effort was the elimination of slavery and the slave trade in England and its territories.

### **The Era of Christian Expansion**

- At the beginning of the nineteenth century, Protestant Christianity scarcely existed outside of Europe and America, but the century proved to be a great era of Christian expansion.
- The Church Historian, Kenneth Scott Latourette said, “Never had any other set of ideas, religious or secular, been propagated over so wide an area by so many professional agents maintained by the unconstrained donations of so many millions of individuals.”
- William Carey was a most unlikely candidate to be considered “The Father of Modern Missions.”
- However, he was typical of those God chooses to accomplish His work, “so that no man may boast before God.” (1 Corinthians 1:29)
- He firmly believed that the foreign missionary can never make more than a small contribution to the accomplishment of the work to be done, and that therefore the development of the local ministry (the Church) is the first and greatest of all missionary considerations.
- Above all, he saw that Christianity must be firmly rooted in the culture and traditions of the land in which it is planted.
- Carey is included with a long list of missionary pioneers who gave their lives to cut the path for others to follow.
- This new passion to preach the gospel to the “heathen” sprang from those portions of Protestantism deeply influenced by the eighteenth-century evangelical revivals in England and America; which revolutionized preaching and its objectives.
- Christianity in this era, especially Protestant Christianity, had several characteristics that highlighted its expansion.
- First, the worldwide expansion usually came by choice not by compulsion. They advanced without state support or control and only by the power of persuasion.
- Second, the support for this movement came from the wealth and the talents of ordinary Protestants.

- Third, there was a wide variety of humanitarian ministries accompanying the widespread preaching of the gospel. Mission agencies established schools, hospitals and orphanages along with churches.

### **Counter Attack**

- It is not surprising to see a counter-attack from the enemy as the Church advanced.
- In America, the Civil War and the moral issue of slavery along with the political issue of states' rights consumed lives, wealth and energy.
- Before the nation could get back on its feet, Charles Darwin's *The Origin of the Species* challenged the Church and the accuracy of the Bible.
- On a broader scale, the Church in England and America had to face a direct assault on the Scriptures in the form of higher criticism of the Bible, much of it from Germany.
- Higher criticism of the Bible involves the use of scientific techniques of literary criticism to establish the sources of the books of the Bible. Mostly its purpose was to discredit any idea supernatural revelation.
- Friedrich Schleiermacher and Albert Ritschl were the two most influential representatives for Liberalism – we will see them too often in our study of the History of Christian Doctrine.
- Then there was a cultural shift of increasing industrialization and a rush to the cities.
- Small towns became big cities almost overnight and the rural communities lost many of their young people and their workforce.

### **The Industrial Revolution**

- With the Industrial Revolution, there was a rising tide of problems related to the crowding of cities, the influx of immigrants and the abuse of workers.
- Into this sea of misery two individuals waded – Karl Marx and William Booth. Marx offered a political solution (Communism) and Booth offered a spiritual solution (The Salvation Army) with a very practical application of compassion and help.
- It is always possible to concentrate on the next life so much that Christians appear insensitive to the pain of the present.
- The various Christian movements for social concerns always faced the danger of losing the Church's true mission.

- However, Christians cannot show their concern for people’s eternal destiny unless they also demonstrate their concern for people’s earthly needs.
- I am sure you have heard the saying: “People do not care how much you know, until they know how much you care.”
- May we be faithful to present the love of God in our words and in our deeds.

### **Review**

- The Church faced another set of new challenges in the Age of Progress:
  - The imbalance of the spirit of the French Revolution.
  - The temptation to retreat to our fortresses and bar the gates.
  - The challenge to fulfill the Great Commission and take the Gospel message and the demonstration of God’s love to the whole world.

### **In the Next Session**

- We will discuss the seven chapters in The Age of Ideologies and the Age of Global Expansion and Relocation.

## INSTRUCTOR’S NOTES: THE AGE OF PROGRESS

For the rest of this session, have your student discuss what they have learned and written in their summary of each of the six chapters in “The Age of Progress.”

There are a series of questions or assignments numbered and in bold letters.

Because of time constraints, use your discretion regarding which of these you would like to have your students work on and discuss as a group. You can lead these discussions yourself or assign some of them to individuals or groups and have them make a presentation or lead the discussion. One suggestion would be to have at least one student (or more, depending on your situation) share their summary as you cover each of the chapters in the notes below.

### **Chapter (Section) Summaries and Notes for Discussion**

Church History in Plain Language

by Bruce Shelley

#### **The Age of Progress – 1789-1914 AD**

Christians saw new social unrest added to the intellectual challenges stemming from the rise of modern science. The French Revolution unleashed new hopes for the common man. Power seemed to be within the reach of the masses. How are Christians supposed to meet the needs of the urban masses? Was man simply a product of evolutionary forces? Christians were seriously divided over ways to face these problems. Without the traditional support of the State, many Protestants turned to voluntary societies to minister to the poor and the oppressed, as well as to carry the gospel to foreign lands.

#### Chapter 36 - The Restoration of Fortresses – Catholicism in The Age of Progress

##### **Birth of a New Age**

The sordid facts of what happened on July 14, 1789, were speedily transformed into heroic deeds of the French Revolution.

The firm ground of popular belief in the new era was the doctrine of human progress. The human race was getting better and growing happier. That was the new creed. The democratic gospel of the French Revolution, “Liberty, Equality and Fraternity,” rested upon the glorification of man rather than God.

Liberty = liberalism (laissez faire – “less-aye-fair”- the theory or system of government that upholds the autonomous character of the economic order, believing that government should intervene as little as possible in the direction of economic affairs. It is also the practice or doctrine of noninterference in the affairs of others, especially with reference to individual conduct or freedom of action.) The middle

class wanted the right to vote and control representative government, freedom to build factories and amass wealth without government interference.

- Equality – stood for the rights of men irrespective of their family background or their financial standing.
- Fraternity – represented a powerful sense of brotherhood and nationalism.

The Catholic Church recognized this and struck back at the heresy – as she had always done. She saw more clearly than did most Protestant churches that the devil, when it is to his advantage, is democratic.

Ten thousand people telling a lie do not turn the lie into truth. That is an important lesson from the Age of Progress for Christians of every generation. The Bible clearly teaches us, that the majority is often wrong. (Numbers 13:25-14:4)

Alexis de Tocqueville observed that the danger in democracy is the tyranny of the majority. The rule of the majority can mean oppression of the minority and control by erratic public moods, rather than reasoned leadership.

The middle class had wealth without responsibility, intelligence without authority and ability without recognition. Drastic change was simply a matter of time – less time than anyone imagined.

### **The Revolutionary Fever**

The American Revolution inspired the radicals in Europe. The Third Estate (the common people) formed their own National Assembly and eventually passed into law the Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen.”

In the 10 years before the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, France formed a republic, executed a king, established an effective (though faction-ridden) revolutionary regime, effectively drove the Catholic Church out of France; or at least broke its power and passed through a period of confusion that ended with General Napoleon Bonaparte’s accession to power.

### **Catholicism Versus Liberalism**

Augustine’s axiom: liberty comes by grace and not grace by liberty (Gal 5:1). Christianity believed that to be properly free man must be in a state of salvation, so throughout these centuries Christians had little enthusiasm for the idea of man’s improper freedom, freedom in a political sense.

Liberalism’s idea was that everyone ought to be as free as possible was summed up in the statement: “The liberty of each is limited by the like liberty of all.” In practice, this meant a constitutional government that guaranteed civil liberties to all, including the freedom to worship according to personal choice. This meant resistance to a return to monarchies (including a “pope-king”).

**1. Read and discuss “Liberty in an Ancient Sense” on pages 374-375. How is this ancient sense of liberty in conflict with Christianity and how is it in harmony with Biblical teaching?**

**True liberty would be to live according to our original creation in the image of God, restored in Christ. Today many people want to be free to, in essence, “wallow in the mud” (sin), to live without any restraint either legal, social or religious. Freedom without consequences.**

The Church of Rome responded by erecting a medieval fortress. Throughout the 19<sup>th</sup> Century, the popes simply continued to defend the past and lost touch with the nice movements of their own time. None of them understood the new world introduced by the French Revolution. They did not figure out how to combat it or convert it. 1848 was an important year – when liberal revolution temporarily triumphed in almost every capital in Europe. September 20, 1870 marked the end of the Papal States after 1000 years. The pope never regained sovereignty until Benito Mussolini concluded the Lateran Treaty in February 1929; and then it was only in the small Vatican State (City).

**The Infallibility of the Pope**

The fortress they were building included officially establishing as dogma, things that were commonly held but not officially sanctioned.

December 8, 1854, Pius IX declared as dogma the traditional belief that Mary had been conceived without original sin. “It is a divinely revealed truth of faith that Mary in the first moment of her conception was freed by special grace from the stain of original sin in view of the merits of Christ.” This was not a declaration by a council, but an *ex cathedra* (from the chair) definition by the pope.

December 1864, Pius IX, sent an encyclical (Papal Letter) that included *The Syllabus of Errors* detailing a list of 80 evils in modern society. Ending with the denial that “the Roman pontiff can and ought to reconcile himself and reach agreement with progress, liberalism and modern civilization.”



1870 not only marked the end of the earthly rule of the pope; it also signifies the declaration of the supreme authority of the Bishop of Rome and the doctrine of papal infallibility.

Fortresses have a decided disadvantage. They grow stuff. They allow no enlargement of thinking and after a time you begin to imagine that the only world of any importance lies within the walls. The church was never meant to be, nor is it ever pictured as a fortress.

**2. Is there a sense in which the Church, we the followers of Christ, must reconcile ourselves to reality and reach agreement with modern civilization? What are the dangers we face in becoming more “tolerant” (forbearing) and what dangers do we face by not being more “tolerant”? Consider: Martin Luther wrote: “A Mighty Fortress is our God” not, “A Mighty Fortress is the church.” Also 2 Timothy 2:22-26.**

#### Chapter 37 - A New Social Frontier

Two outstanding Christian movements in 19<sup>th</sup> century England helped millions of believers adjust to the pace of change in the culture and secured a place of respect for them in Christian history: The Clapham Sect of Evangelicals and The Oxford Movement of Anglican high-churchmen.

The designation, High Church, pertains to the view or practice in the Anglican Church that emphasizes the Catholic tradition, especially in adherence to sacraments, rituals, and obedience to church authority. The designation, Low Church, pertains to the view or practice in the Anglican Church that emphasizes evangelicalism and lays little stress on the sacraments, church rituals, and church authority.

**3. Take note of the definitions of “High Church” and “Low Church” above. Though they are connected with the Anglican Church originally, they are often used, in a general sense, to describe other denominations or churches. How would you describe your church? High or Low? Do you have certain ceremonies, traditions or rituals that must be done in your services?**

**I would hope the preaching of God’s Word is one of them! However, I am certain that we all have a certain set of expectations of what will happen at church – this is not all bad!**

## **Evangelicals in the World**

The two-fold commission to the Church is that God has sent His people INTO the world to proclaim salvation and to serve the needy and He has called his own FROM the world to worship and learn of Him.

Mission without worship can produce empty service, just as worship without mission can lead to careless religion.

### **4. Discuss the maintaining of balance in our mission with our worship, our devotion with our service. How easy is it to focus on one and neglect the other? How do we confuse the two? Should we consider them two separate issues?**

Increasing liberties allowed Christians to form a host of religious societies to minister to English life in some vital way or to spread the gospel overseas. They were not churches in the traditional sense. They were groups of individual Christians working for some specific objective such as, the distribution of Bibles or the relief of the poor.

The greatest power in English religious life was the evangelical movement – sparked by Wesley & Whitefield. Evangelicals of the Church of England were thoroughly loyal to their church and approved of its episcopal government; but were willing to work with Nonconformist ministers and churches.

### **The Clapham Community**

The Clapham Community was not a sect but more like a closely-knit family. Their spiritual guide was the minister of the parish church, John Venn and they often met for Bible study, conversation and prayer. However, the unquestioned leader was William Wilberforce (1759-1833) – a parliamentary statesman.

### **Evangelicals and Social Issues**

The Clapham Community adopted a host of evangelical causes and organized a society for each one. Several examples would include The Church Missionary Society (1799), The British & Foreign Bible Society (1804), The Society for Bettering the Condition of the Poor (1796), and The Society for the Reformation of Prison Discipline. However, their most significant and greatest labor centered on the campaign against slavery within the British Empire. This long battle was finally won just 4 days before Wilberforce died.

The Oxford Movement, like the Clapham Community, was more a movement of the heart than of the land. They were deeply troubled by the direction of English Society. They saw some governmental reforms as attacks upon the Church of England and they were determined to resist the intrusions of the world.

Unlike the Clapham Community, the Oxford Movement responded with more of a fortress mentality, though they did seek to reach out to the culture by printing all sorts of religious pamphlets. They called them “Tracts for the Times.” They sought to affirm that the authority of the Church of England did not rest upon the authority from the state. Their main focus was their belief in “one holy, catholic (world-wide) and apostolic Church.” Some of their historical ideas were more fantasy than reality (the “good old days”) but the bottom line for them was their unity with the catholic (world-wide) tradition in Eastern Orthodoxy and Roman Catholicism. However, they did refuse to accept the supremacy of patriarch or pope.

#### Chapter 38 - To Earth’s Remotest People – Protestant Missions

At the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century, Protestant Christianity scarcely existed outside of Europe and America. However, the 19<sup>th</sup> Century was the era of the greatest expansion of Christianity.

“Never had any other set of ideas, religious or secular, been propagated over so wide an area by so many professional agents maintained by the unconstrained donations of so many millions of individuals.” Kenneth Scott Latourette

How do we explain this sudden explosion of Protestant energy aimed at winning the world for Christ?

#### **The Pioneer in Modern Missions**

William Carey (1761-1834) thought in terms of the evangelization of whole countries. He believed that the foreign missionary can never make more than a small contribution to the accomplishment of the work that has to be done, and that therefore the development of the local ministry (church) is the first and greatest of all missionary considerations. Above all, he saw that Christianity must be firmly rooted in the culture and traditions of the land in which it is planted.

**5. Why should we agree with William Carey’s philosophy, that the development of the local ministry (church) is the first and greatest of all missionary considerations? What other things do we sometimes make the priority? How do we reconcile this idea (of the local church as the priority) with the need to learn the language and culture, the need to translate the Bible and the need to provide for other needs?**

William Carey was converted in 1779 – through a fellow shoemaker and was baptized as a believer in 1783. He became the pastor of the Moulton Baptist Chapel, supporting his family by teaching and shoemaking.

He and fellow pastor, Andrew Fuller resisted the prevailing Calvinistic idea among Baptists that preaching should avoid application to the hearers and appeals to conversion, lest the preacher interfere somehow in God’s election of His chosen people.

They believed that if it is the duty of all men to repent and believe the gospel, (Acts 17:30) then it is also the duty of those entrusted with the gospel to carry it to the whole world.

In 1792 Caret wrote, *An Enquiry into the Obligation of Christians to Use Means for the Conversion of the Heathen*. This dealt with the five objections raised against missions to “heathen” lands. The objections were:

- Their distance
- Their barbarism
- The danger incurred
- The difficulties of support
- The unintelligible languages

He pointed out that the same obstacles had not prevented the merchants from going to distant shores. “It only requires that we should have as much (*love for our Savior and*) love to the souls of our fellow-creatures, and fellow sinners, as they have for the profits arising from a few otter skins, and all these difficulties could be easily surmounted.”

**6. Discuss the objections raised against missions to heathen lands, as well as William Carey’s response. How does this challenge relate to us? How does it relate to “home” missions, as well as “foreign” missions?**

October 1792 – Carey, Fuller and eleven Baptist colleagues formed the Baptist Missionary Society, and within a year Carey and his family were on their way to India. The British East India Company and many of their representatives were not enthusiastic about missions. They were interested in profits and maintaining their free and easy lives, as well as their sense of racial superiority. They protested:

“(We consider) The sending out of missionaries into our Eastern possessions to be the maddest, most extravagant, most costly, most indefensible project which has ever been suggested by a moonstruck fanatic. Such a scheme is pernicious, imprudent, useless, harmful, dangerous, profitless, fantastic.” (Not meant in a good way).

Carey, Joshua Marshman, William Ward and their families labored for 25 years to organize a growing network of mission stations in India. They labored to understand all the intricacies of Hindu thought, this being one of the realms that are to be taken captive and brought into subjection to Christ. By 1824, Carey had supervised six complete and twenty-four partial translations of the Bible as well as publishing several grammars, dictionaries and translations of Eastern books.

**The Contagion of Missionary Service**

The example of these men and their families prove to be contagious and stirred a multitude of others to follow in their example. In a large part, this passion to preach the gospel to the “heathen” sprang from the portions of Protestantism deeply influenced by the 18<sup>th</sup> Century evangelical revivals in England and America which revolutionized preaching and its objectives.

Two emphases led to the new Protestant world vision. The first was Evangelical, the belief that men are lost without faith in Christ and that the Lord commands believers in every age to make salvation known in the entire world. The second was Prophetic, the belief that the knowledge of the Lord would fill the earth and was preparation for the coming reign of Christ upon the earth, “millennialism.”

### **Livingstone in Africa**

David Livingstone arrived in South Africa in 1841 and served there for ten years but was drawn on by “the smoke of a thousand villages” that had never seen a missionary. His first journey, that made him famous, was through the jungles to the west coast in Angola and then, unwilling to desert the African carriers who had accompanied him – right across the continent to Quelimane (a seaport in Mozambique) on the east coast.

He sought to bring legitimate commerce (economic profit) to Africa along with Christianity, in order to help stamp out the slave trade as a means of obtaining wealth for Africans.

### **Creation of the Voluntary Society**

It became clear to British and American Christians that none of the traditional forms of church government would enable the church to embark on a world mission. Supporters of global evangelism were driven to find another form of cooperation. The voluntary society was created to meet a need rather than for theological reasons, but in effect it undermined the established forms of church government. They also made interdenominational action possible.

These Societies were based in various countries and focused on specific countries for outreach. One of the big issues that had to be addressed in this new method was: “What is the church supposed to look like?” To many, Christianity, in its Western form was Christianity. Too often what was exported was Western (British or American) culture, more than biblical mandates.

The London Missionary Society (1795) had as its fundamental principle: that our design is not to send Presbyterianism, Independency, Episcopacy or any other form of church government...but the glorious gospel of the blessed God to the heathen.

## **7. Question: How much of our Christianity is cultural?**

### **The Marks of Modern Christianity**

Several key characteristics mark the expansion of modern Christianity. They would be that the worldwide expansion usually came by voluntarism not by compulsion, that the missionary movement tapped the wealth and talents of rank and file Protestants and that a wide variety of humanitarian ministries accompanied the widespread preaching of the gospel.

### Chapter 39 - The Destiny of a Nation – A Christian America

The vision of a Christian America was a dominant theme in 19<sup>th</sup> Century American Protestantism. The missionary zeal for foreign lands applied to their own.

The call was that Christians should seize the opportunity to shape the religious and political destiny of the nation. By the preaching of the gospel, the distribution of Bibles, the planting of churches, the establishing of schools, and the reform of American morals. A free society needed just laws, and in a democracy just laws required popular support informed by Christianity.

#### **The Challenge of the American West**

At the birth of the United States of America, only five or ten percent of the American people were church members. By mid-century (1800s) half of the American people were west of the Appalachians. Evangelicals had two instruments available, the voluntary society and revival.

The voluntary society was used to exert influence upon public opinion, provide support for far-reaching missionary and educational activities and to spread reform ideals in the youthful nation.

God provided, in the Second Great Awakening (1790-1820) the next generation with skilled and dedicated leaders to regain the East and win the West.

#### **The Inflammable James McGready**

July 1800 James McGready had his Pentecost and changed the course of American history, through “camp-meetings” (revivals).

By 1830 – Alexis de Tocqueville: “There is no country in the world in which the Christian religion retains a greater influence over the souls of men.”

The Lutherans & Presbyterians felt that revivals slighted sound doctrine. Roman Catholics and Episcopalians considered them emotional eruptions, not true worship.

#### **Christianity Among the Slaves**

At first, some owners strongly opposed teaching the Scriptures to the Negro. They feared that the slave might find in the Bible ideas of human equality that could incite him to rebellion. However, opposition declined as masters became convinced that the New Testament itself offered arguments in support of slavery.

During the first three decades of the nineteenth century the antislavery movement was stronger in the South than in the North. Evangelical sentiment against slavery in

the North can be traced to the influence of the preaching of Charles G. Finney, the writings of Theodore Weld and Lyman Beecher’s daughter, Harriet Beecher Stowe in *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*.

### **Cultural Shocks for Evangelical America**

The counter-offensive against the Church, as it reached throughout the land, came in three shock waves. The First Shock was Charles Darwin’s *The Origin of Species*. If Darwin is right, how could the Bible be true? The second Shock was the increasing industrialization of American society and the rush to the cities. The Third Shock was the Higher Criticism of the Bible.

Taken together these were a part of the general shift in Western Culture from Christian to secular forms of thought and behavior. Christians disagreed about what actions they should take to meet the new challenges. “Public Protestants” chose to embrace the change as blessings sent from God and focus on Social Christianity, a Social Gospel and Social Service. However, “Private Protestants” chose to resist the changes as threats to the biblical message. Using the term evangelical, they stressed the need for individual salvation. The major urban revivalist during the generation following the Civil War was Dwight L. Moody.

### Chapter 40 - A Bridge for “Intelligent” Moderns – Protestant Liberalism

Lyman Abbott had been an influential minister in the 1890’s. Long before his 85<sup>th</sup> birthday in 1920, he had ceased to think of God as an “omnipresent policeman” and man as a “scared culprit.” The Western world had undergone too many changes and adopted too many ideas in the last quarter of the nineteenth century.

### **The Aims of Protestant Liberalism**

Liberalism tries to make their faith meaningful in a new world of thought without distorting or destroying the gospel. Yet, in Liberalism, we have a God without wrath, who brought men without sin, into a kingdom without judgment, through the ministrations of a Christ without a cross.

Evangelical Liberalism and Modernistic Liberalism are like two ends of a suspension bridge; with the footing of one tower planted upon “modern thought” and the foundation of the other rests on “Christian experience.” The ground around both towers is shifting soil.

**8. Which is the safer side? It may seem like a dumb question, but it needs to be asked and it needs to be answered.**



Two technical theological terms are crucial. The first is “Immanence” which carries the idea of God dwelling in the world and working through nature. Extreme immanence is pantheism, which says that God is the world and the world is God. The second is “Transcendence” which implies the reality of God apart from the world. Extreme transcendence is found in the faith of the deists, for whom God is as separate from the world as a watchmaker from his watch.

### **Enter Charles Darwin (1809-1882)**

Too many wrestled with Charles Darwin’s books – *The Origin of Species*, and *Descent of Man* trying to reconcile Biblical teachings with this new science. Liberals eventually sought to blend the Bible’s teachings, rejecting what did not agree with Darwin’s theories.

Biblical criticism comes in several forms. Lower criticism deals with problems of the text and tries to weigh the merits of many manuscripts of the Bible to find the earliest and most reliable text of Scripture. While Higher Criticism is not primarily interested in the accuracy of the text, it is interested in the meaning of the words and seeking to read between the lines to discover what really happened. They question who wrote it, when and what were their motives.

### **The Impact of Biblical Criticism**

More important than any of the details of biblical criticism was the fact that criticism threw doubt upon the belief the Bible is an infallible authority for Christian faith and practice.

Liberals welcomed higher criticism because they recognized a radically different view of the Bible was necessary for “intelligent moderns.” When liberals could no longer rest in the traditional doctrines of orthodoxy, which they felt science and history had destroyed, they found their needed assurance in the other pillar of their bridge: Christian Experience.

### **Influential Spokesmen for Liberalism**

Friedrich Schleiermacher (1768-1834) was a product of a pious Moravian home. He debated that the heart of religion was and always had been feeling, not rational proofs. He is considered the father of modern theology because he shifted the basis of the Christian faith from the Bible to religious experience.

Albert Ritschl (1822-1889) focused religious experience upon the historical Jesus. He maintained that the divinity of Jesus does not rest on the “questionable” things in the Bible, it rests on the fact that He is the source of a value-creating movement.

### **An Example of Liberal Change**

The New Theology was a protest in the interests of modern thought against the old theology of evangelical Puritanism (aka: New England Theology). Prior to 1880 most New England ministers held to the sovereignty of God, the depravity of mankind, the atonement of Jesus Christ, the ground of man’s forgiveness of sin; to the Holy Spirit as essential to conversion; and to the eternal separation of the saved and lost in heaven or hell.

After 1880, every one of these beliefs came under heated fire from the Liberals.

### Chapter 41 - Nothing to Lose but Chains – The Social Crisis

The Industrial Revolution is a term historians use for the rapid changes in European and American societies in the nineteenth century. Even in the so-called Christian West, few people see any connection between their religion and their employment.

### **The New World of Factories**

With the invention of the steam engine by James Watt (1736-1819) there was a breakthrough in productivity that helped drive the Industrial Revolution.

Life changed and relatively quickly. Gone was the rural or small-town life and pace. Working and living conditions in the city were harsh.

The Industrial Revolution greatly increased the wealth of mankind, but brought a host of evils for the workers massed together in the ever-expanding factories of European and American cities.

Men inside and outside the churches came to think of Christianity in narrower and narrower terms. Almost everything not obviously spiritual was left free from criticism. Thus, a growing body of industrial workers regarded the churches and the Christian message as largely irrelevant or powerless to speak to the difficulties they suffered in the age of the machine.

**9. Everything not obviously spiritual was left free from criticism, which means anything obviously spiritual was open to criticism. Why would that be the case? Because it wasn’t practical? It was not objective truth? It could not be “proven”? Are religious ideas the only ideas that should be open to criticism, questioned? Is this still true in our culture today?**

### **Marx, the Prophet of the New Age**

Into this era, Karl Marx (1818-1883) was born in the Rhineland of German-Jewish parents who had been converted to Christianity. He and his life-long friend, Friedrich Engels (1820-1895) published the famous *Communist Manifesto* in January 1848 and *Das Kapital* (1867-1894) which is said to be one of the most influential books of modern times. They were attempting to answer the great social ills associated with factories, oppressed workers, crowded living conditions and economic inequity.

After the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, an increasing number of Christians worked zealously for improved conditions for laborers, through four avenues. They challenged the laissez faire philosophy in the name of Christian principles. They established Christian institutions to relieve the suffering of the poor and powerless. They supported the formation of labor unions and they appealed to the state for legislation aimed at the improvement of working conditions.

### **Laboring Men in England**

Nonconformists (such as the Methodists) were the main support for the laboring men in England, as well as the leaders in the temperance crusade and the founding of orphanages.

### **Onward, Christian Soldiers!**

William Booth (1829-1912) left the Methodist ministry to work with London’s poor. He preached in London’s streets in 1864 and met with phenomenal success. Within eleven years, he had thirty-two stations promoting evangelism and social service among London’s destitute.

No such ministry came from the Church of England. It was so wed to the past that it had great difficulty adjusting to the social crisis.

**10. Are we in danger of being “so wed to the past” that we are unable to minister in the midst of a social crisis? Do we have answers that are relevant, biblical and compassionate? What issues should we as the Church be addressing?**

### **Social Gospel in America**

The Liberals formed no organizations but chose to work through established denominations and political agencies.

The primary sign of change came in 1908 with the formation of The Federal Council of Churches. They adopted a “Social Creed of the Churches” that called for many benefits later American workers considered basics, such as, occupational safety, old age security, minimum wage and the rights of arbitration.

It was always possible to concentrate on the next life so much that Christians appeared insensitive to the pain of the present. The various Christian movements for social concerns always faced the danger of losing the church’s true mission. However, Christians cannot show their concern for people’s eternal destiny unless they also demonstrate their concern for people’s earthly needs. People do not care how much we know, until they know how much we care. If we are truly “heavenly minded” we will most certainly do earthly good. (Matthew 5:16)

## **SESSION 11 – AGE OF IDEOLOGIES & GLOBAL EXPANSION 1900S ON**

After this session, you will:

- Know the distinctions and connections between Fundamentalists, Conventional Protestants, and Pentecostals-Charismatics.
- Be able to understand the challenges the church has faced over the past century and continues to face today.
- Think about and discuss the Lord’s sovereign work in bringing many to faith in Christ
- Be encouraged by the growth of Christianity in the Global South and East.

You will KNOW:

- That the 20th century brought with it great political and military struggles.

You will BE ABLE TO:

- Understand the challenges the Church has face.

You will THINK ABOUT:

- By the 20th century, more than 200 denominations crowded the landscape in the United States alone

### **In the Last Session**

- You learned the impact of the French Revolution on the Church and the West.
- You gained an understanding of how the Protestant Church was able to experience a great era of worldwide expansion.
- You also were able to think about and discuss the problems caused by having a fortress mentality rather than an invasion mentality.

### **Begin video.**

### **The Age of Ideologies & Global Expansion**

- The 20th century brought great political and military struggles involving:
  - Imperialism
  - Communism
  - Nazism
  - Democracy
- The Church faced dangers from:
  - Persecution
  - Compromise
  - Secularization
- Protestants cautiously reached out to each other in movements of unity.
- Roman Catholics struggled to update their Church.

- In addition, the “new” Christianity in the Third World and Global South emerged and expanded at an astounding rate.
- The Global South describes the countries in the Southern Hemisphere. Everything from the equator south.
- More people have become Christians in the last one hundred years than at any other time.
- The great missionary push of the late 1800’s and early 1900’s has contributed to this explosive growth largely south of the Equator.
- Yet the new growth seems to have its own distinctive character and Spirit-given initiative.

### **“Post-Christian North America”**

- Ironically, one-time strongholds of Christian mission in Europe and North America are seeing dormancy and decline.
- History will record if the new centers of Christianity in the Global South and beyond can maintain a faithful Christian character and give witness to this unprecedented work of the Spirit.
- Time will tell if signs of Spiritual stirring will revive a faithful witness in the West.
- Without the Spirit’s stirring the label “post-Christian” will become more fitting with time.

### **The 20th Century**

- The 20th Century began with revival from Wales to South Africa, to China, to Korea and to North America.
- The First World War arrived and dampened the fire somewhat.
- According to President Woodrow Wilson, this was to be the war to end all wars and make the world safe for democracy.
- However, by the wars end, the Russian war effort had collapsed, along with its government and the Paris Peace Conference became an exercise in vindictiveness, effectively crippling Germany and setting the stage for the rise of Nazism.
- In Germany, the post-war Protestant clergy were monarchists, with no sympathy for socialism or democracy.
- However, the people were through with the monarchy and ready for someone to make Germany great again.
- The industrial workers came to hate a socially and politically reactionary church.

### **The Nazis Rise to Power**

- As the Nazi’s rose to power, there was no organized campaign of resistance, by any of the major Church movements in Germany. Hitler courted Christian support by emphasizing national pride and pretending to favor the Churches’ role in the state.
- He blamed the Jews for destroying culture through capitalism, Marxism and even the Christian faith:
  - “The heaviest blow that ever-struck humanity was the coming of Christianity. Bolshevism is Christianity’s illegitimate child. Both are inventions of the Jew.”
  - It became clear that the dedicated Christian’s place in the Nazi world was no more secure than that of the Jew.

### **The Communist Revolution**

- Meanwhile, the Communist Revolution in Russia was the other side of the totalitarian coin, Nazism being the right-wing version.
- Communism being the left-wing version.
- Marxism viewed institutional religion (the Church) as a reactionary social force.
- That only impedes progress toward the classless society.
- It is something that must be smashed.
- The Russian Orthodox Church replied with defiance, declaring war on the state.
- In the first six years of the revolution, the State killed twenty-eight bishops and over one thousand priests.

### **The Second World War**

- During the Second World War, Stalin realized the value of the Church’s contribution to public morale and granted them a measure of freedom to minister, primarily to women and children.
- Resistance to Hitler, by the German churches, was amazingly meager.
- They were almost exclusively concerned with individualistic personal faith.
- Traditional submission to the state.
- A conservative outlook that rejected all left-wing proposals for social and political reform.
- This enabled them to accept the Nazis’ claim to be the only alternative to Communism.

- Overall, World War II had a devastating impact on Christianity, both physically and morally.
- Thousands of churches were destroyed.
- Thousands of clergymen killed.
- Thousands of faithful believers persecuted or uprooted from their homes.

### **The Evangelical Dilemma**

- The evangelical dilemma, in the age of ideologies, revolved around the fact that they offered millions of people a consoling, personal faith in the face of apocalyptic fears.
- But could they also lead America in another great awakening of social ideals?
- Evangelicals represented no single approach to America’s problems.
- The movement included:
  - Fundamentalists
  - Pentecostals
  - Charismatics
  - Conventional Conservative Protestants
- Many conservative Christians expressed dissatisfaction with the drift of fundamentalism between the two world wars.
- Most had no criticism of the doctrines of the movement, but they felt it had stumbled into the mire of anger, arrogance, negativity, legalism and especially a failure to apply basic Christian truths to crucial problems confronting modern man.
- In the 16th century, only four major divisions separated the churches of the Reformation:
  - Lutheran
  - Reformed
  - Anabaptist
  - Anglican
- By the 20th century, more than 200 denominations crowded the landscape in the United States alone.
- The Church had moved further and further away from centralization.

### **The Ecumenical Movement**

- However, there was a movement in the 20th century toward a cooperative merger in unity and action.
- The biggest barrier to this Ecumenical movement was the issue of truth and doctrine.



### **The Catholic Renewal**

- The Catholic Church also went through quite a change in the 20th Century with Vatican Council II.
- It was the first council not called to combat heresy, pronounce new dogmas or marshal the Church against hostile forces.
- Its purpose would be to “bring the Church up-to-date.” It was to be a pastoral council, not a doctrinal one.
- They introduced new liturgy, using the language of the people. They discussed but did not fully answer the question:
- Were some truths of the faith found only in tradition or were all truths of the faith found in Scripture?
- The final session renewed the debate on freedom of religion. By accepting the decree, Roman Catholicism solemnly renounced in principle any use of external force against the voice of conscience; marking a radical break with a fifteen-hundred-year-old practice.
- Amid this upheaval, the Catholic Church experienced a major exodus of priests, brothers and nuns.
- From 1962-1974 there was a 31% decrease in the number of those preparing for the priesthood along with nearly 8,000 American priests leaving public ministry.

### **The Church Today**

- Today after two thousand years, Christianity is the faith, at least nominally, of one-third of the world’s population.
- From a handful of early disciples, the faith has spread over the globe to claim the loyalty of nearly a thousand million inhabitants of our planet.
- In 1900, only 10% of the world’s Christians lived in the continents of the south and east, but a century later at least 70% of the world’s Christians lived there.
- More Christians worshiped in Anglican churches in Nigeria each week than in all the Episcopal and Anglican churches of Britain, Europe and North America combined.
- There were ten times more Assembly of God members in Latin America than in the United States.
- There were more Baptists in Congo than in Great Britain.
- More people in church every Sunday in communist China than in all Western Europe or North America.
- Surely, one of the more remarkable aspects of Christianity today is how few of these professed believers have ever seriously studied the history of their religion.

- The movement toward separation of church and state has all but removed religion from public education.
- However, even Christian education in many denominations has done little to give members any sort of adult understanding of the faith.
- Should we really be surprised, when today’s Christian so frequently blends gross errors with orthodox confession or defends some pagan practice as Christian conduct?
- In the past, torrid persecutions served to purge the household of faith.
- Heresy’s spread clarified the Church’s basic beliefs.
- In addition, the sudden appearance of barbarian hordes opened doors for further expansion.
- This ability to face new challenges and to tap the sources of renewal is one of the secrets of Christianity’s growth.

### **Summary**

- The way forward usually meant a studied look backward.
- Baptized masses meant baptized pagans.
- Power corrupts; the Church gained the world but lost its soul.
- Jesus said it very clearly: It is not to be this way among you!
- We need to give a reasoned, biblical and humble response!
- In the midst of it all, we need to keep balanced!

### **Review**

- The Lord is building His Church and the gates of hell will not stop Him.
- The Church has been through it all in the past sometimes responding well and sometimes not. We need to learn from the mistakes and wise choices of others.
- May we not find ourselves living in a “post-Christian” society.

### **In the Next Session**

- Next time we will begin our study of The History of Christian Doctrines. We will begin with The Preface, The Prolegomena (proh-li-gom-uh-nuh) a prologue in text book or preliminary statements) and the Preparatory Doctrinal Development.

## INSTRUCTOR’S NOTES: AGE OF GLOBAL EXPANSION & RELOCATION

For the rest of this session, have your students discuss what they have learned and written in their summary of each of the six chapters in “The Age of Global Expansion and Relocation.”

There are a series of questions or assignments numbered and in bold letters.

Because of time constraints, use your discretion regarding which of these you would like to have your students work on and discuss as a group. You can lead these discussions yourself or assign some of them to individuals or groups and have them make a presentation or lead the discussion. One suggestion would be to have at least one student (or more, depending on your situation) share their summary as you cover each of the chapters in the notes below.

### **Chapter (Section) Summaries and Notes for Discussion**

Church History in Plain Language

by Bruce Shelley

#### **The Age of Ideologies: 1914**

The twentieth century brought the colossal struggles of political and military giants: Communism, Nazism and Americanism. A new paganism appeared in appeals to the laws of economics, the passions of race and the inviolable rights of individuals. Christians were forced to suffer, to think and to unite in new ways. Protestants reached out to each other in the movements of unity. Roman Catholics struggled to update their Church. The fall of the Berlin Wall signaled a decline in the power of ideologies. In addition, the “new” Christianity in the Third World and beyond emerges and expands at an astounding rate. This new Christianity eclipses inflamed Muslim voices in which it discerns both danger and call to mission.

#### Chapter 42 – Graffiti on a Wall of Shame – 20<sup>th</sup> Century Ideologies

A backward glance over the last two generations reveals the Christian message scribbled across the decades like so much graffiti, surrounded by other messages equally arresting and perhaps more demanding: Nazism, Marxism, and Capitalism.

Arnold Toynbee once suggested that the twentieth century marked the replacement of the great world religions by three post-Christian ideologies: nationalism, communism and individualism. They each assumed the character of a religious faith; each making ultimate demands –patriotism, class struggle or secular humanism; each with its sacred symbols and ceremonies, inspired writings, dogmas, saints and charismatic leaders.

World War I was the first time the world knew "total war" and on both sides of the battle lines people believed they were engaged in a righteous crusade. Woodrow Wilson declared that this was, "A war to end all wars and to make the world safe for democracy."

The Russian war effort collapsed, in a revolution in November 1917 by the Bolsheviks (Communists) the militant, self-appointed vanguard of a new socialist society.

The Paris Peace Conference set the terms of peace, which proved to be a curious blend of naïve idealism and eager revenge. The Allies, sought a confession of guilt from Germany and to cripple the country for years to come. They succeeded and Nazism came about as a result of this vindictiveness.

Nazism was a right-wing version of dictatorial rule aka: "fascism." Right-wing governments sprung up all over Europe and the Protestant Church in Germany lost millions of people to this new political religion.

The post-war Protestant clergy were monarchists, with no sympathy for socialism or democracy. The industrial workers came to hate a socially and politically reactionary church.

The distinctive Nazi traits were a rejection of the liberal ideals of the Enlightenment and the nineteenth century; along with magnifying a primitive, idealized past.

Hitler blamed the Jews for destroying culture through capitalism, Marxism and even the Christian faith: "The heaviest blow that ever struck humanity was the coming of Christianity. Bolshevism is Christianity's illegitimate child. Both are inventions of the Jew."

The dedicated Christian's place in the Nazi world was no more secure than that of the Jew. Hitler courted Christian support by emphasizing national pride and pretending to favor the churches' role in the state.

Catholics endorsed the new Nazi government and supported the agreement the Fuhrer signed with the pope in 1933, guaranteeing the freedom to practice the Catholic religion (which he never intended to fulfill) – though it excluded Catholics from German politics.

The German Christian Movement sought to unite the twenty-eight Protestant groups under one bishop and elected a fervent Nazi to that office. The Pastor's Emergency League (aka "The Confessing Church") set up an alternative church government. In

between these two, were the timid majority of protestant ministers who eventually followed Hitler without protest.

In May of 1934, the Confessing Church adopted “The Barmen Declaration” (written mostly by Karl Barth), calling German Christians back to the central truths of Christianity and rejected the totalitarian claims of the state.

During the same troubled 20s and 30s, the Russian Bolsheviks (Communists) created another totalitarian system, a left-wing regime – with many of the same traits of Nazi Germany:

- dictatorial leadership,
- a single centralized party,
- ruthless terror,
- propaganda,
- censorship,
- a controlled economy and
- hostility to all organized religion.

Lenin (1870-1924) was the mastermind of the Russian Revolution (1917-1924) with violence as its chief weapon. He declared, “Institutional religion is a reactionary social force that only impedes progress toward the classless society and it must be smashed.”

The Russian Orthodox Church replied with defiance and declared war on the State. Riots in almost every city followed and in the first six years of the Revolution, twenty-eight bishops and over one thousand priests were killed.

**1. What is the difference between being "reactionary" and being "responsive"?**

**I would tend to see reactionary as mostly emotional in its response. It would also tend to not have practical solutions to the problem and would be unwilling to work with others. Responsive would be the opposite approach.**

**The Marxists viewed "institutional religion" (The Church) as reactionary, an impediment and something that needed to be smashed. Perhaps from our view we might say. "Needs to be reformed"? Consider 2 Timothy 2:23-26 – How do we (individually and collectively) seek to deal with the social issues that we face in our culture? React? Respond? Ignore? What are some of the barriers to our involvement in finding a solution?**

**Apathy? A sense that people are simply reaping what they sow and this is God's judgment on them? A fear of compromise or being accused of compromising? Or...?**

The German churches' resistance to Hitler was amazingly meager. They were exclusively concerned with individualistic personal faith, traditional submission to the state and a conservative outlook that rejected all left-wing proposals for social and political reform. This enabled them to accept the Nazis' claim to be the only alternative to Communism.

In Russian, Stalin realized the value of the church's contribution to public morale during the war and allowed them to set up their organizations again, collect funds and give some private religious instruction to their children.

Overall, World War II had a devastating impact on Christianity, both physically and morally. Thousands of churches were destroyed, clergymen killed and faithful believers persecuted or uprooted from their homes.

### Chapter 43 – Rootless Immigrants in a Sick Society – American Evangelicals

The evangelical dilemma in the Age of Ideologies was that they offered millions of people a consoling personal faith in the face of apocalyptic fears, but could they also lead America in another great awakening of social ideals?

A revitalized evangelical Christianity was showing remarkable signs of new life. (This was partly due to the Welsh Revival that began in 1904 and spread around the world, including America. This is mentioned in this book in connection with the Azusa Street Revival in 1906.) This surprised many Americans who thought religion was supposedly confined to the “Bible Belt,” yet now, it was appearing all over the country.

However, Evangelicals represented no single approach to America’s problems. Most Evangelicals were conventional Protestants who held staunchly to the authority of the Bible and to orthodox doctrines. They believed in making a conscious personal commitment to Christ, known as the born-again experience.

Evangelicals could be compared to rootless immigrants in a new land. Only in this case, Evangelicals never crossed the ocean to experience the shock of a new land. They simply held their ground while the rest of the country changed.

In spite of the growth of the evangelical movement and its sudden visibility, it gave little evidence of reshaping the ideas and ideals of American culture. It had little impact in the government or the universities or the communication centers of the nation.

After The Civil War, many evangelicals turned to premillennialism, the belief that Christ’s return was imminent and that society would inevitably get worse before it occurred. Some believe that this is the root of the fundamentalists’ surrender of social concern.

**2. Do you think that the belief in Christ’s imminent return and that society would inevitably get worse before it occurred, is a source of our failure to have a positive influence on our culture? If so, why would that idea be adopted? Is it a proper response, or is it a reaction?**

Fundamentalism is usually dated from a series of twelve small books published from 1910 to 1915 containing articles and essays designed to defend fundamental Christian truths against the Modernist movement that questioned the authority and truth of the Bible.

Many conservative Christians expressed dissatisfaction with the drift of fundamentalism between the two world wars. Most had no criticism of the doctrines of the movement, but they felt it had stumbled into the mire of some unfortunate emphases, especially their failure to apply basic Christian truths to crucial problems confronting modern man. (As well as their negativity?)

After World War II evangelical Christianity returned to public prominence in America, especially through the very successful and public ministry of Billy Graham. This included a strong emphasis of ministry to the youth in America.

Pentecostalism (in America) was sparked by a three-year long revival, beginning in 1906, at the Azusa Street Mission in Los Angeles. (Although it was really part of the Welsh Revival beginning in 1904).

The modern Charismatic movement crossed over into the Catholic Church as well as into non-Pentecostal denominations in the decades of the 60’s & 70’s. This reinforced the Evangelical movement, swelling their numbers, but made very little difference in the moral climate of America.

#### Chapter 44 – New Creeds for Breakfast – The Ecumenical Movement

In the 16<sup>th</sup> century, only four major divisions separated the churches of the Reformation: Lutheran, Reformed, Anabaptist and Anglican. Soon, however, a number of denominations appeared on the scene, most of them established by believers convinced of the importance of some particular teaching of Scripture. By the 20<sup>th</sup> century, more than 200 denominations crowded the landscape in the United States alone. The force within Christianity was centrifugal – away from centralization – often independent and sometimes divisive. However, another force, this one centripetal, drew Christians toward cooperation, merger and united action: “Ecumenism.”

Ecumenical means worldwide or universal. Applied to Christian churches, it implies the oneness of Christians in the faith, wherever they may be found. This unity can be seen as a spiritual reality or as an effort to create a merger of churches or of denominations.

The first significant effort in modern times to encourage cooperation among Protestants was the evangelical Alliance, organized in London in 1846. They sought to promote religious liberty and encourage cooperative activities but did not survive the century.



The Federal Council of Churches in America (1908) involved 31 denominations, but was criticized for its liberal theology by conservatives and was absorbed into the National Council of Churches of Christ in 1950. The World Council of Churches formed in 1948, in Amsterdam, was the most ambitious expression of ecclesiastical ecumenism.

The Life and Work Movement (1925) was like most of the other efforts. They compromised truth in order to try to gain unity. They rejected faith in the divine and human nature of Christ, stressed revelation as an ongoing process, said that true religion rests not on our conception of God but in our moral character. Religion is what a man is or what he does, not what he believes.

### **Denominational Mergers (See charts 118-126)**

In the United States over 30 mergers of denominations were completed from 1900-1970. Some were reunions of church bodies that had split over such issues as the race question in the nineteenth century or groups from the same traditions that had immigrated to America from different countries.

The most persistent critics of ecumenism were the conservative Evangelicals (and the Fundamentalists). Their primary objections revolved around the inadequate doctrinal basis and an inadequate commitment to evangelism.

There were some efforts by Evangelicals and Fundamentalists to acknowledge unity and to establish a foundation for cooperative ministry. This included The National Association of Evangelicals and to a lesser degree the American Council of Christian Churches. They both were loyal to orthodox Christianity but differed in their structure and in their attitude toward conciliar ecumenism. Among Fundamentalists, the closest they came was the formation of The Independent Fundamentalists Churches of America (IFCA) and The General Association of Regular Baptists (GARB). These are not listed in the book.

Evangelicals turned to a series of congresses to encourage united effort in evangelism.

### **The World Congress on Evangelism in Berlin - 1966**

The International Congress on World Evangelization in Lausanne – 1974

This produced the Lausanne Covenant. In it they affirmed the church’s visible unity in truth is God’s purpose. For two reasons:

- Theologically, the unity of the church is a gift of God through the Spirit, made possible by the cross of Christ (Eph. 2:14). Organic unions do not always maintain unity “in truth” (Eph. 4:13).
- Pragmatically, for visible unity in the truth, evangelism...summons us to unity. How can we preach a gospel of reconciliation and remain unreconciled?  
<https://www.lausanne.org/content/covenant/lausanne-covenant>

**3. There are doctrines that we must defend and doctrines for which we must be willing to die. In any expression of unity, those doctrines that require our defense or death, must be part of that unity. What are those doctrines?**

**Since your students have already taken the CDI class on Christian Doctrine, this should be review.**

#### Chapter 45 – The Medicine of Mercy – Roman Catholicism – Vatican II

Pope Pius XII (1939-1958) – in 1950, decried the attempts of some theologians to update Church teachings and to weaken the significance of the dogmas...by seeking to free them from concepts and formulations long held by the Church and to return instead to the language of the Bible and the Fathers.

Vatican Council II (1962-1965) revealed a new spirit crying out for change in a system that nearly everyone assumed would never change.

Pope John XXIII was elected on October 28, 1958 and proclaimed his plan to convoke a council – Vatican II (1962-1965). Its purpose would be to “bring the church up to date.” It was the first council not called to combat heresy, pronounce new Dogmas or marshal the Church against hostile forces. It was to be a pastoral council not a doctrinal one. “The church must rule with the medicine of mercy rather than with severity.”

This was the largest gathering of church leaders for a Council ever. There were 2540 leaders attending from around the world. The conservatives who gathered saw the future as a threat to the past. The progressives were those who saw promise in the future.

**4. The conservative view of the future often sees it as a threat to the past and the progressive view sees the future as the promise of the future. When we are dealing with the truth of God’s Word and the mission of the Church, which view should be ours?**

**Both!?! Reality check: Were the “Good Old Days” really good? Good compared to what?**

The first session dealt with the central question: Were some truths of the faith found only in tradition or were all truths of the faith found in Scripture? They reaffirmed the validity and authority of tradition.

Pope John XXIII died before the second session and was succeeded by Pope Paul VI. The second session wrestled with how the whole company (college) of bishops related to the pope in the government of the Church. The pope remained as the absolute authority with the bishops as his advisers, if asked.

The third session wrestled with guidelines for the life and ministry of priests, the mission of laymen in the world and missionary work in non-Christian areas. The change here was dramatic as they introduced new liturgy, moved the altar forward and had the priests face the people. They also decreed that prayers were to be offered out loud and in the language of the people (vs. in Latin). They also encouraged connections between fellow worshipers by greeting one another with a “sign of peace.”

The final session renewed the debate on freedom of religion. By accepting the decree, Roman Catholicism solemnly renounced in principle any use of external force against the voice of conscience; marking a radical break with a fifteen-hundred-year-old practice.

Amid the upheaval, the Church experienced (and is still experiencing) a major exodus of priests, brothers and nuns. From 1962-1974 there was a 31% decrease in the number of seminarians in the United States; and between 1966-1972, nearly 8,000 American priests left the public ministry.

The Catholic Church faces two contrasting views of the Church. One sees the Church as a fellowship of spiritual communities held together by their recognition of papal supremacy. The second viewed the Church as a medieval super state, governed by an absolute monarch (the pope) who would and should impose its will upon its members and upon society.

Some found hope for the future of the Church in a new movement stressing personal Christianity – The Catholic Charismatic Renewal.

### **The Age of Global Expansion and Relocation – 1900s**

More people have become Christians in the last one hundred years than at any other time. When focusing upon the evangelistic embrace of faith, it is arguable that more has happened in the last one hundred years than has happened in all of the church’s previous history. The great missionary push of the late 1800s and early 1900s has contributed to this explosive growth largely south of the Equator. Yet the new growth seems to have its own distinctive character and Spirit-given initiative. Ironically one-time strongholds of Christian missions in Europe and North America are seeing dormancy and decline. History will record if the new centers of Christianity in the Global South and beyond can maintain a faithful Christian character and give witness to this unprecedented work of the Spirit. Also, time will tell if signs of Spiritual stirring will revive a faithful witness in the West. Without the Spirit’s stirring the label “post-Christian” will become more fitting with time.

#### Chapter 46- Christianity in The West - Decline and Reconstruction

The state of religion in the West is very uncertain. Opinions abound. Some believe that Christianity’s influence upon culture is a thing of the past. Many describe the West as “post-Christian.” Still others seem to think that the Evangelical church has won, in the sense that people today would identify Evangelical beliefs as “Christian,” as distinguished from liberalism. Others, fully informed about declining numbers, sense that North America is poised for another great work of the Spirit.

Contributing factors to the fading or passing of vibrant Christian faith include:

- An endless preoccupation with self-indulgent individualism that has eroded a sense of community and moral values.
- Affluence has given an ever-increasing standard to be chased. The haves and have-nots alike embrace this endless quest (Consumerism).
- Technology plays an increasingly greater role in our lives, providing individual, private, portable access to entertainment, information and instant social feedback or connection with other viewers. There is a globalizing effect of creating a common culture – for good and for evil.
- Some say, the church is to blame – for being only a reflection of the culture and not an agent of change.

A central notion for today’s understanding of secularization is that we can clearly distinguish what is religious from what is non-religious. In the West, the knowledge of God is thought to be an intellectual or academic venture that requires neither conversion nor even belief in God! In today’s world, secularism refers to movements that wish to eliminate or restrict the influence of religion; especially towards the State.

Hostile voices against religion see faith as not merely unnecessary but evil; these angry voices claim that religion is the root cause for most of the problems the world has faced (see Hitler, Marx & radical Islam). To be sure, the church has faced smarter atheists\*(see chart in textbook pg.484); but the hostility of today’s atheists and secularists calls for the removal of religion and even the removal of Christianity from the public record. The description of western culture as “Christophobic” is not a serious exaggeration.

Perhaps as disturbing as the hostility to faith is an indifference to Christianity not only by opponents but also by adherents.

**5. Which is more disturbing: our culture’s hostility to the Christian faith, its indifference to Christianity or the indifference to Christianity (& the Church) by those who claim Christ? How many people do you know, who claim Christ but not His Church?**

Collectively, conservative churches have responded in three ways to the increasing secularism. The first approach was a speculative anticipation of the end of time, or at least the beginning of the end times. This led some to a conclusion that redeeming the fallen world was futile. Evangelicals have not abandoned this approach to the future, but they generally came to a sense that they had at least applied it in a dubious fashion.

The next approach was to battle secular forces on political and cultural turfs. Jerry Falwell, pastor of the Thomas Road Baptist Church in Lynchburg, Virginia, established a political action group called: “The Moral Majority” and began to battle the influence of secular humanism. The battle lines were drawn primarily around three issues: abortion, homosexual rights and feminism. However, the control of the Panama Canal by the United States was somehow, included in the skirmishes.

The third approach involved another change of course or strategy. Many evangelicals sought to be less confrontational and more engaging with our changing culture, on its own terms. They created user-friendly churches that made religion almost totally a matter of personal choice, sort of a “smorgasbord” of truths where you can take what you like. A great variety of churches adopted a practical self-help approach, embracing a special version of allegory to extract techniques from the Bible, which suddenly became a manual for success in life. (Keep Balanced) The megachurch phenomenon, has at times, illustrated this approach of seeking relevance. Historians tend to view this development as another example of Americans’ privatization of faith.

Conservative evangelical efforts have not stemmed the tide of secularization. Conservatives could no longer look at church decline as a mainline or liberal church problem. Religious affiliation is at its lowest since 1930. Now one in five Americans claims to have no religious affiliation and for adults under the age of thirty, the number jumps to one in three.

Christians will face a still greater danger of infidelity to Christ if Muslims do not encounter the love of Christ in tangible witness and care.

As missions were exploding around the globe, Western Christians were beginning to struggle with the practice. Evangelical denominations and mission-sending organizations were facing budget cuts as churches and their members were not supporting these missions and missionaries.

#### Chapter 47 - Shift to the Global South - What is the New Christianity?

In 1900, only 10% of the world’s Christians lived in the continents of the south and east, but a century later at least 70% of the world’s Christians lived there.

More Christians worshiped in Anglican churches in Nigeria each week than in all the Episcopal and Anglican churches of Britain, Europe and North America combined.

There were ten times more Assembly of God members in Latin America than in the United States.

There were more Baptists in Congo than in Great Britain and more people in church every Sunday in communist China than in all Western Europe or North America.

The unmistakable first observation about the churches below the equator is that they are charismatic. (See chart page 498)

The “third blessing” approach acknowledged the first blessing of conversion and a second blessing whereby the believers were stirred and moved to sanctification or holiness. Additionally, they acknowledged a third blessing, which is Spirit baptism, which includes a special empowerment for service.

The first wave began through international revivals in Wales, India and Korea, then moved around the world including the United States in Azusa, California. This prompted the emergence of the major Pentecostal denominations that followed.

The second wave denotes a sweeping encounter and embrace of charismatic life spilling over into mainline Protestant denominations and Catholicism in the 1960’s and early 1970’s.

The third wave saw the embrace of signs and wonders by charismatics and some conservatives in the 1980’s.

The issue of attaching our culture to the gospel as we take it to the nations has always been an issue. The distinct character of North American Christianity is that it is a voluntary Christianity and less an expression of Christendom; though we certainly started out trying to establish a Christian nation.

**6. What are some of the things from our “Christian” culture that we might need to strip away before we pass it on to others? Style of music, clothing, schedule for church, etc.?**

The missionary vision usually included a vigorous effort to translate the Bible into the language of the nationals. Granted, the act of translation holds many opportunities to import cultural bias but the effect of translation was not cultural manipulation but became a boost for cultural independence. Several scholars have noted the centrality of biblical translation to the emergence of independent thinking.

Christians in the Global south seem to appropriate the Bible in a direct manner; they read with a sense of immediacy as though the Bible was written directly to them. Western readers, by contrast, often observe a historical distance between the world as they see it and the world of the Bible.

The Church has used three major approaches to understand what Jesus did for the human family to accomplish salvation:

- Evangelicals typically see Christ as our representative or substitute who died on the cross to accomplish salvation.

- Liberal Christians see the cross as a dramatic demonstration of God’s love, that when understood, overwhelms our reluctance to believe God loves us and awakens a response of love to God.
- The Eastern Church sees the atoning work of Jesus as addressing the bondage we experience as we face the oppressive evil of Satan and his demons, which we cannot defeat in our own strength.

**7. Which of these three approaches are true? Which of these three approaches should affect how we seek to reach people?**

**All of them together. Consider the radical nature of our redemption.**

Churches outside the West have a sense of solidarity that is hard for Westerners to grasp. We come from the most radically individualistic culture in history. (Even though we have a strong self-identification with sports teams.)

For most people in the world, the opposite is true: they believe their genuine identity is conveyed when they tell you the groups to which they belong. Certainly, this basic human need is perhaps a great opportunity for the church in the West.

Solidarity is visible at the gathered worship of the Church. There is a more vivid sense of encounter with evil for believers beyond the West. Christians in the Global South tend to embrace missions from their earliest days.

Chapter 48 - Windows to the Christian World – Places and Persons of Faith

“Generalizations are always wrong and usually helpful.”

When foreign missionaries were expelled from China in 1949, many wondered whether Christians would survive. There were suspicions that Christianity was merely a tool of Western imperialism. The church was weak, many in the church were nominally Christian and the ruling Communist Party was very hostile towards religion.

The Protestants who cooperated with the Communists were called the Registered Church or the Three-Self movement. They took their name from an old missionary strategy that called for churches to be more self-reliant:

- Self-governing
- Self-supporting
- Self-propagating



The Protestants, who did not cooperate, were called the Underground Church, the house church movement or the unregistered Church. They risked life and limb to maintain independence. They generally viewed the Registered Church as traitors.

The Chinese government’s policy included brutal persecution and believed that isolating Chinese Christianity from Western influence would lead to its collapse.

The state has permitted free worship and the printing and distribution of Bibles. The lines of hostility are diminishing, with cooperation between the legal registered church and the unregistered churches becoming more typical. International churches have also found a footing in the country, serving Christians from other countries that live in China for work.

The number of converts in China is mind-bending. A conservative estimate for 2000 is 89 million believers, a full 7.1% of the Chinese population.

The Catholic Church has had a representation in China through these years as well. Ignatius Cardinal Kung became the first native-born Chinese bishop in Shanghai. He was imprisoned in 1955 for his unwillingness to renounce the pope and recognize the legitimacy of Chinese efforts to control the Catholic Church.

Korea had a Christian witness from the late 1700s and had the Scriptures in their own language in the 1800s, along with a great number of Protestant missionaries. The Welsh Revival in the early 1900s had a great impact on the Church and influenced the practice of praying simultaneously; with each believer praying aloud at the same time. In 1914 one in one hundred Koreans was Protestant. By 2010, one in three Koreans was Christian.

The East African Revival’s (1935 and on) geographic sweep moved from North Uganda to include Kenya, Rwanda, Burundi and Tanzania (was Tanganyika). The numbers defy our imagination. The percentages of Christian adherents near the end of the century were as follows:

- Uganda - 89%
- Kenya - 79%
- Rwanda - 81%
- Burundi - 90%
- Tanzania - 51%

The movement crossed denominational lines at numerous points. Brethren, Seventh Day Adventists, Mennonites, Baptists and Methodists all reported participation in the revival.

In China, Korea and East Africa we observe several common elements. Each has an array of its own rich Christian cultures while having indebtedness to missionary efforts. Each has seen remarkable numerical growth. Each has produced believers who give glory to Christ in their bearing suffering and extending grace.

EPILOGUE - R.L. Hatchett

“To be saved” in the Pauline view means to become part of the people of God, who by the Spirit are born into God’s family and therefore joined to one another as one body, whose gatherings in the Spirit form them into God’s temple. God is not simply saving individuals and preparing them for heaven; rather He is creating a people for His name, among whom God can dwell and who, in their life together, will reproduce God’s life and character in all its unity and diversity. Gordon Fee

The unprecedented growth of Christianity in the last one hundred years requires reassessment. At present, both ends of Christian history profoundly speak in unison.

- Are these new believers, in the global south and east, superstitious or naïve? Is their faith nominal? Can they break with their culture? (Can we break with ours?)
- How could the Rwanda genocide happen on the turf of the East African Revival?

We rightly should also ask similar question of ourselves:

- Is our practice of Christianity shaped or misshaped by our affluent culture?
- What about Christian vs. Christian, in our Civil War?
- Do we understand solidarity?

Reading church history rightly helps us read the Bible rightly; and reading the Bible rightly helps us read church history rightly.

**8. Have you had any experience with the Church, or Christians, in (from) other countries? What did you see as their strengths and their needs?**

**Physically, Financially, Educationally, Spiritually, etc.**

### **Bruce Shelley**

Today after two thousand years, Christianity is the faith, at least nominally of one-third of the world’s population. From a handful of early disciples, the faith has spread over the globe to claim the loyalty of nearly a thousand million inhabitants of our planet.

Surely, one of the more remarkable aspects of Christianity today is how few of these professed believers have ever seriously studied the history of their religion. The movement toward separation of church and state has all but removed religion from public education. However, even Christian education in many denominations has done little to give members any sort of adult understanding of the faith. Should we really be surprised, then, when today’s Christian so frequently blends gross errors with orthodox confession or defends some pagan practice as Christian conduct?

Torrid persecutions served to purge the household of faith. Heresy’s spread clarified the church’s basic beliefs. In addition, the sudden appearance of barbarian hordes opened doors for further expansion. This ability to face new challenges and to tap the sources of renewal is one of the secrets of Christianity’s growth.

The way forward usually meant a studied look backward, back to the image of God revealed in the story of Jesus.

- Baptized masses meant baptized pagans.
- Power corrupts; the Church gained the world but lost its soul.
- It is not to be this way among you!
- Give a reasoned, biblical and humble response!
- Keep Balanced!

## SESSION 12 – PREPARATORY DOCTRINAL DEVELOPMENTS

### **Disclaimer:**

*We will be discussing doctrinal controversies as they occurred historically. Many differing doctrinal positions and opposing ideas will be presented. Often Christians were put into opposition toward one another by these differences, sometimes, bitterly so. As we present these historical, doctrinal positions, please bear in mind that Christian doctrine was developing and solidifying into dogma. Also bear in mind, that the positions and doctrinal views shared are historical, and not necessarily those of either the presenter or of Village Missions. Some of the doctrinal positions were manifestly in error, while others are still a matter of divergence within the bounds of orthodoxy.*

At the end of this lesson, you should:

- Know the methodology used in this course to study the history of Christian Doctrine.
- Be able to understand the difference between doctrine and dogma.
- Think about the monumental task of taking the doctrine of the Bible and translating it into the dogma or doctrinal statements we have today.

You will KNOW:

- We need to hold to the truth of God’s Word, live it and proclaim it with accuracy, confidence, perseverance, gentleness, love and humility.

You will BE ABLE TO:

- Understand the difference between doctrine and dogma. Doctrines are the teachings of Scripture. Dogma is the organization of those teachings into a statement of belief.

You will THINK ABOUT:

- Ancient heresies, long since condemned by the Church, are being constantly repeated and represented as new discoveries.

### **In the Last Session**

- You learned the distinctions and connections between Fundamentalists, Conventional Protestants, and Pentecostals-Charismatics.
- You are now able to understand the challenges the Church has faced over the past century and continues to face today.
- You thought about and discussed the Lord’s sovereign work in bringing many to faith in Christ.

**Begin video.**

### **Preparatory Doctrinal Development**

- Please note, in our textbook we are using the vertical method of study, which picks up each doctrine as it becomes the center of attention in a particular period and traces its development until it reaches its final form.
- The study of doctrinal truth, apart from its historical background, leads to a truncated theology (a theology cut off on one end).
- There has been too much of this in the past and there is a great deal of it even in the present day.
- The result has been the lack of a sound understanding and a proper evaluation of the truth.
- There was little or no appreciation of the fact that the Holy Spirit guided the Church in the interpretation and development of the truth as revealed in the Word of God.
- The checks and the road signs of the past were often ignored.
- Ancient heresies, long since condemned by the Church, are being constantly repeated and represented as new discoveries.

### **Doctrines and Dogmas**

- We find religious doctrines in Scripture, though not in their finished form.
- Then we take the doctrines and form them into Dogmas.
- They are the fruit of human study and reflection, often occasioned or intensified by theological controversies.
- Paul tells us that these kinds of conflicts are necessary and beneficial to the Church.
- 1 Corinthians 11:19 – “For there must also be factions among you, so that those who are approved may become evident among you.”
- Our textbook uses the word dogma to describe officially formulated religious tenets.
- Our culture usually sees those who are dogmatic as people who assert opinions or doctrines in an arrogant manner.
- Words do matter, especially concerning the truth. We need to hold to the truth of God’s Word, live it and proclaim it with accuracy, confidence, perseverance, gentleness, love and humility.

### **Doctrinal Development**

- The Catholic development of dogma involved the clergy (with the infallible pope), as they carefully examined the doctrines taught in Scripture or by tradition.
- The Reformers development of dogma involved the Church, represented by the clergy, deriving its material content from Scripture and from Scripture only.

- A modern idea, a wrong one I might add, of the way dogma should develop is to derive our dogma from Christian experience. Therefore, our dogma would be formed by our individual or collective experiences, sentiments and beliefs.
- Catholic theology sees the Christian religion as unchangeable in all its revealed doctrines, in all its precepts and institutions, which are intended for all men.
- The Church cannot make new dogmas but only hand down the sacred deposit that was entrusted to her.
- Protestant theology has always maintained that the dogma of the Church has a high degree of stability but is subject to change and has been enriched, re-stated and transformed - being built upon the unchanging Bible.
- Dogma is changeable and has changed.

### **Its Starting Point**

- It would be a mistake to assume that the history of dogma can begin with the Council of Nicaea and end with the adoption of the last of the historical Confessions.
- It must take its starting point at the close of the period of special revelation, in the study of the Apostolic Fathers.
- The doctrinal controversies of the Church were the birth pangs of new dogmas.
- Though not edifying, it is essential that we gain a proper understanding of the beginnings of ecclesiastical dogmas.

### **The Apostolic Fathers**

- The Apostolic Fathers were those who lived before the last of the apostles died, some having been disciples of the Apostles.
- The main benefits of their writings are found in their witness to the canonicity and integrity of the New Testament Books and
- They form a doctrinal link between the New Testament and the more speculative writings of the Apologists – in the 2nd century.

### **The 2nd Century**

- In the 2nd century, the Church, as usual, had to guard against dangers from within and without.
- It had to justify its existence and had to maintain the purity of doctrine in the face of subtle and obvious error.
- The Roman government launched a series of persecutions, which threatened the very existence of the Christian Church.
- At the same time, the Church suffered a great deal from the written attacks of some of the keenest minds of the age

- Their arguments are typical of the opposition to Christianity throughout the centuries.
- The greatest dangers came from within through a variety of Jewish and Gentile perversions of the Gospel.
- The 2nd century also brought several reform movements, which gave rise to the Apologists, who helped the Church in three ways.
  - Defensively they showed that there was no evidence for the charges brought against Christianity’s adherents.
  - Offensively they showed the blindness in legalism and the absurd, immoral character of paganism.
  - Constructively they sought to establish Christianity as a positive revelation of God, relying primarily on the fulfillment of prophecy, miracles and the changed character of the followers of Christ.
  - Gnosticism was the thought and practice of various cults of late pre-Christian and early Christian centuries.
  - Gnosticism is distinguished by the conviction that matter is evil and that emancipation comes through gnosis – or a special, secret knowing.

### **The Anti-Gnostic Fathers**

- The Anti-Gnostic Fathers included three men of note, from the late 2nd and early 3rd century:
  - Irenaeus
  - Hippolytus
  - Tertullian
- They saw the separation of the true God and the Creator as the fundamental error of the Gnostics.
- Tertullian was the first to assert the tri-personality of God and to use the word “trinity.”
- He stressed the fact that the three persons in the Godhead are of one substance.
- Did not succeed in reaching the full Trinitarian statement.
- He also planted the seeds for the doctrine of original sin.
  - Irenaeus was averse to speculations about the Logos.
- He gives the fullest description of the work of redemption but it is not completely consistent.
- John uses the Greek word “logos” in his Gospel intentionally, as an intentional counter to the Gnostics.
- John uses “logos” to designate Jesus as the Word of God, the full revelation of God and the second person of the Trinity.
- The Greeks used it to identify the controlling principle in the universe.

- Generally, the anti-Gnostic fathers were not clear in their doctrine of salvation and tended toward moralism, where the sinner earns his salvation through penance.
- They also represented the idea of the Church as a visible organization and the channel of divine grace, with participation in the blessing of salvation dependent on membership in the visible Church.
- Their teaching re: the future generally followed current evangelical teaching. Believing that Jesus was coming again.

### **Alexandrian Theology**

- In the 2nd & 3rd centuries Hellenistic, or Greek philosophy, and the truths of the Gospel combined into Alexandrian theology.
- Clement of Alexandria and Origen represent the theology of the East, which was more speculative than that of the West.
- Clement was not completely orthodox, but followed the path of the Apologists in seeking to wed the philosophy of the day to the Christian tradition and thus build bridges between Gentile learning and the Gospel.
- Orthodox, or orthodoxy, refers to that teaching which is accepted as true or correct. The traditional beliefs and customs of a religion.
- Origen was born of Christian parents and received a Christian education, with Clement as his teacher.
- He battled Gnosticism and struck a decisive blow to Monarchianism.
- He sought to construct a systematic theology of Christian doctrine.
- He also claimed to take his stand squarely on the Word of God and the Rule of Faith, but his allegorical approach to the Scriptures, which he learned from Clement, opened the way for all kinds of speculation and arbitrary interpretation.
- His teachings, later in life, were condemned as heresy.

### **Monarchianism**

- The great heresy of the 3rd century was Monarchianism.
- Emphasizing the unity of God by maintaining that the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit are three manifestations or aspects of God.
- It took two forms.
- Dynamic Monarchianism was mainly interested in maintaining the unity of God teaching that Jesus was consubstantial (of one substance, essence or nature) with the Father but was not a distinct person in the Godhead.
- The Logos was merely an impersonal power that was especially active in Jesus.



- Modalistic Monarchianism was more influential. It too was interested in maintaining the unity of God.
- Primarily intent on maintaining the full deity of Christ.
- It was called “Modalistic” because it conceived of the three Persons in the Godhead as so many modes (forms or ways) in which God manifested Himself.
- The conflict was, in a large part, due to the teaching that the Father Himself had become incarnate in Christ and therefore suffered in and with Him.
- The names: Father, Son and Holy Spirit were simply designations of three different phases under which the One Divine Essence manifests itself.
- It taught that God reveals Himself as the Father in creation and in the giving of the law, as the Son in the incarnation and as the Holy Spirit in regeneration and sanctification.

### **To Consider**

- The doctrinal controversies of the Church were the birth pangs of new dogmas. Though not edifying, it is essential that we gain a proper understanding of the beginnings of ecclesiastical dogmas.
- We find religious doctrines in Scripture, though not in their finished form.
- Then we take the doctrines and form them into Dogmas.
- They are the fruit of human study and reflection, often occasioned or intensified by theological controversies.

### **Review**

- You learned that we are using the Vertical method in this course to study the history of Christian Doctrine. We are studying each doctrine individually through the various ages.
- You were able to explain the difference between doctrine (the teachings in the Scriptures) and dogma (the organization of those teachings into statements).
- You also thought about the important and monumental task of taking the doctrines of the Bible and translating them into the dogmas or the doctrinal statements we have today.

### **In the Next Session**

- Understand that the doctrines of the Trinity and of Christ are great mysteries with glimpses of light that require our humility and submission.

## INSTRUCTOR’S NOTES: PREPARATORY DOCTRINAL DEVELOPMENTS

For the rest of this session, have your students discuss what they have learned and written in their summary of each chapter in “Preface, Introduction and Preparatory Doctrinal Development sections of their textbook.

There are a series of questions or assignments numbered and in bold letters.

Because of time constraints, use your discretion regarding which of these you would like to have your students work on and discuss as a group. You can lead these discussions yourself or assign some of them to individuals or groups and have them make a presentation or lead the discussion. One suggestion would be to have at least one student (or more, depending on your situation) share their summary as you cover each of the chapters in the notes below.

### **Chapter (Section) Summaries and Notes for Discussion**

The History of Christian Doctrine

by Louis Berkhof

#### **Introduction and Preparatory Doctrinal Development**

Please Consider: The author of our textbook reminds us, at least twice, of the context and the struggles of this study in similar words:

“The doctrinal controversies of the Church were the birth pangs of new dogmas.

Though not edifying, it is essential that we gain a proper understanding of the beginnings of ecclesiastical dogmas.”

I would agree that the birth process is painful and messy; and I do not want to see what is happening. However, the birth of the Dogma and its ultimate development is worth it! Consider the times and the resources available in each era as we watch the struggle for truth; and join in the battle for truth!

#### Preface

The study of doctrinal truth, apart from its historical background, leads to a truncated (“shortened on one end”) theology. There has been too much of this in the past and there is a great deal of it even in the present day. The result has been the lack of a sound understanding and a proper evaluation of the truth. There was little, or no appreciation of the fact that the Holy Spirit guided the Church in the interpretation and development of the truth as it is revealed in the Word of God. The checks and the road signs of the past were not taken into consideration, and ancient heresies, long since condemned by the Church, are constantly repeated and represented as new discoveries.

### The Subject Matter of the History of Dogma

The word dogma means an opinion or a (public) decree. We see the word used in several places in the New Testament. Luke 2:1 = decree; Acts 16:4, 17:7; Colossians 2:14 = decrees and in Ephesians 2:15 = ordinances

It is the designation of a firm, and especially a public or official resolution or decree; applied to well-established and admittedly valid philosophical convictions: to government decrees, and to officially formulated religious tenets. Doctrine is the direct expression of a religious truth.

Religious Dogma is a religious truth based on authority and officially formulated by some ecclesiastical assembly. Our textbook uses the word dogma to describe officially formulated religious tenets. Our culture usually sees those who are dogmatic as people who assert opinions or doctrines in an arrogant manner. Words do matter, especially concerning the truth. We need to hold to the truth of God’s Word, live it and proclaim it with confidence, perseverance, gentleness and humility.

**1. Consider the balance we see in 2 Tim 2:14-17, 23-26 (using various forms of the word “macho” for “wrangle” or “quarrels” or “quarrelsome”) and Jude vs 3 (using a form of the word “agonize” for “to contend.” The need to “agonize” and “contend” is because words do matter. However, we do not need to get all “macho” and wrangle or quarrel. How do we keep contending separate from quarreling?**

**This issue would deal with our hearts. Are we responding or reacting? Are we speaking the truth in love or in arrogance? Are there any tears of compassion for those we are contending with?**

Religious doctrines are found in Scripture, though not in finished form, but dogmas in the current sense of the word are not found there. They are the fruit of human reflection, the reflection of the Church, often occasioned or intensified by theological controversies.

**2. Consider 1 Corinthians 11:19 - For there must also be factions among you, so that those who are approved may become evident among you. What does it mean, “so that those who are approved may become evident among you? What is the benefit gained from dealing with factions or divisions?**

**“Those who are approved” would most likely relate to “approved as true” or “as leaders.” Jesus called for us to be “peacemakers” to prove that we are truly God’s children -see Mt 5:9, 44-45. This benefits us by assuring us of our proper relationship with God and it also involves us in the work of Christ as we seek reconciliation on the basis of truth.**

In the Catholic process, dogma comes from the clergy (with the infallible pope). It is carefully examined, then they formulate the doctrine taught in Scripture or by tradition. Finally, it is imposed on all the faithful.

The Reformers developed dogma deriving its material content from Scripture and from Scripture only. They did not regard dogmas as statements directly taken from the Bible, but represented them as the fruit of the reflection of the Church, as the body of believers, on the truths of revelation and as the official formulations of competent representative bodies (not infallible) – led by the Holy Spirit.

Some modern ideas of the development of dogma declares that dogma represents the Christian consciousness, Christian experience, the Christian faith or the Christian life as the source of the material contents of dogmas. They are simply the intellectual formulations of experiences, sentiments and beliefs.

A dogma may be defined as a doctrine, derived from Scripture, officially defined by the Church and declared to rest upon divine authority. Its subject matter is derived from the Word of God and is therefore authoritative. It is not a mere repetition of what is found in Scripture, but the fruit of dogmatic reflection. Dogma is officially defined by a competent ecclesiastical body and declared to rest upon divine authority. It has social expression in a community and traditional value as it passes on to future generations.

### The Task of the History of Dogma

The task of the History of Dogma is to describe the historical origin of the dogma of the Church and to trace its subsequent changes and developments.

Dogma is changeable and has changed over the years. That which is unchangeable is not subject to development and has no history.

Protestant theology has always maintained that the dogma of the Church has a high degree of stability but is subject to change and has been enriched, re-stated and transformed; being built upon the unchanging Bible.

Catholic theology sees the Christian religion as unchangeable in all its revealed doctrines; in all its precepts and institutions which are intended for all men. The Church cannot make new dogmas but only hand down the sacred deposit that was entrusted to her.

The development of the dogma of the Church moved along organic lines and was therefore in continuous growth; and the Church itself, in whole or in part, sometimes erred in its formulation of the truth.

God’s special revelation is the progressive unfolding of the knowledge of God and the redemptive idea in Christ Jesus; presupposing a continuous development and continuity of thought.

**3. What is the problem of taking the stand that our Dogma, or Doctrinal Statements, cannot and should not ever change? Are we declaring that we absolutely know all there is to know about a certain doctrine and that we have expressed it in the clearest and most understandable way? Is there a legitimate reason for us to make it difficult to change the doctrinal statements in our Church constitutions?**

**The Roman Catholic Church has mixed unchangeable Scripture with mutable tradition to arrive at its dogma and that has evidenced change over time. The Protestant Church supposedly deriving its doctrine Sola Scriptura should have had a dogma as immutable as the Scriptures themselves. However, that too has not been the case. Some churches have made it nearly impossible to change their doctrinal statements as a way to help insure that “liberals or heretics or other undesirables” cannot take over their churches or identify who gets to maintain ownership of the property. Sometimes this has left a church with language that does not communicate well over time. Consider also, that because of a failure to clarify the “essentials” and perhaps “major of the minors,” some doctrinal statements may be hard to defend. Consider also Paul’s instructions to the church at Corinth in 1 Corinthians 4:6.**

It would be a mistake to assume that the history of dogma can begin with the Council of Nicaea and end with the adoption of the last of the historical Confessions. It must take its starting point at the close of the period of special revelation, in the study of the Apostolic Fathers.

The doctrinal controversies of the Church were the birth pangs of new dogmas. Though not edifying, it is essential that we gain a proper understanding of the genesis of ecclesiastical dogmas.

#### Method and Divisions of the History of Dogma

The common divisions of the history of dogma are General and Special. The General History covers the philosophic background, the main themes of discussion and the direction of study in each period. The Special History traces the genesis and development of the separate dogmas.

There is a distinction between the horizontal and vertical methods.

The Horizontal method takes up the study as a whole, studying all of the doctrines in particular periods of time. The vertical method picks up each doctrine as it becomes the center of attention in a particular period and traces its development until it reaches its final form.

**4. This (the vertical method) is the method used in this book – See Chart 2 in Charts book. Discuss your understanding of this method.**

The danger lies in the tendency to view the doctrines as detached from their historical setting and from their logical connection in the systems of thought of the theologians of that era.

There are distinctions between a purely objective and the confessional methods.

The objective method is to be without prepossessions, sympathy or antipathy; without determination of the truth or validity of any formulation.

The confessional method judges the doctrinal development against the student’s beliefs and especially against the standard of the Scriptures.

History of the History of Dogma

Valuable materials for such a study were gathered in the centuries preceding the Reformation.

The Reformation dared to challenge the Catholic Church’s position that dogma is unchangeable. They appealed not only to the Scriptures but also to the Fathers of the early Church furnishing a direct and powerful motive for an historical study of dogma.

The Reformers harbored no doubts as to the scriptural character of the doctrines, which they believed; the doctrines entered into their very life and were verified by their experience.

The accusation by The Catholic Church and The Reformers against each other, of departing from the historic faith of Christendom could only be settled by a careful study of history. Pietism and Rationalism also pushed the Church to examine what was the doctrine of the church, as well as its source.

The Roman Catholic scholarship was slow in taking up this study because they proceeded on the assumption that the early church was in possession of the complete dogma of Christianity and that there is no possibility of material alteration from one generation to another.

#### Preparatory Doctrinal Development – The Apostolic Fathers

The Apostolic Fathers were those who supposedly lived before the last of the apostles died and some of whom were said to have been disciples of the Apostles. Six names are especially identified:

- Barnabas – (with doubtful warrant) the companion of Paul and author of a strongly anti-Judaic Epistle of doubtful genuineness.
- Hermas – is supposed to have been the person mentioned in Romans 16:14 (though on insufficient grounds). *The Shepherd of Hermas*, ascribed to him contains a series of visions, commands and similitudes. Though held in high esteem by the early Church, it is a work of doubtful authenticity.
- Clement of Rome – may have been Paul’s fellow-worker named in Philippians 4:3. He authored an *Epistle to the Corinthians*. Some doubt its authenticity – though without good reason.
- Polycarp – a disciple of John, from Smyran who wrote an *Epistle to the Philippians*, consisting chiefly of practical exhortations in Scriptural language.
- Papias – perhaps a disciple of John, from Hierapolis and author of an *Exposition of the Oracles of the Lord*. There are only a few doctrinally insignificant fragments preserved by Eusebius.
- Ignatius – from Antioch had 15 letters ascribed to him, but only seven are regarded as genuine, and even those are doubted by some.
- Two Unknown Authors who wrote, *The Epistle to Diognetes* and *The Didache*.

The characteristics of these teachings reveal that there is not the same freshness, originality, depth and clarity to their writings as that which you find in the writings of the New Testament. Their teachings are characterized by a certain meagerness, though they are generally in full agreement with the teachings of Scripture, they add very little.

With the canon of the New Testament not yet fixed, the early Fathers often quoted oral tradition rather than the written word. The main benefit of the writings of the Apostolic Fathers is found in their witness to the canonicity and integrity of the New Testament Books and they form a doctrinal link between the New Testament and the more speculative writings of the Apologetes (Apologists) – in the 2<sup>nd</sup> century.



It is a matter of common observation that the writings of the Apostolic Fathers contain very little that is doctrinally important. They do testify to an orthodox faith re: God and Jesus Christ, though His work as the Redeemer is not always represented in the same way. The sacraments are represented as the means by which the blessings of salvation are communicated to man. However, their view of the relation of faith to justification and the new life is not clearly understood and a certain anti-Pauline strain of legalism becomes manifest.

#### Perversions of the Gospel

In the 2<sup>nd</sup> century the church had to guard against dangers from within and without, it had to justify its existence and had to maintain the purity of doctrine in the face of subtle (as well as obvious) error.

The Roman government launched a series of persecutions, which threatened the very existence of the Christian Church. At the same time, the Church suffered a great deal from the written attacks of some of the keenest minds of the age; their arguments are typical of the philosophical opposition to Christianity throughout the centuries.

The greatest dangers came from within, consisting in different types of perversions of the Gospel.

### **5. What is Paul’s warning to the Ephesian elders in Acts 20:28-30?**

There were a variety of Jewish Perversions of the Gospel. The Nazarenes – were Jewish Christians, who believed in the deity and virgin birth of Jesus and bound themselves to a strict observance of the law – though they did not require this of Gentile Christians.

The Ebionites – who were a continuation of the Judaistic opponents of the Apostle Paul, who refused to recognize his apostleship and demanded that all Christians submit to the rite of circumcision. They denied the deity and virgin birth of Christ.

The Elkesaites – were a type of Jewish Christianity marked by theosophical (*any of the various forms of philosophical or religious thought based on a mystical insight into the divine nature*) speculations and strict asceticism. They rejected the virgin birth and deity of Christ and included magic and astrology in their practices.

There was also a host of Gentile perversions. The primary perversion was known as Gnosticism.

The origin of Gnosticism is seen in its early form in the days of the Apostles, attaching itself to Judaism and engaging in speculations that lead to both asceticism on one hand and an immoral libertinism of the other.

Philosophical speculation also fed into Gnostic teaching. There was a general tendency toward syncretism (*syncretism - The attempted reconciliation or union of different or opposing principles, practices, or parties, as in philosophy or religion*) in the early part of the 2<sup>nd</sup> century; an eagerness to absorb all possible religious ideas, generalize them and then harmonize them, in order to gain a deeper, mystical knowledge and experience of God.

The essential character of Gnosticism is that it was primarily a speculative movement that laid claim to a deeper knowledge of divine things that could be obtained by common believers. It became a popular movement as it added symbolic rites, mystic ceremonies and the teaching of magic formulas along with its initiation into special associations.

Gnosticism claimed to be Christian in character and often appealed to the words of Jesus explained in an allegorical way; as well as to secret traditions and teachings handed down from the times of the Apostles.

The main teachings of Gnosticism revolved around a trait of dualism that runs through the whole system: two original gods – higher and lower, good and bad – opposed to each other.

The historical significance of Gnosticism is seen in its inability to sidetrack Christianity as it was overcome by the direct refutations of the Church Fathers – especially through the “Rules of Faith,” by a rational interpretation of the New Testament and a limitation of its canon (accepted writings) with the exclusion of all the false books in circulation. The Church also profited by learning to mark off clearly the limits of Divine revelation and determine the relation of the Old Testament to the New.

### The Reform Movements in the Church

There were a variety of reform movements in the Church. This is another evidence that the Church is always in need of reform! This is also evidence that not all reforms are equal, or even necessary!

Marcion lived in the 2<sup>nd</sup> century (139-ish). His primary purpose in reform was soteriology (The Doctrine of Salvation), desiring the “pure gospel,” with an emphasis on faith and rejecting all allegorical interpretations.

His main teachings revolved around how to relate the Old Testament to the New. His solution being to identify the Old Testament God of the Jews as a lesser God and NOT the God of the New Testament. His view of Christ was that He did not defile Himself by taking on a real body.

He also believed that Paul was the only apostle who really understood the Gospel of Jesus Christ and limited his canon of the New Testament to the Gospel of Luke and 10 Epistles of Paul.

Montanism was primarily a reaction against the innovations of the Gnostics but it was also characterized by innovating tendencies.

Montanus lived in the 2<sup>nd</sup> century (150-ish). His teaching is called the Phrygian heresy, since he was from Phrygia. He had two women who ministered with him as prophets. He taught that the age of the “Paraclete” (The Holy Spirit) had come and that the “Paraclete” spoke through him (Montanus), now that the end of the world was at hand.

The revelations given through Montanus were mainly concerned with those things in which the Scriptures were not sufficiently ascetic.

His main teachings were that this was the age of spiritual gifts, especially prophecy; and though he was generally orthodox, he focused much on extreme asceticism and martyrdom. He also emphasized special gifts as more important than regular church offices and officers.

The Church was placed in a somewhat embarrassing position since Montanism represented the orthodox position vs. the Gnostics, along with many other positive things; but the Church followed a true instinct in rejecting it, especially because of the fanaticism it involved and its claim to a higher revelation than that contained in the New Testament.

## **The Apologists and the Beginning of the Church’s Theology**

The earliest Fathers who took up the defense of the truth are called Apologists. Most significant were Justin, Tatian, Athenagoras and Theophilus of Antioch.

They were focused on making the Christian religion acceptable to the educated class, by stressing its rationality and blending general revelation along with special revelation into their writings.

Their task assumed a three-fold character:

- Defensive – by showing that there was no evidence for the charges brought against Christianity’s adherents.
- Offensive – by charging the Jews with a legalism that lost sight of the shadowy and typical character of their system and with a blindness that prevented them from seeing Jesus as The Messiah. They assaulted paganism’s unworthy, absurd and immoral character.
- Constructive – they sought to establish the character of Christianity as a positive revelation of God, relying mainly on the fulfillment of prophecy, along with that from miracles, the spread of Christianity and the changed character of its professors.

The Apologists regarded Christianity as a philosophy, because it contains a rational element and satisfactorily answers the questions that have engaged all true philosophers; but also as the direct antithesis of philosophy, since it is free from all mere notions and opinions and originates from a supernatural revelation.

They represented Christianity largely in terms of philosophy and they did not clearly discriminate between philosophy and theology.

The fact that they sought to give a rational interpretation of Christianity should not be held against them; Christianity has an intellectual content as a reasonable religion. Their work marked the beginnings of Christian theology.

### The Anti-Gnostic Fathers

There are three prominent names among the Anti-Gnostic Fathers:

- Irenaeus was a disciple of Polycarp. His work:
  - “Against Heresies” is marked by ability, moderation and purity in its representation of Christianity.
- Hippolytus was a disciple of Irenaeus. In his principle work:
  - “The Refutation of all Heresies” he finds the root of all the perversions of doctrine in the speculations of the philosophers.

- Tertullian was from Carthage (North Africa). Due to his violent temper, he was naturally passionate in his representation of Christianity and somewhat given to extreme statements. He tended to deduce all heresy from the philosophy of the Greeks. He embraced Montanism later in life and was so convinced of the futility of arguing with heretics that he said it was better to meet them with a simple demurrer (*a plea for the dismissal of a lawsuit on the grounds that even if the statements of the opposing party are true they do not sustain the claim because they are insufficient or otherwise legally defective*).

They saw the separation of the true God and the Creator as the fundamental error of the Gnostics. Tertullian was the first to assert the tri-personality of God and to use the word “trinity.” He also planted the seeds for the doctrine of original sin.

Irenaeus was averse to speculations about the Logos, he asserted that the Logos existed from all eternity and was instrumental in revealing the Father. He saw the central element in the work of Christ as His obedience, which cancelled the disobedience of Adam. He gives the fullest description of the work of redemption but it is not completely consistent. In part because he taught that man regains his destiny when he voluntarily chooses the good, which he is still able to do. The significance of the work of Christ is in the sure knowledge of God, strengthening the freedom of man. Secondly Christ recapitulates all of the human race in Himself and becomes the leaven of a new life in humanity.

Tertullian, in opposition to the Monarchian theory, stressed the fact that the three persons in the Godhead are of one substance and though they can be numbered, they cannot be divided. Even so, he did not succeed in reaching the full Trinitarian statement.

They were generally not clear in their doctrine of salvation and tended toward moralism, where the sinner earns his salvation via penance.

They tended to represent the idea of an external community in place of a spiritual fellowship; and the visible organization as the channel of divine grace, with participation in the blessing of salvation dependent on membership in the visible Church.

Their teaching re: the future generally followed current evangelical teaching.

### The Alexandrian Fathers

The Alexandrian Fathers in the 2<sup>nd</sup> & 3<sup>rd</sup> centuries combined Hellenistic learning and the truths of Alexandrian theology. Clement of Alexandria and Origen were the leaders in this group. The theology of the East was more speculative than that of the West. Clement was not orthodox, he did not follow the rule of faith (*similar to our "Doctrinal Statements" or "Church Covenants" that we would agree to follow*), but instead followed the path of the Apologists in seeking to wed the philosophy of the day to the Christian tradition and thus build bridges between Gentile learning and the Gospel.

Clement’s allegorical interpretation approach opened the door wide for all kinds of human speculation. Origen was born of Christian parents and received a Christian education, with Clement as his teacher. He battled Gnosticism and struck a decisive blow to Monarchianism.

His main goal was to construct a systematic body of Christian doctrine. His teachings were of a very speculative nature and in later life he was condemned for heresy. He said that he took his stand squarely on the Word of God and the Rule of Faith but his theology bore the marks of Neo-Platonism (a hybrid version of Plato’s philosophy) and his allegorical interpretation opened the ways for all kinds of speculation and arbitrary interpretation. (See 1 Corinthians 4:6)

Like the Apologists, Origen speaks of God in absolute terms and like the Anti-Gnostic Fathers, rejected their dualistic view of God. Clement, as usual, was not clear in his representation of the Logos. He recognizes the full divinity of the Son, but uses some expressions that point to subordination.

Clement speaks of the Holy Spirit as the first creature made by the Father through the Son, so the Spirit is not as closely related to the Father as the Son is. The Spirit only operates in the saints and is an object of divine worship.

Origen’s teachings respecting man are somewhat out of the ordinary. Man, pre-existed and fell from holiness into sin, which was the cause for the creation of the present material world, which exists for the discipline and purgation of these fallen spirits.

They both taught that at the incarnation, the Logos assumed human nature in its entirety – body and soul – thus becoming a real man, The God-Man.

Clement did not avoid Docetism (that Christ's body was not human), and said that Christ used food, not because He needed it, but simply to guard against a denial of his humanity; and that He was incapable of emotions of joy and grief.

The sacrifice of Christ as the propitiation for sins is not stressed. Origen taught that Christ does deliver us from the power of Satan by practicing deceit, tricking him into accepting Jesus as the ransom, but because of Jesus' sinlessness, Satan could not retain his hold on Christ.

He also taught that all fallen spirits, including Satan and his evil angels are included in the redemptive influences of Christ.

Origen represents faith as an act of man and speaks of it as an effect of divine grace. He speaks of two ways of salvation: one by faith and another by knowledge. Faith is not the only condition of salvation; repentance is even more necessary. Repentance consists of our confession of sins.

Origen taught that the Church is the congregation of believers, outside of which there is no salvation. They both taught that baptism marks the beginning of the new life in the Church and includes the forgiveness of sins.

Clement distinguishes between a higher and lower state of the Christian life. In the lower, man attains to holiness under influence of fear and hope, while in the higher, fear is cast out by perfect love.

They both taught that the process of purification begun in the life of the sinner on earth is continued after death. Origen teaches that the good enter paradise or a place where they receive further education and the wicked experience the fire of judgment which, is not to be regarded as a permanent punishment, but as a means of purification, until the day of judgment.

Both were averse to the doctrine of a millennium and Origen spiritualized the resurrection.

### Monarchianism

Monarchianism was the great heresy of the 3<sup>rd</sup> century and took two forms:

- Dynamic Monarchianism:
  - This type of Monarchianism was mainly interested in maintaining the unity of God (in line with the Ebionite heresy earlier & Unitarianism today).
  - They taught that Jesus was consubstantial (of the same substance) with the Father, but was not a distinct person in the Godhead. The Logos was merely an impersonal power that was especially active in Jesus.
  
- Modalistic Monarchianism (more influential):
  - It too was interested in maintaining the unity of God but was primarily intent on maintaining the full deity of Christ.
  - It was called “Modalistic” because it conceived of the three Persons in the Godhead as so many modes (or masks) in which God manifested Himself. It was called “Patripassianism” (Latin for: “The Father Suffers”) in the West, teaching that the Father Himself had become incarnate in Christ and therefore suffered in and with Him.

The names: Father, Son and Holy Spirit are said to be simply designations of three different phases under which the One Divine Essence manifests itself.

God reveals Himself as the Father in creation and in the giving of the law, as the Son in the incarnation and as the Holy Spirit in regeneration and sanctification.

**6. Remember that all of this is preparatory doctrinal development and that the New Testament Canon of Scripture had not yet been established. Just because some of the “Church Fathers,” in whatever era, taught certain doctrines, that does not necessarily validate the teaching. Discuss this after reading 1 Corinthians 4:6; 2 Corinthians 10:3-5 and Col 2:8.**



## **SESSION 13 – DOCTRINE OF THE TRINITY AND DIETY OF CHRIST**

After this session, you will:

- Know that words matter, especially when it comes to stating our beliefs.
- Be able to explain the importance of the doctrines of the Trinity and of Christ.
- Think about the struggle, and those who have fought the good fight for the doctrines of the Trinity and of Christ.
- Understand that the doctrines of the Trinity and of Christ are great mysteries with glimpses of light that require our humility and submission.
- Be in awe of our great and glorious and mysterious God.

You will KNOW:

- That words matter.

You will BE ABLE TO:

- See that the Doctrine of Christ and the Christological Controversies are essential to our understanding of the Trinity.

You will THINK ABOUT:

- The early Church Fathers did not have, or at least did not present, a clear conception of the Trinity.

### **In the Last Session**

- You learned that we are using the Vertical method in this course to study the history of Christian Doctrine. We are studying each doctrine individually through the various ages.
- You explained the difference between doctrine (the teachings in the Scriptures) and dogma (the organization of those teachings into statements).
- You also thought about the important and monumental task of taking the doctrines of the Bible and translating them into the dogmas or the doctrinal statements we have today.

### **Begin video.**

### **The Doctrines of the Trinity and of Christ**

- The author of our textbook, Louis Berkhof, makes a statement regarding the early Christological controversies connected to our study of the Trinity.
  - “The early Christological controversies do not present a very edifying spectacle.
  - The passions were too much in evidence.
  - Unworthy intrigues often played an important part and
  - Even violence occasionally made its appearance.”

- Sadly, this is often a too common experience for the Church throughout our history.
- I hope that we can learn to “contend earnestly for the faith, which was once for all handed down to the saints,” (Jude vs 3) without being contentious.

### **The Doctrine of the Trinity**

- After the Council of Nicea in 325, the Council of Sirmium in 357 tried to unite all the factions by setting aside the use of some terms because:
  - “They pertained to matters far beyond human knowledge.”
  - However, no one would admit that this was beyond their knowledge and things had gone too far for any such settlement.
    - Even John Calvin, who defended the doctrine of the Trinity as formulated by the early Church, labels some of the concepts being fought over as “difficult, if not meaningless.”
    - We must realize the limitations of our understanding and our dependence on God’s revelation.
- Dt 29:29 – “The secret things belong to the LORD our God, but the things revealed belong to us and to our sons forever, that we may observe all the words of this law.”
  - There are things we cannot know and things we do not need to know. Get used to it.

### **The Early Church Fathers**

- The early Church Fathers did not have, or at least did not present, a clear conception of the Trinity.
- This should not surprise us since they did not have easy access to much of the New Testament.
- I would imagine that most Christians, even today, do not have a clear conception of the Trinity.
- We saw in our last lesson, that Tertullian was the first to assert clearly the tri-personality of God and to maintain the substantial unity of the three Persons.

### **Defending The “Oneness” of God**

- In the Church, there were those seeking to defend and promote the Oneness or unity of God.
- Others were fighting for the deity of Christ, while still others sought to protect His humanity.
- The Holy Spirit’s status occupied no important place in these discussions at the beginning.
- Almost all of this was completely:
  - Out of balance and reactionary, not to mention, arrogant!

- Arius, who was an Elder in Alexandria, saw the Logos/Son as an impersonal, divine energy that finally became incarnate and was eventually adopted as Son and so entitled to the veneration of men. This was based on what? I do not know.
- His own bishop along with the archdeacon of Alexandria, Athanasius, opposed him.
- Athanasius felt that to regard Christ, as a creature was to deny that faith in Him brings man into saving union with God.
- He strongly emphasized the unity of God and insisted on a view of the Trinity that would not endanger that unity.
- It was his understanding of the doctrine of salvation that led Athanasius to the position that union with God is necessary for salvation and that no creature, but only one who is Himself God can unite us with God.

### **The Council of Nicaea**

- The Council of Nicaea convened in 325 to settle these disputes.
- After much debate and no consensus, the emperor stepped in and secured the victory for Athanasius. The Council adopted this statement: (in part)
- “We believe in one God, the Father Almighty, Maker of things visible and invisible. And in one Lord Jesus Christ, begotten not made, being of one substance with the Father...”
- The key words are “being of one substance with the Father.”
- This decision of the Council, or rather the emperor, did not terminate the controversy; it was actually just the beginning.
- A settlement forced upon the Church by the emperor could not satisfy – and was of uncertain duration.
- The dispute eventually included the doctrine of the Holy Spirit.
- The Nicene Creed was not helpful in this case, since it only contained the indefinite statement: “And I believe in the Holy Spirit.”

### **The Council of Constantinople**

- The Council of Constantinople, in 381, declared its approval of the Nicene Creed and accepted an addition to the formula regarding the Holy Spirit:
- “And we believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, The Life-giving, who proceeds from the Father, Who is to be glorified with the Father and the Son, and Who speaks through the prophets?”
- This statement ultimately proved unsatisfactory.
- First – the word for “being of one substance” was not used, so that the consubstantiality of the Spirit with the Father (being of the same essence) was not directly asserted.

- Second – they did not define the relationship of the Holy Spirit to the other two Persons.
- It was neither denied nor affirmed that He also proceeds from the Son.
- To say that the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father only, seemed like a denial of the essential oneness of the Son with the Father;
- To say that He also proceeds from the Son, seemed to place the Holy Spirit in a more dependent position than the Son – infringing on His deity.

### **The Synod of Toledo**

- It was not until the Synod of Toledo in 589 that the words “and from the Son” were added to the Constantinople Symbol which was a doctrinal statement.
- The Eastern Church never adopted this addition and it was a major factor in the split between the east and the west.
- Later theology did not add significantly to the doctrine of the Trinity. However, there were deviations from, and consequent restatements of, this truth.

### **The Reformed Confessions**

- The doctrine of the Trinity, as formulated by the Church, was expressed in all the Reformed Confessions; perhaps most completely and with the greatest precision in chapter three of the Second Helvetic Confessions. This was also a doctrinal statement developed by a counsel of Church leaders.

### **The Doctrine of Christ**

- The Doctrine of Christ and the Christological Controversies are essential to our understanding of the Trinity.
- The Holy Spirit was guiding the Church, often through shame and confusion, into the clear atmosphere of the truth.
- Some claim the Church attempted too much when it tried to define a mystery, which from the nature of the case transcends all definition.
- We should note that the early church did not claim to be able to penetrate to the depths of this great doctrine and did not pretend to give a solution of the problem of the incarnation (in the formula of Chalcedon).
- It merely sought to guard the truth against the errors of theorizers and ward off various unscriptural constructions of the truth.
- The Church was in search of a conception of Christ that would do justice to the following points: (Otherwise its conception of Christ would be defective.)
- First, His true and proper deity,
- Then, His true and proper humanity,
- Also, the union of deity and humanity in one person and
- Finally, the proper distinction of His deity and humanity.

- All the Christological heresies that arose in the early church (and that cycle back through various cults today) originated in the failure to combine all these elements in the doctrinal statement of the truth.

### **In the Middle Ages**

- In the Middle Ages, the construction of the doctrine of Christ by Thomas Aquinas shows us how the matter stood at the time of the Reformation.
- He adhered to the official theology of the Catholic Church.
- The Person of the Logos became composite after the incarnation and
- The human manhood was hindered from arriving at an independent personality.
- The human knowledge of Christ was such that He could know all things that can be so known by men and all that is made known to them by revelation, a knowledge perfect in its kind but yet subject to creaturely limitations.
- We can find the most complete official statement on the Reformed position regarding the doctrine of Christ in the Second Helvetic Confession of 1566.
- The word confession is used to indicate their doctrinal statement or their statement of faith.

### **A Striking Change**

- From the nineteenth century on, a striking change took place in the study of the Person of Christ.
- There was a growing conviction that there was a better method for studying the Person of Christ: The study of the historical Jesus.
- The point of view was anthropological (the study of man) and the result was anthropocentric (man-centered).
- This new method was employed in such a manner as to yield destructive, rather than constructive results.
- Its application went hand in hand with a strong aversion to authority and the supernatural, as well as with an insistent appeal to reason and experience.
- It was not what the Bible teaches us concerning Christ, but our own discoveries in investigating the phenomena of His life and our experience of Him, that became the determining factor in forming a “proper” conception of Jesus. (You may roll your eyes here.)

**To Consider**

- The doctrinal controversies of the Church were the birth pangs of new dogmas. Though not edifying, it is essential that we gain a proper understanding of the beginnings of ecclesiastical dogmas.
- We find religious doctrines in Scripture, though not in their finished form.
- Then we take the doctrines and form them into Dogmas.
- They are the fruit of human study and reflection, often occasioned or intensified by theological controversies.

**Review**

- You learned that words matter, especially when it comes to stating our beliefs.
- You gained an understanding of the importance of the doctrines of the Trinity and of Christ.
- You gained an appreciation of the struggle, and those who have fought the good fight for the doctrines of the Trinity and of Christ.

**In the Next Session**

- We will be discussing, in the History of Christian Doctrine, the section on the Doctrine of Sin, Grace and Related Doctrines.

## INSTRUCTOR’S NOTES: DOCTRINE OF THE TRINITY AND CHRIST

For the rest of this session, have your students discuss what they have learned and written in their summary of each chapter in their textbook.

There are a series of questions or assignments numbered and in bold letters.

Because of time constraints, use your discretion regarding which of these you would like to have your students work on and discuss as a group. You can lead these discussions yourself or assign some of them to individuals or groups and have them make a presentation or lead the discussion. One suggestion would be to have at least one student (or more, depending on your situation) share their summary as you cover each of the chapters in the notes below.

### Chapter (Section) Summaries & Notes for Discussion

#### THE HISTORY OF CHRISTIAN DOCTRINE

by Louis Berkhof

#### **The Doctrine of the Trinity and the Deity of Christ**

##### **The Trinitarian Controversy**

The early Church Fathers had no clear conception of the Trinity (as if we do?).

Some conceived of the Logos as impersonal reason that became personal at the time of creation.

Others regarded Him as personal and co-eternal with the Father, sharing the divine essence and yet ascribed to Him in subordination to the Father.

The Holy Spirit occupied no important place in their discussion. They spoke of Him primarily in connection with the work of redemption as applied to the hearts and lives of believers (sanctification). Some considered Him to be subordinate to the Father and the Son.

Tertullian was the first to assert clearly the tri-personality of God and to maintain the substantial unity of the three Persons.

Monarchianism emphasized the unity of God and the true deity of Christ, but denied the Trinity. They were opposed by Tertullian, Hippolytus and Origen – who defended the Trinitarian position as expressed (later) in the Apostles’ Creed. Origen failed in giving a scriptural representation of the relation of the three Persons to the one essence in the Godhead. His view involved the subordination of the Second Person

(The Son/Logos), to the First Person (The Father). His view of the Holy Spirit, placed the Spirit as subordinate to the Father and the Son – in fact numbered the Spirit as among the things created by the Son.

**1. Discuss the proper view point to this statement: “he did not succeed in giving a scriptural representation of the relation of the three Persons to the one essence in the Godhead.”**

**A proper view of God has to include the idea that God has revealed Himself in Jesus Christ, through His word and through His creation. Consider Deuteronomy 29:29 - The secret things belong to the LORD our God, but the things revealed belong to us and to our sons forever, that we may observe all the words of this law. (NASB) We have to take our stand on what God has revealed, even if we cannot explain it to others or ourselves in a way that can be understood. The summary of the teachings of Scripture declare that The Father is God, The Son is God and The Holy Spirit is God. They also teach us that The Father is not the Son, nor is He the Holy Spirit. The Son is not the Father nor is He the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is not the Father nor is He the Son. Yet, they are all credited with the work of creation and salvation. And - God is declared to be One!**

The “Arian Controversy” – Related to the anti-Trinitarian views of Arius who was an Elder in Alexandria. His dominate idea was the monotheistic principle of the Monarchians. He saw the Logos/Son as (impersonal) divine energy that finally became incarnate; eventually adopted as Son and so entitled to the veneration of men.

Arius was opposed by his own bishop Alexander and then by the archdeacon of Alexandria – Athanasius: who had great stability and genuineness of character, a sure foundation of the conception of the unity of God and an unerring tact to teach men to recognize the nature and significance of the Person of Christ.

Athanasius felt that to regard Christ, as a creature was to deny that faith in Him brings man into saving union with God. He strongly emphasized the unity of God and insisted on a view of the Trinity that would not endanger that unity.

He recognized three distinct “hypostases” (Hypo-stay-sis) in God. Hypostases is the underlying essential nature of God; the state of being God. Those three hypostases in God were not to be regarded in any way as separated – “polytheism.” Therefore, the unity of God, as well as the distinctions in His Being, is best expressed in the



term: Oneness of Essence. (John 10:30 - One in essence)

His understanding of the doctrine of salvation led him to the position that union with God is necessary for salvation and that no creature, but only one who is Himself God can unite us with God.

**2. Discuss Athanasius “understanding of the doctrine of salvation” (page 86), with 1 Timothy 2:5 – “For there is one God and one mediator also between God and men, the man Christ Jesus” and Gal 3:20 – Now a mediator is not for one party only; whereas God is only one.”**

**Also, Heb 2:17-18; 4:15-16**

The Council of Nicaea convened in 325 AD to settle the dispute. The Arians rejected the idea of a timeless or eternal generation, while Athanasius reasserted this. The Arians said that the Son was created from the non-existent, while Athanasius maintained that He was generated from the essence of the Father.

The Arians held that the Son was not of the same substance as the Father, while Athanasius affirmed that He was “homoousios” (homo-oo-see-us) (of the same essence) with the Father.

There was also a middle party: “The Origenistic Party (following Origen’s views). They opposed the doctrine that the Son is of the same substance with the Father and proposed a compromise originally drawn up by Eusebius which suggested using the word: “homoiousios” (homo-you-see-us) (of a like substance) instead of “homoousios” (homo-oo-see-us) and so teach that the Son is of similar substance with the Father.

The emperor stepped in and secured the victory for Athanasius and the Council adopted this statement:

“We believe in one God, the Father Almighty, Maker of things visible and invisible. And in one Lord Jesus Christ, begotten not made, being of one substance (homoousios) with the Father...”

The decision of the Council did not terminate the controversy; it was actually just the beginning. A settlement forced upon the Church by the emperor could not satisfy – and was of uncertain duration.

**3. Discuss why “because I said so” is rarely an adequate answer. Refer to 1 Peter 3:15, “We must be ready to make a defense...for the hope that is in you, yet with gentleness and reverence.”**

**However, there is a limit to our understanding and sometimes we may have to just accept the idea that something is true simply because God says so. Beware of taking our stand on uncertain sands of speculation!**

Semi-Arianism gained the upper hand in the Eastern Church. The Church became partly Arian, but predominantly Semi-Arian, and the emperors generally sided with the majority. Athanasius was exiled five different times.

The opposition to the Nicene Creed divided into different parties.  
The Son was “heteroousios” - of a different substance from the Father.  
The Son was “anomoios” (ah-nomo-ee-us) - unlike the Father.  
The Son was “homoiousios” - of a like substance with the Father.  
The East (Orthodox) was dominated by the subordinationism of Origen.  
The West (Catholic) was largely influenced by Tertullian (& Athanasius).

A younger Nicene party arose, composed of disciples of the Origenist School, but who were indebted to Athanasius and the Nicene Creed for a more perfect interpretation of the truth. Included in the group were the three Cappadocians: Basil the Great, Gregory of Nyssa and Gregory of Nazianzus. They began with the view of the three hypostases (persons) in the divine Being and attempted to bring these under the conception of the divine essence “ousia.”

The dispute eventually involved the doctrine of the Holy Spirit. Arius and Origen held that the Holy Spirit was the first created being produced by the Son. Athanasius (& the three Cappadocians) asserted that the Holy Spirit was of the same essence with the Father, but the Nicene Creed contains only the indefinite statement: “And I believe in the Holy Spirit.”

The Council of Constantinople, in 381, declared its approval of the Nicene Creed and accepted an addition to the formula respecting the Holy Spirit:  
“And we believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the Life-giving, who proceeds from the Father, who is to be glorified with the Father and the Son, and who speaks through the prophets.”

This statement proved unsatisfactory:

- First – the word for “of the same substance” was not used, so that the consubstantiality (of the same essence) of the Spirit with the Father was not directly asserted.
- Second – the relation of the Holy Spirit to the other two Persons was not defined. It was neither denied nor affirmed that He also proceeds from the Son. To say that the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father only seemed like a denial of the essential oneness of the Son with the Father; and to say that He also proceeds from the Son, seemed to place the Holy Spirit in a more dependent position than the Son – infringing on His deity.

It was not until the Synod of Toledo in AD 589 that the words “and of / from the Son” were added to the Constantinople Symbol. The Eastern Church never adopted this addition and it was a major factor in the split between the east and the west.

In the East (Orthodox), John of Damascus finalized their formulation of the doctrine of the Trinity. Saying that there is but one divine essence, but three persons or hypostases (the realities of the divine Being); but not related to one another as three men are. They are one in every respect, except in their mode of existence. The Father is characterized by “non-generation,” the Son by “generation” and the Holy Spirit by “procession.” Their relation to one another is one of mutual interpenetration without comingling. He still spoke of the Father as the source of the Godhead and represented the Spirit as proceeding from the Father through the Logos.

The western (Catholic) concept of the Trinity reached its final statement in the great work of Augustine. He too stresses the unity of essence and the Trinity of Persons. Each possesses the entire essence and is identical with the essence, and with each one of the other Persons. One is never and can never be without the other; the relation of dependence between them is a mutual one. The divine essence belongs to each of them under a different point of view. Between the three hypostases, there is a relation of mutual interpenetration and inter-dwelling. In this conception, the Holy Spirit is naturally regarded as proceeding, not only from the Father, but also from the Son.

The word, “person” does not satisfy Augustine as a designation of the relationship in which the three stand together with one another. He continued to use it, as he says, “not in order to express it, but in order not to be silent.”

### The Doctrine of the Trinity in Later Theology

Later theology did not add materially to the doctrine of the Trinity. However, there were deviations from, and consequent restatements of, the truth.

Roscelinus (1050-1122) applied the Nominalist theory that universals are merely subjective conceptions to the Trinity. He regarded the three Persons in the Godhead as three essentially different individuals, which could be said to be one generically and in name only. Their unity is merely a unity of will and power which leads to Tritheism (the separate existence of three gods).

Gilbert of Poitiers (1085-1154) interpreted the Doctrine of the Trinity from the view of moderate Realism, “that the universals have their existence in the particulars.” He distinguished between the divine essence and God. The divine essence is not God, but the form of God, or that, which makes Him to be God. This essence or form (forma – that which makes a thing what it is) is common to the three Persons and in that respect, they are one. He was charged with Tetratheism - a doctrine that there are three persons in the Godhead and a divine essence constituting the common origin, interpreted as being a fourth god.

Abelard (1079-1142) identifies the three Persons in the divine Being with the attributes of power, wisdom and goodness. The name of Father stands for power, that of Son for wisdom and that of Holy Spirit for goodness. He also implies that the distinctions in the Godhead are real personal distinctions, employing illustrations that clearly point in the direction of Modalism. (aka: Sabellianism – One God reveals Himself in three ways, or modes, at different times.)

In the Reformation, John Calvin discusses and defends, the doctrine of the Trinity as formulated by the early Church, at length in his “Institutes”; saying that the essence of both the Son and the Spirit is unbegotten, unoriginated. It was said that Calvin seemed to find some of the arguments surrounding the doctrine of the Trinity, to be difficult to understand, if not meaningless.

The doctrine of the Trinity, as formulated by the Church, was expressed in all Reformed Confessions; most completely and with the greatest precision in chapter three of the Second Helvetic Confessions.

Available online: <https://www.ccel.org/creeds/helvetic.htm>

In the 16<sup>th</sup> century, the Socinians declared the doctrine of three Persons possessing a common essence, to be contrary to reason and attempted to refute it on the basis of the scripture passages the Arians used. They went beyond the Arians in denying the pre-existence of the Son and that He was simply a man with a peculiar fullness

of the Spirit. They also defined the Holy Spirit as a “virtue or energy flowing from God to men.”

Samuel Clarke, in England (1712) spoke of the Father as the supreme and only God. Alongside of Him there existed from the beginning, a second divine Person called the Son, who derives His being and all His attributes from the Father, not by a mere necessity of nature, but by an act of the Father’s optional will. Alongside of these two there is a third Person who derives His essence from the Father through the Son. He is subordinate to the Son both by nature and by the will of the Father.

Some New England theologians criticized the doctrine of eternal generation, calling it eternal nonsense. “Father, Son and Holy Spirit are words which designate the distinctions of the Godhead as manifested to us in the economy of redemption, and are not intended to mark the eternal relations of the Godhead as they are in themselves.”

#### The Doctrine of Christ / The Christological Controversies

The Christological problem can be approached from the side of theology proper and from the side of soteriology (the doctrine of salvation).

The early Christological controversies do not present a very edifying spectacle. The passions were too much in evidence, unworthy intrigues often played an important part and even violence occasionally made its appearance.

#### **4. “Not this way among you” – Passions, unworthy intrigues and violence occasionally made their appearance. Have you seen these hanging around your church? Are they usually connected with doctrinal issues or with something else? Remember 2 Timothy 2:23-26.**

The Holy Spirit was guiding the Church, often through shame and confusion, into the clear atmosphere of the truth. Some claim the Church attempted too much when it tried to define a mystery, which from the nature of the case transcends all definition.

We should note that the early church did not claim to be able to penetrate to the depths of this great doctrine and did not pretend to give a solution to the problem of the incarnation in the formula of Chalcedon. It merely sought to guard the truth against the errors of theorizers and ward off various unscriptural constructions of the truth.

The Church was in quest of a conception of Christ that would do justice to the following points: (Otherwise, its conception of Christ would be defective.)

His true and proper deity.

His true and proper humanity.

The union of deity and humanity in one person.

The proper distinction of deity and humanity.

All the Christological heresies that arose in the early church originated in the failure to combine all the elements in the doctrinal statement of the truth.

The first stage of this controversy had its roots in the past.

Monarchians and others, including the Arians denied that the Son-Logos, who became incarnate in Christ, was possessed of absolute Godhead, denying the deity of Christ.

Gnostics and others, including Apollinaris, bishop of Laodicea (390), denied the true and proper humanity of Jesus.

The argument revolved around the belief that, if the Logos did not assume human nature in its integrity, entirety, He could not be our perfect Redeemer.

The Synod of Alexandria in 362 asserted the existence of a human soul in Christ; which was inclusive of the rational element.

Mary was often called: “theotokos” – Mother of God. This had significant implications. If she were the mother of God then Jesus would have to be God.

Theodore of Mopsuestia (Cilicia, Turkey) (350 – 428) began with the idea of the complete manhood of Christ and the perfect reality of His human experiences. He owed His power to keep Himself free from sin to His sinless birth and the union of His manhood with the divine Logos. He saw no essential difference, except in degree, between the indwelling of God in Christ and that in believers – substituting the indwelling of the Logos in the man Jesus in place of the incarnation.

Nestorius (386 – 450) Bishop of Constantinople denied that the term “theotokos” could properly be applied to Mary for the simple reason that she only brought forth a man who was accompanied by the Logos. His opponent held him responsible for the conclusion that would be drawn from this teaching: that if Mary is not “theotokos” then the assumption of a single human being into fellowship with the Logos is substituted for the incarnation of God; and the relation of Christ to humanity is

changed – He is no longer the effectual Redeemer of humanity. The followers of Nestorius did not hesitate to draw those conclusions.

Nestorianism is defective, not in the doctrine of the two natures in Christ, but in that of the one Person. Both the true and proper deity and the true and proper humanity are conceded, but they are not conceived in such a way as to form a real unity and to constitute a single person. Its strong point is that it seeks to do full justice to the humanity of Christ. (By doing injustice to His deity!)

The Cyrilian Party was named after Cyril of Alexandria (376 – 444), the most prominent opponent of Nestorianism. He taught that the Logos assumed human nature in its entirety, in order to redeem it, but at the same time formed the only personal subject in the God-man. His terminology was not always clear. He seemed to teach that there are two separate natures in Christ but he also used expressions stressing the unity of the two natures. His great significance lies in the fact that he stressed the unity of the Person of Christ.

The three points he emphasized were:

- The inseparable conjunction of the two natures.
- The impersonality and dependence of the manhood.
- The unity and continuity of the Person in Christ.

The Council of Ephesus maintained that the term “theotokos” could be used of Mary and asserted the doctrine of the two distinct natures of Christ.

Many of Cyril’s adherents were not satisfied. Eutyches (375- 454), an old monk, with unbalanced convictions and a strong Anti-Nestorian bias led the charge. He believed that the human attributes were assimilated to the divine in Christ, so that His body was not consubstantial (of the same nature or essence) with ours, He was not human in the proper sense of the word.

Flavian, bishop of Constantinople (died 449) wrote the “Tome” that profoundly influenced the Chalcedonian formula.

*(The Council of Chalcedon in 451: see page 107 in the History of Christian Doctrines for their statement.)*

The main points being:

- There are two natures in Christ, permanently distinct.
- The two natures unite in one Person, each performing its own proper function in the incarnate life.

- From the unity of the Person follows the communication between the two natures.
- The work of redemption required a Mediator both human and divine, passible and impassible, mortal and immortal.
- The manhood of Christ is permanent, and its denial implies a docetic (*His body was not human*) denial of the reality of the sufferings of Christ.

Second stage of the controversy moved to Rome, which was ever-increasingly becoming the center of orthodoxy in contrast with the East and Middle East.

There was confusion after the decision of the Chalcedon Council. Egypt, Syria & Palestine harbored many fanatical monks of Eutychian convictions. (e.g., the human nature of Jesus was absorbed into the Logos).

There were groups who:

- Denied that Christ had two distinct natures.
- Emphasized the fact that God suffered.
- Stressed the fact that the human nature of Christ was, like ours, capable of suffering and we worship that which is corruptible.
- Represented just the opposite view, that the human nature of Christ was not consubstantial with ours, but was endowed with divine attributes and was therefore sinless, imperishable and incorruptible.

Leontius of Byzantium (485-543) stressed the fact that the human nature of Christ is personal not impersonal – having its personal subsistence in the Person of the Son of God from the very moment of the incarnation.

The Monothelitic controversy arose because the “how” of the two natures in Christ remained unsolved (*see Dt 29:29 & 1 Corinthians 4:6*), but the additional question arose of “how much” is included in the person and “how much” in the nature? Does the will belong to the person or the nature?

They asserted that there is but one will in Christ. Either the human will was regarded as merged in the divine or the will was regarded as composite – the fusion of the divine and the human.

The sixth ecumenical Council of Constantinople (680) came to the established opinion that the human will in Christ, by its union with the divine did not become less human, but was heightened and perfected by the union, the two always acting in perfect harmony.



John of Damascus (675-749) proclaimed the Logos assumed human nature, and not vice versa. The man Jesus did not assume the Logos.

The Christology of the Western Church remained comparatively unaffected by the controversies raging in the East. However, there was an “adoptionist controversy” that proclaimed Christ as to His divine nature, was the only begotten Son of God in the natural sense, but Christ on His human side became the Son of God by adoption. The Synod of Frankfort condemned this error in 794 AD.

#### Later Christological Discussions

In the Middle Ages other problems, such as those connected with the doctrines of sin and grace and with the doctrine of the work of redemption, became the center of attention.

Thomas Aquinas’s construction of the doctrine of Christ shows us how the matter stood at the time of the Reformation. He adhered to the received theology. The Person of the Logos became composite after the incarnation and the human manhood was hindered from arriving at an independent personality. The human knowledge of Christ was such that He could know all things that can be so known by men and all that is made known to them by revelation, a knowledge perfect in its kind yet subject to creaturely limitations.

During the Reformation, we can find the most complete official statement on the Reformed position re: the doctrine of Christ in the Second Helvetic Confession (1566).

*(See pages 116-117 of The History of Christian Doctrines – the full statement is available online-<https://www.ccel.org/creeds/helvetic.htm>)*

In the 19th Century a striking change took place in the study of the Person of Christ. There was a growing conviction that there was a better method for studying the Person of Christ: The study of the historical Jesus.

This point of view was anthropological and the result was anthropocentric (man-centered). The new method was employed in such a manner as to yield destructive rather than constructive results. Its application went hand in hand with a strong aversion to authority and the supernatural, and with an insistent appeal to reason and experience. Not what the Bible teaches us concerning Christ, but our own discoveries in investigating the phenomena of His life and our experience of Him, became the determining factor in forming a proper conception of Jesus.

**5. It was a goal of the quest for the historical Jesus that the dominant point of view would become anthropocentric (man-centered); i.e. Not what the Bible teaches us concerning Christ, but our own discoveries in investigating the phenomena of His life and our experience of Him. Does this mean that who Jesus is to you, can be different than who Jesus is to me? Or does it mean that I must incorporate who Jesus is to you in with my perception, conception of who Jesus is? Where does this lead us? Where does it stop?**

Schleiermacher's view saw the uniqueness of Christ as consisting of the fact that He possesses a perfect and unbroken sense of union with the divine and realizes to the full the destiny of man in His character of sinless perfection. His transcendent dignity finds its explanation in a special presence of God in Him, in His supreme God-consciousness.

The Christ of Immanuel Kant (1724-1804) was merely an abstract idea of ethical perfection. What saves is faith in this ideal, not in Jesus as a Person.

The Hegelian Christ – Georg Hegel (1770-1831) saw the beliefs of the Church regarding the Person of Jesus Christ as merely man's stammering utterances of ontological ideas (philosophical speculations – *which was too often true*). He regards human history as the process of God's becoming – this is the only sense in which the Word became flesh and dwelt among us. God becomes incarnate in humanity – expressed in the oneness of God and man.

A remarkable attempt was made in the so-called Kenosis doctrine to improve on the theological construction of the doctrine of the Person of Christ taken from Philippians 2:7. A misinterpretation of this passage became the Scriptural basis for the Kenosis doctrine – along with 2 Corinthians 8:9. These passages were interpreted as teaching that Christ as the incarnation emptied or divested Himself of His divinity.

However, there are serious objections to this interpretation:

- "Emptied Himself" is contrary to the usual meaning of the term "to make oneself of no account."
- The implied object of the action expressed is not Christ's divinity, but His being equal with God in power and glory.

Based on 2 Corinthians 8:9 they were teaching the doctrine that the Logos literally became, that is, was changed into a man by reducing Himself, either wholly or in part, to the dimensions of a man, and then increased in wisdom and power until at last, He again assumed the divine nature.



August Dorner's (1846-1920) conception of the incarnation is represented in the Mediating School. He stresses the fact that God and man are akin – there is an essential nature of God, an urge to communicate Himself to man. It would have happened, even if sin had not entered the world.

In Ritschl's view of the Person of Christ, he takes his starting point in the work of Christ rather than in His person and emphasizes the former far more than the latter. His work determines the dignity of His Person.

In modern theology, the adaptations representing Christ vary, but the fundamental idea is generally the same, that of an essential unity of God and man. Christ differed from other men only in that he was more conscious of the God immanent in Him and consequently is the highest relation of the Supreme Being in His word and work. Essentially all men are divine, because God is immanent in all, and they are all sons of God, differing from Christ only in degree. The latter stands apart only in view of His greater receptivity for the divine and of His superior God-consciousness.

**6. Discuss "the doctrinal controversies of the Church were the birth pangs of new dogmas. Though not edifying, it is absolutely essential that we gain a proper understanding of the beginnings of ecclesiastical dogmas."**

**I would agree that the birth process is painful and messy; and I do not want to see what is happening. However, the birth of the Dogma and its ultimate development is worth it! Consider the times and the resources available in each era as we watch the struggle for truth; and join in the battle for truth!**

## **SESSION 14 – DOCTRINE OF SIN, GRACE AND RELATED DOCTRINES**

After this session, you will:

- Know the doctrinal distinctions between Augustine and Pelagius.
- Be able to understand the importance of having a proper view of man, sin and grace.
- Think about and discuss the consequences of a low view of sin and a high view of humanity.
- See the great need for God’s generous grace.

You will KNOW:

- What importance the decisions of the Synod of Dort played.

You will BE ABLE TO:

- Explain that the decay of true religion has always been accompanied by errors and imbalance in the doctrines of man, sin and grace.

You will THINK ABOUT:

- The Greek Fathers’ view of sin was largely influenced by their opposition to Gnosticism.

### **In the Last Session**

- You learned that words matter, especially when it comes to stating our beliefs.
- You gained an understanding of the importance of the doctrines of the Trinity and of Christ.
- You gained an appreciation of the struggle, and those who have fought the good fight for the doctrines of the Trinity and of Christ.

### **Begin video.**

### **The Doctrine of Sin, Grace and Related Doctrines**

- From the view of practical Christianity, the importance of the doctrines regarding sin and grace, as well as, the freedom of the will and divine predestination can hardly be overrated.
- Their bearing on the work of redemption is even more directly apparent than that of the christological questions.
- These are the doctrines and questions that draw the lines between the great divisions of Christianity.
- The decay of true religion has always been accompanied by errors and imbalance in these doctrines. Always!

### **The Greek Fathers**

- The Greek Fathers were the Church leaders in the East. Constantinople rather than Rome.
- The Greek Fathers’ view of sin was largely influenced by their opposition to Gnosticism with its emphasis on the physical necessity of evil and its denial of the freedom of the will.
- They reacted by taking the opposite view, with their main emphasis on the free will of man and almost abandoning the operation of divine grace.
- They learned more toward Pelagius rather than to Augustine.
- Sadly, most of the Greek Fathers simply chose to avoid the issues.

### **Out West**

- In the Catholic West, they wrestled with the questions of whether people were born sinful and sinners or were we born neutral and only sinned because of ignorance and bad examples.
- They also sought answers to whether we receive salvation by God and man working together – The Synergistic Theory or by God’s work alone – The Monergistic Theory?
- Cyprian, along with Ambrose and Hilary later, taught the doctrine of the original sinfulness of man and of the monergistic renewal of the soul.
- They believed that the guilt of original sin is not as great as actual sin and that a sinful nature (what they believed) is distinguished from a corrupt nature (which they did not believe).
- Augustine of Hippo and Pelagius of Britain lived about the same time (354-430) and developed significantly different doctrines of sin and grace. (See chart 27)
- Augustine’s view of sin and grace was molded by his deep religious experiences, his conviction of sin and regeneration by the Holy Spirit.

### **Pelagius**

- Pelagius was a British monk, who led an austere life, with a blameless character and an even temper.
- He was a stranger to those conflicts of the soul that Augustine experienced – the struggles with sin and the deep experience of an all-renewing grace.
- They developed their teachings independently, without knowing each other’s views.
- This kept them from reacting to each other, at least until later.
- They both represented elements that were already present in the writings of the early Church Fathers.
- The most important questions in the debate between Pelagius and Augustine were those of free will and original sin.

- According to Pelagius:
  - Adam’s original condition was one of neutrality: neither sinful nor holy, but with a capacity for both good and evil.
  - Adam’s mortality could not depend on his choice because he was already subject to the law of death.
  - His fall injured only himself and left humanity unimpaired for good. The only thing passed on by Adam was a bad example.
- The fact that God commands man to do what is good is proof positive that he is able to do it. His responsibility is the measure of his ability.
- He admits that sin is universal but that is due only to wrong education, to bad examples and to long-established habits of sinning.
- Grace relates to external gifts and natural endowments - man’s rational nature, the revelation of God in Scripture and the example of Jesus.

### **Augustine**

- According to Augustine: Man, even in his unfallen state, was absolutely dependent on God for the realization of his destiny.
- Through the organic connection to Adam, the fallen nature was transmitted to his posterity, along with guilt and corruption.
- As the result of sin, man is totally depraved and unable to do any spiritual good, though he is capable of acts that are civilly good.
- Augustine saw the will of man as needing renewal, which is exclusively a work of God’s grace.
- Grace becomes the source of all good in man.
- His view of regeneration is entirely monergistic. e.g., solely from God.
- Grace is imparted to sinful man, not because he believes, but in order that he may believe; for faith itself is the gift of God.

### **Semi-Pelagianism**

- Semi-Pelagianism made the attempt to avoid all the difficulties Pelagianism raised, by giving a place to both divine grace and human will as coordinating factors in the renewal of man, and by basing predestination on foreseen faith and obedience.
- It did not deny human corruption but regarded human nature as weakened or diseased rather than as fatally injured by the fall.
- Pelagianism was condemned at the Council of Ephesus in 431 and Semi-Pelagianism was condemned as contrary to the orthodox faith at the Council of Orange in 529.
- Both councils vindicated a moderate Augustinianism.
- Salvation by grace only was victorious, but the sacramental grace of baptism replaced the doctrine of the irresistible grace of predestination.

- They also abandoned the doctrine of double predestination (to salvation and to evil).
- The general decline in the Roman Catholic Church led to a drift in the direction of Semi-Pelagianism, which even though condemned at the Council of Orange, had a strong footing in the East.
- The Latin Church or Catholic Church eventually adopted the anthropology of the Greek Church and has adhered to it ever since.

### **The Reformers**

- The Reformers followed Augustine and Anselm in their construction of the doctrine of sin and grace though with some modifications.
- Socinianism was a non-Trinitarian system of doctrine that was developed by Faustus Socinus. It represented a reaction against the doctrine of the Reformation, and in the doctrines of sin and grace, it is simply a revival of the old Pelagian heresy.
- In the beginning of the 17th century, the Calvinistic doctrines of sin and grace met with a determined opposition in the Netherlands, centered in the great Arminian controversy.

### **Arminius**

- Arminius had been a strict Calvinist but became a convert to the doctrine of universal grace and free will.
- He denied the decree of reprobation, the teaching that God predestined some to eternal damnation. He toned down the doctrine of original sin. His view was practically that of Semi-Pelagianism.
- The Synod of Dort was an international gathering of reformation church leaders. They met in the Netherlands in 1618-1619.
- Their goal was to settle a divisive controversy initiated by the rise of Arminianism.
- The Arminians were not seated as delegates at the Synod of Dort but appeared only as defendants.
- They held 154 sessions (I assume those would be smaller groups?), along with a large number of conferences (the whole group?).
- The Arminians had published Five Articles of Remonstrance. This was their forceful, reproachful protest of reformed doctrine.
- The Synod of Dort rejected the Five Articles of Remonstrance (ree-mahn-strunce) of the Arminians and adopted five, thoroughly Calvinistic Canons, which disputed the five Arminian points.

### **The Synod of Dort**

- The decisions of the Synod of Dort were important for various reasons:



- They dealt with some of the most important points of Reformed Theology.
- They were the decisions of essentially an ecumenical council.
- They ended the uncertainty that many churches faced.
- They had a great determining influence on the composition of the later Westminster Confession.

### **The School of Saumur**

- The School of Saumur was a French Huguenot University at Saumur.
- They attempted to tone down the Calvinism of the Synod of Dort especially on two points.
- Amyraldus, led the way and made a distinction between a universal and conditional decree and that of a limited and unconditional decree.
- In the universal and conditional decree – God decreed to provide a universal salvation through the mediation of Jesus Christ, to be offered to all, on the condition of faith.
- In the limited and unconditional decree – God, seeing that of himself no man would believe, elected some to eternal life and decided to give them the necessary grace of faith and repentance.
- Three Synods dealt with the case of Amyraldus and did not condemn him but found it necessary to guard against the misconceptions to which his view might lead.
- Because, according to this view of the plan of salvation, election is subordinate to redemption. God first redeems all and then elects some.
- In opposition to this, the Formula Consensus Helvetica was drawn up, which gave a clear statement of the Reformed position and was for a time honored in Switzerland as an official standard.
- In the last 200 years, there have been no controversies that brought new elements to the forefront and no Synod or Councils that formulated new dogmas.
- There were a few divergences from the teachings of the Reformation advanced by individual theologians during the last two centuries. You have that information in your notes.

**To Consider**

- The doctrinal controversies of the Church were the birth pangs.
- The decay of true religion has always been accompanied by errors and imbalance in the doctrines of man, sin and grace. Always!
- The issue revolves around whether humans are born as sinners or become sinners. The answer is yes!

**Review**

- You learned the doctrinal distinctions between Augustine and Pelagius.
- You gained an understanding of the importance of having a proper view of man, sin and grace.
- You will be able to think about and discuss the consequences of a low view of sin and a high view of humanity.

**In the Next Session**

- We will be discussing, in the History of Christian Doctrine, the sections on the Doctrine of the Atonement.

## INSTRUCTOR’S NOTES: DOCTRINE OF MAN, SIN AND GRACE

For the rest of this session, have your student discuss what they have learned and written in their summary of the next chapters in their textbook according to the assigned reading list.

There are a series of questions or assignments numbered and in bold letters.

Because of time constraints, use your discretion regarding which of these you would like to have your students work on and discuss as a group. You can lead these discussions yourself or assign some of them to individuals or groups and have them make a presentation or lead the discussion. One suggestion would be to have at least one student (or more, depending on your situation) share their summary as you cover each of the sections in the notes below.

Chapter Summaries & Notes for Discussion  
THE HISTORY OF CHRISTIAN DOCTRINE  
by Louis Berkhof

### **The Doctrine of Sin and Grace and Related Doctrines** **The Anthropology of the Patristic Period**

The importance of the doctrines regarding sin and grace, the freedom of the will and divine predestination can hardly be overrated from the view of practical Christianity. Their bearing on the work of redemption is even more directly apparent than that of the Christological questions. It is in this field that the chief lines of demarcation between the great divisions of Christianity are found. The decay of true religion has always been accompanied by a large measure of error in doctrine upon these subjects.

The Greek Fathers touched the anthropological issues lightly, with a certain dualism in their thinking about sin and grace, which led to confused representations – leaning more toward Pelagius rather than to Augustine.

Their view of sin was largely influenced by their opposition to Gnosticism with its emphasis on the physical necessity of evil and its denial of the freedom of the will.

They stressed that the image of God in Adam only involved the moral perfectibility of his nature. Adam’s fall did not involve mankind in his guilt; and there is no original sin inherent in mankind.

They saw sin as always originating in the free choice of man and as the result of weakness and ignorance. Origen admitted that a certain hereditary pollution attached to everyone at birth but explained it as a pre-natal fall of the soul.

Most of the Greek Fathers scrupulously avoided the issue.

The doctrine regarding divine grace that was prevalent in their teachings was largely determined by their conception of sin; with their main emphasis on the free will of man rather than on the operation of divine grace. It is not the grace of God but the free will of man that takes the initiative in the work of regeneration – it begins the work but cannot complete it without divine aid.

They rarely distinguished between the good the natural man was able to do and the spiritual good that requires the enabling power of the Holy Spirit.

**1. Most of the Greek Fathers scrupulously avoided the issue of free will versus predestination. I am certain that we all face this same temptation. What kind of consequences will we face if we refuse to establish a biblical view of man, sin, grace and free will?**

**An unbiblical view of man, sin, grace and freewill will lead us to unbalanced extremes, not only in our doctrine but most certainly in our practice. We will either be unbearably harsh in our judgments of/towards others – with a large dose of hypocrisy, or we will excuse sin as “not that big of a deal,” with an exalted view of our status. The place of grace and freewill, when out of balance, will ultimately lead us to despair; because our experience will be an abuse of grace to excuse our sin, or a life of continual frustration because of our failure to become holy. I have seen many simply redefine sin and “lower the bar” in order to explain away their sin by saying: “My motives were pure, so it wasn’t sin.” 1 Corinthians 4:6.**

In the West, the traducianism (the doctrine that a child’s soul is generated by the child’s parents; opposed to Creationism – created by God) of Tertullian was substituted for the creationism of Greek theology and paved the way for the doctrine of innate sin, in distinction from innate evil. “The propagation of the soul involves the propagation of sin.”

Tertullian reduces the human effort to a minimum but does use language that presents a synergistic (that God and man work together in regeneration) theory of regeneration.

Cyprian, along with Ambrose and Hilary, taught the doctrine of the original sinfulness of man and of the monergistic (that God alone works in regeneration) renewal of the soul. They believed that the guilt of original sin is not as great as actual sin and that a sinful nature (what they believed) is distinguished from a corrupt nature (which they did not believe?).

### **The Pelagian and Augustinian Doctrines of Sin and Grace**

Augustine of Hippo (354-430) and Pelagius of Britain (died about 420). Augustine’s view of sin and grace was molded by his deep religious experiences. (His conviction of sin and regeneration by the Holy Spirit). He had been involved in Manichaeism – (3<sup>rd</sup> century in Persia) = a dualistic religion that combined Zoroastrian, Christian, Gnostic and other beliefs in a theology of cosmic struggle between Good (light, God, spirit) and Evil (darkness, Satan, matter).

Pelagius was a British monk, who led an austere life, with a blameless character and had an even temper; so, he was a stranger to those conflicts of the soul that Augustine experienced – the struggles with sin, the deep experience of an all-renewing grace.

Their teachings developed independently of each other, before they became acquainted with each other’s teachings. They both represented elements that were already present in the writing of the early Church Fathers.

**2. See Chart 19 re: Manichaeism. See chart 21 re: Augustine for background information.**

### **The Pelagian View of Sin and Grace**

The most important questions in debate between Pelagius and Augustine were those of free will and original sin.

According to Pelagius, Adam – as created by God – was not endowed with positive holiness. His original condition was one of neutrality: neither sinful nor holy, but with a capacity for both good and evil.

Adam’s mortality could not depend on his choice because he was already subject to the law of death. His fall injured no one but himself and left humanity unimpaired for good; there is no hereditary transmission of a sinful nature or of guilt or of pollution. The only thing passed on by Adam was a bad example.

The fact that God commands man to do what is good is proof positive that he is able to do it. His responsibility is the measure of his ability.

Pelagius admits that sin is universal, but that is due only to wrong education, to bad examples and to long-established habits of sinning. In turning from evil to good, man is not dependent on the grace of God – though it is an advantage and will help him to overcome evil in his life.

Pelagius speaks of grace only as external gifts and natural endowments – man's rational nature, the revelation of God in Scripture and the example of Jesus Christ.

He, illogically, believed that children should be baptized – merely as a rite of consecration or in anticipation of future forgiveness – and took the position that children are excluded from the Kingdom of Heaven, though not from a lower state of blessedness = "eternal life."

### **The Augustinian View of Sin and Grace**

Augustine's view of sin and grace was influenced by his early religious experiences and by its opposite in the Pelagian system, but primarily by his careful study of the Epistle to the Romans and his general conception of the soul's relation to God. That man, even in his unfallen state, was absolutely dependent on God for the realization of his destiny.

He emphasized the voluntary character of sin. Because of the entrance of sin into the world man can no more will the true good, which is rooted in the love of God, nor realize his true destiny, but sinks ever deeper into bondage. However, he does continue to sigh after God.

Augustine does not see sin as something positive, rather as a negative – a privation; not a substantial evil added to man but a privation, lacking good. Sin is rooted in self-love that is substituted for the love of God.

Man was created immortal, at least with the capacity for immortality. He had the ability to sin and die, but through obedience would have been confirmed in holiness, and would have had the inability to sin and die; but he did – and entered into that state of an inability not to sin and die.

Through the organic connection to Adam, the fallen nature was transmitted to his posterity, along with guilt and corruption. As the result of sin, man is totally depraved and unable to do any spiritual good, though he is capable of acts that are civilly good.

Augustine saw the will of man as needing renewal, which is exclusively a work of God’s grace. His use of the phrase: “irresistible grace” did not mean that grace forces the will but rather that it so changes the will that man voluntarily chooses that which is good. The will of man is renewed and thus restored to its true freedom. Grace becomes the source of all good in man.

His view of regeneration is entirely monergistic e.g., solely from God. The Holy Spirit is necessary for the complete renewal of the inner disposition of man, to be brought into spiritual conformity to the law.

“Grace is imparted to sinful man, not because he believes, but in order that he may believe; for faith itself is the gift of God.”

Augustine distinguishes several stages in the work of divine grace:

- “Prevenient Grace” where the Holy Spirit employs the law to produce the sense of sin and guilt.
- “Operative Grace” where the Holy Spirit employs the Gospel for the production of that faith in Christ and His atoning work which issues in justification and peace with God.
- “Co-Operative Grace” where the renewed will of man co-operates with Him in the life-long work of sanctification.

The work of grace includes the entire renewal of man in the image of God and the spiritual transformation of the sinner into a saint. Yet, he represents the Church as the (mostly) independent dispenser of divine grace and speaks of baptismal regeneration.

His teachings regarding the doctrine of predestination said, that what God does in time for the gracious renewal of the sinner, He willed to do in His eternal plan. At first, he considered predestination as contingent on divine foreknowledge; representing God as electing those of whom He knew would believe – making predestination conditional on the foreseen free action of man. Later, he felt for the sake of consistency and a fair interpretation of the relevant passages of Scripture, that he should consider man’s choice of the good and his faith in Christ as themselves the effect of divine grace – so he modified his doctrine accordingly.

He saw predestination, in relation to the non-elect, as one of pretermission e.g., the passing over by God of those not elect. Reprobation differs from election in this that it is not accompanied with any direct divine efficiency (working) to secure the result intended.

One idea that he held, foreign to his main thought, was that the grace of regeneration could again be lost. Only those who are regenerated and persevere, or in whom, after loss, the grace of regeneration is restored, are finally saved.

*Fortunately, he taught, the elect never die in an unregenerate condition.*

Pelagian and Semi-Pelagian Controversies

**3. See chart #27 for a summary of the Pelagian Controversy. Does the fact that a person has not experienced the “depths of sin” that others have, mean that their sin is “not as bad” as the sin of others?**

**1 Corinthians 6:9-11 – ...Such were some of you... - but we are all in need of being “washed, sanctified and justified....” This view is one of the consequences of an unbiblical view of man, sin, grace and freewill.**

Augustine’s views of sin and grace met with opposition, since the problems involved had never yet been discussed in a thorough manner.

The Eastern Church emphasized the element of freedom in human nature, in opposition to the pagan idea of fate or destiny. They admitted the human will was corrupt, and had become subject to Satan, to sensuous temptations, and to death; and that the new life was communicated in baptism. The Greek Fathers were content with placing the grace of God and free will side by side.

Pelagius was accused of heresy but by specious (seemingly good, logical or correct without being so) explanations and by qualifying several of his statements he succeeded in satisfying his judges and was acquitted (414-416). However, Pelagianism was condemned as a heresy by the Synods of Mileve and Carthage in 416 – though Zozimus, the bishop of Rome had given Pelagius a certificate of orthodoxy in 418 – Finally in 431 the Council of Ephesus condemned Nestorianism and Pelagianism.

A mediating movement arose – Semi-Pelagianism, succeeded in bringing out clearly, that only a system like the Augustinian – with its strong logical coherence – could maintain its ground successfully against the onslaughts of Pelagius.



Semi-Pelagianism made the attempt to steer clear of all difficulties by giving a place to both divine grace and human will as co-ordinate factors in the renewal of man, and by basing predestination on foreseen faith and obedience. It did not deny human corruption but regarded human nature as weakened or diseased rather than as fatally injured by the fall. Fallen human nature retains an element of freedom, in virtue of which it can co-operate with divine grace. Regeneration is the joint product of both factors, but it is really man and not God that begins the work.

Pelagianism was condemned as contrary to the orthodox faith at the Council of Orange, which vindicated a moderate Augustinianism. Salvation by grace only was victorious, but the doctrine of the irresistible grace of predestination was supplanted by that of the sacramental grace of baptism. The doctrine of double predestination (to salvation and to evil) was abandoned in 529. The general decline in the Roman Catholic Church led to a drift in the direction of Semi-Pelagianism, which had a strong footing in the East. The Latin Church eventually adopted the anthropology of the Greek Church and has adhered to it ever since.

#### The Anthropology of the Middle Ages

The Augustinianism of Pope Gregory the Great (540-604) was somewhat attenuated (less than the original, diluted). He explains the entrance of sin into the world by the weakness of man; and regarded sin as a weakness or disease rather than as guilt – man had not lost the freedom but only the goodness of the will; so, without grace there can be no salvation, nor any human merit.

The work of redemption is begun by the grace of God, causing man to will good and then subsequent grace enables him to do it. The change in man is begun in baptism, which works faith and cancels the guilt of past sins. The will is renewed and the heart is filled with the love of God, and thus man is enabled to merit something with God.

Gregory retained the doctrine of predestination only in modified form; based only on foreknowledge. But no one can be certain of his own election or that of any other person.

Gottschalk (805-868 - Chart 36) found rest and peace for his soul only in the Augustinian doctrine of election, and contended earnestly for a double predestination – that of the lost as well as the saved. He was careful to regard sin merely as the object of a permissive decree, which nevertheless rendered it certain. He rejected the idea of predestination based on foreknowledge, since this makes the divine decree dependent on the acts of man. Foreknowledge merely accompanies predestination and attests the justice of it.

He was accused of teaching that God was the author of sin. His doctrine was condemned in 848; he was scourged and condemned to life-long imprisonment; though this was really little more than a war of words.

Anselm of Canterbury (1033-1109 – Chart 40) stressed the doctrine of original sin, noting that it does not refer to the origin of the human race, but to that of the individual in the present condition of things. He would call original sin, natural sin, though he would not assign it to human nature as such; but it represents a condition into which it has come since creation. By the fall, man became guilty and polluted, and both guilt and pollution are passed on from father to child. All sin, original and actual constitutes guilt.

Human nature apostatized after creation and every child is regarded as an individualized part of that general human nature which Adam possessed. They sinned in Adam and are therefore also guilty and polluted.

He declared the popular definition of freedom as the power of sinning or not sinning, as inadequate because it would not hold to the holy angels, who have perfect moral freedom but not the ability to sin. He felt the true end and destination of the will is not to choose either good or evil, but to choose the good. True freedom consists in its self-determination to holiness.

The Roman Catholic Church’s doctrine of anthropology clearly harbored two tendencies, the one Semi-Augustinian and the other Semi-Pelagian. The view gradually prevailed that the original righteousness was a supernatural endowment of man. God added to man a certain remarkable gift – original righteousness, to check the inferior part of man; who had been created without positive righteousness - but also without positive unrighteousness.

Sin entered the world and man lost his original righteousness. The apostasy of man did not involve the loss of any natural endowment of man, but only the loss of a supernatural gift. The supremacy of the higher over the lower element in his nature was fatally weakened. Man was brought back to the neutral condition – he was neither sinful nor holy.

Scholastics differ as to the nature of original sin, the prevailing opinion is that it is not something positive but rather the absence of something that ought to be present, though some add a positive element, an inclination to evil.

Roman Catholics reject the idea of man’s spiritual impotence and his utter dependence on the grace of God for renewal. They adopt the theory of synergism in regeneration – that man prepares and disposes himself for the grace of justification (infused righteousness). They opposed the Reformation’s monergism with greater vehemence than any other doctrine.

#### The Anthropology of the Period of the Reformation

The Reformers, in their anthropology, followed Augustine and Anselm in their construction of the doctrine of sin and grace with some modifications. They substituted the covenant idea for the realistic theory of Tertullian, Augustine and Anselm; though they did not fully develop the idea, they used it in defining the relation between Adam and his descendants. Because all are guilty in Adam (the federal representative of humanity), they are also born in a polluted condition.

Calvin stressed that original sin was not merely a privation, but also a total corruption of human nature; which makes the first movements of the desires, tend toward the direction of sin and that this is actual sin – even before they are assented to by the will – not just fuel for sin. They are indwelling sins which make man guilty and worthy of condemnation. Original sin is hereditary depravity and corruption of human nature; making us incapable of doing any spiritual good and unable to make the least advance toward our recovery. They did hold that the unregenerate could still perform civil righteousness in their relations with other men.

The Reformers taught the absolute dependence of man on the grace of God for renewal. Melancthon, because of his opposition to the doctrine of the bondage of the will did teach a synergistic theory of regeneration.

The Reformers were strict predestinarians. Luther and Calvin believed in double predestination. Zwingli was not as cautious as Calvin in describing the relation of the divine agency to sin (double predestination) and Melancthon wavered here, as he did on sin and regeneration. He avoided the subject of predestination as much as possible.

After the Reformation, the covenant idea was more fully developed and used to explain the transmission of sin, while the realistic theory was abandoned – more so among the Reformed than Lutherans.

The Socinian Position (So-sin-ee-an) represents a reaction against the Reformation, in the doctrines of sin and grace. It is primarily a revival of the old Pelagian heresy. According to it, the image of God in man consisted merely in man’s dominion over the lower creation and not in any moral perfection or excellence of nature. Adam had no positive righteousness or holiness; he could not lose it as the result of sin. Though he sinned and incurred the divine displeasure, his moral nature remained intact and is transmitted unimpaired to his posterity. Man dies because he was created mortal. We have no proneness to sin – but are in a more unfavorable circumstance because of the examples that surround us. Yet we can still avoid sin – and some do. Even if we do sin, we do not incur the divine wrath; God is a kind and merciful Father who knows our frailty and is quite ready to forgive us when we come to him with penitent hearts. We need no Savior, nor extraordinary interposition of God to secure our salvation. No change in moral nature is required and no provision for effecting such a change was made. The teachings and example of Christ are helpful in leading us in the right direction.

In the beginning of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, the Calvinistic doctrines of sin and grace met with a determined opposition in the Netherlands, which centered in the great Arminian controversy.

Arminius had been a strict Calvinist but became a convert to the doctrine of universal grace and free will. He denied the decree of reprobation and toned down the doctrine of original sin.

His view was practically that of Semi-Pelagianism. Adam’s transgression had an evil effect on the spiritual condition of all his descendants, but they reject the doctrine of original sin as it was taught by the Churches of the Reformation. The guilt of Adam’s sin is not imputed to his descendants, though its pollution is – from father to son. They do not regard this as sin but only as a disease or a weakness. It does not bring man under a sentence of condemnation, but weakens his nature, so that he is incapable of attaining to eternal life – either by re-establishing himself in the favor of God or by discovering for himself a way of salvation. They do not believe in the total depravity of human nature, but leave room for the free will of man as a natural power or ability in man to do something that is spiritually good and can, in some measure, prepare himself for turning to God and doing His will.

Their theory of grace distinguished three degrees in grace: prevenient or common grace – the grace of evangelical obedience – the grace of perseverance.

The Holy Spirit confers on all men sufficient grace to counteract the effect of the inherited depravity and to enable them to co-operate with the Spirit of God in regeneration. If some are not regenerated, it must be due to the failure of the human will to co-operate with the divine. He who makes proper use of this sufficient or enabling grace becomes the object of God’s efficient grace. He receives the higher grace of evangelical obedience, and in the way of obedience may become a partaker of the still higher grace of perseverance.

This theory of sufficient grace is meant as a safeguard to the doctrine of human responsibility – in that God cannot demand faith of him irrespective of the bestowal of enabling grace, which would remove his spiritual inability.

Arminians did not believe in absolute election or reprobation, but based election on foreseen faith, obedience and perseverance; and reprobation on foreseen unbelief, disobedience and persistence in sin.

**4. For the summary of the positions of Calvinism and Arminianism, see chart 72.**

The Synod of Dort was summoned by the States General of the Netherlands in 1619. The Arminians were not seated as delegates but appeared only as defendants. 154 sessions were held, along with a large number of conferences.

It rejected the Five Articles of Remonstrance of the Arminians and adopted five, thoroughly Calvinistic Canons, which disputed the five Arminian points.

**5. The Five Articles of Remonstrance have been printed at the end of your notes. They seem to be of a different tone and flavor than I expected. It would be beneficial for you to read through them, if not in class, then on your own.**

They affirmed the doctrine of a double predestination, based on the good pleasure of God and not on foreseen faith or unbelief. Both election and reprobation were considered absolute. They asserted the doctrine of original sin in the strict sense of the word; that mankind is totally corrupt in every part of their being and cannot do any spiritual good or make a single effort to restore the broken relationship with God; though there are glimmering with natural light and a knowledge of the difference between good and evil. Regeneration is regarded as strictly monergistic and not at all as the work of God and man.

The decisions of the Synod of Dort were important for various reasons:

- They dealt with some of the most important points of Reformed Theology.
- They were the decisions of essentially an ecumenical council.
- They ended the uncertainty many churches faced.
- They had a great influence on the composition of the later Westminster Confession.

The School of Saumur was a French Huguenot University at Saumur. They attempted to tone down the Calvinism of the Synod of Dort especially on two points. Amyraldus, led the way and made a distinction between a universal and *conditional* decree and that of a limited and *unconditional* decree.

In the universal and *conditional* – God decreed to provide a universal salvation through the mediation of Jesus Christ, to be offered to all on *condition* of faith.

In the limited and *unconditional* – God, seeing that of himself no man would believe, elected some to eternal life and decided *to give them* the necessary grace of faith and repentance.

Three Synods dealt with the case of Amyraldus and did not condemn him but found it necessary to guard against the misconceptions to which his view might lead.

In opposition to Amyraldus, the Formula Consensus Helvetica was drawn up, which gave a clear statement of the Reformed position and was for a time honored in Switzerland as an official standard.

### **The Anthropological Views of Post Reformation Times**

There have been no controversies that brought new elements to the forefront and no Synod or Councils that formulated new dogmas. There were a few divergences from the teachings of the Reformation. Here are brief descriptions of some theories of sin advanced by individual theologians during the last two centuries.

There was a modification of the Arminian view in Wesleyan Arminianism. Arminius himself did not depart as far from the teachings of the Reformers as did his followers at the time of the Synod of Dort. Some thought it could be proved that Arminius was not an Arminian!

Wesleyan Arminianism originated in the middle of the eighteenth century. Its theology was shaped by a warm evangelical piety and a deep sense of dependence upon God along with an earnest, practical regard for human freedom and responsibility.

It differs from the doctrine of sin and grace of the earlier Arminians:

- It stresses the fact that original sin is not merely a disease or a pollution of nature, which cannot be called sin, in the strict sense of the word, but is truly sin and renders man guilty in the sight of God. However, it also holds that this original guilt was cancelled by the justification of all men in Christ.
- It denies that man, as he is by nature, has any ability whatsoever to cooperate with the grace of God and admits his entire moral depravity and he is dependent on the grace of God for salvation. It also holds that no man exists in that state of inability.

There was a modification of the Reformed views in New England, which differed in some respects from the Reformers and the Reformed Churches in general:

As to God’s will and the fall of man – Jonathan Edwards ruled out the category of efficiency (cause) from God’s connection with the fall of man and used the ordinary Calvinistic phraseology. However, some of his followers either implied or stated explicitly that there is a divine efficiency (cause) in connection with the production of evil. There was a strong tendency to reduce the divine connection with the entrance of sin into the world to the lowest possible point consistent with an all-inclusive providence.

In connection with the free will of man – Edwards overemphasized the determinate character of the will and thus exposed himself to the charge of determinism (the doctrine that everything, including one’s choice of action, is the necessary result of a

sequence of causes). He was right in that freedom has its laws, known to God – with perfect certainty. Real freedom is lost by sin.

Regarding the transmission of sin – Edwards adopted the realistic theory (natural, logical and practical methods of dealing with the real world). We are connected with Adam as the branches are with a tree and consequently his sin is also our sin and is imputed to us as such. Through this natural connection with Adam, man inherits moral depravity and it is imputed to him as guilt, making him worthy of condemnation.

There are some more modern theories regarding sin.

Philosophical: Philosophers in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries looked upon the evil of the world as something metaphysical (foundational principles of the universe) rather than ethical. It is the simple and natural result of the necessary limitation of the creature. Kant guessed that there was a radical evil in man, a fundamental inclination to evil that cannot be eradicated by man. This evil is rooted in an autonomous will and therefore involves guilt. Others saw sin as a necessary evolution of man as a self-conscious spirit.

Theological: Schleiermacher regards sin as the necessary product of man's sensuous nature – a result of the soul's connection with a physical organism. He denies the objective reality of sin and ascribes to it only a subjective existence – existing only in our consciousness, due to the inadequacy of our God-consciousness. Original sin is simply an acquired habit that has gradually been formed and is not the source of all actual sin.

Some developed the theory that sin was present from birth because of sin in some previous existence – a theory so extremely speculative and so utterly beyond the possibility of verification that it has found little acceptance. **(Except in eastern religions)**

Some see sin as arising from ignorance – and is a necessary stage in man's moral development. The idea that sin is just left over in our nature before the evolutionary process brought us knowledge or enlightenment and is primarily contrary to the individual's conscience.

The Five Articles of Remonstrance refers to the document drawn up in 1610 by the followers of Jacobus Arminius (1560-1609). A "remonstrance" is literally "an expression of opposition or protest," which in this case was a protest against the Calvinist doctrine of predestination contained in the Belgic Confession. This document was condemned as heresy by the reformed churches at the Synod of Dort, 1618-1619.



**Article 1**

That God, by an eternal and unchangeable purpose in Jesus Christ his Son, before the foundation of the world, hath determined, out of the fallen, sinful race of men, to save in Christ, for Christ’s sake, and through Christ, those who, through the grace of the Holy Ghost, shall believe on this His Son Jesus, and shall persevere in this faith and obedience of faith, through this grace, even to the end; and, on the other hand, to leave the incorrigible and unbelieving in sin and under wrath, and to condemn them as alienate from Christ, according to the word of the Gospel in John 3:36: “He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him,” and according to other passages of Scripture also.

**Article 2**

That agreeably thereunto, Jesus Christ the Savior of the world, died for all men and for every man, so that He has obtained for them all, by His death on the cross, redemption and the forgiveness of sins; yet that no one actually enjoys this forgiveness of sins except the believer, according to the word of the Gospel of John 3:16, “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.” And in the First Epistle of 1 John 2:2: “And He is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world.”

**Article 3**

That man has not saving grace of himself, nor of the energy of his free will, inasmuch as he, in the state of apostasy and sin, can of and by himself neither think, will, nor do anything that is truly good (such as saving faith eminently is); but that it is needful that he be born again of God in Christ, through His Holy Spirit, and renewed in understanding, inclination, or will, and all his powers, in order that he may rightly understand, think, will, and effect what is truly good, according to the Word of Christ, John 15:5, “Without me ye can do nothing.”

**Article 4**

That this grace of God is the beginning, continuance, and accomplishment of all good, even to this extent, that the regenerate man himself, without prevenient or assisting, awakening, following and cooperative grace, can neither think, will, nor do good, nor withstand any temptations to evil; so that all good deeds or movements, that can be conceived, must be ascribed to the grace of God in Christ. But regarding the mode of the operation of this grace, it is not irresistible; inasmuch as it is written concerning many, that they have resisted the Holy Ghost. Acts 7 and elsewhere in many places.

**Article 5**

That those who are incorporated into Christ by true faith, and have thereby become partakers of his life-giving Spirit, have thereby full power to strive against Satan, sin, the world, and their own flesh, and to win the victory; it being well understood that it is ever through the assisting grace of the Holy Ghost; and that Jesus Christ assists them through His Spirit in all temptations, extends to them His hand, and if only they are ready for the conflict, and desire His help, and are not inactive, keeps them from falling, so that they, by no craft or power of Satan, can be misled nor plucked out of Christ’s hands, according to the Word of Christ, John 10:28: “Neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand.” But whether they are capable, through negligence, of forsaking again the first beginning of their life in Christ, of again returning to this present evil world, of turning away from the holy doctrine which was delivered them, of losing a good conscience, of becoming devoid of grace, that must be more particularly determined out of the Holy Scripture, before we ourselves can teach it with the full persuasion of our mind.

## **SESSION 15, PART 1 – DOCTRINE OF ATONEMENT**

After this session, you will:

- Know how the Doctrine of the Atonement developed up to the time of the Reformation.
- Be able to understand the challenges faced by those trying to develop the Doctrine of the Atonement.
- Think about and discuss the value of the sacrifice of Jesus Christ in relation to our sin.
- See the negative influence of the faulty dogma of the Church (especially the Eastern Church) on the dogma of the Atonement.
- Be grieved by the devaluation of the work of Christ.

You will KNOW:

- God gave His Son as a ransom for sin and the resulting covering of sin by the righteousness of Christ.

You will BE ABLE TO:

- See the negative influence of the faulty dogma.

You will THINK ABOUT:

- How man’s sin deserves punishment.

### **In the Last Session**

- You learned the doctrinal distinctions between Augustine and Pelagius.
- You gained an understanding of the importance of having a proper view of Man, Sin and Grace.
- You will be able to think about and discuss the consequences of a low view of sin and a high view of humanity.

### **Begin video.**

### **The Apostolic Fathers**

- The Apostolic Fathers speak of the work of Christ using scriptural language.
- Perhaps most significantly, they combine the ideas of Man’s sin deserving punishment.
- God giving His Son as a ransom for sin and the resulting covering of sin by the righteousness of Christ.

### **The Apologists**

- The Apologists added little to the subject but they did represent Christ as a Redeemer, most often redeeming us from the power of the devil and bondage to sin.

- If these teachings had remained as the foundation for this doctrine, all would be well.
- However, from this point onward, through nearly every era, the speculations, arrogance, faulty interpretations of scripture and reactionary imbalance seemed to head off in every direction.
- Granted, it was nearly 400 AD before the New Testament canon was officially established.
- Even then, the availability of and access to these Scriptures was limited.
- Most would hold to some of the orthodox teachings but then add something to it that was anything but orthodox.

### **Five Examples:**

#### **In the Gnostic Systems**

- Christ redeemed us from the kingdom of darkness.
- They might have been referring to Colossians 1:13 – “For He rescued us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of His beloved Son.”
- However, they were not seeing the kingdom of darkness as sin or Satan.
- No, they meant, from the world of matter, the physical universe, which they considered evil.

#### **In Marcion’s Scheme**

- The death of Christ is the price with which the God of love (the New Testament God) purchased men from the Creator of the world (the Old Testament God).

#### **Clement of Alexandria**

- Clement of Alexandria added to his orthodoxy.
  - That it is Christ as Teacher, who saves men.
  - By endowing them with true knowledge.
  - Inspiring them to a life of love and true righteousness.

#### **Origen**

- Origen taught that the work of Christ saves:
  - By deifying human nature through the incarnation
  - By giving the supreme example of self-sacrifice,
  - By inspiring others to love God in return and offer a similar sacrifice of obedience.

### **Athanasius Believed**

- The Logos became incarnate to restore the true knowledge of God to humanity, which was lost by sin.
- He was man’s substitute, who pays his debt by enduring the penalty of sin.
- Necessitated by God’s veracity (truthfulness and faithfulness) – but not by God’s justice.

### **John of Damascus**

- We can sum up the development of the theology of the Greek (Eastern) Church with two statements related to John of Damascus.
- Salvation comes as the direct result of the incarnation, as a new divine revelation given to man, combined with Christ’s death and resurrection, communicating new life to humanity.
- Salvation comes as the result of the fulfillment of certain objective conditions, such as a sacrifice to God, or of a satisfaction to the divine justice, or even of a ransom paid to Satan.
- Most eventually rejected the teaching, of a ransom paid to Satan.
- However, there were those who also rejected the idea that God the Father even required a ransom or atonement.

### **Tertullian in The West**

- In the Latin (Western) Church, Tertullian thought of the incarnation as affecting humanity chiefly through precept and example.
- He viewed the death of Christ on the cross as the real end of the mission of Christ.
- He introduced several legal terms into theology, such as:
  - Guilt
  - Satisfaction
  - Merit
- But he did not apply these terms to the sacrificial work of Christ.
- He applied them to the repentance and good works that should follow sins committed after baptism.
- By this, he laid the foundation for the development of the doctrine of penance in the Catholic Church.

### **Hilary of Poitiers**

- One hundred years later, Hilary of Poitiers (pwa-tee’aye) taught that the satisfaction rendered in the sacrifice of Christ was rendered to God and that Christ died voluntarily in order to satisfy a penal obligation (punishment for a crime).
- However, he sees the need for this satisfaction as providing for the veracity (faithfulness or truthfulness) of God, rather than to satisfy His justice.

### **Pope Gregory I**

- Pope Gregory I – aka: “the Great,” wrote the most complete summary of ancient Latin theology on the atonement:
  - “Man, voluntarily fell under the dominion of sin and death and only a sacrifice could blot out such sin.
  - Where to find this sacrifice? An animal could not serve the purpose; only a man would do, and yet no man could be found without sin.
  - Therefore, the Son of God became incarnate, assuming our nature, but not our sinfulness.
  - The Sinless One became a sacrifice for us, a victim that could die in virtue of His humanity and could cleanse in virtue of His righteousness.
  - He paid for us a debt of death, which He had not deserved, that the death, which was our due, might not harm us.”

### **Anselm of Canterbury**

- Five hundred years later, Anselm of Canterbury made the first attempt at a harmonious and consistent representation of the doctrine of the atonement in his book: “Why God Became Man.”
- His work rests on the absolute necessity of the atonement for the redemption of humanity.
- He rejected the Recapitulation Theory, the Ransom to Satan Theory and the idea that the death of Christ was merely a manifestation of the love of God to humanity, because none of these explained the necessity of the atonement adequately.
- The Reformers would build upon and improve his teachings later.

### **Peter Abelard**

- During this same era, Peter Abelard’s Theory represented the death of Christ NOT as a ransom but as an example, a revelation of God’s love.
- He says God is eager to pardon the repentant sinner.
- This great love calls for and awakens a responsive love in the heart of the sinner.
- This responsive love redeems us, liberates us from the power of sin and leads us into the liberty of the sons of God, so that we obey freely from the motive of love.
- He supposedly based this on Lk 7:47 where Jesus says the one that is forgiven much, loves much.
- But he seems to miss the point and the timing.
- Two of the many things wrong with this theory would be:
  - The false idea that love is the central and all-controlling attribute in God.
  - It robs the sufferings of Christ of their redemptive significance and reduces Him to a mere moral teacher.

- There were several who tried to bring together the ideas of atonement for sin and a response to the love of God displayed in Christ’s sacrifice and example.

### **John Bonaventure**

- John Bonaventure believed that the required satisfaction for sin made the incarnation necessary because the person rendering the satisfaction should be both God and man.
- The merits Christ gained by action and suffering, paid the honor that was due to God.
- His sufferings were the most appropriate means for placating God – displaying both the mercy and the righteousness of God; it was also best suited to arouse in man a responsive love to God.
- The blessings of Christ are then transferred to us, as members of His body – with Him being the head.

### **Thomas Aquinas**

- Thomas Aquinas (uh-kwhy-nus) represents the Dominican theology, which is the official theology of the Church of Rome.
- He saw the work of redemption from the point of view that makes Christ the teacher of and pattern for the human race by His teachings, acts and sufferings.
- These sufferings reveal more clearly the love of God and awaken a responsive love in the hearts of men.
- Perhaps this helps us understand the use and focus on the crucifix, as opposed to the empty cross.
- Thomas Aquinas taught that the passion of Christ affects the salvation of sinners in four ways.
  - By meriting the blessings of salvation, which are passed on to sinners.
  - As a superabundant satisfaction, well-pleasing to God, whose blessings are brought to the faithful through the mystical union (being born again).
  - As a voluntary sacrifice with which God was delighted.
  - By redeeming sinners from slavery and punishment.
- He taught that Satan did NOT receive the ransom and that the superabundant satisfaction of Christ does not save humanity apart from baptism and penance. Since these are the way the members are connected to the Head in the mystical body of Jesus Christ.

### **John Duns Scotus**

- John Duns Scotus, (commonly known as Duns Scotus) the founder of the Franciscan theology, saw no inherent necessity for the sacrifice of Christ to render satisfaction for humanity’s sin.
- He believed that one pious act of Adam might have served to atone for his first sin.
- Nor did he see a requirement that the sacrifice needed to be a man.
- However, God accepted the merits of Christ, even though it was not equal to the debt owed.
- The death of Christ was only necessary because of the arbitrary will of God.

### **To Consider**

- The issues in the Doctrine of the Atonement involve:
  - How far did Adam fall and did we all fall with him?
  - What was the purpose of the suffering and sacrifice of Christ?
  - Was it only His suffering and death involved in our salvation?
  - What did Jesus accomplish in His work?
  - Did He satisfy God’s honor, His veracity or His justice?

### **Review**

- You learned how the Doctrine of the Atonement developed up to the time of the Reformation.
- You came to understand the challenges faced by those trying to develop the Doctrine of the Atonement.
- You thought about the value of the sacrifice of Jesus Christ in relation to our sin.

### **In the Next Session**

- We will be discussing the sections on the Doctrine of the Atonement from the Reformation on.



## INSTRUCTOR’S NOTES: DOCTRINE OF ATONEMENT

For the rest of this session, you will spend time discussing what your students have learned and what they have written in their summaries. Then, you will cover the remainder of the section on the Doctrine of the Atonement from the period of the Reformation on.

There are a series of questions or assignments numbered and in bold letters.

Because of time constraints, use your discretion regarding which of these you would like to have your students work on and discuss as a group. You can lead these discussions yourself or assign some of them to individuals or groups and have them make a presentation or lead the discussion. One suggestion would be to have at least one student (or more, depending on your situation) share their summary as you cover each of the sections in the notes below.

### **Chapter (Section) Summaries and Notes for Discussion**

The History of Christian Doctrine

by Louis Berkhof

### **The Doctrine of the Atonement or the Work of Christ**

Let’s begin with some of the basic questions the Church struggled to answer as they wrestled with the Doctrine of the Atonement:

- Were the sufferings and death of Christ atonement for, punishment of or a ransom payment for the sins of humanity? Was this payment made to God or to Satan?
- Did His suffering and death satisfy God’s veracity or His justice? Was it necessary? Could there have been another way?
- Were the sufferings and death of Christ equivalent payment for the sins of humanity or merely representative (a token)? Is this payment available to all or is it restricted to those who are the “elect”? (John 11:51-52; 1 John 2:2) Is there something that humans are required to do, to make this applicable to them individually? (John 1:11-13)
- Does the atonement cover the sins of fallen angels, including Satan?
- Were the sufferings and death of Christ merely a demonstration of God’s love, meant to inspire humanity to love God and obey Him even to the point of death? Were His sufferings and death merely the great example of love, to inspire us to sacrifice for others?
- How do the incarnation and the righteous works of Jesus during His life fit into this idea of atonement for sin?

**1. Review these questions, so that we gain an understanding of the scope and depth of the challenge of developing the Doctrine of the Atonement or The Work of Christ.**

**The Doctrine of the Atonement Before Anselm (1030-1109)**

In Greek Patristic Theology, the Apostolic Fathers speak in general – usually in Scriptural terms, of the work of Christ. Perhaps most significantly in the Epistle to Diognetus (die’-ug-knee-tus) where it combines the ideas of man’s sin deserving punishment, of God as giving His Son as a ransom for sin and of the resulting covering of sin by the righteousness of Christ.

The Apologists (Greek/East) contain little on the subject but they did represent Christ as a Redeemer, most often from the power of the devil.

In the Gnostic systems, the redemption wrought by Christ is from the kingdom of darkness – the world of matter.

In Marcion’s system, (died 160’s) the death of Christ is the price at which the God of love purchased men from the Creator of the world.

Irenaeus, (late 100’s) joined the Apologists and looked at redemption partly as deliverance from the power of Satan – though he does not look upon it as a satisfaction due to Satan. The death of Christ satisfies the justice of God and thus liberates man. *He gives great prominence to the recapitulation theory (to repeat briefly) – the idea that Christ "recapitulates in Himself all the stages of human life, and all the experiences of these stages, including those which belong to our state as sinners." Thus, He reverses the course on which Adam by his sin started humanity and becomes a new leaven in the life of mankind.*

**2. If we would have stayed with the teaching of the Apostolic Fathers, who “usually spoke in Scriptural terms,” we would have been in good shape! Here is a perfect example of what happens when we “exceed what is written.” (1 Corinthians 4:6) Note the emphasis on freedom from the power of Satan and the explanation of the “Recapitulation Theory” above.**

Clement of Alexandria (150-215) represents the death of Christ as a payment of man’s debt and as a ransom. However, it is Christ as Teacher who saves men by endowing them with true knowledge and inspiring them to a life of love and true righteousness.

Origen (185-254) taught that Christ saves:

- by deifying human nature through the incarnation.
- by giving the supreme example of self-sacrifice, thus inspiring others to a similar sacrifice.
- His sacrifice was for the expiation (making amends or atonement for) of sin.
- His sacrifice was to redeem man from the power of Satan. This is where he presents his idea that Jesus deceived Satan in the transaction.

Athanasius (296-373) too taught that the Logos became incarnate to restore to humanity the true knowledge of God which was lost by sin. He was man’s substitute, who pays his debt by enduring the penalty of sin; necessitated by God’s veracity – not by God’s justice. He differed with Irenaeus on two points:

- The incarnation connects directly with the death and resurrection of Christ in the saving process.
- The emphasis is on the ethical rather than on the physical element in the process. Christ operates by His word and example on the hearts of man.

Gregory of Nyssa (aka: 1/3 of The Three Cappadocians) authored a systematic treatment on the work of Christ: *The Great Catechism*. He repeats the idea of the deceit practiced on Satan and justifies because:

- The deceiver simply received his due when he was deceived in return, and
- Satan himself benefits by it in the end since it results in his salvation.

The underlying thought in his work was that, in the incarnation, God joined himself to our nature to free it from death.

Gregory of Nazianzus (aka: 1/3 of The Three Cappadocians) repudiates with scorn and indignation the idea of a ransom paid to Satan. However, he also rejects the idea that God the Father required a ransom.

Greek Patristic Theology culminates in John of Damascus. He sums up the development in Greek Theology:

- Salvation is the direct result of the incarnation, as a new divine revelation given to humanity, along with Christ’s death and resurrection, communicating new life to humanity.
- Salvation is the result of the fulfillment of certain objective conditions, such as a sacrifice to God, or of a satisfaction to the divine justice, or of a ransom paid to Satan.

**3. The question regarding who receives the “ransom payment” arises from Mk 10:45 and 1 Timothy 2:5-6. Consider also Col 1:13-14 and Romans 1:16-18; 3:21-26; 5:9; 7:1-6. There is a ransom and there is redemption. Fill in the blanks:**

**The ransom Christ paid was to \_\_\_\_\_  
God’s Justice? God’s Veracity – Truth & Faithfulness? God’s Law,  
Righteousness?**

**The redemption Christ provided was from \_\_\_\_\_  
The Law? Satan’s dominion? God’s wrath?**

The distinctions between the Latin and the Greek doctrines began to emerge with Tertullian (160-220). He adopted Irenaeus’ recapitulation theory, but conceives of the incarnation as affecting humankind chiefly through precept and example. His main stress was the central significance of the death of Christ on the cross as the real end of the mission of Christ. He introduced several legal terms into theology, such as guilt, satisfaction, merit, etc. but he did not apply these terms to the sacrificial work of Christ – *he applied them to the repentance and good works that should follow sins committed after baptism; laying the foundation for the development of the doctrine of penance in the Roman Catholic Church. **Which would mean that we need to provide for our sins on our own!?***

Hilary of Poitiers (pwa-tee’-aye) (along with Ambrose) viewed the satisfaction rendered in the sacrifice of Christ was rendered to God and that Christ died voluntarily to satisfy a penal obligation; though he sees the need for this satisfaction for the veracity of God, rather than for the justice of God. Ambrose stressed that the death of Christ was a sacrifice to God and regarded it as a satisfaction of the divine sentence of death pronounced on sinful humanity. However, he did not explain why this sacrifice was necessary.

gustine, surprisingly, did not add significantly to the doctrine of the work of Christ. His central ideas were those of original sin, justification by faith and reconciliation by the sacrifice of Christ

Augustine saw man as subject to the wrath of God and the sacrifice of Christ as placating this wrath and reconciling man to God. He did not distinguish between the judicial and the renovating side of redemption; with justification resting on the sanctifying influence of the Holy Spirit. He sometimes taught that though the atonement by Christ was the most suitable way of salvation, God might have saved sinners in some other way, thus making the atonement only relatively necessary; meaning that God’s power might have worked against His wisdom.

**4. Consider Jesus’ prayer in the Garden – Mt 26:39; Mk 14:36; Lk 22:42 – might God have saved sinners in some other way?**

**Not that we can discern.**

Pope Gregory the Great (Pope – 590-604) wrote, what has been called, the most complete synthesis of ancient Latin theology on the atonement:

Man, voluntarily fell under the dominion of sin and death, and only a sacrifice could blot out such sin. Where to find this sacrifice? An animal could not serve the purpose; only a man would do, and yet no man could be found without sin. Therefore, the Son of God became incarnate, assuming our nature, but not our sinfulness. The Sinless One became a sacrifice for us, a victim that could die in virtue of His humanity, and could cleanse in virtue of His righteousness. He paid for us a debt of death, which He had not deserved, that the death, which was our due, might not harm us. **Well Done, Gregory! 2 Corinthians 5:21!**

**The Doctrine of the Atonement from Anselm to the Reformation**

The five centuries from Gregory the Great to Anselm did not see advancement in the development of the doctrine of the atonement. With Anselm, the systematic study of the doctrine of atonement began.

Anselm of Canterbury (1033-1109) made the first attempt at a harmonious and consistent representation of the doctrine of the atonement in his book: *Cur Deus Homo* (Why God Became Man).

The question of the nature and necessity of the atonement was generally approached from the Christological side as a question respecting the necessity of the incarnation. Could God have saved man by a mere act of His omnipotence, just as easily as He

could create the world? Could not He, the merciful God, simply have pardoned the sin of man, without demanding satisfaction? If a mediator was necessary, why did He choose His only-begotten Son for the work of mediation, and not some other rational being? Once the incarnation was admitted, it was felt that it could only find its explanation in some stupendous exigency (an urgent need or demand). This question respecting the incarnation explains the title of Anselm’s work.

Anselm’s work rests on the position of the absolute necessity of the atonement for the redemption of man. He rejected the Recapitulation Theory, the Ransom-to-Satan Theory and the idea that the death of Christ was *merely* a manifestation of the love of God to humanity – since these do not explain the necessity of the atonement adequately. The absolute necessity of the atoning sacrifice of Jesus Christ must be grounded in an immanent and necessary attribute of the divine nature.

### **5. Justice? Veracity? Righteousness? Love? Mercy? All of them?**

#### **All of them!**

The ultimate ground for this doctrine is in the honor of God. Mankind’s rebellion dishonored God and only punishment or satisfaction would vindicate His honor. God chose the way of satisfaction:

- That man should now render to God the willing obedience which he owed Him.
- That man should make amends for the insult to God’s honor by paying something over and above the actual debt.

All of this is beyond the power of man. Anselm saw the satisfaction provided in Christ as a gift rather than a punishment. The one rendering the satisfaction had to be the God-man who would also render the obedience to God that man had failed to do.

He helps establish the objective character of the atonement and bases its necessity on the immutable nature of God, which makes it impossible that He should permit the violation of His honor to go unpunished. It is defective as compared with the later penal substitutionary doctrine.

### **6. Review the weaknesses (listed below) of Anselm’s view of the Atonement and work of Christ.**

It erroneously represents punishment and satisfaction as alternatives from which God could choose.

It has no place for the idea that, in His suffering, Christ endured the penalty of sin, since it regards the sufferings of Christ as a voluntary tribute to the honor of God, a superfluous merit which served to compensate for the demerits of others. (This is really the Roman Catholic ideas of penance applied to the work of Christ.)

It is inconsistent as far as it starts out with the principle of “private law” or custom and then passes over to “public law.”

It is one-sided – basing redemption exclusively on the death of Christ and denying the atoning significance of His life.

It represents the application of the merits of Christ to the sinner as a merely external transaction. There is no hint of the mystical union of Christ and believers.

### **Abelard’s Theory of The Atonement (1079-1142)**

Abelard only shared Anselm’s view that the price of redemption was NOT paid to Satan. To him the death of Christ was NOT a ransom. All that God requires is penitence in the sinner. He is ready – eager to pardon the penitent sinner. At the same time, he would say that we are justified and reconciled to God by the blood of Christ. Christ revealed the love of God by assuming our nature and by persevering as our teacher and example even unto death. This great love calls for and awakens a responsive love in the heart of the sinner. (Luke 7:47 **taken out of context**) This newly awakened love redeems us, liberating us from the power of sin and leading us into the liberty of the sons of God, so that we obey freely from the motive of love.

This teaching brought him into conflict with the common doctrine of the forgiveness of sins through baptism. He replied that, unless baptism or martyrdom follows the kindling of this love, it must be concluded that perseverance has been lacking. However, in the case of children – remission of sin was independent of the love kindled in the heart.

Among a host of other things wrong with this theory is that:

- It proceeds on the false principle that love is the central and all-controlling attribute in God; (**Important point!**)
- It robs the sufferings of Christ of their redemptive significance and reduced Him to a mere moral teacher, influencing men by His teachings and example.

### **Reaction to Abelard in Bernard of Clairvaux (1090-1153)**

Bernard of Clairvaux criticized Abelard’s theory but offered none of his own. He also rejected Anselm’s teachings. He maintained that “the example of Christ makes us

saints just as little as the example of Adam made us sinners.” He saw in the incarnation the revelation of the love of God and the saving manifestation of Christ’s own divinity. He did not emphasize the physical result of the incarnation, as bringing life and immortality, but its psychological effect – inspiring a patience and love like that of Christ. He firmly believed in an objective redemption as the basis for the subjective. The Father did not require the death of His Son, but accepted it as an oblation; and now it serves to redeem us from sin, death and the devil, and to reconcile us to God.

### **Syncretistic Views of The Atonement**

Peter the Lombard (1095-1159) starts with the merits of Christ. By His pious life, Christ merited for Himself freedom from suffering and glorification, and when He entered into suffering and death, He did it voluntarily – not for Himself but for sinners. He merited for them redemption from sin, punishment and the devil – as well as admittance to paradise. He answers the question: How does the death of Christ affect this deliverance? He answers: It reveals to us the love of God. By so great a pledge of love to us, we are moved and prompted to love God and are thus released from sin and made righteous. And when we are free from sin, we are also free from the devil.

John Bonaventure (1217-1274) – the required satisfaction made the incarnation necessary because the person rendering the satisfaction should be both God and man. His merits gained by action and suffering, paid the honor that was due to God. His sufferings were the most appropriate means for placating God – displaying both the mercy and the righteousness of God; it was also best suited to arouse in man a responsive love to God. The blessings of Christ are transferred to us, as members of His body – Him being the head.

Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274) – The fullness of all grace dwells in the human nature of Christ, the Head of the human race; His perfection and virtue overflow to the members of the body in so far as they are willing to belong to the Head. The work of redemption is considered from the point of view that makes Christ the teacher and pattern of the human race by His teachings, acts and sufferings. These sufferings reveal more particularly the love of God and awaken a responsive love in the hearts of men. He also maintained that redemption was not necessary, since God might have permitted mankind to perish in its sins. He believes that God could have redeemed man without demanding any adequate satisfaction. Though he admits that a human judge could not simply overlook a violation of the law and be just.

He taught that the merits of Christ extended throughout the whole time of His earthly existence, so that every action of His life contributed to the atonement of



man’s sin. This was all that was necessary to render to God condign (very worthy, deserved or suitable; especially regarding punishment for wrongdoing) satisfaction. The passion and suffering were not needed; but God wanted it this way so it would be in keeping with His mercy and justice and would ensure the greatest possible effect. (Revealing the love of God, example – inspiration, etc.)

Thomas Aquinas taught that the passion of Christ affects the salvation of sinners in four ways:

- By meriting the blessings of salvation, which are passed on to sinners
- As a superabundant satisfaction well-pleasing to God, the benefits communicated to the faithful in virtue of the mystical union
- As a voluntary sacrifice with which God was delighted
- By redeeming sinners from slavery and punishment.

Satan did NOT receive the ransom and the superabundant satisfaction of Christ does not save man apart from baptism and penance – because of the necessary configuration of the members to the Head in the mystical body of Jesus Christ.

### **John Duns Scotus On the Atonement (1266-1308)**

Aquinas represents the Dominican theology, which is the official theology of the Church of Rome; John Duns Scotus is regarded as the founder of the Franciscan theology. His work was primarily critical and negative.

He makes the atonement itself, the character it assumes and the effect which it has; depend altogether on the arbitrary will of God. He asserts that there was no inherent necessity for rendering satisfaction. It was necessary only because God wills it; but it was not necessary that He should will it. Even if the necessity of it were granted, it would not follow that it had to assume the exact form, which it took. It did not have to be rendered by God. One pious act of Adam might have served to atone for his first sin. Nor is it possible to prove that it had to be rendered by a man. It all depended on the arbitrary will of God. However, God did ordain it so, and that is what made the sufferings of Christ have a special efficacy – God was willing to accept it as effectual. God accepted the merits of Christ though it was not commensurate with the debt owed – since they were not of infinite value, being the merits of the human nature.

**7. Discussing what you have read about atonement, does this make God an unjust judge, since His judgments are not based on righteousness, but on whatever He decides at the time?**

**See Romans 3:26**

## **SESSION 15, PART 2 – DOCTRINE OF ATONEMENT - REFORMATION**

After this session, you will:

- Know how the Doctrine of the Atonement developed during and since the time of the Reformation.
- Be able to understand the challenges faced by those trying to defend the Doctrine of the Atonement.
- Think about and discuss the work of Jesus Christ in relation to our sin from a biblical foundation.
- See the need to contend for the faith that was once for all delivered to the saints.
- Be grateful for those who have fought the good fight for the Doctrine of the Atonement and the Work of Christ.

You will KNOW:

- See the need to contend for the faith.

You will BE ABLE TO:

- The Reformers looked upon sin primarily as transgression of the law of God and therefore as guilt rather than as an insult.

You will THINK ABOUT:

- The challenges to the Doctrine of the Atonement.

### **In the Last Session**

- You learned how the Doctrine of the Atonement developed up to the time of the Reformation.
- You understood the challenges faced by those trying to develop the Doctrine of the Atonement.
- You thought about the value of the sacrifice of Jesus Christ in relation to our sin.

**Begin video.**

### **The Doctrine of the Atonement (Since the Reformation)**

- The doctrine of the atonement was not a subject of debate between the Reformers and the Catholic Church.
  - Both regarded the death of Christ as a satisfaction for sin.
  - A satisfaction of infinite value.
- They differed primarily on how the work of Christ is applied to believers.
  - The Reformers moved along lines of agreement with Anselm.
  - He taught that forgiveness of sins was a gift from God based on the atoning work of Jesus Christ.
  - The Catholic Church agreed with Thomas Aquinas.
  - He taught that the fullness of grace dwells in the human nature of Christ, who is now the head of the human race. And therefore, His perfection and virtue overflow to the members of His body, those who are baptized.

### **The Reformers and Anselm**

- Both the Reformers and Anselm maintained the objective nature of the atonement and regarded it as a necessity.
- However, they differed as to the nature of this necessity.
- Anselm speaks of this as absolute.
- Some Reformers regarded it as relative or hypothetical.
- Calvin says, "...The necessity (of the atonement) was not commonly (seen as) simple or absolute, but flowed from the divine decree on which the salvation of mankind depended. What was best for us, our most merciful Father determined."
- It would be unfair to say that Calvin makes the atonement dependent on the arbitrary will of God.
- He recognizes no "to be determined" will in God, but only a will that has been determined by all His attributes.
- He emphasizes the fact that the atonement in Christ fully satisfies the justice of God.
- The Reformers agreed that the atonement, through the sufferings and death of Christ, is in harmony with divine wisdom and revelation.
- The doctrine of the atonement developed by the Reformers improved on Anselm's in several ways.
- The Reformers looked upon sin primarily as transgression of the law of God and therefore as guilt rather than as an insult.
- The Reformers saw the death of Christ as a penal sacrifice to satisfy the justice of God. This lifts atonement out of the sphere of private rights into that of public law.

- The Reformers stressed the fact that the sufferings of Christ were not only penal but also vicarious, service as a substitute.
- The Reformers distinguished between the active and passive obedience in the work of Christ as the mediator.
- His life and His sufferings together, satisfied the demands of divine justice.
- The Reformers agreed with the importance of the mystical union with Christ but also directed attention to the conscious act of man by which he appropriates the righteousness of Christ – the act of faith.
- They were also very careful not to represent faith as merit or earning justification.

### **Faustus Socinus**

- The Socinian (sow-si’gn-ee-un) conception of The Atonement comes from the teachings of Faustus Socinus (sow-si’gn-us) and forms the foundation for Unitarianism.
- His teaching was, at least partly, a reaction to the Reformers.
- He was an Italian, rationalistic, religious, reformer who denied the Trinity and so the divinity of Christ.
- He held that we gain salvation only by practicing the virtues exemplified in Christ, (our good works) which we learn as we study the Scriptures.
- In his view, faith is more than the belief that the teaching of Christ is true, but it also results in repentance of sins and in obedience that leads to eternal life.
- Socinian (sow-si’gn-ee-un) doctrine is a concoction of several heresies condemned by the early church.
- Pelagianism with its belief in the inherent goodness and spiritual ability of man.
- The Adoptionist doctrine, making Christ in His human nature a Son of God by adoption.
- The Moral Influence theory with its emphasis on the exemplary life of Christ.
- The Scotus doctrine of an arbitrary will in God.
- We can summarize the Socinian conception of the Atonement as being thoroughly rationalistic (and arrogant); an abstract play of human logic.
- Failing to do justice to the truth revealed in the word of God (which he ironically appealed to.)
- Failing to do justice to the truth experienced in the lives of the redeemed.

### **Hugo Grotius**

- For some reason, Hugo Grotius (grow-she-us), a Dutch legal scholar and Arminian supporter, sought a middle ground between the Reformers and the Socinian view.

- In seeking to eliminate the idea of the Atonement as satisfying the justice of God, he taught that the Ruler of the universe could modify or even abolish the law and its penalty altogether.
- So – the question arises – Why didn’t God simply officially abolish the law, since this was within His power?
- Grotius answered, (revealing a rather low view of God) that God as the Ruler of the universe had to maintain order in His great realm.
- It would not have been safe for Him to remit without revealing in some way the inviolable nature of the law and His holy displeasure against sin.
- This is the Governmental Theory of the Atonement.

### **The Arminian View**

- The Arminian view of the Atonement represents the death of Christ as a sacrificial offering.
- Maintaining that it was not the payment of a debt, a complete satisfaction of justice.
- It is merely an accompanying condition of the forgiveness of sins.
- They regarded the sufferings of Christ as penal and judicial and that they had the effect of reconciling God to humanity, by purchasing the forgiveness of sins.
- However, they did not view His sacrifice as an equivalent substitutional penalty but one that is of inferior worth.
- They described it as a “satisfaction of benevolence.”
- The Arminians disagreed with the Reformers (Calvinists) in four areas regarding the Atonement.
- Christ did not endure the full penalty of sin since He did not suffer eternal death.
- If Christ completely atoned for sin, there is nothing for divine grace to accomplish and no need for divine compassion.
- If Christ rendered full satisfaction, then God has no right to demand faith and obedience or to punish the sinner, if he fails to obey (that would be double punishment.).
- The atonement is general or universal; it is made for the sins of humanity in general and of every individual.
- The divine intention is not universally effective since many are lost.
- This partial failure is due to the obstinacy of the sinner in refusing the offered atonement and so, defeats the divine intention. The application of the atoning work of Christ depending ultimately on the sinner’s will.

### **The Synod of Dort**

- The Synod of Dort (Netherlands) opposed the doctrine of the Arminians, saying the atonement of Christ was sufficient for the salvation of all men but was intended only for those to whom it is effectively applied.

### **The School of Saumur**

- The School of Saumur was a Calvinistic French Huguenot university that sought a compromise.
- They attempted to tone down the extreme Calvinism of the Synod of Dort and at the same time avoid the extremes of Arminianism.
- Moses Amyraldus proposed that Christ did indeed die for all men, and decreed beforehand that it was by repentance and faith in Christ that all men should be saved.
- God knowing, that left to their own devices, none would ever repent and believe, so by a subsequent decree elected some as the objects of the saving operation of His grace. These alone are those actually saved.
- They succeeded in getting the Arminians to agree with their first decree and the Calvinists to agree with their second but not in uniting the two groups.

### **Challenges to the Doctrine of the Atonement**

- Since the Reformation, the doctrine of the atonement has continually faced challenges.
- Most often, the challenge was trying to reconcile Calvinists and Arminians.
- There were also many threats from liberal theology, which emphasized that Christ’s work was a moral influence of some sort, rather than atonement for sin.
- In Great Britain during the 16th and 17th centuries, Neonomianism (New Law) turned the Gospel into a new law.
- This view said that Christ made salvation possible for all and then introduced a new law – the law of the Gospel, which requires faith and conversion.
- Justification is based on our own imperfect work of faith and conversion, rather than the imputed righteousness of Jesus Christ.
- This is only Arminianism by another name.
- There was strong opposition to this teaching, which ultimately led to a split in the Church of Scotland in 1733.
- The liberal theology that dominated Germany in the 17th and 18th century had a devastating effect on churches around the world.
- Schleiermacher (sh-li’ar-mocker) and Ritschl (rich-el) were leading voices in the deconstruction of the Scriptures as the Word of God, of Jesus as the Son of God and of His atonement for our sins.

- Please note: not all German theologians bought into their ideas. The Lord did not leave Himself without a witness.
- The Church continues to meet with reproductions of most of the typical theories we have considered in the preceding sections – with some variations and combinations.
- Perhaps this portion of our study helps us understand the urgency of Jude as he wrote in Jude 1:3 – “Beloved, while I was making every effort to write you about our common salvation, I felt the necessity to write to you appealing that you contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all handed down to the saints.”

### **To Consider**

- Many of the problems surrounding the Doctrine of the Atonement relate to speculation and over reaction to the errors of others.
- The Attacks on the Doctrine of the Atonement seem to be relentless.
- Jude 1:3

### **Review**

- Learned how the Doctrine of the Atonement developed during and since the time of the Reformation.
- Understand the challenges faced by those trying to defend the Doctrine of the Atonement.
- Thought about the work of Jesus Christ in relation to our sin from a biblical foundation.

### **In the Next Session**

- We will be discussing in the History of Christian Doctrine, the section on the Doctrine of the Application and Appropriation of Divine Grace.



## INSTRUCTOR’S NOTES: THE DOCTRINE OF ATONEMENT

For the rest of this session, your students will spend time discussing the notes for this section, what they have learned and what they have written in their summaries of the sections of our textbook that cover the Doctrine of the Atonement during and since the Reformation.

There are a series of questions or assignments numbered and in bold letters.

Because of time constraints, use your discretion regarding which of these you would like to have your students work on and discuss as a group. You can lead these discussions yourself or assign some of them to individuals or groups and have them make a presentation or lead the discussion. One suggestion would be to have at least one student (or more, depending on your situation) share their summary as you cover each of the sections in the notes below.

The History of Christian Doctrine  
by Louis Berkhof

### **The Doctrine of the Atonement in the Period of the Reformation**

The doctrine of the atonement did not constitute one of the subjects of debate between the Reformers and the Roman Catholic Church. Both regarded the death of Christ as a satisfaction for sin and a satisfaction of infinite value. They differed primarily on the subjective application of the work of Christ and a difference of emphasis. The Reformers moved along definite lines in fundamental agreement with Anselm, though differing with him in some details, while the Roman Catholic Church reflected the uncertainty and indeterminateness of the scholastic era.

The Reformers improved on the doctrine of Anselm. They both maintain the objective nature of the atonement and regard it as a necessity. They differ as to the nature of this necessity. Anselm speaks of this as absolute, while some Reformers regard it as relative or hypothetical.

Calvin: “If the necessity be inquired into, it was not commonly termed simple or absolute, but flowed from the divine decree on which the salvation of mankind depended. What was best for us our most merciful Father determined.”

It would be unfair to say that Calvin makes the atonement dependent on the arbitrary will of God. He knows of no indeterminate will in God, but only of a will that is determined by the whole complex of His attributes and duly emphasizes the fact that the atonement in Christ fully satisfies the justice of God. They all agree that the

atonement through the sufferings and death of Christ is most in harmony with divine wisdom and highly appropriate.

“The manifold wisdom of God” and “the manifold grace of God,” describes these attributes or qualities of God as being “multi-colored” or “variegated” or “many shades of” – perhaps even “thousands.” The Greek word is – poly-poi-kilos. So, when we are thinking about the “whole complex of His attributes” and His work, we should multiply our best thoughts about Him by thousands.

See Ephesians 3:10; 1 Peter 4:10

The doctrine of the atonement developed by the Reformers is superior to its Anselmian form in several ways:

- The Reformers looked upon sin primarily as transgression of the law of God and therefore as guilt rather than as an insult.
- The Reformers saw the atonement in the death of Christ as a penal sacrifice to satisfy the justice of God. Thus, the atonement is lifted out of the sphere of private rights into that of public law.
- The Reformers saw that the satisfaction rendered through the sacrifice of Christ was satisfaction through punishment. They stressed the fact that the sufferings of Christ were penal and vicarious.
- The Reformers distinguished between the active and passive obedience in the mediatorial work of Christ. His life and His sufferings satisfied the demands of divine justice.
- The Reformers shared the importance of the mystical union but in addition directed attention to the conscious act of man by which he appropriates the righteousness of Christ – the act of faith. They were very careful not to represent faith as the meritorious cause of justification.

**1. Note the improvements or corrections to Anselm’s teaching.**

**See above.**

**The Socinian Conception of The Atonement**

Socinianism = the teachings of Faustus Socinus (1539-1604) – He was an Italian rationalistic religious reformer who denied the Trinity, the divinity of Christ and held that salvation is attained solely by practicing the virtues exemplified in Christ.

He denied the presence of any such justice in God that requires absolutely and inexorably that sin be punished. It is merely His moral equity in any of His works. Justice which is opposite of mercy is not an immanent attribute of God, but only the

effect of His will. This holds true for that mercy of God, which is opposed to justice. It is not an internal quality in God but is merely an effect of His free choice. Such mercy does not prevent Him from punishing anyone; neither does such justice keep Him from pardoning whom He pleases, and that without satisfaction of its claims.

**(An unjust judge?)**

He argues that it is possible to maintain only one of two things: either that God forgives freely or that He forgives for the sake of Christ; but you cannot say both – for they are mutually exclusive. Of the two, he chooses that God forgives freely.

He maintains that, since guilt is personal, substitution in penal matters is impossible; and that, even if allowed, it cannot be said that Christ bore the exact penalty of the law – since this would mean that He died as many eternal deaths as there are sinners. Yet He did not even suffer one endless death, but only finite pain.

In addition, the ideas of satisfaction and imputation are self-contradictory. If Christ rendered complete satisfaction, that settles the matter by setting the world free. It is inconsistent to make the enjoyment of its fruits dependent on divine imputation and on the faith of man.

He never tires of saying that the forgiveness of sins is an act of pure mercy, simply based on repentance and obedience. The only conditions are sorrow for sin and an earnest desire to obey the law.

He says that Christ saves sinners by revealing to them the way of faith and obedience as the way to eternal life; by giving them an example of true obedience both in His life and in His death and by inspiring them to a similar life. The death of Christ did not atone for our sin; neither did it move God to pardon sin.

**2. What does the teaching of Socinus tell us about His view of God?**

**That God is arbitrary in judgment. God is very much like a human, sometimes pardoning and sometimes not. God doesn’t really seem to have a plan in all of this. He is not just. He is not wise. He is not powerful. He is a fairly simple being, uncomplicated and easily figured out. And, He is ultimately not very loving, since He seems to have done next to nothing to save us. He had to depend upon the purely human Jesus to do something to “help” us.**

Socinian (sow-si’gn-ee-un) doctrine is a concoction of several heresies condemned by the early church:

- Pelagianism with its belief in the inherent goodness and spiritual ability of man.
- The Adoptionist doctrine, making Christ in His human nature a Son of God by adoption.
- The Moral Influence theory with its emphasis on the exemplary life of Christ.
- The Scotus doctrine of an arbitrary will in God.

We can summarize the Socinian conception of the Atonement as:

- Being thoroughly rationalistic (and arrogant).
- An abstract play of human logic.
- Failing to do justice to the truth revealed in the word of God (which he appealed to?)
- Failing to do justice to the truth experienced in the lives of the redeemed.

### **The Grotian Theory of The Atonement**

Hugo Grotius (1563-1641) sought a middle ground between the Reformers and the Socinian view. **(WHY?!)** He pointed out several flaws in the Socinian arguments but failed to answer the most important criticism of the Reformers doctrine, namely, that Christ did not and could not really bear the penalty of the law imposed on sinners. In fact, he simply abandoned the idea, presenting a new theory: that there is no dominant quality of distributive justice in God which demands that the requirements of the law be met in every particular and which, in case of transgression, makes full satisfaction by punishment imperative. Both the law and its penalty can be modified or even abolished altogether by the Ruler of the Universe. (1 Corinthians 4:6)

So – the question arises – Why didn’t God simply abrogate the law, seeing that this was within His power? Grotius answered that God as the Ruler of the universe had to maintain order in His great realm. It would not have been safe for Him to remit without revealing in some way the inviolable nature of the law and His holy displeasure against sin. (The Governmental Theory of the Atonement)

It was characteristic of the Arminian view of the atonement, that it represents the death of Christ as a sacrificial offering – maintaining that it was not the payment of a debt, or as a complete satisfaction of justice. It is merely an accompanying condition of the forgiveness of sins.

### **3. What does it mean that “the death of Christ...is merely an accompanying condition of the forgiveness of sins”?**

**See paragraph below.**

The sufferings of Christ are regarded as penal and judicial and therefore as of the nature of punishment and had the effect of reconciling God to man, procuring the forgiveness of sins. It is not a substitutional penalty (strict equivalent) but as a substitution for a penalty which may be of inferior worth. It is spoken of as a satisfaction of benevolence.

Their primary disagreements with the Reformers were threefold:

- Christ did not endure the full penalty of sin since He did not suffer eternal death.
- If Christ completely atoned for sin, there is nothing for divine grace to accomplish and no need for divine compassion.
- If Christ rendered full satisfaction, God has no right to demand faith and obedience, or to punish the sinner, if he fails to obey. (Double punishment)

The atonement is regarded as general or universal: made for the sins of mankind in general and of every individual in particular. The divine intention is not universally effective since many are lost. This partial failure is ascribed to the obstinacy of the sinner in refusing the offered atonement and defeating the divine intention. The application depending ultimately on the sinner’s will.

The Synod of Dort opposed the doctrine of the Arminians, saying the atonement of Christ was sufficient for the salvation of all men but was nevertheless intended only for those to whom it is effectively applied.

#### **The Compromise of the School of Saumur**

The School of Saumur was a Calvinist French Huguenot university. They attempted to tone down the extreme Calvinism of the Synod of Dort and to avoid the extremes of Arminianism.

This is seen especially in the work of Amyraldus (one of the teachers) where he taught that Christ did indeed die for all men, and decreed beforehand that it was by repentance and faith in Christ that all men should be saved. However, God knowing, that left to their own devices, none would ever repent and believe, so by a subsequent decree elected some as the objects of the saving operation of His grace. These alone are those actually saved.

This proved an untenable position with Arminians holding to the first decree and the Calvinists holding to the later decree.

### **The Doctrine of the Atonement After the Reformation**

The Marrow Controversy in Scotland revolved around Neonomianism (New Law), which practically turned the Gospel into a new law. According to this view, Christ atoned for all men in the sense that He made salvation possible for all and thus brought them all into a salvable state. He provided legal righteousness by His obedience. Then He introduced a new law – the law of the Gospel which requires faith and conversion = the evangelical righteousness; which though imperfect is the ground for his justification rather than the imputed righteousness of Jesus Christ. This is just Arminianism by another name.

#### **4. How would you respond to this idea, that our faith in Christ is a “righteous act” by which we “save ourselves”?**

This was opposed by Fisher’s “Marrow Men” in Scotland. They were eventually accused of teaching antinomianism (without law or no law) – unfairly. Their desire to establish firmly the warrant of the universal offer of salvation led them to use dubious language which laid them open to the charge. They heartily endorsed the Calvinistic principle that Christ died to secure the salvation of the elect but insisted on a general reference of the atonement – that while Christ did not die for all, He is available to all.

#### **5. Discuss the following: When we are reacting to teaching that is false or out of balance, we face the danger of over-reacting, perhaps using dubious language or even refusing to use solid biblical language in trying to re-balance the teaching. Even if we are not out of balance ourselves, we are sometimes accused of heresy. There is certainly a need to “contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all handed down to the saints.” (Jude 1:3)**

Schleiermacher (1768–1834) rejects the doctrine of penal satisfaction. He does dwell on the sympathetic sufferings of Christ and its effect on men. His main line of thought echoes the Church Fathers who stress the incarnation as the great redemptive act of Christ, though they certainly did not share his pantheistic notions. Christ was the perfect prototype of humanity, whose uniqueness consisted in the fact that He possessed a perfect and unbroken sense of union with God and also realized to the full the destiny of man in his character of sinless perfection. Like Adam but placed in more favorable circumstances and remained perfect and sinless.

Ritschl has unfortunately had almost as much influence on modern theology as Schleiermacher did. He sees Christ as a man who can be looked upon as God (a god) because of His work. He denies the fact or even the possibility of a vicarious atonement, declares that reconciliation consists exclusively in the sinner’s change of attitude to God and maintains that the work of redemption pertains primarily to a community and only secondarily to individuals –as they become members of the redeemed community and share its benefits. Christ wrought redemption as the bearer of the perfect and final revelation of God – the founder and sustainer of the Christian community. His death had no significance as a propitiation for sin. Its value lies in the fact that it is a power which continues to awaken steadfast faith in God’s love, a spirit of obedience unto death and a sense of victory over the world. God pardons sin because of the work of Christ in founding the Kingdom or for the sake of the Kingdom. More blah, blah, blah, blech!

Some of the more recent theories of the Atonement include reproductions of most of the typical theories considered in the preceding sections – with variations.

The Governmental Theory in New England theology reveals a downward trend in the doctrine of the atonement. At first the penal substitutionary doctrine of the atonement found a congenial soil but as early as 1650 the doctrine that Christ suffered the very torments of the lost, and the doctrine of imputation founded on it, were attacked. Bellamy introduced what would become known as “The New England Doctrine of the Atonement” – which was simply a reproduction of the Governmental Theory of Grotius. He denied the limited, and asserted the universal design of the atonement and maintained that Christ did not suffer the exact penalty for sin but something that was substituted for it. They taught that Christ did not merit anything by His obedience; only in the sufferings of Christ had redemptive significance. Later they tried to improve it by adding a moral element to it, stressing that the government of God is a moral government, actuated by love.

There were different types of the Moral Influence theory.

Horace Bushnell (1802-1876) rejected the penal and the governmental theories but favored the penal view for its focus on the justice of God. He did see them both as too legal and external and they fail to do justice to the ethical element in the atonement. He rejected the idea that God had to be propitiated and maintains the only requirement was that man should be reconciled to God and manifest a new spirit of love and obedience. Later he received "new light" and saw that God did have to be propitiated; so, he retracted that part of his teaching and substituted for it the idea of self-propitiation by self-sacrifice. For neither God nor man can forgive a sinner until he has sought to do him good and has suffered under his repulses. We overcome God's resentment by sacrificing something or by suffering for Him. Apparently, He thinks that God is inferior to man, because there are some men who will forgive freely and gladly without demanding self-sacrifice.

Fredrick Denison Maurice (1805-1872) takes his starting point in true Alexandrian fashion in Christ as the Logos and regards Him as the root of humanity. As the second Adam, He becomes the Mediator between God and man – bringing man into union with God through fellowship with Himself. His sufferings and sacrifice are those due to God from the humanity of which He is the root and the head.

McLeod Campbell's (1800-1872) theory is sometimes described as the theory of vicarious repentance. He regarded the teachings of John Owen (1616-1683) and Jonathan Edwards (1703-1758) as defective regarding the atonement; being that it is too legal and it does not sufficiently reflect the love of God. Edwards' admission that a perfect repentance would have availed as atonement prompted Campbell to maintain that Christ offered to God, on behalf of humanity, the requisite repentance and fulfilled the conditions of forgiveness. The work of Christ consisted in the vicarious confession of sins on behalf of man. It's great failure being that it has NO SCRIPTURAL BASIS WHATSOEVER!



The Mystical theory of the atonement is popular in some circles and is the same theory taught by Schleiermacher. Its later development could be called the theory of “redemption by sample” (or the Irvingian Theory or the Theory of Gradually Extirpated Depravity) i.e. Christ assumed human nature as it was in Adam after the fall – human nature with its inborn corruption and predisposition to moral evil. BUT through the power of the Holy Spirit (or His divine nature.) He was able to keep this corrupt human nature from manifesting itself in any actual or personal sin, gradually purified it through His sufferings, completely extirpating the original depravity by death and thus reunited it to God. This purifying of human nature in the person of Jesus Christ constitutes His atonement. Consequently, men are saved, not by any objective propitiation, but by becoming partakers of Christ’s new humanity by faith.

**6. Discuss the following: What the Scripture teaches matters. Words matter. Doctrine matters. “The doctrinal controversies of the Church were the birth pangs of new dogmas. Though not edifying, it is essential that we gain a proper understanding of the beginnings of ecclesiastical dogmas.”**

**I would agree that the birth process is painful and messy; and I do not want to see what is happening. However, the birth of the Dogma and its ultimate development is worth it! Consider the times and the resources available in each era as we watch the struggle for truth; and join in the battle for truth! There is certainly a need to “contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all handed down to the saints.” (Jude 1:3)**

## **SESSION 16 – THE DOCTRINE OF DIVINE GRACE – SOTERIOLOGY**

*Disclaimer: Just a reminder, we are studying the historical development of Christian doctrines. The doctrinal controversies and the ideas discussed in these videos do not necessarily represent our final conclusions.*

After this session, you will:

- How the Doctrine of Soteriology developed.
- Be able to clarify the Doctrine of Soteriology from a biblical perspective.
- Think about the process involved in our salvation.
- See the relentlessness of seeking to save the “dignity of humanity” by maintaining a dogma of “works righteousness.”
- Be aware of the great contrast between the “free-gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Romans 6:23) and all other systems that depend on the grace of God AND our good works.

You will KNOW:

- About the early church father.

You will BE ABLE TO:

- Understand legalism.

You will THINK ABOUT:

- Augustine’s different view of man’s natural condition.

### **In the Last Session**

- You learned how the Doctrine of the Atonement developed during and since the time of the Reformation.
- You understood the challenges faced by those trying to defend the Doctrine of the Atonement.
- You thought about and discussed the work of Jesus Christ in relation to our sin from a biblical foundation.

### **Begin video.**

### **The Doctrine of the Application & Appropriation of Divine Grace – (Soteriology)**

- In this session, we will discuss how the objective work of redemption through the atonement of Christ, is applied to believers through the work of the Holy Spirit.
- In simpler words, we will look at how we experience salvation and sanctification.

### **The Early Church Fathers**

- It would be unreasonable to look for a common, definite, well-integrated and fully developed view of the application of the work of redemption in the earliest Church Fathers.
- Karl Kahnis – a Lutheran theologian said: “It stands as an assured fact, a fact knowing no exceptions, and acknowledged by all well versed in the matter, that all of the pre-Augustinian Fathers taught that in the appropriation of salvation there is a co-working of freedom and grace.”
- This was in harmony with the New Testament statement, that man obtains the blessing of salvation by “repentance toward God and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ” (Acts 20:21); the early Fathers stressed these requirements.
- They regarded faith as the way we receive the merits of Christ, and often called it the “only means.”
- They taught, that faith consists of:
  - True knowledge of God.
  - Confidence in Him.
  - Self-committal to Him.
  - Having Jesus Christ and His atoning blood as its special object of faith.
- This faith, rather than the works of the law, was regarded as the means of justification.
- They generally did not expand on this doctrine – mostly repeating what they found in the Bible! This is always a good choice!

### **Legalism**

- However, despite their emphasis on the grace of God and on faith in Jesus Christ for salvation, some of the early Fathers revealed a legalism that is not in harmony with the Pauline doctrine of salvation. Pauline refers to the writings of the apostle Paul.
- They described the Gospel as a new law. They tended to see salvation as depending on the grace of God AND on our good works. I think this was mostly as a preventive of spiritual laxity and as leverage against sin.
- The legalistic perversion of New Testament Christianity was the continuation of the Judaistic legalism combated, by the apostle Paul in Galatians, and the natural self-righteousness of the human heart.
- The first three centuries reveal an initial drift towards ceremonialism and sacramentalism, the belief that “sacred” activities confer or transmit grace to those participating in the sacred ceremony.
- Especially in the idea that baptism carried with it the forgiveness of previous sins and that pardon for sins committed after baptism can be obtained by penance.

- Gradually the idea that the good works of some, and especially the sufferings of martyrs, may serve to atone for the sins of others.

### **Born Catholic**

- Rudolph Sohm, a German-Lutheran theologian and church historian, explained the departure from the teachings of Scripture in the fact that “the natural man is born Catholic.”

### **Pelagius**

- Pelagius deviated much further from the scriptural representation of the application of redemption.
- He forsook the biblical foundation and re-asserted the self-sufficient principle of heathen philosophy.
- This was an early version of “God helps those who help themselves.”
- The Semi-Pelagians denied the total inability of man to do spiritual good.
- Did admit his inability to perform saving works without the assistance of divine grace.
- Pelagianism and Semi-Pelagianism were condemned by various councils/synods and Augustinianism appeared triumphant in the Church.

### **Augustine**

- Augustine starts with a different view of man’s natural condition.
- He regards man as totally depraved and utterly unable to perform spiritual good.
- Grace consists of the Gospel, Baptism and the forgiveness of sins.
- But he realizes this is not sufficient that man needed something internal.
  - A spiritual grace.
  - A supernatural influence of the Spirit of God.
  - Enlightening the mind.
  - Inclining the will towards holiness.
- He distinguished between:
  - “Grace that goes before man when unwilling, that he may will.”
  - “Grace that follows him when willing, that he may not will in vain.”
- Augustine taught that in justification, God not merely declares but makes the sinner righteous by transforming his inner nature assuming sanctification is included in justification.
- Everything is related to the grace of God.
- Augustine’s doctrine did undergo some modifications, since it contained some elements that conflicted with man’s absolute dependence on God and pointed toward sacramentalism and works-based righteousness.

- Participation in the grace of God is dependent on the Church and its sacraments.
- Regeneration may be lost again.
- The doctrine of justification by faith does not consist primarily in the forgiveness of sins but in regeneration – the infusion of grace, which enables man to do good works and to merit everlasting life.
- Faith justifies, not because it appropriates the righteousness of Jesus Christ, but because it works by love.
- Grace merely serves the purpose of making it possible for man once more to merit salvation.
- The Church eventually settled on a modified Augustinianism and “grace alone” was upheld.
- The doctrine of predestination was abandoned, along with irresistible grace.
- The position of the Church was that of a mild Augustinianism, though the Schoolmen, the scholastics or university professors drifted toward Semi-Pelagianism, even though it was declared to be heresy.

### **The Reformation**

- During the Reformation, Luther and Calvin held a common opposition to Rome and agreed on the nature and importance of the doctrine of justification by faith.
- They describe it as an act of free grace and as a legal action which does not change the inner life of man but only the judicial relationship in which he stands to God; no inherent righteousness of the believer, but only the imputed righteousness of Jesus Christ, which the sinner appropriates by faith.
- They taught that justification is instantaneous and complete.
- The believer can be certain that he is forever translated from a state of wrath and condemnation to one of favor and acceptance.
- Unfortunately, Lutheran theology did not remain entirely true to this position.

### **Luther**

- Luther, in opposing Roman Catholic works-righteousness, stressed that true repentance is the fruit of faith.
- Later in opposing antinomianism, those who would teach that the moral law is of no use or obligation.
- He stressed that a deep feeling of penitence precedes true faith. Penitence is a feeling of remorse over sin.
- Which is true? Can both be true? There is an old saying that “Scripture is written for the direction you are going.” If you need encouragement, there is encouragement. If you need a warning, there is warning.

### **The Order of Salvation**

- There was much discussion about the order of events related to a person experiencing God’s grace and salvation.
- This ordering is about God’s working, not about our completion of a series of steps.
- I have included, in your notes, a chart that shows the “order of salvation” from five perspectives: Calvinism, Modified Calvinism, Classical Arminian/Wesleyan, Lutheran and Catholic.
- Those wishing to sustain an idea of sequential order in salvation appeal to a variety of Scriptures, especially, Romans 8:29-30, “For those whom He foreknew He also predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son, so that He would be the firstborn among many brethren and these whom He predestined, He also called and these whom He called, He also justified and these whom He justified, He also glorified.”
- However, when we compare the various lists in our chart, with the Scriptures, there seems to be some gaps or perhaps dyslexia in the order?
- Some theologians have criticized the idea of an order of salvation.
- They think that we run the risk of "psychologizing" salvation and that we do not do justice to the fullness of salvation by trying to determine the order or timing in the process.
- The concept of an ordered sequence of the doctrine of salvation was an important part of the construction of the Westminster Confession.
- In addition, some have observed that Christians cannot avoid thinking about the particular elements of salvation and the order in which they are experienced. This is the way humans operate.
- Perhaps we should consider, Deut 29:29 – “The secret things belong to the LORD our God, but the things revealed belong to us and to our sons forever, that we may observe all the words of this law.”
- Let us beware of speculation and take our stand on the sure foundation of God’s Word.

### **To Consider**

- There is a constant assault upon the Doctrine of Salvation by grace through faith.
- There is a continual attempt to exalt humanity by claiming the ability to save ourselves and to change ourselves.
- A humble, reasoned and biblical response is always necessary when dealing with Dogmas.

**Review**

- We talked about how the Doctrine of Soteriology developed.
- We clarified the Doctrine of Soteriology from a biblical perspective.
- We thought about the process involved in our salvation.

**In the Next Session**

- Which will be our last, we will discuss the Doctrines of the Church, the Sacraments and the Last Things.

**THE ORDER OF SALVATION CHART – ROMANS 8:29-30**

Calvinist:	Modified Calvinist:	Classical Arminian/Wesleyan:	Lutheran:	Catholic:
Predestination	Predestination	Foreknowledge	Calling	Faith (willed assent to the Church's dogmata, not fiducial faith as in Protestantism)
Election	Election	Predestination	Illumination	Conitriion
Calling	Calling	Election	Repentance	Regeneration (in the Sacrament of Baptism)
Regeneration	Faith	Prevenient Grace	Regeneration	Penance (after the Sacrament of Reconciliation)
Faith	Regeneration	External Calling	Justification	Sanctification
Repentance	Repentance	Repentance and faith	Mystical Union	Purgation
Justification	Justification	Justification	Sanctification	Theosis
Adoption	Adoption	Regeneration	Conservation	
Sanctification	Sanctification	Sanctification		
Perseverance	Perseverance	Perseverance (conditional)		
Glorification	Glorification	Glorification		



## INSTRUCTOR’S NOTES: DOCTRINE OF DIVINE GRACE

For the rest of this session, have your students discuss what they have learned and written in their summary of each chapter in their textbook.

There are a series of questions or assignments numbered and in bold letters.

Because of time constraints, use your discretion regarding which of these you would like to have your students work on and discuss as a group. You can lead these discussions yourself or assign some of them to individuals or groups and have them make a presentation or lead the discussion. One suggestion would be to have at least one student (or more, depending on your situation) share their summary as you cover each of the chapters in the notes below.

### **Chapter (Section) Summaries & Notes for Discussion**

The History of Christian Doctrine

by Louis Berkhof

### **The Doctrine of the Application & Appropriation of Divine Grace**

The Soteriology (Doctrine of Salvation) of the Patristic Period

This section deals with the method in which believers obtain a share in the benefits of the atonement (the objective work of redemption through Christ) and/or the subjective application of the merits of Christ through the operation of the Holy Spirit.

The Soteriology of the First Three Centuries

It would be unreasonable to look for a common, definite, well integrated and fully developed view of the application of the work of redemption in the earliest Church Fathers.

“It stands as an assured fact, a fact knowing no exceptions, and acknowledged by all well versed in the matter, that all of the pre-Augustinian Fathers taught that in the appropriation of salvation there is a co-working of freedom and grace.” Karl Kahnis – a Lutheran theologian (1814-1888)

This was in harmony with the New Testament statement, that man obtains the blessing of salvation by “repentance toward God and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ”; the early Fathers stressed these requirements.

Faith was regarded as the outstanding instrument for the reception of the merits of Christ, often called the sole means.

Faith consisted in true knowledge of God, confidence in Him, self-committal to Him and to have as its special object Jesus Christ and His atoning blood.

This faith, rather than the works of the law, was regarded as the means of justification. They generally did not expand on this doctrine – mostly repeating what they found in the Bible!

**1. Discuss “repeating what they found in the Bible” is always safe ground to stand on. Read 1 Corinthians 4:6, “...learn not to exceed what is written...”**

Despite all their emphasis on the grace of God and on faith as the way we obtain salvation, the early Fathers reveal a moralism that is not in harmony with the Pauline doctrine of salvation. The Gospel is often described as a new law. They tended to see salvation as depending on the grace of God AND on the voluntary co-operation of man.

**2. What is it in us, which pulls us toward moralism and legalism? Moralism means that we have an especially undue emphasis on morality. Legalism refers to the idea that we are saved by the keeping of the Law, or a variety of other standards established by the Scripture or by others.**

**It is certainly connected to pride and ego. It is also connected to “the flesh,” that principle of sin we see in Romans 7:14-25. We want to appear spiritual and “on God’s side,” so we compare ourselves to others – see 2 Corinthians 10:12. Perhaps we are hoping that, if we condemn sin in others, He won’t notice our sin and hypocrisy?**

To the early Fathers, repentance, alongside of faith, was regarded as a preliminary condition of salvation. The question was whether they conceived of it merely as an act or as a condition of the mind, or regarded it as including amendment of life. The moralistic perversion of New Testament Christianity – seeing good works in a legal vs. evangelical sense – was the continuation of the Judaistic legalism combated in Galatians; and the natural self-righteousness of the human heart.

It should be noted, that the Church Fathers of the first three centuries already reveal an initial drift towards ceremonialism – especially in the idea that baptism carried with it the forgiveness of previous sins and that pardon for sins committed after baptism can be obtained by penance. Gradually the idea that the good works of some, and especially the sufferings of martyrs, may serve to atone for sins of others.

Rudolph Sohm, (1841-1917) a German-Lutheran theologian and church historian, explained the departure from the teachings of Scripture in the fact that “the natural man is born Catholic.”

### **3. What does he mean that “the natural man is born Catholic”?**

**Here is the quote in context: This "fall" – from the authentic church - occurs because the unregenerate "natural man" is a "born Catholic" who seeks legal authenticity and a guarantee of salvation and who desires what is tangible and visible, providing pomp and circumstance that appeal to the senses. This "natural man" relies upon "small faith" bound to ecclesiastical law that is, bound to the past. – Perhaps we might classify this with “the flesh,” the principle of sin or the idea of “works righteousness.”**

### **The Soteriology of the Remaining Centuries of the Patristic-Period**

Pelagius deviated much further from the Scriptural representation of the application of redemption. He forsook the biblical foundation and re-asserted the self-sufficient principle of heathen philosophy. “God helps those who help themselves.”

His view of grace consisted only in:

- The good of nature – man is endowed with a free will.
- So that he can do either good or evil.
- The Gospel is preached and the example of Christ are directed to the mind of man to teach the way of salvation.
- It is given only to those who make a proper use of their natural powers.

### **4. What would be “the way of salvation” according to Pelagius?**

**Be or do good to others. Make use of your natural powers? Perhaps this means “reach your full potential as a human being”? Be the best you! Be kind and nice to others. Do unto others...**

Augustine starts with a radically different view of man’s natural condition. He regards man as totally depraved and utterly unable to perform spiritual good. Grace consists of the Gospel, baptism and the forgiveness of sins – among other things; but realizes this is not sufficient – that man needed something internal, a spiritual grace, a supernatural influence of the Spirit of God enlightening the mind and inclining the will towards holiness. He distinguished between:

- “Grace that goes before man when unwilling, that he may will,” and
- “Grace that follows him when willing, that he may not will in vain.”

Grace is irresistible in the sense that it inevitably renews the heart, so that the will voluntarily chooses the right.

Faith marks the beginning of the Christian life and is the source of all good works. It is primarily an intellectual assent to the truth. He distinguished between believing Christ and believing IN Christ: one really believes in Christ only when one loves Him and fixes his hope on Him. Christian faith works by love.

In justification, God not merely declares but makes the sinner righteous by transforming his inner nature; assuming sanctification is included in justification. Everything is related to the grace of God.

**5. Is there a legitimate distinction between ‘believing Christ’ and ‘believing in Christ’? How would you explain the distinctions? Are they significant?**

**I would see believing Christ as the prerequisite for believing in Christ. I must believe the things that Jesus taught about Himself, about God, about salvation and about following Him, as His disciple. This would lead me to a commitment to follow Him, believing in Him – that He, Himself is my salvation. It is not just His teachings and ideas that I believe, that I trust and have faith in; but it is Jesus, Himself that I trust and have faith in.**

The Semi-Pelagians denied the total inability of man to do spiritual good but did admit his inability to perform really saving works without the assistance of divine grace. God’s grace illuminates the mind and supports the will, but always in such a manner that the free will of man is in no way compromised; the two work together to accomplish redemption. God’s grace is universal and intended for all, but only becomes effective in those who make a proper use of their free will. Pelagianism was condemned by various councils/synods and Augustinianism appeared triumphant in

the Church.

Augustine’s doctrine did undergo some modifications, since it contained some elements that conflicted with man’s absolute dependence on God and pointed toward ceremonialism and works-righteousness:

- Participation in the grace of God is dependent on the Church and its sacraments.
- Regeneration may be lost again.

The doctrine of justification by faith does not consist primarily in the forgiveness of sins but in regeneration – the infusion of grace, which enables man to do good works and to merit everlasting life.

Faith justifies, not because it appropriates the righteousness of Jesus Christ, but because it works by love. Grace merely serves the purpose of making it possible for man once more to merit salvation.

Though these ideas were foreign to his main teaching, some were eager to use them to give credence to the Semi-Pelagian teaching.

The Church eventually settled on a modified Augustinianism and “grace alone” was upheld; but the doctrine of predestination was abandoned, along with irresistible grace. The doctrine of grace was brought closer to popular Catholicism by the exaltation of good work as the aim of the divine impartation of grace.

**6. Review and discuss “influences contrary to the doctrine of grace as the source of all spiritual blessings” (below). What were the contrary ideas that were being supported by some of the Catholic Church’s practices?**

Some influences contrary to the doctrine of grace as the source of all spiritual blessings included:

The tendency to confound faith with orthodoxy – assuming to believe was simply to hold an orthodox creed; focusing on a list of doctrines that required assent. **(This is not just a “Catholic” issue, is it.)**

Works of mercy and self-discipline were highly commended and often described as the proper way of making satisfaction for the sins of believers.

Many Church Fathers distinguished between divine commands, which were absolutely binding on all Christians, and evangelical counsels, which were a matter of choice, but brought greater reward to those who observed them, with eminent holiness belonging to those who were diligent in the performance of certain externals.

The increasing practice of saint-worship and dependence on the intercession of saints, and especially of the virgin Mary, proved detrimental to spiritual conceptions of salvation; leading to reliance on the works of man; the saints having a super-abundance of good works and could simply transfer some of them to others.

There was a growing tendency to make salvation dependent on baptism, which marked the entrance into that Church outside of which there is no salvation.

### **The Soteriology of the Scholastic Period**

There were varieties of opinions regarding the main elements of the saving process: grace, faith, justification, merit and good works. Overall, the position of the Church was that of a mild Augustinianism, though the Schoolmen drifted toward Semi-Pelagianism.

#### The Scholastic Conception of Grace

Pelagianism (and the Semi version) asserted that it lay within the power of the natural man to originate and increase faith.

The Scholastics generally maintained that man could not do this without the aid of *sufficient* grace. (Sufficient grace is the grace all men are given.)

Augustine asserted the necessity of *efficient* grace. (Efficient grace is a higher form of grace that, if received, leads to justification.)

Peter the Lombard distinguished between grace which enables man to turn to God in faith and grace that co-operates with the will and is effective in bringing about the desired results. The first is worked in man without any action on his part.

Alexander of Hales (along with Thomas Aquinas) introduced another division by speaking of:

- Grace *giving* freely – referring to the gracious activity of God.
- Grace *given* freely – designating all actual graces and infused virtues.
- Grace *making* gracious – as a permanent quality of the soul.

#### The Scholastic Conception of Faith

The Schoolmen tended to distinguish between faith as a form of knowledge – a mere

assent to the truth and faith as a spiritual affection – productive of good works.

Peter the Lombard makes a three-fold distinction:

- To believe in a god/God
- To believe in God
- To believe God (so as to love Him, be joined to Him)

#### The Scholastic Conception of Justification and Merit

Augustine’s confusion of justification and sanctification was not rectified by the Schoolmen – it was intensified. Their common teaching being, that justification is effected through the infusion of sanctifying grace into the soul by God; included the forgiveness of sins and on the part of man the turning of his free will to God through faith and contrition. However, of course, this did not apply to infants, in them justification is entirely the work of God and is only the infusion of grace and the remission of original sin. (*via baptism?*)

Justification was never conceived of as a mere imputation of the righteousness of Christ to the sinner. The big debate was over the order of the various elements in justification.

Thomas Aquinas said that:

- First was the infusion of grace.
- Then the turning of the free will to God.
- Next the turning of the free will against sin.
- Finally, the remission of guilt.

Alexander Hales & Bonaventura contended for a different order:

- Attrition or turning from sin.
- Infusion of grace (with attrition becoming contrition).
- Remission or expulsion of sin.
- The turning of the free will to God.

Duns Scotus had a completely different opinion. Justification consisted of two divine operations:

- The forgiveness of sins.
- The renovation of the soul through sanctifying grace; the two being simultaneous in time with forgiveness preceding the infusion of grace.

The Scholastics speak of justification as instantaneous but the Council of Trent mentions a progressive increase of justification. Aquinas maintains that assurance of justification is not the common privilege of believers in general, but only for those

who have accomplished or suffered much for the sake of religion and so receive a special revelation.

The doctrine of meritorious works was taught in the middle ages. Aquinas distinguished two kinds of merit: Merit of Condignity (*deserving or earned*) – which in strict justice deserves reward and belongs to Christ alone and Merit of Congruity (*in harmony with or like*) – which is fit to be rewarded and can be acquired by men. His followers carried this a little bit further and taught, that after justification, man may, by divine grace, attain to the Merit of Condignity – doing things that give him a claim on God. (*God blesses because we have earned it.*)

The Roman Catholic doctrine of the application and appropriation of divine grace finally assumed the following form: **(handed down from the Apostles?)**

Children born with the Church receive the grace of regeneration, including the forgiveness of sin, in baptism. Others, who come under the influence of the Gospel in later years, receive sufficient grace – the illumination of the understanding and a strengthening of the will by the Holy Spirit. They can resist or yield. By yielding and co-operating, they prepare themselves for the grace of justification.

The preparation includes seven elements:

- Assent to the truth taught by the Church
- Insight into one’s sinful condition
- Hope in the mercy of God
- The beginnings of love to God
- An abhorrence of sin
- A resolution to obey the commandments of God
- A desire for baptism

Justification follows in baptism; this is the infusion of grace and the forgiveness of sins. The measure of forgiveness depends on the degree in which sin is overcome. Forgiveness is preserved by obeying the commandments and by doing good works.

The grace of God, therefore, serves the purpose of enabling man once more to merit salvation. However, it is not certain if justification will be retained. It may be lost through unbelief or by any mortal sin. Yet, it may be regained by the sacrament of penance: contrition (or attrition), confession – along with absolution, and works of sanctification.

Question: What's the difference between contrition and attrition?

Answer: (Catholic)



Contrition is sorrow for one’s sins based on the selfless motive of love for God and sorrow for having offended him.

Attrition is sorrow for one’s sins based on the fear of punishment. For someone in the state of mortal sin (1 John 5:16-17), perfect contrition is required in order to reconcile with God.

### **Reformation and Post Reformation Soteriology**

#### The Lutheran Order of Salvation

Romans 1:17 – man is justified by faith alone

Mathew 4:17 – repentance consisted in real inner contrition of the heart and was a fruit of the grace of God only.

There is some disagreement re: how Luther placed repentance and faith in relation to each other.

Did he at first regard repentance as a fruit of faith and later place it before faith, as something produced by the law? Or did he always hold to the second opinion? Both are instrumental in leading the sinner to Christ and do not yet presuppose a union with Him.

In opposing Roman Catholic works-righteousness, he did stress that true repentance is the fruit of faith. Later in opposing antinomianism, he stressed that true faith is preceded by a deep feeling of penitence.

#### **7. Can both these positions (above) be true? Perhaps this is an example of Scripture being written for the direction you are going?**

There was much discussion about the order of events related to a person experiencing God’s grace and salvation. Some sought to base their order on Scripture – such as Acts 2:38; 20:21; Romans 8:29-30; 1 Corinthians 1:30; 6:11; 1Pt 1:1-2.

Those wishing to sustain an idea of sequential order in salvation appeal to Romans 8:29-30, along with other scriptures. However, when we compare the various lists with the Scriptures, there seems to be some gaps or perhaps dyslexia in the order?

#### **8. Compare these scriptures: Acts 2:38; 20:21; Romans 8:29-30; 1 Corinthians 1:30; 6:11; 1 Peter 1:1-2. See if a biblical base for the order of salvation can be established.**

I have included, in your notes, a chart that shows the “order of salvation” from five perspectives: Calvinism, Modified Calvinism, Classical Arminian/Wesleyan, Lutheran and Catholic

Some theologians have criticized the idea of an order of salvation. They think that we run the risk of "psychologizing" salvation and that we do not do justice to the fullness of salvation by trying to determine the order or timing in the process.

The concept of an ordered sequence of the doctrine of salvation was an important part of the construction of the Westminster Confession. In addition, some have observed that Christians cannot avoid thinking about the particular elements of salvation and the order in which they are experienced. Because this is the way humans operate.

**9. Review the conceptions of the order of Salvation chart (page 296 of this book, page 167 in the student guides). How important or necessary is it that we can designate an order? What does it mean, if a person’s experience is, or seems to be, different from the established order? Does it mean that this person is not saved?**

The Lutheran order of salvation only had three elements at the beginning, but later became far more elaborate in the 17th century. They based their order (loosely) on Acts 2:17-18 and included:

- Calling
- Illumination
- Conversion
- Regeneration
- Justification
- Renovation
- Glorification

The process of salvation was seen as:

- Children born of Christian parents, who cannot yet resist the grace of God, are regenerated in baptism and receive the gift of faith.
- Others are called in later life with a sufficient ability, alike in all cases, and which by illumining the mind and strengthening the will enables them to not resist the grace of God.
- If they do not resist the work of the Holy Spirit in calling, they are brought to contrition, are regenerated and are endowed with the gift of faith.

- By faith they are then justified, receive the forgiveness of sins and are adopted as children of God, incorporated into Christ, renewed by the Holy Spirit and are finally glorified.
- The beginning does not ensure its completion. God is always resistible.

### **The Reformed Order of Salvation**

In reformed theology, the order of salvation acquired a different form, because Calvin consistently took his starting point in an eternal election and in the mystical union established in the Covenant of Redemption. There is no participation in the blessings of Christ, except through a living union with the Savior.

The very first of the blessings of saving grace already presupposes a union with Christ and the imputation of His righteousness precedes all else. A union already established between Him and those who were given unto Him by the Father – both legal & mystical. They are ready for distribution and are appropriated by faith.

Regeneration, repentance and faith are not mere preparations, nor conditions. They are blessings of the covenant of grace. Calvin recognized a repentance preceding faith but saw in it merely an initial fear, a legal repentance that does not necessarily lead to faith and cannot be regarded as an essential preparation for it. He stresses the repentance that flows from faith, that is possible only in communion with Christ and that continues throughout life.

Calvin and Luther, in their common opposition to Rome, agreed on the nature and importance of the doctrine of justification by faith. They describe it as an act of free grace and as a forensic act (a legality) which does not change the inner life of man, but only the judicial relationship in which he stands to God; with no inherent righteousness of the believer, but only in the imputed righteousness of Jesus Christ, which the sinner appropriates by faith.

Justification is instantaneous and complete. The believer can be sure that he is forever translated from a state of wrath and condemnation to one of favor and acceptance. However, Lutheran theology did not remain entirely true to this position.

### The Arminian Order of Salvation

The Arminians teach that:

- God bestows a universal grace on man, which is sufficient to enable the sinner to believe and obey the Gospel; and that the call which comes to man through the preaching of the Word exerts a merely moral influence on his understanding and will.
- If he assents to the truth, trusts in the grace of God and obeys the commandments of Christ, he receives a greater measure of divine grace, is justified because of his faith and, if he perseveres to the end, becomes a partaker of life eternal.

The School of Saumur moved in the same general direction, teaching that the will of man always follows the final dictate of the understanding and that therefore in regeneration and conversion an effective illumination of the mind is all that is required and all that takes place. There is no supernatural operation of the Holy Spirit directly on the will of man and that the efficacy of the divine calling depends on its congruity with the external circumstances in which it comes to man.

The order of salvation that arose from Arminian teachings was:

- Christ atoned for the sins of all men, making salvation possible for all and brought them into a salvable state.
- He met the demands of the old law, the covenant of works; substituting for it a new law, a law of grace – which is satisfied with faith and conversion; as well as a true, though imperfect, obedience of the repentant sinner.

They developed the ideas of a legal righteousness and an evangelical righteousness. Evangelical righteousness consisted of obedience to the new law of faith and conversion, which was the ground of our justification.

This rationalistic tendency eventually led to a liberalism that recognizes Christ only as a great prophet and teacher, who proclaimed the truth of God and sealed it with His death, and whose example man has but to follow; to obtain eternal salvation.

Methodism, a more pietistic form of Arminianism, was averse to the idea of gradual conversions and did not recognize a lengthy period of contrition, followed by a period in which the darkness is dispelled and the light breaks through, and a still later season when doubt turns into the glad assurance of salvation. They concentrated all efforts in the preaching of the Gospel on a single point – casting the sinner down by the preaching of the law. The sinner who does so accept Christ passes in a single moment from the greatest misery into the most rapturous ecstasy and from the deepest gloom into the most transcendent joy; along with an immediate assurance of being saved.

Many hold that a second radical change is necessary, and is worked in man, for entire sanctification.

#### Minor Conceptions of the Order of Salvation

The Antinomians (without law) leave no room for a subjective application of the redemption wrought by Christ. They make no distinction between Christ procuring and the Holy Spirit applying the blessings of saving grace. The only requirement of man is to believe – to become conscious of the fact of what Christ has done. Some even said that Christ did not atone for sin but only revealed the love of God.

The Mystical approach to salvation sought the essential thing of the Christian life in experience, emphasizing the fact that true faith IS experience. This experience is not guided by the Scripture, but by the experiences of those who were reputed to be “oaks of righteousness.” The law should be preached to all but the Gospel only to certain “qualified sinners” who will go through great gloom, despair and agony; ... until they receive a special token from the Spirit; then after further struggle a special assurance by voice, vision, word of Scripture or such.

## **SESSION 17, PART 1 – THE DOCTRINE OF THE CHURCH**

After this session, you will:

- Know how the Doctrine of the Church developed.
- Be able to explain the difficult challenges the Church has faced throughout its history.
- Think about and discuss the importance of the Church.
- Appreciate your freedom to worship in a church of your choosing.
- Be amazed at the Church’s surviving and thriving.

You will KNOW:

- We should not romanticize the times of persecution as the Church’s best, strongest or purest eras.

You will BE ABLE TO:

- Talk about how the Church identified itself.

You will THINK ABOUT:

- The persecution of the Church.

### **In the Last Session**

- You learned how the Doctrine of Soteriology developed.
- You clarified the doctrine of Soteriology from a biblical perspective.
- You thought about the process involved in our salvation.

### **Begin video.**

### **The Doctrine of the Church**

- Rudolph Sohm, a German-Lutheran theologian and church historian, argued that the Early Church had no legal constitution.
- Ecclesiastical law stands in contradiction to the nature of Ecclesia.
- The Early Church was ruled not by legal concepts but by a power he called "charisma" ("a gift of grace") bestowed by the Holy Spirit.
- The charismatically based Jesus movement of the Early Church changed into the legalistic bureaucracy of Roman Catholicism.

### **The Apostolic Fathers**

- The Apostolic Fathers and the Apologists generally represented the Church as "The Communion of The Saints."
  - The People of God.
  - Those He has chosen for a possession.

- At times, they referred to the Church as “The True Israel,” though how it related to the people of Israel and God’s covenant with them was not always clear.

### **Persecution**

- We should take notice that the followers of Christ suffered persecution by the State, for 163 years of out of 250 years, from 54 to 304 AD,.
- There were multitudes that confessed their faith in Jesus Christ and persevered despite horrendous suffering and death.
- Several times, leaders had to discourage believers from purposely seeking out martyrdom.
- However, some fled to other locations or even denied Christ.
- How was the Church to respond to those who did not respond well?
- Was there forgiveness available?
- There were many who said, “NO!”
- The pressures from the State and from false teaching within the Church made this a very difficult time and even influenced the development of doctrine.
- We should not romanticize the times of persecution as the Church’s best, or strongest or purest eras.

### **The Church’s Identity**

- By the second century, with the rise of heresies, it was necessary to designate some external characteristics by which the true catholic (worldwide) Church could be known.
- The Church identified itself simply as an organization ruled by a bishop, and in possession of the true religion.
- The local churches were not seen as separate units, but as parts of the universal church.
- They would be true churches only if they were loyal and subject to the Church as a whole.

### **The Sects**

- The sects, such as Montanism, Novatianism and Donatism, tended to focus on the holiness of its members as the mark of the true Church.
- These were reform movements against:
  - The gradual secularization.
  - The increasing worldliness.
  - The corruption of the Church.

### **Cyprian**

- Cyprian was the first to develop the doctrine of the episcopal Church.
- The idea of a Bishop or Overseer ruling each church.
- His grand contributions to the progress of error and corruption in the Church were the central ideas that “outside of the Church (catholic) there was no salvation.”
- That only the leaders who received the Spirit – which could be received only in the Church – could impart forgiveness of sins.

### **Augustine**

- Sadly, Augustine’s conception of the Church did not harmonize with his doctrine of sin and grace.
- There was a dualism in his idea of the Church:
  - On the one hand, he conceives of the Church as the company of the elect, The Communion (community) of the Saints, and not just in an outward sense.
  - The real unity of the saints is an invisible one.
  - On the other hand, the true Church is the Catholic Church, outside of which there is no salvation.
- This Church is a mixed body, but is destined for perfect purity in the future.

### **The Middles Ages**

- The theologians in the Middle Ages had very little to say about the Church, seeing that the Church had developed into a close-knit, compactly organized, absolute hierarchy.
- Two ideas became very prominent during the Middle Ages:
  - The primacy of Rome.
  - The identity of the Church as the Kingdom of God.
- In the 4th & 5th centuries several traditions gained traction.
- First, that Christ had given Peter an official primacy over the other Apostles.
- That Peter had been the first bishop of Rome and that this primacy was passed on to his successors.
- The idea, that the Catholic Church was the Kingdom of God, developed at the same time, as these traditions, leading to the conclusion that the authority of the “Universal Bishop” (conferred on Boniface III - 607) was over the entire earth – thus over an earthly kingdom.
- This identification of the visible and organized Church with the Kingdom of God had important and far-reaching consequences.
- Most significantly, it led to the secularization of the Church.
- As an external Kingdom, the Church began to pay more attention to politics than to the salvation of souls.



### **The Roman Catholic Church**

- The Roman Catholic Church did not officially formulate their conception of the Church until after the Reformation.
- The Tridentine Catechism (From the Council of Trent 1566) defined the Church as “the body of all the faithful who have lived up to this time on earth with one invisible head, Christ, and one visible head, the successor of Peter, who occupies the Roman see.” This refers to the holy chair or seat and relates to the sovereignty of the Vatican and the Popes authority over the Catholic Church as the Vicar of Christ or the substitute of Christ.

### **Luther**

- Luther rejected the ideas of:
  - An infallible Church,
  - A special priesthood, and
  - Sacraments that operate in a magical way.
- He sought to restore to its rightful place the scriptural idea of the priesthood of all believers.
- He regarded the Church as the spiritual community of those who believe in Christ – established and sustained by Christ who is its Head.

### **The Anabaptists**

- The Anabaptists had the most extreme reaction against the Roman Catholic externalization of the Church.
- They denied the identity of the Old Testament Church with that of the New, insisting on a Church of believers only.
- Though children had a place in the Church of the Old Testament, they have no legitimate place in the Church of the New Testament since they can neither exercise faith nor make a profession of it.
- They also demanded absolute separation of Church and State.

### **The Reformed (Calvinists)**

- The Reformed conception of the Church is fundamentally the same as the Lutheran.
- Both agree that we can find the real essence of the Church in the community of the saints as a spiritual entity (the invisible Church).
- The Reformed were also of the opinion that the possibility of salvation extends beyond the borders of the visible Church and that the Spirit of God is not absolutely bound to the ordinary means of grace, but may work and save “when, where and how He pleases.”

- The Reformed spoke of the invisibility of the Church in more than one sense:
  - As those called out through all time and in all places.
  - As the group of the elect which will not be completed until the revelation of Jesus Christ – His return.
  - As the group of the elect who are called – signifying the inability to distinguish absolutely the true believers from the false.
- Finally, the Reformed found the true marks of the Church, not only in the true administration of the Word and the sacraments, but also in the faithful administration of Church discipline.
- There were also differences between the Reformed and the Lutherans as to the government of the Church.

### **Divergent Views**

- There were some divergent post-Reformation views as well.
- The Socinians, which have probably infiltrated more churches than we realize, spoke of the invisible Church, but forgot all about it.
- Since they conceived of the Christian religion simply as an acceptable doctrine – as long as Jesus is not God.
- The Arminians, denied that the Church is essentially the invisible communion of the saints.
- Made it primarily a visible society.
- They robbed the Church of its independence by yielding the right of discipline to the State.
- Retained the right to preach the Gospel and to admonish its members.
- The Methodists, representing many pietistic movements chose a different approach.
- They disregarded the visible Church.
- Pietists were those who had a disciplined and emotional devotion in their practices of Christianity.
- They were indifferent towards the institutional Church, with its functions and sacraments.
- They brought their followers into small groups or cells.
- They focused on a society or fellowship, as opposed to a church.

### **The Roman Catholic Church**

- The Roman Catholic Church moved even further in the direction of an absolute hierarchy after the days of the Reformation with a more pronounced authority of the Pope.
- The Vatican Council in 1870 finally declared the infallibility of the Roman Pontiff, when speaking to fulfill the office of pastor and teacher.

- The Germans, however, were not willing to submit to this decision and began to identify themselves as “The Old Catholic Church.”
- When comparing themselves with the Protestants, the Catholic Church boasts of its unity.
- Though this is more appearance than reality.
- Their unity is merely a corporate or organizational unity, rather than a unity of spirit and purpose.

**To Consider**

- The Church was greatly influenced by the Roman Empire, especially as the State Church.
- There seemed to be little willingness to submit the Church structure/ organization to a biblical standard.
- The power of the Church structure – Protestant and Catholic- was equally resistant to change.

**Review**

- You learned how the Doctrine of the Church developed.
- You were able to explain the difficult challenges the Church has faced throughout its history.
- You thought about and discussed the importance of the Church.

**In the Next Session**

- We will be discussing, in the History of Christian Doctrine, the sections on the Doctrines of the Sacraments and the Last Things.

## INSTRUCTOR’S NOTES: DOCTRINE OF THE CHURCH

For the rest of this session, have your students discuss what they have learned and written in their summary of each chapter in their textbook.

There are a series of questions or assignments numbered and in bold letters.

Because of time constraints, use your discretion regarding which of these you would like to have your students work on and discuss as a group. You can lead these discussions yourself or assign some of them to individuals or groups and have them make a presentation or lead the discussion. One suggestion would be to have at least one student (or more, depending on your situation) share their summary as you cover each of the chapters in the notes below.

### **Chapter (Section) Summaries and Notes for Discussion**

The History of Christian Doctrine

by Louis Berkhof

#### **The Doctrine of the Church, the Sacraments and the Last Things In the Patristic Period**

In 1892, Rudolph Sohm, (1841-1917) a German-Lutheran theologian and church historian, argued that:

- the Early Church had no legal constitution,
- ecclesiastical law stands in contradiction to the nature of Ecclesia,
- the Early Church was ruled not by legal concepts but by a power he called "charisma" ("a gift of grace") bestowed by the Holy Spirit, and
- the charismatically based Jesus movement of the Early Church changed into the legalistic bureaucracy of Roman Catholicism.

The Apostolic Fathers and the Apologists generally represented the Church as “The Communion of The Saints” – the People of God – those He has chosen for a possession. They did, at times, refer to the church as: “The True Israel;” though how it related to the people of Israel and God’s covenant with them was not always clear.

**1. Is there a conflict between the Church as a fellowship and the Church as an organization? Should there be a problem? Is it either/or?**

**There should be no conflict. The Church is both a fellowship and an organization. There are to be objectively qualified, appointed leaders. The conflict usually arises from violating the biblical pattern and the teachings of Jesus in Mt 20:20-28 – esp. vs.25-28. When we are out of balance, either as a fellowship or as an organization it will show up in conflicts. Those approved as leaders are to step into the midst of those conflicts and deal with any divisions, re-establishing peace. 1 Corinthians 11:19)**

By the second century, with the rise of heresies, it became necessary to designate some external characteristics by which the true catholic (worldwide) Church could be known. The Church began to be identified as an organization ruled by a bishop as a direct successor of the apostles? This designated a particular governmental structure. It was also to be in possession of the true religion, which would be correct doctrine.

**2. What should be the external characteristics that designate a true church, a truly Christian church? Are there core doctrines, practices or a specific organizational structure we must use? What are some things that we probably should not use to determine a true church? For example, I once heard that if a church did not have a bus ministry and a gymnasium, then it was not a New Testament church. What would you put on this list?**

The local churches were thought of, not separate units, but parts of the universal church (governed by the bishops). They would be true churches only as long as they were loyal and subject to the catholic Church as a whole.

The sects (Montanism, Novatianism, and Donatism) tended to focus on the holiness of its members as the real mark of the true Church. This was a reaction against the gradual secularization and increasing worldliness and corruption of the Church.

The Montanists (late 2nd century)

- railed against the worldliness of the churches,
- insisted on ascetic practices,
- declared sins after baptism as unpardonable, but
- said there was a possibility of atoning for mortal sins by martyrdom.

The Novatians (middle of 3rd century)

- worked for the purity of the church, believing that the Church has no power to forgive those who had denied the faith during the Decian persecution (249-251) and then sought readmission to the Church.
- they also re-baptized those who joined their circle.

The Donatists (beginning of 4th century)

- rejected those who denied the faith during the persecution of Diocletian (284-304),
- insisted on rigorous ecclesiastical discipline,
- insisted on a pure church-membership,
- rejected unworthy ministers, and
- protested state interference in religious matters – though they themselves courted the favor and protection of the emperor.

**3. Is the idea of a pure church membership in the local church, realistic? Where is the balance? Augustine considered Jesus’ teaching on the wheat and the tares as evidence that a pure (visible) church is not expected. See Mt 13:24-30 (the parable) and 13:36-43 (the explanation). What do you think?**

**Does this mean that we should somehow make accommodation for the tares? Is there really any church, this side of the return of Christ, which could seriously consider itself as pure? Is God able, through the work of Jesus Christ, the Holy Spirit and His word, to transform tares into wheat?**

The Church Fathers took issue with all these sects and emphasized the episcopal (rule by bishops) institution of the Church.

Cyprian (200-258) was the first to develop the doctrine of the episcopal (bishop led) Church. He regarded the bishops as chosen by the Lord Himself and as the real successors of the Apostles. He maintained, based on Matthew 16:18, that the Church was founded on the bishops. He considered the bishop as the absolute lord of the Church (the local congregations within his area), it was he who decided who could belong to the Church and who could be restored to fellowship. The bishop conducted the worship of the Church as a priest of God – by virtue of their sacrificial work. He saw the unity of the Church as based on the unity of the bishops. He also maintained their parity and ascribed no primacy to the bishop of Rome.

He taught that true members always obey and remain in the Church, outside of which there is no possibility of being saved.

He denied the validity of baptism administered by heretics and taught that only the leaders who received the Spirit – which could be received only in the Church – could impart forgiveness of sins. These were, at least in part, “Cyprian’s grand contributions to the progress of error and corruption in the Church.” (Cunningham – *Historical Theology* pg.169)

Augustine’s (354-430) struggle with the Donatists compelled him to reflect more deeply on the essence of the Church. Sadly, his conception of the Church does not harmonize with his doctrine of sin and grace. There is a dualism in his idea of the Church:

On the one hand, he is the predestinarian who conceives of the Church as the company of the elect, The Communion (community) of the Saints, who have the Spirit of God and are characterized by true love. These truly belong to the Church – not just in an outward sense. The real unity of the saints is an invisible one.

On the other hand, he is the Churchman, who holds to the Cyprianic idea of the Church, in its general aspects. The true Church is the catholic Church, in which the apostolic authority is continued by episcopal succession – outside of which there is no salvation – its sacraments are not merely symbols, with divine energy: Sins are really forgiven in Baptism and the Lord’s Supper gives spiritual refreshment to the soul. This Church is a mixed body but is destined for perfect purity in the future.

The Donatists criticized Augustine saying that he split the Church into two Churches: the mixed Church of the present and the pure Church of the future in heaven. Augustine maintained the purity of the one catholic Church also in the present, but sought it more particularly in the objective institution – with its offices, sacraments and ministries; he also defended a certain subjective purity.

Augustine’s view of the Kingdom of God went beyond the earlier Church Fathers, who used the term to describe the result and goal of the Church’s development – the eschatological Kingdom to come.

Augustine said, “The Church is the Kingdom of Heaven, even now.” By this, he means primarily that the saints constitute the Kingdom of God – though he applies this term to the leaders of the Church collectively. The contrast between the city (State/Kingdom) of God and the city (State/Kingdom) of the world is regarded as equivalent to that between Christianity and heathenism, between the good and the bad, between the saints and the wicked – even within the Church – between the spiritual and the carnal, between the elect and the non-elect. He never was able to affect a true synthesis of his divergent views about the Church. It could certainly be questioned as to whether such a harmonizing could be possible.

**4. Here are a few of the questions (below) that arise when considering Augustine’s teachings. Perhaps we should consider our answers to these questions concerning our own belief about the church – visible and invisible. Note: it is acceptable to answer, “I do not know.”**

Who are in the Church? (Augustine’s answer)

- All the predestined, including the still unconverted.
- All believers, including those who will relapse.
- All those who have part in the sacraments.

Which is the true Church, the external communion of the baptized, or the spiritual communion of the elect and the saints, or both, since it is said that there is no salvation outside of the external communion?

How is the Church, as constituted of the number of the elect, related to the Church as the communion of the faithful? They are clearly not identical for some may be of the faithful (in attendance and support) who are not of the elect and are finally lost. “No one has God for a Father, who does not have the Church (i.e. the one visible catholic Church) for a mother.” So, what about the elect who never join the Church?

If the Church is founded on the predestinating grace of God, how is it possible that those who have once received the grace of regeneration and the forgiveness of sins in baptism, should lose this again and forfeit salvation?



If God is the only absolute source of all grace and dispenses it in a sovereign way, can it be considered proper to ascribe this power to the visible Church with its sacraments, and to make salvation dependent on membership in that organization?

### **In the Middle Ages**

The theologians in the Middle Ages had very little to say about the Church, seeing that the Church had developed into a close-knit, compactly organized, absolute hierarchy. The seeds for this development came from the writings and teachings of Cyprian and Augustine regarding the Church as an external organization.

Two ideas became very prominent during the Middle Ages:

- The primacy of Rome.
- The identity of the Church as the Kingdom of God.

In the 4<sup>th</sup> & 5<sup>th</sup> centuries the traditions that:

- Christ had given Peter an official primacy over the other Apostles.
- Peter had been the first bishop of Rome.
- This primacy that was passed on to his successors gained traction.

These traditions were especially being promoted by successive bishops, along with the promise of renewal after the fall of the Western Empire. In 533, the Emperor Justinian recognized the primacy of the bishop of Rome over the occupants of the other patriarchal sees. Gregory the Great (590-604) refused the title of “Universal Bishop” but it was conferred on Boniface III (607). The Church thus received an external and visible head, the Pope, who soon developed into an absolute monarch.

The idea, that the Catholic Church was the Kingdom of God, developed at the same time leading to the conclusion that the authority of the “Universal Bishop” was over the entire earth – thus over an earthly kingdom.

This identification of the visible and organized Church with the Kingdom of God had important and far-reaching consequences.

If the Church alone is The Kingdom of God, then all Christian duties and activities must take the form of services rendered to the Church. All that did not come under the control of the Church was considered as purely secular and its renunciation became a work of special piety. (*Think: Hermits & Monks*)

Another result was that an undue significance was ascribed to the outward ordinances of the Church. All the blessings of salvation were thought of as coming to humanity through the ordinances of the Church; without their use salvation was

considered impossible.

In addition, it led to the practical secularization of the Church. As an external Kingdom, the Church began to pay more attention to politics than to the salvation of souls.

**5. Consider the consequences (above) of seeing the Church alone, as the Kingdom of God.**

**Is God not sovereign over all? With dynamically different groups proclaiming themselves as “the Church,” how do we recognize the True Church - The Kingdom of God? Consider also the consequences of seeing the Kingdom of God in a Church and State union as we saw in Church History. (It was definitely the Church that suffered in this union!) The focus turned from faith and conversion, to conquering and ruling. Then, consider also Jesus’ words in John 18:33-37. Where is the balance point? If we want to see the influence of God’s Kingdom upon the kingdoms of this world, then our focus must be on the power of Jesus Christ, through the gospel, to transform lives and make disciples who follow Jesus. As this occurs, there is a possibility that people groups, cultures and kingdoms will be influenced from a spiritual level, rather than a political level.**

It was not until after the Reformation that the Roman Catholic conception of the Church was officially formulated. The Tridentine Catechism (from the Council of Trent 1566) defined the Church as “the body of all the faithful who have lived up to this time on earth with one invisible head, Christ, and one visible head, the successor of Peter, who occupies the Roman see.”

Cardinal Bellarmine (1542-1621) defined the Church as “the company of all who are bound together by the profession of the same Christian faith and using the same sacraments and are under the rule of legitimate pastors and principally under Christ’s vicar (representative) on earth, the Roman Pontiff.”

Notable factors in the Roman Catholic conception of the Church:

They strongly emphasize the visible nature of the Church, based on the incarnation of the divine Word with the Church being the continuation of the incarnation.

A very important distinction is made between the Teaching Church, a term applied to the hierarchy, (e.g., the Pope and the bishops in union with him, speaking in their divinely authorized capacity of teaching the faithful in matters pertaining to salvation and sanctification) and the hearing, learning or believing Church. A term applied to all the faithful, or all the disciples, insofar as they are being taught by the successors of the Apostles.

The Church is made up, like a human person, of body and soul.

The soul of the Church consists of the society of “those called to the faith of Christ and are united with Him by supernatural gifts and graces – at any particular time, vs. all the elect.

The body of the Church is the society of those who profess the true faith, whether they be just or sinners, but only the baptized and confirmed.

In the Church, Christ distributes the fullness of those graces and blessings which He merited for sinners; exclusively through the agency of the clergy, the legitimate officers of the Church.

The Church is exclusively an institute of salvation, a saving ark – with three functions:

- To propagate the true faith by means of the ministry of the Word,
- To effect sanctification by means of the sacraments, and
- To govern believers according to ecclesiastical law.

### **During and After the Reformation**

The Lutheran View: Luther rejected the ideas:

- Of an infallible Church,
- Of a special priesthood, and
- Of sacraments that operate in a magical way.

He sought to restore to its rightful place the scriptural idea of the priesthood of all believers, regarded the Church as the spiritual community of those who believe in Christ – established and sustained by Christ who is its Head.

He stressed the oneness of the Church but distinguished between the visible and invisible aspects of it. He was careful to point out that these two aspects were not two churches, but simply two aspects, views, of the same Church.

The invisibility of the Church served the purpose of denying that it is essentially an external society with a visible head, and affirming that the essence of the Church is to be found in the sphere of the invisible:

- Faith,
- Communion with Christ, and
- Participation in the blessings of salvation through the Holy Spirit.

The visibility of the Church can be recognized – not by the leadership or the externals but by the pure administration of the Word and the sacraments. The important thing would be that one belongs to the spiritual, invisible Church – though this is closely related with membership in the visible Church.

The Augsburg Confession (Lutheran) defines the visible Church as “the congregation of the saints in which the Gospel is rightly taught and the sacraments are rightly administered.”

The Anabaptist View: This was the most extreme reaction against the Roman Catholic externalization of the Church. They denied the identity of the Old Testament Church with that of the New, insisting on a Church of believers only. Though children had a place in the Church of the Old Testament, they have no legitimate place in the Church of the New Testament since they can neither exercise faith nor make a profession of it. They also demanded absolute separation of Church and State.

The Reformed View: The Reformed conception of the Church is fundamentally the same as the Lutheran, with some relatively important points. Both agree that the real essence of the Church is found in the community of the saints as a spiritual entity (the invisible Church).

The Reformed believed the possibility of salvation extends beyond the borders of the visible Church and that the Spirit of God is not absolutely bound to the ordinary means of grace, but may work and save “when, where and how He pleases.”

The Reformed spoke of the invisibility of the Church in more than one sense:

- As those called out through all time and in all places.
- As the group of the elect which will not be completed until the revelation of Jesus Christ – His return.
- As the group of the elect who are called – signifying the inability to distinguish absolutely the true believers from the false.

Finally, the Reformed found the true marks of the Church, not only in the true administration of the Word and the sacraments, but also in the faithful

administration of Church discipline. There were also differences with the Lutherans as to the government of the Church.

**6. In our earlier question about the identifying characteristics of a truly Christian Church, did you include some of the things we see in the Reformation groups above? Such as, the “pure or true administration of the Word (the Gospel) and the sacraments”? How about, “in the faithful administration of Church discipline”? Did you find other things that you agreed with or disagreed with? Are there things you would add?**

### **Divergent Post-Reformation Views**

Socinian & Arminian

The Reformation opened the door for change and for a variety of “Confessions.” Churches outside of the Lutheran & Reformed traditions often sacrificed the invisible to the visible Church, or vice versa. The Socinians spoke of the invisible Church, but in reality, forgot all about it, since they conceived of the Christian religion simply as an acceptable doctrine.

The Arminians denied that the Church is essentially the invisible communion of the saints and made it primarily a visible society. They robbed the Church of its independence by yielding the right of discipline to the State, retaining the right to preach the Gospel and to admonish its members.

The Labadists (a French Pietist movement) & Methodist – took the opposite track, they disregarded the visible Church. Pietism in general insisted strongly on a practical religion. It combated worldliness, viewing the world itself as an organism of sin, which must be shunned. They were indifferent towards the institutional Church, with its functions and sacraments – bringing their followers into conventicles (meetings: an unlawful or secret religious gatherings, such as small groups or cells); a society vs. a church.

**7. It is hard for us to imagine, that the idea of gathering in small groups for Bible study, fellowship and worship would be considered “unlawful or secret religious gatherings.” Small groups or cell groups have always proved effective in making disciples. Does this mean that we should abandon the “visible” / local church and only meet in independent, small groups? Why or why not?**

### **Roman Catholic**

They moved even further in the direction of an absolute hierarchy after the days of the Reformation, with a more pronounced authority of the Pope. The Vatican Council in 1870 finally declared officially, what had been the accepted practice, that the Roman Pontiff when speaking – fulfilling the office of pastor and teacher – in virtue of his supreme apostolic authority, defines a doctrine regarding faith or morals, “as a doctrine to be held by the universal Church, then through the divine assistance which has been promised him in the person of St. Peter, he enjoys fully that infallibility, which the divine Redeemer wished His Church to have in defining doctrine touching faith and morals; and consequently such definitions of the Roman Pontiff are of themselves unchangeable and are not to be changed through approval of the Church.” It should be noted that the boasted unity of the Church of Rome is a mere corporate uniformity rather than a unity of spirit and purpose.

## **SESSION 17, PART 2 – THE DOCTRINE OF THE SACRAMENTS**

After this session, you will:

- Know how the Doctrine of the Sacraments developed.
- Be able to explain the proper function of the Sacraments.
- Think about and discuss the significance and identity of the Sacraments.
- See clearly, the scriptural ceremonies, sacraments that we are to observe: Baptism and The Lord’s Supper
- Feel that we should observe them sincerely and seriously, but avoid any consideration of magical power.

You will KNOW:

- The term “sacraments” is not used in the New Testament, but was the Latin translation of the Greek word for mystery.

You will BE ABLE TO:

- Explain the proper function of the Sacraments.

You will THINK ABOUT:

- The significance and identity of the Sacraments.

### **In the Last Session**

- You learned how the Doctrine of the Church developed.
- You examined the difficult challenges the Church has faced throughout its history.
- You thought about the importance of the Church.

**Begin video.**

### **The Doctrine of the Sacraments**

- The term “sacraments” is not used in the New Testament, but was the Latin translation of the Greek word “mystērion” (mystery) which was used to designate something that was not revealed in the Old Testament.
- Later it acquired another connotation, becoming the designation of all that was mysterious and incomprehensible in the Christian religion.
- “Sacrament” had a wide application in the early Christian centuries.
- It was used of anything to which the idea of sanctity or sacredness could be attached; such as:
  - The sign of the cross
  - Salt given to a person receiving instructions prior to baptism
  - The ordination of priests
  - Marriage
  - Exorcism
  - Celebration of the Sabbath
  - The term was predominately applied to baptism and the Lord’s Supper.

### **The Scholastics**

- The Scholastics followed Augustine’s conception of the sacraments as visible signs and mediums of an invisible grace.
- There was no agreement of their number, somewhere from 5-30.
- Eventually, in 1439, the Roman Catholic Church settled on seven:
  - Baptism
  - Confirmation
  - Eucharist (The Lord’s Supper)
  - Penance
  - Priestly Consecration
  - Marriage
  - Extreme Unction (Last Rites)
- The relation of the physical to the spiritual element was not clearly defined.
- Neither was there a clear explanation of how the sacraments work.
- Many considered them as magic, or at least unexplainable.

### **The Reformation**

- The Reformation subjected the doctrine of the sacraments to a scriptural revision.
- Generally, the reformers agreed that the Grace imparted in the sacrament is first the forgiving grace of God, which bears on the guilt of sin rather than on the lower nature of man.
- Sacraments are signs and seals attached to the Word, which communicate no kind of grace that is not also imparted by the Word and have no value apart from the Word.



- Operation and fruit of the sacrament is dependent on faith in the recipient and always presupposes saving grace.
- Luther at first stressed the fact that the operation of the sacraments is dependent on faith of the recipient, and later gave greater prominence to their intimate and essential connection with the Word, of which they are signs and seals.
- Because of his struggles with the Anabaptists, he emphasized their effectiveness was dependent on the divine institution rather than on the faith of the recipient.
- Because sacraments are administered only to believers, Zwingli, (and the Anabaptists) conceived of them as signs and proofs of faith.
- Secondly they saw them as the means for the strengthening of faith.
- Reminders of the blessings appropriated by faith.
- Directing our faith away from ourselves to the grace of God in Jesus Christ.
- Calvin also regards the sacraments as acts of confession but only secondarily.
- They are first signs and seals of the promises of God which direct attention to the riches of His grace.
- God is and remains the only source of grace.
- Unbelievers may receive the external sign, but do not participate in the thing signified.

### **Baptism**

- Baptism was foremost among the sacraments as the rite of initiation into the Church.
- Even in the Apostolic Fathers, we find the idea that it was instrumental in effecting the forgiveness of sin and in communicating the new life of regeneration.
- It could be said that they taught baptismal regeneration, or salvation by water baptism, with some qualifications.
- They held that baptism was effective in the case of adults, only in connection with the right inner disposition and purpose.
- They did not regard baptism as essential to the initiation of spiritual life but rather as the completing element in a process of renewal.
- Infant baptism was apparently practiced in the days of Origen and Tertullian though opposed on some grounds.
- The mode of baptism was not a matter of dispute.
- While immersion was practiced, it was not the only mode and was not considered to be of the essence of baptism.
- The conception of baptism changed from the second century on, the idea gaining ground that the sacrament works magically.

### **Augustine**

- Augustine considered faith and repentance as the necessary conditions of baptism in the case of adults.
- That children who die unbaptized are lost.
- Those baptized have the faith of the Church as their sponsors.
- The official stand of the Roman Catholic Church declares baptism to be the sacrament of regeneration and of initiation into the Church.
- Baptism provides forgiveness for original sin and for sins committed before baptism.
- Note: martyrdom was considered the full equivalent of baptism.

### **Luther**

- Luther taught that the Word of God with its intrinsic divine power makes the water of baptism a gracious water of life and a washing of regeneration.
- At first, it was dependent on faith, but since children can hardly exercise faith, he next held that God by His prevenient grace works faith in this unconscious child. Prevenient means divine grace, and it comes before any human action including faith.

### **The Anabaptists**

- The Anabaptists denied the validity of infant baptism (hence the name)
- They insisted on re-baptizing those baptized in infancy, who wanted to join their circle.
- In their estimation, there was no true baptism that was not preceded by a voluntary profession of faith in Jesus Christ.

### **The Reformed**

- The Reformed proceeded on the assumption that baptism was instituted for believers and therefore does not work, but strengthens faith.
- Their two-fold difficulty involved having to prove that children (infants) can be regarded as believers.
- They had to define the spiritual benefit which the child receives in baptism – since they have no faith to be strengthened.
- Their answer focused on the benefit received.
- That baptism gives the parents assurance that their child is incorporated in the covenant, gives the child a share in all the blessings of the covenant.

### **The Lord’s Supper**

- The Lord’s Supper was, at first, part of a common meal provided for and shared in by the people.
- Later, when the bishop became a priest, the Supper itself assumed the character of a sacrifice brought by the priest-bishop, which changed the nature of the ceremony from a remembrance to something else.
- The original, symbolic conception was supplanted by the doctrine that the flesh and blood of Christ was in some way combined with the bread and wine in the sacrament.
- In 818 the doctrine was put forward that the material elements in the sacrament are, by divine power, literally changed into the very body that was born of Mary.
- The outward appearance of bread and wine being, after consecration, a mere veil that deceives the senses, the Council of Trent (1545-1563) declared that Jesus Christ is truly, really and substantially present in the holy sacrament.

### **The Reformers**

- The Reformers all rejected the sacrificial theory of the Lord’s Supper and the mediaeval doctrine of transubstantiation. Transubstantiation is the idea that the bread and wine are turned into the actual body and blood of Jesus.
- They began constructing a scriptural doctrine of the Lord’s Supper and that is where they parted ways.
- Luther said they were signs and seals of the forgiveness of sin.
- But then later adopted another view.
- Opposing Zwingli’s figurative interpretation of the words of the institution saying they should be taken literally.
- Zwingli opposed especially the idolatry of the mass and denied absolutely the bodily presence of Christ in the Lord’s Supper.
- Calvin held an intermediate position, having two objections with Zwingli.
- Zwingli stressed the activity of the believers rather than the gracious gift of God in the sacrament – thus it is an act of profession.
- Zwingli saw in the eating of the body of Christ nothing more than an expression of belief in His name and confident trust in His death.
- Calvin’s theory was, that the glorified humanity of Christ is a fountain of spiritual virtue or efficacy.
- This efficacy is mediated by the Holy Spirit to the believing recipient of the Eucharistic elements. Eucharist comes from the Greek word for “thankful.”
- Accordingly, the body of Christ is present in the Eucharist in virtue of efficacy. Efficacy means the ability to produce a desired or intended result.
- The eating of Christ’s body is entirely spiritual, by means of faith and a physical chewing of His body is out of the question.
- 1 Corinthians 11:23-33:

- 23 – “For I received from the Lord that which I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus in the night in which He was betrayed took bread;
- 24 – “and when He had given thanks, He broke it and said, “This is My body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of Me.”
- 25 – “In the same way He took the cup also after supper, saying, “This cup is the new covenant in My blood; do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me.”
- 26 – “For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until He comes.”
- 27 – “Therefore whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner, shall be guilty of the body and the blood of the Lord.”
- 28 – “But a man must examine himself, and in so doing he is to eat of the bread and drink of the cup.”
- 29 – “For he who eats and drinks, eats and drinks judgment to himself if he does not judge the body rightly.”
- 30 – “For this reason many among you are weak and sick, and a number sleep.”
- 31 – “But if we judged ourselves rightly, we would not be judged.”
- 32 – “But when we are judged, we are disciplined by the Lord so that we will not be condemned along with the world.”
- 33 – “So then, my brethren, when you come together to eat, wait for one another.”

### **To Consider**

- There was very little clarity regarding what were sacraments.
- There was very little clarity on what exactly they were supposed to accomplish and how they worked.
- There was no scriptural support for all the “sacraments” other than Baptism and the Lord’s Supper.

### **Review**

- You learned how the Doctrine of the Sacraments developed.
- You learned about the proper function of the Sacraments.
- You thought about the significance and identity of the Sacraments.

### **In the Next Session**

- We will be discussing, in the “History of Christian Doctrine,” the sections on the Doctrine of the Last Things.

## INSTRUCTOR’S NOTES: DOCTRINE OF THE SACRAMENTS

In the next part of this session (which will be our last), we will be discussing - in the History of Christian Doctrine - the sections on the Doctrines of the Last Things. For the rest of this part of our session you will spend time discussing the notes for this section, what you have learned and what you have written in your summaries of the sections of our textbook that cover the Doctrine of the Sacraments. You will not only share your insights but you will also gain from the insights of your classmates. There are a series of questions or assignments numbered and in bold letters.

Because of time constraints, use your discretion regarding which of these you would like to have your students work on and discuss as a group. You can lead these discussions yourself or assign some of them to individuals or groups and have them make a presentation or lead the discussion. One suggestion would be to have at least one student (or more, depending on your situation) share their summary as you cover each of the sections in the notes below. The Sections that require summaries are in ALL CAPS – BOLD – Roman Numerals for easy identification.

### **Chapter (Section) Summaries and Notes for Discussion**

The History of the Christian Doctrine  
by Louis Berkhof

#### **The Doctrine of the Sacraments**

##### The Sacraments in General

##### The development of the doctrine before the Reformation:

The term “sacraments” is not used in the New Testament, but was the Latin translation of the Greek word “mystērion” (mystery) used to designate something that was not revealed in the Old Testament. Later it acquired another connotation, becoming the designation of all that was mysterious and incomprehensible in the Christian religion.

“Sacrament” had a wide application in the early Christian centuries. It could be used of anything to which the idea of sanctity could be attached; such as – the sign of the cross, salt given to catechumens (a person receiving instructions prior to baptism), the ordination of priests, marriage, exorcism, celebration of the Sabbath. The term was predominately applied to baptism and the Lord’s Supper.

The Scholastics (1000-1700) followed Augustine’s conception of the sacraments as visible signs and mediums of an invisible grace. There was no unanimity of their number – somewhere from 5-30. Eventually the Roman Catholic Church settled on seven in 1439:

- Baptism
- Confirmation
- Eucharist
- Penance
- Priestly Consecration
- Marriage
- Extreme Unction

The relation of the physical to the spiritual element was not clearly defined; neither was there a clear representation of how the sacraments work. Sometimes it was dependent on the faith of the recipient. Other times it was dependent upon the person administering the sacrament. Many considered them as magic, or at least unexplainable (mystery).

Through the Middle Ages the dominant view was that the sacraments do not contain, but only symbolize grace; though God has covenanted to accompany the use of the sacraments with a direct operation of His grace in the souls of the recipients.

The Council of Trent (1545-1563) passed several decisions respecting the sacraments:

- The sacraments are necessary for salvation; they must be received or at least desired. However, not all are necessary for all. (*Marriage would be one example.*)
- They contain the grace, which they signify and confer that grace through the act performed, upon the one who does not present an obstacle.
- The intention of the officiating priest to administer the sacrament in all sincerity is essential to its validity.
- The sacraments of baptism, confirmation and ordination impress an indelible character on the soul of the recipient and are not to be repeated.
- The priests only are the legitimate administrators of the sacraments.
- Ordination can only be performed by a Bishop and baptism may be administered by a layman, in cases of necessity.

Some points of consideration:

- Rome conceives of the grace communicated in the sacraments exclusively as an infused sanctifying grace that raises man to the supernatural order and makes him a partaker of the divine nature.
- The connection of the sacrament with the Word is practically ignored.
- Faith is not an absolute requirement for the reception of the sacrament.

**1. The question about “sacraments” is directional. Is this something that is done to me, for me or is it something I do, or is it all of these? Does the sacredness of the ceremony come from the ceremony, from the administrator or from the participant? Is it declarative or is it internal? Or is it both?**

The Doctrine of the Reformers and of Later Theology

The Reformers all rejected the sacrificial theory of the Lord’s Supper and the mediaeval doctrine of transubstantiation. In Theology, this refers to the changing of the elements of the bread and wine, when they are consecrated in the Eucharist (“The Blessing” – of the bread and of the cup), into the body and blood of Christ.

The Reformation subjected the doctrine of the sacraments to a scriptural revision. Generally, the reformers agreed that the grace imparted in the sacrament is first the forgiving grace of God, which bears on the guilt of sin rather than on the lower nature of man.

**Clarification Note:** This distinction (above) relates to the Catholic teaching that Adam was created good but then was given super grace, which he lost in the fall. However, humans now receive that super grace again through the sacraments.

Sacraments are signs and seals attached to the Word, which communicate no kind of grace that is not also imparted by the Word and have no value apart from the Word.

Operation and fruit of the sacrament is dependent on faith in the recipient and always presupposes saving grace (that the person is a Christian).

Luther at first stressed the fact that the operation of the sacraments is dependent on faith in the recipient, and later gave greater prominence to their intimate and essential connection with the Word, of which they are signs and seals.

Because of his struggles with the Anabaptists, after 1524 he emphasized their effectiveness was dependent on the divine institution rather than on the subjective state of the recipient.

**2. Was Luther’s change of emphasis regarding the sacraments a reaction or a response? Earlier we saw him respond in two different ways when seeking to counter perceived heresies regarding the order of salvation. Is this the same kind of situation? Can both these things be true? Is it more a matter of emphasis or is it a change of doctrine? Is it dependent on faith or is it dependent upon the sacrament? What about the person administering the sacrament, does that matter?**

Zwingli, because they are administered only to believers, conceives of sacraments as being first of all signs and proofs of faith and only secondarily as means for the strengthening of faith as reminders of the blessings appropriated by faith and as directing our faith away from ourselves to the grace of God in Jesus Christ. They were memorials or badges of profession.

Calvin also regards the sacraments as acts of confession but only secondarily. To him they are first of all signs and seals of the promises of God which direct attention to the riches of His grace. He finds their essential element in the word of promise, in the covenant of grace and in the person of Christ with all His blessings. God is and remains the only source of grace. Unbelievers may receive the external sign, but do not participate in the thing signified.

**3. Calvin says that “unbelievers may receive the external sign, but do not participate in the thing signified.” Should we be concerned about “unbelievers” participating in observing “The Lord’s Supper” and perhaps restrict participation to (certified) church members only?**

Outside of Lutheran & Reformed Churches, Zwingli’s conception of the sacraments enjoyed great popularity.

The Anabaptists denied that the sacraments were seals and regarded them as signs and symbols only; giving a visible representation of the blessings conveyed to believers, but sacraments do this merely as acts of confession; they communicate no grace.

Socinans regarded the Lord’s Supper as a memorial of Christ’s death and baptism merely as a primitive rite of profession for Jewish and pagan converts, without any permanent validity.



The Arminians speak of the sacraments as exhibiting and sealing the blessings of grace but do not want to convey the idea that they are seals of the promise of God and communicate grace. They are simply signs of the covenant between God and man.

Rationalists reduced the sacraments to mere memorials and badges of confession, aiming at the promotion of virtue.

### Baptism

The Development of the Doctrine before the Reformation.

Baptism was foremost among the sacraments as the rite of initiation into the Church. Even in the Apostolic Fathers, we find the idea that it was instrumental in effecting the forgiveness of sin and in communicating the new life of regeneration. Perhaps it could even be said that they taught baptismal regeneration, with some qualifications:

- They held that baptism was efficacious in the case of adults only in connection with the right inner disposition and purpose.
- They did not regard baptism as essential to the initiation of spiritual life but rather as the completing element in a process of renewal.

#### **4. Because of their qualifications, perhaps it could be said that the Apostolic Fathers viewed baptism as only for those who have already responded to Jesus Christ for salvation and are being baptized to confirm that commitment?**

Infant baptism was apparently practiced in the days of Origen (185-254) and Tertullian (160-254) though opposed on some grounds.

The general opinion was that baptism ought in no case to be repeated; but there was no unanimous opinion as to the validity of baptism administered by heretics.

Later it became the practice of the Roman Catholic Church not to re-baptize those who had been baptized according to the Trinitarian formula.

Mode of baptism was not in dispute. While immersion was practiced, it was not the only mode and was not considered to be of the essence of baptism.

The conception of baptism changed from the second century on, the idea gaining ground that the sacrament works more or less magically.

Augustine considered faith and repentance as the necessary conditions of baptism in the case of adults and that children who die unbaptized are lost but those baptized have the faith of the Church as their sponsors. The official stand of the Roman Catholic Church declares baptism to be the sacrament of regeneration and of initiation into the Church. Baptism provides forgiveness for original sin and for sins committed before baptism. Note: martyrdom was considered the full equivalent of baptism.

**5. If baptism were an essential sacrament for salvation, how can martyrdom be a substitute?**

The Doctrine of the Reformers and Later Theology

The German Reformers adopted much of the baptism of the Roman Catholic Church, even retaining many of the ceremonies connected with it.

Luther taught that the Word of God with its intrinsic divine power makes “the water of baptism a gracious water of life and a washing of regeneration.” At first, it was dependent on faith, but in view of the fact that children can hardly exercise faith, he next held that God by His prevenient grace works faith in this unconscious child.

The Anabaptists (“to baptize again”) denied the validity of infant baptism and they insisted on re-baptizing those baptized in infancy, who wanted to join their circle. In their estimation, there was no true baptism that was not preceded by a voluntary profession of faith in Jesus Christ.

The Reformed proceeded on the assumption that baptism was instituted for believers and therefore does not work but strengthens faith. Their two-fold difficulty involved having to prove that children can be regarded as believers before baptism and as such ought to be baptized and they had to define the spiritual benefit which the child receives in baptism – since they have no faith to be strengthened. Their answer primarily focused on the benefit received. It was generally said that baptism gives the parents the assurance that their child is incorporated in the covenant and ultimately gives the child a title to all the blessings of the covenant.

## **The Lord’s Supper**

### Development of the Doctrine Before the Reformation

At first the Lord’s Supper was part of a common meal provided for and shared in by the people.

When the bishop became a priest, the Supper itself assumed the character of a sacrifice brought by the priest-bishop; which affected the representation of the sacramental union. The symbolic conception found in Origen was supplanted by the doctrine that the flesh and blood of Christ was in some way combined with the bread and wine in the sacrament.

In 818 AD, the doctrine was put forward that the material elements in the sacrament are by divine power literally changed into the very body that was born of Mary, the outward appearance of bread and wine being after consecration a mere veil that deceives the senses. The Council of Trent (1545-1563) declared that Jesus Christ is truly, really and substantially present in the holy sacrament.

**6. “After consecration,” this is where the idea of “magic” or “supernatural” enters the picture, even more so. This is also why it is called the “Eucharist” or “The Blessing.” Supposedly, just as Jesus spoke a blessing and made the bread into His body and the wine in the cup into His blood, so, the priest recites the word prescribed and does the same.**

### The Doctrine of the Reformers and of Later Theology

The Reformers all rejected the sacrificial theory of the Lord’s Supper and the mediaeval doctrine of transubstantiation. They took on the task of constructing a scriptural doctrine of the Lord’s Supper and that is where they parted ways.

Luther said they were signs and seals of the forgiveness of sin but then later adopted another view – opposing Zwingli’s figurative interpretation of the words of the institution; saying they should be taken literally.

Zwingli opposed especially the idolatry of the mass and denied absolutely the bodily presence of Christ in the Lord’s Supper.

Calvin held an intermediate position, having two objections with Zwingli:

- Zwingli stresses the activity of the believers rather than the gracious gift of God in the sacrament – thus it is an act of profession.
- Zwingli sees in the eating of the body of Christ nothing more than an expression of belief in His name and confident trust in His death.

Calvin’s theory was that:

- The glorified humanity of Christ is a fountain of spiritual virtue or efficacy;
- This efficacy is mediated by the Holy Spirit to the believing recipient of the Eucharistic elements;
- Accordingly, the body of Christ is present in the Eucharist in virtue of efficacy (effect); that the eating of Christ’s body is entirely spiritual, by means of faith the unbelieving having no part in it, and an oral manducation (chewing) being out of the question.

**7. I am not sure what Calvin means by his use of “efficacy” but I am thinking that he is talking about the reality of the Spirit’s work in our lives through our observance of the Lord’s Supper. Christians generally have a good association, good memories, and good feelings related to our observance. Much of it, I think, relates to our eating this bread and drinking this cup with one another. Consider your own thoughts about the observance of the Lord’s Supper. Is it something that has a special place in your experience?**

After the Reformation, Zwingli’s conception of the Lord’s Supper gained favor in some circles. It was regarded as a sacrament of a purely external covenant, to which all who gave no offence were entitled. Thus, the way was paved for Rationalism, and others, who saw in the Lord’s Supper only a memorial, an act of profession or a means for moral improvement.

## **SESSION 17, PART 3 – THE DOCTRINE OF LAST THINGS**

At the end of this lesson, you will:

- Know how the Doctrine of the Last Things developed.
- Be able to discern truth from speculation regarding the Last Things.
- Think about how speculation produced different ideas about the Last Things, from those produced by the Scriptures.
- Renew your commitment to building dogma on the truths of God’s word.
- Realize that God’s word tells us more than we realize about the Last Things.

You will KNOW:

- There has been a great deal of speculation regarding The Last Things of Heaven, Hell, Judgment, Resurrection, the Return of Christ and His Millennial Kingdom.

You will BE ABLE TO:

- Discern truth from speculation regarding the Last Things.

You will THINK ABOUT:

- The doctrine of purgatory was opposed by the pre-Reformers and rejected as contrary to Scripture by the Reformers.

### **In the Last Session**

- You learned how the Doctrine of the Sacraments developed.
- You understood the proper function of the Sacraments.
- You thought about and discussed the significance and identity of the Sacraments.

**Begin video.**

### **The Doctrine of the Last Things**

- Eschatology is the formal name of the doctrine of Last Things.
- The doctrine of the last things never stood in the center of attention.
- It is one of the least developed doctrines and therefore allows little elaborate discussion regarding its history.
- In the 20th century, we reached a point in the history of dogma in which the doctrine of the last things received greater attention and developed further.

### **The Abode of The Dead**

- The Apostolic Fathers did not write extensively about what happens after death.
- According to the common opinion of their day, and consistent with New Testament teaching, the pious at death immediately inherit the heavenly glory prepared for them and the wicked at once suffer the punishment of hell.
- When it became apparent that Christ would not immediately return, some began to rethink our status between death and the resurrection.
- Justin Martyr said, “The souls of the pious are in a better place, those of the unjust and wicked in a worse, waiting for the time of judgment.”
- He denounced as heretical those who said that their souls, when they die, are taken to heaven.

### **Purgatory**

- The general opinion of the later Fathers was that the dead descend into Hades, a place with various divisions, where they remain until the Day of Judgment or, according to Augustine, until they are sufficiently purified. (Purgatory)
- The doctrine of purgatory was opposed by the pre-Reformers and rejected as contrary to Scripture by the Reformers; being described as “The vermin brood of idolatry, begotten by the tail of the dragon” and as “A fond thing vainly invented and grounded upon no warranty of Scripture.”

### **The Second Advent**

- Regarding the Second Advent and the Millennial hope, early Christians were taught to look for the return of Jesus Christ and it is evident even from the New Testament that some of them expected a speedy return.
- The literal interpretation of Revelation 20:1-6 led some early Church Fathers to distinguish between a first and a second resurrection and to believe in an intervening millennial kingdom.
- The belief in a millennial kingdom, which existed in the early Church, gradually eroded because of several factors.
- Centuries rolled by without the return of Jesus Christ.
- Persecutions ceased.
- Christianity received a sure footing in the Roman Empire and even became the State religion.
- The passionate longing for the appearance of Jesus Christ gave way for an adaptation of the Church to its present task.
- The allegorical interpretation of Scripture had a chilling effect on all millennial hopes.
- Turning the thoughts of the Church from the future to the present.
- Identifying the Church as the Kingdom of God.

### **The Millennial Kingdom**

- In the Middle Ages, belief in a Millennial Kingdom was generally regarded as heretical.
- However, in the 10th century, there was a widespread expectation of the approaching end of the world when we reached the year 1000 – but it did not happen.
- At the time of the Reformation, the doctrine of the millennium was rejected by the Protestant Churches, but revived by some, the Anabaptists in particular.
- Luther scornfully rejected the dream that there would be an earthly kingdom of Christ preceding the Day of Judgment.
- The Augsburg Confession declared that this doctrine should be suppressed.

### **The Second Helvetic Confession**

- “Moreover, we condemn the Jewish dreams, that before the Day of Judgment there shall be a golden age in the earth and the godly shall possess the kingdoms of the world, their wicked enemies being trodden under foot.”

### **Postmillennialism**

- In the 17th century, a more spiritual conception of the millennium appeared, advocated by some Lutheran & Reformed theologians.
- Their view was that before the end of the world and the return of Jesus Christ, there will be a period in which the spiritual presence of Christ in the Church will be experienced in an unusual measure and a universal religious awakening will ensue.
- The Kingdom of Jesus Christ will then stand out as a kingdom of peace and righteousness. This was the early form of postmillennialism.
- In Liberal circles, a new form of postmillennialism has made its appearance, with the expectation of a new social order in which the law of Christ shall prevail, and result in peace, justice and a glorious blossoming of present spiritual forces.

### **Premillennialism**

- During the 18th and 19th centuries, the doctrine of the millennium again met with great favor in some circles.
- There is great diversity of opinion among the premillennialists as to the order of the final events and the actual condition of things during the millennium.
- Too many, have foolishly made repeated attempts to predict the time of Christ's return.
- There is widespread belief today, especially in the United States that the return of Christ will be followed by a temporary visible reign of Christ on earth. However, there are many who deny it.

### **The Resurrection**

- How did the Doctrine of the Resurrection develop?
- Most of the early Church Fathers believed in the resurrection of the body and in the identity of the future body with that of the present.
- Origen described the resurrection body as a refined and spiritualized body. Some of the Church Fathers shared his view but the majority did not.
- Augustine believed that at the resurrection all would have the stature of the full-grown man.
- Jerome insisted on the identity of the very hairs and teeth.
- The East manifested a tendency to adopt a more spiritual view of the resurrection than that of the West. Some suggested the analogy of the seed and the plant.
- Those who believed in a future millennium spoke of a double resurrection.
- That of the pious at the beginning and that of the wicked at the end of the millennial reign.



- The Scholastics speculated, in their usual way, about the body of the resurrection, with little permanent value.
- Thomas Aquinas seemed to have special information on the subject.
- He informs us that they who are alive at the coming of Christ will first die and then be raised again with the rest of the dead which will take place in the evening.
- All will be in the bloom of youth.
- The body will be tangible, but fine and light and not subject to growth.
- The theologians of the Reformation agreed that the resurrection body would be identical with the present body.
- This doctrine is included in the confessional standards of the Churches of the Reformation.
- With the advance of the physical sciences, some (unjustly) had difficulties with a doctrine of the resurrection and religious liberalism simply denied the resurrection.

### **The Last Judgment**

- The earliest Church Fathers have very little to say about the last judgment, but generally stress its certainty.
- Most are of the opinion that the saints in heaven will enjoy different degrees of blessedness, as reward for the virtues they had on earth.
- The punishment of the wicked was considered eternal.
- The Later Fathers stood firm in the conviction that there would be a final judgment at the end of the world.
- Augustine assumes that the scriptural representations are figurative and is uncertain about how long this judgment will last.
- Some believed in degrees of bliss and torment and generally regarded them as eternal, most clung to the idea of material fire.

### **Heaven and Hell**

- The Scholastics paid special attention to the location of heaven and hell (of course they did).
  - There were the visible heavens
  - The spiritual heaven
  - The intellectual heaven
- Hell was the abode of the damned.
- There were three regions besides Hell.
  - Purgatory in close proximity to Hell.
  - The limbo state of children who were unbaptized.
  - The limbo state of the Old Testament saints.

### **The Reformers**

- The Reformers were content with the affirmation of the simple doctrine of the Scripture that Christ will come again to judge the world.
- Being careful to distinguish between the general judgment at the end of the world and the secret and particular judgment, which takes place at the death of each individual.
- They shared the common belief in the eternal bliss of heaven and the eternal torments of hell.
- Some Anabaptists taught restorationism and some Socinians taught annihilation of the wicked. Restorationism, as it relates to eschatology, is the belief in a temporary future punishment and a final restoration of all to the favor and presence of God. A universalist.
- Some Protestant theologians believe that material fire has a part in the endless punishment of the wicked – others are non-committal on the subject; and still others interpreted it in a figurative manner.
- The doctrine of future rewards and punishments, as taught by the Reformation, remains the official doctrine of the Churches up to the present day.
- Only Universalists believe in universal salvation and in the restoration of all things in the absolute sense of the word.

### **To Consider**

- There has been a great deal of speculation regarding The Last Things of Heaven, Hell, Judgment, Resurrection, the Return of Christ and His Millennial Kingdom.
- Let us not lose heart in hoping for Christ’s return. His word and promise are true.
- There is a hell to shun and a heaven to gain – through Christ.

### **Thank You**

- I trust that you have benefited from our time together as we studied Church History - Ecclesiology and the History of Christian Doctrine. May God continue to bless you.

**Review**

- Learned how the Doctrine of the Last Things developed.
- Understood the difference between the truth and speculation regarding the Last Things.
- Understood how speculation produced different ideas about the Last Things, from those produced by the Scriptures.

## INSTRUCTOR’S NOTES: DOCTRINE OF LAST THINGS

For the rest of this session, you will spend time discussing what your students have learned and what they have written in their summary of the textbook.

There are a series of questions or assignments numbered and in bold letters. Because of time constraints, use your discretion regarding which of these you would like to have your students work on and discuss as a group.

You can lead these discussions yourself or assign some of them to individuals or groups and have them make a presentation or lead the discussion. One suggestion would be to have at least one student (or more, depending on your situation) share their summary as you cover each of the chapters in the notes below.

The final assignment will be a paper, detailing your student’s learning experience in this class: what they have learned, what was especially beneficial to them and how this has affected their attitude and view of the Church.

### **Chapter (Section) Summaries and Notes for Discussion**

#### THE HISTORY OF CHRISTIAN DOCTRINE

by Louis Berkhof

#### **The Doctrine of Last Things**

##### THE INTERMEDIATE STATE

The doctrine of the last things never stood in the center of attention. It is one of the least developed doctrines and therefore allows little elaborate discussion regarding its history.

In the 20<sup>th</sup> century, it seems that we reached a point in the history of dogma in which the doctrine of the last things has received greater attention and has been brought to further development. (J. Edwin Orr – 1902)

For discussion purposes, turn to Chart 2 in the Charts book.

The Apostolic Fathers did not reflect on the intermediate state. According to the common opinion of their day, the pious at death immediately inherit the heavenly glory prepared for them and the wicked at once suffer the punishment of hell. Consider 1 Corinthians 15:20-26, 35-58; 2 Corinthians 5:1-10; 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18; 2 Thessalonians 2:1-12.

When it became apparent that Christ would not immediately return, they began to reflect on the state between death and the resurrection. Justin Martyr (100-165) said, “The souls of the pious are in a better place, those of the unjust and wicked in a worse waiting for the time of judgment.” He denounced as heretical those who said that their souls, when they die, are taken to heaven.

**1. Why would a change in expectation of Christ’s return produce a change in an understanding of the state between death and the resurrection?**

**Perhaps the idea that they were wrong in expecting that Christ would return during the lifetime of the Apostles, caused them to reconsider their understanding of what they believed about “those who had fallen asleep” and the return of Christ – 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18.**

The general opinion of the later Fathers was that the dead descend into hades a place with various divisions, where they remain until the Day of Judgment or, according to Augustine, until they are sufficiently purified. (Purgatory)

The doctrine of purgatory was opposed by the pre-Reformers and rejected as contrary to Scripture by the Reformers, being described as:

- “The vermin brood of idolatry, begotten by the tail of the dragon.” and as
- “A fond thing vainly invented and grounded upon no warranty of Scripture.”

**The Second Advent and the Millennial Hope**

The early Christians were taught to look for the return of Jesus Christ and it is evident even from the New Testament that some of them expected a speedy return. The literal interpretation of Revelation 20:1-6 led some early Church Fathers to distinguish between a first and a second resurrection, and to believe in an intervening millennial kingdom.

- The Millennialism (belief in a Thousand Year Reign of Christ) of the early Church was gradually overcome when the:
  - Centuries rolled by without the return of Jesus Christ.
  - Persecutions ceased.
  - Christianity received a sure footing in the Roman Empire, even became the State religion.
  - The passionate longing for the appearance of Jesus Christ gave way for an adaptation of the Church to its perceived present task.

- The allegorical interpretation of Scripture had a chilling effect on all millennial hopes; turning the thoughts of the Church from the future to the present – identifying the Church as the Kingdom of God.

**2. How can these things (above) overcome our hope of Christ’s return and kingdom? See 2 Peter 3:3-13. What was the “perceived present task” of the church?**

**It seems as if the “perceived present task” was different than the task assigned by our Savior-King in Mt 28:18-20; Acts 1:8. The new task was perceived as establishing the Kingdom of God – literally & politically and ruling the nations.**

In the Middle Ages, Millennialism was generally regarded as heretical. However, in the 10<sup>th</sup> century, there was a widespread expectation of the approaching end of the world, as we approached the year 1000 – but it did not happen.

At the time of the Reformation, the doctrine of the millennium was rejected by the Protestant Churches, but revived by some, the Anabaptists in particular.

Luther scornfully rejected the dream that there would be an earthly kingdom of Christ preceding the Day of Judgment. The Augsburg Confession declared that this doctrine should be suppressed.

The Second Helvetic Confession says, “Moreover, we condemn the Jewish dreams, that before the Day of Judgment there shall be a golden age in the earth and the godly shall possess the kingdoms of the world, their wicked enemies being trodden under foot.”

In the 17<sup>th</sup> century, a form of Millennialism made its appearance and some Lutheran and Reformed theologians advocated a more spiritual conception of the millennium.

Their view was that before the end of the world and the return of Jesus Christ, there will be a period in which the spiritual presence of Christ in the Church will be experienced in an unusual measure and a universal religious awakening will ensue. The Kingdom of Jesus Christ will then stand out as a kingdom of peace and righteousness. This was the early form of Post – as distinguished from Pre-millennialism.

During the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, the doctrine of the millennium again met with great favor in some circles. There is great diversity of opinion among the Pre-

millennials as to the order of the final events and the actual condition of things during the millennium. Repeated attempts have been made to fix the time of Christ’s return. Though there is widespread belief today (1940s), especially in our country (U.S.), that the return of Christ will be followed by a temporary visible reign of Christ on earth, yet the weight of theological opinion is against it. (**Is it?**)

**3. “The weight of theological opinion” being for or against something would only matter, if that theological opinion has real substance, being based on the Scriptures.**

In Liberal circles a new form of postmillennialism appeared, with the expectation of a new social order in which the law of Christ prevails, and results in peace, justice and a glorious blossoming of present spiritual forces.

**The Resurrection**

Most of the early Church Fathers believed in the resurrection of the body and in the identity of the future body with that of the present.

Origen described the resurrection body as a refined and spiritualized body. Some of the Church Fathers shared his view but the majority did not.

Augustine believed that at the resurrection all would have the stature of the full-grown adult. Jerome insisted on the identity of the very hairs and teeth.

The East manifested a tendency to adopt a more spiritual view of the resurrection than that of the West. Some suggested the analogy of the seed and the plant. (1 Corinthians 15:35-49)

Those who believed in a future millennium spoke of a double resurrection, that of the pious at the beginning and that of the wicked at the termination of the millennial reign.

The Scholastics speculated, in their usual way, about the body of the resurrection, with little permanent value.

Thomas Aquinas seemed to have special information on the subject. He informs us that they who are alive at the coming of Christ will first die and then be raised again with the rest of the dead. All will be in the bloom of youth. The body will be tangible, but fine and light and not subject to growth....

The theologians of the Reformation were agreed that the resurrection body would be

identical with the present body. This doctrine is included in the confessional standards of the Churches of the Reformation.

With the advance of the physical sciences, some had difficulties with a doctrine of the resurrection and religious liberalism simply denied the resurrection.

**4. Who will we believe? Will we believe the speculations of Scientists, or God’s Word? Are we going to trust our own wisdom and understanding or the wisdom and understanding of God?**

**Proverbs 3:5; Isaiah 40:28**

**The Last Judgment and the Final Awards**

The earliest Church Fathers have very little to say about the last judgment, but generally stress its certainty. Most believe the saints in heaven will enjoy different degrees of blessedness, commensurate with the virtues, which adorned them on earth. (Heb 9:27)

The punishment of the wicked was generally thought of as eternal.

The Later Fathers stood firm in the conviction that there would be a final judgment at the end of the world.

Augustine assumes that the Scriptural representations are figurative and is uncertain about how long this judgment will last.

Some believed in degrees of bliss and torment and generally regarded them as eternal. Most clung to the idea of material fire.

The Scholastics paid special attention to the location of heaven and hell (of course they did). They taught that there were the visible heavens:

- The spiritual heaven
- The intellectual heaven
- Hell was the abode of the damned



There were three regions of Hell:

- Purgatory in close proximity to hell
- The limbo state of children who were unbaptized
- The limbo state of the Old Testament saints

The Reformers were content with the affirmation of the simple doctrine of the Scripture that Christ will come again to judge the world. Being careful to distinguish between the general judgment at the end of the world and the secret and particular judgment, which takes place at the death of each individual. (1 Corinthians 3:12-15; 2 Corinthians 5:10)

They shared the common belief in the eternal bliss of heaven and the eternal torments of hell.

Some Anabaptists taught a form of restorationism and some Socinians taught annihilation of the wicked (they simply cease to exist).

Some Protestant theologians believe in material fire having a part in the endless punishment of the wicked – others are non-committal on the subject; and still others interpreted it in a figurative manner. ***(If the punishments of the wicked are "pictured as eternal fire"...that certainly doesn't seem like a very comforting accommodation)***

The doctrine of future rewards and punishments, as taught by the Reformation, remains the official doctrine of the Churches up to the present day. Only Universalists believe in universal salvation and in the restoration of all things in the absolute sense of the word.

## GLOSSARY

**Atonement** - A term originally coined by William Tyndale to translate the Latin term *reconciliatio*, which has since come to have the developed meaning of “the work of Christ” or “the benefits of Christ gained for believers by his death and resurrection.”

**Calvin, John** - (1509-64). French Protestant and the second most outstanding figure in the Reformation after Martin Luther. Born in Noyon, he spent his youth training for a career in the Roman Church. He was educated in French Legal Humanism in Universities in Orleans, Paris and Bourges. He became a Protestant sometime in the late 1520’s or early 1530’s. Associated most strongly with Geneva, he was scholar turned pastor. He wrote voluminously, taught daily through the Bible and preached from the NT each Lord’s Day. His greatest theological work is his *Institutes of the Christian Religion* which he revised several times from 1536-59. His contribution to Protestant theology was to link Luther’s doctrine of justification to a more developed doctrine of sanctification framed by a thoroughly Trinitarian understanding of creation and redemption.

**Canons of Dort** - (1619). Five articles drafted and adopted by an international Reformed Synod convened at Dordrecht by the Dutch Reformed Church in response to the five points of the Remonstrant (Arminian) theologians.

**Cappadocian Fathers** –also traditionally known as the Three Cappadocians. They are: Basil the Great (330–379), who was bishop of Caesarea; Basil's younger brother Gregory of Nyssa (c.332–395), who was bishop of Nyssa; and a close friend, Gregory of Nazianzus (329–389), who became Patriarch of Constantinople. The Cappadocia region, in modern-day Turkey, was an early site of Christian activity, with several missions by Paul in this region.

**Christology** - The locus of Christian theology dealing with the identity, person, and work of Jesus Christ, and particularly the relation of his human and divine natures.

**Clericalized** -To cause to become clerical or be influenced by clericalism.

**The Cluniac Reforms** – A series of changes within medieval monasticism of the Western Church focused on restoring the traditional monastic life, encouraging art, and caring for the poor.

**Consubstantiation** - A term used to refer to the theory of the real presence, especially associated with Martin Luther, which holds that the substance of the Eucharistic bread and wine are given together with the substance of the body and blood of Christ.

**Council of Trent** - (1545-63) Promulgated the official Roman Catholic response to and anathema against the Protestant Reformation. Vatican Council I (1869-70) solidified this response by adding the doctrine of Papal infallibility. Vatican Council II (1962-65), however, appears to move back from Trent and Vatican I by describing Protestants as 'separated brethren'.

**Creed** - A formal definition or summary of the Christian faith, held in common by all Christians. The most important are those generally known as the "Apostles' creed" and the "Nicene creed."

**Doctrine** - Body of beliefs and tenets, as of the church.

**Donatism** - A movement, centering upon Roman North Africa in the fourth century, which developed a rigorist view of the church and sacraments.

**Ekklesia** – (ek-klay-see'-ah) An assembly, congregation, church; the Church, the whole body of Christian believers.

**Ecclesiastical** – Of or pertaining to the church or clergy (from Latin ecclesia).

**Ecclesiology** – The study of Church doctrine.

**Eucharist** – The term used in to refer to the sacrament variously known as "the mass," "the Lord's supper," and "holy communion."

**Helvetic Confessions** - Two documents expressing the common belief of the Reformed churches of Switzerland.

**John Duns Scotus** - Commonly known as Duns Scotus is generally considered to be one of the three most important philosopher-theologians of the High Middle Ages. Duns Scotus had considerable influence on both Catholic and secular thought.

**Pope Gregory I** - Commonly known as Gregory the Great. He was pope of the Catholic Church from 590 to his death in 604. Gregory is famous for instigating the first recorded large-scale mission from Rome to convert people to Christianity.

**Kyriakos** - Belonging to the Lord.

**Martin Luther** - A German professor of theology, composer, priest, monk and a seminal figure in the Protestant Reformation.

**Modalism** - (or **modalistic Monarchianism**) God is one person appearing and working in the different "modes" of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. The chief proponent of **modalism** was Sabellius, hence the view is commonly called Sabellianism.

**Monergism** - Is the doctrine that the Holy Spirit is the only efficient agent in regeneration. That the human will possesses no inclination to holiness until regenerated, and cannot cooperate in regeneration.

**Novatianism** - An Early Christian sect devoted to Novatian. (a scholar, priest, theologian and antipope between 251 and 258). It held a strict view that refused readmission to communion of Lapsi, those baptized Christians who had denied their faith or performed the formalities of a ritual sacrifice to the pagan gods, under the pressures of the persecution sanctioned by Emperor Decius, in AD 250. The Novationists were declared heretical.

**Origen or Origen Adamantius** - A Greek scholar, ascetic, and early Christian theologian who was born and spent the first half of his career in Alexandria.

**Orthodoxy** - Literally “right beliefs.” Doctrine authoritatively established by the Church.

**Qahal** - (kha-hale) One of the primary words for a gathering or assembly. The Biblical text consistently distinguishes between ‘edah and qahal.

**Sacralized** - To treat as or make sacred.

**Schism** - From the Greek meaning “to tear or to split,” a division, usually from an organization or a movement. Refers to a person who creates or incites division in a group or a church, or a defined organization with a hierarchy.

**Thomas Aquinas** - An Italian Dominican friar, Catholic priest, and Doctor of the Church. He was an immensely influential philosopher, theologian, and jurist in the tradition of scholasticism, within which he is also known as the Doctor Angelicus and the Doctor Communis. The name Aquinas identifies his ancestral origins in the county of Aquino in present-day Lazio.

**Totalitarian** - Relating to a centralized government that does not tolerate parties of differing opinion and that exercises dictatorial control over many aspects of life.

**Vatican II or Second Vatican Ecumenical Council** - Commonly known as the Second Vatican Council, or informally Vatican II, addressed relations between the Catholic Church and the modern world. It was the twenty-first and most recent ecumenical council of the Catholic Church and the second to be held at St. Peter's Basilica in the Vatican. The council, through the Holy See, formally opened under the pontificate of Pope John XXIII October 11, 1962 and closed under Pope Paul VI on the Feast of the Immaculate Conception December 8, 1965.

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