

Church History

A Study and Discussion Guide for Digging Deeper

by Keith Stanglin

In this guide, each lesson is summarized in a couple of sentences. A brief outline is provided to help viewers follow along with the video and to take notes. Discussion and reflection questions are also provided. Embedded in the discussion questions are instructions for outside reading. Readings without hyperlinks may be downloaded separately.

Lesson 1. The Importance of Studying Church History

Summary

The history of Christianity is ignored by many Christians or dismissed as irrelevant to the Christian life. Yet there are many good reasons for studying for church history.

Outline

I. Introduction

-“Tradition”

II. Restorationist Marginalization of Church History

III. Inescapable Influence of Church History

-How have the figures and events of church history shaped the present-day church?

2 options:

1) Forget the history.

-What is the problem with saying, “We are going back to the Bible only, rejecting all ‘traditions’”?

2) Acknowledge the history.

IV. Learning from Church History

-Why study church history?

1. Gives us _____.

2. Gives us _____ and _____.

3. Can be useful in shaping proper Christian _____.

4. Value for _____.

5. Strengthens our _____.

Discussion Questions:

1. What do you think of when you hear the word “history”? Is your reaction to “learning about history” shaped by history courses you had in school?

2. How does the past influence us?

3. Read Stanglin, “Restorationism and Church History: Strange Bedfellows?” (see website). How do you think we have been positively influenced by church history? Name some practices that developed after the New Testament and still shape us today.

4. What does “historical perspective” mean to you?

5. How can the study of church history help you in church and ministry work?

Lesson 2. Apostolic Fathers

Summary

When the generation of apostles and direct witnesses of Jesus died, a new generation stepped up to lead the church. What can we learn about early Christianity from their writings?

Outline

Introduction. We are hindered by two difficulties for our knowledge of the subapostolic church:

1) Scant documentation for a half-century after the NT.

2) The documents that do exist are not systematic or comprehensive.

Apostolic Fathers: Who were the apostolic fathers? The generation of leaders after the apostles. Give valuable insight into the earliest days of Christianity after the N.T. period.

A. Clement of Rome- a bishop in Rome; mentioned in Phil. 4:3? Wrote ca. 95 to the city of Corinth about issues of church order and urged church to submit to elders.

B. *Didache*- “Teaching of the 12 Apostles;” ca. 50–100; 2 main sections: moral, doctrinal. Used for teaching new Christians the basics of the faith as it moved out of the Jewish world. Prescribes affusion for those without ample water; non-Christians excluded from LS; bishops and deacons.

C. Ignatius of Antioch (d. ca. 110)- 7 letters on his way to martyrdom; moniscopacy referred to; later bishop comes to mean head over many congregations. Dealt with 2 Christological heresies: Judaizers (Christ was merely human) and Docetism (Christ only “seemed” to be a human).

D. Polycarp of Smyrna- pupil of John; recipient of letter from Ignatius. Letter to the Philippians, ca. 115. *Martyrdom of Polycarp*.

E. Papias- Statements about the gospels.

F. *Shepherd of Hermas*- ca. 130; apocalyptic; author was a former slave; can sins after baptism be forgiven? Yes—once. Widely read and respected.

G. *Epistle of Barnabas*- author unknown; about Christians who revert to the Law. It allegorizes the OT ceremonial laws as moral and spiritual truths.

H. *2 Clement*.

*Development from NT? Evolution, but in continuity. Later developments more discontinuous. Summary of apostolic fathers: Anti-Sin! Or, put positively, holiness. Moral rigor, by today’s standards.

Discussion Questions:

1. How and what do we know about the earliest Christians after the New Testament?
2. Read the *Didache*, available at <http://www.earlychristianwritings.com/text/didache-roberts.html>. What are your impressions of this ancient book, probably the earliest Christian writing outside the New Testament?
3. What specific thing surprises you most about the early second-century church?

Lesson 3. Trouble from Without: Persecution

Summary

Pagans mostly did not understand the new Christian faith and rarely appreciated its adherents. Early Christians were constantly marginalized and occasionally persecuted with violence.

Outline

I. Introductory Facts/Terms

“Martyr”

- Greek *martys* means “witness, testifier.”
- “One who testifies at the cost of one’s life” became a special meaning for this word. The death becomes the testimony of the witness.
- The word approaches this meaning in Heb. 12:1, and fully embraces this meaning in Acts 22:20 and Rev. 17:6.
- A “martyrology” was an account of a martyr’s testimony in death. Antecedents in 2 Macc. 6-7; 4 Macc.; Jesus’ passion narrative; Stephen in Acts 7.
- Confessor- one tortured for confessing the faith, but not killed.

II. Why Persecuted? Pagan Attitudes toward Christians

Early Christianity, in general, did not attempt to attract adherents. Secrecy during Eucharist (*Didache* 9.5), Jewish pedigree, and the developing three-year catechumenate were enough to keep many people away.

Because knowledge of Christianity usually came through private acquaintance, it was publicly regarded with suspicion as a secret *superstitio*, and therefore widely misunderstood.

Some accusations against early Christians:

- | | |
|----------------------|-------------------------------|
| 1. Atheism | 5. Novelty |
| 2. Cannibalism | 6. Relation to Judaism and OT |
| 3. Incest | *7. Treason |
| 4. Social subversion | |

Christianity did not fit the typical categories: Its strict monotheism made it impossible for Roman religion to absorb it, but it was not confined to a particular race, nation, or language group (unlike Judaism).

III. Overview of Roman Persecutions

Nature of the persecutions: Not continuous 250 years of state-sponsored persecution. But in addition to the known state-initiated persecutions that ended in martyrdoms, there was the constant marginalization and persecution of being a misunderstood minority. Four examples:

1. Nero (r. 54-68)

When Rome burned (AD 64), Nero launched a persecution against Christians in the city of Rome. Peter and Paul were martyred during this time.

2. Trajan (r. 98-117)

Christians were not sought out. But if revealed, they were persecuted. Ignatius.

3. Decius (r. 249-51)

His was the first empire-wide persecution.

4. Diocletian (r. 284-305), Maximian (r. 286-305), and successors

The most severe persecution of all (Great Persecution) began in 303.

IV. Persecution and Marginalization Today

Discussion Questions:

1. What were some of the accusations against early Christians? How might early Christians have answered those charges?
2. What are the main outsider accusations against Christians today?
3. Read the Letter of Pliny to Trajan and Trajan's response, available at <https://faculty.georgetown.edu/jod/texts/pliny.html>. Which passages stand out to you and why?
4. Read Ignatius' "Letter to the Romans," available at <http://www.earlychristianwritings.com/text/ignatius-romans-lightfoot.html>. What do you learn here about the early Christian "theology of martyrdom?"
5. Which Scriptures would encourage the kind of language that Ignatius uses to speak of his impending suffering?

Lesson 4. Trouble from Within: Heresy

Summary

In addition to external threats, the church also experienced internal challenges to the received doctrine, a situation foreseen by Jesus and the apostles. Gnosticism posed the most serious of these early challenges.

Outline

Discussion Questions:

1. What are the main concerns of the following passages?

-Mt. 7:15-20; 24:23-24

-Acts 20:28-30, 35

-1 Cor. 11:23; 15:3-5; 16:21

-2 Cor. 11:13; 12:11-12; 13:5-6

-Gal. 1:8-9; 6:11-16

-Phil. 3:2-3, 17-19

-Col. 4:16, 18

-2 Thess. 2:1-2, 15; 3:17

-1 Tim. 4:1-3

-2 Tim. 3:1-9; 4:3-4

-2 Pet. 2:1-3; 3:14-16

-1 Jn. 4:1-3

-2 Jn. 7-11

-Jude 3-4

-Rev. 2:6, 14-15, 20, 24

2. In Gnosticism, what is the main barrier between humanity and God?

3. Read Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, Preface; Book I ch. 8 paragraph 1; Book I.10:1-2; Book III chapters 3-4, all sections available at <https://www.newadvent.org/fathers/0103.htm>. How does the succession of bishops after the apostles function as an argument against Gnosticism? What does it have to do with the handing down of the true faith?

4. Where does the authority for faith and practice lie? Why?

Lesson 5. Christology: The Councils of Nicaea and Constantinople

Summary

The Roman Emperor Constantine, who now favored the Christian faith, convened an ecumenical council in 325, the first of many councils that debated the right way to think and speak about the nature of Jesus Christ. What happened at the first two of these councils, Nicaea and Constantinople?

Outline

Was Jesus completely God or was he less than God? How would the church define Jesus' special status as "Son of God" and "one with the Father"?

1. 325 Nicaea

Arius (ca. 270–336) taught that the Son 1) was a creature, 2) had a beginning, 3) had no *direct* knowledge of God the Father, and 4) the Logos by nature was mutable. Arius wanted to guard the complete transcendence and oneness of God the Father, so he said the Logos was created before all time began. If the Son was begotten by the Father, then "there was when he was not." "The Son has age and magnitude from the will of God, His origin from God has a 'from when,' a 'from which' and a 'from then.'"

Arianism was condemned; equality of the Father and Son; **oneness of God.**

Date set for celebration of Easter (no longer on 14 Nisan).

Lasting importance:

- a. It was the first attempt to bring bishops from all over the empire together.
- b. It issued the first general creed (some local ones already existed).
- c. Ended with anathemas. Creeds became increasingly occasional and polemical.

2. 381 Constantinople

Convened by Emperor Theodosius.

Against Macedonius' denial that the Holy Spirit is one with the Father; **threeness of God.**

Apollinarianism was condemned; Jesus is fully human.

Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed is a good, agreeable statement of faith

For Further Reading and Study on Constantine and Nicaea

Anatolios, Khaled. *Retrieving Nicaea: The Development and Meaning of Trinitarian Doctrine*. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2011.

Burn, A. E. *The Council of Nicaea: A Memorial for Its Sixteenth Centenary*. London: SPCK, 1925.

Davis, Leo Donald. *The First Seven Ecumenical Councils (325–787): Their History and Theology*. Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 1990.

Dünzl, Franz. *A Brief History of the Doctrine of the Trinity in the Early Church*. New York: T&T Clark, 2007.

Frend, W. H. C. *The Rise of Christianity*. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1984.

Grillmeier, A. *Christ in Christian Tradition, Volume One: From the Apostolic Age to Chalcedon (451)*. 2nd ed. Trans. John Bowden. Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1975.

Hanson, R. P. C. *The Search for the Christian Doctrine of God: The Arian Controversy, 318–81*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 1988.

Leithart, Peter J. *Defending Constantine: The Twilight of an Empire and the Dawn of Christendom*. Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2010.

Need, Stephen W. *Truly Divine and Truly Human: The Story of Christ and the Seven Ecumenical Councils*. Peabody: Hendrickson, 2008.

Seeberg, Reinhold. *Textbook of the History of Doctrines*. 2 vols. in 1. Grand Rapids: Baker, 1977.

Weinandy, Thomas. *Athanasius: A Theological Introduction*. Great Theologians Series. Ashgate, 2007.

Williams, Rowan. *Arius: Heresy and Tradition*. Rev. ed. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002.

Young, Frances M., and Andrew Teal. *From Nicaea to Chalcedon: A Guide to the Literature and Its Background*. 2nd ed. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2010.

Discussion Questions:

1. How did the course of Christianity change in the fourth century?
2. Is Jesus Christ completely God or is he less than God? Who (or what) is Jesus Christ? What are the implications?
3. Read selections on the “Outbreak of the Arian Controversy,” selections 280-84, 286 (in separate file). Describe Arius’ views. Which biblical texts do you think could be used for and against Arius’ views?

4. Read and compare the Creed of Nicaea (325) with the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed (381) (at the end of Arianism file). What do you notice about these creeds?

5. Read the Chalcedonian Definition (451), available at https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chalcedonian_Definition#Content. What does it say about Jesus Christ?

Lesson 6. Rise of Islam

Summary

After five centuries of unprecedented flourishing and expansion, Christianity faced a new threat with the rise of Islam in the early seventh century. What is Islam, what is its relationship to Christianity, and how did it affect church history?

Outline

“No event during the first thousand years of Christian history was more unexpected, calamitous, and consequential than the rise of Islam.” (Robert Louis Wilken)

-Muhammed- born in Mecca (570); his uncle raised him.

-His thinking shaped probably by Judaism and Christianity; received revelation at age 40.

-In 622, he left Mecca and returned to Medina. In 630, he returned and conquered Mecca.

-Jihad (“struggle”) is sometimes regarded as so important as to be called the 6th pillar of Islam. The centrality of war to Islam goes back to its earliest sources (9th cent.); one of the earliest Muslim accounts of Muhammed’s life is simply called “The Book of Raids.”

-Arab conquerors preferred negotiations to slaughter, though they resorted to the latter when the former failed.

-Within a century of Muhammed’s death, Islam spread throughout the Mediterranean world and into China.

-Battle of Tours, 732, Charles Martel’s army stops Islam from spreading further into Western Europe. Christianity loses numbers to Islam. By the 16th cent., Asia Minor was 90% Muslim.

-There is a fundamental difference between Islam and Christianity in their attitudes to power.

Discussion Questions:

1. What is Islam and how did it shape medieval church history?

2. Read John of Damascus, *On Heresies* 101, available at http://orthodoxinfo.com/general/stjohn_islam.aspx. What do you find interesting about John's very early assessment of Muhammed, Islam, and the Quran?
3. Do Muslims and Christians worship the same God?
4. What other similarities and significant differences do you see between the two faiths?
5. See the video on the spread of many world religions at <https://youtu.be/AvFl6UBZLv4>. What do you notice, particularly about the spread of Christianity and Islam?

Lesson 7. Crusades

Summary

Beginning in 1096, many Western European Christians traveled to formerly Christian lands to take them back from Muslim control. Their goal was to re-establish a Christian kingdom in Jerusalem. What motivated the Crusaders, and what were the long-term results?

Outline

Four introductory, contextual points:

1) The first truth is that Muslims had first invaded and taken control of territory that previously did not belong to them, and their violent conquests were in the name of Islam. 2) Second, it never was, and never has been, simply a war against Islam. Muslims militarily conquered four of the five patriarchal cities of Christianity, turning many of the Christians' holiest sites into mosques (as with Hagia Sophia in Constantinople). 3) The third truth is that Muslims at the time never dwelt on the Crusades as much as Europeans later did. 4) Although there were exceptions, most Crusaders were not out for money.

-What are the Crusades? Military expeditions that Western Catholics took from the end of 11th cent. to the end of 13th cent. to take Holy Land back from Muslims.

-Emperor Alexios I requested aid to help drive Muslims out of Palestine. Pope Urban II saw an opportunity to unite east and west.

Influential strands of thought and innovations:

1. Pilgrimage and Pilgrim vow
2. Feudal knights possessed "hallowed" sword (Code of Chivalry)
3. Church decides what is a "just war"

4. Penitential War

5. Taking up one's cross

1st Crusade (1096–99)- “Deus vult.” Pope Urban II proclaimed indulgence for sins to those who fought in the crusade (forgives the temporal punishment, whether that be penance on earth or in purgatory). Ca. 25,000 combatants, and about 15,000 more unarmed, poor people.

4th Crusade (1204)

-Results of Crusades: failed; but...

1) Rise of new knightly monastic orders

2) Revival of commerce

3) Led to breakup of feudalism

4) Revival of learning (universities)

Discussion Questions:

1. What were the Crusades, and why in the world did Christians think they were a good idea?

2. Read Section 1 (“Conditions in Europe at the beginning of the Crusades”), a description by Fulcher, available at <https://deremilitari.org/2013/04/the-first-crusade-1095-99-a-short-narrative-from-contemporary-sources/>. What does the state of things in Christian lands say about the motivation for the Crusades?

3. Read Pope Urban II's call to (the First) Crusade (see separate attachment). What do you find interesting about this sermon?

4. Do you think the Crusades qualify as “just war”?

Lesson 8. Monasticism

Summary

Monastic movements proliferated during the fourth century and throughout the medieval period. The monastic life attracted Christians who wanted to dedicate themselves fully to God and kingdom work. This lesson surveys some of the major movements and their leaders.

Outline

-3 factors influencing life in the Middle Ages:

1. Papacy 2. Secular rulers 3. Monasticism- Life of seclusion for the sake of becoming holy.

A. Early Monasticism

1. Goal- escape from world

2. Factors:

a. Deep disillusionment with world, before Constantine.

b. Revolt against “worldly church,” after Constantine.

c. Spiritual battle against demons.

3. “Rules”

4. Scribal work.

5. Mission work.

B. Early Western Monasticism.

Benedict of Nursia founded a monastery at Monte Cassino in Italy. Benedict’s “Rule”. The Benedictine life became widespread.

C. Cluny Renewal

D. Cistercian Monasteries (Citeaux/Cistercium, France)

By 13th cent., 750 Cistercian houses for men, 900 for women

E. Mendicant Orders- beggar monks.

1. Franciscans.

a. Francis of Assisi (1152–1226) (movie *Brother Sun, Sister Moon*).

b. Order known as Ordo Fratrum Minorum (OFM).

c. *Rule of Franciscans*.

d. Later conflict between Spiritual Franciscans and moderate Franciscans.

2. Dominicans.

3. Augustinian Hermits.

4. Mendicant Orders served 2 important functions (see Oberman, *Luther*, 131):

- a. Answer to criticism of church's wealth.
- b. Reaction to daunting demographic changes.

F. Tension with Hierarchical Church

Joachim of Fiore (d. 1202).

This idea of the coming "reformation" will be influential for centuries to come. More specifically, the language of "reformer" applied later to Luther, along with his language of the pope as antichrist.

G. Women especially influential in monastic setting.

1. Nuns- chastity, poverty, obedience
2. Hermitesses- mystical solitude
3. Habit- group work in the cities with poor, with no particular order or rule

3 women to know:

1. Hildegard of Bingen (1098–1179).
2. Julian of Norwich (1342–1423) was a mystical and speculative theologian, well-versed in the Latin Vulgate and the spiritual literature of her time.
3. Catherine of Sienna (1347–80)- perhaps most influential woman theologian of medieval era.

H. *Devotio moderna*. Thomas à Kempis. Emphasis on high ethical standards.

Discussion Questions:

1. What were the types of and motivations for monasticism?
2. Read selections from the *Rule of St. Benedict*, chs. 3-9, 16, at https://www.solesmes.com/sites/default/files/upload/pdf/rule_of_st_benedict.pdf. What are your impressions of this book? Does it seem like a good guide for Christian life?
3. Is the monastic life a godly vocation for Christians today?

Lesson 9. Reformations

Summary

The Reformations of the sixteenth century were, in some sense, the religious expression of the Renaissance. What were the main doctrinal points of dissent that led to schism in the Western Latin Church?

Outline

Reformation (1517–1555)- Protest movement against doctrinal and moral abuses of Roman Church.

3 main points of dissent:

I. Prolegomena—religious authority.

A. Primary authority from Scripture alone, not pope- 2 late medieval options (per Oberman): Tradition I (Scripture and Church teaching both normative, but Scripture has priority above church tradition; a medieval and genuine Catholic option of Aquinas, Cajetan, reformers) vs. Tradition II (co-equal norms, magisterium as normative as Scripture; Biel, Eck, Trent).

II. Doctrine of salvation

A. Assurance of salvation- RCC tried to bolster with sacrament of penance; late medieval system of merits. As a monk, Luther's conscience was tortured for fear of not living up to God's righteous expectations; his confessions were never-ending.

B. By grace alone through faith alone- no more reliance on relics, works of merit, prayers of saints, "superstitious" practices; works are evidence of saving faith, not the basis of salvation.

III. Doctrine of the church

A. Sacraments- 2 sacraments rather than 7; rejection of transubstantiation and communion in 1 kind; joined with proclamation of Word (not just a self-explanatory ritual, but something to be understood along with the gospel).

B. Polity- Hierarchical structure of one person over whole church was rejected.

IV. Otherwise, great continuity of doctrine ("catholic"). On the main differences, anyone who questions or seems to undermine any of these points will be suspected of "papism."

V. "Magisterial Reformation" of Luther, Zwingli, Calvin, and England. Radicals and Anabaptists were generally antagonistic toward the magistrates.

Discussion Questions:

1. What was the Protestant Reformation and what were the points of contention with the Roman Church?

2. Read Martin Luther's *95 Theses* from 1517, available at <https://www.luther.de/en/95thesen.html>. What does Luther say about purgatory, the legitimacy of the pope as head of the church, and the privilege of papal indulgence? How does he seek to limit indulgences? What does this document indicate about the state of the "Reformation" in 1517?

3. Read Luther's "Preface" to his Latin works, written in 1545, toward the end of his life, available at <https://www.bluffton.edu/courses/humanities/2/ml-1545.htm> (read the whole document or begin with the paragraph, "Meanwhile in that same year..."). What was the driving force behind Luther's theology?

4. In what sense was assurance of salvation a key motivating factor for the Protestant Reformations?

5. What do you think is the most important legacy of the Reformation?

Lesson 10. Arminian Controversy

Summary

The sixteenth-century reformations led to the fragmentation of Western Christendom into multiple confessional identities. The Arminian debate within the Dutch Reformed Church is a typical instance of such theological conflict and its long-term effects.

Outline

As an instance of Confessionalization and the debates within a denomination and a republic, and as a topic that still gets some people excited today, let's talk about Arminius and Arminianism.

1. Reformed theology. Much to it, but note these emphases.

a. Unconditional predestination (election).

b. Irresistible (effectual) grace.

c. Divine sovereignty. What is the result of such an emphasis on sovereignty?

2. Jacob Arminius (1559–1609)

a. Life

1) Pastor. Why is it important to point out that he was a pastor (and more than twice as many years as he was a professor)?

2) Professor

b. Theology

- 1) Conditional election
- 2) Resistible grace
- 3) Sovereignty that allows for human freedom and reciprocity. What is the practical point of emphasizing divine sovereignty and human freedom?
- 4) Theology of creation- God created and loves all people for the purpose of salvation.
- 5) Called for revision of the Belgic Confession and Heidelberg Catechism

d. Motivations

- 1) Reconciliation of divine grace and human freedom. God's grace doesn't override human nature.
- 2) Problem of evil (theodicy). God is not author of sin.
- 3) Assurance of salvation. How could things go wrong? 2 extremes to avoid.

3. Arminianism

- a. Remonstrance of 1610. Synod of Dordt, 1618-19. Remonstrants expelled from Holland
- b. Arminius became the figurehead of anti-Calvinism
- c. Anglican/Wesleyanism/Methodism

4. Legacy

- a. Scripture above confessions
- b. Unity and toleration. How can emphasis on toleration go overboard?
- c. Good works
- d. Reciprocity in God-human relationship
- e. Many debates over next 4 centuries regarding Calvinism vs. Arminianism. The debate defined the splits in the Evangelical Revival/Great Awakening (e.g., Whitefield vs. Wesley). RM came out Arminian, definitely anti-Calvinist/TULIP

Discussion Questions:

1. Before this video, had you ever heard of Arminius? What had you heard? What did you think of him?

2. Read Arminius' description of the Reformed doctrine of predestination from his *Declaration of Sentiments*, available at <https://ccel.org/ccel/arminius/works1/works1.iii.ii.ii.html>. What do you make of this doctrinal viewpoint (that Arminius describes but will reject)?
3. Read some of the twenty reasons Arminius gives for rejecting this Reformed predestination (perhaps especially reasons XVIII and XIX), available at <https://ccel.org/ccel/arminius/works1/works1.iii.ii.iii.html>. Which reasons stand out to you?
4. In your estimation, whom does God choose for salvation, and why?

Lesson 11. Enlightenment and Skepticism

Summary

One reaction to the theological and political conflict of the Reformation and Post-Reformation period was the so-called Enlightenment and the consequent skepticism of modernity. What are the main features of the birth of the modern world?

Outline

2 reactions to Confessionalization and Conflict: 1) "De-confessionalization" and Enlightenment, 2) Pietism.

DE-CONFESSIONALIZATION AND ENLIGHTENMENT

De-confessionalization is the process by which these theological confessions became obsolete even within their own churches. De-confessionalization in England begins when the Arminians are allowed to subscribe to the 39 Articles, which could be interpreted as such. Latitudinarians and Arians then were able to subscribe, for, after all, the 39 Articles are a bit vague about the Trinity. Later, Deists could subscribe, and the "confession of faith" has lost all significance. These ideas took a while to become widespread, but eventually they trickled down.

During Reformation, they mostly want continuity, and they don't reject that reason is subject to revelation.

During Post-Reformation period, there is a plurality of churches, interpretations of Scripture, and confessions. Political and ecclesiastical conflicts arise, and some people begin to want a rational foundation that transcends (sectarian) Christianity.

Enlightenment (1650–1800)- Preeminence of Reason over supernatural revelation.

4 principles of Enlightenment (cf. Grenz and Olson, ch. 1; and Livingston, 1):

1. Exalted reason- optimism regarding human mind's ability to discover truth. Humans once realized reason is severely limited and could easily falter, and is therefore not a sound first principle or foundation for theology. But reason is now a "vital, progressive force" (Livingston, 1:7).

2. Nature and harmony- natural order and natural laws; modern scientific method.

3. Autonomy- individualistic choice or self-rule that questions authority.

4. Toleration- truth claims of historic religions cannot be proved at present.

-René Descartes

Discussion Questions:

1. How did the conflict that resulted from the Reformations negatively affect Christianity in the West?

2. Read the selections from Descartes' *Discourse on Method* (separate attachment in notes). What are the four rules that Descartes imposed on himself?

3. How do you react to Descartes' statement, "If you would be a real seeker after truth, it is necessary that at least once in your life you doubt, as far as possible, all things." Do you agree with this statement? Why or why not?

Lesson 12. Pietist Revival

Summary

In contrast to Enlightenment rationalism and empiricism, various Pietistic movements stressed the importance of knowing God through Scripture, the heart, and good works. Such movements swept across Roman Catholic and Protestant communions alike.

Outline

Another reaction to the ivory tower theology of Protestant and Catholic orthodoxies.

Lutheran Piety

In Germany, the movement was led by Philipp Jakob Spener (1635–1705). Left Dresden pastorate in 1689 after accusing the elector (his boss) of immorality, and went to Halle. Wrote *Pia desideria* (pious wishes).

Started collegia (gatherings), or *ecclesiola*, for studying the Bible in the original languages.

Reformed Pietist Movement

Reformed tradition was able to blend the theoretical and practical aspects of theology generally better than the Lutheran tradition. One of their favorite slogans was: *ecclesia reformata semper*

reformanda: “The church reformed, always reforming.”

Blaise Pascal (1623–62)

With regard to the two reactions, reason and piety, some held these two together very well. Pascal was a mathematician and scientist of the highest rank, but also a philosopher and theologian who was sympathetic to the Jansenist revival in Roman Catholic France.

Faith and reason are neither inimical to nor isolated from one another (see Thomas Morris).

“Fire. ‘God of Abraham, God of Isaac, God of Jacob,’ not of the philosophers and scholars. Certitude, certitude, feeling, joy, peace. God of Jesus Christ” (Memorial). “The heart has its reasons of which reason knows nothing” (*Pensées* 423).

Reason cannot argue for or against first principles, for anything you try to do uses those first principles. Pascal is not a believer in natural theology.

Knowledge of God comes through heart, which is healed by God’s grace; so faith can be recommended by reason, but not secured by reason.

Discussion Questions:

1. Read the selections from Pascal’s *Pensées* (separate attachment in notes). Summarize Pascal’s thoughts on reason and the mind.
2. Read the selections from Spener’s *Pia desideria* (separate attachment in notes). What is the single most important contribution of pietism, and how would it contribute to our churches today?
3. To what extent do Spener’s reform principles still resonate with evangelical Protestantism?

Lesson 13. American Restoration Movement

Summary

The American Restoration Movement was led by Barton Stone, Thomas and Alexander Campbell, and Walter Scott. Like other restoration movements before them, these reformers emphasized the unity of all Christian believers on the basis of Scripture alone.

Outline

Americans (and American immigrants from Scotland and Ireland) sought to “restore” the first-century church in the present context. Jn. 16:13: The Holy Spirit was to guide the apostles into “all truth.” Once given, God did not intend for his basic plan to change. The NT writers predicted that some would leave the way.

The idea of restoration is prevalent in the reformation, and esp. in England. There are people like Robert Sandeman (1718-71), who was a leader of restoration in England and in America. There were several restoration movements in America. James O’Kelley and Rice Haggard broke away from the Methodist Church. Also, the so-called “New England Christians” movement.

Stone Movement. In 1797, James McGready brought the “Great Western Revival” to Western Kentucky. He influenced Barton W. Stone. There were intense emotion and “exercises,” especially

at Cane Ridge. Denominations were working together during the Second Great Awakening. See *Last Will and Testament*.

Stone was respected and known for living an exemplary Christian life, a model of holiness.

Stone edited a monthly journal called the *Christian Messenger*, which he intended as a means for uniting Christians.

Campbell Movement. Written as Thomas Campbell broke from the Presbyterian Church, *Declaration and Address* (1809) is seen as foundational to the RM. In a sense, Thomas Campbell was ahead of his time, but in other ways, he was saying what many predecessors and contemporaries were also advocating. In this document, Campbell wanted to get back to the basics.

Based on this document, *Dec and Add.*, we can isolate 2 fundamental values of SCM:

1. Unity of Christians (end). Dec and Add emphasizes unity in the face of divisions.
2. Restoration (means) on the sole authority of Scripture (basis).

In 1809, Alexander Campbell and the family finally arrived in America and reunited with TC. *Millennial Harbinger*.

Union of SCM. But note some differences and prejudices between the two groups:

- 1) Names- Disciples (Campbell) vs. Christians (Stone)
- 2) Emphasis on immersion- Stone said not essential for remission of sins or for fellowship and communion. AC and TC were immersed in 1812. Baptism is an objective moment and sign of salvation and God's promise to us, not a subjective feeling of heart being "strangely warmed" (Wesley) or "liquid love" (Finney).
- 3) Lord's Supper- AC did it every Sunday; Stone did not
- 4) Evangelistic methods- AC emphasized reason and intellect more than Stone, who appealed more to emotions. AC reacted strongly against the revivalism that Stone embraced.
- 5) Theology- a) AC was Trinitarian, Stone was not (he was basically Arian).
 - b) Atonement- Stone advocated the "moral influence" theory, which the Campbells thought was mistaken (at least as an exclusive explanation). The cross is necessary for demonstrating the justice of God in forgiving sin.
 - c) AC postmillennial; Stone apocalyptic.
- 6) Different orientations toward culture- Stone was apolitical, and refused to vote; Campbell was politically involved (e.g., friend of Andrew Jackson).

In many ways, owing to its Presbyterian background, the Church of Christ is a free Reformed church that rejects TULIP. On certain theological questions, TC self-identified as a "Calvinist."

Walter Scott. If Campbells were the teachers and lecturers, the brains; Scott was the preacher, the mover and shaker (oversimplification). Scott was the first to preach repentance and baptism by immersion for the forgiveness of sins. This became the sacramental hallmark of RM. There was tremendous growth in the movement between 1825 and 1855.

Discussion Questions:

1. Read Stone, et al., *Last Will and Testament of the Springfield Presbytery*

[https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Last Will and Testament of The Springfield Presbytery](https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Last_Will_and_Testament_of_The_Springfield_Presbytery)

What seems to be the primary motivation for this document?

2. What are the reasons given for dissolving the presbytery?

3. Read selections from Thomas Campbell, *Declaration and Address* (see separate attachment in notes). In what ways is this document characteristically American?

4. Which of the 13 propositions do you find agreeable? Disagreeable?

5. What would you say still needs to be restored in the church today?

Lesson 14. 20th-Century Developments

Summary

At the turn of the twentieth century, liberal Protestant theology was in its heyday. In the aftermath of the First World War, Karl Barth turned this theology on its head and stressed the sovereignty of God. After the Second World War, became increasingly fragmented and idiosyncratic.

Outline

Karl Barth: The greatest theologian of the 20th cent. Born May 10, 1886, Basel, Switzerland. Taught at Göttingen and Münster (1921–30). Taught at Bonn (1930–34); began *Church Dogmatics* and wrote *Nein!* (contra Brunner). Taught at Basel (1935–62) and finished *Church Dogmatics*. Died Dec. 9, 1968.

Barth wrote most of CD at Basel, only 1/1 having been written before that.

Vol. 1- Doctrine of Word of God. Prolegomena, Revelation.

Vol. 2- Doctrine of God. Trinity, attributes.

Vol. 3- Doctrine of Creation. God the Father's work.

Vol. 4- Reconciliation. God the Son's work.

Planned a 5th vol. on redemption. God the Spirit's work.

Vol. 1—Word of God

3fold word. Incarnate, written, preached.

Vol. 2/1—God (a summary of sections 25-26)

1. God is known; God is knowable.

2. God is not just one in a series of similar objects. There is just one God. Extra-biblical descriptions don't describe the true God.

3. Knowledge of God is mediated by his revelation. God knows himself immediately, we know him on basis of revelation. Contra Schleiermacher's immediate feeling.

4. No fundamental alteration of relationship with God between OT and NT; our knowledge of God stands in *grace*. NT believer knows some new things, but grace situation is same. God's work is prior to us. Our knowledge of God is from grace, dependent on God's preceding work.

5. We know God as he gives himself to be known.

a. God in himself can't be different from the God who meets us.

b. Limitations in our knowledge of God. God is an object of knowledge *in se*, and he allows humanity to see that reciprocity in Christ. Emphasis on Trinity.

c. God lowers himself to be known by us in time, acc. to the measure of our own cognition.

Discussion Questions:

1. How do you suppose events like the two World Wars might have affected theology?

2. Read the selections from Karl Barth's *Epistle to the Romans* (see attachment in study notes). How does Barth criticize liberal Protestant theology?

3. Read the selections from Barth's *Church Dogmatics* (see attachment). What is the basis of human knowledge of God?

4. What does Barth think about natural theology and its place in Scripture?