

“Church History: Heroes, Heretics & Holy Wars”

Sunday School Notes

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CLASS 17 – Great Men of Faith of the 18th – 19th Century

Moravians:

Moravia is modern-day Czech Republic. Remember the early Reformer John Hus? His followers were the Hussites, eventually became the Moravians. There was a Moravian Revival of the 18th century whose main figure was **Count Nicholas von Zinzendorf (1700-1760)**.

Zinzendorf was a rich, young Austrian ruler who took in many persecuted Protestants from Germany. He was a faithful Lutheran, but Moravians flocked to his estate. Then he found the original charter of Hussite churches that predated Lutheran churches, so he essentially embraced the Moravian movement. They placed great emphasis on “living in community,” emphasized experience and love over doctrine, and were very evangelistic. Early on they sent out 18 missionaries; over the next century they sent out over 2,000. This started before the modern missions movement – 60 years before William Carey (the “Father of Modern Missions”). Zinzendorf was asked to preach in England by John Wesley. Powerful work of God that is still around in the Moravian church. They came to the New World and established cities like Bethlehem, PA and Salem (Winston Salem, NC).

Richard Allen was born into slavery in Philadelphia in 1760. His master gave him the opportunity to purchase his freedom, so he did and became a brick layer. The Methodist Episcopal church had been officially established in 1784, and was the most anti-slavery and open to having black people, and Allen became a travelling preacher. He ended up at a Methodist church in Philadelphia, but an ugly incident happened in 1787 where some white ushers forced some black men who had been seated outside their usual area, out. So, Richard Allen started the African Methodist Episcopal Church in Philadelphia in 1794. Francis Asbury, who was the major Methodist preacher in America, preached the opening sermon. That seems friendly, but then the white church tried to take over; a court case gave the African Methodists control over their own church. In 1816, the denomination actually started, and Allen became the bishop. The denomination grew greatly after the Civil War, attracting many freed slaves.

Meanwhile back in England:

John Newton (1725 – 1807)

John Newton was the son of a sea captain who was away a lot, but his mother was a Christian who passed on Scripture verses and stories. But she died when he was 7. His stepmother was not a Christian and didn't like him; he fell in with the rough crowd. By 11, he accompanied his dad at sea. A few years later he started working for a slave-trading ship. He was flogged many times for ridiculing his captains, and even ended up being enslaved at one point, but his father had sent people to look for him and they took him home. On the way home but they hit a major storm that made him start reading the New Testament. He believed it and prayed for forgiveness and a new life. He studied and was ordained in the Church of England, pastoring a poor town north of London. He composed hundreds of hymns, the most famous of course being “Amazing Grace.” He wrote

pamphlets against slavery and testified before Parliament; inspiring Wilberforce and others to stop the slave trade. "My memory is nearly gone; but I remember two things: that I am a great sinner, and that Christ is a great Savior."

William Wilberforce (1759 - 1833)

An evangelical Anglican, Wilberforce didn't get serious about his faith until he was 25 years old, right after he had been elected to Parliament. He sought out John Newton's advice to see whether he should get out or not. Newton told him that God needed true Christians in Parliament, and that he could help abolish slavery.

Wilberforce brought a bill to abolish slavery in 1787 but opposition was too much. If you've seen "Amazing Grace" the movie you've got a good idea of Wilberforce's years struggling to get slavery outlawed in England. The prime minister was named William Pitt, a college friend of Wilberforce's, but he was a moderate and wasn't ready to help. But there was a group of Christians dedicated to abolition called the Clapham Sect (who were also into prison reform, helping the poor and sending missionaries out). 20 years later in 1807, the abolitionists got the bill passed that stopped the British slave trade, but it was only slave trafficking that was illegal, not actual slavery. So Wilberforce kept working. Took another 26 years, a month after Wilberforce's death that the House of Commons voted to free the slaves and abolish all slavery. The Emancipation Act passed in 1833.

Robert Raikes lived in late 18th century England where he saw people caught in cycles of poverty. He saw that children never got to attend school because they had to work in factories to help their families. So in 1780, he started offering classes on Sundays to help kids learn to read. The idea caught on, John Wesley loved it and Wesleyans started classes. A man named William Fox started the "Society for the Support and Encouragement of Sunday Schools in the Different Counties of England" in 1785. The Queen at the time, Charlotte, met with Raikes privately and supported it, though the established church and some politicians denounced it.

By 1827, there were 1.5 million children attending Sunday School worldwide, with 160,000 teachers (at first paid, but then volunteer). The schools were started to teach reading, writing and arithmetic, but soon public schooling developed, so Sunday Schools concentrated more on Bible reading. Huge movement in England and America.

Dwight Moody (1837 - 1899) was a teenager in the 1850s in Boston who had only a 5th grade education. His uncle hired him as a shoe salesman on the condition that he attend the Congregational Church. Dwight had been raised a Unitarian, which denied the divinity of Christ and the need for salvation. But his Sunday School teacher, Edward Kimball, (who had said that he had never seen anyone's mind as spiritually dark as Dwight's) taught him and eventually led him to faith in Christ in 1855. After moving to Chicago where he wanted to amass a fortune of \$100,000, it slowly dawned on him that he should live to help the poor rather than living for his own wealth. Dwight started teaching Sunday School and would wander the streets inviting kids to attend. He would get them to come with candy and pony rides. He made strong alliances with business leaders, and urged them to put their wealth into good causes.

In 1871 the Great Chicago Fire burned down his house, his church and the YMCA that he was active in. He felt that the Lord was telling him that preaching the gospel would change the world more than social work. At some point, he resolved to never let a day pass without sharing the gospel with someone. He also started evangelistic campaigns, alternating between Europe and America. He became an international celebrity. His campaigns were said to have been held with over 100

million people, and as many as a million people came to Christ through Moody's ministry. He founded the Moody Bible Institute in Chicago, as well as a boy's and a girl's school.

Charles Haddon Spurgeon (1834 - 1891)

Charles Spurgeon grew up poor (the oldest of 17 children) with his Congregationalist grandparents in a rural area of Essex, England. He became a Christian at a Primitive Methodist church at the age of 16, but he became a Baptist within a month, breaking family tradition. Within 2 years, he was the pastor of a small Baptist church, though he had no university degree or seminary training. It was an area known for drunkenness and rough people, so Spurgeon developed a very direct style of explaining the Scriptures. He became known as the "boy preacher" (though he would eventually become known as the "Prince of Preachers"). Men in the town changed.

Two years later in 1854, before he had turned 20 years old, Spurgeon was asked to speak at the very prestigious New Park Street Chapel in London, but he thought it must have been a mistake. After he spoke to only @80 people, the church invited him to be its pastor, and he stayed there for over 35 years. The building held 1,000 people, but they soon outgrew that. They had to rent Exeter Hall, which held 4,500; but then they outgrew that and had to go to a 12,000 seat music hall, packing it with 10,000 people waiting outside. However, at the first service someone yelled "Fire," there was a panic and 7 people died. But the church continued, and eventually built the almost 6,000 seat Metropolitan Tabernacle. The church had a membership at one time of over 14,000. *The London Times* and *The New York Times* would print his sermons each week.

Though he only lived to 57 yrs. of age, Spurgeon published 140 books in his lifetime, mostly sermons, commentaries and devotionals. He also founded a pastor's college and an orphanage that held 500 children. He was a Calvinistic Baptist, and helped merge the 2 traditions – bringing Calvinism to the lower classes and the Baptist faith to the upper-class churches. But it also made him a target of critics from both camps. Some called him "the pulpit buffoon" because he would act out biblical stories. He replied that, "we have had enough polite preachers." He rejected the sentimentalism and rationalism infecting the church of his day, battling his Baptist brethren who were accepting Darwinian evolution, and criticizing liberalism that denied inerrancy and the resurrection. The "Down Grade Controversy" started when Spurgeon claimed that some of his fellow Baptist ministers were "down grading" the faith – denying the sacrificial atonement, the inspiration of Scripture and justification by faith. He was censured by the denomination for criticizing them.

When he died in 1891, London mourned. 100,000 people lined the streets as a funeral parade went from the Metropolitan Tabernacle to the cemetery.

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