

Church History Overview

Church History Outline - review

The Reformation – closed with expansion and exhaustion

- **Expansion of the church outside Europe**
 - **Evangelization of Asia**
 - Portugal opens Asian ports to trade – financial motivation, not religious
 - **Francis Xavier** commissioned by the RCC to take the gospel to these ports
 - Encounters ancient, strong religions and cultures – Hindu, Muslim, Shinto, Buddhist, Confucian
 - Missions by persuasion and accommodation – lived among the people
 - **Conquest of Central and South America**
 - Spain and Portugal conquer and claim – wipe out Aztecs and Incas
 - Motivated by quest for gold
 - Enslave Indians and forcibly convert to RC
 - **Settlement of North America**
 - Puritans – religious separatists from England who saw Anglicanism as a sellout
 - Fought a war led by Oliver Cromwell to retake England & make it Reformed
 - When they eventually failed, many decided to establish a new Israel in America
 - John Cotton, puritan minister, at departure of a Puritan ship in 1630, quoted 2 Sam 7:10, “Moreover I will appoint a place for my people Israel...”
 - Joined by settlements focused on financial profit
- Ironical: in the same era that the church geographically expands more than ever, back at home...
- **Exhaustion of the church in Europe**
 - Back in Europe – populace exhausted by religious wars b/w Christians
 - Catholics vs Protestants & Protestants vs Protestants
 - Culminated in 30 years’ war – left 1/3 of Germany dead – millions died

The Modern Church Part 2: The Enlightenment (1700-1900)

- Out of exhaustion over religious war... the seeds of Enlightenment philosophy took off
- Review: The Enlightenment an intellectual and philosophical movement in the West...
- ...that relied on human reason rather than revelation as the source of truth and progress
 - roots stretching back to the Renaissance
 - fueled by progress in science, mathematics, and especially philosophy
- **Birthered by Philosophers**
 - **Rene Descartes**
 - A faithful Christian, but...
 - “I think, therefore I am” – the absolute ground of knowledge is not divine revelation external to me – it’s my own reason thinking things through
 - **John Locke**
 - Pioneered the concept of religious tolerance

- **David Hume**
 - Pioneer in empiricism, skepticism and naturalism
 - All of which diminished the authority of divine revelation
- **The greatest of all Enlightenment Philosophers: Immanuel Kant**
 - Who separated all things we claim to “know” into...
 - *phenomena* – things we experience with our senses – can be tested, observed
 - *nomena* – actual things in themselves that exist independent of us
 - God and salvation – these are *nomena* – we can’t “know” them with certainty like we do scientific realities
 - SO, there’s no reason to keep killing each other over religion!
- **These philosophical innovations fueled a push for radical new FREEDOMS**
 - of thought, religion, governance, economic pursuit
 - **Peace of Westphalia** – 1648 Germany – ended 30 years war – allowed Catholics and Lutherans to coexist... and outlawed any political interference from Pope
- **Result: Christianity’s alliance with power was crumbling**
 - That dramatically changed the church’s relationship to the state
- Two revolutions give us 2 examples...
- **American Revolution (1776 – Declaration of Independence)**
 - Many people believe the US was founded as a Christian nation
 - That’s actually false and the exact opposite of the truth
 - **US was intentionally founded on the new idea of religious freedom**
 - no religion would control gov’t; gov’t wouldn’t control any religion
 - we forget how RADICAL that concept was 300 yrs ago!!
 - One group resisted... the Puritans of New England!
 - Remember: goal to establish a new Israel – both spiritual and political
 - Church and state combined – failure to attend church brought civil punishment
 - But they were outnumbered by secular colonists and lost their charter in 1684
 - Instead, America became a land of **denominations** – another new idea
 - opposite = sectarianism – the view of each group during the reformation
 - “We alone claim Christ’s authority – all others are heretics who should die”
 - denominationalism is *inclusive*, not *exclusive*
 - “we are but one small group within Christ’s church”
 - But in reality, even when you added all these denominations together... the size of Christianity by the time of the American Revolution was small
 - Only 5-10% of the American people were church members
 - Now be clear: US was founded on a Judeo/Christian ethic
 - And some of the founders were practicing Christians
 - But many were Deists
 - believed in a supreme watchmaker God – wound up the Universe and then took off – denied miracles and incarnation
 - popularized by Voltaire in France
 - All they really cared about was moral duty and just laws
 - So Christianity was present in the founding of the US... but not given any political authority

- **French Revolution (1789 – storming of the Bastille) – church fared far worse**
 - Because of the long history of Roman Catholic alliance with the monarchs of France... the church was seen as the enemy of revolution
 - The French Revolution was far more bloody and anti-Christian than the one in the US
 - At its peak, it erected a Goddess of Reason in Notre Dame – made Reason the official religion of the French Republic
 - Their revolution fell on hard times with the return of an emperor – Napoleon
 - They did, however, become a modern Republic
 - But the damage done to the Church's influence in the country was permanent
 - The RCC went into fortress mode – trying to protect itself
 - And France led the way into a new view of the world called **SECULARISM**
 - Goes beyond the early philosophers of the enlightenment – all religious claims are either denied or ignored – all that matters is this life
 - Expressed by Ben Franklin, "As to Jesus of Nazareth... I have some doubts as to His divinity, though it is a question I do not dogmatize upon, having never studied it, and think it needless to busy myself with it now."

Due to the enlightenment and secularism, the Western World changed radically
How would the church respond? Two basic responses... EMBRACE it or FIGHT it

EMBRACE it – birth of liberal Christianity

- If reason trumps revelation – then all factual claims of revelation must be tested by reason
- Beliefs of Christianity are tested... and most rejected
 - Miracles, resurrection, angels... science doesn't observe any of that, so we reject it
 - Trinity... defies the laws of math – reject that
- The Bible itself must be tested by reason... what we call Higher Criticism of the Bible
 - What is most logical explanation for books of the Bible based just on secular history?
 - Most traditional, religious claims of authorship and authority were rejected
- So if Christianity is stripped of core beliefs and books, what's left? FEELINGS & BEHAVIOR
 - Liberal Christianity at its core = Christianity reduced to religious feelings and behavior
 - Now let's be clear: feelings and behavior ARE IMPORTANT to Christianity!
 - But in liberal Christianity... that's all that matters
- Father of liberal Christianity = Friedrich Schleiermacher, born 1768 in Germany
 - Enlightenment philosophy and scientific progress entirely accepted
 - When Charles Darwin released *Origin of Species* in 1859 evolutionary theory embraced
 - Goal is to make Christianity acceptable to the modern thinking man
- Liberal Christianity proved very popular throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries
 - Won over most high-church denominations
 - Won over most of what was left of Christianity in Europe
 - Won over most seminaries
- But not all Christians embraced it...

RESIST it

- **The Pietist movement – born in Germany and France**
 - Argued for a return to an authentic practice of Christianity that touches the heart and leads to missions and evangelism
 - Blaise Pascal, French Roman Catholic born 1623 became leading defender of pietism
 - Count von Zinzendorf, born 1700, led the Moravians brethren to launch the first large scale Protestant missionary effort in history
- **The Methodist Movement – begins in England in the early 1700's**
 - Organizer and leader: John Wesley
 - Greatest hymn writer: Charles Wesley
 - Greatest preacher: George Whitfield
 - Movement that began in the Anglican Church and stayed within as long as possible
 - But the Anglican church was very much a high church – stately, formal
 - Full of high-class people who were there b/c of social expectations, not true religious belief
 - Wesley's life was transformed on a voyage to America when he encountered Moravian Pietists – shocked at their assurance of salvation and confidence in Christ
 - Their religion was so authentic and their passion for the lost so convicting
 - Back in England, Whitfield invited Wesley to preach open air to coal-miners
 - That just wasn't done back then – preaching is to happen in church only
 - But Wesley sees all that Whitfield is accomplishing – so he joins in
 - Model for all future traveling, itinerant preachers – would write sermons on horseback!
 - The Methodist Movement is born
 - a return to a *personal practice of Christianity* for every person, even the poor
 - **Why called Methodist? B/c Wesley was a great organizer!**
 - In every town left behind fellowship groups of truly converted Christians who prayed, studied the Bible, and held one another accountable, gave towards missions and poverty relief
 - Birth of what we think of as small groups!
 - Still officially within the Anglican Church... but eventually broke off to form own denomination

- **The First Great Awakening – began in colonial America about the same time**
 - Multiple spiritual revivals at churches throughout the colonies
 - Leading theologian: Jonathan Edwards, born 1703
 - Preached “Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God”
 - Really complex, long sermon! Actually not emotional – highly logical
 - But led to wide scale conversions
 - Awakening fanned into flame when Whitfield showed up to preach
 - Key idea in this Awakening – need for a *personal* conversion to God
 - Not enough to be “born Christian” – one must recognize sin, repent, believe, be regenerated
 - We call this the *voluntary* model of the Christian church
 - You are not a Christian b/c you were born into a country with a state church
 - You are a Christian only if someone persuades you to trust in Jesus
 - We take that for granted – our whole church built on that assumption!
 - But that was very new!!
 - New tool for conversions = REVIVALS
 - big events with big sermons that drew people from many churches and denominations
 - hence, the need for true religious freedom in America so that people could be free to gather, worship, be taught, and believe
 - The Methodist Movement and 1st Great Awakening end up launching a tidal wave Christian work in missions and social justice...
- **Protestant Missions and Social Action in England**
 - William Carey – pioneer to the nations
 - India – builds organization that inspires thousands more to go
 - Adonirum Judson (Burma), Hudson Taylor (China), David Livingstone (China)
 - This missionary movement tapped laypeople instead of just professionals
 - Funding relied on voluntary groups of supporters instead of state churches
 - Social Action – Christians lead effort to change social structures to care for the vulnerable, the working poor, orphans... and above all slaves
 - Effort against English slave trade led by sincere Christian William Willberforce
 - Demonstrated that Christianity is not *merely* a private affair nor is it *merely* evangelistic
 - While evangelism and missions are crucially important, so is fighting injustices like slavery
 - Succeeds in getting slavery outlawed in British Empire in 1833
 - Sadly, it would take a lot longer and a lot more blood in America
 - The seeds of the Civil War and emancipation were planted in America by Christian revivals of the...

- **The Second Great Awakening in America – around 1800**
 - First Great Awakening was in colonial America – focused on East Coast
 - Second Great Awakening focused on new lands West of Appalachians
 - Rugged, wild land being claimed by wild, rugged men
 - Second Great Awakening took on that flavor
 - led by men like Charles Finney – father of modern revivalism
 - less theologically grounded than first – more emotional
 - not in church buildings... they weren't around yet - in open tents
 - drew thousands from far away forests and fields
 - camped at tent revivals for days – emotional affairs focused on conversion
 - When it had run its course... THIS is what actually led to America being called a Christian nation
 - But slavery was a dark blot on that claim!
 - And it was revivalists like Finney that pointed that out – fanned flame of antislavery in the north
 - So as America spread West: slaves states were added in the south and free states in the north... and the Civil War became inevitable
- **The Roman Catholic Opposition to the Enlightenment**
 - Very different: Methodists and Great Awakenings turned outward to evangelize
 - RCC turned inward to build a fortress
 - Codified at the first Vatican council - 1869
 - Proclamation of Papal Infallibility – when Pope speaks from chair – inerrant
 - All opponents anathematized – Roman Catholicism will stay unchanged & unchanging

That brings us up to the dawn of a new era that began in the early 1900's

The Postmodern Church (1900...)

The era we live in today did not begin with a philosopher's pen... it began with war

- WW1, WW2, holocaust, nuclear weapons, a cold war...
 - you let science off the leash of religious morality... this is what you get
- The hope of scientific progress crashed and burned spectacularly!
 - b/c these wars weren't over religion – they were over philosophical ideas
 - wars b/w ideologies
 - facism – absolute power in all spheres of life in the hands of a single party dictator
 - who puts nation and race above the rights of the individual
 - communism – state ownership of all property and control of all economic activity
 - where, in theory, all wealth is shared equally
 - individualism – where individuals possess inalienable rights and government exists by the will and for the service of the people... at least in theory!
- These ideologies waged war with new and terrifying weapons unleashed by scientific progress
 - machine guns, tanks, bombers, napalm, nuclear weapons
 - they used scientific discoveries like genetics to justify atrocities like genocide
- The scale of death and destruction shocked the world
- Gave birth to a new philosophy that rejected all ideologies and absolutes...

Postmodernism

- Anything that claims absolute authority, whether a religion or ideology, is rejected
- So how do we know what's true?... EXPERIENCE
- And since each person's experience of life is unique, no one person can claim to have *the* truth compared to all other truth
- All truths are equally valid so long as they don't infringe on the truths of others
- This is *the* dominant cultural philosophy all of us have been raised in – it's assumed true by the vast majority of the Western World

So how would the church respond to the death of Modernity and rise of Postmodernity?

- **Theological renewal and numerical decline in Europe**
 - o In Germany around the time of WW2... Karl Barth
 - most significant theologian in 20th Century
 - back to devotion to Christ – still not a return to inerrancy of the Bible
 - o Similar voices in Bonhoeffer and CS Lewis
 - o But little lasting influence on the majority of Europe
 - Europe becomes post-Christian – Protestants in decline
 - o The exception: Roman Catholicism!
 - 2nd Vatican Council convened 1959
 - Extended salvation to protestants; changed liturgy to common languages!
 - Gave birth to a new, renewed RCC
- **Rise of Evangelicalism in the US**
 - o Seeds of Evangelicalism:
 - Bible conference movements in the late 1800's and early 1900's – focus on studying the Bible and preparing for the next life with Christ
 - Charismatic movement – started with an AA preacher named William Seymour in LA – grew rapidly and made significant inroads in almost every denomination and throughout the world
 - Fundamentalism – a return to fundamental doctrines of Christianity – usually led to a break from established denominations and seminaries
 - o New seminaries like DTS were planted; new denominations like Bible Churches
 - We are a denomination despite our “non-denominational” tag!
 - o Evangelicalism really took off after WW2 with Billy Graham's crusades
 - Led tens of thousands of people into the faith
 - o Eventually empowered the rise of the Religious Right
 - A response to liberal politics of the 60's and 70's
 - Sought to unify evangelicals to influence politics
 - We're still in the middle of that – for both good and ill!
 - o Independent Megachurches
 - As people threw off their denominational ties, they had freedom to choose any church they like
 - This led to competition in the religious marketplace – churches with more elaborate programs, exciting music, engaging sermons grew into behemoths at the same time that most traditional churches were in decline
 - This is what we are! A megachurch is 2000+ in weekly attendance – we're ~5k!

- Megachurches have an identity and influence independent of any denomination
- **Movement of the Church to the 3rd World**
 - Center of authentic Christianity moving out of the West
 - Already departed Europe
 - Leaving the US – rise of the “nones”
 - Incredible growth of Christianity in C & S America, Africa, and Asia
 - These churches are bringing new energy, mission, and creativity to how church is practiced

The church is alive and at work in the Postmodern era

And in fact, postmodernity has actually helped the church in a lot of ways!

- Helped us learn to value the experiences of others
- History is not one-dimensional – it’s full of many different stories and traditions
- Our way of doing church is not the one right way
 - it’s just a way that’s developed from our own unique history and experiences
- Therefore, there’s a lot we can learn from other people’s experience of God and church
 - We can learn a lot from Eastern Orthodoxy, Roman Catholicism, the Charismatic Movement, the Latino church, the African church...
 - And the African American church – and that’s the one I want to give special attention to tonight
 - B/c almost all of the movements in America I covered were movements in the WHITE church in America – Edwards, Wesley, Finney, Graham... all white!
- There was a-whole-nother stream of Christianity flowing in America in the AA church
- Fortunately, Joshua Lockett has studied the AA church’s history in great detail...

Witness and Worldview 3 – Experience

A “**worldview**” is a comprehensive conception or image of the universe and of humanity's relation to it. A person's worldview represents his or her most fundamental beliefs and assumptions about life.

The Experience Worldview – ultimate truth is found in my own experiences

Ideas for witness from the postmodern church

1. Listen to their story

To the postmodern mind, one's own life story determines one's own truth. Therefore, the most important thing you can learn about a person is his or her own story. So, your goal is not to be fascinating; it's to BE FASCINATED with the person you're speaking with. Listen carefully to their story. Ask questions. If they end up speaking 75% of the time, you're doing well!

2. Share your story

Again, if one's own story determines one's own truth, then you need to be ready to share your personal story and how it led you to trust in Jesus. Most people find it helpful to build their story (their “testimony”) around three questions: (1) what was life like before you knew Jesus? (2) how did you come to know Jesus? (3) how has life changed now that you know Jesus?

This is not a straightjacket, though! Feel free to shape your story in whatever way works best for you. Remember to keep it AUTHENTIC! Postmoderns can smell a sales pitch a mile away. Your goal is not to “sell” the gospel; God is the one who leads a person to faith. Your goal is to truthfully and graciously share what Jesus has done in your life.

Table discussion: How exactly did you get to know Jesus?

3. Invite them to experience

A postmodern person will be more affected by experiencing something than by simply hearing about something. So find ways to invite this friend to experience the life of faith with you even though they don't yet believe. Invite them to share in your Christian community. Invite them to serve the vulnerable with you. Invite them to worship with you. Don't wait for a "perfect" moment to invite them in. Remember, postmoderns care deeply about authenticity. Therefore, our messes can be just as winning as our victories! The more they can see and be part of your actual, authentic community of faith, the more likely they are to be interested in Jesus. Table discussion: Practically speaking, what could you invite a non-Christian to do with you that would help them experience genuine community in Jesus?

4. Prove your sincerity through sacrificial good deeds

Postmoderns are HIGHLY SKEPTICAL of anything that smacks of advertising. To many of them, the church is just another salesman trying to make a buck. Unfortunately, there's plenty of pastors' whose behavior enforces that belief!

You must EARN the right to share the gospel – you do that through doing good deeds.

So whereas history, science, and philosophy are the tools of apologetics to the Reason worldview; good deeds in the community is the tool of apologetics to the Experience worldview.

With a postmodern person, you don't get to pick b/w evangelism and community service – you must do both!