# Diarmaid MacCulloch's Christianity: The First Three Thousand Years

A Study Guide by Jeannie Babb



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#### How to Use this Study Guide

For each chapter of Diarmaid MacCulloch's *Christianity: The First Three Thousand Years*, this guide offers a short introductory summary followed by a list of some key points and some suggested exercises for reflection. Read the summary and key points prior to reading the chapter for a preview of what to anticipate in the book, or read it afterward for a review of some major points in the chapter. It is impossible in this slim guide even to hit all the highlights, but the hope is to help readers select some of the more important information that should be retained.

The Reflection section provides questions for discussion, topics to investigate for deeper understanding, and suggestions for making the reading relevant to your own life. Many of these topics are appropriate for small group discussion or essays.

Page numbers cited in the Study Guide are taken from 2010 Viking Penguin hardcover edition (USA).

# How to Read Christianity: The First Three Thousand Years

Read for sweep rather trying to memorize names and dates, which are fairly easy to retrieve when you need them. It is more important to grasp the direction and force of historical movement. Those who struggle with MacCulloch's writing style may find it helpful to remember that *Christianity: The First Three Thousand Years* is not written as a traditional text book. Rather, the author uses a reminiscent narrative style that sometimes connects topically or geographically rather than chronologically, so that the flow is more web-like than linear. In an attempt to offer both panoramic views and memorable details, the author zooms in and out, and draws connections to different points in history – including people or periods which have not yet been covered in the text. It can be unsettling to encounter a seemingly parenthetical note about an unfamiliar topic, and you may wonder whether you missed something.

Readers who lack a strong background in world history or Christian history may struggle with the author's tendency to refer to people and incidents without fully explaining them. At times he makes literary or historical references without noting those. Many readers benefit from using a search engine as they read. Taking a few seconds to grasp the author's meaning before moving to the next paragraph will prevent confusion down the line.

If you find that you struggle with MacCulloch's narrative style, consider watching some of his BBC documentaries on Christian history. Hearing his voice and learning the cadence of his speech patterns may make the reading easier, and the topics can only help your grasp of Christian history.

Critics of MacCulloch's book contend that it contains a lot of trivial information. Certainly he includes some obscure details among the major developments every student of history needs to know. This emphasis on details reveals the author's love for turning points in history. Note how often he refers to an "accident of history" which changed the direction of a nation or a Church, and what might have been different had the story taken just a slight different turn. MacCulloch is not merely using these details to flavor the text; they support his narrative of the Church as a dynamic organism changing history and being changed by it.

### Introduction

Students are often tempted to skip over the introduction and dig into the body of a text; however, the introduction provides important clues about the lens through which we are about to peer. Here the author steps back to examine his own purpose, bias, and starting point. MacCulloch reveals himself to the reader as a preacher's child and grandchild, affectionate toward Christianity although he strongly implies he has had a crisis of faith. He calls himself not a Christian but "a candid friend of Christianity" (11).

The introduction also sets the stage for the founding of Christianity, within both Greece and Israel. Greece and Israel shared a sense of unique privilege and destiny. The cultures differed in their understanding of divinity. While Israel trusted in an intensely passionate and personal deity, Greece asserted that a perfect creator must be devoid of emotion and unable to be swayed. Christianity attempts to reconcile these two views of God through the person of Christ.

- Christianity is, at root, a personality cult based on the story of a person believed to be the Christ.
- Conversion and repentance are key concepts in the Christian vocabulary.
- Christianity has usually been intolerant toward other faiths, except sometimes Judaism.
- The Bible speaks with many voices and genres, including criticism of church or temple tradition (prophecy).
- The history of Christianity diverged into three different language families:
  - Those who spoke Latin
  - o Those who spoke Greek
  - Those who spoke Oriental languages
- These language differences affected the development of theology, especially as the three groups sought to discuss the divine and human natures of Christ
- Christianity is more uniform and unified now that at any point in history, even among these three groups and all the divisions in each of them.
- Christianity has displayed an amazing ability to mutate (as have all the world faiths). Many Christians have trouble admitting this and prefer to believe it is unchanged from the beginning.

- 1. The subtitle "The First Three Thousand Years" invites readers to consider Christianity's future, and suggests that Christianity did not start with the birth of Jesus. How does that shift affect your approach to this text?
- 2. MacCulloch says modern historians have a moral task: To promote sanity by curbing the rhetoric of fanaticism. He says bad history (that is, history oversimplified) is a root cause of fanaticism. Consider the relationship between history and fanaticism, in modern or historical examples you know. What might be the moral task of *students* of history?
- 3. In this introduction, the author reflects on Christianity's claim to truth, noting, "the *story* of Christianity is undeniably true, in that it is part of human history" (11). He states his conviction that Shakespeare's *Hamlet* is true, even though it never happened. How does this idea of what is true inform your study of Christian history, and your faith?

# Chapter 1 Greece and Rome (c. 1000 BCE-100 CE)

This chapter establishes the Graeco-Roman context of Christianity. Although many people think of early Christianity in a more Jewish context, the religion is also firmly rooted in Greek language and philosophy. Rome conquered Greece militarily, but Greek language and philosophy dominated the culture during the emergence of Christianity. Christians therefore inherited Graeco-Roman culture and thought processes, which continue to inform Christian ethics and our interpretation of the Christian narrative and history.

- Logos is a Greek word. The Gospel of John also relies heavily on the Greek word Christ, preferring it over the Hebrew Messiah.
- The philosopher Socrates contributed to Graeco-Roman culture (and therefore to Christianity) the idea that what we see in this life are only shadows and echoes of true forms.
- Plato provided a radical new concept of God later adopted and adapted by Christianity, when he asserted that the ultimate God must be good and must be one, perfect, separate from creation, and unchanging.
- While Plato left us dialogues on the ethics of deity, Aristotle left us files and lecture notes classifying and categorizing ideas and practices.
- Many Christian debates arise from taking a Platonic or Aristotelian perspective. Indeed, it is almost impossible to talk about Christianity without resorting to Platonic or Aristotelian constructs.

- 1. Logos is typically translated "word," though the connotation of the Greek word is much broader, often referring to the whole act of speech or intent behind it. In the Gospel of John, the Logos is named as a person, Jesus Christ. John uses this very Greek thought, conveyed in Greek language, to look back at the book of Genesis of the Hebrew Scriptures, which portrays creation as an act of language. Read John 1:1-15. Consider the complete picture John paints of Jesus. What does John gain by portraying Jesus as Logos as well as creator, God, life-giver, light, etc.?
- 2. Are you more like Plato (relying on intuition, spirituality and mysticism) or Artistotle (preferring science, order, logic, and analysis)? Arthur Herman, author of *The Cave and the Light*, offers this helpful quiz: <a href="http://www.biographile.com/the-personality-divide-are-you-more-like-plato-or-aristotle/25239/">http://www.biographile.com/the-personality-divide-are-you-more-like-plato-or-aristotle/25239/</a>
- 3. *Ekklesia* (translated 'church' in the New Testament) is borrowed from Greek political vocabulary. In the *polis*, the *ekklesia* was an assembly of citizens who made decisions. While *polis* was the local form of *Hellas* (both signifying the culture as well as the political body), *ekklesia* in the New Testament and in church tradition could both expand and contract; that is, either a local congregation, or a group of congregations, or the entire Christian population might be called the *ekklesia*. How is the English word "church" used today? How have various traditions sought to expand or more clearly define the word?

# **Chapter 2** Israel (c. 1000 BCE – 100 CE)

This chapter provides the Jewish context in which Christianity took root, including a historical past that looks quite different from the simple linear heritage provided in the Genesis and Exodus accounts. The biblical accounts of the patriarchs were mostly written a thousand years later than the setting of the stories. They were written and compiled to give a sense of purpose and identity to a group that likely came together over time rather than descending cohesively from a single family as depicted in the narrative. The Hebrew sense of identity (for they were not called Jews until late, after the Judean place name) was centered more on religion than bloodlines or ethnicity, but sought commonality through these stories.

- Names for the region include Israel, Palestine, the Promised Land, and the Holy Land.
- The stories of the Patriarchs are set around 1800 BCE, but seem to have been written *after* the writings of Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Hosea in the eighth and seventh centuries.
- Five scrolls known as the Pentateuch (Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy) share the theme of Israel's journey from Egypt into the Promised Land.
- The thousand years between King David and Jesus Christ are so important to Christianity, MacCulloch labels them "the first millennium of Christian history," for these years established the notions of God's chosen one, the Temple in Jerusalem, Yahweh as one supreme God, and "the foreordained salvation of the Jewish people" (56).
- During the eighth century, the national cult was reformed by two groups of people: prophets who delivered impassioned speeches and the writers/editors of the Deuteronomic party who cleverly wove together new and old stories and laws.
- In Hebrew scripture, prophets are not fortunetellers; they are the mouthpieces of Yahweh who interpret the will of God, typically indicting the entire society rather than attacking individuals.
- The Deuteronomic code emphasizes monotheistic worship of Yahweh, editing old stories to recast Abraham as the first of their party and first to receive the covenant of circumcision and set the Ten Commandments as the centerpiece for the set of laws.
- Many beliefs embraced by Christians came into Judaism from other cultures during this millennium, including resurrection and afterlife, and the concept of the human soul.

- 1. The success of the Deuteronomic reform program relied on a Greek-influenced shift toward focusing religious identity on the contents of a text. Consider how this shift in Jewish identity set the stage for Christianity.
- 2. Although the Deuteronomic party reworked their own sacred literature rigorously (MacCulloch imagines many collaborators working across several decades), they maintained older story threads and details that did not fit current religious practice. What does the preservation of this "conflicting" material say about their attitude toward the literature, toward the past, and toward contradiction?

# Chapter 3 A Crucified Messiah (4 BCE – 100 CE)

In a relatively short period, Christianity emerged as a sect of Judaism, spread to non-Jews (especially gentile "God-fearers" who worshiped at the Jewish temple), and then separated from Judaism. Although Christianity arose within a rich and complex historical context, it was characterized by and catalyzed by a number of precedents, including the gospels as a new genre of literature and the institution of new rituals celebrating the death and resurrection of Jesus. By the end of the first century, Christianity had split from Judaism and even rejected the Jewish Christians now exiled from Jerusalem.

- Although drawn from the Jewish Passover meal, the Eucharist is unlike anything in previous tradition. It quickly became a central feature of Christian worship. It includes a recitation of the words of Jesus and a re-enactment of his last meal with his followers before his death. It links the crucified messiah to those who took the bread and wine.
- Paul, attributed author of most of the New Testament letters, took Christianity in a new direction, focusing on baptism rather than Judaism as the unifying factor.
- John and his followers developed the Gospel in a similar direction, rejecting Judaism to develop Christology through metaphor and majestic discourse.
- The Jewish Christian church fled Jerusalem during the Jewish revolt of 66 CE, and became separate from the gentile Christian community. These "Ebionites" were later disowned by gentile Christians because they did not accept the gentile Christian misreading of Hebrew scripture requiring a virgin birth for Jesus. Meanwhile, Christianity had moved further from Judaism by worshiping Jesus (another precedent) and recognizing Sunday as their principal feast day rather than the Sabbath.
- Mark, Matthew, and Luke are known as the "Synoptic Gospels" because they "see together" from different perspectives (like a synopsis).
- Mark is widely considered the earliest gospel. Matthew and Luke were written using Mark and separate material exclusive to Matthew or Luke. All three were written about fifty years after the death of Jesus.

# **For Reflection Question**

- 1. The term "Christian" was coined in Antioch of Syria, but has a Latin word form, and is based on *Christos*, a Greek translation of the Jewish *Messiah*. Consider how the etymology of the word reflects the history and transition of the movement itself.
- **2.** Find more examples in the Synoptic Gospels of these speech patterns or quirks of Jesus:
  - **a.** Antithetic parallelism Setting one proposition against an opposed proposition, with stress on the second (c.f. Mark 10:27)
  - **b.** Asserting authority by saying "Amen!" before making a pronouncement (c.f. Matt 5:18)
  - **c.** Irony and indirectness, such as calling himself "the Son of Man" which both pointed back to Daniel's apocryphal "one like a son of man" and also suggested "people like us"
  - **d.** Speaking in parables, which do not appear as a literary form in later Jewish writings until after the death of Jesus
  - e. An emphasis (especially in the parables) on a coming kingdom that would transform the world and upset hierarchies

# Chapter 4 Boundaries Defined (50 CE – 300)

During these two and a half centuries, the church was shaped by many forces and characters seeking to influence and unify a movement that was at first held together only by a belief that Jesus was the Christ (which meant different things to different groups) and early ritual practices such as the Eucharist. Paul and his followers, who often wrote in his name, were the initial shapers of the church, followed by those we loosely called Gnostics. The three forces that unified the church as we know it today are canon, creed, and Catholicism. Once the canon was established, the question of how to interpret the writings emerged.

- The early church set a precedent of not radically challenging social distinctions (e.g., class and slavery), initially because they expected the imminent return of Christ to change the world.
- "Gnostics" did not exist as a sect of Christianity like a denomination; this is a seventeenth-century designation.
- The influence of Gnostic thought was widespread, lasted for centuries, and permanently altered Christian theology.
- Discovery of Coptic texts in Nag Hammadi reveals that Gnostic Christianity was a dialogue between Judaism and dualism, and was influenced by both eastern religion and Greek ideas.
  - Gnosticism was characterized by:
  - o Distrust of the Jewish creation account, especially related to the problem of evil.
  - Rejection of Jesus as God taking flesh, leading to a rejection of a literal, fleshly crucifixion and bodily resurrection; Christ only seemed to die and rise (Docetism).
  - Opposition to martyrdom so esteemed by the rest of the church, since to Gnosticism the body was not worth sacrificing.

- 1. Paul's writings show more interest in who Jesus was than in what Jesus said. In what ways does the church today emphasize one of those interests over the other? Which seems preferable? Does your own life seem more influenced by a belief in who Christ is, or by what Jesus said?
- 2. Christianity gave women a newly active role, then suppressed their official participation as the movement became an institution. The "new prophecy" of Montanism again offered women freedom and leadership, and was quickly tamped down by the new authority structure of presbyters and bishops. Some have called this a Priscilla effect, observing that women's leadership is welcomed in the messy excitement of revival, but suppressed by authority structure as movements solidify into bureaucracies. What are your thoughts?
- 3. Origen introduced allegorical reading to Christianity, by reading Christian texts the way Alexandrian philosophers read Homer. Do you look for layers of meaning in a text?

# Chapter 5 The Prince: Ally or Enemy (100-300)

Hostility between the early church and the Roman Empire was exacerbated more by Christian secrecy than by preaching in the streets. Early Christians withdrew from public life to avoid participating in cultic practices, avoided public bath houses, and refused to fight in the army. Still, persecution was mostly local and sporadic, only becoming widespread and long-lasting under Emperor Diocletian.

- Most early Christians regarded military service as antithetical to Christianity, since baptism was
  an initiation into a type of army. In fact, the word "pagan" as applied to non-Christians may
  come from Roman military slang for non-combatants.
- The prophet Mani rose to popularity in the third century, combining Buddhism and Hinduism with Catholic and gnostic Christianity. The Manichaean cult resulting from these influences focused on explaining the world's suffering as a struggle between good and evil, with Jesus as judge, teacher and healer who speaks in paradox.
- Diocletian persecuted and burned Manichaees even before he started persecuting other Christians.
- Centralized, systematic persecution of Christians beginning in 250 resulted in division in the church when it was over, with some rallying around bishops who supported forgiveness of the "lapsed," others denying forgiveness to those who obeyed the edict to sacrifice to the state cult, and others simply arguing that forgiveness could only be offered by bishops.
- In 303, Emperor Diocletian launched the most vicious persecution of Christians yet, attacking clergy, church members, buildings, and sacred texts. As many Christians were martyred in this persecution as in all previous attacks combined.
- In the East, Syriac Christianity continued to thrive, and had never severed ties with Judaism.
- Syriac Christians pioneered church music, hymnody and chant. Even some of the polemic writings of Ephrem are set to meter.
- Christianity became the official religion of Armenia at the turn of the 4<sup>th</sup> century, about a decade before Rome launched western Christendom by edict of Constantine.

- 1. Read "The Passion of Saints Perpetua and Felicity," found online or in most libraries. (An excellent new translation is found in *Perpetua's Passions: Multidisciplinary Approaches to the Passio Perpetuae et Felicitatis*, edited by Jan N. Bremmer and Marco Formisano, translated by Josh Farrell and Craig Williams, 14-23. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012.) This text tells the story of Perpetua's martyrdom twice: once as she sees it in a dream before her final trial, and once as told by an editor after her death. What are the differences between the two stories? Can you find traces of the early struggle between Montanism and Catholic Christianity in the two versions?
- 2. MacCulloch describes an ancient Christian church preserved in Dura Europa (p. 179). Describe one of your favorite worship spaces and contrast the two.

# Chapter 6 The Imperial Church (300-451)

The Emperor Constantine, encouraged by a smashing military victory he attributed to the Christian Chi Rho symbol on his troops' shields, made it illegal to persecute Christians in 312. With Christian safety in the Roman Empire assured, the Church spend the next 150 years focused on matters of doctrine; that is, which version of Christianity should have the state's protection?

- Churches began to be housed in buildings built for this purpose. The *basilica* was designed to draw one west-to-east ever closer to the altar, Eucharist, and bishop.
- Monasticism emerged as an alternate expression of Christianity, emphasizing spiritual transcendence in contrast to the earthly splendor reflected in the architecture and fashions of the church.
- Monastics arose as early Christian celebrities, with their reputations depending on adopting severely austere lifestyles or engaging in extraordinary practices like living for years atop a pillar.
- While Antony and Simeon were hermits, Basil the Great discouraged a solitary lifestyle because it conflicted with the law of love. Basil wrote some of the first rules for monastic life.
- Constantine borrowed from North Africa the practice of submitting church-wide disputes to councils of bishops. He called councils to settle questions about who had legitimate authority to forgive (the Donatist schism), the nature of Jesus (especially Arianism), and the nature of the Trinity. These early meetings set the precedent for resolving problems via councils.
- Constantine's successors continued to be deeply involved in the affairs of the church.
- Arian Christianity, effectively erased from the imperial Church by the councils, continued to flourish across the northern frontier among the Goths and the Vandals.
- The Council of Chalcedon in 451 declared that Christ was "consubstantial with the Father as regards his divinity, and the same consubstantial with us as regards his humanity," keeping the two natures distinct while taking care to mention the *Theotokos*.

- 1. MacCulloch writes, "All Christian monasticism is an implied criticism of the Church's decision to become a large-scale and inclusive organization" (201). Discuss.
- 2. Contrast the Alexandrian and Antiochene approaches to theology. Try to tease out remnants of each in current faith traditions.
- 3. Why did Nicene enthusiasts consider devotion to Mary a safeguard against Arianism?
- 4. Episcopal priest and architect John Runkle says, "Architecture always wins; you cannot fight the space." Consider how architecture and furniture shape worship in your own group and individual experiences.

# Chapter 7 Defying Chalcedon: Asia and Africa (451-622)

Miaphysites and Dyophysites (Nestorians) were the two groups disenfranchised by the Council of Chalcedon. The Miaphysite headquarters was in the still-powerful city of Alexandria, Egypt. The Egyptian bishops had refused to sign the Definition at Chalcedon, arguing that they would be killed for it when they returned home. History supported this assumption, since several priest had recently been slaughtered for compromising on the *mia physis* (one nature). In the 540s, Christianity spread as far as today's Sudan, Nigeria and Darfur, backed by Theodora the wife of Emperor Justinian, who was promoting the Miaphysite faction. Theodora also supported a Syrian initiative to propagate Miaphysite clergy, out of which emerged the Syrian Orthodox Church. Another great Miaphysite center developed in Ethiopia, which had episcopal connections to the church in Alexandria and linguistic, historical, and missional connections to the Semitic world.

- Coptic Christianity already used a distinct language and liturgy, and had its own monastic heroes; disagreement with Chalcedon gave Coptic Christians motivation to dig deeper into their own heritage and further separate from the Catholic Church.
- Emperor Zeno tried to bring the Syrian Miaphysites back into the fold by promoting the cult of Simeon Stylites and constructing a magnificent church around his pillar.
- East Syrian Christianity became increasingly devoted to the Dyophysite (Nestorian) cause.
- Nestorian Christianity spread east as far as the China Sea and the Indian Ocean.
- Christians in India revered the apostle Thomas as their missionary. They settled into lifestyles and alliances with their Hindu neighbors, but maintained ties with the Church in the West until Catholic armies mostly destroyed their way of life and history in the sixteenth century.
- The Church in the East revered the Alexandrian theologian Origen, and adopted from him the belief that in the end, all will be saved.
- While the Miaphysites translated texts into diverse languages, the Nestorian Church clung to Syriac. Having a single language gave the Church some cohesiveness, but also meant Dyophysite/Nestorian Christians were always minorities using a foreign lingua franca.
- While the Miaphysites captured royal patronage in Ethiopia, Nubia and Armenia, the Church of the East did not find such an allegiance

- 1. Which monastics appeal most to you?
- 2. Consider the effect of language on the growth and estrangement of various branches of Christianity. What languages do Christians speak in your area, and how are they are connected?

# Chapter 8 Islam: The Great Realignment (622-1500)

Muhammad was influenced by Judaism, Christianity and Arabic religions. He synthesized and distilled these faiths, enhanced by personal revelations, to create a new one. From its very roots, Islam was both militant and poetic. In Arabia, Muslims sought to eradicate Christianity, despite earlier commitments to tolerate all "people of the book" and despite a general toleration elsewhere of both Christians and Jews. Meanwhile in China, Christian mission was successful during certain periods, depending on the current ruling powers. Christianity was facing extinction in Africa, with the Mamluks taking over Egypt. The Ethiopian Coptic Church survived, though isolated and developing its own canon and traditions. It retained ties with the Catholic Church through the episcopacy, since Ethiopia had no native bishops.

- Christians remarked on Islam in terms and manners reserved for sects of Christianity they considered heretical, not the way they wrote about Zoroastrianism or Roman cults.
- Some Muslim rulers suppressed Christianity. Others honored Christian priests and supported the monasteries financially. The Qur'an itself is contradictory in its treatment of monasteries.
- Miaphysites and Dyophysites often experienced less grief under Islamic rule than they had under the imperial Church.
- A black limestone stele discovered by a Jesuit mission in the 1620s memorializes the protections of Christians in China.
- Dyophysite Christians who evangelized China used language and imagery from Taoism, which emphasized original goodness in human nature. They also incorporated elements of Buddhism that were familiar to their converts.
- For two centuries, many of the Mongol rulers (including Genghis Khan and Kublai Khan) were Dyophysite Christians or were married to Christian Kerait princesses.
- Christianity in China lacked indigenous support and was later all but wiped out by the Ming Dynasty.

- 1. In what ways does the role of the Qur'an in Islam parallel the role of the incarnate Son in Christianity?
- 2. Dyophysite Christians preferred bare crosses to crucifixes because the idea of Jesus making God suffer on the cross was problematic to their understanding of the two natures of Jesus. Miaphysite Armenians also kept their crosses bare, because the image of Jesus on the cross challenged their notion of Jesus having a single nature. By contrast, Chalcedonian Christians preferred the crucifix to the bare cross. Where is your comfort level, why?
- 3. For exciting reading on the Mamluk rise to power, look up Shajar al-Durr, a kidnapped slave girl who rose to rule Egypt.

# Chapter 9 The Making of Latin Christianity (300-500)

Since the third century, the Catholic Church (which MacCulloch suggests should more accurately be called "the Western Church of the Latin Rite") has depended on the charisma of Peter, from whom they claim apostolic descent. In the fifth century, Pope Leo began to see the Catholic Church as the arbiter of all Christian doctrine. The pope's claim to authority has never been grounded in theological training, but rather on the tombs of the apostles. The greatest shaper of Latin Christian theology was not a pope but a bishop and theologian known as Augustine of Hippo.

- Jerome's translation of the Bible from Greek to Latin (the *Vulgate*) was unchallenged in Western culture for over a thousand years.
- Strong bishops like Ambrose, often hastily appointed from political rather than ascetic backgrounds, became the order of the day.
- The empire was besieged by attacks from the north, and finally the city of Rome was sacked by the Visigoth army, which eventually led to the emperor in Constantinople ruling the whole empire.
- Augustine spoke Latin, was not terribly familiar with Plato or Aristotle. He became more
  influential in western Christian thought than anyone except, perhaps, Paul of Tarsus. In fact, it is
  difficult for westerners to read Paul without the looking through the lens of Augustine, so
  thorough was his reinterpretation.
- The importance of Plato and Aristotle to Christian doctrine was discussed in Chapter 1. Augustine's lack of knowledge in this area, and Christianity's dependence on Augustinian theology, created an opportunity for later theologians to return to these "lost" ideas and place them in dialogue with Augustine's work.
- Augustine developed a doctrine of theodicy to respond to the vexing question, "If God created everything, and God is all good and all-knowing and all powerful, why is there evil in the world?" Augustine replied that evil does not exist. Evil was not created; it is just the lack of the goodness that God did create.

- 1. For further reading, acquire a copy of Proba's Cento. Read a portion, and discuss the style, mechanics, and possible motives of the work.
- 2. Augustine thought that asking where evil comes from is like wanting to hear what makes the sound of silence, or trying to see darkness. What do you think?
- 3. Does Augustine's denial of the existence of evil solve the theodicy problem? Does it create new problems in how we understand the adequacy, love, or goodness of God?

# Chapter 10 Latin Christendom: New Frontiers (500-1000)

Midway through the millennium, Latin culture very nearly disappeared. Texts stop being copied for over two centuries and many were lost. The area of the former empire devolved into small kingdoms, often ruled by Goths (typically Arian Christians). Arian and Catholic Christianity existed side by side for many years, with the importance of saints continuing to attest Catholic triumph over Arianism among the common people. Missions into northern Europe prospered, and the British Isles became their own mission power house. In the last quarter of the millennium, the Merovingian dynasty in France gave way to Charlemagne and the Carolingians.

- Celtic monasteries were influenced by Syrian or Egyptian literature; they tended to be more optimistic than eastern monastics; however, this did not cause them to be less ascetic.
- Celtic monasteries developed tariff books, predecessors to the system of penance that would later cause conflict in the Western Church and contribute to the Protestant Reformation.
- Before the mission of Bishop Augustine, Canterbury already had a bishop and a church dedicated to St. Martin of Tours; thus, the mission was not about making new believers so much as converting the region to papal obedience.
- Missionaries were often of noble blood and appealed directly to local nobles, seeking submission of the community rather than individual conversion to the Gospel.
- In the 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> centuries, the British Isles were the source of a huge amount of mission work, mostly via sea routes into the low countries and Saxony.
- In the century from 650-750, eleven of eighteen popes (over 60%) had Greek or other Eastern background, thus Christianity was more consolidated than usual.
- In Francia, Pippin and Charlemagne used monasteries as a way to dispose of inconvenient
  monarchs. Women, however, were able to turn this concept on its head; noble women often
  entered convents to lead emancipated lives and rise to power as abbesses. Religious life
  afforded women more freedom and power than marriage; sometimes they even adopted the
  mitre worn by bishops.
- Benedictine monasteries grew into new roles not mentioned in the Rule of St. Benedict:
  - Scholarship
  - o Eucharistic intercession
  - Social engineering

- 1. Contrast Genevieve to Joan of Arc as a female icon of Christian character.
- 2. Compare a photograph of Jesus as Good Shepherd in the lunette in the Mausoleum of Galla Placidia to other artistic depictions of Jesus as Good Shepherd. Where does this depiction fit on the spectrum between the simply garbed earlier (even pre-Christian) depictions of the shepherd, and the eventual shepherd-king of later Christian art?
- 3. Visit <a href="http://www.ravennamosaici.it/">http://www.ravennamosaici.it/</a> to see images of Arian art in Sant'Apolinnare Nuovo.

### Chapter 11 The West: Universal Emperor or Universal Pope? (900-1200)

This is the age of splendid abbeys, soaring cathedrals, serfs, knights and the beginning of the crusades. Whereas before, wealth had been gathered chiefly from the edges of the empire through warfare, now nobility pulled wealth from within their own territory by exploiting the land they controlled. The population was largely reduced to serfdom, and economic productivity was demanded.

- New abbeys inspired by the Benedictine monastery in Cluny were dedicated as priories, constituting a powerful Cluniac Order.
- Cluny capitalized on the popularity of Christian pilgrimages, setting up priories as way stations.
- Cluny's investment in the pilgrim route led them to discard the pacifist ways of earlier monasteries and espouse the idea of fighting for God.
- The church's pastoral concern expanded, along with the demand for church support; parishioners with farms were pressed to contribute 10% of their produce, the scriptural tithe.
- The expansion of pastoral care also extended to the church's interest in sexual relationships and marriage. Church weddings became popular and thus began the church's insistence that priests perform (rather than merely witness) the contract.
- The custom of primogeniture (eldest son takes all) was established in the twelfth century, strengthening the concern for marriage, and shifting the church toward a celibate priesthood to protect church lands from inheritance by priests' children.
- With the introduction of canon law, married priests were considered sinful, their wives concubines, and their children illegitimate.
- Pope Urban asserted that death while on crusade assured the soldier of a place in heaven.
- The Crusades strengthened the Western Church, but weakened the Christian empire in the East

   particularly in 1204 when overzealous crusaders called to defend Constantinople from
   Muslims instead sacked the city.
- The idea of Mary's perpetual virginity developed during this time, as the Western Church struggled with the implications of calling Mary "Mother of God."

- 1. The parish was introduced in this period, ideally representing an area with boundaries that could be walked within an hour or two. Consider how the Latin empire and the church were in many ways settling down during this period, using and thinking of land in new ways. Consider how travel, pilgrimage, and the crusades contrast or fit into this picture.
- 2. Contrast the concerns of the Cisterians, Carthusians, and those of the Augustinian movement.
- 3. The author refers to Pope Gregory's reforms as a top-down "Reformation" and even capitalizes the word. How did you react to this word choice? What associations do you make with reformation, and how do the Gregorian reforms fit or contrast with those associations?

# Chapter 12 A Church for all People? (1100 – 1300)

The age of cathedrals gave way to the period of scholasticism, where the center of learning moved from eleventh-century cathedral schools focusing on a field now called "theology," to city-owned schools (especially in Italy) modeled after Islamic learning with lectures, professors, and degrees. Western Church authorities felt threatened by scholasticism, with its emphasis on discussion and harmonization of thought, at a time when they were also threatened by concerns about "heresy," a charge often leveled at charismatic and vocal groups that did not fall easily under church hierarchy and control.

# **Key Points:**

- Scholasticism brought about a revival of Aristotelian thought in the Latin West, mostly championed by Thomas Aquinas.
- Aquinas, a Dominican, did not seek to contradict the Platonic "unmoved mover," but to reconcile this concept of divinity with Aristotle's system, in his voluminous *Summa Theologica*.
- Personal mysticism offered another avenue of learning, particularly for women, since they were excluded from the university. Fame gained through mystic spirituality was fickle and as likely to earn a condemnation as an accolade.
- Franciscan spirituality continued its influence, especially popular because Francis's Jesus was so personal.
- Later Franciscans were responsible for growing animosity toward Jews, originally sparked by Augustine of Hippo's remark that Jews were only left in the world as a sign and warning to Christians.
- In the Christian West, Jews were usually tolerated but were marginalized and sometimes attacked. Many Jews took up money lending as a niche, since Christians were prohibited from earning interest.
- Mendicant preaching became so popular, it influenced architecture, resulting in a number of hall churches all over Europe, with single naves for large crowds.
- At the Fourth Lateran Council, Pope Innocent III addressed:
  - o Which religious orders to recognize and which to call heretical.
  - o All Christians should receive the Eucharist once per year, preceded by confession.
  - o Priests were to instruct the faithful on the Eucharist and transubstantiation.
  - o Procedures for the inquisition of heretics.

- 1. How were the Dominican and Franciscan orders different?
- 2. Meister Eckhart wrote that "Every creature is a word of God." Reflect on the precision and the implications of this statement.
- 3. Read excerpts from *The Cloud of Unknowing* or other works by some of the mystics mentioned in this chapter: Bridget of Sweden, Marguerite Porete, and Hildegard of Bingen. What ideas connect the excerpts you chose?

# Chapter 13 Faith in a New Rome (451-900)

This chapter begins Part V of the book, covering Orthodoxy, so the dates are not sequential with the previous chapter. While the Western Church focused on Christian doctrine and heresy during the last half of the first millennium (see chapters 9 and 10), the Orthodox Church wrestled with its love of icons versus the Second Commandment, and developed its own distinctive doctrines.

- The Byzantine Empire did not burn many heretics. Instead, the Orthodox Church wrote pointed hymns about its enemies.
- Hagia Sophia in Constantinople is somewhat analogous to St. Peter's basilica in Rome.
- Theosis (union with divinity) is expressed through architecture, literature, and hagiography. For instance, the *iconostasis* which may seem to be a barrier between the worshiper and God, is considered a window into divinity because of the icons it holds; thus, it does not separate the worshiper from God but draws the worshiper closer.
- The icons of Orthodoxy were defended from the Second Commandment's prohibition against graven images by their art form (flat, both in medium and perspective) and sometimes by denying that the prohibition was a stand-alone commandment; subsuming it into the first commandment made images a dangerous medium rather than an outright sin.
- In the late 700s, Eastern Christians began to worry that perhaps Muslims and Western Christians were right about their images after all, and a period of iconoclast policies ensued, led by the Byzantine Emperor himself, Leo III.
- As the pendulum finally swung back to favor icons, the iconophiles strengthened their
  arguments and their position, both by employing Aristotelian categories and causes, and leaning
  on the intricate nuances of the Greek language as in previous theological debates. Some of
  these distinctions were misunderstood by Christians in the West, who thought Orthodox
  Christians were worshiping images equally with God.
- The greatest defenders of icons were both empresses: Irene and Theodora.
- Palestinian monasteries exerted a powerful and lasting influence on the music of Orthodoxy.
- The creation of the Cyrillic alphabet allowed Khan Boris-Michael and his clergy to promote Christianity in the Slavonic language and even develop Slavonic liturgy pushing back against the Church in the West and the Moravians with their Latin liturgy.

### For Discussion

- 1. While the church in the West emphasized original sin, the Greek tradition focused on theosis, the idea that humanity could be sanctified or deified through the Church. Accordingly, hagiographies tracing the biography of saints undergoing this process became extremely popular. Alternately, one might suggest that the popularity of such literature fueled the theology. Does art imitate life, or does not life imitate art?
- 2. Drawing on the wisdom of Dionysius the Areopagite, Orthodox scholarship began in this era to develop a strong apophatic tradition. They found it useful to talk about what God is not, rather than what God is. Work from this perspective in some medium that appeals to you, perhaps poetry, word collage, or thinking aloud with a small group.

# Chapter 14 Orthodoxy: More than an Empire (900-1700)

Having survived the internal struggle of iconoclasm, the Church in the East was now challenged by a number of crises. When the Fourth Crusade gave Venitians the opportunity to settle personal debts, they sacked Constantinople, looted relics, and left East/West relations in a state almost beyond repair. The Byzantine Empire soon fell to the Ottoman Empire and came under Muslim control; however, it was within this environment that the Orthodox Church developed much of the character it still retains.

### **Key Points**

- Macedonian emperors befriended Miaphysite Christians and other people Chalcedonian Christians viewed as heretics.
- Mount Athos, "the only state in the world with an entirely male population," became the most significant holy mountain in the Byzantine Empire.
- The fall of the Second Rome to the Ottoman Empire had roots in the Fourth Crusade, which began as a Venetian naval campaign against Cairo but turned against Constantinople when Crusaders could not muster enough troops to fill the ships.
- Crusaders looted the relics of Byzantium; Rome was more concerned with how to authenticate them than with the ethics of the looting. Eventually duplicate copies of the stolen relics reappeared at their original sites, and their restorations were hailed as miracles.
- Less than a century later, Constantinople was returned to Byzantine control, but never again regained its political strength and cohesiveness.
- After the Fourth Crusade in 1204, the structure of Orthodoxy became less imperial and more strictly religious.
- Many Orthodox Christians found themselves under Islamic rule as the Ottoman Empire encroached on the empire.
- Monasteries tend to flourish when secular administration fails.
- Greek theologians recognized the arguments of Origen in the Latin development of purgatory, driving an additional wedge between Eastern and Western theology.
- Hesychasm is a mystical style of prayer meaning "to keep stillness." One of the major contributions of hesychasm is The Jesus Prayer.

- 1. The Jesus Prayer is a repetition of a single devotional rephrase, rendered in English, "Lord Jesus Christ, Son of the living God, have mercy on me." Hesychasts taught that one might concentrate on a prayer such as this until God's very essence was perceived. Barlaam argued that prayers like this ran afoul of apophatic wisdom, which says the individual cannot perceive God's essence. Make an argument for or against Barlaam. Then switch sides.
- 2. Critics of Domenikos Theotokopoulos (El Greco) complained that his artwork was odd and incomprehensible. Look at examples of his work. What did he do with light, elongation, and other emotive depictions that was new to those accustomed to the iconographers of the Cretan School, for example Andreas Ritzos? You may also compare El Greco's icons to his later works, such as The Opening of the Fifth Seal.

# Chapter 15 Russia: The Third Rome (900-1800)

This chapter traces the rise of Russia from a group of small kingdoms established by the Rus', Norseman and Vikings who had invaded the area. The Rus' also attacked Constantinople, and Photios responded by sending out missionaries to evangelize them. As a result, Orthodox Christianity and architecture spread into area of Lithuania, Muscovy, and the surrounding lands that would become Russia.

- Kiev had warmer relations with the Latin Church than the Greek Orthodox did, because Kievan Christians were not initially convinced Catholics were heretics.
- The Tatars (not different from Tartars, but a more correct term when applied to people) were nomads. A Tatar army led by a son of Genhis Kan seized Rus' and established the Kipchak Khanate.
- The grand princes of Lithuania remained uncommitted to any of the three great monotheisms for as long as possible, forming and re-forming strategic alliances.
- Grand Prince Olgred of Lithuania executed three Christians in Vilnius for refusing meat while fasting. Constantinople celebrated the executed men as "the Vilnius martyrs" and used their memory to strengthen relations between Constantinople and Muscovy.
- Lithuania eventually became Catholic, because the Grand Prince secured a marriage to a Polish princess, and the Polish were already Catholics.
- For a long time, Rus' had no academic centers of scholarship. There was no sustained interest in reviving pre-Christian Greek or Roman art; the only art was the art of the Church, which prized tradition over innovation. Andrei Rublev so exemplified this style, in modern times the artist/monk was declared a saint.
- Sergius of Radonezh established Trinity Lavra because he sought to live in isolation. When seekers flocked to him, he adopted the office of abbot and a Stoudite (or Studite) rule. This pattern was repeated by others as monastic life spread.
- Muscovite clerics were so sure the world was going to end after what they considered the seventh millennium since creation, their liturgical kalendars did not extend beyond 1492.
- When the world did not in fact end, the calculation was not perceived as a mistake; rather the people had received God's grace and thus the Muscovite sense of imperial mission only grew stronger. More churches were built, just as in Western Europe after the survival of the expected end time in 1000. Onion domes and extravagant spires and gables characterize the architecture of this era.
- Conflict between "possessors" and "non-possessors" over the good or evil of monastic wealth was often a battle over control of that wealth and influence.
- Ivan the Terrible (as he is known in the West) was partially raised by a monk of the "possessor" persuasion. The pope tried to invite Ivan to the Council of Trent, but Catholic Poles kidnapped the messenger and prevented delivery of the message.

- 1. MacCulloch describes the Red Square Cathedral as a tribute to Ivan's eightfold victories, and to the biblical symbolism of the number 8. Where is that symbolism found in the Bible?
- 2. The author is fond of the term "historic accident" to describe various events that turned the course of history. What does that phrase mean to you? How do you feel when you encounter it?

# Chapter 16 Perspectives on the True Church (1300-1517)

The Black Death killed one in three Europeans; in some places the death toll was as high as two thirds. Europe became preoccupied with death, with prayer as the link between the living and the dead. At the end of this period, humanism led people to think of a brighter future here on earth.

- Purgatory became more pronounced, especially in the north. Prayer was the link between living and dead; the living prayed for those in Purgatory and the dead (in Heaven) prayed for those still living.
- The sale of indulgences raised funds for building churches, hospitals, and elder homes.
- In the 14<sup>th</sup> century, the papal monarchy was challenged by William of Ockham and others, who declared the Pope "Antichrist" or a heretic. Imperialists supported these attacks, hoping to sway power away from the church.
- Conciliarists promoted the idea that a church council has the greatest authority in the church, even over the pope. The first experiment failed, resulting in two rival popes both lawfully elected, and the resolution led to a third.
- Pious laypersons turned to the *Devotio Moderna* as a means to reach out to God through the printed text. Especially in the Netherlands and Germany, people were as likely to be reading at the Mass as listening. Wealthy parishioners even built enclosed pews to block out distractions.
- John Wyclif said the true Church was invisible, since we cannot know who is saved or damned. He translated the Bible into English. Decades after his death, the Church burned his bones and called him a heretic, but during his lifetime he was protected by the prince.
- Jan Hus was influenced by Wyclif but his movement was an assertion of Czech identity in the Bohemian Church, which had been taken over by Germans. Because Hussites offered consecrated wine to laity (while only bread was the norm), the chalice became the symbol of their movement.
- Humanism developed in Italy in the fourteenth century (though the name came later), closely associated with the Renaissance and the rediscovery of Greek and Latin texts.
- Erasmus was "the supreme humanist scholar;" he made a parallel Greek and Latin New Testament, and challenged allegorical interpretation run amok.

- 1. Survivors of the Black Plague often sought someone to blame for God's anger: oneself, society, or some scapegoat. Consider how all three impulses are reflected in the flagellant movement in northern Europe.
- 2. A recent archaeological find in Edinburgh unearthed a communal graveyard used by a hospital until 1640. Forensic artists reconstructed the faces of the dead, many of whom were likely victims of the plague. See:
  - http://www.culture24.org.uk/history-and-heritage/archaeology/art492359-eerie-reconstructions-show-faces-and-diets-of-medieval-men-and-women-in-edinburghgraveyard#.U9i9yWaHfH8.twitter

# **Chapter 17** A House Divided (1517 – 1660)

During this period, the Church, salvation, and the sacraments were completely reconsidered. The eventual result was two distinctly different traditions: Catholic and Reformed, with the Church of England straddling them.

- For Martin Luther, salvation was not God making humans righteous, but God calling humans righteous, even though they were not before or after. This view made Purgatory obsolete, but Luther took a few years to realize it.
- Luther opposed the Eucharist as a Mass, which seemed to claim that Christ was being resacrificed every time. While maintaining the claim of the real presence in the bread and wine, he rejected transubstantiation.
- Zwingli rejected the Roman Catholic Church for many of the same reasons, yet strong arguments kept the two at a distance:
  - o Zwingli could not understand why Luther kept the idea of real presence.
  - Zwingli viewed sacraments as something people did for God, not something God did for people. Eucharist and baptism were communal promises to God, but nothing magic happened at either.
  - Luther was so horrified at Zwingli's view of the sacraments, he advised people to have their children baptized Catholic rather than in one of Zwingli's churches.
  - Luther supported infant baptism because he saw baptism as something God does for people. Zwingli supported it because he saw the Church of Zurich as being for all of Zurich and thus a child was baptized by the community rather than having to opt in.
- Radicals who came after Luther and Zwingli reverted to an earlier form of Christianity, refusing
  to swear oaths or take up the sword and expecting (and receiving) persecution. Others actually
  took up the sword (e.g. John of Leyden).
- King Henry VIII was the first European king to repudiate papal jurisdiction.
- Thomas Cranmer, Archbishop of Canterbury, reorganized the church in England. Cranmer shut down all the monasteries. Many priests who still held to Catholic beliefs went into hiding, until Cranmer was burned at the stake when Lady Mary took the crown.
- Under Queen Elizabeth, England settled into a Reformed tradition, but with bishops, cathedrals, and medieval worship.
- Meanwhile, reformation was successful in Strasburg (under Bucer) and Geneva (under Calvin).

- 1. Erasmus wrote, "I will put up with this Church until I see a better one; and it will have to put up with me, until I become better." Have you ever felt this way? Have you ever changed churches or denominations for theological reasons, or considered doing so but remained? Why?
- 2. Some radicals called the Bible "the paper pope," insisting that Christians look to their own inner light to hear God's voice rather than relying on the Bible. How has the tension between personal revelation and Scripture played out in your life, and in the traditions of faith to which you've been exposed?

# Chapter 18 Rome's Renewal (1500-1700)

Roman Catholic Church was also challenged and changed by new theological thinking and devotional practices, both in conversation with Reformers like Luther, and from the Church's own clerics and local men and women. Conflict in the Roman Catholic Church is sometimes characterized as a contest between the *Spirituali* (Cardinal Reginald Pole, poet Vitoria Colonna, Michelangelo, and Jesuits who wanted to adopt some of Luther's ideas on justification by faith) in tension with the *Zelanti* (Franciscans and other conservatives trying to preserve centralized power). However, it is a vast oversimplification to imagine two such teams.

- 1. The Spanish heretic Juan de Valdes fled to Italy to avoid the Spanish Inquisition, and found the Gilds a means of spiritual community and renewal.
- 2. The revelation of Ignatius led him to revere rather than reject church authority; his *Spiritual Exercises* received papal approval for use in systematic self-examination with a spiritual director.
- 3. Those who gathered around Ignatius when he left Spain to avoid the Spanish Inquisition became known as Jesuits, though they call themselves a *Compagnia* or Society of Jesus. They quickly found official favor and became part of the *Spirituali*.
- 4. Most of the *Spirituali* leaders fled to eastern or northern Europe when the political climate changed. A Roman Inquisition was instituted, and remaining *Spirituali* felt little loyalty to the Roman Catholic Church.
- 5. The Council of Trent emphasized the need to see the Bible in the context of tradition, explained by Church authority.
- The Council of Trent launched an era of "Counter-Reformation" characterized by uniform liturgy in Latin. The celibate priesthood was reaffirmed, and the pope's authority over bishops was emphasized.
- 7. The Spanish Inquisition, intent on keeping Spain Catholic, was suspicious of Jesuits and Dominicans, and other deep thinkers like Teresa of Avila and John of the Cross.
- 8. France and Poland-Lithuania were slower to come under the reaches of the Council of Trent; France because the Huguenots had achieved privileged status, and Poland-Lithuania because of the early Protestant work there. The latter was eventually won over by steady missionary work, especially free Jesuit education.
- 9. As Catholic and Protestant Christianity settled into their own rhythms, their architecture diverged to reflect their own practices: Protestant churches were locked during the week and the pulpit was most prominent; Catholic Churches became more majestic than ever, with the high altar as the visual focus.

- 1. Consider how the marriage of clergy affected masculinity expectations, not only among Protestant clergy but also Catholics, and extended to the increased suppression of homosexuality among both clergy and laypersons.
- 2. Read excerpts of the *Malleus Maleficarum*, or stories of European witch trials. Some writers have called the witch hunts a women's holocaust, since around 85% of those executed were female. Consider why women would be disproportionally affected.

# Chapter 19 A Worldwide Faith (1500-1800)

During these three hundred years, Christianity became more prominent around the globe – Catholicism primarily through mission, and Protestant Christianity a bit later through the immigration and re-settling of Protestant Christians seeking to create a new Eden.

- 1. Portuguese and Spanish exportation of Christianity into the New World mitigated somewhat against papal and monarchial greed; Franciscans and Dominicans protested against the enslavement and forced conversion of natives.
- 2. Native American kingdoms did not succumb to force until they had already succumbed to disease. Within three centuries of European contact, indigenous populations in the western hemisphere were at ten percent their original numbers.
- 3. The Spaniards, perhaps more secure in their own culture, were more ready than the English to recognize tribal societies and marry into them.
- 4. Friars and Jesuits learned native languages, partly to protect their converts from colonist meddling.
- 5. Christian mission in both Asia and Africa were based on Portuguese trading routes and connections with nobles.
- 6. In Asia, Counter-Reformation mission was largely unsuccessful, since conversion to Christianity meant losing one's caste. Missionaries were somewhat successful with those already in the lowest caste.
- 7. Some Jesuits began adapting themselves to the culture by dressing like Confucian scholars with long beards.
- 8. Eventually the Chinese mission counted a quarter of a million converts, but with only 75 priests to serve them. Unwilling to give indigenous people equality as clergy, the missionaries installed "Chinese virgins" who, like Ursalines, pledged celibacy and lived at home. These virgins ministered to the laity when priests could not be present.
- 9. Jesuits dominated the Japanese mission and took Japanese culture seriously. When Franciscan friars arrived, they opposed Japanese culture mostly to spite the Jesuits; as a result, many friars were crucified.
- 10. In Africa, greater attempts were made to establish indigenous clergy.
- 11. Baptismal ministries were established at both ends of the slave trade route.

- 1. Cortes, a Roman Catholic, called native temples he encountered "mosques." Protestants interacting with indigenous people often used Catholic terms such as "priest" when writing about native religions. What can we learn from these word choices?
- 2. Reflect on the unintended consequences of Las Casas making his argument against slavery based on the perceived character and intelligence of his converts rather than their intrinsic rights as human beings.

### Chapter 20: Protestant Awakenings (1600-1800)

While Catholic powers were busy with conquests and worldwide evangelism, Protestants were still wrestling with identity issues. They sought to distinguish themselves from Catholicism, and to distinguish among themselves as each group claimed to define exactly what Protestantism was. During this time, pietism, a movement focused on spiritual growth through personal devotion, spread from Lutheran Germany across Europe to England and the American colonies.

- 1. Pietism emphasized parish life and encouraged the devotion of laypeople. Children's education was paramount and extended to orphans and the poor.
- 2. Music played an important role in pietism, in Protestantism in general, and in the rise of African Christian spirituality in North America.
- 3. Puritans were less inclined to evangelism because covenant theology implied the natives should demonstrate their elect status by taking initiative or imitating Christian neighbors.
- 4. Beliefs about the Last Days affected many attitudes in this period. For example, Oliver Cromwell tolerated Jews because he believed their conversion was needed to catalyze the return of Christ.
- 5. John Eliot's prayer towns were established alongside English settlements to teach Native Americans how to live as Christians.
- 6. Pennsylvania was not long successful in fulfilling William Penn's vision of free exercise of religion for all monotheists; however, the state did successfully foster a hatred for slavery, especially among Quakers.
- 7. In the late 17<sup>th</sup> century, the Church of England agreed to tolerate Protestant Dissenting groups. The unintended consequence of this decision was to encourage Anglicans at variance with the Church to declare themselves dissenters when some would have preferred to remain within the Church.
- 8. The Moravian Church, originating with Bohemians fleeing Habsburg recatholicization, emphasized and eroticized the suffering of Christ and spoke of the Holy Spirit as Mother.
- 9. The Evangelical Revival sprang from a number of devotional groups and voluntary activism societies, and culminated in the movement called Methodism, which founder John Wesley never intended to become a new church. Wesley stepped outside the Church of England when he began ordaining his own ministers without a bishop; however, he maintained that he lived and died an Anglican.
- 10. Parishes were originally established by walking distance, a system that did not expand well for population growth; thus Methodism employed open air preaching as the Jesuits had done.

- 1. How did the power structure of parishes in the New World differ from in the Church of England? How might this have affected the government that would later be formed?
- 2. Consider the relationship between baptism and slavery.
- 3. Discuss the difference between religious toleration and religious liberty.
- 4. The author uses the term adjective "extrovert" repeatedly to contrast The Awakening to the status quo against which it reacted. Discuss its meaning and its significance in churches today.

# Chapter 21 Enlightenment: Ally or Enemy? (1492 – 1815)

In this era, religion was influenced by many of the same leaders changing the face of philosophical thought through science and natural law – Hobbes, Newton, Locke, Voltaire, Rousseau, Kant, etc. The rise of natural philosophy and a scientific revolution challenged blind devotion to Church tradition, while reaffirming the value of Classical literature.

- 1. Christians could not admit doubt without being accused of atheism, but the wealthy and educated could shield themselves from such fall-out by studying Classical literature and posing questions and discussions of theory rather than personal belief.
- 2. Freemasonry is a Scottish phenomenon born of Reformed Christianity's enthusiasm for rediscoveries of Classical wisdom and hostility toward the Catholic Church institution.
- 3. Coercive religious conversions and inquisitions bred doubt about all religions, so the mood in Europe was increasingly skeptical.
- 4. Spinoza, influenced by Sephardic Jews and Dutch Libertines, treated the Bible as critically as other texts, and asserted that sacred literature was a human artefact. He regarded God as undifferentiated from the universe, neither good nor evil but simply God.
- 5. Even before the theory of evolution was put forth, beliefs about a pre-Adamic race of humans called original sin into question.
- 6. Gender roles became more rigid during the Enlightenment, with women regarded as frail and passive. However, as religious choice caused skewed church attendance (with twice as many women as men), women came to be regarded as the more spiritual sex. This opened the way for a greater role for women in Evangelical and Quaker churches.
- 7. Autonomous church government withered in all quarters, as Catholic, Protestant and Orthodox bodies were controlled and silenced by the state.
- 8. The French Revolution led to an attempt at a national Church in which bishops would be elected by all male citizens. Parish priests objected, and many were executed along with aristocrats.
- 9. The French Revolution failed but its slogans had hit home, and increasingly the middle class (a new development) longed to overthrow the regime. Socialism emerged.

- 1. MacCulloch says, "The greatest question mark set against Reformation and Counter-Reformation Christianity was posed by the continuing existence of Judaism" (777). Explain why this was a theological conundrum for Christians of the Enlightenment. Has it since been resolved by Christians?
- 2. Throughout this text, Classical literature has emerged and re-emerged, being repeatedly rediscovered to renew or galvanize Christian thought. Given that Classical literature is not Christian and, in fact, predates Christianity, how can we make sense of this phenomenon?

# Chapter 22 Europe: Re-enchanted or Disenchanted? (1815-1914)

Whereas the Catholic Church sought to resist the Enlightenment, the Protestant Church more readily engaged with it. The questions entertained would change the face of Christianity forever. The heritage of the Enlightenment included not only deep suspicion about Christianity's God and the Bible, but also a host of visionary personalities from both Catholic and Protestant realms who were moved by convictions about the End Times. These visionaries were busy building new churches and monasteries, and employing new sciences and technologies in the pursuit of Christianity. Feminism also began as a movement within Christianity, both Catholic and Protestant.

- 1. Ultramontane feminism resulted in more nuns than monks, with only a small percentage in contemplative orders while the majority worked in the streets with the poor.
- 2. Women sometimes received from Mary the authority not offered by the Church hierarchy. Marian visions typically appeared to women without money or power, often in remote locations which created new pilgrimage pathways.
- 3. Protestant women lacked Mary to lend validity to their voice, so they tended to cast themselves as Old Testament-style prophets. Joanna Southcott's apocalyptic visions led to a feminist movement the Anglican bishops could neither renounce nor accept.
- 4. The British history of dissent allowed various Enlightenment rifts to develop and flourish without causing hostility toward the established Church or toward Christianity itself.
- 5. Socialism in Britain was influenced by Methodism and the Catholic Mass, as well as Marx.
- 6. The Orthodox world came through the Enlightenment with faith intact, seeing the Russian Orthodox Church strengthened. However, Jews and Greek Catholics suffered oppression under Orthodox leadership.
- 7. Catherine the Great restricted monasticism, but afterward male religious orders doubled their numbers and women's religious orders increased nearly tenfold.
- 8. Evolution and humanism led to optimism about the future, but suspicion of Christianity's picture of God. Strauss and the Tübingen School suggested New Testament narratives were filled with theological symbolism rather than historical fact.
- 9. Fundamentalists emphasized five main points: 1.) verbal inerrancy of the Bible, 2.) divinity of Jesus, 3.) Virgin Birth, 4.) penal substitution, and 5.) physical resurrection and return.

- 1. Our Lady at Lourdes originally manifested as a powerful, frightening figure. What is suggested by removal of some of these stories from the official record?
- 2. The Enlightenment challenged the place of theology as a senior discipline in the university. Friedrich Schleiermacher argued that theology still had two important roles: 1.) as a practical discipline for pastoral care, and 2.) as a general branch of scholarship to be subjected to research an analysis like any hard science. Consider how theology is studied today, for what purpose, and by whom. Does Schleiermacher's scheme make sense today?
- 3. Hegel said "Without the world, God is not God." Later Karl Barth would respond, "God could be God without the world but chooses not to be such a God." How do these claims fit or contrast with the conflicting Greek and Jewish views of divinity upon which Christianity was founded?

### Chapter 23: To Make the World Protestant (1700-1914)

The 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries of Christian history were characterized by global interaction with Protestantism. Slavery became the new Christian taboo while polygamy, which had been rejected by European Christians, came back into the Christian conversation through African missions and Mormon revelation.

- 1. Christian abolitionists found scriptural backing for their position, but also faced the clear and obvious fact that the Bible takes the institution of slavery for granted.
- 2. British mission sprang from Evangelical fervor. Many missionaries were Methodists or members of Dissenting Churches; once their missionary efforts resulted in a strong British presence, colonial expansion soon followed.
- 3. India was an exception where colonial expansion preceded missionary work. The East India Company, which had largely respected Hindu practices, was reluctant to accept missionaries in India. When missionaries did arrive, Indians largely enjoyed their schools but became more confident in Hinduism, with their Western education leading to a Hindu renaissance.
- 4. The Maori of New Zealand adopted Christianity and regarded their treaties with the British Crown as biblical covenants. Old Testament stories also inspired them to unite feuding tribes under a local monarchy.
- 5. In Africa, local converts applied their own exegesis to questions such as polygamy and ordination. Indigenous people demonstrated that they could interpret the Bible themselves, and often rejected Church hierarchy to adapt their own liturgical and musical styles.
- 6. The ancient Coptic Church received help from English missionaries who were eager to be associated with a church that had always resisted popery. Ethiopian Christians also enjoyed contact with Protestant missionaries, but the Church maintained its Miaphysite character.
- 7. Protestant inroads in Asia were not smooth or quick. Missionaries like Hudson Taylor found success in a program of indigenous leadership and adopting Chinese dress.
- 8. Christianity entered Korea at great cost to human life, flourishing in underground churches with indigenous leadership and practicing lay baptism. In Korea, Christianity became a symbol for resistance to colonialism.

- 1. At least twice in his life, Samuel Sewall made a momentous decision to change course. What enables some people to make decisions like this, in the face of public pressure from both sides, while others dig in? Is this a trait you can cultivate?
- 2. The tension in the iconic movie *The Mission* (1986) is between slave traders and Jesuit missionaries. The movie depicts some Christians opposing slavery, others complicit, and those in power torn. Although the movie is only loosely based on real events and employs plenty of artistic license, consider viewing or reviewing it as you digest the issues in this chapter.
- 3. The United States of America is often depicted as a Christian nation engaged in a fall away from God. How does this chapter support or refute that narrative?

# Chapter 24 Not Peace but a Sword (1914-60)

The globalization of war began (and continues) to alter the face of religion along with political boundaries. As monarchies gave way to republics, popes and patriarchs found it more difficult to maintain power or even protect their adherents.

- 1. Within a few years of the end of World War I, the British King-Emperor was the only European imperial power who still wore his crown. The Austro-Hungarian monarchy fell, Wilhelm II (Kaiser of Germany and King of Prussia) was overthrown, and the Ottoman Sultanate was ended by the Turkish War for Independence.
- The Young Turk regime that emerged and took over the Ottoman Empire killed over a million Armenian Christians from 1915-1916, prompting the Allies to threaten post-war retribution. Approximately 80% of Armenians were killed, but the Allies did not respond.
- 3. Assyrian (Dyophysite) Christians in Turkey were also betrayed in post-war dealings, when they were sectioned into the newly constructed state of Iraq, dominated by Muslims
- 4. Greek Orthodoxy also suffered, with religious identity transmuting into national identity in the 1923 population exchange following the Treaty of Lausanne.
- 5. In the revolution of 1920, Mexican churches were burned down or painted red. Decades of persecution followed, during which Catholic *cristeros* raised the banner of Christ the King. Lay leadership was crucial to the resistance, which set the tone for increased lay leadership in Latin American Catholicism.
- 6. The Vatican regarded Socialism or Communism as the chief enemy of Christianity, and had mixed interactions with Fascism and Nazi Germany. In 1937 Pius XI issued an encyclical that condemned the tenets of Nazi racism as idolatry, but made no mention of the plight of Jews; his encyclical mostly defended the Vatican's failed concordant with Germany and demanded the right to worship as Catholics.
- 7. Lutheran theologians in and around Germany both influenced and responded to the nationalistic tone and anti-Semitism of Nazism. Baur began to see the New Testament as a conversation between Jewish Christians and Pauline Christians rejecting Judaism. Harnack was prepared to jettison the entire Old Testament. Barth pushed back against German nationalism and formed the Confessing Church, with Bonhoeffer and others.
- 8. During the Spanish Civil War in the late 1930s, Republicans burned churches, tortured and killed clergy. The Nationalists, led by Franco, eventually prevailed and made Spain Catholic again.
- 9. The devastation of World War II shifted Christian strength (Protestant and Catholic) from Europe to America, Africa and Asia.
- 10. In Africa, Christianity interacts with local cultures to produce unique expressions of Christianity, such as Ethiopian prophets mixing Anglican hierarchy with the charisma of prophecy, and the Maasai of Kenya using feminine pronouns for the Christian God.

- 1. Do Christians have a responsibility to other Christians in times of war? Or is our responsibility to human beings of all religions equal?
- 2. What should churches do with architectural vestiges of racism like the pulpit in the Martin Luther Memorial Church in Mariendorf?

# Chapter 25 Culture Wars (1960-Present)

Hell has dropped out of popular concern in Christianity, along with burial. Theological concerns have largely been replaced by current concerns: prosperity for Pentecostals and political justice for liberals. In Catholicism, liberalism is expressed as the Gospel showing a preferential option for the poor. This era has been characterized by a new humility and repentance on the part of both Catholic and Protestant Christians.

- 1. Apartheid in South Africa was orchestrated by the Anglican Church, with the South African Dutch Reformed Church moving rather quickly to repentance.
- 2. The Southern Baptist expressed repentance for their origin as a Church in support of slavery.
- 3. The Church of England sought to legalize homosexuality, even before public opinion shifted.
- 4. Civil rights for African Americans were hard won. Martin Luther King, Jr., synthesized Evangelical preaching with the social gospel and the theology of Reinhold Niebuhr. Other Protestants in the civil rights movement, such as Belle Harris Bennett, campaigned against lynching, helped register voters, and fought segregated seating on Sunday.
- 5. In South Korea, *minjung* theology began as another kind of liberation theology, ushering in grassroots change in the face of torture, imprisonment and execution from South Korean military dictators. *Minjung* theology both contributed to and benefits from Korean democracy and now must compete with Pentecostalism imported from America.
- 6. The decline of colonialism in Africa (a phenomenon influenced by Christian missionary organizations) did not result in a decline in Christianity as predicted; African-initiated churches have made Christianity as indigenous as Islam.
- 7. The Moral Majority was formed as a coalition of American Evangelicals favoring Republican government, in response to two legal judgments: *Roe v. Wade* legalizing abortion, and the ban of official school prayer. This voting group favors siding with Israel against Palestine, despite Israeli oppression of Palestinian Christians, because of apocalyptic beliefs regarding Israel. However, the political solidarity of Evangelicals is being fragmented by environmentalism.
- 8. Pope John Paul II's legacy includes encouraging the transition of Eastern Europe to democracy, tightening Catholic teaching by stripping dissenters of their teaching license, a nervous response to liberation theology, the child sex abuse cover-up, and opposing "a culture of death" which included abortion, birth control, the death penalty, and the America invasion of Iraq.

- 1. MacCulloch writes of liberal English Christians, "They were acknowledging, even furthering and celebrating, the death of Christendom, with a conviction that beyond it there lay better prospects for Christianity" (988). Distinguish Christendom from Christianity, and consider what one may become without the other.
- 2. The first woman ordained in the Anglican Communion, Lee Tim Oi, laid aside her orders for decades until the rest of the Communion caught up with the idea of female priests. Consider the implications of her choice, and how else she might have chosen.