

16. The church history – Part 3

If you are like me, you've heard from others, especially unbelievers asking us why there are so many denominations within Christianity. Most likely, you didn't have an answer. Surely Jesus didn't create denominations within the body of Christianity.

Some might say, "He may not, but He didn't mind having a Baptist as a cousin." For that, the proper translation should have been 'John the Baptizer' rather than 'John the Baptist'. And no, he was not the first president of the Southern Baptist Convention.

I believe that the denominations within Christianity started with pride and selfishness of men. If we simply obeyed the Word of God as is, do what it says, there wouldn't be any other denomination but the one the Lord Jesus made. But His followers argued, bickered, and separated from each other like a group of children. They would pick up their toys and go home after their argument. I wonder if the Lord had to shake His head for our stupidities.

Now that we have hundreds of denominations within Christianity, I am glad that we have denominations. Because there are a number of them that do not follow the Word of God, they follow their own denominational traditions and rules in certain issues. Are they still brothers and sisters of Christ? Yes.

This morning, we are going to learn the last segment of the Church History that largely represents the history of the Protestant.

A. PURITANS AND KJV

In 1604, a band of English reformers had met with King James I at Hampton Court. Their desire was to purify the Church of England. So they became known as "Puritans." And they preferred the Geneva Bible which was one of the most historically significant translations of the Bible into the English language. It was the primary Bible of the 16th century Protestant movement.

However, King James disliked the Geneva Bible because it included study notes that were quite Calvinistic. The Puritans suggested to King James a new translation of the Scriptures, and King Jimmy quickly agreed. Forty seven scholars worked for 33 months on the King James' Version. In 1611 the first King James Version of the Bible rolled off the presses. It became the most popular English translation of the Scriptures and remained popular until the closing decades of the 20th century.



B. ISAAC NEWTON AND DEISM

Sir Isaac Newton (1643-1727) was an English physicist, astronomer, mathematician, and theologian who is considered to be one of the most influential people in human history. With his Universal Gravitation theory, he explained the mystery of the planets' movements in the universe.

Out of the new-found facts of the universe by Newton, a group of twisted-minded people known

as 'Enlightenment' thinkers began to mold a new concept which became known as 'deism'. They rejected every belief that reason could not confirm. Here are their ideas: Miracles? Impossible. The Trinity? Absurd. Jesus? A human teacher. God's mystery? Gone. To them, being a Christian is simply being nice to others according to Christ's ethics.

Around this time, a group called 'Masonic Brotherhood' became clubs dedicated to charity, peace and education. Their focus on education and peace led them to support 'Deism' in the 1700s.

Deism remained popular in Europe in 1800s. Influenced by this deceiving demonic concept, many churches embraced 'Unitarianism' the belief that God is not a Trinity. Unitarianism is a cult without a doubt.

C. THE FIRST GREAT AWAKENING AND PIETISM

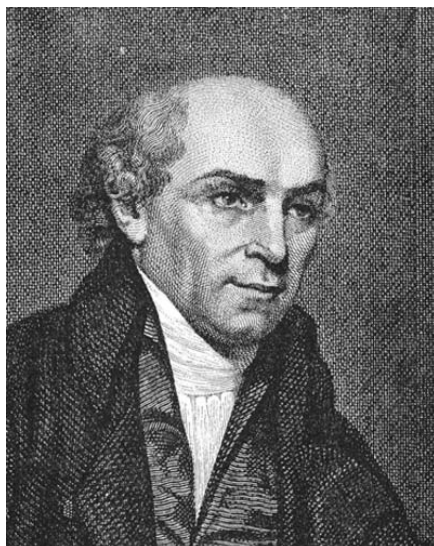
In 1734 flashes of revival began to light up the Northampton church's spiritual darkness in Northampton, Massachusetts. It was sparked by the Holy Spirit through a sermon of Pastor Jonathan Edwards - "Sinners in the hands of an Angry God." However, the first wave of revival lasted only three years.

In the meanwhile, the Lord used a European movement known as 'Pietism' to bring about a spiritual awakening that would reach around the world to this day. Pietism began with a booklet entitled 'Pious Desires' by Jacob Spener. The book urged Christians to pursue a personal relationship with Christ through intense meditation on the Scriptures.

During this time, the people like Charles Wesley and Isaac Watts wrote Pietist hymns that we still sing today.

Charles Wesley's brother John taught the Scriptures to his congregation so methodically that they started to call him 'Methodist.'

One of the great Methodist preachers was George Whitefield. He became a part of the First Great Awakening. Later he and John Wesley split over the doctrine of predestination.



D. THE MODERN AGE AND THE PARTICULAR BAPTIST

The Modern Age lasted from the end of the Enlightenment in the late 1700s until the mid 1900s. In the Modern Age, people emphasized human potential, progress and the material world.



William Carey (1761-1834) was an English Baptist missionary and known as the 'father of modern missions.' His most famous quote was "Expect great things from God; attempt great things for God."

In April 1793, Carey and a doctor volunteered to go to India. Later, the missionary doctor stole their funds. Two of the Carey's children died. While Carey focused on missions, depression seized his wife. After seven years of missionary work, he had one convert in India.

However, Carey continued, eventually, translated and published New Testaments in 24 of India's native languages. His work laid the foundation for thousands of future missionaries.

E. UNIVERSALISM AND THE SECOND GREAT AWAKENING

Many people on the American frontier started to embrace an unbiblical theology, known as 'Universalism' - the belief that God would never condemn anyone to hell; everyone would be saved. It is another deception from the spiritual darkness of hell.

Around 1800 many American Christians began to seek a renewed vision of the true God. The Presbyterians set aside days for prayer. They begged God to redeem their nation from darkness. In 1801, at a Christian believers' camp meeting, the fire of revival started and went across America for 30 years.

F. MORMONISM

Mormonism began with Joseph Smith when he supposedly met Jesus in a Vermont forest. He claimed that America stood at the center of God's plans and Native American Indians were, he claimed, displaced Israelites. He claimed that he was 'king of God's kingdom.' After a mob murdered Smith, Brigham Young led the so-called "Latter-Day Saints" to Utah.

G. HIGHER CRITICISM AND FAITH THROUGH SOCIAL ACTION

Another bogus theology surfaced around this time - Higher Criticism. These people tried to question the accuracy of the Bible. They were self-convinced that the Gospel writers didn't write about the real and historical, flesh-and-blood Jesus Christ.

In the 1800s the believers of Jesus Christ started to take what they learned from the Scripture to their society - their faith through social action. Wilberforce led to the Slavery Abolition Act 1833 in England; William Booth organized the Salvation Army; Wealthy British believers founded the YMCA. It has nothing to do with the Village People.

Charles H. Spurgeon, pastor of the London Metropolitan Tabernacle was providing balanced social reforms with an emphasis on evangelism to Great Britain.

H. THE SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTISTS AND JEHOVAH'S WITNESS

A self-proclaimed biblical scholar, William Miller, prophesied Christ's return in March 21, 1844. Nothing happened. He readjusted his calculation to October 22, 1844. Still nothing. I guess his Miller Time didn't come through.

Out of this shenanigan, 19 year-old girl Ellen White prophesied that one reason Christ hadn't returned was because Christians were not obeying God's OT laws. Her sabbath-keeping followers became known as 'Seventh-Day Adventists.'

Around that time, another cuckoo Charles Russell claimed that Jesus returned spiritually in 1872. Russell's followers - known today as 'Jehovah's Witness' revived the Arian heresy - Jesus did not always exist, but was created by God the Father and is therefore inferior to the Father. Both of them are cults.

I. THE THIRD GREAT AWAKENING AND THE AMERICAN CIVIL WAR

After a stock-market crash in 1857, the Third Great Awakening began in Canada and swept England and America. On the eve of the war, Christian believers were divided over the slavery issue. Throughout the Civil War, Americans on both sides assumed that God supported their cause.

The first Ku Klux Klan was founded in 1865 in Tennessee by veterans of the Confederate Army. In their fanatic minds, they claimed that God hates the Jews, blacks and any colored people.

I'd like to ask you to join me in a day of fasting and praying each week for the Lord that might start the fourth Great Awakening in our country and the world. I'd like you to join me on Monday in spirit from wherever you are. You can do this fasting and praying a whole day or just a meal depending on your health condition. I am sure that many of us can skip a meal without any problem. The idea of fasting is instead of eating a meal, we'd spend that time in praying and interceding for our church, for our country, for this world to turn our hearts back to the Lord. But don't tell others about your fasting.

2 Chronicles 7:14 if My people who are called by My name will humble themselves, and pray and seek My face, and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin and heal their land.

You may ask, "For how long?" Until the Lord answers. Who knows, this might be the last revival before the Rapture and the Great Tribulation on earth happens.

J. IMMACULATE CONCEPTION BY POPE PIUS IX

In 1854 Pope Pius IX personally decreed the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception - the tradition that Mary was free from original sin. And he insisted that the pope is infallible. I don't know what he had been smoking. Another heresy.

K. D.L. MOODY AND THE FUNDAMENTALS

God turned a simple shoe salesman Dwight L. Moody to a soul salesman for Himself. In 1871 a great Chicago fire destroyed a large portion of its city including his home. Instead of lamenting his loss, he went across the Atlantic Ocean to preach in Britain. Someone remarked, "The world has yet to see what God can do with a man fully consecrated to Him." Indeed, God's fire was blazing in Moody's soul.

Perhaps one of the wisest and most balanced responses to the Modern Age came from a Bible conference in Niagara, NY. They declared five basic truth of Christian faith:

- 1) Jesus was uniquely divine
- 2) He was born of a virgin
- 3) He died as a sacrifice for the sins of mankind
- 4) He will come again
- 5) The Scriptures contains no errors. The Bible is inerrant.

The booklet that contained these five points called 'Fundamentals,' and the people who accepted the five basic beliefs became known as 'Fundamentalists.'

L. WWII

A conservative politician campaigned for family values in Europe in the 1930s. He condemned homosexuality, pornography and communism. German Protestants even formed a Christian coalition to support him. The politician was Adolph Hitler.

Hitler attempted to merge all German Protestants into a single Pro-Nazi denomination. 5000 Christian leaders stood against Hitler's plan; consequently his claws had begun to clench the Christians in Germany. During the Holocaust, most church members, Protestant and Catholic alike, did little to stop Hitler's onslaught with the exception of Pope Pius XII. He sheltered many Jewish people in Vatican.

One of the most profound German Christians was Dietrich Bonhoeffer. He said, "Cheap grace is our church's deadly enemy. Costly grace is the Gospel which must be sought again and again. Such grace is costly because it costs one's life; it is grace because it cost God His Son's life. Above all, it is grace because God did not reckon His son to be too dear a price to pay for our life." Pastor Bonhoeffer was killed by Nazi Gestapo.

M. THE BIRTH OF EVANGELICALISM

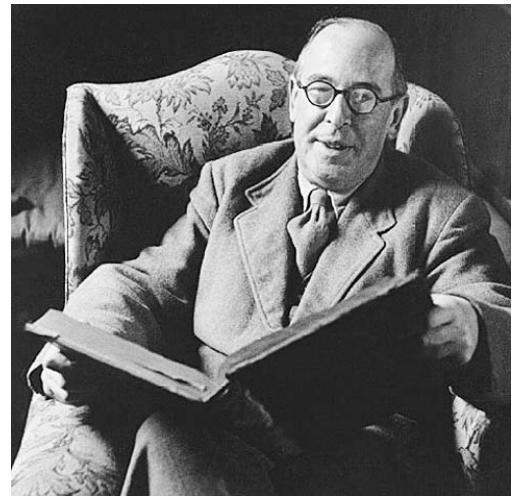
In October 1941, several conservative Christian leaders gathered at Moody Bible Institute to lay the foundation for the National Association of Evangelicals. Because they realized that the fundamentalist focus on total separation from everything modern and did not want to do anything with the secular world.

Jesus prayed for us to be in the world but not be of the world.

John 17:15 I do not pray that You should take them out of the world, but that You should keep them from the evil one.



Throughout the second half of the 20th century, the writings of a British Christian C.S. Lewis encouraged many evangelicals to think more deeply about their faith in the world.



N. AN EVANGELIST WITH A PASSION



In 1949, a thirty one year old evangelist preached a simple message of the Gospel of Jesus Christ to many unbelievers who packed a gigantic tent in Los Angeles. His name is Billy Graham. Billy Graham had led more people to Jesus Christ through these massive crusades than anyone in history.

O. MANNING THE BRIDGES BY POPES OR MAYBE NOT

In 1958 pope John XXIII called all Protestants "separated brothers" even though the previous popes had condemned them.

In 1962 pope Paul VI and the leader of the Orthodox Church forgave each other for the schism of AD 1054, when each church had condemned the other.

After the death of Pope John Paul II in 2005, new pope Benedict XVI reaffirmed that the Roman Catholic Church is the sole true church. According to him, organized groups of believers outside of the Roman Catholic Church are merely "ecclesial communities" that should "not be called churches in the proper sense."

P. THE JESUS MOVEMENT

The Jesus movement was a movement in Christianity beginning on the West Coast of the United States in the late 1960s and early 1970s and spreading primarily through North America and Europe. Many, many dope headed hippies came to know Jesus as their Savior and Lord through this movement.

Right in the middle of this Jesus Movement was Pastor Chuck Smith with Calvary Chapel Costa Mesa. Calvary Chapel is evangelical, dispensational, pre-tribulationist. Calvary Chapels place great importance in the practice of expository teaching, a "verse by verse, chapter by chapter, book by book" approach to teaching the Bible. It started with a 25 person church in Costa Mesa, CA. Now there are over 1400 Calvary Chapels across the U.S.A. and around the world.

Q. THE THINGS TO REMEMBER AND APPLY

- 1) A good start does not guarantee a good finish. – e.g., Methodist
- 2) The result of God's work does not depend on what we accomplish right now, but how the Lord brings it out for His glory. – e.g., Carey
- 3) The majority of the population on this earth will end up in hell. It is our solemn duty - every one of us - to spread the Good News of Jesus Christ.