

COMPLETE VIDEO PROGRAM SCRIPTS
FOR

HISTORY OF
CHRISTIANITY

Six-part video curriculum series

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THE HISTORY OF CHRISTIANITY: EARLY CHURCH

PROGRAM SCRIPT

The history of Christianity is inextricably woven with the person and work of Jesus Christ. In one of the earliest documents of the New Testament, St. Paul wrote the following words to the Christians at Galatia: “But, when the fullness of the time was come, God sent forth His Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law” (Gal. 4:4).

In the fullness of time. There are two separate words for time in the New Testament. There is *chronos*, from which we get our English words “chronic” and “chronology.” Chronos is time that can be measured, counted, divided into minutes, hours, months, years, centuries, and so on. *Chronos* is the tick-tick-tick time of an alarm clock in the morning or a stopwatch in a race. It is time as you and I live it and experience it, day in and day out.

But there is another word for time: *kairos*. *Kairos* means the opportune time, the right time, time that is laden with meaning and significance.

The Christian faith is based on the fact that the event of Jesus Christ — His life, His death, His resurrection — has forever changed the meaning of time and history itself. As St. John put it: “The Word became flesh and dwelt among us” (John 1:14). In Jesus, *chronos* became *kairos*. So significant was that event, for the whole history of the world, that we have subsequently divided time itself into A.D. (*Anno Domini*, Latin for “in the year of the Lord”) and B.C.

The study of Christian history is rooted in the most basic presupposition of our faith, namely, that God Himself, has entered the warp and woof of our human existence as a baby in a manger, as a man on a cross. And so the study of Christian history is not a luxury but a necessity. For Christianity is not primarily a philosophy of life or a code of behavior or even a set of rituals. It is the story of what God Himself has said and done, in space and time, in the person of His Son on earth, and in the work of His Spirit through the ages.

The word “church” occurs only twice in the Gospels, both times in Matthew. One text has been especially well-remembered through the centuries. In response to Peter’s confession, “You are the Christ, the Son of the Living God,” Jesus said, “Upon this rock, I will build My church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it” (Mt. 16:18).

The history of Christianity is, to some extent, the story of the fulfillment of that prophecy. Christianity began as a small sect within Palestinian Judaism. By the end of the first century, it had already become a significant force within the

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Roman Empire. When Jesus died, the Roman Governor, Pontius Pilate, required that the words, "This is Jesus, King of the Jews," be written on His cross in three languages: Hebrew, Greek, and Latin. These three languages represented the three worlds into which the early Christians carried their message of a crucified and risen Redeemer.

THE WORLD OF HEBREW RELIGION

Jesus was a Jew, as was His greatest interpreter, the Apostle Paul. When Paul reminded his young disciple, Timothy, how, from his early childhood, he had known the Holy Scriptures through which he had learned the way of salvation, he was referring, of course, to the Hebrew Scriptures, which the Christians regarded as the inspired Word of God fulfilled in Jesus Christ. One of the most momentous decisions of the early church was the retention of the Old Testament as Christian scripture. Above all else, this meant that the God of creation, the God of the covenant, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, was none other than the God and Father of the Messiah, Jesus.

THE WORLD OF GREEK CULTURE

Since the time of Alexander the Great, some 300 years before Christ, the Mediterranean world had been drawn together into a common intellectual and cultural unity which we call Hellenism. A new form of the Greek language, the *koine*, or common tongue, came into general use. The New Testament writers used *koine* Greek to spread the message of Jesus throughout the Roman Empire. Christianity also had to come to grips with the Greek philosophical tradition, the intellectual heritage of Plato and Aristotle, of Stoicism and Epicurianism. Tertullian, an important church father from Carthage, asked a famous question: "What has Athens to do with Jerusalem?" Had not St. Paul himself said that the preaching of the cross was foolishness to the Greeks, just as it had been a stumbling block to the Jews? (1 Cor. 1:18). But if Christianity was to gain a hearing in the marketplace of ideas, then certain Greek words and ideas had to be "baptized" with Christian meaning. Certain apologists, such as Justin Martyr in the second century and Origen in the third, went so far as to claim that Greek philosophy, with its concepts of order, justice, and beauty, had, in fact, prepared the way for Christ among the Greeks just as Moses and the prophets had done among the Jews. Yet how far could one go in this direction without losing the essence of the Gospel itself? This tension would mark the history of Christian thought through Augustine and well beyond.

THE WORLD OF ROMAN ORDER

For more than 200 years, the world had known a period of relative peace and stability, known as the *pax Romana*. During this time, the Christian church was born. The story of Jesus was carried along the major highways and well-

developed sea routes of the Roman Empire into all the known world. The Apostle Paul was a citizen of the Roman Empire, and urged obedience to the civil authority. But he also knew that the Christian's prior political allegiance was to that heavenly commonwealth, "the Jerusalem that is above," as he called it (Gal. 4:26). From the beginning, Christianity was a missionary movement with a worldwide vision and a universal message. It was inevitable that Christianity should come to be seen as a threat to the prevailing world system, at whose head stood a man who was believed to be a God: Caesar. Had Christians been willing to worship Jesus and Caesar, to say their prayers to Christ and also place a pinch of incense on the altar of the imperial deity, then conflict could have been avoided, for religious pluralism was much in vogue in the Roman Empire. But when the Emperor Domitian arrogated to himself the title, *Dominus et Deus* ("Lord and God"), the Christians would not acquiesce. "Jesus is Lord," they said, "not Caesar." Thus the blood of the martyrs became the seed of the church.

Some Christians, like Ignatius of Antioch, faced martyrdom with great eagerness. To a group of believers, he wrote:

I hope to obtain by your prayers, the privilege of fighting with the beasts at Rome. Suffer me to be eaten by the beasts, that I may be found the pure bread of Christ. Entice the wild beasts that they may become my tomb, and leave no trace of my body. Then shall I truly be a disciple of Jesus Christ, when the world shall not even see my body.

The equanimity, and even joy, with which the martyrs faced persecution and death, was a great witness to the sustaining power of the Christian faith. Indeed, the arena became one of the most fruitful places for evangelism in the early church. Many of those who had witnessed the martyrs' deaths with such constancy, became themselves followers of Jesus. In time, the stories of the martyrs' deaths developed into a new genre of devotional literature. Martyr stories, like those of Bishop Polycarp of Smyrna, and the Cathaginian noblewoman, Perpetua, and her servant girl, Felicitas, were read aloud to encourage young Christians to steadfastness and hope.

A major turning in the fortunes of Christianity took place in the early fourth century with the conversion of Emperor Constantine. Under two previous Emperors, Decius and Diocletian, the Christians had been savagely suppressed, their churches destroyed, their Bibles burned, and many put to death because of their refusal to sacrifice to the pagan gods. But rather than quenching Christianity, these persecutions were a stimulus to its growth and expansion. Christianity had permeated all levels of Roman society, including the nobility and the army, some of whose members faced death rather than deny their Lord.

As a soldier with political ambitions, Constantine was alive to the religious

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questions within the Empire. He had linked his personal destiny to the sun god, *Sol Invictus*, a deity claiming universal dominion in all parts of the empire. However, as he prepared for a battle at the Milvian Bridge near Rome, on October 28, 312, Constantine had a dream in which he was told to place the sign of Christ, the “Chi Rho,” on the shields of his soldiers. According to another version of this story, he also saw the following words written in the sky: *In hoc signo, vinces*, “In this sign, you will conquer”. Constantine won the battle of Milvian Bridge. He went on to become Emperor, and he switched his allegiance from the sun god to the Son of God.

Constantine’s conversion has been endlessly debated by historians. Was it the result of divine intervention or merely an act of political expediency? However we interpret this event, it had enormous consequences for the history of the church. In 313, the Edict of Milan recognized Christianity as a *religio licita* (“a legal religion”), to be tolerated along with other religions within the empire. In time, however, accommodation gave way to assimilation, as Christianity became the official established religion of the empire. In 321, Sunday was declared an official holy day. December 25th, the festival day of Sol Invictus, became the day for celebrating the birth of Jesus Christ. The Christianization of the Roman Empire brought many great benefits to the Christian church, but there was a downside as well. Eventually Christianity became not merely tolerated but required. The Emperor Theodosius II permitted only Christians to serve in his army. Unbelievers, and even Christian dissenters, such as the Donatists in North Africa, were suppressed by the force of arms. Within less than two generations, the Christian church had moved from being an illegal minority to becoming the dominant religion. Christians, who were once persecuted, now became the persecutors.

The fourth century was a watershed in many other ways as well. I want us to look briefly at three of them:

- A New Sense of History
- A New Form of Spirituality
- The Classic Development of Christian Theology

A NEW SENSE OF HISTORY

The first generations of Christian believers looked forward to the end of the age and the return of Jesus Christ in power and glory. In the second and third centuries, for example, a group of charismatic Christians, known as Montanists, put forth prophecies concerning the date and place of Christ’s return. They urged Christians to withdraw from the world and into an ascetic lifestyle, in anticipation of the apocalyptic denouement of history. As time went on, this apocalyptic fervor began to wane. Although Christians still professed belief in the second coming of Christ, instead of looking forward to the future, they now began to look backward on the past.

It is no accident that the first real history of the Christian church was written in the fourth century by Eusebius, a bishop in Palestine. Eusebius also wrote the official biography of Constantine in which he referred to him as the “thirteenth apostle,” the visible head of the New Israel. Christians now began to erect houses of worship on a large scale. Church architecture was born as Christians moved from worshiping in the caves and catacombs into beautiful basilicas and stately houses of worship. The mother of Constantine, Helena, was a great advocate of this development. She supervised the building of churches over the presumed sites of Christ’s birth in Bethlehem and His death in Jerusalem. By 333, we read of pilgrims from Bordeaux visiting the Holy Land as an act of religious devotion. “Guided tours of the Holy Land” became a thriving business and has remained so to this very day!

As we have seen, the cult of martyrdom had a powerful effect on Christian devotion in the early church. With the cessation of persecution, however, the possibility of martyrdom (as the highest achievement of the Christian life) was removed. At this precise moment, a new and distinctive form of Christian spirituality emerged and established itself as an alternative to the growing lax mentality of official Christianity. The “white martyrdom” of monasticism would leave an indelible mark on the history of Christianity.

The father of monasticism was Saint Antony, who, at the age of 18, entered a church at the very moment when the words of Jesus were being read: “If you want to be perfect, go and sell all you possess, give it to the poor, and come follow me” (Luke 18:22). Immediately, he went out, literally obeying the words he had heard. He secluded himself in the desert of Egypt, where he lived in tombs, doing hand-to-hand combat with the devil and his demons of the dark. Eventually, thousands of others followed Anthony into his monastic retreat.

The monks were the successors to the martyrs, a new form of the *militia Christi*, front-line fighters in the ongoing struggle against the world, the flesh, and the devil. In Syria, a unique form of monastic life developed around the pillar saints, the most famous of whom was Simeon Stylites, who died in 459. He built a stone pillar, some 70 feet high, where he lived an ascetic life of prayer for more than 30 years. His daily food was hoisted up by a band of loyal disciples, who camped at the foot of his stone edifice.

A more routine form of monasticism was developed by Pachomius and Basil the Great. This was “cenobitic” monasticism, from the Greek words, *koinos bios* (“common life”). They emphasized life in community, life together, with a definite form of prayer, a routine of manual labor, and obedience to the abbot, or leader, of the community. “Basil’s Rule” became the standard manual for cenobitic monasticism in the East as monasticism became integrated into the wider life of the church. It exerted a powerful influence on Christian devotion. It is no accident that St. Augustine, the greatest of all the church fathers, was profoundly moved toward the monastic life by reading the biography of St. Anthony.

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Along with a new history and a new form of Christian community and spirituality, the fourth and fifth centuries also witnessed the formation of classic Christian orthodoxy in the doctrines of the Holy Trinity and Christology. From the beginning, Christian theology had been reoccupied with the question of Jesus during His earthly ministry: “Whom do you say that I am? (Matthew 16:15). The Christian community answered with Peter, “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.”

Early debates over the nature of God and the person of Christ were often prompted by heretical groups within the church, such as the Gnostics, who tried to separate the God of creation from the God of redemption. How could the Eternal God have become human flesh, they asked. Or how could the Son of God have possessed a material body of flesh and blood? At best, they argued, Jesus only *appeared* to be a real human being. When he had walked along the shores of Galilee, His foot had only appeared to leave a print in the sand. Over against such views, the church set forth a rule of faith, basic principles of Christian belief, questions asked of every new Christian at the time of baptism. What we know today as the Apostles’ Creed developed out of this kind of baptismal confession of faith.

“Do you believe in God the Father Almighty, Creator of heaven and earth?”
(To which the new Christian would answer), “*Pisteuo*, I believe.”

“Do you believe in Jesus Christ, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate?”

“*Pisteuo*.”

“And do you believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic church, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting?”

“*Pisteuo*.”

Still unresolved, however, was the fundamental question of how Jesus of Nazareth was related to the Eternal God whom He called Father. In its most basic form, the doctrine of the Trinity is the effort of the Christian church to reconcile the Old Testament affirmation, “Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God is one” (Deut. 6:4), with the New Testament confession, “Jesus Christ is Lord” (Phil. 2:5-11). This was not merely a problem of semantics or philosophical word games. It went to the very root of Christian piety, in the fact that Jesus was an object of prayer and worship. As the Roman philosopher and Christian antagonist, Celsus, put it: “These Christians, in fact, worship to an extravagant degree this man, who appeared only recently, and think it not inconsistent with monotheism that they also worship God’s servant.”

The issue came to a head, in the early fourth century, in a fierce conflict between Arius and Athanasius, the Bishop of Alexandria. Arius emphasized the uniqueness and transcendence of God. The essence of God is indivisible, he declared, and therefore it cannot be shared with anyone else, not even with His Son. Therefore, the Logos, the Son, must be a creature. He must have had a

beginning or, as Arius put it, “There was when He was not.” (In the twentieth century, Dorothy Sayers has summarized Arian theology in a memorable couplet: “If you want the Logos doctrine, I can serve it cool or hot; God begot Him, and before He was begot, He was not.”)

Over against this idea of Christ as creature, Athanasius proclaimed that the Logos was *homoousios* (“of the same essence as”) the Father. A mere creature, Athanasius said, however exalted, could never atone for our sins. Only God Himself could rescue us from sin and death. In 325, the church set forth this view of Christ at the Council of Nicea:

We believe in one Lord Jesus Christ, the only Son of God, eternally begotten of the Father, God from God, Light from Light, True God from True God, begotten, not made, of one being with the Father. Through Him all things were made. For us men, and for our salvation, He came down from heaven.

The Council of Nicea did not stop the controversy over the Trinity, which continued to be debated along with the divinity and humanity of Christ. The Council of Constantinople in 381, the Council of Ephesus in 431, and the Council of Chalcedon in 451 all contributed to the settlement of ecumenical orthodoxy: the doctrine that God is one in essence or being, three in Person; Jesus Christ is one Person in two natures. Near the end of the Patristic period, St. Augustine wrote a massive treatise, *De Trinitate*, (*On the Trinity*), in which he summed up the whole orthodox tradition of thinking about God, emphasizing the unity and equality of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit as well as the personal dynamic of relationship with the divine Godhead. In this realm, as in so much else, the theology of St. Augustine would leave an indelible imprint on Christian thinking for the next millennium.

TRADITIONS OF LATE ANTIQUITY

Augustine himself had come to the Christian faith through a tortuous intellectual and spiritual quest. He was born in 354 in Tagaste, in what is today the modern North African country of Algeria. His father, Patricius, was not a Christian, but his mother, Monica, was a devout believer who had a dominant influence on Augustine’s life and development.

For seven years, Augustine followed the way of the Manichaeans, a radically dualistic religion with roots in ancient Persia. Then he became a skeptic, doubting whether genuine truth and meaning could be discovered at all. At last he turned to neo-platonism, which offered him a model of transcendence, pointing him beyond the visible world of flow and flux, from the temporal toward the eternal. The sermons of Ambrose, the Bishop of Milan, brought him closer to the Christian faith. But still he resisted, until one day, when he was sitting alone in

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the garden, he heard a group of children singing a song at play: *Tolle lege, tolle lege*, "Take and read, take and read." He immediately picked up a copy of the Scriptures and opened them to a text in Romans 13 (Rom. 13:11-14). This event was a turning point in his quest for God. He was baptized by Ambrose on Easter Sunday in 387. He later described his spiritual pilgrimage in a work which has become a classic paradigm for Christian autobiography: *The Confessions*. He opens this book, which is really a prayer, by declaring to God: "Thou hast made us for Thyself, O Lord, and our heart is restless until it finds its rest in Thee."

Adolf Von Harnack once characterized Augustine as "the first modern man." But we might also call him the first medieval man, for his life and his theology would exert a profoundly shaping influence on the one thousand years of Christian history between his death, in 430, and the birth of Martin Luther, another Augustinian monk, in 1483. Augustine was not only a great theologian, but also an active bishop and shepherd of souls. His voluminous writings deal with all kinds of problems faced by ordinary Christians in his day: the nature of the sacraments, discipline and penance, worship and prayer, how to venerate the martyrs and saints, how to study and teach and preach the Bible. In his debates with the British monk, Pelagius, Augustine set forth a theology of God's grace and salvation, which emphasized the impotence of human beings apart from grace, and stressed God's sovereign love and election. The church would later honor St. Augustine as the preeminent *Doctor Gratiae*, "The Teacher of Grace."

With the death of St. Augustine in 430, the world of classical antiquity drew to a close, giving way to a millennium of turbulence and realignment in western Christendom. In his fulsome life as a religious seeker, bishop, spiritual ascetic, and theologian, St. Augustine summed up the major themes of the early Christian era. His vision of God and his description of the Christian life would form the basis for numerous streams of medieval spirituality.

When he was born, the blood of the martyrs was still warm and wet in Christian memory. When he died, the organized church had become sufficiently strong in the world to assume the place of the fallen Roman Empire in the formation of a new civilization. One thousand years later, both Protestants and Catholics claim St. Augustine as the forerunner of their own efforts to advance the cause of Christ. For Christians today, both Catholics and Protestants, St. Augustine is above all the master teacher of the introspective conscience. His opening words from *The Confessions* still speak to us today:

Thou hast made us for Thyself, and our hearts are restless until they find their rest in Thee. Whoever does not want to fear, let him probe his inmost self. Do not just touch the surface; go down into yourselves; reach into the farthest corner of your heart.

THE QUEST FOR ORDER: MEDIEVAL CHRISTENDOM

PROGRAM SCRIPT

Certain events in human history stand out in bold relief against all others. These are defining moments which summarize the essence of an entire age, like the storming of the Bastille in 1789 or the fall of the Berlin Wall in our own century.

Such an event took place in the year 410, when the city of Rome was sacked and burned by a Gothic chieftain named Alaric. For centuries, Rome had stood as a symbol of stability and continuity; the “eternal city” it was called. Now, Rome had been ravaged by barbarian soldiers. In faraway Palestine, in the little town of Bethlehem St. Jerome received the news of the fall of Rome with horror and shock. He wept and asked, “If Rome can perish, what then is safe?”

The answer came from St. Augustine, who replied to Jerome’s lament: “You are surprised that the world is losing its grip? That the world is grown old? Do not fear; thy youth shall be renewed as an eagle.”

For Augustine, the wellspring of youth was Christianity. It could not help but persist and grow, rising above spent empires and cultures. As soon as Augustine heard of the fall of Rome, he began to write his *magnum opus*, *The City of God*. It was the first philosophy of history written by a Christian author. The city of God, he said, cannot be equated with any human empire or kingdom, however glorious or powerful.

Jesus had promised that the gates of hell would never prevail against the church. The church is the Body of Christ extended throughout time as well as space. It belongs to the future, as well as to the past and the present. More than anyone else, it was Augustine who provided the blueprint for the millennium of Christian history which we know as the “Middle Ages.”

THE MIDDLE AGES

But what are the Middle Ages? When did they begin and end? Why should Christians be concerned about them today?

The Middle Ages are the intervening centuries between the death of St. Augustine in 430 and the birth of Martin Luther in 1483. In popular imagination, the Middle Ages have been glamorized and romanticized. We think of knights in shining armor, the crusaders’ quest for the holy grail, King Arthur, Camelot, and all that. But, in fact, the Middle Ages were marked by violence and great suffering in what was to become Europe.

Jerome had reason to weep at the fall of Rome. For the Goths were succeed-

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ed by the Lombards, the Franks, and the Vandals, from which we get our modern word “vandalism.” Still later, the Vikings from Scandinavia would reek their own distinctive brand of havoc on the outposts of Christian civilization.

A still more sinister force arose from the deserts of Arabia as the armed forces of the prophet Muhammad (also spelled “Mohammed”), fanned out across the Mediterranean in a *blitzkrieg*-like holy war, or *jihad*, capturing Jerusalem, Antioch, Alexandria, Carthage. They advanced even into the heart of Europe, until they were stopped by Charles Martel, the grandfather of Charlemagne, at the famous battle of Poitiers, in 732.

It was not without reason that this period of history would later be called “The Dark Ages.” Yet, in the thickest darkness, the light of the Gospel was never completely extinguished.

Protestant and evangelical Christians are apt to think that there were few, if any, true believers during this age of darkness and disintegration. But we should remember that we are all like dwarfs standing on the shoulders of giants. We may be able to see further than they, but without their steadfastness, we could see nothing at all.

For example, the classics of Greece and Rome, not to mention the writings of the early church fathers, have come down to us in manuscripts painstakingly copied letter by letter in the monasteries and cathedral schools of medieval Europe. In addition to this, there is an unbroken tradition of worship and prayer, contemplation and meditation, the kind of spirituality embodied so fully in a figure like Saint Bernard of Clairvaux, whom both Luther and Calvin cited frequently and with great favor.

In the midst of the oppression and bloodshed of his age (in which, it must be said, he himself played a part), Saint Bernard could describe the transcendent reality of divine love so beautifully that it still speaks across the centuries to our own hearts today:

What value has there been in all this work? This, I think: We have learned that every soul — although burdened with sins, afflicted with sorrow — may, without fear, enter a bond of society with God and may, without alarm, take up with the King of angels a sweet yoke of love.

“A sweet yoke of love,” “a bond of society with God” — these were the ideals which shaped the most characteristic institutions of the Middle Ages: the great Gothic cathedrals, the universities, and the monasteries.

THE “WAVE” OF CHURCH-BUILDING

From the eleventh through the fourteenth centuries, all of Christendom, it seemed, peasants and lords, artisans and scholars, bishops and kings, con-

tributed to a remarkable wave of church-building. As one contemporary put it, "It was as if the whole earth had cast off her old age and were clothing herself everywhere in a white garment of churches."

The stately form of the Romanesque churches had given way to the soaring spires and flying buttress of the Gothic cathedrals. The most amazing masterpiece of all was, and remains, the majestic cathedral at Chartres, whose frescoes and friezes tell the history of salvation, while the dazzling stained-glass windows turn the sanctuary and nave into an ecstasy of color and light.

For medieval men and women, life was a torturous journey up the ladder from earth to heaven. The demons were always eager to ensnare and capture lost souls in their eternal war against humanity. The way to heaven was beset by infernal dangers while pilgrims on the way were sustained by the prayers of the monks on earth and the exalted saints in heaven.

It was this theology which lay behind the rosary, relics, pilgrimages, indulgences, and many other practices of late medieval Catholicism, against which the reformers of the sixteenth century would protest in the name of God's unmerited love and grace.

What the Gothic cathedrals displayed so magnificently in stone and stained-glass, the great scholastic masters of the thirteenth century set forth, with equal clarity, in their famous *summae* or systematic summaries of Christian theology.

THOMAS AQUINAS

The rediscovery of the Greek philosopher Aristotle gave a new basis for theology in the thought of Albert the Great and his brilliant student, Thomas Aquinas. While revelation and reason are distinct, Thomas argued, they are not in opposition. It is the task of Christian theology to show that faith is in harmony with reason. He gave his life to building, stone by stone, a Gothic cathedral of Christian thought.

It is significant that Thomas was never able to complete his great masterpiece, the *Summa Theologica*. Near the end of his life, he experienced a vision of God, a blaze of heavenly light so overwhelming that he was not able to describe it. After this experience, he put down his pen and never wrote another word. All that I have written, he said, now seems to me like straw.

Thus, Thomas Aquinas died in 1274, his life work incomplete. Fifty years later, he was canonized by Pope John XXII. Since then, his theology has come to be regarded as normative for the Roman Catholic tradition. However, two centuries before Thomas' death, the father of scholasticism, Saint Anselm, expressed, in the form of a prayer, that yearning for God which is at the heart of all true theology and spirituality: "Oh Lord my God, teach my heart where and how to seek Thee, where and how to find Thee. For I do not seek to understand in order to believe, but I believe in order to understand."

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THE MONASTIC TRADITION

Anselm was a monk, and he combined in his prayer and his theology that love of learning and desire for God, which was the wellspring of the monastic tradition. The rule of Saint Benedict had provided a blueprint for a well-ordered Christian community, whose basic motto was *ora et labora* (“pray and work”).

The work of Benedictine monks involved physical labor — clearing the forests, tilling the soil — but it also involved the intellectual labor of the *scriptorium*, as ancient manuscripts were copied and biblical texts studied and commented upon in the annual cycle of the Christian year. At the heart of this great enterprise was the priority of Christian worship, the praying of the Psalms, and the rich harmony of Gregorian chant.

Again and again, throughout the medieval centuries, monastic reformers arose to call their fellow monks back to the purity and simplicity of Saint Benedict’s rule.

In the thirteenth century, however, the rise of the Mendicant orders, the Dominicans and the Franciscans, introduced something radically new and different into the religious life of the Middle Ages. The word “mendicant” means “beggar,” and it points to the fact that these new religious orders were free to move into the new towns and cities of Europe, begging for their food, ministering to all the needy in Jesus’ name.

The Benedictine ideal had been *stabilitas* (“stability”), a tract of land, a single place where one lived, prayed, and died. The ideal of the Franciscans and Dominicans was *mobilitas* (“mobility”). Like John Wesley in a later age, their parish was the world, especially the universities where, in the medieval equivalent of a great Christian student movement, they attracted disciples from all walks of life.

ST. FRANCIS OF ASSISI

Of the mendicant reformers, the one who stands out above all others, is Francis of Assisi. His given name was Giovanni. He was later called Francesca because of his mother’s connection with France. His father was Pietro Bernadone, a rich cloth merchant in the Italian city of Assisi. The two ideals of his youth were the troubadour and the knight. The picture which emerges from his early biographers is that of an over-indulged, spoiled-brat type. He was “a master of revels,” a playboy who spent much of his time drinking, joking, and squandering any money he could get his hands on.

At the age of 20, he got his chance to realize his dreams of glory, and went off to war. In the heat of battle, he was taken prisoner and held for one year by the enemy. Out of this experience, followed by a severe illness, Francis came to see the vanity of his former life. His conversion coincided with his identification with the helpless, the poor, and the sick. During a pilgrimage to Rome, he was confronted with hundreds of beggars who roamed the city looking for bread. In an impulsive gesture, he exchanged his fine clothes for beggars’ rags and walked the streets of Rome, begging with them.

On another occasion, while riding one day near Assisi, he came across a leper in the road. He dismounted and gave the leper a gift of money, whereupon the leper seized his hand and kissed it, exposing Francis to his dreadful disease. Francis determined to live with the lepers and to serve them as Jesus would have done.

Francis' future ministry was determined by two other events. One of these occurred while he was praying in an old dilapidated chapel. He heard, he said, the voice of Christ from the crucifix in the church saying, "My house is being destroyed; go, therefore, and repair it for me." Francis took this as a divine calling to rebuild the church.

The second event occurred when he appealed to his father for financial support. His father, however, was not sympathetic to his son's radical ideas and hailed him before the bishop of Assisi for discipline. In an act of defiance before the bishop, Francis declared:

Up to this day I have called Pietro Bernidone father. But now I desire to serve God and to say nothing else than, "Our Father which art in heaven." Not only money, but everything that can be called his, I will return to my father, even the clothes he has given me.

Immediately, Francis stripped himself naked and ran out of the church to take up a life of abject poverty and apostolic simplicity. He was, as a contemporary writer put it, "a naked man following a naked Christ."

Eventually, Francis gathered around him a company of like-minded disciples, who agreed to live with him a life of literal, deliberate imitation of the way of Christ and His apostles.

Francis, of course, drew opposition from the leaders of the church. Many of them, like the bishop of Assisi, were, themselves, deeply enmeshed in the futile structures of medieval society. Our modern game of chess derives from this historical period. In that game, it is no accident that the figure of the bishop serves the interest of the king and queen, while he himself lords it over many pawns.

Francis set forth a rule and a way of life which challenged this entire system. His movement may well have been driven underground and declared heretical, as that of Peter Waldo had been a generation before. However, when Francis presented his order to Pope Innocent III at St. Peter's Basilica in Rome, this most powerful of all medieval popes made an extraordinary gesture. He bowed prostrate before the bare-footed beggar from Assisi and kissed his feet in a public act of devotion.

Scholars still debate whether Innocent III acted out of genuine spiritual concern or simply as a shrewd politician, trying to ward off a potential problem. In any event, in that single dramatic act, we have two contrasting figures of Jesus Christ:

THE QUEST FOR ORDER: MEDIEVAL CHRISTENDOM

- Innocent, arrayed in his purple regalia and papal tiara, *vicarius Christi* — the vicar of Christ on earth, the Christ of power and glory, resplendent in wealth and prestige; and, on the other hand,
- Francis, also a vicar of Christ — not the exalted, glorified Christ, but the naked, suffering, crucified Christ. The Christ who came, not to be served, but to serve, and to offer His life on behalf of others.

It is no surprise that the Franciscan ideal was too pure, too unrealistic to survive the allurements of time and history. Soon after Francis' death in 1224, he who had renounced all property had a beautiful church building erected over the place of his birth! Still, the legacy of Francis, a saint beloved by Protestants and Catholics alike, is a reminder that Jesus' call to follow Him can break through any social barrier or ecclesiastical system.

We can still see the spirit of Francis living today in a figure like Mother Teresa. We can still join our prayer to his when we say, "Lord make me an instrument of Thy peace." And we can still lift our hearts to the Christ who calls us, no less than He did Francis, to see the world through the eyes of the Savior's love.

"REFORM IS NECESSARY!"

Francis was not the last medieval Christian to challenge the structures of the church. John Wycliffe in England, John Huss in Bohemia, Savonarola in Florence — these, and many others, all called for a reform of the church, in head and in members. As one contemporary theologian put it, "The whole world, the clergy, all Christian people, know that a reform of the church is both necessary and expedient. Heaven and the elements demand it. The very stones will soon be constrained to join in the cry."

The reform of the church would come, but with consequences that no one, from Augustine on, could have predicted.

If the Middle Ages began with the fall of Rome in 410, they can be fairly said to have concluded with the fall of another city in 1453. For a thousand years, Constantinople had withstood assault after assault. But on the eve of the Reformation, this great light in the East, the last outpost of classical Christian antiquity, succumbed to the forces of the Ottoman Turks. Hundreds of Greek scholars fled to the West, carrying with them precious manuscripts, relics of the Eastern saints, and a fresh knowledge of the language in which the New Testament was written. In 1516, Desiderius Erasmus published the first critical edition of the Greek New Testament in Basel, Switzerland. A few months later, Martin Luther, an Augustinian monk in Wittenberg, Germany, was pouring over that same text, desperately seeking to discover the meaning of the Gospel of the grace of God. In all of these events, we can hear the death throes of the Middle Ages, and the birth pangs of the modern world.

THE REFORMATION: DIVISION AND RENEWAL BETWEEN MEDIEVAL AND MODERN TIMES

PROGRAM SCRIPT

It was the best of times, it was the worst of times, it was the age of wisdom, it was the age of foolishness, it was the epoch of belief, it was the epoch of incredulity, it was the season of light, it was the season of darkness, it was the spring of hope, it was the winter of despair, we had everything before us, we had nothing before us, we were all going direct to heaven, we were all going direct the other way.

Charles Dickens, *A Tale of Two Cities*

MARTIN LUTHER

These are the opening lines from Charles Dickens' famous novel, *A Tale of Two Cities*, describing the spirit of the age on the eve of the French Revolution in the 18th century. But they also describe the mood and events on the eve of the Protestant Reformation (1517) in the 16th century. Seldom, if ever, has there been an age more similar to our own than the world into which Martin Luther was born in 1483.

It was the best of times! It was an age of exploration and discovery. Martin Luther was only nine years old when Christopher Columbus set sail for India and stumbled onto a new hemisphere. Back in Germany, the printing press had just been invented, making literacy and learning available to common people. In art and architecture, the glory of the Renaissance cast its spell over all of Europe. It was the age of Raphael (1483-1520) and Michelangelo (1475-1564) and Leonardo Da Vinci (1452-1519). It was the age of Johannes Kepler (1571-1630) and Galileo (1564-1642), whose invention of the telescope opened the heavens to the human eye.

But it was also the worst of times, for it was an age of violence and death, an age of great anxiety about the very meaning of life itself. What AIDS and cancer are to us, the Bubonic Plague or "Black Death" was to the world of the Reformation, a devastating disease without a cure. Peasants revolting against their lords, kings against the emperor, thousands of so-called "witches" put to death in a frenzy of persecution.

The "Dance of Death" was a prominent motif in church painting and architecture of the period. The skeleton-figure of death, often laughing, is shown leading a parade of nobles, peasants, artisans, and clerics to a common grave.

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As William Shakespeare (1564-1616) described it,

What raging of the sea! Shaking of earth! Commotion in the winds! Frights, changes, horrors, divert and crack, rend and deracinate the unity and married calm of states quite from their fixture. Oh, when degree is shaped, which is the ladder of all high designs, the enterprise is sick.

And right in the middle of it all sat the Church. The Church of Jesus Christ, against which, he had said, the gates of hell would never prevail. ("And I tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it " [Matthew 16:18, NIV].) But the Church had become corrupt in many ways and beset by sexual immorality extending even to the papacy. Alexander VI (1492-1503), one of the most notorious of the Renaissance popes, boasted numerous illegitimate children, some of whom he had elevated to high offices in the church.

DESIDERIUS ERASMUS

One of those who protested against such abuses in the church was a scholar from Holland named Desiderius Erasmus, himself the illegitimate son of a Dutch priest. Erasmus was a moral reformer. He saw little value in external religious rites such as pilgrimages or the rosary or relics.

"Oh," he said, "the folly of those who revere a bone of the Apostle Paul enshrined in glass and feel not the glow of his spirit enshrined in his epistles!"

Erasmus' solution was to go back to the sources of classical and Biblical antiquity, especially the New Testament. In 1516, he published the first critical edition of the Greek New Testament. It was this very volume that Martin Luther would use to develop his own far more penetrating critique of the Medieval Church.

1. JUSTIFICATION BY FAITH ALONE

The Reformation began on October 31, 1517, when Martin Luther posted his 95 Theses on the door of the castle church in Wittenberg. He was protesting the religious "hucksterism" of a Dominican friar named Tetzel who had come into his territory hawking indulgences on behalf of the pope. Through the purchase of an indulgence, one could receive great spiritual benefits including release time from purgatory.

Luther was incensed.

If the pope had so much control over purgatory, he said, why doesn't he just open the door and let everybody out? The true treasure of the church, he said, is not the accumulated merits of the saints, but rather the Holy Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. And when Jesus said, "Repent," He did not mean (as the Latin

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Vulgate [the Latin translation of the Bible]) had translated it, "Do penance," but rather (as Erasmus' Greek New Testament had shown), he called for a change of heart and mind. He meant for the entire life of believers to be one of repentance.

Luther was protesting against "cheap grace." He fought the church, not because it demanded too much, but because it demanded too little.

But how did Luther come to this insight?

"I did not learn my theology at once," he said. "I had to follow where my temptations led me. It is not by reading or writing or speculating that one becomes a theologian. It is rather by living, dying, and being damned that makes one a theologian."

In fact, Luther had no intention of becoming a theologian when he started his academic career. His father had wanted him to be a lawyer. Luther had taken up this discipline at the University of Erfurt. Returning home on spring break, he was caught in a terrible thunderstorm. And he cried out, "Saint Anna, help me, I will become a monk!" So against the wishes of his father and his friends, Luther joined the order of the Augustinian Monks.

In the monastery, he sought to find an answer to the question which plagued his soul day and night: "How can I find a gracious God? How can I know that God is for me, not against me? What can I do to please God, to satisfy God, to constitute some claim upon God?"

Luther was not just a regular monk, but a scrupulous one. The earliest woodcuts we have of him show his face emaciated, his cheeks protruding. "If ever a monk got to heaven because of his monkery, it was I," Luther later recalled. He would go without food and water for days on end. In the winter-time, he would sleep on the stone floor of his monastic cell without a blanket until he shivered to the bone. But he was always asking himself, "Am I hungry enough? Am I cold enough? Have I suffered enough? Is there ever any 'enough' to satisfy God?"

Martin Luther would go to confession, time and again, pouring out all of his sins, but still there was no relief. He even began to doubt the goodness and mercy of God.

"Man," said his confessor, "you're making it too hard. All you have to do is just love God."

"Love God?!" retorted Luther. "I hate Him!"

Luther found his way through this dark night of the soul by turning to the scriptures. Day and night he would pour over the text of the Bible. In reading through the Psalter, he came to this verse in Psalms 22: "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" (Ps. 22:1, KJV). Luther realized, of course, that these were the very words Jesus had quoted on the cross (Matt. 27:46). Forsaken. Jesus forsaken.

"That's exactly the way I feel," thought Luther. "And I thought that I was the only one! How could it be that Jesus, the sinless son of God, felt Himself

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estranged from His Father, on our side, crying out in the darkness the very question that I have asked a thousand times, 'My God, my God, why?'"

Luther then came to Romans 1, where Saint Paul quoted the Old Testament prophet Habakkuk: "The righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith, as it is written, the righteous shall live by faith (Romans 1:17, NIV). Luther had always understood that verse to refer to the righteousness by which God punishes the unrighteous. He thought of Christ, as Michelangelo had painted Him on the Cistine Chapel, the Judge sitting on the rainbow, consigning men and women, sheep and goats, to His right and His left. It was this God whom Luther could not love, but rather hated and murmured against in his heart.

But as Luther studied that expression, "the righteousness of God," he came to see that it refers to the righteousness by which God, because of Jesus Christ, accounts the sinner acceptable in His sight. Justification by faith, "*allein*," as Luther said in German, "alone," apart from good works and self-earned merits.

When I realized this, Luther said, I felt as if the gates of paradise had opened and I had entered in. It was as though I had gone from the darkest midnight into the brilliance of the noonday sun. I felt as if I had been born again.

The entire Reformation grew out of Luther's fundamental insight into the gracious character of God. Luther had come to this insight through his study of the Bible.

"Everyone," he said, "should be able to take the Word of God in their hands and read it with their eyes. The farm boy at his plow, the milkmaid at her pail, as well as the learned clerics and scholars in the university."

Perhaps Luther's single greatest contribution to the Reformation was his translation of the Bible into his native German tongue. In 1519, Luther was drawn into a public debate with the Roman Catholic theologian John Eck, the relative authority of scripture and tradition. Luther had great respect for the writings of the early church fathers and the decisions made at early church councils. But all of these, he believed, should be subordinated to the authority of God's written Word in Holy Scripture.

"The Bible is God's Word clad in human words, just as Christ, the eternal Word of God, is incarnate in the garment of His humanity. Christ lies in the crib of the Scriptures," Luther says, "wrapped in swaddling clothes."

So alongside the doctrine of justification by faith alone, we place a second principle of the Reformation: the sufficiency of God's revelation in Holy Scripture alone.

2. THE SUFFICIENCY OF SCRIPTURE

The last thing in the world Luther wanted to do was to start a new church. To the end of his life he saw himself as a faithful servant of the one holy, catholic, and apostolic church.

But in 1521, Luther was brought before the emperor, Charles V, at the Diet of

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Worms and was asked by the emissary of the pope to recant what he had written.

“Unless I am persuaded by reason and by conscience,” he said, “I cannot and I will not recant. Here I stand, I can do no other, so help me God. Amen.”

From this time on there was little hope that the division in the church could be patched over. Luther’s movement could not be stopped. Soon the cry for reformation was being heard all over Europe.

HULDRYCH ZWINGLI

In Switzerland, a parallel and yet distinctive movement for reform was led by a powerful preacher named Huldrych Zwingli. Zwingli had been deeply influenced by Erasmus as well as Luther. He committed to memory all of Paul’s letters in the original Greek! On January 1, 1519, Zwingli was called to be the pastor of the famous Great Minster Church in Zurich. He entered the pulpit, opened his Bible to the Gospel of Matthew, chapter one, and began a series of expository sermons from the New Testament. Four years later, on January 29, 1523, some 600 citizens crowded into the Zurich town hall to hear a public disputation between Zwingli and John Fabri, a representative of the local bishop. Zwingli brought his Greek New Testament and Hebrew Old Testament to which he referred again and again during the debate. At the end of the day, the city council agreed that Zwingli could continue to preach God’s Word and to lead the church to abandon those traditional practices which had no foundation in Scripture.

In 1529, Zwingli and Luther came face to face for the only time in their lives. They met in the city of Marburg, Germany, to discuss their differing views of the Lord’s Supper. Luther, for all his dislike of the medieval doctrine of transubstantiation, still believed that Christ was bodily present in the sacrament of the altar “in, with, and under” the elements of bread and wine.

Zwingli, on the other hand, saw the Lord’s Supper as a memorial feast. The same concerns which had led Zwingli to oppose images and to remove the organ from the church in Zurich also prompted him to oppose Luther on this point.

Salvation was by Christ alone, through faith alone, not through faith and bread, Zwingli said. The body of Christ is in heaven, at God’s right hand, not on the various altars of Christendom when Christians gather to celebrate the Lord’s Supper.

At the height of the debate, Luther took a piece of chalk and wrote on the table before him the Latin word *est*. This is my body, Jesus had said. To believe anything less was to deny the incarnation itself, Luther believed.

The two great leaders were never reconciled. As a consequence, the Protestant Reformation developed into two competing camps with different confessions: the Lutheran tradition and the Reformed tradition.

Today, the visitor to Zurich, Switzerland, is shown a statue of Zwingli near

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the Limmat River. Zwingli stands with the Bible in one hand and the sword in the other. In 1531, Zwingli was killed at the Battle of Kappel wielding such a sword. But the movement he had started soon spread to other Swiss cities, including Basel, Bern, and Geneva. From Geneva, the Reformed tradition was given a new impetus under the direction of John Calvin, a brilliant Frenchman trained in law at the University of Paris.

JOHN CALVIN

We know very little about Calvin's conversion to the Protestant faith, which must have occurred sometime in the 1530's. He only referred to it once, and, then, in a very cryptic way:

"By a sudden conversion," he said, "God subdued my heart to teachability."

In 1536, Calvin found himself in the city of Basel, a refugee from religious persecution in France. Here he published a little book, *The Institutes of the Christian Religion*. It was a brilliant, systematic introduction to Protestant theology. Calvin said he hoped that it would be "a key to open a way for all children of God into a good and right understanding of Holy Scripture."

During the course of his life, Calvin revised and expanded *The Institutes* numerous times until the definitive edition of 1559. The basic outlines of *The Institutes* follows the order of the "Apostles' Creed." It is divided into four books, each of which deals with a cluster of key theological ideas.

THE INSTITUTES:

- BOOK ONE is about the knowledge of God, His general revelation in creation, and His special revelation in the Bible along with the concern He shows for His people through His providential care.
- BOOK TWO focuses on the person and work of Jesus Christ, His atoning death on the cross, which is God's remedy for the sin and guilt of lost humanity.
- BOOK THREE explores the work of the Holy Spirit in salvation, the life of prayer, the mystery of predestination, and the Christian hope in resurrection.
- BOOK FOUR is about the church. In one sense, Calvin explains, the church is invisible. It is the company of all God's redeemed ones throughout all the ages of time. We can never be absolutely sure who is a part of this invisible church because God's elect are known with certainty only to Himself. But in this life, we are also concerned with the visible church, the blueprint for which is

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found in the New Testament. Calvin had very clear ideas about the organization of the visible church, its officers, sacraments, and responsibilities in the world. Calvin saw the church as a dynamic presence in the world, responsible not only for religious activities but for giving shape and direction to every aspect of culture and life. “The world,” Calvin said, “is the theater of God’s glory.”

Calvin sought to extend the lordship of Christ into every area of life. In the 19th century, the great Calvinist prime minister of Holland put it, “There is not one square inch of the entire creation about which Jesus Christ does not cry out, ‘This is Mine! This belongs to Me!’”

Unlike Lutheranism, which remained largely contained within Germany and the Scandinavian countries, Calvinism was an international movement of great political and social significance. From Hungary and Poland in the east, to the Netherlands, Scotland, and eventually New England in the west, Calvinism sought to give form and shape to an emerging new world. While the Anabaptists rejected the world as the domain of darkness and evil, and while Luther accepted the world as a necessary evil with which the Christian had to co-exist, Calvin sought to overcome the world, to transform and re-form the world on the basis of the Word of God and His providential purpose in creation and redemption.

The popular stereotype of Calvin as a “cold-blooded tyrant ruling Geneva with an iron fist” does not fit the facts of history. Calvin was, as Luther declared all Christians to be, at one and the same time both a sinner and a saint. Neither Luther nor Calvin was interested in promoting a personality cult. Luther was upset when some of his followers started calling themselves “Lutherans.”

“Who am I,” he asked, “poor, stinking bag of maggots that I am that the servants of Christ should be called after my evil name?”

Calvin died on May 27, 1564, and at his own request, he was buried in an unmarked grave. His life’s goal was to be a faithful servant of the Word of God. No doubt, he would have agreed with one of his spiritual decedents, John Robinson, (1576-1625) the pastor of the pilgrim fathers: “I have followed Calvin no further than he has followed Christ. For the Lord hath yet more truth and light to break forth from His Holy Word.”

A MIGHTY FORTRESS

Luther, Zwingli, and Calvin were men of great courage and conviction whose legacy lives on in our own faith today. Every time we stand to sing, “A Mighty Fortress Is Our God”; every time we reach for our Bible and open it to read a certain passage; every time we hear the preaching of God’s Word or gather as a community of believers in a church meeting, we are bearing witness to the abiding validity of the Reformation. The torch lighted by these reformers

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was carried forward by others, sometimes in ways that no one could have predicted.

Who would have thought in 1525, when Pope Clement VII awarded the title “Defender of the Faith” to King Henry VIII for having written a lusty treatise against Luther, that within another generation, England would become, by royal edict, a Protestant commonwealth, with the worship of the church forever enriched by Archbishop Thomas Cranmer’s liturgical masterpiece, *The Book of Common Prayer*?

Who could have predicted in 1520, when Luther published his treatise, *The Freedom of a Christian*, that some of his erstwhile followers, the Radicals and Anabaptists, would interpret freedom in a vastly different way, leading them to abandon infant baptism and to organize congregational churches for believers only?

Who, in 1536, could have foreseen the revolutionary consequences of Calvin’s Reformation? Zwingli once compared the Word of God to the Rhine River: “One can perhaps dam it up for a while,” he said, “but it is impossible to stop it.”

Looking back on the Reformation, we can give thanks for the great achievements of that age:

- the recovery of the gospel,
- the translation and distribution of the Bible among the common people,
- the great doctrines of justification by faith alone,
- the priesthood of all believers,
- the lordship of Christ over all of life.

The Reformation was not an event which happened once and for all in the 16th century, for the church faces always anew the decision for faith or for unbelief, for obedience or for stagnation. And thus the reformers have bequeathed to us the concept of *ecclesia semper referenda*, the Church always reforming and ever in need of further reformation. And so, in spite of their foibles, blind spots, and sins, we continue to build on the good foundation laid by these reformers. As the Swiss-born philosopher, Ernst Bloch (1880-1959), has written: “Despite their suffering, their fear and trembling, in all these souls there glows the spark from beyond, and it ignites the tarrying kingdom.”

THE AGE OF REASON AND PIETY: THE CHURCH IN EARLY MODERN TIMES

PROGRAM SCRIPT

During the two centuries between the death of Martin Luther in 1546 and the conversion of John Wesley in 1738, the Christian world experienced a major paradigm shift from the Age of Faith to the Age of Reason. The tension between these two, faith and reason, was always there, like an underground stream running just beneath the surface, sometimes unseen, at other times erupting like a geyser into full view. It is a conflict embedded within the very bedrock of Christianity itself.

Jesus said that we were to love God with all our mind. (Matthew 22:37: "Jesus replied: 'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.'" NIV) Yet Saint Paul warned against an over reliance on philosophy and vain speculation. Tertullian's famous question, "What has Athens to do with Jerusalem? What has the church to do with the academy?" echoes down the centuries.

In the early church, Augustine struggled to integrate his Christian faith into the world view of neoplatonism. In the Middle Ages, Thomas Aquinas tried to harmonize the competing claims of nature and grace. It was not an easy task. Three years after his death, many of his ideas were condemned by the Bishop of Paris, indicating that, at least in the minds of some, Thomas had not perfectly succeeded in this quest. In the sixteenth century, the Reformation asserted the priority of revelation over reason, but neither Luther nor Calvin were prepared to abandon the life of the mind. Only when human reasoning was elevated above faith was it seen as an enemy of God, a beast or, as Luther called it, "The Devil's Whore."

THE MAJOR PARADIGM SHIFT

The period immediately after the Reformation was a time of great triumph in many ways. The ideas of Luther and Calvin were expressed in classic statements of faith: "What is the chief end of man?" asks the Westminster Shorter Catechism. "To glorify God and to enjoy Him forever."

This was the age of Johann Sebastian Bach, who inscribed on every piece of music he wrote the words: *Soli Deo Gloria!*, "To God alone be the glory!" This was also the age of John Bunyan and John Milton, of artists Rubens and Rembrandt, and the amazing art and architecture of the Baroque period, all majestic witnesses to the coherence and power of the Christian vision.

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But just beneath the surface, enormous changes were taking place in the way human beings conceived the world and their own place within it. In 1543, three years before Luther's death, the Polish astronomer Nicolas Copernicus' book, *On the Revolutions of the Heavenly Bodies*, turned on its head the cosmology of the ancient world that had held sway for over one thousand years. "The Earth is not the center of the universe," Copernicus said, "but merely one of several planets revolving around the sun." To this day we have yet to grasp the full significance of the Copernican Revolution, for we still speak anachronistically of "the sun rising and setting."

Equally important was the work of René Descartes, a French philosopher who introduced a new method of knowledge based on the principle of radical doubt. Archbishop William Temple once said that the most disastrous moment in European history was perhaps the bitterly cold day in the winter of 1620, when Descartes climbed into the alcove of a stove and resolved to search for a new kind of philosophy. Out of this effort came his famous principle *cogito, ergo sum*, "I think, therefore I am." Or as he also expressed it, "I doubt, therefore I am." Descartes himself remained a nominal Catholic. The result of his philosophy was to split apart reality into mind and matter and to reduce God to the level of a hypothesis called in, as it were, merely to guarantee the validity of human thinking.

Building on the work of Copernicus and Descartes, Sir Isaac Newton finally drew up, in complete mathematical form, a mechanical view of nature. Newton was a devout Christian who accepted the claim of the Bible. He even wrote a commentary on the Book of Revelation. But later philosophers found it easier to accept his mathematics than his theology, thus deepening the rift between faith and reason.

THE AGE OF ENLIGHTENMENT BORN

In such an atmosphere, the "Age of Enlightenment" was born. What is "The Enlightenment"? It was a tendency, a spirit which permeated the culture and religion of the 17th and 18th centuries, characterized by two primary thoughts:

- The first we might call "The Rise of the Imperial Self." The great German philosopher, Immanuel Kant, summarized the Enlightenment in two Latin words: *supere aude!* — "dare to think for yourself! "To think for one's self meant to seek the supreme touchstone of truth in one's own reason.
- And this implied the second principle of the Enlightenment: a radical suspicion and distrust of authority and tradition, especially Christian authority and tradition.

THE AGE OF REASON AND PIETY: THE CHURCH IN EARLY MODERN TIMES

The Enlightenment attack on Christianity took two forms. One was biting sarcasm and ridicule. “Ecrasez l’infâme!” shouted Voltaire, “Destroy the infamous thing!”— meaning historic Christianity. To be sure, there was much about the church which deserved criticism: for more than one hundred years Europe had been ravaged by fierce wars of religion, Catholics fighting Protestants; and there was immorality and corruption in the church itself. But Voltaire was less interested in reform than in refutation. He denounced Christian doctrine and belief. He scoffed at the miracles in the Bible and made fun of traditional Christian teaching: “If Jesus had been taken up to a hill where he could see all the kingdoms of the earth,” he asked, “why hadn’t he discovered America instead of Columbus? And why had Jesus not returned to earth as He had promised to establish the kingdom of God with power and great glory? What had detained him? Was the fog too thick perhaps?”

What Voltaire tried to do with a sneer, the English deists wanted to accomplish through a religion of reason and refinement. The titles of their writings say it all: *Christianity Not Mystrious*, *Christianity as Old as the Creation*. No special revelation, no miraculous Incarnation was necessary.

In America, Thomas Jefferson, who was greatly influenced by the deists, published a special edition of the New Testament in which he literally cut out all of the verses which were offensive to his reason: No demons, no judgment, no hell, no miraculous interventions from above.

CHRISTIAN RESPONSE TO THE ENLIGHTENMENT

What was the Christian response to The Enlightenment? Some Christians tried to answer the deists and the skeptics on their own terms. The philosopher John Locke, wrote a book entitled *The Reasonableness of Christianity*. Bishop Joseph Butler published his *Analogy of Religion*, claiming that the intricate design of the universe implied a Designer, that is, God. While this kind of apologetics had a place in Christian thinking, it did little to bring genuine renewal and revival to the church.

For this we must look elsewhere: to France, for the lonely witness of Blaise Pascal; to Germany, where the Pietists stressed the importance of the new birth; and finally, to England, where John Wesley and the Methodist revival made a lasting impact on the church in the modern world.

Pascal was a brilliant philosopher, mathematician, and inventor. He was the first man to wear a wristwatch. He also invented one of the earliest forms of the computer as well as the first underground public transportation system for the city of Paris. Pascal had a profound sense of the ambiguity of human existence:

What a novelty, what a portent, what a chaos, what a mass of contradictions, what a prodigy is man! Judge of all things. A ridiculous earthworm who is none the less the repository of truth. A

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sink of uncertainty and error. The glory and scum of the world. A chaos suspended over an abyss.

Pascal was a Roman Catholic, of course. He defended the Jansenists, a radical Augustinian order opposed by the Jesuits. He agreed with the Jansenist emphasis on the sovereignty of God and the surprise of grace in the Christian life. Pascal was no irrationalist, but he realized the limitations of human thinking. "The heart has its reasons which are unknown to reason," he said. When Pascal died at the age of 39, a statement of his own personal conversion was found on his body, sewn into the fabric of his shirt. It said this:

The year of grace, 1654: Monday, November 23, day of St. Clement, pope and martyr, and others in the martyrology. Vigil of St. Chrysogonus, martyr, and others from about half past ten in the evening to about half past midnight. Fire. God of Abraham, God of Isaac, God of Jacob, not of the philosopher and the scientists, certitude, certitude. Emotion. Joy. Peace. God of Jesus Christ.

Pascal's writings were not widely known outside of France in his own lifetime, but many of his ideas were echoed among the Pietists in Germany. Pietism arose as a protest movement within the tradition of Lutheran Orthodoxy. The Pietists stressed the religious renewal of the individual and experiential oneness with God over against arid scholasticism in theology and extreme formalism in worship.

John Wesley summarized the spirit of Pietism as well as anyone when he said,

How plain and simple is this? Is not this the sum? One thing I know: I was blind, but now I see. If then it were possible (which I can see that it is not) to shake the traditional evidence of Christianity, still he that has the internal evidence would stand firm and unshaken.

Pietism was about "the internal evidence," and this led them to stress three things:

- The importance of the new birth, which implied a life of holiness and complete devotion to Christ. "We are called to be *ein ganzer Christ* (as they said in German), "a whole, complete Christian. We cannot be 'almost' Christians. 'Almost' a son is a bastard; 'almost' sweet is unsavory; 'almost' hot is lukewarm (which God speweth out of his mouth). So 'almost' a Christian is not a Christian."

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- But for all of their stress on individual renewal, the Pietists were not like the early monks who lived alone in the desert. The context of personal renewal was the small group, the prayer circle, the Bible study fellowship. Within such small groups a much higher level of commitment could be demanded than was possible within the larger congregation. Not surprisingly, these smaller groups became “little churches within the church,” sometimes leading to division and separation, but sometimes working as a reforming leaven within the larger group.
- A third mark of Pietist spirituality was a sense of opposition to the world. *Gotteskinder* are not in league with *Weltkinder*. God’s children march to a different drummer than the children of the world. To some Pietists, separation from the world meant a distinctive form of dress and food as well as foreswearing such worldly activities as dancing, drinking, the theater, etc. In the quest for authentic Christianity, legalism is always a possibility, but the Pietist reaction can also represent a healthy impulse against a Christianity that has become too accommodated to the culture around it. This tradition lives on today among the Amish and other holiness movements who have willingly separated from the world to maintain the purity of worship and a distinctively Christian lifestyle.

But in its larger expressions, the Pietist movement was both world-affirming and missionary-minded. It was the Pietists who pioneered works of charity among the poor: orphanages, medical missions, and Bible societies. It was also the Pietists (especially the Moravians, who carried the Gospel into the remote corners of the world), who paved the way for the modern missionary movement.

The founder of the Moravian Church was Nikolaus Ludwig von Zinzendorf, a Lutheran nobleman from Saxony. While touring Europe in 1719, Zinzendorf saw a famous painting of Christ wearing the crown of thorns, with the inscription: “All this I did for you. What are you doing for me?” Zinzendorf gathered around him a group of Moravian refugees who dedicated themselves to carrying the Gospel into all the world. The Moravians had a great devotion to Jesus, and many of Zinzendorf’s hymns are still sung by Christians today. And the Methodist revival was born in a Moravian prayer meeting on Aldersgate Street in London, where John Wesley had gone seeking salvation and hope.

THE METHODIST REVIVAL: JOHN AND CHARLES WESLEY

John Benjamin Wesley was born in 1703, one of 19 children born to Samuel and Susanna Wesley. His father was a pastor, and Wesley grew up with the disciplines of the Christian life. When he was only six years old, the parsonage

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caught on fire. Young John nearly perished, being rescued at the last minute. His mother, Susanna, said that he was, “a brand plucked from the burning.” Wesley never forgot this event. Every year, on the anniversary of his rescue, he stopped to thank God for his remarkable providence.

When he and his brother, Charles Wesley, were students at Oxford, they met another young man, the son of an innkeeper, named George Whitefield. All three would later emerge as leaders in the Evangelical Revival. At Oxford, they formed a small Pietist group, which other students nicknamed “The Holy Club.” They would pray together, read the scriptures together, visit the sick and those in prison. They also read other devotional works such as Jeremy Taylor’s *Rules for Holy Living and Dying*, William Law’s *A Serious Call to a Devout and Holy Life*, and Thomas à Kempis’ *The Imitation of Christ*. Charles Wesley later said of these books: “These convinced me more than ever of the absolute impossibility of being half a Christian. I determined by God’s grace to be all devoted to my Lord, to give Him all my soul, my body, and my substance.”

Moved by this kind of commitment, both Wesley brothers volunteered for a stint of missionary service in the new colony of Georgia, where General James Oglethorpe needed chaplains to serve among his settlers, many of whom were recently released prisoners and other “ne’er do wells.”

John Wesley was a notable failure as a minister in Georgia. He fell passionately in love with a young lady named Sophie Hopkey but decided, by casting lots, that he should not marry her. Miss Sophie felt betrayed and misled by Mr. Wesley. Before long, Wesley found himself imprisoned in Savannah, charged with slandering the good name of this young lady.

Somehow he managed to escape by the skin of his teeth and soon found himself on a ship headed back to England. When the ship was caught in a storm at sea, Wesley was deeply impressed by a band of Moravians who faced the danger with great peace and poise. He doubted his own salvation. He wrote in his journal,

I went to America to convert the Indians, but, oh, who shall convert me? Who, what, is he that will deliver me from this evil heart of unbelief: I have a fair summer religion. I can talk well, nay and believe myself, while no danger is near. But let death look me in the face, and my spirit is troubled. Nor can I say, “to die is gain.”

Back in London, he met a group of Moravians, led by Peter Böhler, who invited him to a service of worship held in a little meeting house on Aldersgate Street (not far from St. Paul’s Cathedral). On the evening of May 24, 1738, Wesley went very unwillingly, he said, to a society in Aldersgate Street, where one was reading Luther’s preface to the Epistle to the Romans.

“About a quarter before nine,” John says, “while he was describing the change which God works in the heart through faith in Christ, I felt my heart

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strangely warmed. I felt I did trust in Christ, Christ alone for my salvation; and an assurance was given me that He had taken away my sins, even mine, and saved me from the law of sin and death."

Someone has said that "what happened in that little room was of more importance to England than all of the victories of Pitt by land or by sea." But what did happen in that little room? No doubt, Wesley's Aldersgate experience is one of the most famous conversions in the history of Christianity.

But what was he converted from? He was 34 years old when this happened. He had been brought up in a godly home, educated in the finest schools, ordained as both a deacon and priest in the Church of England. He had been a tutor at Lincoln College, Oxford, and had even served several years on the foreign mission field. Apart from a few wild oats in Georgia perhaps, there is no evidence that Wesley was anything other than a religious man of discipline, devotion, earnest service, and good works. But all of that had left him totally miserable, with no assurance of salvation.

And what was he converted by? There were none of the trappings of modern revivalism — no sawdust trail, no one sang "Just As I Am" or "The Old Rugged Cross." Someone was merely reading a commentary of Luther on a letter of Paul, who was explaining the meaning of the forgiveness that Jesus had brought. But in that moment, Wesley discovered for himself what Jesus had declared, what Paul had known, and what Luther had proclaimed, namely, that no one can find peace of heart by trying to make himself a worthwhile person in the eyes of God. Wesley later said that before Aldersgate, "he had had the faith of a servant. Now he had the faith of a son."

And finally, what was Wesley converted to? Well, in one sense, he was converted to the same kind of work he had been doing all along before Aldersgate. He remained a priest in the Church of England and continued to receive the sacrament of communion once every five days for the rest of his life. He still continued to visit the poor, the sick, the imprisoned. He continued to study and preach from the scriptures. But he was doing all of this now, not as a means to earn favor with God, but in glad and joyful obedience to God's amazing grace in his life.

Wesley was a brilliant organizer and a great popularizer of the evangelical faith among the common people of England. His friend, George Whitefield, persuaded Wesley to start preaching out-of-doors, and soon he was addressing huge throngs of coal miners and factory workers. The poor and the outcast responded gladly to his message.

Wesley had remarkable stamina. During the last 50 years of his life, he travelled 225,000 miles and preached more than 40,000 sermons, (an average of 15 per week). He once remarked that he first began to feel old at 85!

Wesley declared that he had only one point of view: "To promote, so far as I am able, vital, practical religion, and by the grace of God, beget, preserve, and increase the life of God in the soul of men."

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METHODISM: A MOVEMENT ON FIRE!

Methodism was a movement on fire, with John's theology set to music by his brother, Charles, who produced over 7,000 sacred songs and poems. Hymn singing made an enormous contribution to the evangelical revival. The hymns of Charles Wesley were especially powerful, expressing both the joy of the new birth and the doctrinal truths of scripture.

"The world is my parish," Wesley had declared. His movement soon spread beyond England to America and, indeed, throughout the world.

His theology can be summarized in three phrases:

- Faith alone
- Working by love
- Leading to holiness

Wesley brought together the personal and social sides of Christianity. "To turn Christianity into a solitary religion is to destroy it," Wesley said. He proved his contention through his work on behalf of the poor, the enslaved, the imprisoned, the unlearned, and the addicted.

In an age when many Christian leaders were defending the lucrative slave trade, Wesley spoke out against it. On February 24, 1741, Wesley wrote the following letter to William Wilberforce, encouraging him to persevere in the struggle against slavery:

Dear Sir,

Unless God has raised you up for this very thing, you will be worn out by the opposition of men and devils. But if God be for you, who can be against you? Are all of them together stronger than God? O, be not weary of well doing! Go on, in the name of God and in the power of His might, till even American slavery (the vilest that ever saw the sun) shall vanish away before it.

But his concern for the practical application of the Gospel was never divorced from the primary message of God's love and grace in Jesus Christ. In an age when Christianity seemed to be overwhelmed by the rising tide of rationalism and unbelief, the "Evangelical Awakening" ignited new fire in God's people, inspiring them once again to be a vital force in the life of the world. The spirit of that original Wesleyan movement still rings in the words of this Charles Wesley hymn on God's sufficient, sovereign, saving grace:

Father, whose everlasting love thy only Son for sinners gave,
Whose grace to all did freely move
And sent Him down a world to save,
Oh, all ye ends of earth behold the bleeding, all-atoning lamb!
Look unto Him for sinners sold,
Look and be saved through Jesus' name.

A CITY SET ON A HILL: CHRISTIANITY IN THE NEW WORLD

PROGRAM SCRIPT

Martin Luther was only nine years old when Christopher Columbus set sail for India and, in the process, stumbled onto a new hemisphere. Columbus, himself, saw his voyage as a religious mission, the launching of a new crusade which would restore the unity and splendor of medieval Christendom. He had a prophetic role to play, he thought, one foretold long ago by the prophet Isaiah (46:11): “I call a bird of prey from the east, a man of my counsel from a far country. I have spoken, says the Lord, and I will bring it to pass, I have a plan to carry out, and carry it out I will.”

Although Columbus died a pauper, his dreams unfulfilled, the European discovery of the New World did indeed open a new chapter in the history of Christianity.

America was the land of new beginnings. Europe represented for Americans not only the past (which they were eager to forget), but a corrupt past, whose contamination they wished to escape. Here in America, they could build the Holy Commonwealth. Here they could carry out “a lively experiment,” as Baptist pioneer John Clarke said. And here, in the famous words of Massachusetts Bay’s Governor, John Winthrop, they could be “a city set on a hill,” sending forth the light of the Gospel unto the uttermost ends of the earth.

William Blake, the poet, never came to the New World, but he seemed to understand the mystique of the American promise when he wrote:

Tho’ born on the cheating banks of Thames,
Tho’ his waters bathed my infant limbs,
The Ohio shall wash his stains from me,
I was born a slave, but I shall go free.

One constant theme permeates the history of Christianity in America — from the earliest settlements at Jamestown and Plymouth, through the revivals and great awakenings, through the trauma of civil war and reconstruction, to the explosion of the charismatic movement and seeker-friendly mega-churches in the last decades of the twentieth century. It is the mission of fulfilling God’s purpose in the New World in a new way. In this study, we will examine this theme through three major episodes which were crucial in the shaping of Christianity in America:

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- Puritan Foundations
- The Struggle for Religious Liberty
- The First Great Awakening

PURITAN FOUNDATIONS

The Puritan story began, not in New England, but in Old England, during the reign of Queen Elizabeth, when a number of her subjects protested against the slow pace of reform within the established church. They objected to ministers wearing vestments, to kneeling at communion, to the lack of fervent preaching, and to the ritualism of the Book of Common Prayer. All these were vestiges of popery, they said, and should be replaced by a more biblical pattern of worship. Their enemies referred to these zealous reformers in uncomplimentary terms: the “hotter sort of Protestants,” “hot gospelers,” “precisians,” or “Puritans.”

The Puritan strategy was to work for change from within the Church of England, however slow or difficult that might be. Others, however, were less patient. They were “Puritans in a hurry,” so to speak. They wanted *A Reformation Without Tarrying For Any*, as the title of a book by Robert Brown put it in 1583. They would separate from the manifestly false Church of England and restore what they called “the old, glorious face of primitive Christianity,” by starting all over again.

When King James I came to the throne in 1603, he could barely tolerate the Puritans. The Separatists he could not abide. “I will make them conform,” he said, “or else I will harry them out of the land!”

Indeed, many of the Separatists were driven into exile in Holland. But, after living there some 12 years, a band of these Separatists decided to transplant their community to the New World. In a tearful scene of farewell, their pastor John Robinson bade them adieu: “...The Lord knoweth whether ever we shall see your faces again,” he said. “But I am confident that the Lord has more truth and light yet to break forth out of His Holy Word.”

Then on “the tide which stays for no man,” as William Bradford wrote in his journal, they set sail into the unknown, leaving behind friends, families, and everything they had known.

“But they looked not much on such things,” Bradford wrote, “but lifted their eyes to heaven, their dearest country, for they knew they were but strangers and pilgrims in this world.”

Against all odds, the Pilgrim Fathers survived the treacherous ocean voyage to establish the first beachhead of Protestant Christianity in New England. There, in Plymouth, Massachusetts, “in the desert of dismal circumstances,” as Cotton Mather described their situation, their faith was to be shaken but not destroyed. The Pilgrims established a Christian community of courage and faith which many others would emulate. William Bradford, after serving many years

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as governor of Plymouth, looked back on the experience of the Pilgrims: “As one small candle may light a thousand, so the light here kindled hath shown to many, yea, in some sort to our whole nation.”

But unlike the Pilgrims who came to Plymouth, the Puritans who settled Massachusetts Bay Colony were not Separatists.

“We do not say, ‘Farewell, Babylon! Farewell, Rome!’ But we say, ‘Farewell, dear England! Farewell, the Church of God in England, and the Christian friends there!’ . . . We go to practice the positive part of church reformation and propagate the Gospel in America,” they said.

The Pilgrims had come to light a candle.

The Puritans aimed to build a city set on a hill.

The Puritans exerted an influence on American culture far out of proportion to their numbers. And yet the word “Puritan” has become a derogatory label. H.L. Mencken voiced the popular belief that a Puritan is a person who has “the haunting fear that someone, somewhere, might be having a good time!” But nothing could be further from the truth! The Puritans were exuberant about life. They were painters and poets. They wore bright clothes and lived in beautifully decorated houses. They read great books and listened to great music. They drank rum at wedding parties. And far from being prudes, they reveled in the sensuality of married life.

It is ironic that some of the most revolutionary, forward-looking movements in history have taken their cues from the past. Puritanism was a “back to the future” movement which called the people of New England back to God, back to the Bible, and back to the Reformation.

Like Martin Luther and John Calvin before them, Puritans were Augustinian in theology. Salvation was the work of grace which resulted in the miracle of conversion — a turning from sin to trust the promise of forgiveness and justification through Christ’s death on the cross. Conversion required the preparation of the heart, and many Puritans recorded the struggles of their soul in journals and personal diaries. In this way, the Puritans sought to bring every activity and relationship into conformity with the will of God as revealed in His Word, the Bible. William Ames said it beautifully when he defined theology as “the science of living in the presence of God.”

THE STRUGGLE FOR RELIGIOUS LIBERTY

But the Puritans were not only interested in personal spiritual renewal. They also wanted to create an ordered and godly society, marked by the unity of faith and public life. For the Puritans, New England was, in effect, new Israel — God’s elect people in covenant with their Creator. All of life was made up of interweaving covenantal relationships. The rule of Christ was intended to prevail in all of them — the family, the congregation, and the commonwealth. On every New England town square stood a school house, a church house, and a meeting

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house, representing the three offices of Christ as Prophet, Priest, and King.

Many historians have seen the origins of democracy in these structures, as well as the kind of social vision and public theology which has undergirded reforming efforts in our own day, including the civil rights crusade and the pro-life movement.

The Puritan vision dominated New England for a century and more. But from the first there were dissenters — nonconformists who challenged the close alliance between church and commonwealth. Like the Puritans, the dissenters would have a far greater influence on American Christianity than their slender numbers might warrant. Their story is a part of the ongoing struggle for religious liberty.

Someone has said that the Puritans came to New England to worship God in their own way but not in anybody else's! This was somewhat accurate. Competing religious confessions, coexisting within the same political structure, was a radical thought in the seventeenth century. While the Puritans were settling Boston and Salem, the wars of religion were raging between Protestants and Catholics in Europe. The Puritans harked back to an earlier medieval ideal and insisted upon religious conformity within their colony.

One of the first to challenge this principle was Anne Hutchinson, midwife, nurse, and mother of 15 children. Anne was a devotee of the Reverend John Cotton, a Puritan minister who stressed God's initiative and sovereign grace in salvation. This was the common view of all Puritans. But Anne so stressed God's grace, that she left no room for the moral law in the life of the believer. Her position was called antinomianism, which means "against the law," and it seemed to undermine the moral basis of New England society itself. If the Ten Commandments had become obsolete, how could there be laws against adultery, theft, or even murder?

As "a woman of ready wit and a bold spirit," Anne began to hold meetings in her house. Puritan sermons were criticized, and she gave out teachings which she claimed were the result of direct inspiration by the Holy Spirit. This was too much for the pastors and magistrates of Massachusetts Bay! Anne Hutchinson was excommunicated and banished from the colony in 1637. Driven to New Netherlands, she and five of her young children were killed in an Indian raid five years later. It was considered by some her "just dessert."

If Anne Hutchinson's theological ideas were unsettling to the Puritans, Roger Williams' doctrine of soul liberty was an outrage! Roger Williams was a brilliant thinker, a graduate of Cambridge University, and sometime minister in both Plymouth and Salem. As a strict Separatist, Williams criticized Puritan congregations for having fellowship with the Church of England. He also criticized the whole system of church/state relations in Massachusetts Bay.

In the Old Testament, he said, God had a national people, the Jews, but now, He has only a congregational people. The state is ordained of God to regulate

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the material affairs of life. But civil magistrates have no authority over the souls of their subjects. Williams summed up his ideas in his famous *The Bloody Tenant of Persecution*. God alone is the Lord of the conscience, he argued. The persecutor is a soul-murderer. Religious coercion is never justified.

“Having bought truth dear,” he cried, “we must not sell it cheap — no, not the least grain of it for the whole world.”

Like Anne Hutchinson, Roger Williams was found guilty of spreading “diverse new and dangerous opinions” and was exiled from Massachusetts. Leaving behind his wife and small child, he walked southward “in the bitter winter season” of 1636. He wandered in the wilderness “sorely tossed, not knowing what bread or bed did mean.” When he finally arrived in Narragansett Bay, he purchased a parcel of land from the Indians. There he established a new settlement, which he named “Providence,” since God’s providence had guided him through great distress.

Thus Roger Williams became the founder of Rhode Island, the first colony established on the principle of religious liberty. The Puritans of Boston called Rhode Island “the latrine of New England” because it permitted all sorts of religious beliefs and made no religious requirements for citizenship. But the Puritan viewpoint prevailed. Many others, however, would suffer greatly for their faith before religious freedom became the norm in the New World. For instance:

- In 1651, Baptist preacher Obadiah Holmes was publicly whipped for teaching that baptism should be administered by immersion for believers only.
- In 1654, Henry Dunster, the first president of Harvard, was pressured from office for objecting to infant baptism.
- In 1660, one of Anne Hutchinson’s friends, Mary Dyer, who had become a Quaker, was banished three times. She was finally hanged to death on Boston Common when she would not promise never to return to bear witness to her faith. “Why don’t you stay down in Rhode Island?” her accusers asked. “No,” she replied, “the whole earth is the Lord’s, and the fullness thereof.”

After the American Revolution, religious freedom was protected by the First Amendment to the Constitution. But the continued existence of slavery posed a terrible dilemma for a people who believed that God alone was Lord of the conscience. Could there be religious liberty without basic human equality, especially when the Constitution itself considered slaves as only three-fourths of a human being?

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On the other side of the bloody conflict (which answered that question by tearing a nation apart), Abraham Lincoln reached back to the original Puritan ideal of God's sovereign plan at work among men and nations: "The purposes of the Almighty are perfect and must prevail, though we erring mortals may fail to accurately perceive them in advance — the judgments of the Lord are true and righteous all together."

Christians in every age have struggled with the difficult task of passing on their faith intact to the rising generation. The Puritans were no exception. By the early eighteenth century, the original Puritan vision of America as "a city set on a hill" had grown dim with age. Could Puritanism survive its own success? While their errand in the wilderness increasingly prospered, their hearts' desire for God seemed to diminish. Cotton Mather observed, "Piety has begotten prosperity, and the daughter has devoured the mother."

A new form of sermon literature called the "jeremiad" appeared as Puritan preachers bemoaned the loss of fervor and zeal in their congregations. On the eve of the first great awakening, the Reverend Samuel Wigglesworth exclaimed: "We have a goodly exterior form of religion, yet this is but the remains of what we once might show, the shadow of past and vanished glory."

In this context, a series of religious revivals swept through the American colonies between 1739 and 1745. This "great and general awakening," as it was called, was to leave an indelible mark on the character of American Christianity.

THE FIRST GREAT AWAKENING

The theologian of the Great Awakening was Jonathan Edwards, whom Perry Miller once aptly described as "the greatest theologian ever to grace the American scene." The precocious son of a congregationalist minister, Edwards was born in the same year as John Wesley, 1703. Ten years later, he was called to succeed his famous grandfather, Solomon Stoddard, as pastor of the Church at Northampton, Massachusetts.

Edwards was an evangelical Calvinist. No one before or since has written so deeply, or with great clarity, on the themes of election, predestination, and justification by faith. The modern critical edition of his writings fill some 20 hefty volumes. But he was not a stuffy academic! He had a great love for, and an almost mystical devotion, to Jesus Christ.

Edwards told of an experience he had in 1737 when riding out into the woods for his health. He was suddenly overwhelmed with the sense of the glory of the Son of God.

"The person of Christ," he said, "appeared ineffably excellent in a flood of tears. Weeping aloud, I felt my soul to be emptied and annihilated; I desired to lie in the dust and to be full of Christ alone; to love Him with a holy and pure love; to trust in Him, to serve Him and follow Him with a divine and heavenly purity."

Edwards was a complete stranger to that separation of “heart” and “head” that has so often plagued evangelical religion.

The Great Awakening came to Northampton in 1734 while Edwards was preaching a series of doctrinal sermons from the letters of St. Paul. Edwards later documented the awakening in his *A Faithful Narrative of the Surprising Work of God*: “A great earnest concern about the great things of religion and the eternal world became universal in all parts of the town, and among persons of all degrees and all ages. Each day the noise among the dry bones waxed louder and louder.”

In the course of one year, more than 300 persons were converted. Soon the revival spread to other towns in the Connecticut Valley, then throughout New England and the other colonies.

Jonathan Edwards was the “theologian” of the Great Awakening. But its most effective preacher and promoter was George Whitefield, a friend of John Wesley. It was Whitefield who carried the flame of revival from England to the New World, preaching up and down the eastern seacoast from Georgia to Maine. If Edwards was measured and restrained, Whitefield was exuberant and unpredictable. In Philadelphia, Whitefield preached with great passion to a crowd of more than 20,000. The skeptical Benjamin Franklin heard him and was deeply impressed with his sincerity and eloquence.

Not everyone, of course, was equally impressed. Charles Chauncey, of Boston, dismissed Whitefield as “a raving enthusiast,” whose emotional preaching did far more damage than good. One day the two antagonists happened to meet on the street in Boston.

“I am sorry to see you return,” said Chauncey to Whitefield, to which Whitefield replied, “So is the devil!”

When Whitefield died in 1770, an African American servant girl and poet, Phyllis Wheatley, wrote a famous eulogy about the Great Awakener:

He leaves the earth for heaven’s unmeasured height,
And worlds unknown receive him from our sight;
There Whitefield wings, with rapid course his way,
And sails to Zion, through vast seas of day.

The effects of the first Great Awakening were momentous. The importance of a personal, experiential faith, “heart religion” (as it was called), became a defining characteristic of the evangelical tradition. The necessity of truly knowing God, not merely knowing about Him, would be stressed by later awakeners and evangelists such as Charles Finney, D. L. Moody, and, in the twentieth century, Billy Sunday (who once said, “Going to church don’t make a man a Christian any more than going to a stable makes a man a horse”).

Revivalism became a major feature on the American religious landscape.

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Jonathan Edwards would doubtless have frowned on some later evangelistic techniques, for they showed little appreciation for what he called “the surprising work of God.” Education also benefitted from the Great Awakening. New colleges and schools were begun: Princeton by the Presbyterians in New Jersey, Brown by the Baptists in Rhode Island. Another result was the rise and growth of denominations: Baptists, Presbyterians, and, later, Methodists. In the numbers game, the Baptists became the biggest winners. In 1740, there were 96 Baptist churches in the American colonies. By 1780, there were 457.

The First Great Awakening also spawned a new kind of interdenominational evangelicalism as Christians joined efforts across denominational lines to support Bible societies, missionary movements, and benevolent works of all kinds. Speaking from the courthouse balcony at Philadelphia in 1740, George Whitefield sounded the call for Christian unity:

“Father Abraham, whom have you in heaven? Any Episcopalians?”

“No!”

“Any Presbyterians?”

“No!”

“Any Independents and Methodists?”

“No, no, no!”

“Whom have you there?”

“We don’t know those names here. All who are here are Christians. . . .”

“Oh, is this the case? Then God help us to forget party names and to become Christians in deed and in truth.”

INTO ALL THE WORLD: THE CHRISTIAN MOVEMENT IN AN AGE OF UNCERTAINTY

PROGRAM SCRIPT

On July 14, 1789, a mob of French peasants in Paris attacked the famous prison, the Bastille, stormed its gates and burned it to the ground. This act of violence marked the beginning of the French Revolution, the first in a series of political and religious revolts which were to shake Europe during the next two centuries. On November 9, 1989, citizens of East and West Berlin converged on the infamous Berlin Wall, which had symbolized the great divide between communism and the free world. With picks and hammers, they chipped away until the wall was reduced to rubble.

In this study, we will look at the history of Christianity between these two defining events — 500 miles and 200 years apart — the fall of the Bastille and the fall of the Berlin Wall. It is the story of the church in an age of revolution.

WILLIAM CAREY

The tiny village of Paulerspury, in the Midlands region of England, is a far cry from either Paris or Berlin. Yet the little boy, who was born here in 1761, would have a revolutionary effect on the Christian witness in the modern world. His name was William Carey, and we remember him today as “the father of modern missions.”

Carey was a poor cobbler by trade, but he had an amazing gift with languages and taught himself Hebrew, Greek, Latin, and Dutch. He had an unusual concern for the world and tried to persuade his fellow Baptists that they should pray for the conversion of those who had never heard the name of Jesus Christ! At one meeting, while he was making such a plea, a senior minister said to him, “Young man, sit down. When God wants to convert the heathen, He will do it without your help or mine!”

In those days, many Christians, even Baptists and other evangelicals, believed that the Great Commission had been fulfilled long ago and was no longer applicable to them. Sometimes they even joined in singing anti-missionary hymns:

Go ye into all the world, the Lord of old did say.

But now where He has placed thee, there He would have thee stay.

Carey could not accept this theology. When he read the Great Commission, it was clear what Jesus meant: “Go ye into all the world and preach the Gospel

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to every creature.” “Go ye,” Carey said, “means you and me. . . here and now.”

On May 31, 1791, he preached a famous sermon based on Isaiah 54:1-5. “Let us expect great things from God,” he urged, “and attempt great things for God.” In the following year, Carey published his ideas in a book, *An Enquiry into the Obligations of Christians to Use Means for the Conversion of the Heathens*. “We must pray, plan, give, and go,” he said. Carey’s *Enquiry* became the manifesto of the modern missionary movement.

On June 13, 1793, Carey, his wife Dorothy, and their four children, including a nursing infant, sailed from England on a Danish ship headed for India. No one on board that ship would ever see their native homeland again. Carey spent 41 years in India translating the Bible into Bengali and scores of other Indian languages and dialects of the East. He and his fellow missionaries at Serampore, near Calcutta, had a phenomenal ministry among the people of India. They preached the Gospel, planted churches, built schools, and worked to overcome inhumane practices, such as infanticide and *sati*, the burning to death of widows.

Carey always insisted that the Gospel was addressed to the whole person. He would have agreed completely with E. Stanley Jones, the great twentieth-century Methodist missionary to India, who said, “A soul without a body is a ghost; a body without a soul is a corpse.” Jesus came to bring good news to the whole person — body and soul.

Although he lived in a radically pluralistic culture, Carey never compromised the essential Christian message. He always proclaimed Jesus Christ as the only way of salvation for all peoples everywhere. Through the publication of his letters and journal, Carey’s work in India became well known throughout the Christian world. Shortly before he died, Carey was visited by Alexander Duff, a preacher from Scotland, who had traveled many miles to see the famous missionary. Carey summoned him to his bed and whispered, “You have been speaking of Dr. Carey, Dr. Carey. When I am gone, speak no more of Dr. Carey; speak instead of Dr. Carey’s Savior.” When he died in 1834, Carey requested that two lines from a hymn by Isaac Watts be inscribed on the simple stone slab that would mark his grave: “A wretched, poor, and helpless worm, on Thy kind arms I fall.”

Although Carey’s work in India was sponsored by the Baptist Missionary Society, he worked closely with Anglicans, Presbyterians, Methodists, and other Christians who were committed to carrying out the “Great Commission.” The modern quest for Christian unity was born on the mission field. Those who followed in his footsteps, such as Henry Martyn, David Livingstone, Lottie Moon, and Hudson Taylor, were all guided by the same principle which informed his approach to ecumenical cooperation: In essentials, unity; in nonessentials, liberty; in all things, charity.

Carey’s mission to India was a catalyst for a great missionary awakening throughout the entire Body of Christ. In 1810, he called for Christians of all denominations to come together to devise a common strategy for world evange-

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lization. Precisely 100 years after Carey had proposed such a gathering in 1910, the first International Missionary Conference convened at Edinburgh.

In recent decades, the modern ecumenical movement has lost influence, as the original vision for missions and evangelism has waned. And yet, the work of God cannot be stopped by official structures and bureaucracies. Today, Christians are cooperating in ways that would have surprised William Carey. Conservative Roman Catholics and evangelical Protestants work and pray together for the sanctity of life, moral values in society, the translation and spread of the Scriptures, the struggle for religious liberty, and the sharing of the Gospel around the world.

THE CHURCH, ATTACKED AND CRITICIZED

During these two centuries, Christianity spread around the world at a phenomenal pace. But spiritual and theological storms were brewing in western Europe, in the heart of what had once been “Christian” civilization. The church was like an army besieged by an unseen foe, unable to respond to new forms of attack and criticism.

- Karl Marx and Friedreich Engels called religion “an opiate of the people.” They exhorted the workers of the world to unite against traditional Christian beliefs.
- Charles Darwin’s theory of evolution seemed to call into question the biblical account of creation.
- Sigmund Freud looked deep into the human soul and pronounced it void of religious significance.
- Few were as bold as Friedreich Nietzsche, who summed up the mood of his age in this way: “The most important of recent events — that God is dead, that the belief in the Christian God had become unworthy of belief — already begins to cast its first shadows over Europe.”

Amidst these shadows of doubt loomed the greater shadow of violence and war. Looking back on all of this, H. Richard Niebuhr characterized the theology which prevailed as the world hovered on the brink of chaos: “A God without wrath brought men without sin into a kingdom without judgment through the ministrations of a Christ without a cross.”

KARL BARTH

In the midst of this malaise, a young pastor in Switzerland, Karl Barth, spoke out for a new kind of theology, very much at odds with the prevailing liberalism of the day. Barth’s sermons were preached within sound of the gunfire of World War I. The liberal theology, he had been taught in the finest German universities, was inadequate to the crisis which engulfed him and his parishioners.

Barth’s answer was to return to the witness of the Reformation and to the Bible, which lay behind it. In 1918, he published his commentary, *On the Epistle*

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to the Romans, which, as someone said, “fell like a bomb on the playground of the theologians.”

“One cannot speak about God,” Barth said, “simply by speaking about man in a loud voice.” What was needed was a recovery of the transcendent God, the God who speaks in the Bible, above all the God who reveals Himself in Jesus Christ.

This medieval painting by Matthias Grunewald, which Karl Barth hung on the wall behind his desk, depicts one of his favorite scenes in the Bible. It shows John the Baptist pointing with his long bony finger to Jesus on the cross. The mission of every theologian, of every Christian, of the church itself, is not to draw attention to ourselves, our ideas, or our achievements. Our job, like that of John the Baptist, is to point others toward the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.

Barth was soon called on to put his theology into practice when he was offered a teaching post in Germany. It was the era of the Weimar Republic. Germany was still reeling from its defeat in World War I. Adolf Hitler and the Nazis were already rising to power. Many Christians in Germany found Hitler’s appeal irresistible. On many issues, Hitler stressed pro-moral and pro-family values. He promised to eliminate pornography and prostitution. Nazism, he said, was the true fulfillment of Christianity, and many German Christians agreed with him. “The swastika on our breasts, the cross in our hearts” was their motto. But the real motive of the Nazi movement was better expressed by Heinrich Himmler who said, “We shall not rest until we have rooted out Christianity.”

THE CONFESSING CHURCH

In 1933, Martin Niemöller, a Lutheran pastor in Berlin, organized resistance to the Nazi takeover of the church. That opposition set up an alternative church structure known as the “Confessing Church.” In May, 1934, Karl Barth drafted the famous “Barmen Declaration,” the theological standard of the Confessing Church.

Article I declares:

Jesus Christ, as He has testified to us in the Holy Scripture, is the one Word of God, whom we are to hear, whom we are to trust and obey in life and in death. We repudiate the false teaching that the church can and must recognize yet other happenings and powers, images and truths as divine revelation alongside this one Word of God, as a source of her preaching. We also repudiate the false teaching that there are areas of our life in which we belong not to Jesus Christ but to another lord, areas in which we do not need justification and sanctification through Him.

Later that same year, Karl Barth found himself in trouble at the University of Bonn when he refused to begin his classes with the Nazi salute, “Heil Hitler!”

He was soon deprived of his teaching post and expelled from Germany.

DIETRICH BONHOEFFER

One of Karl Barth's closest friends and disciples was a young theologian, Dietrich Bonhoeffer. Like Barth, he denounced the paganism and anti-Semitism of the Nazis. For awhile, Bonhoeffer served as the director of an underground seminary, training pastors for the Confessing Church. But near the end of the war, he became involved in a conspiracy to assassinate Hitler. The plot was uncovered, and Bonhoeffer was imprisoned by the Gestapo. Eventually he was executed in the concentration camp at Flossenbergr. In one of his early books, *The Cost of Discipleship*, Bonhoeffer had written, "When Jesus Christ calls a man to follow Him, He calls him to take up his cross and die."

Payne Best, an English officer, shared a prison cell with Bonhoeffer during his last days. "Bonhoeffer was all humility and sweetness," he wrote. "He always seemed to diffuse an atmosphere of happiness, of joy in every smallest event in life, and of deep gratitude for the mere fact that he was alive. He was one of the very few men that I have ever met to whom God was real and close."

Bonhoeffer and Barth were part of a minority of Christians who dared to stand for the truth of the Gospel in a time of great darkness and distress. After World War II, many Christians publicly repented of their complicity in the evil deeds of the Nazi regime. In recent decades, many other Christians have suffered greatly under Communist totalitarianism in China and Russia. In fact, more martyrs have been put to death for their faith in Christ in the twentieth century than in all other persecutions in the history of the church. Now, as then, the price of religious liberty and spiritual integrity is eternal vigilance.

THE CHURCH'S ONE FOUNDATION

Nearly 100 years ago, a group of open-minded, progressive Protestants launched a new journal which they called *The Christian Century*. It is a label that is hard to justify from the record of the past ten decades: two world wars, the Holocaust, poverty, oppression, and dehumanization. Yet Christianity survives, and even thrives, especially in Africa and Latin America, and even in China, where decades of oppression and persecution were not able to extinguish the flame of Christian faith. Korea has also become a dynamic center of Christian witness in Asia, sending thousands of missionaries to people groups yet unreached with the Gospel. Nearly 2000 years ago, Jesus said to His disciples, "Upon this rock I will build my Church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." Christians have often felt that they are here and there, up and down, without sure footing in this present evil world. But the church's one foundation is still Jesus Christ her Lord. His purposes remain intact, undaunted, despite all the changes, successes, and disappointments in the annals of human history.

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EASTERN ORTHODOXY

What is Christianity's future? The German theologian, Wolfhart Pannenberg, has said that the three vital forces within the Christianity of the third millennium will be Eastern Orthodoxy, Roman Catholicism, and conservative evangelicalism. Of these three groups, the Orthodox churches of the East may be the least open to change, tied as they are to national identity and ethnic history. Yet the majesty and dignity of the Orthodox tradition continue to attract new believers while a prophetic figure such as Alexander Solzhenitsin calls for renewal of the Christian faith in both East and West. Orthodox theologians have also been stalwart defenders of classical Christology and the historic doctrine of the Trinity, against more modernist views within the circles of liberal ecumenism. At the same time, others have raised the issue of religious liberty and the freedom to share the Gospel in many countries where orthodox churches are dominant.

ROMAN CATHOLICISM

While Orthodoxy has pursued its own pathway, Roman Catholicism has emerged as an aggressive global movement of numerous national churches, all in fellowship with the Bishop of Rome, who claims to be the vicar of Christ for the whole Christian church. The direction of Roman Catholicism in the third millennium will be shaped by the legacy of the two greatest popes of the twentieth century, John XXIII and John Paul II.

John XXIII was elected pope in 1958. He surprised the world by announcing that he intended to summon a general council to consider many basic matters of church teaching and worship. It was time, he said, to open the windows and let some fresh air into the corridors of the Roman Catholic church. His favorite word for this process was *aggiornamento*, which means "bringing up to date." The work of the Second Vatican Council, which Pope John convened in 1962, has led to major changes within the Catholic church, including an eager desire to read and study the Scriptures, and to conduct worship in the common language of the people. Non-Catholic Christians were no longer automatically condemned but regarded instead as "separated brethren." Vatican II also lifted up the role of the laity in the life of the church and extolled the ideal of religious liberty for all people.

The election of Cardinal Karol Wojtyla as Pope John Paul II in 1978 was another signal of the worldwide significance of the Catholic church. Coming from Poland, John Paul was the first non-Italian pope since the sixteenth century. If John XXIII's watchword was *aggiornamento* (bringing things up to date), John Paul II's keynote theme has been *ressourcement*, (a returning to the resources of tradition and early church thinking). The Pope, supported by his chief theological advisor, Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, has opposed the modernizing theology of scholars such as Hans Küng and the excesses of liberation theology in Latin America. He has also refused to ordain women priests, lift the ban on clerical

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celibacy, or change the church's teaching about birth control, all controversial issues for many Catholics in America. At the same time, John Paul II has had an impact far beyond the bounds of the Church of Rome. His stand against communist oppression in Eastern Europe was a major factor in the disillusion of that totalitarian system. His opposition to what he calls "the culture of death," including abortion and euthanasia, has struck a prophetic note when human life is increasingly regarded as cheap and dispensable. For all these reasons, John Paul II is widely regarded as the greatest living Christian statesman in the world today.

EVANGELICALISM

Pannenberg's third vital force, in the Christianity of the third millennium, is evangelicalism. In 1942, a group of conservative Protestant church leaders met in Chicago to form the National Association of Evangelicals. They were unhappy with the narrow separatism and constant bickering of some of their fellow conservatives — the feudin', fightin', fussin' Fundamentalists. But they were also wary of the liberal drift and compromising theology advanced by many leaders in the mainline Protestant denominations. They wanted to forge a third way between these two extremes.

The distinctive witness of evangelical Christians in the world today has been shaped by numerous entrepreneurial ministries and parachurch movements, such as Campus Crusade for Christ, Prison Fellowship, World Vision, and InterVarsity Christian Fellowship. Three of the greatest leaders of evangelicalism during the past half century have been theologian Carl F. H. Henry, British writer C. S. Lewis, and Southern Baptist evangelist Billy Graham.

KEY FIGURES: HENRY, LEWIS AND GRAHAM

Carl Henry was a founding member of the faculty of Fuller Theological Seminar, and also the founding editor of the evangelical journal *Christianity Today*. His 1947 book, *The Uneasy Conscience of Modern Fundamentalism*, marked a decisive break with stilted patterns of the past in favor of a positive engagement with culture and contemporary social life. Henry's six-volume *magnum opus*, *God, Revelation, and Authority*, defended a high view of biblical inspiration against looser views of scriptural authority.

While Henry wrote as a theologian, C. S. Lewis, himself a renowned scholar of English literature, produced numerous popular books on apologetics and the Christian life. His writings have been translated into numerous popular languages of the world and are treasured today as classics of Christian spirituality.

No one person has represented the wide world of evangelicalism more fully than Billy Graham. Throughout his long and productive ministry, he has consistently stuck to one theme: salvation by grace through personal faith in Jesus Christ. The clarity of his witness and the integrity of his life, stand out in contrast to less worthy exemplars of the evangelical movement. In 1966, Billy

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Graham and Carl Henry convened the World Congress on Evangelism in Berlin. Eight years later, Billy Graham spoke to the International Congress on World Evangelization at Lausanne. His five key principles may be taken as hallmarks of the world evangelical movement:

1. The authority of the Scriptures,
2. The lostness of human beings apart from Jesus Christ,
3. Salvation in Jesus Christ alone,
4. A witness to the Gospel in word and deed,
5. The priority and urgency of evangelism and missions in fulfilling the Great Commission of Christ Himself.

THE CHURCH — THE BODY OF CHRIST

We close this series on the history of Christianity by remembering that the Church is the Body of Christ, extended throughout time as well as space. Between Jesus and the first disciples, there is a long line, a trail of brothers and sisters, a circle of forgiven sinners, a company of fellow pilgrims in the family of faith, forever united through the bond of Christ's love and forgiveness. Although each of us may differ from one another in many respects, all who know Jesus Christ as personal Savior and Lord belong to His Body and share in His life.

The connection which binds God's people together across the boundaries of nation and denomination, of culture and language and time, is nowhere better seen than in the witness of Irina Ratushinskaya, a Christian poet in Russia, imprisoned by the Communist Regime for her Gospel witness and her defense of human rights. From her gulag in Siberia, Irina wrote the following words:

Believe me, it was often thus: in solitary cells, on winter nights, a sudden sense of joy and warmth and a resounding note of love.
And then, unsleeping, I would know a huddle by an icy wall:
Someone is thinking of me now, petitioning the Lord for me. My dear ones, thank you all who did not falter, who believed in us! In the most fearful prison hour we probably would not have passed through everything — from end to end, our head held high, unbowed — without your valiant hearts to light our path.

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ISBN 1-56364-370-7



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