



FROM JERUSALEM TO GLEN CARBON

An overview of church history and where our Baptist
theology fits into it all



THE CHURCH OF THE MARTYRS

Persecution from Stephen to Constantine and the two
great doctrinal problems of the ancient fathers



Persecution For the First Two Hundred Years

Christianity not seen as separate from Second Temple Judaism until the middle of the second century

Persecution until AD 64 was largely either internal within Jewish communities, or external when Rome turned on the Jews (e.g. Claudius throwing the Jews out of Rome “at the instigation of Chrestus” (Suetonius), which could have been Rome lumping the Jews and Christians together, or could have been something else, ca. AD 41-54)

Nero seems to have blamed Christians for burning Rome in AD 64 according to Tacitus

Until AD 249 persecution was local and sporadic



Persecution For the Last Seventy-Five Years



- Decius tied a universally required pledge of allegiance to sacrifice to Roman gods on behalf of the emperor in 249 AD, which continued until 268 AD, two emperors later
- Many of the public heads of city churches were killed in the early parts of the Decian persecution and exiled in the later ones
- Church councils were called to decide how to handle people who had given in and sacrificed during the persecution (the Novatian schism, named after the man who argued that lapsing was an unforgivable sin)
- Diocletian started official persecution again from 303-313 AD, ending with Constantine's Edict of Milan

Gnosticism

- Originated in Jewish thought, and can be seen in much modern Kabbalism
- Gnosis = knowledge, usually mystical knowledge revealed through direct revelation
- Primarily concerned with a dualism where the spiritual is good and the material is evil, therefore salvation comes from denying the body, i.e., asceticism. The Fall is a fall into the material world, not a fall from sinlessness
- Jesus is seen as a purely spiritual being who merely put on or pretended to be physical, to reach out to spiritual beings and teach them how to escape the material world
- Colossians deals with the supremacy of Christ over asceticism in the form of the Jewish restrictions, and John is constantly fighting a war with proto-Gnostics in the first century
- Result: monastic tradition teaches that holiness comes from denying the material, or backlash against it produces an attitude that the material does not matter at all

1 John 4:2: By this you know the Spirit of God: every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God,

2 John 7: For many deceivers have gone out into the world, those who do not confess the coming of Jesus Christ in the flesh. Such a one is the deceiver and the antichrist.

Arianism

We believe in one God, the Father Almighty, Maker of all things visible and invisible.

And in one Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, begotten of the Father the only-begotten; that is, of the essence of the Father, God of God, Light of Light, very God of very God, begotten, not made, being of one substance (ὁμοούσιον) with the Father; by whom all things were made both in heaven and on earth; who for us men, and for our salvation, came down and was incarnate and was made man; he suffered, and the third day he rose again, ascended into heaven; from thence he shall come to judge the quick and the dead.

And in the Holy Ghost.

But those who say: 'There was a time when he was not;' and 'He was not before he was made;' and 'He was made out of nothing,' or 'He is of another substance' or 'essence,' or 'The Son of God is created,' or 'changeable,' or 'alterable'—they are condemned by the holy catholic and apostolic Church.

Arius taught that Christ was not God but was among the first of God's creations, "a god"

Constantine called the meeting largely to settle the matter of the church of Alexandria, and the bishop of Alexandria brought his own champion, Athanasius

The real question is to what beliefs were people agreeing when they were baptized; a "baptismal creed" could have been written to accommodate both sides, or only favor one at the expense of the other

Winner: Athanasius, and the "Nicene Creed" was written to make clear who Christ was. One tiny Greek letter could have been changed to make this creed acceptable to Arians, but it was rejected ("homoiousion" rather than "homoousion")

THE DARK AGES

From the end of persecution and the rise of the Roman Catholic Church to the Protestant Reformation, a tale of two monks



The Pelagian Heresy

- Pelagius is a British lay monk who moved to Rome late in the fourth century
- He taught that original sin did not destroy human nature regarding its capacity to choose not to sin, and that man had an inviolable free will even if he had sinned to choose to be saved; original sin merely made men mortal and set a bad example
- He further taught that the Law was given to reduce or destroy the bad habit of sin, and when mankind had progressed far enough, it would receive grace as shown in the New Testament
- Unbaptized infants were saved (contra church teaching, that unbaptized infants have no means of grace and go to hell, albeit a nice one)
- Augustine responded that Adam's sin destroyed free will to choose obedience, and therefore repentance and forgiveness are impossible without God's choosing to give grace
- "Semi-pelagians" later argued that God desired all men to be saved and granted some measure of free will to all men to choose salvation

Augustine and Aquinas

- Augustine argued for a church-state connection and developed an apologetic for many things like infant baptism and asceticism
- Thomas Aquinas wielded Aristotelian thought to explain Roman Catholic doctrine, helping to establish a framework which allowed for many ideas that were later rejected in whole or in part by Protestants, including various sacramental ideas and the veneration of Mary
- Aquinas' theology and approach to apologetics is called "Scholasticism" and was the foundation for much of the Reformers' thought in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries
- A monastic order were founded on Augustine's life, and another took a great deal of its ideals from Aquinas'



THE MAGISTERIAL REFORMATION

Western Europe emerges from Rome's shadow



The Proto-Reformers

- Peter Waldo and his Waldensians in France taught that the Scriptures should be translated into the language of commoners, that purgatory didn't exist, and that infants unable to formulate their beliefs should not be baptized, in the twelfth century
- John Wycliffe in England in 1374 was sent to represent the king in a dispute with the pope, and was so disheartened with the Church of Rome that he began to attack simony and indulgences
- Over his life he taught that salvation is by grace alone, but grace produces works that save us, not faith alone (somewhat like Augustine's view); he also believed that the Scriptures must be in the language of the common people, but for the effect that people would know what they must *do* to be saved
- Jan Hus in Bohemia (now the Czech Republic) preached against indulgences and the papacy, and for the priesthood of all believers
- He was lured to a trial with the promise of safe conduct; that safe conduct was revoked, he was tried for promulgating "Wycliffe's heresy" and burned at the stake in 1415

Luther the Monk



- Luther grew up in an upper-middle-class home and was sent to law school by his father
- He had seen Christ as his Judge his whole life, and worried greatly that he would die or Christ would return and judge him for his sins
- Once after a terrible argument with his father he was returning to school and got caught in a thunderstorm; after a close call he vowed to become a monk
- He joined the most stringent monastic order in his part of Germany: the Augustinian Order
- He was a zealous and brilliant student and became Dr. Luther, provincial vicar and theology chair at the University of Wittenberg, all while desperate to attain salvation

Luther the Reformer

- The local archbishop had a huge debt to pay to the pope, and called in the best fundraiser to sell indulgences to the people: Johann Tetzel, Dominican friar
- Luther objected to the idea that money can buy forgiveness of sins, and wrote a short volume of disputations to be debated on the topic, nailing them as a notice to the door of the Castle Church in Wittenberg on October 31, 1517 and sending them around for various scholarly debate possibilities
- Until 1518 Luther was lecturing on Hebrews, Romans, and Galatians, and his studies led him to believe that justification was by faith alone
- In 1518 Pope Leo X sent Cardinal Cajetan to confront Luther, at which point Luther denied that the Pope or church teaching was above the Scriptures; in 1520 Luther was excommunicated
- In 1521 Luther appeared on trial before the Holy Roman Emperor to defend his life for the promulgation of the Ninety-five Theses in Worms; Luther was found guilty and fled for his life to Wartburg Castle, where he pretended to be a local knight and translated the New Testament into German

Luther the Catholic

- Luther held to the Real Presence of Christ's body and blood in the Eucharist with more stubbornness than any man of his age
- Luther believed that sacraments were a means of salvific grace but that there were only two of them, and never broke from the Roman Catholic tradition of infant baptism; many of his stances were from extremely un-nuanced takes on plain statements of Scripture ("this is my body," "baptism saves")
- Luther symbolically burned his copy of Aquinas' *Summa Theologica* but never emerged from many of the doctrines or thought processes learned from Aquinas' work



Luther the Augustinian



- Erasmus alone recognized the nature of Luther's view of grace
- Erasmus wrote a tract, "On the Freedom of the Will," in which he argued that man's proper province is to contemplate the "obscurity" of exactly how God saves us, and be driven by that contemplation to good works
- Luther responded with "The Bondage of the Will," in which he wrote: "The Holy Spirit is no Skeptic, and it is not doubts or mere opinions that he has written on our hearts, but assertions more sure and certain than life itself and all experience."
- Furthermore, he writes, "The work is finished and complete; Christ has acquired and won the treasure for us by his sufferings, death, and resurrection, etc."
- The heart of the Magisterial Reformation is God's sovereignty in salvation, a work that is "all of grace."

Calvin and Zwingli: Independent But Together

Independently of Luther, but appearing on the world stage right after the Ninety-five Theses were published, Calvin and Zwingli had their own reformations at Geneva and Zurich

Zwingli turned from “sacramentalism” although he upheld some sort of mysterious spiritual transaction taking place in the Lord’s Supper, but on the basis of church tradition he upheld infant baptism, declaring that it was the symbol of the New Covenant in the same way that circumcision was the symbol of the Old

Calvin’s *Institutes of the Christian Religion* were meant to be a new textbook and devotional work for believers, and deal with far more than just what we call “Calvinism”

All the Magisterial Reformers continued to uphold a connection between church and state



Henry VIII



- Wrote a pamphlet against the Reformation in 1521, and was given the title “Defender of the Faith” by the pope in perpetuity
- Could not come to an agreement with Pope Clement VII to let him have his marriage to Catherine of Aragon annulled since they were not producing a male heir (probably because Charles V, the Holy Roman Emperor, was Catherine’s nephew)
- Luther said Henry should just take another wife; polygamy isn’t banned in Scripture
- Henry suddenly decided that the reformers were right, but decided to arrogate supreme ecclesiastical power to the head of the English state, and had his marriage annulled
- The Church of England was set up under the Archbishop of Canterbury in 1534, and by 1571 was governed by the Thirty-nine Articles along Swiss church lines as another Presbyterian church, although the articles are vague enough that it has largely reestablished itself as a Roman-style bishop-led church



THE NONCONFORMISTS

The rise of dissenters and Puritans, and the dawn of
the first modern Baptist movement



England from Henry to Cromwell



- In 1553 Henry's son Edward VI died at age 15; nine days later his sister Mary usurped the throne and reversed the Reformation of the Church of England, beginning a fierce persecution of Protestants throughout the kingdom
- Five years later Elizabeth I became queen and put the Church back on a Protestant footing
- In 1603 James VI of Scotland became James I of England, and many thought he would keep the Church on an even Presbyterian/Calvinist keel, especially after Catholic Guy Fawkes and the Gunpowder Plot were stopped
- Instead he largely tolerated or encouraged High Anglicanism, trying to force Roman governmental style on the Presbyterian Church of Scotland
- His son Charles I was openly Arminian and sacramentalist, and in 1648 denied that any authority on earth could try him for crimes, because of the Divine Right of Kings
- In 1631 Cromwell seems to have repented and believed and become a Puritan, then was turned down to emigrate to Connecticut; by 1649 he was the Lord Protector of England in its brief republican period

Church Polity: a Comparison

Episcopal

- Bishops rule dioceses
- Churches are members of dioceses
- Some regional groups of dioceses are governed by archbishops
- Roman Catholic, Orthodox, Methodist

Presbyterian

- General Assemblies have Presbyteries
- Presbyteries have churches
- Churches are ruled by a “session” of elders
- Presbyterian, some other Reformed churches, Lutherans

Congregational

- Churches are ruled by elders
- Churches can be elder-led or elder-ruled
- Includes single-pastor model but sometimes single pastors act like bishops in multi-church situations
- Baptists, Congregationalists, independent churches

The Dissenters and the Nonconformists

- As the Church of England settled down into the interregnum (between the rules of Charles I and Charles II), various forms of church government and church doctrine sparred to exist or take over the central church
- Many Puritans who remained in England were Dissenters, who wanted the Anglican church to set aside its episcopal polity (bishop rule) for either Presbyterian or Congregational polity
- Puritans also pressed for an end to anything that seemed “Romish” or “papist,” including for some celebrations of Christmas, wedding rings, the idea of “vicars” or “priests,” vestments, and much of the pomp and ceremony that the Anglicans had inherited from Rome; they read into the very letter of the Thirty-nine Articles that constituted the statement of faith of the Church of England an overt Calvinism
- A non-Catholic, non-Zwinglian view of baptism would mark you, not as a Dissenter, but as a Nonconformist: somebody actively stepping outside the state church’s doctrine and practice



The Baptists Before Bunyan

- In 1612 there was a mission church established by Baptists from Amsterdam in London
- In 1620 there were enough English Baptists to circulate a petition which they signed and sent to James I, declaring that they were loyal subjects who just wanted to be left alone regarding their beliefs
- Already at this time there was confusion about the difference between Anabaptists (usually seen as followers of Menno, and frequently heretical about the Trinity, Christology, soul sleep, and so forth) and Baptists; one must be careful when reading histories to differentiate which Baptist sects are being discussed
- Charles I had already begun imprisoning and exiling Baptists, and some of those laws were not fully repealed during the interregnum; the Puritans also saw the Baptists as a threat, since they preached against a state church among other things

The 1646 London Baptist Confession

- Seven London Baptist churches came together to respond to their critics (who spread lies about their practices and called them Anabaptists)
- Based on the 1596 English Separatist Confession, written by churches who had to be separate from the Church of England (but were not Baptist in theology)
- Differs mostly in the Baptist theology sections, but also clearly states that they are not Mennonites in the sense of not taking oaths or not being able to hold political offices or serve as magistrates
- Specifically answers some of the lies spread about their practices
- Differs greatly from the 1689 Second London Baptist Confession in two places: Sunday is not declared to be a Christian Sabbath, and the pope is not declared to be the antichrist
- The clearest doctrinal statement of “Particular Baptists” (Calvinistic) as opposed to “General Baptists” (Arminian or free-will)

THE REFORMATION IN AMERICA

Puritans, Pilgrims, Methodists, and even a few Baptists



Religious migrations from England

- Puritans – Massachusetts Bay Colony, Dissenters from England, mostly Presbyterians and some Congregationalists who wanted to reform the Church of England
- Pilgrims – Plymouth Plantation, Separatists, mostly about Congregationalism, the moral failure of the Anglican church, and not remaining under their thumb
- Quakers – Pennsylvania, not Christians for the most part since they replaced the authority of Scripture with what God says to the individual in his heart (notably a few broke away to become part of the Plymouth Brethren)
- Catholics – Maryland, although they were tolerant of other denominations
- Toleration – Rhode Island, founded by Roger Williams, who founded the first Baptist Church in America (which went through an Arminian split within a couple of decades)

The First Great Awakening

- The intellectuals in the 1730s and 1740s were largely agnostics or Deists, and many churches no longer required members to believe or profess faith
- Jonathan Edwards, a noted Congregationalist, was attacked by his own church for insisting on only allowing Christians to the Lord's Table
- He preached a series on justification by faith alone which started a revival which swept through New England; one thing he taught in particular was that there was a certain point in time, even if you didn't know when it was, that the Lord regenerated a person's heart
- George Whitefield started in Georgia and in a couple of trips worked his way up the eastern seaboard, and thousands were saved
- The Presbyterians and Congregationalists split over these changes but the Baptist churches suddenly exploded throughout the east

The Effects of the First Great Awakening



- The generation that grew up and came into power in America during this revival led the American Revolution
- Most of the Ivy League schools were established as seminaries and prep schools as a result of the revival
- John Wesley's Methodists became circuit riders and began to spread evangelical Arminianism throughout the East, alongside Baptist churches
- The revival spread across the Atlantic and while the Revolution was happening here, the first great missionary efforts were beginning in England
- Baptist churches up to the Civil War tended to be Particular Baptists (that is, Calvinists) with either strong connections to the 1689 Second London Baptist Confession of Faith or a shorter creed which did not lean so heavily on Westminster
- As time went on, more and more Baptists were General or Freewill Baptists (Arminian)



THE SECOND GREAT AWAKENING

The Splintering of the Church in America



A “Revival” Happens Again

- After the American Revolution, from the 1790s through to the 1830s, at the forefront of Arminian circuit riders “reawakening” people in dead mostly-Calvinist churches throughout the south and Midwest, camp meetings and revivals began
- Peter Cartwright and several circuit-riding preachers held large tent and open-air meetings where people frequently swooned and some had visions; in some areas this would happen regularly, every time a rider came through town
- Barton Stone and Alexander Campbell individually decided that creeds and confessions of faith were overly complicating the faith, and decided to believe in the Bible, and “only the Bible” – where it speaks they speak, where it is silent, they are silent
- Their movements came together as the Church of Christ, and then split again at the turn of the century into Disciples of Christ and the Churches of Christ
- A few joined the Evangelical and Reformed Church to become the UCC

The Burned-Over District

- Charles Finney was a famous “revivalist” who was ordained a Presbyterian, then read the Westminster Confession of Faith, decided he was mostly against it (espousing a form of Pelagianism), and never formally left the church
- He preached in western New York state and called it a “burnt district” since revivals had gone through there so much and had so little effect that people became very hard-hearted
- Notable heretics that arose from the Burned-Over District:
 - Joseph Smith (founder of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints)
 - William Miller (taught that Jesus would return on Oct. 22, 1844)
 - Ellen G. White (Millerite who received prophecies and founded the Seventh-Day Adventists)
 - Charles Taze Russell (followed Adventism, founder of Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society)
 - The Fox Sisters (among the first modern Spiritualists, who communed with the dead via séance)
 - The Shakers (who worshipped their founder, Mother Ann, as God Incarnate)

