

Adult Sunday School Class “Our Christian Heritage” - Lesson 11

The 1800's

The 1800's brought significant developments in Christianity. Because of the shift in politics, science, and philosophy during this century, people began to change the way they thought about everything - including God, religion, and life.

In politics, two important events took place in 1789. In Europe, the French Revolution overthrew the monarchy and separated church from state. In North America, the United States adopted the Bill of Rights, which guaranteed many rights vital to the life of the church including freedom of religion, speech, press, and assembly. It also prohibited the government from favoring or supporting a particular denomination or religion, which set a new standard for tolerance and equality.

Science had previously entered a new era in the 1600's with the modern scientific method of experimentation and investigation. Before that time, ideas about science came primarily from the ancient Greeks and Romans and the Catholic Church's interpretation of Scripture. Galileo Galilei (1594-1642) said that good science comes from experience and observation, not preconceptions. With his improvements to the telescope, he confirmed that the earth revolves around the sun, rather than the sun around the earth as the Catholic Church held (The Catholic Church used Scriptures that spoke of the “setting of the sun,” or the “rising of the sun,” to support their view that the sun revolves around the earth). Galileo was sentenced by the Inquisition as a heretic, and was under house arrest for the rest of his life. He eventually recanted his position because of the pressure.

Galileo and Francis Bacon said that scientific truth was largely unknown and waiting to be discovered. Some people applied this to theology as well, stating that perhaps not all biblical truths had been revealed and that not all accepted ideas were true. Some people took this idea to search the Scriptures for truth, while others took it the other way, looking purely to reason and to our senses to determine truth, being skeptical of Christianity. This resulted in Deism, which was an attempt to reduce all religion to its most basic, universally held, and reasonable elements. Thomas Jefferson was a famous Deist. Benjamin Franklin supported it.

The Deists sought to remove all “myths” from religion, such as the accounts of miracles, and to affirm only what makes sense to human reason. They concluded that the existence of the world requires a Creator - hence the label Deist - but He is not concerned with present human affairs and does not involve Himself with His creation. He is like a watchmaker who creates a watch, winds it up, sets it on a table, and lets it tick by itself from that time forward. So God created the world, established natural laws by which it operates, and let it continue on its own.

Instead of relying on the Word of God for morality, the Deist finds morality by what is reasonable, or by what is best for humanity. Revelation of the Word of God becomes unnecessary - the human mind can discover and understand on its own.

This rejection of Scripture as the supreme authority and the reliance on the reasoning of the human mind greatly affected the 1800's. Charles Darwin (1809-82) of Great Britain, introduced the theory of evolution. While he believed in God, his views made it easier for people to deny the God of creation and become agnostics or atheists. Charles Darwin has been called one of the most influential figures in human history. Certainly his theories have shaken Christian faith more than any other teachings, undercutting the fact that God is the Creator, and because He created all things we should seek to know Him, love Him, and obey Him.

The emphasis on reason in the 1800's challenged the true Christian who relied on revelation of Scripture. It *is* reasonable for the Christian to look to the Author of Scripture to get the true meaning of it, praying for understanding and revelation of His holy Word. However, the emphasis on reason brought about "Liberal Theology," in which scholars studied the Bible as they did any uninspired literature. They typically denied the miracles of the Bible and questioned its accuracy. Liberal theology led to a movement in America called the "social gospel." Simply stated, the gospel of Christ calls believers to work for God's kingdom in this world, which is the kingdom of justice. The real mission of the church is not to save souls for an invisible, eternal kingdom, but to establish the kingdom of God on earth through justice, freedom, and a better society.

Other Groups That Formed in the 1800's in America

In America, several new religions arose out of traditional Christianity, and we will give a brief description of a few of them. The Seventh-day Adventists grew out of the preaching of a Baptist named William Miller (1782-1849). He predicted the second coming of Christ in 1843 and again in 1844, attracting numerous followers. When his prophecies failed, he renounced his methods and apologized, but some of his followers continued under the leadership of Ellen G. White in 1846. She explained away the inaccuracy and taught that Christians must keep Saturday as the Sabbath, or else they run the risk of being lost. Today's Seventh-day Adventists regard Ellen White as a prophet whose writings are authoritative, but they seek to be recognized as Protestant Christians by accepting the authority of Scripture, the doctrine of the trinity (which they accepted in the 20th century), and being justified by faith.

Another aspect of the Seventh-day Adventists is an emphasis on diet and health, recommending vegetarianism. John Harvey Kellogg, a Seventh-day Adventist, developed breakfast cereals as a health food and helped make them accepted by the general public.

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (the Mormons) began in 1830 with Joseph Smith who claimed he was restoring the true church. In his first vision, he claimed that he saw Jesus and the Father, and he was told that all Christian denominations had become corrupt. In another vision, he said an angel revealed to him the location of some buried golden plates containing ancient writings. According to Smith, the writings contained an account of the various nations that

inhabited ancient America, and described how they were led to the new world by Jesus. Supposedly, Smith was able to translate the golden plates by the power of God. His translation was called the *Book of Mormon*, and is believed by Mormons to be on a par with the Bible. After much persecution, Smith was killed. Brigham Young led the majority of Mormons to Utah in 1847, where they settled and became the dominant religion there. Under Young's influence, the Mormons came to believe that God was once a man and through obedience and good works we can become gods ourselves.

The founder of Jehovah's Witnesses, who also uses the name of Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society, was Charles Taze Russell (1852-1916). He and subsequent leaders made a number of failed predictions relative to the Second Coming, and finally concluded that Jesus had already come invisibly. Jehovah's Witnesses deny the trinity and hold a view of Jesus that He is not the supreme God but a subordinate spirit being. They use their own translation of the Bible. Jehovah's Witnesses believe their religion is a restoration of first-century Christianity. They do not believe in hell, and they believe that death is a state of non-existence. They interpret Revelation 14:1-5 to mean that the number of Christians going to heaven is limited to exactly 144,000 who will rule and reign with Jesus.

Mary Baker Eddy (1821-1910) founded the Church of Christ, Scientist, or Christian Science to "restore original Christianity and its lost element of healing." Blending biblical terms with Eastern religious philosophy, she taught that God is an abstract principle rather than a personal being. She denied the reality of disease and claimed that when a sick person fully embraces this truth he will be healed. Branches of Church of Christ, Scientist, normally maintain a Christian Science Reading Room in their community where the public can study, borrow, or purchase Christian Science literature. Teachings of this movement are derived from the writings of Mary Baker Eddy and the Bible.

The Second Great Awakening

In America, the 1800's ushered in a new wave of revival. The fervor of the Great Awakening had subsided years before, but in the 1790's and early 1800's, a renewed thrust of revival and evangelism, sometimes called the Second Great Awakening, began. It was characterized by great frontier revivals, circuit-riding preachers, and camp meetings, which originated during this time.

The new revival mostly involved the Methodists and Baptists, but some Presbyterians took part, particularly in the beginning.

A wave of revival began in Logan County, Kentucky, with the preaching of James McGready in 1799. The first camp meeting was held in July 1800 in the same area near the Gasper River, and it was noted for "weeping and shouts of ecstasy." The most outstanding camp meeting took place at Cane Ridge, Kentucky (about fifteen miles from Lexington) in August, 1801. It was organized by Presbyterians and Methodists, and twenty to thirty thousand people attended.

Participants engaged in extended prayer; enthusiastic, emotional worship; and physical demonstrations as the Spirit of God moved upon them.

These demonstrations included sobbing, screaming, falling (over three thousand fell under the power of God), exuberant singing, shouting, laughing (“holy laughter”), dancing, shaking (“jerking”), jumping, leaping, rolling and running. People testified that they fell into trances, saw visions, and exercised various gifts of the Holy Spirit.

Similar demonstrations occurred at other revivals throughout the century. In the wake of these revivals were profound moral reforms. There were also numerous reports of speaking in tongues. As one example, a great revival swept the University of Georgia in 1800-01, and the students “shouted and talked in unknown tongues.”

A leading participant in the Cane Ridge revival was Barton W. Stone, a Presbyterian minister who rejected predestination and who set his slaves free. Stone stated that the revival was a genuine move of God in which God poured out His Spirit.

Stone and his followers dissolved his Presbyterian group and called themselves only Christians, advocating no creed but the Bible. Their chief goal was the restoration of original Christianity and unity among Christians.

Stone had difficulties with the doctrine of the trinity. Stone wrote: “Sometimes my mind inclined the three persons as three distinctions, appellations, or relations, in the one God. This opinion rather preponderated in my mind, yet I was unsettled. At the same time I so far doubted the propriety of the phrase Eternal Son of God, that I could not receive it as an article of faith.”

Stone’s study of the Scriptures also led him to water baptism of believers by immersion in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins. Before long, Barton Stone met Alexander Campbell and his group, and the two groups combined, resolving to call themselves Christians, or Churches of Christ.

Since there was no defining creed or articles of faith, over time this movement separated into two distinct camps. The more liberal wing became the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), which now is a mainline denomination.

The conservatives became known as the Churches of Christ, and these churches remain congregational and independent. They stress the essentiality of water baptism, are staunch trinitarians, forbid the use of musical instruments in church, and oppose any tangible feeling, anointing, demonstration, or gift of the Spirit for today.

Well-Known Evangelists of the 1800’s

In the 1800’s there arose two conservative Protestant evangelists in the United States who became nationally known. They preached revival meetings and crusades across the country and later in Great Britain, pioneering modern techniques of mass evangelism. Their emphasis was a need for personal

repentance and a personal decision for Christ, and they were responsible for thousands of conversions.

Charles Finney (1792-1875), became prominent around the middle of the century. He was a Presbyterian who left that denomination because he rejected the doctrine of predestination. He believed that anyone could respond to the gospel message and be saved. After leaving the Presbyterian church, Finney became a Congregational pastor. He also served as a teacher of theology at Oberlin College in Ohio for many years, and for fifteen years he was its president. Oberlin was an innovative, evangelical Christian college that accepted both male and female students and both blacks and whites.

Finney was a leader in the Second Great Awakening and has been called “the Father of Modern Revivalism.” He preached Christian perfectionism just as John Wesley did. Finney was the youngest of fifteen children. He never attended college but had musical skill and leadership abilities. He studied as an apprentice to become a lawyer, but after a dramatic conversion experience and baptism of the Holy Spirit, he gave up law to preach the gospel. His early Christian years were known for continual prayer along with days of fasting. Finney moved to New York City in 1832 where he later founded and preached at the Broadway Tabernacle.

Finney was most active as a revival preacher from 1825 - 1835, and was known for his innovations in preaching and religious meetings, including having women pray in public meetings of mixed gender and the development of the “anxious seat,” a place where those considering becoming Christians could come to receive prayer. He was also known for his use of extemporaneous preaching. Finney denounced slavery from the pulpit.

Like most protestants, Finney believed that salvation was by grace through faith alone, not by works or by obedience. Finney also affirmed that works were the evidence of faith. The presence of unrepented sin indicated that a person had not received salvation. Therefore, much of Finney’s preaching and writings reflect the need for personal holiness.

Dwight L. Moody (1837-99) was converted in a Congregational church in 1855 and became a successful businessman in Chicago. His conversion was the result of the encouragement of his Sunday school teacher. Although he was never ordained, he soon gave up business, founded a nondenominational church, and served as president of the Young Men’s Christian Association of Chicago (the YMCA). Throughout the latter part of the 1800’s, Moody toured the United States and Great Britain, holding evangelistic meetings.

Holiness Groups of the 1800’s

John Wesley and the early Methodists promoted the life of sanctification with the goal of Christian perfection. By the mid 1800’s, however, it was evident that the Methodist church had departed from the original emphasis on holiness. A number of people within or associated with Methodism were quite concerned to preserve

this message. Phoebe Palmer (1807-74) initiated a revival of holiness teaching in Methodism, particularly with her book, *The Way of Holiness* (1845). She is considered one of the founders of the Holiness Movement in the United States.

Some date the formal beginning of the Holiness Movement to a camp meeting in Vineland, New Jersey, in 1867. The organizers issued a call to holiness, dedicating the camp meeting to preaching and teaching on this subject. From the camp, the National Holiness Association was born. Its purpose was to renew and promote the message of holiness within the Methodist Episcopal Church and throughout Protestant ranks.

Toward the end of the century, the Methodist Church as a whole rejected this renewed emphasis, and Methodist publications condemned the movement. Consequently, many holiness-minded people felt they had no choice but to form their own denominations. A number of conservative Wesleyan or Holiness churches were established including the Wesleyan Methodist Church, Pilgrim Holiness Church, the Free Methodist Church, the Church of God (Anderson, Indiana), the Church of God (Cleveland, Tennessee), the Church of the Nazarene (which became the largest group in the Holiness Movement), the Fire-Baptized Holiness Church, and the Church of God in Christ (a black organization).

Two other groups that taught sanctification and practical holiness were the Christian and Missionary Alliance, and the Salvation Army. The Salvation Army originated with the ministry of William and Catherine Booth in the slums of London. It was modeled after the military with its own flag and its own hymns, often with words set to popular and folk tunes sung in the pubs. Booth would wear the Army's own uniform for meetings and ministry work. He became the "general" and his other ministers were given ranks as "officers." Other members became "soldiers."

Catherine Booth acted as a religious minister, which was unusual at the time. William Booth described the organization's approach: "The three 'S's' best expressed the way in which the Army administered to the 'down and outs': first, soup; second, soap; and finally salvation."

The Salvation Army's main converts were at first alcoholics, morphine addicts, prostitutes, and other "undesirables" that were unwelcome in polite Christian society. The Booths did not practice baptism or communion and taught their converts to completely refrain from drinking, smoking, taking illegal drugs, and gambling. Their meetings and gatherings suffered persecution (often by pub owners).

Today, the salvation army is well-known for disaster relief, Christmas bell ringers, and their thrift stores.

Holiness Theology

The distinctive doctrine of the Holiness movement was Christian perfection. The Holiness groups taught that everyone should seek two distinct experiences with God. First, a person needs to be saved. When he repents of sin, believes on the

Lord, and confesses Jesus as his personal Savior, he is justified, forgiven of sins, and born again, and has Christ living within.

At this point he needs a second work of grace, called Christian perfection or “entire sanctification.” In this experience, God completely takes away the indwelling nature of sin, thereby enabling the Christian to live a victorious, holy life.

Holiness people sought this experience with prayer, weeping, and soul searching, much as they did the initial experience of conversion. Many began to look for evidence of this second experience, such as a strong assurance, emotional feeling, or physical sensations.

As they studied the Scriptures, particularly the Book of Acts, they noticed that the disciples were “baptized with the Holy Ghost,” and they began to equate Christian perfection with the baptism of the Holy Ghost. At this time, they did not necessarily associate this experience with speaking in tongues, although this did happen in some instances in the Holiness Movement.

Wesley had taught that a person received the Holy Spirit upon conversion (repenting or accepting Jesus as Savior). Now, Holiness people began to teach that a person received the Holy Spirit at sanctification.

There was a strong call to go back to the doctrines and practices of the apostles in the New Testament church. In describing this desire, the rallying cry was, “Back to Pentecost.” Some leaders pressed for the restoration of spiritual gifts, including prophecy, healing, and miracles.

The Holiness Movement particularly sought to restore the New Testament truth of divine healing. Healing became an important part of the message of Holiness preachers, and many miraculous healings took place. Some began to preach that Jesus Christ provided healing along with salvation at the Atonement.

The people of the Holiness Movement, as well as other conservative Protestants, dedicated themselves to strict morality and a separated, holy lifestyle. They preached that Christians should be godly in their conduct, dress, and speech. As part of holiness they preached against tobacco, alcohol, gambling, swearing, immodest dress, jewelry, theaters, dancing, and worldly amusements. When the 20th century ushered in new styles and inventions, the Holiness denominations extended the application of these principles to prohibit attendance at movies, women cutting their hair, women wearing pants, and the use of makeup.

Many Holiness preachers, particularly itinerant evangelists, determined to live and conduct their ministries “by faith,” depending on God to supply their daily needs as they worked for him.

Preparation for the Pentecostal Movement

In many ways the Holiness Movement prepared the way for the Pentecostal movement, particularly by its emphasis on repentance, seeking a distinct experience after repentance called the baptism of the Holy Ghost, demonstrative worship, the move of the Holy Spirit, divine healing, faith, and practical holiness

standards for everyday conduct and dress. Although the Holiness movement was trinitarian, in practice the hymns, prayers, worship, and faith of its followers centered on Jesus Christ. This set the stage for the message of Oneness Pentecostalism in the early 1900's.

The modern Pentecostal Movement rose out of the Holiness Movement. It began in the early hours of the new century, on January 1, 1901, in a small Bible school in Topeka, Kansas, operated by faith. The founder and director was Charles Parham, an independent preacher with the Holiness movement.

The Bible school began in the fall of 1900. Parham studied the Scriptures to find evidence for the baptism of the Holy Ghost, and he urged his students to do likewise. Under his guidance, they concluded that the initial biblical evidence is speaking in tongues, and they began to seek this experience.

In a prayer meeting on January 1, Agnes Ozman, a student at the school, asked Parham to lay hands on her that she might receive the Holy Ghost with the evidence of speaking in tongues. When he did, she began to speak in tongues. Several other students soon received the same experience, and on January 3, Parham himself, along with many others also received the Holy Ghost with the sign of speaking in tongues.



Stone's Folly - Topeka Kansas - site of outpouring of Holy Ghost, January 1, 1901



Charles Parham

These new Pentecostals concluded that this experience was something more than the Holiness movement had taught. At first, they thought of it as a third work of grace, leading to the common testimony of early Pentecostals: "Thank God, I am saved, sanctified, and filled with the Holy Ghost."

Many Holiness groups soon embraced the Pentecostal message in great numbers, including the Church of God (Cleveland), the Church of God in Christ, and the Pentecostal Holiness Church. These organizations taught the three works of grace, while later other Pentecostals reduced the number to two or one. For instance, the Assemblies of God believe in two works of grace (saved, and then

filled with the Holy Ghost). The United Pentecostal Church and the Assemblies of the Lord Jesus Christ hold that repentance, water baptism, and the baptism of the Holy Ghost are all part of the one experience of regeneration or being “born again.”

Acts 2:36 (NKJV) “Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ.”

37 Now when they heard *this*, they were cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, “Men *and* brethren, what shall we do?”

38 Then Peter said to them, “Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. **39** For the promise is to you and to your children, and to all who are afar off, as many as the Lord our God will call.”

As we have already seen January 1901 in Topeka was by no means the first time since Bible days that someone had received the Holy Spirit with the evidence of speaking in tongues. But it was the first recorded time in modern church history when people sought for and received the Holy Spirit with the *expectation* of speaking in tongues as the sign of this experience. This made Pentecostalism a distinct movement. The Pentecostals also differed from earlier believers by proclaiming this experience as the norm and urging everyone to receive it.

A Summary of Christianity in the 1800’s

Christianity in the 1800’s underwent rapid changes and innovations and became increasingly diverse. In the Roman Catholic Church, the pope attained greater power in the church than ever before but lost most of his secular power. In Protestantism, liberal teachings came in under the movement of the Enlightenment (particularly in Germany), yet at the same time conservative revivals swept America and Great Britain and prepared the way for the Pentecostal outpouring of the early 20th century.

As we survey the Christian doctrine beginning with the Reformation, we find an amazing process of the restoration of biblical understanding and practice. It did not take place overnight, although in every age God provided a witness to the fulness of truth. The leading preachers and teachers of each era took only a few steps at a time instead of leaping to the full restoration of Apostolic truth and practice.

Martin Luther - restored widespread understanding of the doctrine of justification by faith, although his understanding was flawed by predestination.

John Calvin - the Eucharist (Communion or Lord’s Supper) is a memorial and spiritual communion with Jesus Christ, not the literal body and blood

The Anabaptists - Baptism is for believers. Also taught proper emphasis on

repentance and holiness of life.

John Wesley - emphasized holy living.

The Holiness Movement - reemphasized holy living and brought Christianity to the point of expecting the sign of speaking in tongues as the evidence of the baptism of the Holy Spirit.

While the vital New Testament doctrines of the oneness of God, the absolute deity of Jesus Christ, water baptism in the name of Jesus Christ, and the baptism of the Holy Spirit with the evidence of speaking in tongues were taught as such and restored in the 20th century, we must understand that all of these biblical doctrines were present throughout the Christian period in part through various outstanding individuals. We cannot answer why it took so long for Apostolic Christianity to be fully restored and taught, but we can study Christian history and see the mighty hand of God upon the lives and hearts of people who have sought Him throughout the centuries.