

The Modern Church Era [1913 to the Present]

A. Key Doctrinal Issues of the 19th and 20th Century

1. Issue of Creation vs. Evolution [*Answers in Genesis, Institute for Creation Research*]

2. Issue of Higher Criticism

- a. *Liberal approach to Scripture: Analysis in terms of historical development, literary sources, and human authorship instead of traditional supernatural assumptions*
- b. *Denial of prophetic and apostolic authorship*

3. Issue of Biblical Miracles

Liberal treatment of miracles as myths or contrived stories to teach moral principles

4. Issue of Compromise and Demythologizing

- a. *To make Christianity credible in the scientific age its doctrines must be seen as merely moral exhortations. [Myths with a message]*
- b. *Suggested that key doctrines of the virgin birth, miracles of Jesus, and the bodily resurrection were not essential to the Christian faith.*

5. Issue of Inspiration and Inerrancy

- a. *Personal experience, reason, or the ethical teaching of Jesus was to be placed above Inspiration*
- b. *Promoted false theories of inspiration such as natural, partial, conceptual, or encounter theories of inspiration.*
- c. *Outright rejection of the inerrancy of Scripture with emphasis on alleged biblical errors*
- d. *Resulted in widespread skepticism towards Scripture among the “academic elites”*

6. Issue of Archaeology (19th and 20th Century phenomenon)

- a. *1906 Discovery of the **Hittite** capital by Hugo Winkler of Berlin*
- b. *1948 deciphering of the famous **Sinai script** proved the Hebrews or fellow Semites invented the first alphabet well before Moses writing of the Pentateuch*
- c. *The **Tel Dan Stele** of the 9th century BC refers to the “House of David”.*
- d. ***Pool of Siloam** discovered in Jerusalem*
- e. ***Ossuary [bone box] of James**, son of Joseph, brother of Jesus” discovered in 2002*
- f. ***Pontius Pilate Inscription** found in Caesarea Maritima mentioning Pontius Pilate as the prefect of Judea during the time of Christ.*
- g. ***Hezekiah’s Seal and Tunnel** uncovered in Jerusalem*
- h. ***Dead Sea Scrolls***
- i. ***Caiaphas Ossuary** – Ossuary of “Joseph son of Caiaphas” [high priest at Jesus’s trial]*
- j. *Archaeological layers of Jericho and Hazor point to violent destructions*
- k. ***Sennacherib’s Prism** – Assyrian artifact describes the siege of Jerusalem at the time of King Hezekiah [2 Kings 18-19]*

7. Issues within the Church

Calvinism and Arminianism

Before you disagree make sure you understand. In other words, we must make sure that we can describe another's theological position as he or she would describe it before we criticize or condemn. Another guiding principle should be "Do not impute to others beliefs you regard as logically entailed by their beliefs but that they explicitly deny." [Olson, p. 41]

Arminianism is the form of protestant theology that rejects unconditional election (and especially unconditional reprobation), limited atonement, and irresistible grace because, by contrast, it affirms the character of God as compassionate, having universal love for the whole world and everyone in it, and extending grace-restored [prevenient] free will to accept or resist the grace of God. Opponents of Arminianism often attempt to connect it with the heretical teachings of Pelagianism and semi-Pelagianism: the former denies original sin and the latter holds that fallen man initiates salvation by exercising good will toward God. When some conservative reformed theologians declare that Arminianism is heresy, they are mistakenly referring to an arbitrary connection between Arminianism and Pelagianism or Semi-Pelagianism. True Arminianism is neither.

Both Calvinists and Arminians believe God must initiate Salvation; first by Christ's death on the cross, and secondly by awakening those who are dead in trespasses and sin. The Calvinist believes God unconditionally regenerates the mind of man by giving some the faith to believe. The Arminian believes God gives to all mankind the gift of prevenient grace so he then has the free will to accept or reject God's offer of salvation [Acts 7:51]. The Calvinist believes in the Sovereignty of God in all things, which for some Calvinists, includes the presence of sin and the damnation of the sinner. The Arminian also believes in the Sovereignty of God but includes within that Sovereignty God's love in self-limiting Himself by giving man a legitimate choice to believe.

B. Defenders and Dispensers of the Faith [Jude 3 – "Contend for the Faith"]

1. B. B. Warfield [1851-1921]

*Princeton University theologians = staunch defenders of orthodox Christianity
Warfield: defender of **Inspiration** – His giftedness was not in the pulpit but in the classroom
Regrettably, within a few years after Warfield's death, Princeton turned to the liberal infidelity he opposed*

2. J. Gresham Machen [1881-1937]

*Joined Princeton faculty in 1902, teaching New Testament but especially Greek - Authored *Christianity and Liberalism**

"The greatest menace to the Christian Church today comes not from the enemies outside, but from the enemies within; it comes from the presence within the Church of a type of faith and practice that is anti-Christian to the core."

Presbyterian denominational and Princeton theological split

In 1929 Machen, several other Princeton faculty members, and many students left Princeton to form Westminster Theological Seminary.

"Christ died – that is history; Christ died for our sins – that is doctrine. Without these two elements, joined in an absolutely indissoluble union, there is no Christianity."

"If the liberal party really obtains control of the Church, evangelical Christians must be prepared to withdraw no matter what it costs. Our Lord has died for us, and surely we must not deny Him for favor of men."

3. Robert Dick Wilson [1856-1930] - Great Old Testament linguist

The Word Studies in the New Testament *The Vocabulary of the Greek New Testament*
The Origin of the Bible *The Evidence of the Manuscripts* *The Divine Names in the Old Testament*
The Book of Daniel [Liberal attacks: prophecy and variety of literary styles (history, prophecy, apocalyptic)]

Born 1856 - graduated Princeton 1876 - Postgrad at Berlin 1876

Taught at Western Theo. Seminary and then headed OT dept. at Princeton

4. C. S. Lewis [1898-1963] – *Mere Christianity*

J. R. R. Tolkien had a substantial influence on C. S. Lewis, especially in Lewis's journey from atheism to Christianity and in the development of his imaginative writing. Tolkien was instrumental in helping Lewis understand the deep connection between myth and truth, leading to Lewis's acceptance of Christianity as the "true myth"—a story that is both meaningful and historically real. Their conversations were pivotal; Lewis himself noted that a long talk with Tolkien and Dyson "had much to do with it" when he became a Christian.

Tolkien encouraged Lewis not only in matters of faith but also in honing the quality and richness of his imaginative works, including the *Narnia series*, even as they sometimes differed in literary style or philosophical emphasis. Both men valued the power of narrative to express profound truths, and their friendship, particularly through the *Inklings literary group* at Oxford, provided a collaborative and critical environment that shaped Lewis's writing and thinking.

"I am trying here to prevent anyone saying the really foolish thing that people often say about Him: 'I'm ready to accept Jesus as a great moral teacher, but I don't accept His claim to be God.' That is the one thing we must not say. A man who was merely a man and said the sort of things Jesus said would not be a great moral teacher. He would either be a lunatic—on a level with the man who says he is a poached egg—or else he would be the Devil of Hell. You must make your choice. Either this man was, and is, the Son of God; or else a madman or something worse. You can shut Him up for a fool, you can spit at Him and kill Him as a demon; or you can fall at His feet and call Him Lord and God. But let us not come with any patronizing nonsense about His being a great human teacher. He has not left that open to us. He did not intend to."

5. Ford Porter [1893-1976] – Gospel Tract: *God's Simple Plan of Salvation*

C. Lessons of Church History

1. God often uses the weakest of men and women to accomplish His Will.

We all have our frailties – "Elias was a man subject to like passions as we are." [James 5:17]

2. Heroes of the Faith simply followed God's leading one step at a time. [Acts 16]

3. God delights in using a vast variety of human instruments.

"For ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many might, not many noble, are called; But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; And base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are; That no flesh should glory in his presence." [1 Cor. 1:26-29]

4. **What appears to us to be obstacles may be God's method to further His Gospel.**
5. **God uses *baby steps* in the furtherance of His plan for the ages.**
6. **Heresies [divisions] often are God's method of driving us to the Truth. [1 Cor. 11:19]**
7. **Church History teaches us that, while seeking Unity, we can learn from Diversity.**
8. **There is no limit to what God can do through you as long as you give Him all the Glory.**
9. **God's Blessings come from our willingness to stand against compromise. [Jude 3-4]**
10. **All of us have our place in Church History. [Rom. 12; 1 Cor. 12]**

"Our hearts are willing, when we cheerfully assist in promoting the cause of God. Those who are diligent and contented in employments considered mean [average], are as much accepted of God as those engaged in splendid services. The women who spun the goats' hair were wise-hearted, because they did it heartily to the Lord. Thus the laborer, mechanic, or servant who attends to his work in the faith and fear of God, may be as wise for his place, as the most useful minister, and he equally accepted of the Lord, Our wisdom and duty consist in giving God the glory and use of our talents, be they many or few." [Matthew Henry]

Average Modern Church – 75 members

"The question of small or great has no place here. To have been thought about at all and then fashioned by God's hands to fill any place, is glory enough for the grandest and most aspiring life. And the highest place to which anyone can attain in life is that for which he was designed and made." - J. R. Miller