

Church History II

(Pre-Reformation to Modern Day)

Week 5 – Reason and Feeling

- I. The Enlightenment or the Age of Reason
1. “The spirit of the Age of Reason was nothing less than an intellectual revolution, a whole new way of looking at God, the world, and one’s self. It was the birth of secularism...The primary concern was not the next life but happiness and fulfillment in this one. And the mind, rather than faith or emotions or traditions or myths, was the best guide to happiness.”¹
 - A. The desire to be changed and set apart by reason had not started here. The entirety of the Renaissance was this idea, and this sought to change the views of man in general.
 - i. For example whether man is in a natural state of goodness or evil was addressed by early thinkers like Erasmus.
 - ii. If man is good, his difficulty and lack of happiness lie not in sin but in his missing education and rational thinking.

† **Eccl. 1:18** – *For in much wisdom is much grief: and he that increaseth knowledge increaseth sorrow.*
 - B. Also, during the time of enlightenment, people became disenfranchised with the previously religiously fueled violence.
 - i. Between religiously based wars, inquisitions, and killings, religion became seen as superstition or an excuse for cruelty.
 - ii. “Religious prejudice seemed like a far greater danger than atheism. So a thirst for tolerance and truths common to all humanity spread.”²
 - C. The desire to understand natural law became a natural consequence of seeking to be rational and free from superstition, but many of the giants in these areas were not simply atheistic; it just gave a springboard to future secular generations.
 - i. “Copernicus (1473–1543), who insisted that the sun, not the earth, is the center of our universe
 - ii. Johann Kepler (1571–1630), who concluded that the sun emits a magnetic force that moves the planets in their courses.
 - iii. Galileo Galilei (1564–1642), who made a telescope to examine the planets and proved that the acceleration of falling bodies is constant.
 - iv. Isaac Newton (1642–1727), in 1687 Newton published his momentous work, *Mathematical Principles of Natural Philosophy*, in which all laws of motion, in

¹ Bruce L. Shelley, [*Church History in Plain Language*](#), ed. Marshall Shelley, 5th Edition (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Academic, 2020), 366.

² *Ibid.*, 367.

- the heavens and on the earth, are harmonized in a master principle for the universe, the law of gravitation.”³
- v. This is not to say that everyone naturally became secular overnight, but the tide was shifting in the background nonetheless.
- D. In time two opposing views prevailed.
- i. Those who tried to harmonize reason and faith. They argued Christianity’s reasonableness, noting that some things are reasoned from natural law while others are revealed from the scripture.
 - ii. Then there were those who believed reason supplanted Biblical revelation.⁴
 - iii. This caused men to seek to rationalize the Bible to a point that they minimized the necessities of it. John Locke held to a fundamental belief that Christ was the Messiah. Everything else out from there may reasonably flow.⁵
2. This movement saw many who radicalized into the view of reason to the total removal of scripture.
- A. The French in particular held this kind of view.
- i. “In Paris a group of thinkers and writers known as the *philosophes* brought the Age of Reason to its climax...They were literate students of society who analyzed its evils and advocated reforms. They aimed to spread knowledge and emancipate the human spirit”⁶
 - 1) This view, although springing from God, recognized a need for one, but it sought to remove the God of the Bible.
 - 2) The views of Deism became heavily influential where God made and set the watch and then walked away.
 - ii. “The most influential propagandist for deism was Voltaire (1694–1778)... Above all others, Voltaire popularized Newton’s science, fought for personal liberty and freedom of the press, and spread the cult of reason. He turned out a prodigious number of works: histories, plays, pamphlets, essays, and novels. In his correspondence—estimated at ten thousand letters—he wittily spread the virtues of the Enlightenment and scathingly attacked the abuses of his day...Voltaire achieved his greatest fame as the most relentless critic of the established churches, Protestant and Catholic alike. He was sickened by the intolerance of organized Christianity and disgusted by the petty squabbles that seemed to monopolize the time of many priests and clergymen.”
 - iii. His only serious rival in spreading the gospel of deism was a set of books—the famous French *Encyclopedia* edited by Denis Diderot (1713–84). The seventeen volumes of the *Encyclopedia* constituted the chief monument of the philosophes. They heralded the supremacy of the new science,

³ Shelley, [Church History in Plain Language](#), 367.

⁴ Ibid., 369.

⁵ Ibid., 370.

⁶ Ibid., 370–371.

championed tolerance, denounced superstition, and expounded the merits of deism. Diderot's article on Christianity professed high regard for the religion of Jesus, but its effect was to stir the reader to a profound contempt for Christianity's social failures.⁷

3. The Opposition to the Reason War

- A. Catholics attempted to respond according to tradition, which was essentially shrugged off.
- B. Bishop Joseph Butler was an Anglican Bishop who had grown up Presbyterian. He essentially undermined Reason as a basis of a complete system of knowledge because things we don't know, or can't understand, happen all the time. He noted the same is true within religion itself. He sought to give reason to its rightful place and essentially said it is a probability game if something I don't know has occurred, but I have found reason to trust that probability is it will work out.
- C. Deism however collapsed on itself because it could not effectively deal with the evils and disasters of life.⁸
 - i. "The eventual rejection of deism, however, did not restore Christianity to a central place in Western culture.
 - ii. Modern culture—its art, its education, its politics—was freed from formal Christian influence.
 - iii. Nations made a deliberate attempt to organize a religiously neutral civilization.
 - iv. This meant that faith was to function in the private realms, confined to church, home, and heart. That is what we find today in modern secular societies."⁹

II. Pietism and the Age of heart

- 1. The natural inclination when dealing with hyper intellectualism is to focus on the spiritual or emotional side, or vice versa.
 - A. This was true as the age of Pietism somewhat stood in contrast with the intellectual rigor of the Enlightenment.
 - B. The condemnation of the wickedness within religion struck a cord with many and caused them to desire a better way.
 - i. In this time, the Jesuits seem to be very lenient on sin and made many allowances for those they informed. This seemed to many to equate to a cheap grace in which no repentance was had, but people were let off the hook for sin.¹⁰
 - ii. "The most aggressive opposition to the Jesuits came from a movement called Jansenism. Cornelius Jansen (1585–1638) was a Dutchman who had adopted St. Augustine's views of sin and grace at the University of Louvain."¹¹

⁷ Shelley, [*Church History in Plain Language*](#), 371–372.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 373.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 374.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 376.

¹¹ Shelley, [*Church History in Plain Language*](#), 376.

- iii. “The Jesuits, he said, made far too much of human reason and woefully little of a trustful, utterly dependent faith in God.”¹²
 - iv. Jansen died prior to the completion and dissemination of his life’s work; however, his message had already spread into France, where, after his death, Antoine Arnauld II picked up the charge.
 - v. Arnauld condemned the idea that frequent confession fixed the problem of frequent sinning. After going back and forth with the Jesuits, he needed a friend, a defender of the ideas of Jansenism. He found this in Blaise Pascal.
 - vi. Pascal had been introduced to the ideas earlier and spent a good amount of time studying the Bible but in times of trouble he attempted to soothe his soul with the pleasures of this life. However, after a year of hedonism, he returned to the Bible and the doctrine whose opponents referred to as Calvinism in Catholic garb.¹³
 - vii. “Pascal responded brilliantly. He penned eighteen *Provincial Letters* exposing the Jesuit theology and practices by flashes of eloquence and sarcastic wit. As each letter appeared, the public snatched them up. They were instant bestsellers.”¹⁴ He died before finishing his projected book but it was published some years later by his students.
 - viii. Pascal found the Bible and Revelation necessary because he felt it gave ambiguous information. It could encourage some thoughts of God, but could not fully explain nor deny the God who is.
 - ix. Pascal felt, “That would be the greatest of all blasphemies to think that life and the universe have no meaning. God and the meaning of life must be felt by the heart rather than by reason: “The heart has its reasons which reason does not know.”¹⁵
2. “Pietism arose as a reaction to this ossification of the Reformation. Just as Jansenism opposed the cheap grace of the French Jesuits, so the Pietists challenged the nominal faith of German Lutheranism.”¹⁶
- A. Pietism held the importance of personal faith. Not just Christian activities but an experience of Grace in the believer's heart.
 - B. Pietism also sought to focus on intimate fellowships with legitimate Christians as opposed to just a generalized state church.

¹² Ibid., 377.

¹³ Ibid., 378-379.

¹⁴ Ibid., 379.

¹⁵ Ibid., 380.

¹⁶ Ibid., 381.

- C. The Three men who exemplify the history of Pietism are Philip Jakob Spener, August Hermann Francke, and Count Nikolaus von Zinzendorf ¹⁷
- i. Philip Spener (1635–1705) grew up under strong religious influences, including the writings of the German mystic Johann Arndt and the English Puritans. ¹⁸
 - 1) After years of preaching through the Bible, conversions were occurring.
 - 2) Spener then gathered the little company of dedicated believers to his house twice a week for scripture reading and religious conversation. These meetings were called the gatherings of the pious.
 - 3) “He recommended the establishment of Bible study groups for spiritual development;
 - 4) A strenuous, rather ascetic, Christian life;
 - 5) Greater care for the Christian character of theological students;
 - 6) and simpler and more spiritual preaching.
 - 7) Spener’s thought was that a cell of experiential Christians should be gathered in each congregation to cultivate a rigorous and warmer Christian life.”¹⁹
 - 8) “In 1692 he welcomed an invitation from the elector of Brandenburg to move to Berlin. That same year he persuaded Frederick, the future king of Prussia, to invite August Hermann Francke (1663–1727) to become a professor at the new University of Halle”²⁰
 - ii. August Hermann Franckle
 - 1) At Halle, Francke pioneered an array of spiritual and social ministries. The university became the hub of Pietist ministries.
 - 2) Francke’s compassion for the neglected led him to begin a school for the poor.
 - 3) He also established an orphanage and bought a tavern and adjunct land to build a hospital.
 - 4) His ongoing work included a Latin school for talented boys, a house for widows, a house for unmarried women, a medical dispensary, a book depot, a printing establishment, and a Bible house.
 - 5) When King Frederick IV of Denmark wished to establish one of the earliest of Protestant missions in India in 1705, it was among Francke’s disciples in Halle that he found his first missionaries.²¹
 - iii. Count von Zinzendorf

¹⁷ Shelley, [Church History in Plain Language](#), 382.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Ibid., 382–383.

²⁰ Ibid., 383.

²¹ Ibid.

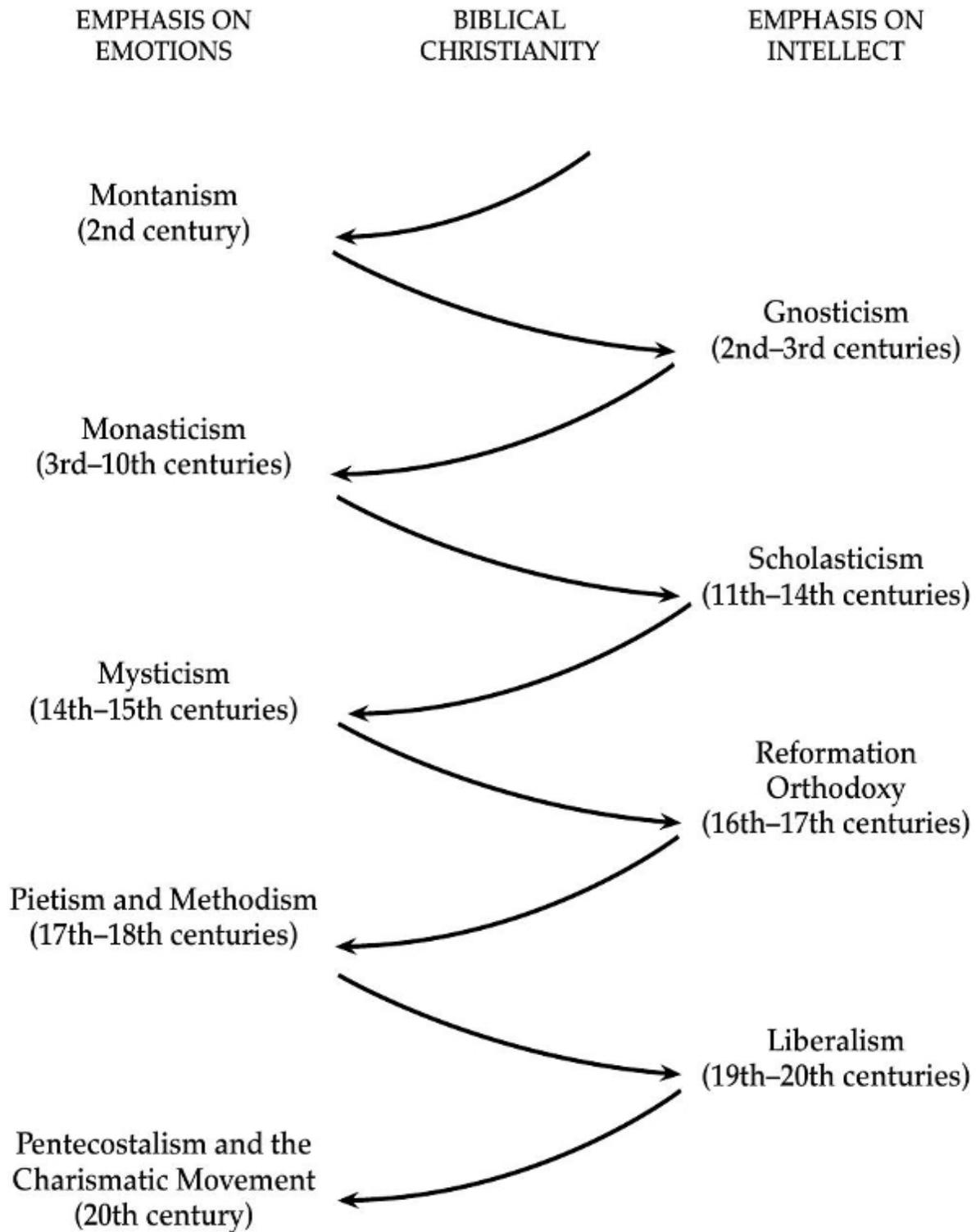
- 1) An ardent and emotional man who believed that the mark of true Christianity is a simple, childlike faith in the blood of Jesus²²
 - 2) Zinzendorf ended up opening his estates to the Moravian movement, which had been abused and displaced, and he and his Pastor friend Christian David founded the Lord's watch or Herrnhut.
 - 3) "The Moravians had in mind a town inhabited only by Christians, separate from the world, a real "communion of saints." It was a free and social monasticism, without celibacy. But like monasticism, they sought to live the Christian life under peculiarly favorable conditions and apart from grosser temptations."²³
 - 4) In 1737 Zinzendorf became an ordained Moravian Minister and they became the first large scale protestant missions force.
 - 5) These missions included St. Thomas in the Danish West Indies, Greenland, Lapland, to native Americans in Georgia, the Guinea coast in Africa, South Africa, Ceylon, and Algeria.
- D. "Pietism made an enormous contribution not only to the German people but to Christianity worldwide.
- i. It shifted emphasis in eighteenth-century churches from avid doctrinal and political controversy to the care of souls.
 - ii. It made preaching and pastoral visitation central concerns of the Protestant ministry.
 - iii. It enriched Christian music enormously.
 - iv. it underscored the importance of a spiritual laity for a revived church.
 - v. Perhaps its greatest legacy was its emphasis on small groups and the devotional reading of Scripture."²⁴
 - vi. Pietism became the backbone of evangelical Christianity, Focusing not just on knowing truth but loving and seeking the Lord internally and in churches with believing members. It led to the works of all revivalists including the like of The Wesley's and Whitefield.

²² Shelley, [*Church History in Plain Language*](#), 384.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Ibid., 385.

The Pendulum Effect on Church History²⁵



²⁵ Robert C. Walton, *Chronological and Background Charts of Church History*, Revised Edition, ZondervanCharts (Zondervan, 2018), 3.

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