



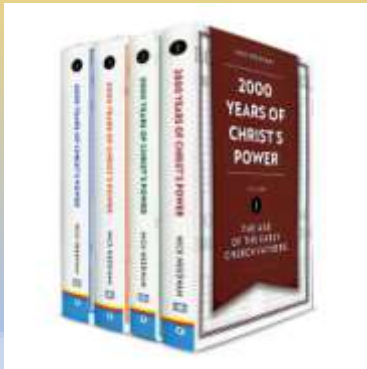
Introduction to Church History

Recommended Method for Learning Church History

- Distinction between learning history and writing history.
- For the learner:
 - 1st Level: Course like this that gives an overview; supplemented by introductory church history books.
 - 2nd Level: Focus in on an era, person, denomination, etc. More narrow courses on these. More focused books (e.g., biographies and specific historical topics or periods).
 - 3rd Level: Read the primary sources of the desired era and really get to know the details of such works and their authors.
- For the writer:
 - 1st Level: Read primary sources and learn as much as you can about the setting.
 - 2nd Level: Read the most up-to-date scholarly material on the subject of interest.
 - 3rd Level: Synthesize and write.

For the Learner

1st Level



2nd Level



3rd Level



Basic Historical Housekeeping

- Come to understand the difference between B.C. and A.D.
 - Also why it is often rendered BCE and CE.
 - Everything before AD 1 counts backward. Everything after AD 1 counts forward.
 - When writing a B.C. date, the initials go after the number. When writing an A.D. date, the initials go before the number. If using BCE and CE, both go after the number.
- Why do we keep time this way?
 - Dionysius Exiguus, a Scythian monk from Italy, came up with this system around AD 525. With the sources available to him, he calculated that Christ was born 753 years after the founding of Rome. He was off by 4-5 years.
 - Not everyone readily accepted it. Notably, the Venerable Bede in the 8th century and German monk Regino of Prim in the 9th century rejected it. Most of Europe waited until the 11th century to accept it. Prior to this, they used a system called indiction.
- Centuries are typically one year after the first number.
 - 801 = 9th century; 1980 = 20th century; 64 = 1st century.
 - Exception: 100, 200, 300, ... 1900, etc.

Nature of Church History

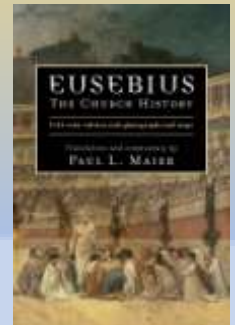
- We will approach this course as Theological Determinists that believe in linear history.
 - Secular historians today tend to lean on social or economic, but the Biblical approach is to use all categories filtered through the truth that God is in control of history.
- History is “His Story.” There was a beginning and there will be an end.
- Those who only teach social history miss the whole picture. Good Christian historians give you the full picture.

Nature of Church History

- Christianity is a historical faith.
 - Our source of divine revelation is written as a history for us to study. Genesis, the books of history, the Gospels, Acts, the Epistles, and Revelation are all a form of history.
 - In the gospel, God entered human history through Christ in the most unique way.
 - The Bible gives historical indicators (e.g., Matt 2:1; Luke 1:5, 2:2, 3:1).
- Church history is a recognition that our God is a God who interacts in history.
 - Genesis 1:14 has God give us the means of keeping and recording time (moon, sun, rotations, and revolutions). God wanted us to tell and record time.
- God has intervened in history many times to accomplish His will, and every time we pray we are asking for Him to intervene in history.
- Thus, church history is defined as the study of what God has done in the life of the church.

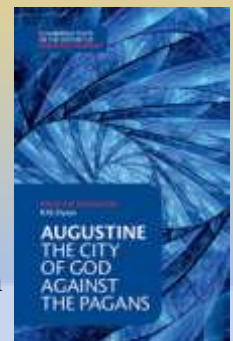
Sources of Church History

- Church history can be found in many sources.
 - Church histories, letters from Christians to other churches, apologies, polemical interest (attacking heresies), the decision of councils, written creeds, and private letters between Christians.
 - Secular sources – edicts of kings, the pagan histories of Tacitus, Suetonius, Dio Cassius, history of Josephus, and the writings of pagan philosophers.
- Church histories started being formed in the 2nd century so future generations would know what occurred. The first church historian was Hegasippus.
- The most notable was Eusebius of Caesarea.
- Secular pagan historian from the 4th century A.D. name Socrates also wrote a church history.
- Jesus promised to build His church in Matthew 16:18 and we must trust Him to fulfill His promise. Church history is the record of His work through His body of believers.



Christians and Church History Throughout History

- Throughout different eras, Christian thinkers have tried to look at the story of the church. They haven't always been on the same page.
- Patristic Era: Two Opposing Views.
 - Eusebius and Imperial Theology (4th century). Constantine's conversion and marriage of church and state is a blessing from God due to Constantine's obedience. Presupposition: If you do good, God blesses you.
 - Augustine and the City of God (5th century). It opposed Imperial Theology. God does not award anyone on merit, but only on grace. History is built of grace. The church's greatest moments were often when the worst men were in power. City of God presents a grand theological vision of history in its totality.



Christians and Church History Throughout History

- Middle Ages: They mutated Augustine's City of God by identifying it as the visible, institutional church.
 - Thus, Medieval Christendom = City of God. Later Medieval scholars believed the Middle Ages represented the golden age of the union between church and state.
- Renaissance (15th & 16th centuries): More critical methods emerge and the first secular histories are produced.
 - They exposed some major Middle Age forgeries.
- Reformation Era gave the Confessional View of history.
 - Church history was viewed through the confessional belief of each Protestant group.
 - Lutherans saw everything as good until the High Middle Ages (Scholasticism).
 - Anabaptists saw nothing as good after AD 150.
 - Most Protestants thought you could find great stuff throughout all of church history (chew the meat, spit out the bones).

Christians and Church History Throughout History

- Two Opposed Views of the 17th and 18th Centuries. There was an emphasis on the accuracy of research.
 - Protestant Orthodoxy continued to read church history through the lens of their distinct Protestant tradition
 - The 18th Century Enlightenment (up through the 19th century) gave birth to the modern-historical-critical method. Providence was displaced by other unifying principles (e.g., Marxism, materialistic nihilism, social sciences, etc.).
- The 19th Century Christians held to Optimistic History (read Philp Schaff).
 - It was the heyday of the evangelical missions movement. Western Christians believed a golden age arrived in which Christianity will spread and unify all corners of the globe. It was post-millennial.
 - This rejected Augustine's view that the City of God and City of Man duke it out until the end of the age.

Christians and Church History Throughout History

- Twentieth Century: After WWI, it was much more pessimistic. Christianity did not provide a hegemonic unity over the world.
 - In the 1950s you end up with Feminist and Black Studies. New questions were asked of history since it was only told through the perspective of white males.
 - This is not inherently bad, but in this case it was part of a larger revisionist project. A Marxist lens and liberation theology declared traditional accounts of history were false and oppressive.
 - Other scholars started to see Gnostics and the heretics as the true Christians silenced by the power of the orthodox.
- The 21st century will likely start telling church history from a much more global perspective as the majority of Christians no longer live in the West.



Outline for the Course

- It will be divided into five sections.
- Introduction – will discuss the foundations of the church from 4 B.C. to A.D 100.
- Persecution From Pagan Domination – covers the years of 100 – 325.
- The Institutional Church – covers the years 325-1054.
- Papal Domination – covers the years from 1054-1215.
- Collapse of Papal Prestige – covers the years from 1215-1517.
- In each era, we will discuss the main men, women, movements, theories, writings, and events that took place.

Conclusion

- Church History is a blessing to those who know and understand it.
- Ignorance of it causes people to repeat mistakes and be stumbled when dialoguing with RCC, EOC, heretics, or atheists.
- It is our duty to use the intellect God gave us not just to know the Bible, but also the history of His people.