

SUMMARY

TURNING POINTS

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- Key Insights
- Best Quotes
- Study Questions

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Turning Points



MAIN IDEA

“One of the most interesting ways to grasp a general sense of Christian history (though there are many others) is to examine critical turning points in that story.” (p. 2)

However, capturing critical turning points in the Christian story over the last 2,000 years is a somewhat subjective task. Nevertheless, wrapping one’s mind around several of the “bigger trees” of Christian history will inevitably help him or her understand the nature of the entire forest.

All histories are slanted in one direction or another, but the goal of examining various time periods in Christian history is to investigate them as objectively as possible so as to see the broader work of what God is doing and the lasting significance these particular turning points may have created.

Christians should care about church history because it reminds them that the faith they hold is a historical one. Furthermore, studying church history “provides guidance in several ways for discovering the meaning of Scripture” (p. 6). Finally, studying history reminds believers that through good days and bad God sustains the church, and ultimately after any period of darkness there will always come light. God will not let His church fail.

This book is a helpful aid to the church as it seeks to give believers a solid grasp of church history and its significance to today.



Church History Matters

It is impossible for any individual Christian or Christian movement to separate itself from the broader historical context of Christianity.

It is unfortunate that certain segments of Christianity can come across as almost anti-history at times. There seems to be an ever-present temptation for Christians to get so locked into the struggles and realities of today, that they can forget their connection and solidarity with all believers of all time.

In a way, some of the church's trials today are new, but in another sense the history of Christianity shows that there is nothing the church cannot ultimately overcome. "The gates of hell will not prevail against it." ([Mat. 16:18](#))

Too many Christians can get so locked into today's events, and even their own interpretations of Scripture, that they forget to consider the richness

of church history. While the Bible is sufficient for the Christian walk, this does not mean that the history of God's people since the close of the New Testament canon is not important at all. In fact, studying Christian history helps show that the power and sufficiency of the Bible as God's Word continually shapes and fashions God's people throughout all of church history. And it continues to do so today!

As far as today's culture goes, "the study of the church gives us fascinating glimpses into the ways Christians have interacted with their culture" (p. 329). Learning Christianity's triumphs and defeats is an excellent way for believers to give glory to God and to help guard against similar errors today.

Furthermore, it is important not to get locked into only one period of Christianity as the "golden age." Some people fixate on the age of the church fathers or the period of the Reformation and desire to bring the church back to those time periods. Yet the truth is, God has continued His church to the present day and while those time periods are important, they were also fraught with sin and failure that should be learned from.

It is important for all believers to be students of church history so as to give praise to God for His grace, continue to learn from the mistakes of the past, and be encouraged by the great faith demonstrated by so many believers over the past 20 centuries.

KEY QUOTES

- “In a word, since Christianity is not captured simply in a set of dogmas, a moral code, or a picture of the universe — though Christianity certainly involves dogmas, morality, and a worldview — since Christianity is ultimately the acts of God in time and space, centrally the acts of God in Christ, then to study the history of Christianity is continually to remember the historical character of the Christian faith.” (p. 5)
- “The blows that Vespasian, Titus, Hadrian, and other Roman generals rained upon Jerusalem did not destroy the Christian church. Rather, they liberated the church for its destiny as a universal religion offered to the whole world.” (p. 16)
- “Luther’s importance for the outer history of Christianity lies in the timing of his theological contribution.” (p. 164)
- “God is sovereign in all, including all experiences and events that affect his church.” (p. 330)

APPLICATION QUESTIONS

- How might you intentionally broaden your understanding of church history?
- How can you encourage other believers to think rightly about church history? What if you started a group that met periodically to read and study history?
- It is important to read primary sources. Who is someone from the Christian past you might read directly from instead of just reading about them?



God's People Sing

Throughout the history of the church, in the midst of persecution or triumph, in the face of the unknown or in comfort, God's people have always been singers.

Initially, it might shock someone to think of the history of Christianity as a history of singing people, but given the realities of the Christian gospel this isn't all that far-fetched. Grace, forgiveness, the cross of Christ, and the goodness of God have found their way in the hearts and lips of believers from all walks of life and languages for the past 2,000 years.

Christians have been singers on the way to the stake to burn alive. They have been singers on days of great triumph or victory, and they have sung during times of great uncertainty.

The fact that the longest book in the Bible is composed of songs helps solidify the truth that God's people have always been a singing people. Therefore, it is no real surprise that "one of the earliest accounts of the

church from an outsider happens to mention hymn singing” (p. 13).

Many of the songs of the early church and throughout history may never be known. Thankfully, however, many have been recorded and can be examined today as an encouragement to present day Christians. As Christians of the 21st century look back on their long history, they sense the solidarity they share with those before by examining the lyrics that poured forth from regenerate hearts that are now in glory.

Songs like [Bernard of Clairvaux](#)'s (1090-1153) “O Sacred Head, Now Wounded:”

O sacred Head, now wounded,
With grief and shame weighed down;
Now scornfully surrounded
With thorns Thine only Crown (p. 77)

Or [Gegory of Nazianzus](#)'s (329-89) “O Light That Knew No Dawn” that says:

Thy grace, O Father, give,
That I may serve in fear;
Above all boons, I pray,

Grant me thy voice to hear;
From sin thy child in mercy free,
And let me dwell in light with thee (p. 121-122)

Or the well known hymn published just before the French Revolution by [Edward Perronet](#) (1726-92), “All Hail the Power of Jesus’ Name:”

All hail the power of Jesus’ Name;
Let Angels prostrate fall,
Bring forth the royal diadem
To crown him Lord of all. (p. 239)

Because of who God is and what He has done for them in Christ, believers of all time have been a singing people. As long as history continues, Christians will continue to share this rich tradition.

KEY QUOTES

- “Some of the freshest expressions of joy and desire in the early Christian community come from [songs written on] papyri and potsherds that were preserved in the deserts of Egypt.” (p. 39)

- “Although our sin be great, God’s grace
Is greater to relieve us.” Martin Luther, based on Psalm 130
(p. 144)
- “The Lord ye know is God indeed; without our aid he did
us make; We are his folk, he doth us feed, and for his sheep
he doth us take.” William Kethe, 1561 (p. 167)

APPLICATION QUESTIONS

- How can you find a healthy balance between enjoying new Christian songs and truly appreciating those that have been around for centuries?
- How can you guard against familiarity in Christian singing and actually think about the truth the song is expressing?
- Since God’s people have always been poetic, might you write a few lines of your thoughts on God and His gospel? Remember, no one else has to see it!



Our History Now

Believers must now consider what historians might say about today in 500 years and seek to live lives faithful to Christ and promote the spread of the gospel.

Hindsight is 20/20. In a way, therefore, it's actually impossible to fully see your historical blind spots as you are still living. Christians today have the benefit of looking back and learning from the blind spots of others.

For example, it wasn't until the 19th century that men like [William Wilberforce](#) led “the fight against slavery” (p. 253). Slavery was a major blindspot for too many Christians until that time.

Believers today have the opportunity to wonder why certain men and women in church history had particular blind spots. But another way they can spend their time is to actually learn from those areas of failures in order to eliminate historians writing negative things about them in the centuries to come.

Of course, the goal is not to present a squeaky clean image. The goal is to bring glory to Christ. To whom much is given much is required ([Luke 12:48](#)). Christians today have been given the benefit of learning from 2,000 years of Christian history. Therefore, it behooves believers to actually learn from history so as to live lives of faithfulness to Christ.

We should be concerned about the needs of today and meet them with a compassionate heart and a zeal to truly see Christ heralded in every nook and cranny of the globe. May Christians give their time and resources toward increasing Bible translations and missionary endeavors. May Christians today eschew the worldliness that permeates so many churches and seek to live lives holy and separated unto God.

And may historians in 500 years be able to say that the single truth that captured the lives of Christians in the 21st century was *solī deo gloria* - to God alone be the glory.

KEY QUOTES

- “Despite a tangled history, the promise of the Savior concerning the church has been fulfilled: ‘the gates of

Hades will not overcome it' (Matt. 16:18). But precisely that tangled history points to the reason why Christianity has endured: 'I will build *my* church.'" (p. 9, emphasis in original)

- "The church survives by the mercy of God, not because of the wisdom, purity, or consistent faithfulness of Christians." (p. 325)

APPLICATION QUESTIONS

- Have you considered, recently, what Christianity may look like in 20 years for your children? What about in 50 years for your grandchildren? What about in 100 years or more for your great-grandchildren?
- Since you are caught up in God's grand story, how might your actions today be a benefit (as opposed to a detriment) to future generations?
- Would you consider picking a biography of a faithful Christian from the past in order to learn from his or her mistakes and be challenged by his or her faithfulness? Whose would it be?

CHAPTER

1

The Church Pushed Out on Its Own: The Fall of Jerusalem (70)

Both biblically and historically it's easy to prove that Christianity began in an overtly Jewish context. In some ways certain people saw it merely as another Jewish sect. This all changed with the fall of Jerusalem in AD 70.

The tension between the Jews and their Roman overlords had been heavy for a long time, but finally boiled over in AD 66 with a Jewish revolt that began in Caesarea. Roman legions led in AD 70 by [Titus](#) destroyed Jerusalem, including the temple. Christianity had already begun to move out on its own by this time, but this event hastened the break between Judaism and Christianity.

In the time period post AD 70, the church stabilized as it solidified the New Testament canon, had bishops replacing the apostles, and worked out orthodox statements of belief known as creeds.

KEY QUOTES

- “The great turning point represented by the destruction of Jerusalem was to move Christianity outward, to transform it from a religion shaped in nearly every particular by its early Jewish environment into a religion advancing toward universal significance in the broader reaches of the Mediterranean world, and then beyond.” (p. 17)
- “The early baptismal creeds, along with the conciliar creeds that followed, functioned as apostolic summaries of the Christian faith. They were distilled from the broader teachings of Scripture and they guided the outward practices of the church. Along with the foundational message of the New Testament and the work of the bishops, they allowed the church to know its own mind.” (p. 36)

CHAPTER

2

Realities of Empire: The Council of Nicea (325)

From its inception, Christianity was a persecuted religion. Persecutions were typically sporadic, but still cost the lives of many saints over the first few centuries. This all changed when [Constantine](#) (288-337) became emperor in 324.

Constantine attributed part of his success in becoming emperor to the Christian God. He saw Christianity as a way to unite the empire. Therefore, in 325, he called a council to discuss the dispute over the divinity of Jesus.

Since 318, [Arius of Alexandria](#) had been teaching that Jesus “was more than human, yet less than fully God” (p. 41). This sparked intense controversy which finally came to a head in 325. How should the church think about the divinity of Jesus?

[Athanasius of Alexandria](#) fiercely defended the full divinity of Jesus. The council agreed and decisively set forth the orthodox teaching of Christ's full equality with God the Father. Political influence over the years kept the [teaching of Arius](#) alive, but the efforts of the men at Nicea helped keep the church on the right trajectory.

KEY QUOTES

- “What Athanasius saw clearly was that, unless Christ was truly God, humanity would lose the hope that Paul expressed in 2 Corinthians 5:21, ‘that in [Christ] we might become the righteousness of God.’” (p. 47)
- “Ordinary believers did not usually possess the technical skill to counter Arius’s arguments. As worshipping beings, however, they knew that to take divinity from Christ was to take hope from their souls.” (p. 48)

CHAPTER

3

Doctrine, Politics, and Life in the Word: The Council of Chalcedon (451)

With the discussion over Christ's divinity settled, Christians began debating over the nature of His humanity. The key in the debates over these matters was always Scripture. Both [Nicea](#) and [Chalcedon](#) sought to ground their statements in what the Bible revealed.

Men like [Apollinaris](#) tried to fuse the natures of Christ into something He was not. Others like [Nestorius](#) also tried to divide Him into something He was not. The result of Chalcedon was the biblical view that Christ is one person consisting of two natures. He is both 100% God and 100% man ([John 1:14](#)). If this were not true, Jesus would have been unable to bring His people salvation.

66 KEY QUOTES

- “We all with one voice teach the confession of one and the same Son, our Lord Jesus Christ: the same perfect in divinity and perfect in humanity, the same truly God and truly man...acknowledged in two natures which undergo no confusion, no change, no division, no separation.” The Creed of Chalcedon (10/25/451) (p. 70)
- “Chalcedon proved that the heart of the gospel message could be preserved, even when that message was put into a new conceptual language.” (p. 74)

CHAPTER

4

The Monastic Rescue of the Church: Benedict's Rule (530)

While this period of church history might often be overlooked, and while it certainly did have its share of error, monasticism as a whole was helpful to Christianity. Men like Augustine, Luther, Jerome, and Patrick were all affiliated with monasticism.

After Constantine, Christians faced little to no persecution as the state and the church were wed. This quickly led to worldliness from leaders in the church as they came to hold power in both the church and the state.

The monks rejected this worldliness and sought to cultivate humility as well as serious prayer and study of the Scriptures. The zeal and stability of the monks helped preserve right belief and right behavior in parts of the church.

Benedict's Rule of 530 sought to codify the life of a monk and how monasteries should operate. Throughout the middle ages monks and friars were responsible for cross-cultural evangelism, learning, and preserving documents of the Christian past. Again, not everything about monasticism is beneficial, but as a whole it helped to preserve key components to Christianity even in dark times.

KEY QUOTES

- “For over a millennium, in the centuries between the reign of Constantine and the Protestant Reformation, almost everything in the church that approached the highest, noblest, and truest ideals of the gospel was done either by those who had chosen the monastic way or by those who had been inspired in their Christian life by the monks.” (p. 78)
- “Throughout the Middle Ages, the monastic life provided one of the few venues where women were allowed (and sometimes even encouraged) to express publicly their grasp of the Christian faith.” (p. 90)

CHAPTER

5

The Culmination of Christendom: The Coronation of Charlemagne (800)

On Christmas Day 800, Pope Leo III crowned [Charlemagne](#) as Holy Roman Emperor. While not as impactful as “the Council of Nicaea or the founding of the monasteries,” this event still “was a dramatic symbol of relationships undergoing permanent change” (p. 101).

The fall of Rome in the 5th century left a power vacuum in the west. This vacuum came to be filled by the bishop of Rome, who would eventually be called the Pope (from the Greek [pappas](#) meaning “father;” *papa* used in Latin as a sign of respect).

While the history of the popes is complex, the reality is that by 800 the bishop of Rome had enough power to crown a new emperor. This coronation set the precedent for Christendom throughout the Middle Ages. Church and state were again solidified for centuries to come. Though plagued with moral and doctrinal errors, Christendom withstood the advancement of Islam and managed not to snuff out the faith once delivered to the saints.

KEY QUOTES

- “By 800 an elaborate mixing of elements had created a situation in which the Roman bishop was regarded unquestionably as the prime ecclesiastical figure in the West and as the personal representative of Western Christianity in the East.” (p. 108)
- “For the next 800 years and more, the politics, learning, social organization, art, music, economics, and law of Europe would be ‘Christian’ — not necessarily in the sense of fully incorporating norms of the gospel, but because the fate of the Western church centered in Rome and had been so decisively linked with the new ‘Roman’ emperor [Charlemagne].” (p. 114)

CHAPTER

6

Division Between East and West: The Great Schism (1054)

Even from its early days, Christianity seemed to be represented slightly different by men in the West, such as [Tertullian](#) (160-225), from those in the East, such as [Clement of Alexandria](#) (150-215).

Yet, these differences were very minor compared to the differences in the Eastern Orthodox Church today. Several events over the early centuries seemed to drive the East and West further apart. One key event is when 6th century churches in the West began to say that the Holy Spirit proceeded from the Father and the Son (the [filioque clause](#)). Other differences included the East's veneration of icons over the years.

Language differences (Greek and Latin), political differences, and the rise of Islam all played a role in the split between the East and the West. The reason 1054 is significant is because Pope Leo IX's representative, Cardinal Humbert, excommunicated the Eastern Patriarch, [Michael Cerularius](#), from the Roman church in that year.

This excommunication stemmed from arguments over church property during the midst of Leo's reforms. Leo's untimely death, as well as the East's rejection of the Pope's full authority led to extreme tensions between Cerularius and Humbert thus resulting in the excommunication and the Great Schism.

KEY QUOTES

- “The rupture between Eastern and Western churches that occurred during the pontificate of Leo IX should not be disconnected from a very long history of disengagement and estrangement.” (p. 123)
- “The [Eastern] Orthodox continue to regard themselves as *the* ‘one holy catholic and apostolic Church’ of which the Nicene Creed speaks.” (p. 137, emphasis in original)

CHAPTER

7

The Beginnings of Protestantism: The Diet of Worms (1521)

On October 31, 1517, Martin Luther nailed his 95 theses on the door of the Castle Church in Wittenberg. Luther wasn't the first to seek reform in the Roman Catholic Church, but his actions marked a decisive turning point in the history of Christianity.

Luther did not discover any new teaching but recovered the biblical doctrine of justification by faith alone. He was called to account for his teachings by Emperor Charles V at the Diet of Worms in 1521. He refused to recant his position and dug his heels in on appealing to Scripture alone as his highest authority.

Medieval Christianity had largely turned into teaching the things that men needed to do for God in order to find eternal life. Luther and others

recovered the truth during the Reformation that the gospel is about what God has done for humanity. This recovery positively affected the trajectory of Christianity up to the present day.

KEY QUOTES

- “The righteousness of God is revealed by the gospel, namely, the passive righteousness with which merciful God justifies us by faith.” Luther (p. 151)
- “Luther’s significance is not in providing something new to the church, though his modes of expression were often striking in their originality. Rather, Luther’s significance was in providing a timely, effective reminder that the hope of the Christian, now and forever, rises from the transaction that occurred at the cross and the empty tomb that his weeping disciples encountered on the third day.” (p. 164)

CHAPTER

8

A New Europe: The English Act of Supremacy (1534)

The work of Luther and others during the time of the Reformation had far reaching effects theologically, morally, and politically.

King Henry VIII sought a divorce from his wife Catherine so that he could marry Anne Boleyn. Henry desired a male heir, which Catherine had not provided. Pope Clement VII refused to grant a divorce because of pressure from Catherine's nephew, Charles V.

Luther's reforms had set the stage for Henry to work with the English Parliament to pass an [Act of Supremacy](#) which forever separated the Church of England from the Roman Catholic Church. While the motivations behind this split were suspect, this separation symbolized what

was happening around Europe. Multiple expressions of Protestant Christianity would be the reality of Christianity in the West from then on.

KEY QUOTES

- “By no means was it the case that the church was entirely a spiritual wasteland in the fifteenth century... Nonetheless, the persistent fascination for over two centuries with political power, wealth, dynastic influence, and temporal advantage eventually began to tell on the entire church.” (p. 177, 180)
- “Protestant fragmentation was not as complete or as rapid as defenders of the Roman Catholic Church predicted it would become, but fragmentation within Protestantism was, nonetheless, a reality early in the Reformation movement.” (p. 184)

CHAPTER

9

Catholic Reform and Worldwide Outreach: The Founding of the Jesuits (1540)

The turmoil of the 16th century forced the Roman Catholic Church to make some changes. Rome never embraced the biblical truth of justification by faith alone, though they did seek to clean up immorality in the leadership of the church. Furthermore, the founding of the Jesuits was an outreach arm that outpaced Protestant mission work for 200 years.

[Ignatius Loyola](#), a former soldier, founded the order of the [Jesuits](#) as a group to be devoted to the Pope and however he might desire to use them to further the cause of Catholicism. He also authored *Spiritual Exercises* which includes his thoughts on communion with God, benefiting even some outside of Catholicism.

The Jesuits, in their zeal for moral living and missionary outreach, are a symbol of the [Catholic Counter-Reformation](#) of the mid-to-late 16th century. For codification of the Catholic Reformation one must look to the [Council of Trent](#) which took place in meetings between 1545-1563.

KEY QUOTES

- “The sum total of counter-reform, reform, papal initiatives, and the Council of Trent left the Catholic Church at the end of the sixteenth century a systematically different body than it had been a century before.” (p. 194)
- “From a Protestant point of view, Catholic missionary activity in the sixteenth and later centuries often seems overly superficial, inadequately scriptural, and frequently syncretistic (that is, uncritically blending Catholic elements into the fabric of pagan or non Christian religions).” (p. 211)

CHAPTER
10

The New Piety: The Conversion of the Wesleys (1738)

The political and religious changes of the 16th and 17th centuries, changed the face of Europe. As Europe appeared to be trending more secular, established Protestant churches were plagued with formalism and insincerity.

In response, men like [John Wesley](#), [Charles Wesley](#), and [George Whitefield](#) took the gospel to the streets — literally. They began preaching to the masses in the fields and streets of England. They emphasized the need for personal conversion and holiness and saw many people converted to Christ.

In addition, John Wesley’s revamped practice of Jakob Spener’s 17th century [pietism](#) was “the basis for interconnected small groups which

became the spiritual hallmark of Methodism” (p. 224).

What made this Protestant movement even more significant is that it retained the important Reformation principle of *sola scriptura* (meaning Scripture alone has the highest authority in the church). Unfortunately, it also came to mean “no authority except the Bible” (p. 235), in some circles.

KEY QUOTES

- “Through the ups and downs of their very active lives, and while engaged in a considerable number of traumatic controversies, John and Charles Wesley never relinquished this grand theme: God’s free grace saves sinners.” (p. 221)
- “If the renewal of Roman Catholicism in the second half of the sixteenth century was the most important development in Catholic history until the twentieth century, much the same can be said for Protestantism about the innovations symbolized so well by John Wesley’s decision in April 1739 to preach in the fields.” (p. 235)

CHAPTER
11**Discontents of
the Modern
West: The French
Revolution
(1789)**

European Christendom, which began with the crowning of Charlemagne in 800, finally collapsed in the 18th century. The effects of the Reformation and political maneuverings had resulted in individuals seeing their allegiance to their nation over and above Christianity. Moreover, as the church and state began to separate, people began to rapidly find less and less need for the Christianity that had shaped Western Europe.

This is true of the [French Revolution](#) in 1789. Violence broke out in the streets of Paris as people sought to be “liberated” from “deference, traditions, and the rule of hereditary elites” (p. 243). But the momentum of the Revolution pushed even further.

King Louis XVI and Marie Antoinette were executed in 1793. The Cathedral of Notre Dame was renamed the Temple of Reason. The leaders of the French Revolution “attempted to throw off what they felt to be the heavy, dead hand of the church” (p. 240). These events symbolized the changing in thought that was occurring throughout Europe as society moved to become more and more secular.

KEY QUOTES

- “The same drift characterized the development of science. While traditional cooperation between Christian faith and scientific endeavor actually survived longer and in many more forms than popular stereotypes suggest, still the trend was toward a conception of the world in which traditional beliefs concerning God’s power and creative wisdom were superfluous. Charles Darwin’s *Origin of Species* (1859) soon became a symbol of science proceeding on its own without reference to a Creator.” (p. 248)

- “In sum, liberal, sectarian, and traditionalist responses to the weakening of European Christendom all had considerable vigor, though of markedly different kinds. Yet despite much laudable faith and much effective practice, the juggernaut of secularism rolled on. Nothing would so well — but also so tragically — sum up the ‘long century’ of dechristianization that began with the French Revolution as the events that unfolded in World War I.” (p. 258)

CHAPTER
12**A Faith for All
the World: The
Edinburgh
Missionary
Conference (1910)**

The [Edinburgh Missionary Conference](#) gathered leaders from Protestant churches in Western Europe and the United States to consider the subject of the furtherance of the gospel to the uttermost parts of the earth. This conference is not significant because it was the first time Protestants were concerned with world missions. Rather, its significance is in it symbolizing the efforts of churches to see the gospel move out of the West and to reach across the globe.

In fact, it was the 19th century that saw a serious move toward missionary efforts to extend the gospel cross culturally. Men like [William Carey](#), [Adoniram Judson](#), [T. Fowell Buxton](#), and [Hudson Taylor](#) were committed

to global missions. Women like [Lottie Moon](#) sought to carry the banner of Christ to places like China, far removed from Western Europe.

The missionary movement was not without great sacrifice. Many missionaries died on the mission field. Some by sickness; others were killed by native inhabitants. [John Williams](#) was beaten and eaten by cannibals in 1839.

Others struggled with what Christianity should look like in foreign lands; wondering how much of the gospel had to be connected to Western Civilization. Yet in all these struggles, the missions movement of the 19th and 20th centuries were largely successful for the cause of Christ.

KEY QUOTES

- “[In the 18th century] the major churches in Europe and North America were, in general, more concerned with maintaining the status quo than with expansion.” (p. 266)
- “The nineteenth century witnessed a broader and more diffuse expansion of Christianity than had happened since the very first centuries of the church’s existence.” (p. 274)

CHAPTER
13**Mobilizing for
the Future:
Second Vatican
Council (1962-65)
and Lausanne
Congress (1974)**

The Second Vatican Council sought to “modernize” Roman Catholicism as it looked to remain relevant in an ever-changing society. This council sought to “soften” some of the harshness against protestants set forth in the Council of Trent. In fact, the council stated that “Non-Catholic Christians were ‘in some real way...joined with us in the Holy Spirit’” (p. 291).

Unfortunately, the council upheld church tradition as being revelation from God (thus equal in authority with Scripture) and did not embrace the biblical teaching of justification by faith alone. The council also had significant influence from “progressives” who “had combined reliance on

the early church fathers with a belief that historical change could purify or clarify ancient church traditions” (p. 295). The Roman Catholicism of today has been significantly impacted by Vatican II.

The [Lausanne Congress](#) of 1974 was not as significant as Vatican II, “but it did represent and stimulate important change among the world’s conservative or evangelical Protestants” (p. 297). This Congress upheld the Protestant commitment to *sola scriptura* while seeking to mobilize the church for world missions “with a special emphasis on individual commitment and individual action” (p. 304).

KEY QUOTES

- “In the partnership of [Billy] Graham and [John] Stott, the Lausanne meeting can be viewed as the climax of Anglo-American world evangelical leadership. Significantly, however, because both leaders poured great energy into encouraging, training, heeding, and learning from evangelicals in the Majority World, they made the Lausanne Congress a symbolically important transition where evangelical leadership began to shift toward Africa, Asia, and Latin America.” (p. 300)

- “Viewed in world historical terms, the gatherings represented two very different strands of Christian experience moving in parallel, and perhaps even inching slightly closer to each other, as they faced some of the major challenges of contemporary life.” (p. 304)



CONCLUSION

Christians hold to a historical faith; a faith that has been passed down through the centuries; a faith that has expressed itself in a variety of ways over the years while holding firmly to the core truths of God’s revelation in Scripture.

Christians have not always been perfect. In fact, they’ve never been perfect. This is the point of the Christian gospel. Turning points in the history of the church are important to study as they can encourage, challenge, and warn believers today who seek to live faithfully under Christ’s kingship in the 21st century.

Christians should care about church history because it reminds them that the faith they hold is a historical one. Furthermore, studying church history “provides guidance in several ways for discovering the meaning of Scripture” (p. 6). Finally, studying history reminds believers that through good days and bad God sustains the church and ultimately after any period of darkness, there will always come light. God will not let His church fail.

The main 3 Key Insights in this book are:

1 **Church History Matters**

It is impossible for any individual Christian or Christian movement to separate itself from the broader historical context of Christianity.

2 **God's People Sing**

Throughout the history of the church, in the midst of persecution or triumph, in the face of the unknown or in comfort, God's people have always been singing people.

3 **Our History Now**

Believers must now consider what historians might say about today in 500 years and seek to live lives faithful to Christ and promote the spread of the gospel.



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