

**Early Church; Europe; Asia**

*Our Father, we praise You as Lord of all the Earth, the creator and king, the one who has come close to us in the Lord Jesus. We thank You that He has indeed come and lived among us and knows what it means to laugh, to cry, to suffer, to become hungry, to become tired, to enjoy friendship, to live in this world, to be misunderstood, to face the challenges of everyday life. And thank You that through His death and resurrection, You, O Lord, have defeated the evil one and have thrown our sins into the ocean never to touch us again. Thank You that those of us who know that redemption in the Lord Jesus are free to serve You and walk before You, free to be loved by You, free to rest in Your full embrace. O God, there are many in this world who do not know of that good news, of that wonder of Your love and mercy. Help us who do know You, who do know you in the Lord Jesus, to be faithful witnesses to Your goodness. Help us as Your people to be salt and light. Help us as Your people to be able by the way we live and speak to give proper prophetic witness to Your standards of justice, peace, and goodness in the world. As we meet here for this lesson, we pray for Your guidance and Your presence. Help us to make the most of our time together. We ask this in Jesus' name. Amen.*

Our next four topics, beginning with topic number 12, are aimed in particular toward the first stated objective of this class, which is to become more aware of the world. We will do so through looking at historical matters, to think historically, to learn from history and through history, to put ourselves properly within history—this is another course objective. In particular, we will focus on just becoming more aware of what has happened in the world, particularly with respect to the Christian church.

Topic 12 is the early centuries of the Christian church. First, let us just think about world history and our ideas of world mission. You will know, I trust, that not all peoples have all had the same pictures—literally—of what the world is. This picture that I often show in this course shows a more contemporary understanding of the geography of modern nation states across planet Earth. There are other ways of looking at contemporary maps, as you will know. Different places in the world can be placed at the center of the map, you can turn it “upside down,” which Australians in particular like to do, etc. But when you look at other maps drawn during different periods of history by different people, you get, obviously, different pictures.

This map (found in the PDF file for this lesson) was one of the best pictures that the ancient Greco-Roman world had. Strabo was a great thinker of his day in 18 AD, during the New Testament period. If you look at that map, you can see that there is a great amount of detail, especially around the Mediterranean. Even Britain is included in the northwest region of the world. What we call the Red Sea is included, as well as the Persian Gulf. As we move into India, there is not the actual complexity we see today of how the different mountain ranges go; they are kind of all lumped together into one straight line out into “the void.” North of those mountains were certain peoples, and south of those mountains were other sorts of people. This was the best image Greco-Romans would have had. And when you think of, for example, Jesus' disciples, when they thought of the world and going into all the world and what it meant to “go to the ends of the earth,” you can see where, for them, the ends of the Earth were. Certainly when Paul had aspirations to go to Spain, that was for sure to that end of the Earth as he understood it. We will come back to this later, but when you think of your own ancestors and where they fit on this map, they might have been within the ends of the Earth or they may not have even been in their view of the world. I do not know how that affects you, but you can ponder that, and we will come back to it.

How do we think about the world today? We have the advantage, if you will, of pictures of the globe taken from satellites, from spacecraft. And we have much broader images geographically and

cosmologically of what the universe looks like and what planet Earth looks like. And yet, when we think about our understanding of “world” history, you can quickly realize that we are rather limited in our instincts if nothing else. For example, when you are listening to talks or giving talks yourself, or when you read often or hear people mention the ancient world or the ancients, most often you or they are talking about Greco-Roman people. For us that is the ancient world. “Classical literature” is a term that is rather confined in our usage. When we talk about classical schools in our day, what is it that we mean, and why are we so eager to get back to the classics? Now, I realize that some of these are heated, public, political topics in our day. There is a great deal of confusion as to the motives and political correctness of matters and those sorts of things. But I would encourage us, despite some of those landmines along the way, to allow God to be the God of all the Earth He has made and desires to redeem and to recognize the worldwide presence of the Christian church. To do these things we need very much to be able to think in worldwide terms, including historically. The current crisis, involving such places as Afghanistan and others, shows many of us who are not familiar with that part of the world and not at all familiar with the history of that part of the world how limited we indeed can be in our instincts and understandings.

The main goal of this particular topic, in looking at the early centuries, it to realize that in the early years, decades, and centuries of the Christian church, the growth was not simply to the northwest of Jerusalem, Judea, and Samaria. The growth was in all directions. Our next three topics are Europe, Asia, and Africa. The church spread in all those directions. Now, again, that can run counter to some of our instinctive ideas of what church history is. For many of us, because of the tradition we inherited, church history basically starts in Jerusalem, heads around the Mediterranean, and keeps heading westward, and then mission history covers the rest. Part of what we want to do, I think, in order to be accurate, fair, and helpful, is to conflate, to bring together, church history and mission history and to know that in the early centuries you have a multi-directional spread of the Christian church. Now, when you look at the early chapters of Acts, that is clear enough. Acts chapter 2 is the event of Pentecost in Jerusalem. Here the text tells us that Jewish believers from all the surrounding areas had gathered to celebrate Pentecost. Starting in Acts 2:5 it says,

Now there were dwelling in Jerusalem Jews, devout men from every nation under heaven. And at this sound the multitude came together, and they were bewildered, because each one was hearing them speak in his own language. And they were amazed and astonished, saying, “Are not all these who are speaking Galileans? And how is it that we hear, each of us in his own native language? Parthians and Medes and Elamites and residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya belonging to Cyrene, and visitors from Rome, both Jews and proselytes, Cretans and Arabians—we hear them telling in our own tongues the mighty works of God.”

Remember when it says “devout men from every nation under heaven” to think of Strabo’s map. People from all over the place were gathered there. And they hear the Gospel spoken to them miraculously as the Holy Spirit comes on the disciples. The early church nevertheless stays focused on its ministry and existence in Jerusalem, as you head through the earlier chapters in Acts. In chapter 7 we see the stoning of Stephen. In the wake of that there is a persecution that breaks out when you come to chapter 8 and therefore the church scatters: “They scattered throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria.” You can use here, of course, Acts 1:8 as an outline of what is happening here: the Gospel is being spread from Jerusalem to Judea and Samaria and then on outward from there.

Speaking of Judea and Samaria, Philip is in Samaria. He goes and preaches to the Ethiopian eunuch there. Many people see that as the entrance of the Christian faith into northeastern Africa. Paul is converted to become a special apostle to all sorts of peoples, which he is. God comes to Peter in a vision

to convince him that he should go to a Gentile's home. God simultaneously comes to Cornelius to tell him someone would come—and then Peter comes. The Gospel indeed comes to these non-Jewish people. Peter says, “What am I supposed to do?” The Holy Spirit falls on Cornelius and his family, and Peter is compelled to recognize that, despite his instincts that this is only for the Jews. Then in chapter 11 as Peter reports this event, you see that God is bringing His good news to all sorts of people. And indeed that is an essential part of the good news—that it is for all sorts of people. Then when you get to 11:19, it says that those who were scattered of the persecution in connection with Stephen make their way to Phoenicia, Cyprus, and Antioch, spreading all around, “spreading the word to no one but Jews alone.” But, verse 20 says, “There were some of them, men in Cyprus and Cyrene who came to Antioch and began speaking to the Greeks also, preaching the Lord Jesus.” These believers, who perhaps because of cross-cultural instincts, because of being from Cyprus and Cyrene, come to Antioch up north and speak not just to Jews but to Greeks also. This was a significant step taken under the leadership of God's Spirit, bringing the good news to God's people.

Some people as well want to make a good deal of the fact that they “preached the Lord Jesus,” speaking of *kurios*. We will later get to Christology in particular with contextualization. But what some people want to stress here is that in preaching *kurios*, these early believers are taking the risk of entering a whole new philosophical world, religio-philosophical world—because they take the idea associated with the word *kurios* and see Jesus identified by that term. This is an indigenous, pre-Christian idea that they take on and see Jesus being described by that term. Then you have to go through all the rigor and painstaking generation-to-generation task of working that out as the Christian faith is brought into a whole new setting. In other words, they do not here stress Jesus being Messiah. That is not an indigenous term in the same sense that *kurios* is. That is an indigenous term of one who is powerful and over others—that is the term they used. Take the English word “lord” and go back to think why it is that the translators of the English Bible chose that term. It is an appropriate term to express who Jesus is as Lord in relation to us at a particular place in society at that time.

Let me share with you now a quote from Andrew Walls on page 18. He stresses again within his scheme of the different phases of Christian history. He stresses the second phase to be, as he calls it, “Hellenistic-Roman.” Then he offers a qualifying statement, and this is what I want to stress here: “The second of the six phases of Christianity was Hellenistic-Roman. This is not, of course, to say that within that age Christianity was geographically confined to the area where Hellenistic-Roman culture was dominant. Important Christian communities lay, for instance, in Central Asia, East Africa, and South India. But the dominant expression of the Christian faith for several centuries resulted from its steady penetration of Hellenistic thought and culture during a period when that culture was also associated with a single political entity, the Roman Empire.” He wants to recognize that “important Christian communities lay, for instance, in Central Asia, East Africa, and South India.” Professor Walls will stress here that over the ensuing generations, the Christian faith does gain a particular stronghold within the Roman Empire, which leads to further successive stages in Northern Europe, Western Europe, and then the spread in modern times to the rest of the world via Europe. But he wants to assure us that the Christian faith early on is going into all sorts of directions.

A map that helps us with this a bit, entitled “The Spread of Christianity,” can be found in the PDF file for this lesson. The darker gray shows where the Christian faith had grown, particularly in the first century and then after that by 185 or by the time of Irenaeus with the lighter gray portions. And then a few early centers of Christianity are noted. They have here a few interactive points that we can consider briefly.

Rome is one of the early centers of Christianity. There were Jews from Rome in Jerusalem at Pentecost, as we saw in Acts 2. The church in Rome perhaps began through that. Paul wrote to the church in Rome and wanted to see them become a missions sending base for further ministry that he foresaw in Spain. And this was a church made up of Jews and Gentiles together. Of course, one of the early centers was in Northeast Africa, in Alexandria, Egypt. The city itself was founded by Alexander the Great. It had a very influential catechetical school, and some of the early church fathers, Clement and Origen, attended there. These were critical and influential early church fathers. Antioch was another early center, which we see of course from reading about the beginning of the church there in Acts 7. This was another important center within the Roman Empire. And then there was the important early center of Edessa, on the other side from Antioch of the Euphrates River, which was important. Edessa had an Aramaic name prior to being re-founded as a military settlement in the third century BCE. BCE is Before the Common Era, and CE is Common Era. Increasingly in literature those categories are used as more academically neutral or religiously neutral than the designations BC and AD, which are specifically Christian. This Edessa did come into prominent roles in various conflicts between the Parthian Empire and Rome, especially from the third century BC into the third century AD. Christianity reached Edessa about the middle of the second century. At this time it was still an independent state—not a part of the Roman Empire. Also at this time neither Greek nor Roman was understood. The native language of Syriac was used in Christian writings. That puts it into a whole different political, religious setting than Christian centers within the Roman Empire. That becomes very important for later developments. It also is important just for understanding what happened during the second century as the Christian faith did spread into a variety of cultural and political settings. The Christian church did not simply grow early on within the Pax Romana, within the Roman Empire. It grew elsewhere as well. Again, that is important to refine and correct in many instances our instincts about what the growth of the early church was like. That whole different cultural and political environment is very important.

In Antioch they spoke Greek, though there would undoubtedly have been other languages spoken there as well. Certainly some Jews who had gone to Jerusalem would have spoken some Aramaic. My guess would be that it would have been similar to what you see in modern cities where you have various immigrants coming and having their own multilingual contexts. But Greek was the main common language. It was the Euphrates River that became the dividing line between Greco-Roman culture and Syriac, which was a part of Asian territory.

Was there something distinctive about the way the Christian church grew in all the places where it grew? In parts of the world outside the Greco-Roman Empire, Christianity did not come to have the sociopolitical prominence that it eventually did in the Greco-Roman Empire. There are places where it did, but not in a uniform sense the way it did in the Greco-Roman Empire. And then the further implications for how Christianity spread into Europe out of the Roman Empire become essentially growing in a way that insists on religious uniformity within territories as Christianity spread from a position of political prominence. That would be the main difference, generally speaking.

Which languages did missionaries use as they went into Asia? I do not know. I am speculating that because of contact with Greece and by extension, in the Greco-Roman Empire from the time of Alexander the Great, there would have been some familiarity in many circles, if nothing else, as a political trade language, with Greek. But that certainly was not a widespread, uniform language among various territories. This was a multilingual environment. It is interesting to note that as the Christian church spread throughout Asia, particularly from missionaries going out of Edessa and Syria, part of the church that sprang up and originated in India came to be known as the Syrian church. Thus one could think—again, I do not have the expertise, and I am not competent within my research to go back and

verify this—that Syriac would have been the language those missionaries would have been likely to use as they went, including in India. Then that would have become a liturgical language even in India.

Let us think with Andrew Walls, then, a little further about, as he calls it, re-conceiving the study of Christian history, but I think it would be fair to call it deconstructing the idea of Christian history. This is from an article you have not read. This article is from the July 2000 issue of the *International Bulletin of Missionary Research*. He notes on page 107 that one danger is that we think by study of our own tradition we are doing church history. And he says we are not, we are doing our own church history. If this is the only lens through which we study Christianity, we bypass the story of the whole people of God in favor of what he calls clan history. Such an approach reduces the area in which we look for the work of God, whereas the promises of God are to all who trust Him. And the Lord of hosts is not to be treated as a territorial *baal* or as a tribal god. If you are really going to study Christian history, let us see where Christian history truly has grown in its full scope. If you confine Christian history to simply coming from the Roman Empire to the West, he says that is just clan history. That is not Christian history. It is a slice of Christian history. That would be an example he would say of exalting to a universal status what is particular. And he talks about Edessa. Edessa indeed often does appear on maps of the early church. Go back to the map around the Mediterranean we just discussed. Unfortunately, it is usually at the eastern extremity of the Christian center on the Mediterranean. If, however (and this is a switch where he wants to turn us on our ear a little bit), if we place Edessa on the western end of the map and pigeonholed the Roman Empire for a while, you can see a different story. Go back to the contemporary world map. Focus on Asia, the full extent of Asia, East Asia, into the Middle East, and include Russia. Picture Europe as a Western appendage to Asia. Then rethink how Christian history has progressed. That forces you to reconsider the center of Christian history. What you quickly see when you consider the early centuries of the church is that there is no center, unless it is Jerusalem from which it begins. But it goes in all sorts of directions.

Another contemporary world map, which can be found in the PDF file for this lesson, has some directives to show how the Christian faith has grown. Many of the arrows focus on growth from Europe to the rest of the world during the past 500 years during the modern missionary movement, and rightly so, because this seeks to encompass 20 centuries of Christian growth. But if you will look at the arrows coming from Jerusalem, Judea, and Samaria, they are heading out from here in all sorts of directions, into Africa, Asia, Asia Minor, and Europe. And that is true to the picture of what happened. They cannot include everything in this picture, but they have arrows going into India from Syria. I cannot tell, but they should have, and we would want them to have, arrows going into China, etc. That is the way the Christian faith grows, in all sorts of directions.

Andrew Walls talks as well about how African church history is equally distorted by attempts to make it an appendage of general church history that really is a form of European history. We must not see African church history as mission history done by the Western church. African church history goes back 2000 years, almost. Again, the main point of this topic is to stress the reality that in the early centuries the early church grew in all sorts of directions into various cultural-political settings.

Topic 13 is Europe. If there is a single main point to this topic, it is this: the history of Christianity moving into and then continuing in Europe, the early entrances into Europe, is Christian-mission history. And this is right in line with the overall idea of bringing together church history and mission history. Christianity was not there, and it entered into Europe in a variety of settings. As relatively small as Europe is on a world scale, Europe has its own complexities and diversities, obviously. There are many different languages, etc. Thus as Christianity came in, it did not occur in exactly the same way according to where you were in Europe. Thus as an introductory remark, you see here as Christianity came into

Europe more Gentiles being grafted in (to use the imagery Paul uses in Romans). It is not just non-Europeans who are Gentiles. All those who are outside Judaism are brought in as Gentiles.

Let us think now about Southern Europe and go back to the first map. We are fairly familiar, particularly from the New Testament, with how the Christian faith spread around the Mediterranean, especially northward around the Mediterranean. We see this especially as we come into Acts 16 where Paul and his companions go into Philippi, Lydia comes to faith, and the prayer meeting and the church begins in Philippi. That is really what many people call the first conversions in Europe proper. You could possibly go back to Acts 2 as well, to people who are in Jerusalem for Pentecost from Rome or elsewhere. But you see that continue on through the missionary journeys of Paul. And the Christian faith spread from there into Southern Europe. That is fairly familiar to us.

Now let us turn to Western Europe. Here is a timeline that is incomplete for our needs but serves to remind us of a few particular dates. Again, this does not stress everything we want to stress. But, if you think of the conversion of Western Europe (separate from Southern Europe), what sorts of events come to mind? Saint Patrick's mission to Ireland. Many of you probably know the story of Saint Patrick. He was not a native of Ireland, but he was in England and was captured by Irish raiders. He was taken to Ireland and had to work tending sheep and doing menial work as a slave. He escaped back to Ireland and got some further theological training there. Then he received a specific missionary call to go and preach the Christian faith in Ireland, which he did, and he became the Saint Patrick of Ireland. Missionary expansion also went into Britain from Ireland. In the 500s, Pope Gregory sent a Saint Augustine into Britain (not the more famous Saint Augustine). Missionaries went from Britain into continental Europe. Thus we see the spread of the faith in those sorts of ways, through missionary endeavors. Saint Columba out of Iona worked among the Picts up in Scotland. You see listed here in the wider understanding of what was happening in Europe the spread of Islam as it came into Western Europe in the early eighth century. That plays a very important role later on. When you get into the ninth century, the Viking raids began, and that speaks of the beginnings of the conversion of Northern Europe.

Understanding at least in general terms the history of Islam and what that means for world history in general and what that means for Christian history in particular—what that means for just Western history—is fundamental, fundamentally important. Islam began in the early 600s with the different events that occurred in Mecca, in Medina. Muhammad at that time received the revelations of the Koran, which he gave. It is after he died and subsequent generations assumed responsibility that through different caliphates associated with various dynasties Islam spread. And it spread quickly in the seventh century across North Africa (Mecca, Medina is in contemporary Saudi Arabia) and somewhat into Asia. It took a few centuries for Islam to reach India, around present-day Pakistan and Afghanistan. It started to spread northward as well, threatening Europe. It was in the thirteenth century, after the Crusades, when Islam really began to seriously threaten Eastern and Central Europe. And, as you know, Constantinople fell in the mid-fifteenth century, becoming Istanbul. Then Islam spread further on into Asia and Indonesia. As you will have been hearing lately, Indonesia is one of the most populous Islamic countries in the world today.

That is the general perspective on the growth of Islam. It began in the seventh century, experienced rapid growth across North Africa in particular, and spread eastward into Asia as well. And that plays an important role in the fortunes of Christianity in Asia, as Islam spread—and certainly in North Africa. North Africa is a good example of a former Christian heartland—it was a strong Christian territory—that became no longer Christian territory. There is a continuous Christian history still, but Christians became very much a minority under the political rule of Islam. Now, there was a continuing African Christian nation further down in Northeast Africa, associated with Ethiopia and that part of the world.

But generally speaking, Christianity became a minority at the political mercy of Islamic rulers. The Coptic Church, for example, traces its history back 2000 years, but to this day is important but a minority in Egypt.

Here is another, more general point in association with that. In contrasting the spread of Christianity with Islam in North Africa and in Asia, one way of categorizing the general spread of Christianity is that it has been a serial spread. It will spread into a territory, and then it will recess. Look at what has happened in Jerusalem and Judea, in North Africa, and now we see the recession of Christian faith out of Europe in the most recent centuries. The Christian faith moves in, and then it recesses at some point later. That is a general characteristic of how Christianity has grown in the world. Thus you can find former Christian areas of the world. With Islam, however, almost in every case where Islam has spread and taken hold, it remains. Spain is an exception. But it is very difficult to find any area in the world that is former Islamic territory. Now, there are ways to start analyzing that, and we will not do that right now. But that is just a general characteristic of those two religious faiths in comparison to one another. One way to begin to analyze it is to see how the Christian faith translates into areas and takes the risk of doing that. Islam, however, has a much more unifying cultural rubric associated with the Arabic language, because the Koran is only the Koran in Arabic. Thus there is an inevitable, essential tie with Arabic.

Let us now look at Central and Eastern Europe and the growth of Christianity there. Cyril and Methodius were two missionaries who are critical in the study of the spread of the Christian faith and in missions history in particular. They, particularly Cyril, translated the Scriptures into the local Slavic language. By that I mean they went through the whole process of coming to an illiterate people, putting their language into written form, and then translating the Scriptures. We do not have time to get into all the political intricacies of how this happened, but in the old Moravian Empire in the late ninth century, the political ruler went to Constantinople and requested (to gain some further freedom and flexibility with respect to what was happening around Rome and to the East with the Byzantine Empire) for missionaries to come from Constantinople. Again, we are not to the Great Schism of 1054 yet, but there was a growing divide between the Greek Christian world and the Latin Christian world. So he wanted someone to come from the Orthodox, Greek Christian world as missionaries to teach people who were becoming Christian. Cyril and Methodius were sent. They translated not only the Scriptures, the Lord's Prayer, and the Ten Commandments, but the liturgy of the Mass itself into Slavic languages. By the time of the ninth century, there were German missionaries and bishops in this part of the world, in Moravia, who were by that time fully convinced that the only holy Christian languages were Hebrew, Greek, and (most especially as far as the liturgy was concerned) Latin. Thus to do anything other than that was heretical. Well, Cyril and Methodius, being Slavic and Greek speakers themselves (they were from Thessalonica and thus bilingual), went out with a *sola Scriptura* sense of Protestantism, if you will. Thus we see all of the Christian faith translated into the local language, and that is a major risk they took.

They were very influential in the Christian faith influencing the Slavic peoples. Christianity as it came into Central and Eastern Europe can point to Cyril and Methodius as a crucial starting point. Cyril and Methodius were brothers. And Cyril was more of the linguist who took the lead in the translation of the Scriptures. Some people, when they see the Russian alphabet, call it the Cyrillic alphabet—but that is the one Cyril created, and they are not the same. Here is a website about Slavic peoples in general: <http://www.omda.bg/engl/history/kiril&meth.html>. We are not able to dwell here right now, but this is important when you think about the Christian faith spreading into Central and Eastern Europe—places like contemporary Slovakia, Czech Republic, and Poland (Hungary has its own story). But this web page is just a general site about Slavic peoples. This gives a breakdown of the people groups and the background of their migration into that part of the world centuries ago. In talking about religion and

culture, you can see how Christianity was initially introduced to the Slavs by Greek missionaries, Cyril and Methodius and others who came after them during the ninth and tenth centuries. That is only meant to be a taste and an introduction.

Hungary has its own, particular history. Via the Roman Empire stretching into present-day Hungary, you see early Roman ruins and evidence of Roman Christianity from the third century in present-day Hungary. This is a site that points to some of that early Christian archaeological evidence: <http://www.cryingvoice.com/Christianity/HunAquincum.html>. This summer I was in Hungary, and while there I visited a university town in southwestern Hungary. There we saw the foundations of an early Christian chapel from around the third century. Thus when you go to a place like Hungary, you are going to a very early Christian history. When you talk about later Christian history in Hungary, you need to talk about the conversion of the king who came to be known as Saint Stephen. That occurred in 1000 AD. The Hungarian crown has become an important symbol. While we were there in just the last month, they were preparing for one of the annual national holidays. This crown was of particular significance in that preparation. Hungary in a unique way within Central and Eastern Europe with the crowning of Saint Stephen by the Latin pope became aligned with Western Christianity, with Roman Catholicism. It did not become Orthodox. That is part of the dividing line in Central Europe between what came to be known from the eleventh century in particular as Western and Eastern Christianity. Hungary also, as far as Roman Catholicism was concerned, became a defender on the Eastern frontier against the eventual encroachments of Islam. Thus within the Roman world, the eventual Roman Christian world, Hungary took on a particular importance. The crowning of Saint Stephen, for whom the massive Saint Stephen's Basilica is named, goes back 1000 years and marks Hungary's conversion to Catholicism. At this time, Hungary also became Christian in a more modern sense as well as in an archaeological sense of Ancient Roman Christianity being there at the time of the old Roman Empire.

Russia began at a similar time to receive Christianity from Ukraine. In 988 AD, King Vladimir was converted. That is seen as the beginning of the Christian faith in Russia. If you think of the year 1000, that is when Saint Stephen was crowned in Hungary and is about the time when Russia began to become Christian and become a part of the wider, more complex world. You can also see the wider Slavonic liturgy by Cyril and Methodius come into the wider Slavic world, including Russia.

Here is a timeline of the Russian Orthodox Church up to 1453. There are some crucial dates associated with Constantine, the building of Constantinople, and the early councils. There is also a reference to Islam because of how important that became in Central and Eastern Europe, and indeed in all of Europe, and what that meant for Constantinople. You see Constantinople sending missionaries to the Balkans, Russia, and up into Moravia. The conversion to Orthodoxy is noted. And then 1054, the date of the Great Schism as it is called, is certainly noted. This was the time of the division of the church into what became known as Western and Eastern Christianity. We are getting a little ahead of ourselves, because we are getting into Asian history, but we need to be careful about what we mean by Western and Eastern Christianity. We need to realize that West and East are relative, conventional terms. From the fifth century on, when we talk about Western and Eastern Christianity, we are talking generally about Christianity associated with the now overrun Roman Empire—Greco-Roman Christianity and Syriac/Nestorian (what came to be known as)/Asian Christianity (in general terms). That is Eastern Christianity versus Western Christianity, as it came to be known. Then, as Greco-Roman Christianity became increasingly isolated from Asian Christianity, in large part because of the rise of Islam—this contributed toward the contemporary misunderstanding and total lack of acquaintance with Asian Christianity for those of us in the wake of Western Christianity. As Western Christianity became more self-enclosed, the Great Schism happened in 1054 between Western Christianity and Eastern Christianity. And that came to be seen as basically a totally Christian world.

Do you see how increasingly confined the understanding of Christian history became? And our understanding of what the “civilized world” was became very confined as well. “Civilized world” is certainly a contemporary term. That was considered to be Europe and the part of Asia right next to it, namely Russia. If you fast forward in your mind to the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, Islam was circling Europe. And that is the world for Europeans. Europeans became increasingly isolated and self-contained. And those ideas from several centuries ago help inform and feed into the confinements of our understanding of history today, and of Christian history in particular.

It has been asked, did churches outside of Europe have a more global outlook than European churches as this was developing, or were they too confined in their outlook? I would say that they were also more confined in their outlook. I guess the reason we are stressing our confinement here today is because of who we are in this room first, and second because of the more widespread Western influence in the world. But that is an excellent question and a very good point. It is not just Europeans who are confined in their understanding. All sorts of people are.

Let us move now quickly to Northern Europe. Here you have a different type of conversion in some ways. As far as the conversion of Northern Europe is concerned, you have the spread of Latin Christianity. Here is a quote from Andrew Walls: “In Northern Europe, for a people to become Christian was for them to enter Christendom, to be part of a fellowship of peoples owing allegiance to Christ. In the West, this allegiance was concretized through the acknowledgement of the West’s only apostolic seed. Entry to Christendom was also entry to a literary culture preserved by and through the Church. It was a literary culture based on Latin, the language of the sacred books and the liturgy, the language of the literary tradition of the Western Roman Empire, which the peoples of the north and west had collectively destroyed.” In the early preaching of Christianity in Europe, missionaries proclaimed God over against the old gods, the One over against the many, the new Christ over against the old Thor. There was a continuation of those methods as the Christian faith spread into Northern Europe as well. A distinction he makes is what has been happening in more contemporary sub-Saharan Africa. There you have the incorporation of pre-Christian names of deities, for example, as the Scriptures are translated into the vernacular. And in more general terms, you have the translation of the Christian faith into the existing setting. And you have this encounter and coming to terms with the past and the Christian faith coming to be at home there by integrating itself into the culture, bringing change, bringing Christian distinctives to what is there, but there is some continuation of the old. You can look at what happened in Northern Europe: what was there was wiped out, destroyed, or distorted, and this new, external Christian faith came in. That is a general difference in what happens.

Walls claims that this sort of conversion, where whole regions became officially Christian when the ruler became Christian and the people were forced to be baptized, was not decisive enough for Christianity. It was a violent, forced conversion in many ways, and he claims it was often much more violent and bloody in Northern Europe than what the Conquistadors did in Latin America. And he says that simply substituting a whole new Latin culture that embodied the Christian religion for what was there was not sufficient. There needed to be more of an integration. Again, part of the reason he says this is because many people in our day look at what is happening in Europe, the recession of Christianity and old religions coming back. Some people in Africa are saying, “Wait a minute. Christianity is being integrated for us. We have a long way to go; we are just in the beginning stages. But did that ever really happen for you in Northern Europe? Or was Christianity more like a kind of veneer that was brought in forcefully and now has recessed and what was already there is raising its head?”

Now, my own comment on that is, I think that is very thought-provoking to consider. There are books worth reading, like *Was Europe Ever Really Christian?* At the same time, I would again caution us

against being simplistic in our explanations. The Christian faith being in an area for that long, for centuries and generations, is not going to have no effect. There will be a deep penetration. And it did not just remain in Latin. With the Protestant Reformation, for example, in various areas you have contextualization of the Christian faith into the vernacular in many areas. There again, some people would say those are instances of integration. And to think that you can have some kind of pure, quarantined Christianity that is not “affected by the culture” is not taking into account one of the basic principles of the Christian faith. It translates into, becomes a part of, and integrates with new settings all the time. Remember, we looked very quickly at some of the methods of cross-cultural missionaries and how when Pope Gregory sent out Augustine to England he said, “You have these pagan temples? Do not just rip them down and build up new churches. Use them as churches. They are already there to be used.” That is one attempt at (this has been called different things in our day) assimilation, contextualization, enculturation, adaptation—those different terms have different nuances, depending on who is using them and at what time. But to think, again, that we can come in and wipe out what is there and have a *tabula rasa*, a blank slate, and begin from scratch is not reality, and it is not Christian. That is a harsh way to put it, that it is not Christian. It has been a part of what Christian history has involved. But it is not what, I would suggest, is inherent to the translatability of the Christian faith.

I want to move quickly to at least begin our section on Asia, topic 14. Again, thinking back to what happened with the Christian faith in various parts of Europe, the main organizing point is mission history. Again, when we talk about world mission here, we are talking about a comprehensive sense where God's mission is concerned about whether the Christian faith continues as well. But I am using mission history in the sense of Europe as we just looked at it as the beginnings of Christianity into new settings that were a part of Europe. The main point of our topic, Asia, is the course founding point. The tendency can be to think, “What happened in Europe? That is church history. What happened in Asia? That is mission history.” Let us flip it. What happened in Asia is Christian history; it is church history. It is also mission history—you need to say both. I want to stress here that it is church, Christian history, because that does not get enough stress. Samuel Moffett (who I think was for some years in Korea himself), a well-known and renowned church historian at Princeton and a close friend and colleague of our own David Calhoun, is working on this *History of Christianity in Asia*. I have some readings for you from part 1. Part 2 is just coming out, that takes us up to 1900. Dr. Moffett says there will be a part 3. We hope so! It took a while for part 2 to come out. He says this at the beginning of volume 1 of his *History of Christianity in Asia*: “The story of Christianity in the West has often been told, but the history of Christianity in the East is not as well known [...] It is too often forgotten that the faith moved east across Asia as early as it moved west into Europe. Western church history tends to follow Paul to Philippi and to Rome and on across Europe to the conversion of Constantine and the barbarians. With some outstanding exceptions, only intermittently has the West looked beyond Constantinople into Asia and given attention to the long, proud traditions of a Christianity that chose to look neither to Rome nor to Constantinople as its center. It was a Christianity that has for centuries remained unashamedly Asian.” He is just making the point here that there has been a Christianity that for centuries has remained unashamedly Asian.

These next categories in the notes for the historical progression I am using to outline what Moffett uses in his book. We are looking at the growth of the church from the time of the apostles up to Mohammed in the seventh century. With the first 200 years, Moffett notes the four main empires in Asia in the wide sense: West Asia of the Greco-Roman Empire, the Iranian and Persian Empire, the Chinese Empire, and the Indian Empire. Those are the various larger empires of these early centuries in Asia. Then you have the early missions to India. Moffett concludes—and most scholars now conclude, and I fully concur—that there were indeed very early outreaches, inroads of the early church into India. Some people want to say the evidence is not conclusive and we really do not know. The evidence is there to see a first-century

entrance of Christianity into India, spearheaded by Saint Thomas. I am depending in this on the research of Dr. Moffett and others. I have not done primary research myself. But the increasing conclusion in nearly everything I read that is put out is that it is perhaps not undeniable but the evidence is very overwhelming. Part of the evidence is the witness of Thomas Christians themselves in India today. And then there is the whole Syrian period, the Persian period. It is at this point, when you get to the third century onward, that you see what comes to be known as the Persian Church and eventually comes to be known as the Nestorian Church, associated with Nestorius. In the fifth century there was an important theological controversy that emerged that began with Nestorius, who was associated with Antiochan Christianity, which has some different nuances than Alexandrian theology and Christianity. Much of this is cultural, though you cannot reduce it to cultural matters, but it is related to cultural and political matters. Nestorius, with a focus on the human nature of Christ as Antiochan Christianity did, did not want to use the term "mother of God," *theotokos* for Mary, the mother of Jesus. He said it was not proper. The Alexandrians saw that as heresy. Because of time constraints, we will pick up with this next time. Thank you.