

History of Global Christianity (CH-301)

J. Raymond Albrektson, Th.D, Course Instructor

Course Description: *This course will trace the global expansion of Christianity from its beginnings to the present era. Attention will be paid to the theological, cultural, sociological, and missiological dimensions of the worldwide Christian movement as it developed and spread throughout history. In addition to exploring European and American Christian history, the course will also investigate African, Asian, and Latin American varieties of Christianity, which are currently enjoying resurgence in the global south.*

Class Objectives: By the end of this class you should be able to:

- Trace the geographic spread of Christianity from its Asiatic origins into the five continents over twenty centuries.
- Present a brief century-by-century summary of the major movements, events, and theological developments of the global church from the time of Christ up to the present.
- Describe the origins, organizational patterns, rituals, and doctrinal emphases of the major branches of Christianity (Orthodox, Protestant, Pentecostal, Roman Catholic, and Miaphysite churches) back to their beginnings to their present global concentration.
- Discuss the major theological, practical, or missional contributions of some of the most significant figures of church history.
- Summarize the major issues and outcomes of the most significant doctrinal controversies of the Ancient, Medieval, and Modern periods and how they permanently affected the geographical spread of the church.
- Apply insights gained from studying the origin, development, and expansion of the church to the present task of crossing cultural barriers with the gospel.

Required Texts: *Global Gospel*, Douglas Jacobsen (Baker, 2015); *Christian History Made Easy*, Timothy Paul Jones (Rose, 2009)

Course Location and class schedule: The class will meet from Monday-Friday from 9-12 and 1:30-2:30 in the Bill Bright Strategy Center at Lake Hart. *Please be on time.*

Reading Schedule: This is a very compressed class, and it is important to do as much reading as possible before the course begins. In any event, it is essential to complete the reading in the schedule *before* it is discussed in class. On-time reading will count for **25%** of the course grade. The Jacobsen book is challenging, so please watch this video (<https://vimeo.com/111883127>) prior to reading the book. This video will be briefly discussed in class.

| Date | Session Title (Key Idea*) and content summary for each session | Pages in Jones | Pages in Jacobsen |
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| March 11 | 1st: The Church Planted, Equipped, and Sent <i>Beginning in Asia, the first century witnessed the spread of Christianity into Europe and Africa</i> | 1-55 | 1-72 (Global Christianity; Four Traditions; Africa) |
| | 2nd: The Early Church: Faithful, but Flawed <i>While expansion continued, the church struggled to adjust to the lack of apostolic leadership and rise of splinter branches</i> | | |
| | 3rd: External Persecution and Internal Corruption <i>The first national church was founded in Armenia, but the church found it difficult to cope with dramatically increasing persecution coupled with dynamic false teachers</i> | | |
| | 4th: Conversion of Constantine <i>Christianity's promotion to official status in the Empire led to great difficulties for Christians in the East, schism and bitterness in North Africa, and the rise of state-supported Arian Christianity.</i> | | |
| March 12 | 5th: Golden Age of the Church Fathers <i>Great scholars arise, the West abandons Arianism (mostly), and the Latin West gets its first translation while Nestorian Christianity begins to move East.</i> | 55-78 | 73-105 (Latin America) |
| | 6th: Age of the Monasteries <i>Monasticism becomes a powerful movement in both West and East, and fuels missionary expansion in the British Isles and Europe.</i> | | |
| | 7th: The Pope and the Prophet <i>While Pope Gregory I typified all of the values of the medieval era to come in Europe, the rise of Islam in the East lay waste to Christianity in the Levant, North Africa, and Asia Minor.</i> | | |

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| | <p>8th: Charles the Great (Charlemagne) <i>The descendent of a Frankish warlord established the single greatest Empire in the Europe since the 5th Century. While Christianity lost almost all of North Africa, Spain, Nestorian Christianity reached the heart of China.</i></p> | | |
| March 13 | <p>9th: Collapse of the West <i>The fragmentation of Charlemagne's empire ushered in societal collapse in the West, greatly accelerated by the pagan Vikings. The Islamic culture reaches a zenith of enquiry and tolerance.</i></p> | 79-90 | 106-145 (Europe) |
| | <p>10th: Conversion of the Slavs <i>The Viking ruler Vladimir became the first Christian ruler of what would become Russia, and forges close ties with the Eastern Church.</i></p> | | |
| | <p>11th: The Church Divided <i>A thousand tiny causes (and a few giant ones) result a divorce between the Eastern and Western Churches, while Turkic people-groups accept Nestorian Christianity.</i></p> | | |
| | <p>12th: The First Crusade <i>The theological gulf between Rome and the Eastern Church became unbridgeable when Crusaders of the Fourth Crusade sacked Constantinople. Hatred between Muslims and Christians in the Middle East reached the boiling point.</i></p> | | |
| March 14 | <p>13th: Birth of the Universities <i>The disastrous 4th crusade also flooded the West with Greek scholars and instigated the rise of universities. The Nestorian church reaches its greatest influence in China</i></p> | 91-134 | 146-187 (Asia) |
| | <p>14th: The Time of the Three Popes (Western Schism) <i>The papacy moves out of Rome for about 70 years, and upon returning</i></p> | | |

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| | <i>unwisely elects two popes. Two councils plus a third pope barely resolve the situation. Tamerlane arises in the East and crushes Armenian, Syrian and Persian Christianity. The last Nestorians are expelled from China</i> | | |
| | <i>15th: Morning Stars of the Reformation Reformers—both theological and moral—seek to put the church back on track. Islam completes the eradication of the Eastern Empire, and Russia considers itself the heir of the Byzantine empire.</i> | | |
| | <i>16th: Reformation! The Protestant reformation fractures the Western Church. The invasion of the Ottoman Muslims gave protestants time to organize for survival.</i> | | |
| March 15 | <i>17th: Wars of Religion While the Roman church struggled to win back lost European territories, ambitious missions were launched to N & S America, Asia (China, Philippines, Japan, and India)</i> | 135-188 | 188-230 (North America) |
| | <i>18th: Great Awakenings! At least two great waves of revival led to the Methodist church in England, the Pietist revival in Europe, and an awakening of belief in the American Colonies.</i> | | |
| | <i>19th: Great Century of Missions Protestants finally joined the world mission movement, and national churches were planted in SE Asia and Africa in a colonial context. Revolutions in N & Central America lost the Roman Church much ground, and Europe was plunged into widespread skepticism about the Christian faith.</i> | | |
| | <i>20th: Triumph of Global Christianity World wars and economic collapse led to a new post-Colonial world,</i> | | |

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| | <i>and a dramatic rise of new and unfamiliar churches, especially Pentecostal and Independent African Churches. Mission sending countries tipped from the Euro-American North to the Global South. With the rise of information technology, missions underwent a global transformation.</i> | | |
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Assignments and Exam:

- ✓ **Church History Memory Project:** Church History Memory Project: One goal of this course is for each student to acquire a working ability to discuss the broad outline of church history in a global context. Each student will be required to memorize the twenty "key ideas" of church history using the standard "peg word" method. This will count **35%** of your total grade. A handout on this will be provided on the first day of class, but it would help a great deal to watch the following YouTube video in order to understand the basics of the memory system we'll be using: <https://youtu.be/ml96Ph-yHcA>
- ✓ **Time-Travel Church Visit:** Sometime within two weeks of the end of the course each student will visit a church that represents an earlier branch of World Christianity. Examples: Armenian, Greek (or Russian, Ukrainian, Serbian, or Bulgarian) Orthodox, Ethiopian, Coptic, Syrian, or Tridentine-Rite Catholic churches. If you like, you could also visit a modern worship service of a church that is significantly culturally different than your own, such as an African Methodist Episcopal church, Primitive Baptist, or Holy Ghost Pentecostal church. This is not an exclusive list, but seek here for starters.

Do research online in advance to discover the *history* of the church you plan to visit, and address the questions of how you should dress, behave, and speak to the people you will meet. Be sure that you are prepared for cultural minefields! Many of the churches mentioned will expect women to wear scarves and dresses. Imagine that this is your target mission community—how should you make your first visit if your goal is to become an insider?

You should preferably seek out a Sunday-morning experience—one with the largest number of people. Don't go on some obscure weeknight. Finally, write a brief (one-page or less) summary of your observations and analysis in light of your understanding of how and where they fit into the "tree" that is World Christianity. This will count for **30%** of your total grade. You should email that to the ray.albrektson@cru.org (subject: Time Travel Assignment) by midnight Eastern time on April 1, 2019. That allows three Sundays to elapse after the course and allows a full day to complete the assignment and email it in.

- ✓ **Application:** Identify four items on your twenty-point historical scheme and indicate applications for the coming year. The goal is to help you integrate what you have learned from church history into your life and ministry. For example, if you chose

Charlemagne as your key figure for the 9th century, you might observe that despite the general illiteracy of his times, he never stopped attempting to broaden his intellectual understanding. Your application might be to take an introductory course in Spanish, or learn to play the blues harmonica, or read a popular biography of a great physicist (Feynman or Einstein come to mind). These four items must be spelled out in sufficient detail that it could be scheduled and evaluated. These will count for **10%** of the grade and will be turned in along with memory project above and should, in fact, be written somewhere ON the memory project.

- Wrong (and no credit): "18th Century—Great Awakening. –I'll seek to be more spiritually awake in the coming year."
- Right: "I'll read David Brainerd's diary before this coming Christmas."

About Dr. Albrektson: Ray was born in Kentucky, earned his B.Sc. at Duke University, and served as a radar and electronics officer in the U.S.A.F. He's been on CCC staff since 1974 and earned the M. Div. from International School of Theology and his Th. D. from the Asian Baptist Graduate Theological Seminary (while concurrently helping to plant and teach at ISOT-Asia, now known as International Graduate School of Leadership in Manila). He taught New Testament and Church History courses at ISOT-US from 1986 until its closure in 2002. He was recognized as a "Google Scholar" in computer-mediated distance education for a research article he wrote in 1986 that became the first and most-cited publication in its field. He is currently a "Professor-at-Large" for the International Schools of Theology Consortium and concentrates on promoting theological education to Christian workers in the developing world. He's married, has two grown children and three grandchildren. He's the author of several books, a scuba diver, an ex-hang-glider pilot, enjoys the ukulele, and competed on *Jeopardy*. You can email him at ray.albrektson@cru.org.

*The twenty "key ideas" for this course are not proposed to comprehensively describe the breadth and global significance of a given century. Rather, they are intended to be short and pithy nuggets that will provide a chronological and memorable context for *all* of the warp and woof of history, both Western and Eastern, Northern and Southern. Historians struggle with harmonizing the obvious "Western movement of history" from the Middle East, through Europe, to the Americans and Asia, with the conflicting fact that Christianity was ancient in Asia long before Columbus. Since this course is likely to be attended by students who are the product of the Western tradition, it makes the most sense to use "key ideas" that are most relevant to the Christian and intellectual traditions of the West, while simultaneously relating them to corresponding patterns in Asia and the Global South. The choice of broadly Western key ideas is not intended in any way to reflect a triumphalist or monocultural view of global history.