

# CHRISTIAN HISTORY 101

## SESSION EIGHT: Back to the Future

- Cracks in Christendom
- A Post-Christian, Post-Modern World
- What Comes Next

Premise: By going “Back to the Future,” Christianity has a chance to recover its identity as a post-Christendom, pre-Constantine movement.

### CRACKS IN CHRISTENDOM

A fuller definition of Christendom based on Stuart Murray:

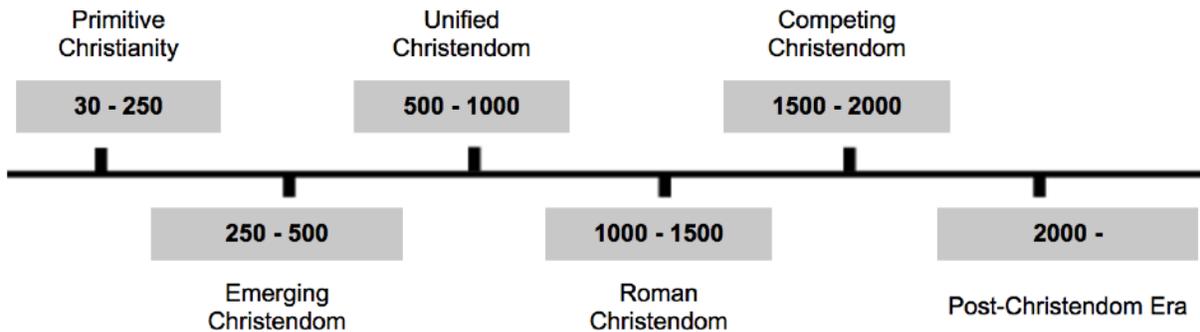
- The adoption of Christianity as the official state religion
- The movement of the church from the margins of society to its center
- The identification of Christians by birth (infant baptism) or nationality (nationalism)
- The fusion of political, civil, military, and religious power
- The establishment of an institutional, hierarchical system mirroring the state
- The construction of ornate church buildings and the cathedral
- The use of force to impose orthodoxy or expand borders

The Enlightenment (1650-1800): The philosophical and intellectual revolution that transitioned Europe to the modern era, to Modernity, and began the erosion of Christendom.

Modernity: A belief/myth in the great age of humanity and progress. The fatal flaw in the modern worldview is not the desire and hope of improving human conditions; it is the false belief that the modern view could improve THE human condition.

### A POST-CHRISTIAN, POST-MODERN WORLD

The emerging post-Christian, post-modern world is one where faith in God has been lost along with a complete loss of confidence in the systems that used to bring us meaning. The Western world became a “post” society around World War 2.



Postmodernism, is not so much a philosophy. It is cynicism. It is the rejection of the Enlightenment-driven optimism and modern assumption that we can self-produce our own utopia. Jean-Francois Lyotard: “Our grand narratives have lost all credibility; unification is over.”

The best biblical example is the Tower of Babel found in Genesis 11.

### **WHAT COMES NEXT?**

#### **A - ACCEPT DISCOMFORT**

The culture is not “coming back” to us - “us” meaning white, North American, Protestant Christians.

N.T. Wright: “I believe discomfort is itself one aspect of a contemporary Christian’s vocation: As our world goes through the deep pain of the death throes of the Enlightenment, the Christian is not called to stand apart from this pain but to share it.”

#### **B - BE THE CHURCH**

We have to recapture our role as a truly alternative community that Barth says, “exists... to contradict the world, but to do so in a way full of promise.” Be cause if people have given up on God, religion, reason, and themselves - they need something that promises hope.

#### **C - CHANGE**

- 1) A well-established way of thinking becomes dominate; a “worldview” forms.
- 2) An anomaly develops - a “splinter in the mind.”
- 3) A slow but growing sense of contradiction sets in.

- 4) Danger emerges.
- 5) A new, different worldview appears.

D - DIE

The church as you have know it will die; either by retreating, accommodating, or in letting go of the life it has had to take hold of what is next.

John 12:24: “I tell you the truth, unless a kernel of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains only a single seed. But if it dies, it produces many seeds” (NIV).

The 21st Century church will be “missional.” In short, we have be saved from the world to be sent to the world in order that we might serve the world.

**Projected Cumulative Change Due to Religious Switching, 2010-2050**

	Switching in	Switching out	Net change
Unaffiliated	97,080,000	35,590,000	+61,490,000
Muslims	12,620,000	9,400,000	+3,220,000
Folk Religions	5,460,000	2,850,000	+2,610,000
Other Religions	3,040,000	1,160,000	+1,880,000
Hindus	260,000	250,000	+10,000
Jews	320,000	630,000	-310,000
Buddhists	3,370,000	6,210,000	-2,850,000
Christians	40,060,000	106,110,000	-66,050,000

Source: The Future of World Religions: Population Growth Projections, 2010-2050

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