
HOW DID WE GET TO...?

A Series on Christian History and Doctrine

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INTRODUCTION

Have you ever wondered why Christians, perhaps yourself included, affirm certain doctrines? Or maybe you have wondered why Christians and Jews separated into distinct religions or why theological liberals and conservatives so seldom attend the same churches.

“How did we get...” is a series designed to help you find some answers. The series covers six topics:

- How did we get to the doctrine of the Trinity?
- How did we get to the doctrine that Jesus was fully human and fully divine?
- How did we get to the doctrine of original sin?
- How did we get to the doctrine of justification by faith?
- How did we get to a distinction between Judaism and Christianity?
- How did we get to theological liberals and conservatives?

For each topic, I have a short video (available on YouTube), an outline, discussion questions, and a glossary. Each session is intended to give you the beginning of the story. More could—and should—be said about all of them, but my hope is to provide a useful introduction to these key topics.

A few notes to begin. First, I called this video series “how did we get to...” even as I recognize that not everyone might find themselves in the “we.” I get that. I, for example, disagree with the doctrine of original sin. My claim, therefore, is not that all Christians believe the doctrines or like the historical realities I cover. I mean “how did we get” more in the sense of “how did we end up with” or “how did we inherit.” You may or may not like what we ended up with, but I think understanding how particular doctrines came to be accepted by many is useful. I may not agree with Augustine’s understanding of original sin, but I have certainly “ended up” with it in the sense that it has affected my religious tradition. I think it is also worth learning about ideas with which you disagree because can lead to reflection on what you believe and why. Sometimes—and this is true for me and Augustine—a thinker with whom you disagree still asks you questions that make you consider your positions anew.

Second, this series focuses on how what we might call “the mainstream church” came to the doctrines and situations it did. Christianity is a diverse tradition and not everything I say about “the church” or “Christians” applies to everyone who understand themselves to be part of the church or a Christian. My goal was to help people understand the doctrines and historical situations of a large

swath of Christians, particularly the swath that continues to exercise influence over large numbers of Protestant, Catholic, and Orthodox Christians today.

Third: theology is hard. In this series, I attempt to make the topics as accessible as possible without diluting them of all complexity and nuance. Even so, some of the topics are difficult. They involve debates among people with unfamiliar names who had philosophical, theological, and cultural assumptions different from many of those you or I might have. In order to tell the stories accurately, I do include details and terminology that might be confusing. I encourage you to focus on the big ideas and think about what questions people were trying to solve, what answers they came to, and why they found those answers compelling. If you can't remember the name of all the councils or every discarded belief, don't worry. I have to look many of them up too.

Fourth, I made this series with Sunday School or adult forums in mind. You can certainly watch it on your own, but I do think discussing the ideas and events in a group will be valuable. In my experience, many Christians have no idea what the people sitting around them on a Sunday morning believe. That makes it easy to assume that everyone sees the world just like you do. In the same way that learning that not all Christians for all time have thought exactly what you do, learning that people with whom you serve on committees and pray and sing see important issues differently can provide some humility (could you possibly be wrong or at least not fully correct?) and perspective (there might be other ways of seeing the world).

Finally, I am grateful for the congregation at the Congregational Church United Church of Christ of Rochester, Minnesota. They approached me about creating this series, funded it, and produced the videos. Thank you especially to Pastor Andrew Greenhaw, videographer Ryan Bliss, and congregant Janet Bartz for all their work to make this series possible. (I should also note that they allowed me complete freedom in terms of content—which means that they are in no way responsible for any errors, omissions, or bad historical or theological interpretations Those are mine alone.) People in that congregation, like many of us, had questions about Christian doctrine and vocabulary. My thanks to them for sponsoring this project as part of their quest to learn more.

Blessings as we learn together,

Sarah Ruble

HOW DID WE GET TO... THE DOCTRINE OF THE TRINITY?

Discussion Guide

For many people, the doctrine of the Trinity is confusing. Why would people in the early church come to the conclusion that God was one and that God was three? Why proclaim something so strange and hard to understand? In this video, we explore why this doctrine developed. Sarah argues that the theologians in the fourth century who developed the Trinitarian language many Christians still use did so because they thought that language aligned with what was revealed about God and salvation in the Bible.

Note on Doctrine and Salvation

When discussing both the Trinity and Christology, Sarah says that the early Christians were trying to figure out what had to be true of God and of Jesus given their understanding of salvation. She occasionally says things like “the early church decided that X had to be true of Jesus in order to salvation to be possible.” That is different from saying that early Christian thought that everyone had to believe or say X in order to be saved. In the Trinitarian and Christological debates, the larger question was what had to be true of God in order for God to be the kind of God who saves. Whether people had to believe or accept that understanding in order to experience salvation was (and is) a separate question. In other words, the focus was on how God had to be for salvation to be possible, not on what humans had to believe in order to experience that salvation.

Note on Language:

You may notice in this video that Sarah uses the gendered language of “Father, Son, and Holy Spirit” when talking about the persons of the Trinity. Today, some people reject that gendered language or use a variety of names to talk about the three persons. Because she is describing how the historical doctrine developed, Sarah chose to use the gendered language used at the time. That choice, however, is not the only one she could have made (and could have been the wrong one). As you think about the doctrine of the Trinity, it is good to think about how the language we use for

God affects how we view God and humanity. You might also think about when (or if) it is appropriate to use the language people in the past did and when we should update or change it.

Questions for Discussion (you might find it helpful to read these questions before you watch the video):

1. How have you thought about or been taught to think about the doctrine of the Trinity? What in the video aligned with what you have thought or been taught? What was new or different?
2. Sarah argues that one reason early Christians developed the doctrine was because of biblical language about God. Does that explanation make sense to you? Why or why not?
3. Sarah also argues that early Christians developed the doctrine because of how they understood salvation. How does the understanding of salvation outlined in the video align with how you have understood salvation? Whatever your understanding of salvation, does the explanation that many early Christians believed trinitarian doctrine described how God had to be in order for salvation to be possible make sense?
4. Sarah suggests that one way of thinking about the doctrine of the Trinity is that it tells us that God is not just loving, but that God is love because God is eternally relationship. What do you think of that? Does that change how you think about God or about the doctrine of the Trinity?
5. If God is eternally relationship, what does that mean for how we should live?
6. As noted above, Sarah uses the traditional language of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit throughout the video because it was the language used during the debates she discusses. What do you think of that explanation for using the gendered language she does? What does that language do for your understanding of God? Do you think it is possible to use that language without making it seem like God is male? Are there ways you have seen that language changed or supplemented?

Key Ideas (you can watch for these in the video and revisit them afterwards in your discussion):

1. Biblical language about God, Jesus, and the Spirit was open to interpretation, particularly around the question of the relationship among Jesus (who early Christians understood to be “the Son of God” in some sense), the Spirit, and God the Father.
2. The earliest Christians used the language of “Father, Son, and Holy Spirit,” but did not work out how the persons “fit” together.
3. In the third century (200s) theologians began to discuss the relationship among God, Jesus/the Son, and the Spirit in more systematic ways. Two models for thinking about the relationship were “modalism” (the persons are modes of the one God and they appear at

different times) and subordinationism (the Son and Spirit are subordinate to the truly transcendent God).

4. In the fourth century (300s), a subordinationist theologian named Arius argued that the Son was created. This assertion led to the Council of Nicaea (325) declaring that the Father and Son were of “one substance” (homoousios) and that the Son was not created.
5. After Nicaea, Christians continued to debate the relationship between Father and Son. Some believed Nicaea’s formulation was right (the homoousians); some believed the Son and Father were equal but were concerned that Nicaea’s formulation was modalist (the homoiousians; people who believed that the Son was like or “homoi,” the Father in essence); some continued to believe that the Son was like, but not equal to, the Father (homoians; like, but not in essence).
6. At the end of the fourth century, another council (Constantinople in 381) declared that the Father and Son were homoousios (of the same essence) and that the Spirit was also to be worshiped and glorified. They could come to this agreement because a set of theologians had articulated a way of understanding what was the same in the Godhead (essence or ousia) and what was distinct (hypostasis).
7. Aside from thinking that the doctrine of the Trinity best aligned with the Bible, theologians like Athanasius argued for it because they believed the shared essence of the persons of the Godhead were necessary for salvation (which these theologians understood to be about bringing people into communion and likeness with God, or what we call deification).

HOW DID WE GET TO...THE DOCTRINE OF THE TRINITY?

Video Outline

I. Introduction

A. Nicene Creed on the Son: “the only begotten Son of God, born of the Father before all ages. God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God, begotten, not made, consubstantial with the Father; through him all things were made.

1. Trinitarian language is confusing. God is one, but God is three. Jesus is God, but not the same as the Father.

B. In this video, we are going to explore how and why early Christians developed the Nicene Creed and how and why early Christians developed the language that has come to be associated with the doctrine of the Trinity.

C. Thesis: Many Christians decided that trinitarian language best accorded with all that the Bible said about God, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit and with how salvation worked.

D. What about the Emperor?: Politics played a role in the development of trinitarian theology, but is not the whole story.

II. The Bible

A. Four things Christians had to reconcile in their authoritative texts:

1. Hebrew Scriptures and Jewish monotheism.

a) Deuteronomy: The Lord your God is one.

b) 10 Commandments: no other Gods

2. New Testament and calls to worship Jesus.

3. New Testament and differentiation between Father, Son, and Spirit.

4. New Testament and differences on whether Son is eternal or first-born.

B. Summary: Early Christians had biblical language that asserted monotheism, commanded the worship of one God plus the worship of Jesus, said that Jesus was one with God, indicated that Jesus was different from the Father, and identified the Holy Spirit, which was somehow the presence of the Father and/or Jesus but not identical with either.

III. Third Century Developments

- A. Before 200s, Christians made little attempt to systematize language.
- B. One catalyst for systematizing language: Sabellius. Sabellius suggested what came to be known as modalism.
 - 1. Modalism: The Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are “modes” in which God appears.
 - 2. Strengths:
 - a) Protected monotheism.
 - b) Easy to explain.
 - 3. Weaknesses:
 - a) Could not account for biblical language indicating that the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit all co-exist or for language suggesting distinctions among Father, Son, and Spirit.
- C. Major Third Century Thinker: Origen.
 - 1. Origen held that the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit were distinct and eternally in relationships (so Son is eternal).
 - 2. Origen also held that the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are gradations of divinity.
 - a) According to Origen, the Son mediates radically transcendent God to the finite world.

IV. Fourth Century: Arian Controversy and Thereafter

- 1. The original “Arian” debate
- 2. Occurred between 318 and 322 in Alexandria, Egypt.
- 3. The bishop of Alexandria, Alexander taught—like Origen—that the Son was eternally generated.
- 4. Arius, a teacher in Alexandria, disagreed and argued that “there was a time when the Son was not.”
 - a) Arius believed that the Son created by the will of God.
 - b) Arius’s reasons for his teaching:
 - (1) He believed it was impossible that the immutable or unchangeable God could become incarnate in the human and, thus subject to change.
 - (2) He knew that Bible had passages that suggested that the Son was created/not eternal.

B. Council of Nicaea (325)

1. Called by Emperor Constantine to settle the Trinitarian debate.
2. The council decided against Arius by rejecting the claim that there was a time when the Son was not (Nicaea said that the Son was eternal).
 - a) The council further declared that the Son and the Father were homoousios. Homo=same, ousia=substance or essence. Homoousios=same substance or essence. They then put their beliefs in a statement.
3. The Council of Nicaea is not the end of the story (nor the only council responsible for what we today call “the Nicene Creed”).

C. Three Post-Nicaea Camps

1. Homoousians: people who thought Nicaea was right, particularly in describing the Father and Son as homoousios or of the same substance or essence.
2. Homoiousians: people concerned that Nicaea was modalist (remember that modalists believed that the one God appeared in different modes) because “homoousios” erased distinction; this group preferred “like substance or essence” (homoiousios; homoi=like; ousia=substance) and believed Son was eternal.
 - a) Yes, the difference between homoousios and homoiousios is one “i”
 - b) Homoousians wanted to say “same substance” to protect the equality of the Father and Son; homoiousians wanted to say “like substance” to protect the distinction between the Father and Son.
3. Homoians: people held to a subordinationist position (like Arius), declaring that the Son was created and/or was a subordinate divinity to the Father. They held that the Son like Father but not in essence. (Homoi=like, but not ousia so not like substance).
 - a) Supported by Constantius (another emperor).

D. Cappadocian breakthrough in the late fourth century (Cappadocians were a group of theologians).

1. Homoousians and homoiousians were able to come together over new ways of understanding contested language (these new ways of understanding the language came from the Cappadocian thinkers).
 - a) Homoousios, the Cappadocians said, refers to equality and shared essence.
 - b) They used another term, hypostasis, to refer to the “unique manner of subsistence” and to note distinction between the Father and the Son.

c) According to the Cappadocians, God was one ousia (homoousia) with three hypostases. This formulation seemed, to many, to preserve both equality and distinction. (In Latin, una substantia, tres personae became the preferred language; one substance, three persons).

E. Holy Spirit

1. The Holy Spirit was not much discussed at Nicaea. Whether the Holy Spirit was also of equal divinity with the Father and Son was debated in the late fourth century.

a) Some people who accepted the Son as equal with the Father did not accept the Spirit as such because they did not think the Bible said that the Spirit was equal.

2. At the Council of Constantinople (381), the equal status of the Spirit was affirmed.

F. Council of Constantinople (381) affirmed that:

1. The Son and Father are homoousious or of the same substance.

2. The Son is begotten, not made.

a) The Holy Spirit is, like the Father and Son, worshiped and glorified.

3. The Father, Son, and Holy Spirit were distinct and distinguished among the three persons by declaring that the Son is begotten of the Father while the Spirit proceeds.

V. Trinitarian Theology and Salvation

A. Why did the majority of the church come to reject subordinationist positions (the Arians and homoians) and accept the language of same substance and three persons?

1. Because of biblical language and how early theologians understood salvation.

B. Salvation and the Word according to Athanasius (a pro-Nicene, anti-Arian thinker). His understanding of creation, sin, and salvation were deeply tied to his Trinitarian theology. He said that:

1. God created out of nothing.

2. Everything else relies for existence on God.

3. Apart from God, everything that is not God falls into non-existence, both physically and spiritually.

4. Humans needed be restored to the full communion we had with God so we are not lost to sin and death.

5. In the incarnation, Word takes on flesh and, in so doing, restores to human flesh the possibility of communion with God.

6. By being joined to God through Christ, we become like God, which is called deification. Salvation or deification entails becoming more loving and kind and enjoying eternal life since, in God through Christ, we are not subject to eternal decay.

7. All of the above led to Athanasius's problem with Arius: If what is incarnate in Christ is a creature, Christ cannot restore us to communion with God.

C. Salvation and the Holy Spirit according to Gregory of Nyssa (a Cappadocian), who argued for the full divinity of the Spirit, also on salvific grounds. He said that:

1. After the life and death of Jesus, the Holy Spirit was God's presence with us, particularly through baptism and communion. If what was present through those was not fully God, then, again, we are not experiencing God and, if we are not experiencing full God, we are not saved.

D. Summary: for the theologians of Nicaea and Constantinople, salvation was participation in the life of God. If the Holy Spirit, which brings people into the body of Christ, and Christ himself were not fully God, then Christians were not participating in the life of God and were, thus, still in sin, death, and decay.

VI. Conclusion

A. Trinitarian language was not meant to explain how the Trinity works.

B. So, why bother? One possible reason:

1. Trinity says more than that God is loving. God is love, an eternal relationship.

HOW DID WE GET TO...THE DOCTRINE OF THE TRINITY?

Glossary

Athanasius: pro-Nicaea theologian who argued that Arian or subordinationist theology could not adequately account for salvation.

Arius: early fourth-century theologian who argued that the Son was created. His teaching was condemned at Nicaea in 325 although Arian or subordinationist teachings continued.

Constantinople: council in 325 that reaffirmed that Father and Son were homoousios and declared that Holy Spirit was to be worshiped and glorified.

Deification: to be made like God. Athanasius, among others, understood salvation as deification, becoming more and more like God (although not in essence).

Homoousios: same substance or same essence. The term used for Father and Son at Nicaea and reaffirmed at Constantinople. Some theologians worried that using this term erased distinction in the Godhead and tended toward modalism.

Homoiousios: like substance or like essence. The term used for Father and Son by some theologians who accepted the co-eternity of the Son, but wanted to emphasize distinction in order to avoid modalism.

Homoian: like. The term used for Father and Son by subordinationist who did not think the Son and the Father shared an essence.

Modalism: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit were modes or masks in which the one God appeared.

Nicaea: council in 325 that declared the Father and Son homoousios.

Origen: third-century theologian who taught that the Father and Son were co-eternal, but also argued that the Father, Son, and Spirit were gradations of divinity.

Sabellius: proponent of modalism, the teaching that the Father, Son, and Spirit were modes that the one God appeared in.

HOW DID WE GET TO...THE DOCTRINE THAT JESUS WAS FULLY HUMAN AND FULLY DIVINE?

Discussion Guide

You will often hear Christians say that Jesus was “fully human and fully divine.” Yet, for some people, this affirmation seems far removed from the stories of an itinerant teacher wandering around Galilee. In this video, we will explore why early Christians affirmed Jesus’ full humanity and fully divinity and what they meant by that affirmation. Sarah argues that, as with the Trinity, Christological doctrines (or doctrines about the person and work of Jesus) were an attempt to work out what the Bible said about Jesus and what would have to be true of the humanity and divinity of Jesus in order for Jesus to be sufficient for salvation.

Note on Doctrine and Salvation:

When discussing both the Trinity and Christology, Sarah says that the early Christians were trying to figure out what had to be true of God and of Jesus given their understanding of salvation. She occasionally says things like “the early church decided that X had to be true of Jesus in order to salvation to be possible.” That is different from saying that early Christians were saying that everyone had to believe or say X in order to be saved. In the Trinitarian and Christological debates, the larger question was what had to be true of God in order for God to be the kind of God who saves. Whether people had to believe or accept that understanding in order to experience salvation was (and is) a separate question. In other words, the focus was one how God had to be for salvation to be possible, not on what humans had to believe in order to experience that salvation.

Questions for Discussion (you might find it helpful to read these questions before you watch the video):

1. How have you thought about or been taught to think about the humanity and divinity of Jesus? What in the video aligned with what you have thought or been taught? What was new or different?
2. Sarah argues that one reason early Christians developed the doctrine was because of biblical language about Jesus. Does that explanation make sense to you? Why or why not?
3. Sarah offers multiple metaphors for understanding Nestorian and Chalcedonian Christologies. Did you find any of them particularly helpful (or unhelpful)? Did any of them change how you think of the divine/human relationship?
4. One of the ideas Sarah talks a lot about in this video is divine impassibility. What do you think of that idea? What, if anything, do you find compelling about it? What, if anything, do you find challenging or unhelpful about it?
5. Sarah suggests that Chalcedonian Christology means that God and humans are in a non-competitive relationship (we do not have to be less human in order for God to be fully God) and that our humanity is not a problem. Are these new ideas for you? Are they helpful or unhelpful?

Key Ideas (you can watch for these in the video and revisit them afterwards in your discussion):

1. Biblical accounts of Jesus included both things that could be said of any human being and things that could not. Early Christians had to figure out how to hold all of those things together.
2. Divine impassibility, or the idea that God cannot be affected by anything outside God and certainly cannot suffer, was a key issue in both trinitarian and Christological debates. In Christological debates it was important because if Jesus was fully human, Jesus would be able to suffer, but if Jesus was also fully divine, that might mean that God suffered (which divine impassibility did not allow).
3. After the early church came to a largely-accepted language around the equality of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, questions about the relationship between the divinity and humanity in Jesus took on new import because the trinitarian consensus meant that whatever was incarnate in Jesus was fully God.
4. Theologians offered various proposals regarding the relationship between divinity and humanity in Jesus. These included Apollinarianism (Jesus was a human body with a divine mind), monophysitism (the divinity and humanity combined into a new nature), and Nestorianism (the divinity and humanity were voluntarily in relationship but theoretically separable). The Council of Chalcedon in 451 rejected all of these proposals in its definition.
5. For many people in the early church, the idea that “what was not assumed, was not redeemed” was key to understanding what could and could not be true of the relationship

between the humanity and divinity in Jesus. In order to humans to be saved, the full divinity had to assume full humanity and heal it.

6. Modern theologians suggest that the way the Council of Chalcedon defined the relationship between humanity and divinity in Jesus has ongoing implications for how we understand the divine/human relationship more broadly, specifically that it is a non-competitive relationship (humans and God are not in competition for “space” or agency so we can be fully human and God can be fully God without dislodging or competing with each other).

HOW DID WE GET TO...THE DOCTRINE THAT JESUS WAS FULLY HUMAN AND FULLY DIVINE?

Video Outline

I. Introduction

A. In the fifth-century, a debate broke out among Christians about how to refer to Mary. Was she Theotokos, God-bearer, or Christotoks, Christ-bearer?

1. Why it mattered: the name for Mary indicated something about the relationship between the divinity and humanity in Jesus.

a) Mary as Theotokos meant she bore God and that people could say that God was born, God suffered, and God died.

b) Mary as Christotokos meant that the human Jesus was born, suffered, and died.

B. The Council of Chalcedon (451 AD) created a definition of the relationship between the humanity and divinity in Jesus that sided with the Theotokos party:

1. “We, then, following the holy Fathers, all with one consent, teach men to confess one and the same Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, the same perfect in Godhead and also perfect in manhood; truly God and truly man, of a reasonable soul and body; consubstantial with us according to the manhood; in all things like unto us, without sin; begotten before all ages of the Father according to the Godhead, and in these latter days, for us and for our salvation, born of the virgin Mary, the mother of God, according to the manhood; one and the same Christ, Son, Lord, Only-begotten, to be acknowledged in two natures, inconfusedly, unchangeably, indivisibly, inseparably; the distinction of natures being by no means taken away by the union, but rather the property of each nature being preserved, and concurring in one Person and one Subsistence, not parted or divided into two persons, but one

and the same Son, and only begotten, God the Word, the Lord Jesus Christ, as the prophets from the beginning have declared concerning him, and the Lord Jesus Christ himself taught us, and the Creed of the holy Fathers has handed down to us.”

2. In sum: the definition said that:

a) The divinity and the humanity in Jesus were united without division, separation, combination, or confusion;

b) Whatever you said about Jesus—he was born, he suffered, he died—you could correctly say about God.

c) Mary, then could be called both the mother of Jesus and the mother of God or Theotokos.

C. In this episode, we are going to explore the debates about the nature of Jesus that led to the Council of Chalcedon.

D. Thesis: For both biblical and soteriological (salvation) reasons, early Christians came to believe that you had to say more than that Jesus was a really good person or a good teacher, but also that whatever you could say about the human Jesus, you could also rightly ascribe to God.

II. The Bible

A. Although the language of the Council of Chalcedon might seem very removed from the stories about Jesus in the Bible, early church leaders understood themselves to be making sense of what the Bible said. So, what sorts of things were they dealing with?

B. What the Bible says about Jesus:

1. Things you could say about any other human being: Jesus learned, ate, prayed, cried, and slept. Jesus was also born and he died.

2. Things not typical of what we say about people.

a) Paul regularly uses languages of followers of Jesus being “in Christ” or “part of the body of Christ.”

b) Jesus, in the Gospel of John, makes claims about being one with the Father.

C. Rather than using available categories to describe Jesus (Jesus as angel or divine messenger), the early church continued to grapple.

III. The First Centuries

A. Two early proposals:

1. Ebionitists claimed that Jesus was fully human and not divine.

2. Docetists claimed that Jesus only seemed human, but that he was really only divine. For the Docetists, for example, Jesus only seemed to suffer and to die.

3. Early church largely rejected both because both failed to account for the entire biblical witness.

B. A quick excursus on the issue of divine suffering.

1. The issue of Jesus suffering was a big one for many people in the early centuries of the church, because part of what it meant to be God was that God could not suffer.

a) Many early Christians believed that God was impassible, meaning that God was not subject to change of any kind and that God could not be affected by anything outside of God.

2. Notes on divine impassibility.

a) For much of church history, it was the consensus theological view.

b) Today, the doctrine of divine impassibility is much more contested.

(1) For some, the idea that God cannot be affected by anything outside of God makes God sound inert or unfeeling.

(2) Some theologians, such as Jurgen Moltmann, argue that God who cannot suffer with us cannot truly be loving.

(3) Some contemporary theologians continue to assert that God is impassible because, among other things, they think it important to say that things outside of God, particularly evil, do not determine who God is.

(a) They want to assert that God is always the fullest, most active love possible and nothing outside of God can change that.

c) Key historical point: In the early centuries of the church, what most people agreed upon was that God was impassible and could not, in God's self, suffer.

(1) Divine impassibility led to some problems with the notion that Jesus was fully human and fully divine because if you said that Jesus was human, you had to say that Jesus suffered, but, if Jesus was also divine, you were attributing suffering to God.

IV. The Fourth Century

A. Councils of Nicaea and Constantinople affirm that whatever is incarnate in Jesus was fully God, equal to the Father.

1. One reason Arius, who had made the proposal that what was incarnate in Jesus was not fully God, believed what he did was because he believed in divine impassibility.

B. After Nicaea (325 AD) and Constantinople (381 AD), the consensus view was that the equality of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit was settled. The question turned to how to understand the relationship between what people now agreed was full divinity and humanity in Jesus.

C. One fourth-century proposal: Apollinarianism (or the alien-invasion theory of the incarnation).

1. Apollinarius claimed that what happened in the incarnation was that a human body was united with a divine mind.

2. Condemned at Council of Constantinople in 381 (same council that affirmed Trinitarian language).

3. As with the Trinity, debates about the relationship between humanity and divinity were debates about salvation or what had to be true about the relationship of divinity and humanity in order for salvation to “work.”

a) [Note: these were not debates about what individual people had to believe in order to be saved, but debates about what had to be true of Jesus in order for salvation to be a possibility for anyone.]

b) Early Christians believed that sin and death had injured every part of our humanity. Salvation entailed God healing everything broken within humanity. In Apollinarius’s scheme, the Word replaced the human mind, which did not heal it the human mind.

(1) As Gregory of Nazianzus, a theological opponent of Apollinarius, famously said: what is not assumed is not redeemed. [Note: here “assumed” means “taken on.”]

V. The Fifth-Century Debates

A. One Proposal: Nestorianism

1. Named for Nestorius, archbishop of Constantinople.

2. Changed the name of Mary in the liturgy from Theotokos to Christotoks.

a) Lesson: changing the liturgy can get you in big trouble.

3. Nestorius’s view of the humanity and divinity:

a) The human Jesus voluntarily joined with the divine word. In practice, they always went together. In theory, however, they were associated, but separable.

(1) Theoretical separation important for Nestorius because he did not need to ascribe to the divinity the “changeable” part of the human Jesus story, which protected impassibility. Nestorius could say that Jesus or Christ was born, but not need to say that God was born.

- B. Another proposal: Etychianism or Monophysitism
1. Monophysites claimed that the divinity and humanity combined so that there was only one nature in Jesus.
- C. The eventual consensus: rejected both Nestorianism and Monophysitism.
1. Problem with monophysitism: what is not assumed is not redeemed. If Jesus “assumed” a combined nature, Jesus did not “assume” a truly human nature and, hence, our human natures are not redeemed (humans have human natures, not combination human/divine natures).
 2. Problem with Nestorianism: a bit more complicated because Nestorianism seems to make sense, particularly in light of impassibility.
 - a) Cyril of Alexandria (opponent of Nestorius): the separation between the humanity and divinity of Jesus upon which Nestorius insisted would have undermined salvation.
 - (1) According to Cyril, in order to be healed, restored, and transformed, humans needed union with the divine (only God can heal us).
 - (2) According to Cyril, the separation between the divine and human natures that Nestorius thought necessary did not allow for the interpenetration of the divine and human that would revivify or bring to life the human nature.
 - (a) In order to transform us, the divine had to touch every part of human life from birth to death. Only that would allow Jesus to “reconstitute our condition within himself.”
 - b) The Council of Chalcedon (451)
 - (1) Agrees with Cyril.
 - (2) According to the Definition of Chalcedon, in Jesus, the human and divine were united without confusion, change, division, or separation.
 - (a) No to monophysitism with the “without confusion or change” clause.
 - (b) No to Nestorianism with “without division or separation.”
 - (3) The Council asserted that Jesus was of the same nature with the Father in terms of divinity, and the same nature with humans in terms of humanity.
 - (a) Note that the language is not mathematical.

(b) Rather than offer math, the Council provides a description that says when you see Jesus, you are seeing God without interruption. There is no point at which Jesus is acting only humanly. Also, there is no point at which the humanity is lost and just God takes over. Everything Jesus does is what a human being, fully animated by God, did.

D. An Attempt at Metaphors

1. Nestorian Christology: The divine and human natures are like two pieces of wood strapped together.

a) They are always together but the divine piece isn't transforming the human piece. They are just sitting there side-by-side.

2. Chalcedonian/Cyrian Christology: The divine and human nature are like the body and soul.

a) The soul and body are not the same thing, but they are inseparable. The soul (here standing in for divinity) animates the body or enlivens it as the Word of God enlivens human nature.

3. Chalcedonian/Cyrian Christology (because the ideas are complicated and they need multiple metaphors): The divine and human nature are like fire and iron.

a) The fire (divine nature) "transforms" cold iron (human nature) to hot iron without the fire ceasing to be fire or the iron ceasing to be iron. It is full interpenetration without confusion or change.

4. Chalcedonian/Williams Christology (Williams agrees with Cyril too): The divine and human nature is a great performer playing Bach.

a) The performer (here human nature) gives a perfect performance of Bach (here divine nature). There is no moment where the performer is not fully the performer's self (or human nature). There is also no moment where it is not a perfect performance of Bach (divine). Likewise, in the incarnation, we see a perfect translation of God into human life. No moment not fully God; not moment not fully human.

VI. Conclusion

A. Implication of Chalcedonian Christology:

1. In Chalcedonian Christology, God is willing to identify with humanity and human limitations.

a) Different from the picture of a God who can only be God by not entering the mess of creation.

b) Chalcedon offered a description of a God who would, out of sheer love, take on the limitations, pain, and suffering of human life. Rather than a God who refuses the suffering and limitations of being human, we see God in a peasant who suffered a humiliating death.

2. In Chalcedonian Christology, humans and God are in a non-competitive relationship.

a) The infinite God can fully interpenetrate our finitude and neither cease to be God nor makes us less than human.

(1) What we see in Jesus is that to be most fully human is to be most fully in union with God. God does not need us to become less so that God can become more. Rather, God gives us God's self precisely so that we can become the fullness of what God created us to be.

3. In Chalcedonian Christology, humanity is not a problem (sin is, humanity as created is not).

a) Our humanity is not a problem, but it was always a humanity intended to be lived in relationship with God. What we see in Jesus is humanity as it was always intended to be and the lengths to which God will go—even to the point where God so identifies with us that we can say that God was born, God suffered, and God died—to make it so.

HOW DID WE GET TO...THE DOCTRINE THAT JESUS WAS FULLY HUMAN AND FULLY DIVINE?

Glossary

Apollinarius: fourth-century theologian who proposed that the divine nature took the place of the human mind in Jesus; Apollinarianism was condemned at Council of Constantinople in 381 AD.

Arius: early fourth-century theologian who argued that the Son was created. Arius believed that a created Son ensured that God did not suffer. His teaching about the created Son was condemned at Nicaea in 325 AD.

Chalcedon: council in 451 AD that created a definition affirming that both the humanity and divinity in Jesus were united without division, separation, combination, or confusion.

Christotokos: Nestorius's title for Mary; means "Christ-bearer" and was distinguished for Theotokos or God-bearer; suggested that while the human nature was born, suffered, and died, the divine nature was not.

Constantinople: council in 381 that reaffirmed that Father and Son were homoousios, declared that Holy Spirit was to be worshiped and glorified, and condemned Apollinarianism.

Cyril of Alexandria: fifth-century opponent of Nestorius; held that in order for our humanity to be healed, it must be fully assumed by Christ's divine nature.

Divine Impassibility: doctrine that God is not changed or affected by anything outside God; a consensus view in the early church that is much more contested today.

Docetism: belief that Jesus only seemed human (and thus only seemed to suffer and to die).

Ebionism: belief that Jesus was only human.

Gregory of Nanzianus: fourth-century theologian who, in response to Apollinarianism, said that “what is not assumed is not redeemed.”

Monophysitism: fifth-century proposal for understanding the relationship between the divinity and humanity in Jesus; claimed that the two combined (also called Etychianism).

Nestorius: fifth-century theologian who proposed that the divine and human natures were voluntarily joined in Jesus but were theoretically separable; Nestorius started controversy by calling Mary Christotokos rather than Theotokos.

Nicaea: council in 325 that declared the Father and Son homoousios.

Theotokos: title for Mary meaning “Mother of God;” at issue in Nestorian controversy because it suggested that God was, in some sense, born, suffered, and died.

HOW DID WE GET TO... THE DOCTRINE OF THE ORIGINAL SIN?

Discussion Guide

Have you ever wondered what people mean when they say “the doctrine of original sin”? You might think that it simply means “the first sin,” but in Christian theology the doctrine of original sin often means a doctrine about not just the first sin, but the guilt that all humanity carries because of “the first sin.” In this episode, we will explore how the idea of original sin became tied with original guilt. Sarah will argue that for Augustine of Hippo, one key thinker in the development of the doctrine of original sin, the doctrine was born out in his experience, attested to in Scripture, and tied to a strong doctrine of grace. Many branches of Christianity have wrestled with this theological inheritance, whether they agree with Augustine or not.

Questions for Discussion (you might find it helpful to read these questions before you watch the video):

1. What do you think of when you hear the term “original sin”?
2. What is your understanding of sin (original or otherwise)? Did any of the ideas about sin Sarah explored in the video confirm, challenge, or nuance your ideas?
3. Sarah argues that, for some people, Augustine’s picture of sin as a bondage from which people cannot escape without God’s intervention is compelling, even if they do not agree with Augustine on original guilt or predestination. What did you think about Augustine’s picture of sin in *The Confessions*?
4. What, if anything, do you find compelling about the notion of original sin as original guilt? What, if anything, do you find unconvincing about it?
5. Sarah describes Pelagius’s ideas about human capacity as “Nike theology” (just do it) and she suggests that some people who reject theological Pelagianism adhere to it in their economic or political thought. What do you think of that assertion? Are there ways in which your thinking is Pelagian (theologically, economically, or politically)? Do you think that is a good or a bad thing?
6. Sarah claims that, for Augustine, a strong doctrine of sin went along with a strong doctrine of grace. Do you think Augustine was right in making that connection? Do you think that

your understanding of what sin is and how grace operates align (even if they are different from what Augustine believed)?

Key Ideas (you can watch for these in the video and revisit them afterwards in your discussion):

1. The doctrine of original sin is usually meant as more than a doctrine about “the first sin.” Rather, it is a doctrine that holds that people are born both broken by and guilty for sin.
2. The doctrine of original sin as original guilt is not one shared by all Christians. Christians whose theological roots lie in Greek-speaking/Eastern Orthodox Christianity usually reject the notion of original sin as original guilt.
3. Augustine of Hippo was a key figure in the development of the doctrine of original sin. In his spiritual autobiography, *The Confessions* he describes sin as a kind of bondage from which people can only be saved through God’s direct intervention. While not yet the fully developed doctrine of original sin, this picture does show Augustine’s conviction that people could not compel themselves to love God.
4. Augustine’s strong doctrine of original sin was worked out in debate with Pelagius and Pelagius’s followers. Pelagius believed that human beings had agency and the capacity not to sin.
5. Augustine’s doctrine of original sin went with a belief in predestination. Since people were powerless to love God without God’s intervention, only those with whom God chose to intervene would love God. For Augustine, both a strong doctrine of original sin and predestination aligned with a strong doctrine of grace.

HOW DID WE GET TO...THE DOCTRINE OF ORIGINAL SIN?

Video Outline

I. Introduction

A. The doctrine of original sin, as it has been articulated in traditional Catholic and Protestant theology, includes the idea that people are born guilty and, even from birth, are justly condemned by God for their sinful natures.

1. For some Western Christians, original sin has often gone together with another doctrine, predestination, or the belief that humans do not have free will to choose God or evil.

B. Doctrines of original sin or predestination have not been a universally accepted doctrine in the Christian Church. The Eastern Orthodox tradition rejects both, at least as they have been worked out by many Western theologians.

C. In this video, we are going to explore the development of the doctrine of original sin.

D. Thesis: The history of doctrine of original sin illuminates larger debates about human nature, sin, and grace. The history is also helpful in understanding the terms of debates in Western Christianity.

II. Some Background and Terms

A. Roman Empire was linguistically split between Latin (western empire) and Greek speakers (eastern empire).

1. Other differences between the two linguistic regions related to papal primacy (i.e. authority of the Pope) and the political situation (western empire falls earlier than the eastern empire).

B. Term Clarification

1. Greek-speaking/Eastern Christianity = Christianity that became identified with the various Eastern Orthodox churches.

2. Latin-speaking/ Western Christianity = branch of Christianity that gave rise to Catholicism and eventually Protestantism.

- a) This is the branch that articulates an understanding of original sin as original guilt and of predestination as God choosing some people for salvation and either allowing or choosing the damnation of others.

III. Augustine, Pelagius, and Original Sin

A. Augustine of Hippo

1. North African bishop who wrote about his long journey to Christianity in *The Confessions*.
2. In *The Confessions*, Augustine describes his pre-Christian self as a self-divided. Part of him wants to do what he understands to be good and holy, but he also wanted what was not good and holy.: “I thus came to understand from my own experience what I had read, how the flesh lusts against the spirit and the spirit strives against the flesh. I was aligned with both, but more with the desires I approved in myself than with those I frowned upon, for in these latter I was not really the agent, since for the most part I was enduring them against my will rather than acting freely. All the same, the force of habit that fought against me had grown fiercer by my own doing, because I had come willingly to this point where I now wished not to be.”
3. According to Augustine, only God can come in from the outside and free people from the chains of sin and infuses people with love of God.
4. Augustine presents a strong picture of sin in *The Confessions*, but his strong doctrine of original sin as original guilt will be more fully developed during a controversy later in his life.

B. The Pelagian Controversy

1. Pelagius: a monk who disagreed with Augustine’s picture of human sin and capability.
 - a) Pelagius taught that God had created humans with free will and that the fall had not altered the human capacity to choose the good.
 - b) For Pelagius, God’s grace was manifest in God creating people with free will and then in giving to humanity the law, the prophets, and the teaching and example of Jesus so that they knew what God wanted them to do.
 - c) Pelagius’s context: The fourth-century Roman toleration of Christianity had, according to some Christians, led to moral laxity.
 - d) Pelagius concerned with emphasizing God’s goodness and believed that a strong doctrine of human fallenness undermined belief in God’s goodness.

C. Augustine on Pelagius.

1. The ability to choose the good on his own had not been Augustine's experience.
2. Augustine did not think Pelagius's view was biblical.
 - a) In the Latin translation Augustine had, Romans 5:12 says "By one man sin entered the world, and death by sin; so death passed upon all men, for in him all men sinned." As a point of reference, the NRSV translation says "Therefore, just as sin came into the world through one man, and death came through sin, and so death spread to all because all have sinned."
 - (1) Note the difference: in him all men sinned versus "because all have sinned."
 - b) Many theologians and commentators suggest that the Latin translation of the verse from the Greek was a bad translation, particularly that phrase "in him all men sinned."
 - c) In sum: Augustine believed that all people sinned when Adam sinned. Thus, for Augustine, people carried both the effects of sin—death, corruption and the like—and also the guilt of sin. We all sinned in Adam and were all responsible for sin. That's original guilt.
3. Implications of Augustine's view of original sin as original guilt
 - a) According to Augustine, after the fall, people could not choose not to sin on our own.
 - b) Augustine thought that the transmission of sin was connected to sex and procreation.
 - c) For Augustine, a strong doctrine of predestination or the notion that God chooses some and not others for salvation.
4. More on original sin and predestination
 - a) For Augustine, people are bound by sin and cannot choose the good. They cannot will themselves to love God.
 - (1) That inability is both a lack of freedom and a sin for which people can be justly punished (all people sinned in Adam so all are guilty).
 - (2) The only possibility of salvation comes from God infusing people with love.
 - b) For Augustine, it is clear that God chooses some and not others.
 - (1) Biblical evidence: Paul discussion of election in Romans.

(2) In response to questions about God's justice, Augustine says that no one deserves grace. This logic even extended to unbaptized babies that died.

D. The history of the controversy

1. Debate was originally between Pelagius and Augustine and then extended to Pelagius's followers.

a) Celestius taught an even more exaggerated form of Pelagianism than Pelagius and was condemned at a council at Carthage in 412.

b) Julian of Eclanum was a bishop who lost his see for refusing to sign a letter condemning Pelagius and Celestius.

(1) In the arguments with Julian, Augustine develops his strongest statements regarding original guilt and predestination.

E. Some points about Augustine to consider.

1. Augustine understood himself as defending the grace of God.

a) With a strong doctrine of original sin, there is no doubt that people need grace.

2. Augustine raises good questions about how humans work.

a) Augustine describes people as being more driven by what they love than by what they know.

b) If Augustine is right, it is worth asking if we attend as much to formation as we should.

3. Augustine's theology profoundly shaped Western theology, both Catholic and Protestant. Even groups that rejected his notion of original guilt and predestination have still had to deal with them. In other words, Augustine set up the debates and vocabulary that would shape Western theology for a very long time.

IV. Eastern Orthodoxy and Original Sin as Original Guilt.

A. Eastern Orthodoxy (from the Greek-speaking East) never accepted the idea of original guilt.

1. Eastern theologians did not think it could make sense for people to be held responsible for something that they did not do.

B. Eastern Orthodoxy had and has a doctrine of sin and its effects.

1. Eastern orthodox Christians understood sin as introducing death and corruption into God's good creation.

a) Orthodox theologians held that people were not responsible for sin's presence in the world, but they were certainly affected by it.

(1) One of those effects: a weakened constitution that made it likely that people themselves would sin and would then be responsible for those sins.

C. Eastern theologians had a doctrine of grace.

1. Humanity needed to be reunited with God and that initiative came from God's side (so it is grace).

2. Eastern theologians described salvation in synergistic or cooperative terms.

a) People must participate or grow in that grace. There was more room for human cooperation and agency in salvation than there was in at least some of the Western theologies influenced by Augustine.

D. In sum, the Eastern way of thinking does not map well onto the various sides of the Pelagian controversy. The framework and terms were simply different.

V. Conclusion

A. In the early centuries of the church, the idea that something had gone profoundly wrong with creation was widely shared, but the specific doctrine that often goes under the name "original sin," a doctrine that includes the notion of original guilt, is largely associated with Augustine and Western Christianity.

B. The way Augustine articulated the doctrine of original, particularly amid the Pelagian Controversy, created a set of theological ideas and questions that people in the Latin-speaking West—and the traditions that came out of the Latin-speaking West—would wrestle with. These questions include:

1. How tightly are bound people to sin?

2. What, if anything, does free will have to do with sin?

3. If God must elect or predestine people, why not everyone? What does this say about the justice of God?

4. Is human freedom or action compatible with God's freedom?

C. Some Questions to Consider:

1. If Augustine is wrong about sin, why is the world so messed up?

2. Do we sometimes translate Augustine's theological idea of predestination in to an economic, social, or political one?

a) If we happen to be the fortunate, do we sometimes tell ourselves that we are chosen or special or elect?

b) Are we secular Pelagians, telling others that if they just try hard enough or do more, they can be successful or healthy?

c) Do we sometimes give too much credit to human capability—particularly when we are judging how much other people should be able to do for themselves?

HOW DID WE GET TO...THE DOCTRINE OF ORIGINAL SIN?

Glossary

Augustine of Hippo: bishop and theologian; wrote the spiritual autobiography *The Confessions*. A key thinker in the development of the doctrine of original sin as original guilt.

Celestius: follower of Pelagius; ideas were condemned at the Council of Carthage.

Julian of Eclanum: former bishop who refused to sign a statement condemning Pelagius and Celestius; Julian continued the debate about sin and human agency with Augustine.

Pelagius: monk opposed to Augustine's understanding of sin and human agency. Pelagius believed that people could choose not to sin and that God's grace was manifest in giving the law and the example of Jesus to follow.

Predestination: idea that God chooses the eternal destiny of individuals (although the term has been interpreted to mean other things).

HOW DID WE GET TO...A DISTINCTION BETWEEN JUDAISM AND CHRISTIANITY?

Discussion Guide

Today, most people take for granted that Judaism and Christianity are distinct religions. In this video, Sarah explores how this distinction came to be. She also considers some contemporary Christian beliefs about Judaism, particularly related to first-century Jewish understandings of grace and works, and argues that these beliefs misrepresent first-century Judaism.

Questions for Discussion (you might find it helpful to read these questions before you watch the video):

1. What, if anything, have you been taught about the relationship between Judaism and Christianity in the New Testament and the early history of the Christian church?
2. Sarah asserts that Christians often contrast a supposed Christian emphasis on grace with a supposed Jewish emphasis on works. Have you heard Christians make that or other distinctions between Christianity and Judaism? Do you agree with Sarah's assertion that those contrasts tend to denigrate Judaism in order to make Christianity seem better?
3. In the videos, Sarah argues that first-century Judaism was not a religion of "works righteousness" and she offers a reading of Paul to make her case. What do you think of her argument? Does it, as she contends, make sense of what Paul writes in Galatians and Romans?
4. What, if anything, did you learn about the emergence of Christianity and Judaism as distinct religious traditions? Did anything you learned help you understand either tradition better?
5. Sarah asks Christians to stop making Judaism sound bad in order to make Christianity sound good. Is denigrating Judaism a problem in your community? What might you start or stop doing in order to provide a more accurate portrayal of both Christianity and Judaism?

Key Ideas (you can watch for these in the video and revisit them afterwards in your discussion):

1. The story of how Judaism and Christianity became distinct religions in complicated and contested.
2. Christians have tended to portray first-century Judaism as a religion of “works righteousness.” Many scholarly interpretations of first-century Judaism, including interpretations of Paul’s writing on Judaism, indicate that Jews understood the covenant itself as a gift of grace and “works” as responses to that gift.
3. Some interpreters of Paul think that he believed Gentiles did not have to follow works such as kosher and circumcision not because God had ended the Abrahamic covenant but precisely because God, in Jesus, had kept it.
4. Scholars have suggested various key points in the process by which Judaism and Christianity emerged as distinct religions. These include the exclusion of Christians from synagogues, the Roman definition of Judaism as a religion rather than an ethnicity, and Roman recognition of Christianity as distinct from Judaism.
5. Some scholars have suggested that early Christians tried to make a positive case for Christianity by denigrating Judaism, including by claiming that they (Christians) understood the Hebrew scriptures better than did Jews.
6. Inaccurate Christian portrayals of Judaism—portrayals that go beyond acknowledging real differences between the two traditions—have had ongoing and pernicious effects.

HOW DID WE GET TO...A DISTINCTION BETWEEN JUDAISM AND CHRISTIANITY?

Video Outline

I. Introduction

A. Justin Martry's *Dialogue with Trypho* is an early Christian text recounting a fictional conversation between a Jewish man (Trypho) and Justin.

1. One reading: *The Dialogue with Trypho* is a fairly straightforward example of Christian attitudes toward Judaism in the second Christian century written in a time when there were well-established boundaries between Christians and Jews—boundaries understood by everyone.

a) Contains themes contained in other polemics.

2. Another reading: *The Dialogue with Trypho* is part of a longer effort to delineate boundaries between Christianity and Judaism.

B. Question: isn't there a very clear distinction between Judaism and Christianity from the very beginning?

C. In this video, we are going to delve into some of the questions around the development of Judaism and Christianity as separate religions, particularly questions related to justification by faith and the law.

D. Thesis: The answer to the question of when Judaism and Christianity separated is complicated. Also, many scholars think much of what many Christians think New Testament writers, particularly Paul, were saying about Judaism was not what they were saying.

II. Christianity, Judaism, and “Works Righteousness”

A. Many Christians have said (and say) that “Christians believe in grace, but Jews believe in works” and base this understanding of the difference between Christianity and Judaism in Paul's writings.

B. Many scholars now agree that Paul was not differentiating Judaism and Christianity on the basis of grace.

1. Scholarly understandings of first-century Judaism, Christianity, and salvation have been influenced by E.P. Sanders's 1979 book *Paul and Palestinian Judaism*.

a) Sanders argued that first-century Jews did not believe that they had to keep the law in order to be part of the covenant. Rather, they understood keeping the law as a response to God's gracious gift of the covenant.

C. The covenant and works in Genesis

1. God makes promises to Abraham in Genesis 12, 15, and 17.

a) In Genesis 17, God stipulates that males in the covenant need to be circumcised.

b) Genesis 12 and Genesis 15 do not have the stipulation but do have covenants.

2. In sum: in Genesis, covenant precedes works.

D. Many scholars agree that first-century Jews did not think that they earned their way into the covenant by keeping laws. Rather, they understood themselves to be demonstrating fidelity to that covenant by keeping the law, particularly by practicing circumcision, observing the Sabbath, and keeping kosher

1. Keeping the law was not a work that earned grace. Rather, it was a way of living that responded to grace already given.

E. Paul and works of the law.

1. Scholars such as James Dunn and N.T. Wright have argued that Paul's argues that keeping kosher and circumcision—the two “works” Paul singles out in Galatians—functioned as identity markers for Jews. Keeping those rituals demonstrated that they were in the covenant.

2. But, according to Paul, there was now a new identity marker: Jesus. What marked you as a member of the covenant was Jesus, not circumcision or kosher.

3. To people who argued that Gentiles had to have both those identity markers (circumcision and kosher) and Jesus, Paul said, no, Jesus alone was sufficient to mark someone as in the covenant.

4. Paul did not think that God rescinded or superseded God's covenant with Abraham and, hence, to the Jews.

a) In Genesis 12, God promises Abraham that Abraham's nation will be a blessing to the nations. God, according to Paul, had absolutely kept God's promise through the Jewish messiah, Jesus, a blessing to the nations. Through Jesus, Paul was bringing Gentiles into the covenant. God kept God's promises because a descendent of Abraham was blessing all nations through inclusion in God's covenant.

F. Implications of this reading of Paul

1. It corrects a longstanding, erroneous Christian belief that Jews reject grace.
 - a) The idea that Jews reject grace has been used to justify anti-semitism.
2. It makes sense of Paul's writing. In Galatians and Romans, Paul attempts to work out how God can be faithful to God's promises if God includes the Gentiles in the covenant and does not require circumcision.
3. It also makes sense of Paul arguing that people no longer need to perform "works of the law" even as he has a lot to say about what people should and should not do in terms of behavior.
4. It could lead to a more covenantal, and less individualistic, view of salvation.

III. On the Distinction Between Judaism and Christianity

- A. Situation in the New Testament: a complicated situation on the ground.
 1. There were still Jews, people who never became part of the group that saw Jesus as the Messiah.
 2. There were Jews who saw Jesus as the Messiah and who also still believed in keeping practices like circumcision and kosher.
 3. There were Jews like Paul who saw the Jesus movement as in continuity with the history of Israel but were not convinced that practices like kosher and circumcision needed to be followed.
 4. There were Gentiles who followed Jesus who believed themselves to be entering into the Abrahamic covenant without adopting practices such as circumcision.
- B. There are different ways of thinking about when Jews and Christians "parted ways" (from Timothy Gabrielson).
 1. When there was mutual religious recognition or the point at which the two groups saw each other as mutually exclusive, meaning you could either be Jewish or you could be Christian.
 2. When religious interaction stopped (e.g. Christians stop going to synagogue or celebrating Jewish holidays).
 3. When social concourse or relations between Jews and Christians largely stopped.
 4. When people who were not Jews or Christians—Roman authorities, for example—thought of the two groups as different.
- C. Scholars increasingly agree that there was not just one moment in time when Judaism and Christianity became separate theologically, socially, pietistically, and politically.
- D. Some possible parts of those many processes:
 1. The expulsion of Christians from synagogues at the end of the first century.

a) A long line of scholarship that suggests that Jews leaders expelled people who worshipped Jesus from the synagogues and that this expulsion is the context for the Gospel of John and its often hostile statements about “the Jews.”

(1) Not everyone agrees that this happened or was so decisive.

2. Romans defining Judaism as a separate religion from Christianity.

a) The *Fiscus Judaicus*: after Rome destroyed the temple (70 AD) the emperor required that Jews, who before the temple’s destruction were supposed to send two drachma to the temple, send the same amount to Rome.

(1) Early on, some argue, the tax applied to anyone the Romans considered Jewish—which seemed to include non-practicing Jews and maybe included Gentile Christians.

(2) At the end of the first century, a new emperor clearly defined the tax as only applicable to Jews and based what constituted Judaism on religious practice.

(a) Thus, something identifiable as “Judaism” as distinct from “Christianity” was developing based not on ethnicity, but on religious practice. Now, note that this is a hypothesis.

3. Roman authorities identify Christians as separate group (111 AD)

a) Pliny the Younger, a Roman governor, wrote to the emperor Trajan, wondering what to do about the Christians, this new group that refused to worship the Roman gods.

b) Christians, in this letter, seem to be distinguished from the Jews whose refusal to worship the gods Rome tolerated.

c) Point in time where we know that Rome distinguished between Christians and Jews (although that could have happened earlier—we just lack clear evidence).

4. Inclusion of “Old Testament” as Christian scripture.

a) A response to people like Marcion who argued that the god of Israel and Israel’s scriptures was a vengeful, cruel god distinct from the God of Jesus Christ.

b) Bart Ehrmann's hypothesis: In addition to theological reasons for rejecting Marcion, there was a practical or apologetic one. By including the Hebrew Scriptures in their canon, Ehrmann suggests that Christians were emphasizing the ancient roots of their faith. Jesus's historical life might have been recent, but the prophecies about him and the community of which he was the culmination—those were very, very old.

(1) As Christians adopted the Old Testament, they also claimed that they, and not the Jews, understood it (differentiating themselves as true inheritors of the Hebrew scriptures).

IV. Conclusion

A. Many Christians name the distinctions between Judaism and Christianity in ways that are inaccurate and derogatory to Judaism.

1. There are real differences, but the differences were not between a religion that accepted grace and one that did not.

B. Judaism and Christianity emerged as different things over time.

C. How Christians name differences between Judaism and Christianity matters.

HOW DID WE GET TO...A DISTINCTION BETWEEN JUDAISM AND CHRISTIANITY?

Glossary

E.P. Sanders: a modern biblical scholar who argued that first-century Jews did not believe that they earned their way into the covenant through “works righteousness,” but that they understood the covenant as a gracious gift.

Fiscus Judaicus: a tax imposed on Jews by Rome after the destruction of the temple (c. 70 AD); some scholars suggest that originally it was levied on anyone the Romans considered Jewish, which might have included non-practicing Jews and perhaps even Christians, but eventually was levied only on those who engaged in Jewish practicing (marking a point where Rome saw Judaism as a religion marked by practices).

Justin Martyr: second-century Christian apologist who wrote *A Dialogue with Trypho*, a fictional discussion between Justin and a Jewish man.

Marcion: a second-century Christian theologian who argued that the God of Jesus was distinct from the God of the Hebrew Bible and that the Christian scriptures should not include the Hebrew Scripture or any New Testament writings. His proposed canon included some letters of Paul and the Gospel of Luke (some argued it was an edited version). Marcion’s proposal led other Christians to make a case for including the Hebrew Scriptures and other writings in the emerging Christian canon.

Pliny the Younger: Roman governor whose letter to Emperor Trajan in 111 AD called out “the Christians” as a specific group.

Works of the law: A phrase Paul uses; many Christians have understood it to mean any work performed to “earn” God’s favor, but many contemporary scholars believe it means specific works such as keeping kosher and practicing circumcision meant to identify who was part of the Abrahamic covenant (by grace).

HOW DID WE GET TO... THE DOCTRINE OF JUSTIFICATION BY FAITH?

Discussion Guide

For many Protestant Christians, justification by faith is a central doctrine. Yet not all Christians have understood it as central and, even among those who do, not all agree on what it means. In this video, Sarah traces the development of the doctrine of justification by faith. She argues that is a biblical, but not the only biblical, theme related to salvation. She also contends that as the doctrine developed, particularly among Christians influenced by the theology of Augustine, the meaning of justification shifted. Augustine had understood justification as demanding a real change in a person (a real change made by God in the person). Luther, and many Protestants, came to understand it as God's declaration about a person's status based only on Christ's merit.

Questions for Discussion (you might find it helpful to read these questions before you watch the video):

1. What do you think of when you hear the term "justification by faith"?
2. What is your understanding of justification by faith? Did any of the ideas about justification by faith that Sarah explored in the video confirm, challenge, or nuance your ideas?
3. Sarah says that justification by faith is a central theme in a couple of Paul's letters but is not a theme in all of the Bible. Should that effect how central a doctrine it is for Christians? How do you think Christians should decide what is a central or key doctrine and what is not?
4. Sarah argues that the meaning of justification by faith shifted from Augustine to Luther. What meaning do you find most compelling (biblically, theologically, pastorally, etc.?). Why?
5. Sarah argues that the doctrine of justification by faith is countercultural. What do you think of that claim?

Key Ideas (you can watch for these in the video and revisit them afterwards in your discussion):

1. Justification by faith is a central doctrine for Christian traditions influenced by Augustine, but its meaning has been long contested.
2. Justification by faith is a key theme in Paul's letters to the Romans and Galatians. It is not, however, a major theme (at least in an explicit sense) in other parts of the New Testament.
3. Augustine of Hippo emphasized justification by faith. He understood justification to be a real change in a person, but a real change made by God in a person.
4. Medieval theologians largely accepted Augustine's understanding of justification by faith, but disagreed on whether a person could, in some sense, merit justification and how much justification depended on what a person did. They also tied justification by faith to the penitential system.
5. Martin Luther rejected the common-at-his-time understanding of justification and its requirements (specifically, that a person could be truly contrite and therefore "merit" justification). Luther believed that justification was a declaration by God that a person was right with God, based on the merits of Christ. People simply needed to trust that God was telling the truth about their status.
6. Although Protestants have differed on the details, many accept Luther's basic understanding of justification. They separate justification (a change in status before God) and sanctification (becoming holy), at least conceptually.

HOW DID WE GET TO...THE DOCTRINE OF JUSTIFICATION BY FAITH?

Video Outline

I. Introduction

A. “The Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification by Faith.”: 1999 statement by Lutherans and Catholics on a doctrine that had long divided them.

B. In this video, we are going to explore what the doctrine of justification by faith is and how did it come to be such a big deal.

C. Thesis: Understandings of justification by faith have shifted over time. Also, the doctrine of justification by faith connects with other questions such as the role of human agency in salvation, the extent of human fallenness, and the relationship between God’s grace and good works.

D. Definition of justification by faith.

1. Hard to answer because what justification means is precisely what is under debate.

2. Generally, justification is being right or being aligned with God.

a) When we think about the doctrine of justification, we are thinking about how people in the Christian tradition have thought about being brought into line or declared in line with God, what that takes, and who is involved.

II. The Bible

A. Language of justification found especially in two of Paul’s letters, Romans and Galatians.

1. Romans 3: “we hold that a person is justified by faith apart from works prescribed by the law.”

2. Romans 5: “Therefore, since we are justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have obtained access to this grace in which we stand; and we boast in our hope of sharing the glory of God.”

3. Galatians 2: “Yet we know that a person is justified not by the works of the law but through faith in Jesus Christ. And we have come to believe in Christ Jesus, so that we might be justified by faith in Christ, and not by doing the works of the law, because no one will be justified by the works of the law.”

B. What Paul means by “works of the law” becomes part of the debate about justification itself.

1. Some later interpreters use “works” to mean anything humans do to try to earn or merit God’s favor.

2. Many modern scholars believe that Paul has in mind specific works such as keeping kosher, observing the Sabbath, and practicing circumcision.

a) These interpreters argue that Paul is not talking generally about doing good things.

b) In the context of questions about how Gentiles are made right with God, Paul opposes those who think that Gentiles must adopt kosher, sabbath, and circumcision.

c) Jesus, for Paul, is sufficient.

C. Justification by faith in the New Testament

1. A major theme in Romans and Galatians.

a) Paul employs the term justification as he wrestles with how to understand how God could be faithful to God’s promises—particularly the promise of the covenant and the institution of markers of covenant faithfulness such as circumcision—if Gentiles are included in the covenant without circumcision.

2. Justification is not a theme throughout the New Testament.

a) Other New Testament books do not address it.

b) James discusses it in order to tell people who seem to have gone overboard on “justification by faith” that they also need to perform works. James writes about Abraham that “faith was active along with his works, and faith was brought to completion by the works” and that “You see that a person is justified by works and not by faith alone.”

D. Summary of Justification in the New Testament:

1. Justification is a theme, but only one of many ways of talking about right relationships between God and people.

2. Paul and James leave open some questions about the relationship between justification, faith, and works, whatever works mean.

3. Bible does not definitively answer a host of questions such as whether both God and human agency are active in justification or whether justification is a declaration God makes about a persons' status or whether justification is a process in which a person becomes more holy.

III. Justification by Faith as a Minor Doctrine

A. Most scholars agree justification by faith was not a prominent doctrine in the early centuries of the Christian church.

1. Early Christians thought about salvation or right relationship with God. They didn't, however, think of salvation primarily in terms of justification. They tended to talk about it in other ways such as participation, divinization, or theosis

B. The lack of emphasis on justification by faith continues today among Orthodox Christians

1. Orthodox theologian Juliya Vidovic notes that "from the outset, Eastern Christianity has displayed a certain lack of interest in soteriology expressed in terms of justification."

a) The Orthodox tradition cares about soteriology but does not think of it primarily in terms of justification by faith.

IV. The Rise of the Doctrine of Justification by Faith

A. Augustine was a key figure in the development of justification by faith.

1. He was not the first theologian to think about justification or use the word, but thought about it more systematically and made it a bigger emphasis in his theology than most previous theologians.

2. Augustine's influence on theology in the Latin-speaking West meant that his focus on justification by faith would make the doctrine significant for those traditions that grew out of the Latin-speaking West.

B. Components of Augustine's view of justification by faith.

1. God justifies people (meaning people cannot make themselves right with God).

a) Went with Augustine's strong doctrine of sin, which eventually became a doctrine of original sin with inherited guilt. Humans were caught in sin, unable to free themselves. Because people could not, by themselves, will the good, God had to justify them or make them right with God.

- (1) In his later life, Augustine's doctrines of grace and sin led him to espouse predestination. People could not will themselves to love God on their own, thus God had to justify based solely on God's decision to elect, not based on what people did.
2. Justification meant God making people righteous.
 - a) Justification was not simply a declaration by God that people were righteous. It was a process through which God made people actually righteous.
 - b) Being made righteous in *The Confessions*: God infuses Augustine with love for God (Augustine could not love God on his own). That infusion of love is a real change in Augustine.
3. Augustine was comfortable using the language of merit, particularly with regard to whether humans could merit eternal life.
 - a) Augustine did not think people could earn God's favor.
 - b) Because Augustine believed that justification was a real change in people, he could say that humans merited eternal life because, as he wrote, when God crowns our merit, God is crowning God's own gifts.

V. Medieval Theology and Justification

A. Medieval theologians concurred with Augustine that justification meant a real change in the person.

1. Theologian Thomas Aquinas: God's grace "moved a person to justice."

B. Medieval Debates

1. Merit.
 - a) Medieval theologians began to think about merit in the context of justification or what some would call "first grace." For them, the question became whether humans could merit justification, not just eternal life after a justified life.
2. Disposition to Justification
 - a) There was a spectrum of answers to the questions about merit and disposition ranging from less emphasis on what humans could do without grace to more emphasis on what humans could do without grace.

(1) For example, Thomas Aquinas, particularly in his *magnum opus Summa Theologia* claimed that humans needed a disposition toward justification, but that that disposition itself comes from God moving on the human will.

(2) Gabriel Biel, a later medieval theologian accepted the axiom that “God will not deny grace to those who do their best.” Before receiving grace, humans could avoid mortal sin and love God above all else and could be truly contrite. That disposition, according to Biel, was meritorious and God had promised to reward it with the remission of sin.

(a) Biel would not have understood this as works righteousness because he believed that the only reason our human best merited grace was because God, who was under no obligation to humans whatsoever, had promised to accept human best as meriting grace.

C. Justification and the Penitential System

1. Medieval theologians connected justification with the sacraments, particularly the sacrament of penance.

2. The connection between justification and the sacramental system could be very reassuring because you were actually doing the things through which you would receive grace. But the notion that justification meant an actual change could induce anxiety about whether you had actually met the bar (see Martin Luther).

VI. Luther and the Reformation Difference

A. Martin Luther’s world.

1. Death an ever-present reality.

2. Devil understood as active in trying to drag people into hell.

3. The theology of Gabriel Biel (and others) offered a way of escaping hell: doing the best that was in you, particularly by contritely confessing and doing penance.

a) This gave Luther no assurance: “I tried to live according to the Rule with all diligence, and I used to be contrite, to confess and number off my sins, and often repeated my confession, and sedulously performed my allotted penance. And yet my conscience could never give me certainty, but I always doubted and said, ‘You did not perform that correctly. You were not contrite enough. You left that out of your confession.’”

B. Luther on justification by faith

1. His understanding changed over the course of his life.
2. As Luther started to read the Bible in light of Paul (and Luther's new reading of Paul), he began to see justification as a gift from God based solely on the merits of Christ.
 - a) God "justified" in the sense that God looked at someone and said "you are right with me" because of what Jesus had done.
3. Luther on faith.
 - a) Faith not believing hard enough or believing all the right things.
 - b) "Faith" is "trust." People were not to trust in themselves and their own goodness or merits, but to trust in Christ and in the promise of God.
4. Luther on justification by faith and the penitential system.
 - a) By Luther's time, indulgences had become part of the penitential system. After a contrite confession and absolution, a penitent would perform some work of satisfaction. In Luther's time, people could buy an indulgence rather than performing the work.
 - b) Indulgences seemed, to Luther, like purchasing grace.
 - c) According to Luther, people did not need to be "contrite enough" to be justified—they needed to trust God when God said they were justified.

C. Other Protestants

1. What set many, perhaps most, Protestants apart from Catholics was the shared belief that justification was a declaration about a person's status before God, not a change in the person.
2. Protestants conceptually separated being declared right with God (justification) from a change in the person (sanctification).

VII. Conclusion

A. Other questions raised by the doctrine of justification by faith:

1. The role of free will in justification.
2. The relationship between justification and sanctification.
3. How well the doctrine of justification adheres to what Paul wrote and what the Bible as a whole says about soteriology.

B. A possible implication of a Lutheran-leaning account of justification by faith.

1. All people infinitely loved by God independent of anything they do.
2. A countercultural message in a world where many people believe that their value is dependent on their success.

HOW DID WE GET TO...THE DOCTRINE OF JUSTIFICATION BY FAITH?

Glossary

Augustine of Hippo: bishop and theologian; wrote the spiritual autobiography *The Confessions*. A key thinker in the development of the doctrine of justification. Augustine understood justification as a real change in a person.

Gabriel Biel: late medieval theologian who argued that “God will not deny grace to those who do their best.” His understanding of justification was influential during Luther’s lifetime and was one that Luther reacted against.

Indulgence: in Luther’s time, a part of the penitential system (or system of penance). People could purchase an indulgence rather than perform penance. Luther understood this practice as buying grace.

Justification: being right with or being made right by God.

Martin Luther: sixteenth-century theologian; Luther rejected the idea that people needed to be contrite and participate in the penitential system in order to be justified. He believed that justification was a gift from God based on the merits of Christ and did not depend on a real change in a person.

Sanctification: being holy or being made holy.

Soteriology: doctrine of salvation.

HOW DID WE GET TO... THEOLOGICAL LIBERALS AND CONSERVATIVES?

Discussion Guide

Today, we are accustomed to talking about people as “liberals” or “conservatives.” Although the terms today often conceal as much as they illumine, when applied to theology they do name real differences. In this video, Sarah argues that liberals and conservatives understand and prioritize theological sources of authority differently. She also argues that the two camps emerged as Christians responded to a series of challenges in the late 18th century and the late 19th and early 20th centuries.

Questions for Discussion (you might find it helpful to read these questions before you watch the video):

1. When you hear the term “theological liberal,” what do you think it means? What about “theological conservative”?
2. How does your understanding of the terms “theological liberal” and “theological conservative” align with how Sarah uses the terms?
3. In the video, Sarah discusses the “sources of authority”: scripture, tradition, reason, and experience. How do you understand these sources? How do you prioritize them?
4. Sarah describes theological liberalism as, in part, a response to Enlightenment skepticism and then, in the U.S. context, to a series of social and intellectual challenges. Does that help you understand theological liberalism? What is helpful or not helpful about that explanation?
5. Where do you see points of common ground between theological liberals and theological conservatives? Do you think it is important to find points of common ground between the two? Why or why not?

Key Ideas (you can watch for these in the video and revisit them afterwards in your discussion):

1. Theological liberalism and theological conservatism name differences in how Christians think about and prioritize the sources of authority.

2. The sources of authority are scripture, tradition, reason, and experience. Reason and experience, particularly, have more than one definition.
3. Theological liberalism emerges out of the 18th century Enlightenment. Liberal theologians accepted the Enlightenment's elevation of reason and experience over sources such as scripture and tradition, but rejected the idea that Christianity itself was unreasonable.
4. In the U.S. context, theological liberalism and theological conservatism emerge as two distinct tendencies with significant influence after the Civil War. Owing to their differing responses to a series of intellectual and social challenges (evolutionary theory, historical-criticism of the Bible, and mass urbanization and industrialization), Protestants began splitting into liberal and conservative camps.
5. Although the terms liberal and conservative often conceal as much as they reveal today, thinking about what the terms have signified provides an opportunity to be self-reflective about how we understand and prioritize the sources of authority and our responses to new intellectual, political, and social trends.

HOW DID WE GET TO...THEOLOGICAL LIBERALS AND CONSERVATIVES?

Video Outline

I. Introduction

A. In the United States today, we are accustomed to thinking about liberals and conservatives as opposing camps in politics, culture, and religion.

B. In this video, will explore the use and development of the terms “liberal” and “conservative,” specifically as they relate to theology and the intellectual and social developments that gave rise to theological liberalism particularly.

C. Thesis: Theological liberals and conservatives prioritize the sources of authority differently. Theological liberalism was a response to intellectual and social changes coming out of the Enlightenment and, in the U.S. context, post-Civil War changes.

D. Three notes.

1. Theological conservatism and liberalism do not necessarily map onto political conservatism and liberalism.

2. This video focuses on white Christians in the late 18th century and late 19th and early 20th centuries.

3. This video focuses on a Protestant story.

II. Sources of Authority

A. Definition: the places or things that Christians go to in order to figure out what is true or what they should do.

B. Wesleyan Quadrilateral (proposed by Albert Outler, who studied John Wesley) is one way of talking about the sources of authority (there are four of them; a quadrilateral is not equilateral).

1. Scripture: the Bible.

a) Note Christians develop different ideas about what the Bible is.

2. Tradition: the teaching of recognized theologians and church leaders.
 3. Reason
 - a) Meaning 1: The capacity we use to make sense of the teachings of the other sources of authority.
 - b) Meaning 2: An independent source of authority, often informed by the sciences and social sciences, that evaluates the other sources of authority.
 4. Experience.
 - a) Meaning 1: The experience of the community over time.
 - b) Meaning 2: Personal experience of God or a sense of what God is telling them.
- C. Sources of authority and theological liberalism and conservatism.
1. Theological liberalism and conservatism prioritize different sources of authority and even define the sources a bit differently.
 2. Conservatives:
 - a) Prioritize scripture.
 - b) Give varying weight to tradition, but, overall, see tradition as helpful in understanding Scripture.
 - c) Do not give reason and experience independent authority by which they could override a teaching that conservatives think is clear from scripture and affirmed by the tradition.
 3. Liberals:
 - a) Give more authority to reason, again understood not just as our reasoning capacity but as knowledge from the sciences, social sciences, and history among others, and to experience, here understood as a sense or intuition of the divine.
 - (1) For liberals, reason and experience can critique what we know from scripture and tradition.

III. Beginning of Theological Liberalism.

- A. The 18th century “Age of Enlightenment.”
 1. An intellectual movement that privileged human reason over traditional authority.
 2. Emphasized empirical knowledge, or what we know from the scientific method, over belief, which might come from the Bible or tradition.

- a) Some Enlightenment thinkers questioned both traditional Christian beliefs and the traditional sources of authority. They questioned miracles, the incarnation, church power, and, in a few cases, theism itself.
 - B. Theological liberalism was a response to the Enlightenment elevation of reason and experience.
 - 1. Theological liberals agreed with the elevation of reason and experience.
 - 2. Theological liberals maintained that Christianity was reasonable and aligned with reason and experience.
 - a) Rather than grounding religious dogma in scripture and tradition, religious liberals ground it in reason and experience.
 - C. Frederich Schleiermacher: “father of theological liberalism.”
 - 1. Argued that religion was an intuition of a relationship with God or the infinite. Theology is built out of this sense.
- IV. Conservatives and Liberals in the Post-Civil War United States
- A. In the United States, religious liberals had limited influence before the Civil War.
 - B. Three post-Civil War developments:
 - 1. Evolutionary theory.
 - a) Charles Darwin published *Origin of the Species* in 1859.
 - b) In the late nineteenth-century, debates about evolution were not yet debates about teaching evolution in public high schools.
 - c) Evolution’s challenges to Christianity:
 - (1) Evolution offered an account of creation that differed from what was found in Genesis.
 - (a) Not all conservatives believed this was an insurmountable problem.
 - (2) Natural selection and random variation undermined, for some, the idea of a sovereign God.
 - (a) Also suggested that creation happened through a violent process of survival of the fittest, not because of a benevolent creator.
 - (3) Evolutionary theory was seen, by some, as a law that applied to everything, including Christianity. This meant that Christianity was not based on unchanging revelation but was a product of human questioning and development.

- d) Christian responses to evolution's challenges:
 - (1) Some rejected evolutionary theory.
 - (a) Charles Hodge: evolution undermines God's sovereignty so evolution is not true.
 - (2) Some accepted evolution as a possibility, but on theologically conservative grounds.
 - (a) B.B. Warfield: believed that the Bible was inerrant, but believed it possible to reconcile a biblical view of God with the notion that God worked through evolution.
 - (3) Some reinterpreted traditional doctrines on the basis of evolution (this is the liberal move).
 - (a) For example, some theologians claimed that God was immanent or operated within historical processes.

2. Historical-criticism of the Bible

- a) Developed in Germany.
- b) Influence reached the United States in a major way in the late 19th century as more American academics went to German universities to train.
- c) Historical-criticism used the tools of history and social science to uncover the history behind the biblical texts. Historical-critics did not assume that those parts of the story that contradicted reason—such as the miracles—were historically accurate.
- d) Not all historical-critics agreed on what was accurate or inaccurate about the Bible.
 - (1) Charles Briggs: proponent of historical-criticism who faced criticisms for arguing that Moses did not write the Pentateuch; Isaiah had multiple authors; and inerrancy was bunk. Briggs was found guilty of heresy by his denomination for his beliefs.
 - (2) In his later life, Briggs disagreed with other historical-critics who, in Briggs's mind, went too far in what they were willing to doubt, including parts of the Bible such as the stories about Jesus's birth.
- e) Liberals and conservatives had different descriptions of what the Bible was.
 - (1) Conservatives: Bible a historically, scientifically, and theologically accurate account of what happened in ancient Israel and in the early church.

(2) Liberals: Bible divinely-inspired, but also a human product providing theologically-inspired accounts to serve the needs or interests of particular ancient communities.

(a) Some historical-critics believed they could separate the husk of the biblical narratives from what they believed to be the kernel of truth (e.g. love of God and neighbor).

3. Mass urbanization and industrialization.

a) With increased urbanization and industrialization came new problems with poverty, housing, and working conditions.

b) Social Gospel: for some liberal Christians, these new problems demanded a rethinking of the Christian message. Social Gospelers claimed that traditional notions of sin and salvation needed reinterpretation in light of social problems.

(1) For example, they claimed that sin was not primarily about individual wrongdoing, guilt, or brokenness, but was a collective problem, manifested in social structures that made it difficult for some individuals to thrive. Christians, then, were to change the social structures.

(2) Northern Methodist Church Social Creed (1908), for called for a living wage and “the recognition of the Golden Rule and the mind of Christ as the supreme law of society and the sure remedy for all social ills.”

(3) Note: late 19th and early 20th century liberal focus on changing social structures could be deeply racist. Social Gospelers and other theological liberals were often imperialist, assuming that white, Anglo-Saxon Protestants were on a mission from God to transform the world to be more like them.

c) Conservatives responded to the Social Gospel by claiming that a focus on social structures removes focus from individual sin and salvation.

C. Two-Party Protestantism.

1. As Christians responded to these developments—higher-criticism, evolution, and urbanization and industrialization—they did so in ways that showed different understandings and prioritizations of the sources of authority and they split into two camps (liberal and conservative).

V. Conclusion

- A. True that, today, the terms liberal and conservative conceal as much as they illumine.
- B. Why bother?
 1. Thinking about this history and the “two camps” enables people to consider how they understand and prioritize the sources of authority. That’s a good thing to be self-reflective about.
 2. Might help us understand other perspectives.

HOW DID WE GET TO...THEOLOGICAL LIBERALS AND CONSERVATIVES?

Glossary

Albert Outler: 20th century historian and theologian who coined the term “Wesleyan Quadrilateral.”

Charles Briggs: 19th century proponent of historical-criticism who came to disagree with later historical-critics about what was and was not historically accurate in the Bible.

Frederich Schleiermacher: theologian active in the late 18th and early 19th centuries; often called the “father of theological liberalism.” He claimed that religion was an intuition of dependence on God and that theology was a reflection on that intuition. He helped, then, to ground the reasonableness of Christianity in experience.

Historical-criticism: a method that applied the tools of history and the social sciences to the Bible in order to understand the historical context in which biblical writings were produced. The method did not assume that the biblical accounts were historically-accurate and did assume the Bible could be studied like any other ancient text.

Wesleyan Quadrilateral: term coined by Albert Outler to describe the four sources of authority John Wesley used: scripture, tradition, reason, and experience.

