

BRITE DIVINITY SCHOOL
FORT WORTH, TEXAS

FINAL TAKE HOME ESSAYS

HISTORY OF CHRISTIANITY II: REFORMATION AND MODERN

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In the 18th and 19th centuries, the world began to change at such a rapid pace that the church struggled to keep pace. Governments were being formed and others being destroyed.

Colonialism changed more than the flag of a conquered land. Men were at the visible forefront of all this, but many women wouldn't be pushed into the background. Mary Wollstonecraft, Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Lucretia Mott, and Susanna Wesley were three women that spoke their minds and forced changes that couldn't be ignored. Wollstonecraft stood out as a product of Enlightenment-era thinking. Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Lucretia Mott challenged orthodoxies of her day. Susana Wesley was a model of piety. This paper will discuss these four women and their impact on society.

Mary Wollstonecraft was an English feminist who changed Enlightenment-era thinking by questioning women's role in society. Though she had written other works before, she jumps to history's center stage in 1790 when she published *A Vindication of the Rights of Men*. This work challenged the idea of slavery. The publication immediately sold out and two years later she followed it with *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*. Both obsequious and snarky, Wollstonecraft dedicated and sent a copy of her book to Charles Maurice de Tallyrand-Peregrin, a French politician who thought women's education should be limited to domestic matters.¹ In the dedication, she writes, "Consider...when men contend for their freedom, and to be allowed to judge for themselves respecting their own happiness, it be not inconsistent and unjust to

¹ Duke, Dr. James O. *Lecture for History of Christianity II* (2014).

subjugate women, even though you firmly believe that you are acting in the manner best calculated to promote their happiness? Who made man the exclusive judge, if woman partake with him in the gift of reason?”² She was angry at the mistreatment of women and social assumptions about their assigned roles and mental capacity. Women are just as human as man, and Wollstonecraft fought to prove it. Once again she returns to the theme of slavery and compares women and their social restraints to that of slaves. In *Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, Wollstonecraft writes “The first object of laudable ambition is to obtain a character as a human being, regardless of the distinction of sex.”³ Once established as human beings, women could go on and rightly demand equal access to education and opportunity for career paths that best fit their talents. “Her final conclusions were that women were either human or they were not. If they were, then everything else followed.”⁴ Wollstonecraft’s book was ground-breaking and shocking. At the same time, her writing is a reaction to the vast movement of thought stirring in the French Revolution.⁵ Religiously speaking, Wollstonecraft was unorthodox as well. She “consistently argued that true religion was not a mere matter of enthusiastic sentiment but rather a ‘governing principle of conduct, drawn from self-knowledge, and rational opinion respecting the attributes of God.’ ”⁶ By questioning women’s role in society, Wollstonecraft began thought processes and social debates that continue into the 21st century.

Another woman known for challenging the orthodoxies of her day was Elizabeth Cady Stanton. Stanton published *The Woman’s Bible* in 1895 which challenged orthodoxies about how

² Ibid.

³ Malone, Mary T. *Women and Christianity*. New York: Orbis Books, 2003.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ James, Henry Roshier. *Mary Wollstonecraft: A Sketch*. New York: Haskell House Publishers, Ltd., 1932.

⁶ Taylor, Barbara. *Mary Wollstonecraft and the Feminist Imagination*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003.

women relate to men. As she wrote this book, she took into account the cultural and historical backdrop of the Biblical writers as well as the traditional understanding of the writings. “She discovered that the Bible itself was androcentric, written wholly from a male perspective and, having been officially interpreted for centuries only by men, it had now become a political tool in the hands of male churchmen to impose their will.”⁷ Men had been twisting the message of the Bible to impose women’s slavery.⁸ “The Bible teaches that woman brought sin and death into the world, that she precipitated the fall of the race... Marriage for her was to be a condition of bondage, maternity a period of suffering and anguish, and in silence and subjection, she was to play the role of a dependent on man’s bounty for all her material wants and for all the information she might desire on the vital questions of the hour, she was commanded to ask her husband at home.”⁹ Orthodox culture and the Bible served to propagate this misconception of women’s roles and abilities, according to Stanton. If one could argue that the Bible teaches equality of all, then Stanton questioned why then, women couldn’t be ordained as preachers of the gospel, allowed to administer sacraments, or even be admitted as delegates to assemblies and synods of different denominations. “So perverted is the religious element in her nature, that with faith and works she is the chief support of the church and clergy; the very powers that make her emancipation impossible. When, in the early part of the Nineteenth Century, women began to protest against their civil and political degradation, they were referred to the Bible for an answer. When they protested their unequal position in the church, they were referred to the Bible for an answer.”¹⁰ Besides *The Woman’s Bible*, Stanton is also remembered for her work towards

⁷ Malone, 2003.

⁸ Oden, 1994.

⁹ Oden, 1994.

¹⁰ Ibid.

women's suffrage. Oddly, the same women that she worked beside to earn the right to vote were scandalized and distanced themselves from *The Woman's Bible*. Unfortunately, Stanton died before women earned the right to vote. Elizabeth Cady Stanton is remembered for her work in abolition, women's rights, and also for her collaborations with Lucretia Mott.

Lucretia Mott met Elizabeth Cady Stanton at an abolitionist convention in London. Both women were outraged at the restraints put on women at the convention, denying them speaking rights and even forbidding sitting together with men.¹¹ Fast friends, they worked together to organize a convention for women's rights in Seneca Falls, New York in 1848. At the convention, they presented the Declaration of Rights and Sentiments, which outlined women's rights. Although Stanton was credited with drafting the first Declaration of Rights and Sentiments, it was created with Mott's input. The declaration was edited and signed by 100 of 300 people at the convention. Mott was a Philadelphia-based Quaker and was well-known for her piety and talents as a public speaker. She first became interested in women's rights as a young woman when she discovered that male teachers at her school were paid three times as much as females. Mott became a Quaker minister, and with her husband's support, travelled and preached against slavery. Quakers allowed anyone to become a minister, although she was forbidden from receiving pay as such. As a Quaker, Mott subscribed to the Quaker belief of a divine light of God in every human, no matter gender or race. Although she wasn't confrontational, Mott didn't shy away from arguments. "She used her powerful feminine voice and her physical body to confront slavery and racial prejudice as well as sexual inequality, religious intolerance, and war."¹² Mott

¹¹ Malone, 2003.

¹² Faulkner, Carol. *Lucretia Mott's Heresy: Abolition and Women's Rights in Nineteenth-Century America*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2011.

worked in the Philadelphia Female Anti-Slavery Society and was an advocate of immediatism, the belief that slavery should be abolished immediately and not gradually. Mott was also a vocal proponent of women's suffrage and said feminism must include racial equality. After the Civil War, Mott helped advocate against segregation in Philadelphia's public transportation.¹³ Lucretia Mott is remembered for her devotion to God as well as her work toward abolition and women's suffrage.

Susanna Wesley was the mother of 19 children, among them Charles, the famous hymnist, and John, the founder of Methodism. She raised her children with routines of learning, chores, and devotions.¹⁴ Once grown, she continued to instruct her children through writing letters covering such topics as theology and moral issues. Her letters to her sons tell the tale of a woman of devout faith and piety. In a letter to one of her sons, she includes an argument against God's being anything other than benevolent. "This life is a state of probation, wherein eternal happiness or misery is proposed to our choice; the one as the reward of a virtuous, the other as a consequence of a vicious, life. Man is a compound being, a strange mixture of spirit and matter. The true happiness of man, under this consideration, consists in a due subordination of the inferior to the superior powers; of the animal to the rational nature; and of both to God."¹⁵ To be holy and happy, men and women must correct their nature and retrain their appetites, Wesley said. "Our blessed Lord who came from heaven to save us from our sins, as well as the punishment of them, as knowing that it was impossible for us to be happy in either world, unless we were holy, did not intend by commanding us to take up the cross, that we should bid adieu to

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Oden, 1994.

¹⁵ Ibid.

all joy and satisfaction indefinitely: but he opens our joys; how to seek satisfaction durable as our being; which is not to be found in gratifying, but in retrenching our sensual appetites; not in obeying the dictates of our irregular passions, but in correcting their exorbitancy, bringing every appetite of the body and power of the soul under subjection to his laws, if we would follow him to heaven.”¹⁶ Her emotional and tireless devotion to her God, as well as her passion for sharing it made Susanna Wesley an excellent example of pietism.

In the 18th and 19th centuries, the world began to change at a rapid rate. Mary Wollstonecraft, Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Lucretia Mott, and Susanna Wesley were four women that spoke their minds and in doing so, helped promote the changes that brought women to where they are in the 21st century. Church history and the world wouldn’t look the same without the effect these women had on orthodoxy, piety, and Enlightenment-era thinking.

¹⁶ Ibid.

SOCIAL-POLITICAL GAME CHANGERS, 1750 TO 1960 C.E.

The world in 1750 looked completely different from the world in 1960. North American colonies declared their independence and eventually became the United States. Protestants turned from establishing their religion to propagating it through missions. African slave trading both became popular and ceased in this time. Worldwide, women were redefining their roles both in the home and out. It would be impossible to list even every major historical event from this time period in one paper. I will not even attempt the impossible. Instead, this paper will discuss the missionary movement, slavery, and women's rights. These three issues deeply affected the church and are essential to an understanding of its history.

In Matthew 28:19-20, Jesus says, "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you." Referred to as The Great Commission, this scripture is has been quoted as a call to both proselytize and do good works in the name of the church. Because many denominations were being formed and birthed, it wasn't until after the Reformation that the concept of foreign mission work picked up steam. One of the first missionaries was William Carey, who "came to the conviction that Christians had the obligation to preach the gospel in distant countries to people who had not heard it."¹⁷ Carey created the Particular Baptist Society for Propagating the Gospel amongst the Heathen, and travelled to Calcutta as their envoy. Carey was gifted at languages and before his death; he translated

¹⁷ Gonzaelez, Justo. *The Story of Christianity Volume II: The Reformation to the Present Day*. New York: Harper Collins, 2010.

portions of the Bible into 35 different languages. Carey was a success story and many decided to reproduce his work. He paved the way for other international missionaries.

Due to necessity as well as being geographically hard to reach for correction, the missionary movement allowed women freedoms that they often didn't otherwise receive in society. Pandita Ramabai was one of those women. Born in India as the daughter of orthodox Hindu parents, Ramabai was exceptional in her level of education, her worldwide travels, and her wisdom. When she was a child, Ramabai's mother taught her how to educate herself. As a missionary, her goal was to educate women and girls. In 1889 she established the Mukti mission, an organization that provided education and opportunities for women and girls. "Many hundreds of the girls and young women who have come to my Home ever since its doors were opened for them have found Christ as I have. They are capable of thinking for themselves. They have had their eyes opened by reading the Word of God, and many of them have truly been converted and saved, to the praise and glory of God."¹⁸ Pandita Ramabai is remembered both for helping further women's rights in India as well as for being a missionary.

The nineteenth century was driven by colonialism. Often, the same people who wished to claim new land for their country wanted to claim new souls for Christ. The colonizers believed they were helping those lands they colonized. "As they saw matters, God has placed the benefits of Western civilization and Christian faith in the hands of white people—both Europeans and North American settlers—in order for them to share it with the rest of the world."¹⁹ Called white-man's burden, men and women believed it was their mission to take the rest of the world

¹⁸ Oden, 1994.

¹⁹ Gonzalez, 2010.

the benefits of industrialization, capitalism, and democracy. This had both negative and positive results. In Africa, colonialism and mission went hand-in-hand, with missionaries endorsing colonialism in order to bring so-called advantages of the modern age to Africa. Likewise, colonists used missionaries to further their own agendas.²⁰ Dr. David Livingstone was a key example of this. He believed introducing modern trade to South Africa would eliminate the slave trade and end slavery. He was called to preach, but he also worked for the British government's colonization interests.²¹

Missionaries to remote lands were some of the first to work ecumenically, with those of other denominations. "While the vast majority of people in the missionary movement were loyal denominationalists, those missionaries in the remote lands found that more often than not, they had more in common with their other denominational missionaries than they did with everybody else."²² This understanding led missionaries to begin collaborating and forming alliances. Denominational conflicts were forgotten and teams were built. In 1910, the World Missionary Council in Edinburgh made great strides ecumenism. The Council appointed a Continuation Committee, which started the International Missionary Council in 1921. Initially, these international missionary groups stayed away from denominational language. They had two goals: more unity and the birth of a worldwide church to whose mission and self-understanding all would contribute.²³ In 1948, the first assembly of the World Council of Churches convened in Amsterdam. International missions are still on the forefront of the ecumenical movement.

²⁰ Gonzalez, Justo. *Church History, An Essential Guide*. Nashville, Abingdon Press: 1996.

²¹ Gonzalez, 1996.

²² Duke, 2014.

²³ Gonzalez, 2010.

Today, the missionary movement continues to start new churches around the world. These churches are designed to work under their own hierarchies. For Protestants, the goal is to plant churches with three-selves: self-government, self-support, and self-propagation.²⁴ These new churches in Latin America and third world countries are experiencing strength and vitality. Ironically, some of the same countries that were once destinations for missionaries are sending their own missionaries to the start churches back where it all began, in Western Europe and North America.

An international social-political game-changer was the African slave trade and the church's response to it. During the Industrial Revolution, African slavery became popular in America and Western Europe as a source of cheap labor. Dr. David Livingstone, British missionary in Africa in the 19th century, was passionate about ending domestic slavery in Africa as well as the slave trade out of Africa. He wrote, "Slavery hardens within, petrifies the feelings, is bad for the victims and ill for the victimizers."²⁵

Rev. Peter Fontaine said in 1757 that living in Virginia without slaves was morally impossible. "Like Adam, we are all apt to shift off the blame from ourselves and lay it upon others, how justly in our case you may judge. The Negroes are enslaved by the Negroes themselves before they are purchased by the masters of the ships who bring them here. It is, to be sure, at our choice whether we buy them or not, so this then is our crime, folly, or whatever you will please to call it."²⁶ His argument didn't lose its relevance into the 19th century. Debates

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Livingstone, Dr. David. *The Life and African Exploration of David Livingstone*. New York, Cooper Square Press: 2002.

²⁶ Rodriguez, Junius P. *Slavery in the United States: A Social, Political, and Historical Encyclopedia, Volume 1*. Santa Barbara: ABC-CLIO, 2007.

about the necessity of slavery abounded. Lemuel Haynes was the first African-American Calvinist pastor in the United States. He was convinced that God would see to it that there would be emancipation. While some churches ended up turning a blind eye to slavery, others worked hard to end it. Some decided that the slaves should be freed and sent to West Africa to colonize that region. This led to the founding of Liberia.²⁷ In England, Methodists pledged against slavery. Oddly, their United State counterparts dropped the issue from the Book of Discipline so each member could make up their own mind on the issue.²⁸

Amanda Berry Smith was born into slavery in Maryland. Her father was determined to remove his family from slavery and most of them were able to reach freedom in Pennsylvania. As an adult, Smith lived through two difficult marriages and eventually became a spokeswoman for the holiness movement. She worked as domestic help in America, and later was known as a talented preacher. Smith also participated in mission work in Africa and India. Smith was passionate about talking about sanctification, which she described as God working in her. “I found out that it was not necessary to be a nun or be isolated away off in some deep retirement to have communion with Jesus; but, though your hands are employed in doing your daily business; it is no bar to the soul's communion with Jesus. Many times over my wash-tub and ironing table, and while making my bed and sweeping my house and washing my dishes I have had some of the richest blessings.”²⁹

²⁷ Duke, 2014.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Janosz, Janice. “Freed for Evangelism: The Story of Former Slave Amanda Berry Smith.” Christianity Today. <http://www.christianitytoday.com/women/2014/march/freed-for-evangelism-story-of-former-slave-amanda-berry-smi.html?start=1> (2014)

Internationally, slavery was a complicated issue that Christians on both sides struggled with. The issue wasn't simply slavery: good or bad. In the United States, people from the North struggled about deciding what rights freedmen should have and people from the South struggled with how much of the gospel to share with their slaves. Education was another issue; should a slave be taught to read and allowed to read the Bible? How much education should be allowed for African-Americans in the Northern states? Tensions on issues surrounding slavery and economics kept rising until the secession of the Southern states and later, the Civil War.

Intertwined with the missionary movement and abolitionist movement, were women, elbowing their way through the mess, trying to define their roles and earn respect. The Romantic Period brought a mixed view of women. On one hand, women were prized as people of spirit. Women were recognized as having capacities of vital deep self-awareness and humanitarian impulses that come with it. On the other hand, women's humanizing influences were perceived as not hard-nosed and real enough. Men's occupation was to go out into the world and conquer it.³⁰

Elizabeth Cady Stanton questioned assumptions and roles of women on several different fronts. She worked as an abolitionist, as a suffragette, and led the writing and publication of *The Woman's Bible*, which worked to correct misogyny of the Bible. She said no Christian denomination truly supported women's rights. "A few of the more democratic denominations accord women some privileges, but invidious discriminations of sex are found in all religions organizations, and the most bitter, outspoken enemies of woman are found among clergymen and

³⁰ Duke, 2014.

bishops of the Protestant religion.”³¹ Stanton proved to be even more liberal than the Women’s Movement and the same women that worked side by side with her to get the right to vote distanced themselves from her work on *The Woman’s Bible*.

Another woman who helped change the world was Sojourner Truth. She spent her first 30 years of life as a slave and with Harriet Tubman organized the Underground Railroad, an escape route for slaves from the United States to Canada. She worked tirelessly for women’s rights. She wanted African-American women to earn their rights at the same time as the men. “If colored men get their rights, and not colored women theirs, you see the colored men will be masters of the women, and it will be just as bad as it was before. So I am for keeping the thing going while things are stirring; because if we wait till it is still, it will take a great while to get going again.”³²

In the United States, slaves were freed with the Emancipation Proclamation in 1863. Women earned the right to vote in 1920. Those issues seemed to be resolved, but some fights continue. Women are still fighting to define their role in the home and the workplace. For the Texas governor’s race this year and nationwide, a debate continues about whether or not women deserve and receive equal pay for equal work. Last month in Nigeria, nearly 300 girls were kidnapped from their school dorms. Their kidnappers, an African Islamist group, have gone public saying the girls will be sold. They oppose education of women. The same arguments set forth by Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Sojourner Truth are still relevant in today’s world.

The world in 1750 looked completely different from the world today, but the more things change; the more they stay the same. The missionary movement is still an active force for

³¹ Oden, 1994.

³² Duke, 2014.

ecumenism. Although owning slaves is now illegal in most countries, human rights are still debated at church. Women are still defining their roles in society. Although impossible to list even every major historical event from this time period in one paper, I attempted to explain three important issues: the missionary movement, slavery, and women's rights. These three issues deeply affected the church and are essential to an understanding of its history.

TAKEAWAYS FROM CHURCH HISTORY CLASS

History of Christianity II was my first class in my first semester at Brite Divinity School. This class was influential in my life for many reasons. I learned that I cannot write research papers when my family is at home. I learned that unlike classes I took for my undergraduate degree, I will actually need to read the entire textbooks for the course and not just key chapters. I learned that the Ipad helps me take notes much more efficiently than a pen and paper ever did. I learned that this is where I belong and oddly, I get excited about theological study. Several issues that we discussed in class had the effect of lifting a veil from my eyes and helping me see the world differently. The two issues I will discuss in this paper are women's rights and piety.

Since elementary school, I have been aware of the Women's Rights movement and women like Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony who fought for women's right to vote. These struggles have seemed far off and removed from my modern life. As a young woman in college, I prided myself on my independence and self-reliance. I didn't have to follow in the

same footsteps as women of the past. I had an education and later, a career and a husband. In my world, words like “feminism” or “women’s rights” or “women’s roles in society” were moot points. I didn’t think about any of these issues. However, studying these as a mature woman, wife, and mother, has added a new layer of understanding.

I have always been aware that I am a mixture of old traditions and new; sort of a 1950s wife mixed with a 21st century woman. Although I had a college degree and a career, I willingly quit to be a stay-at-home mother and housewife. My mother was a “homemaker” and her mother before her and her mother before her, generations into infinity. My embedded theology and understanding of a wife’s role in the home was never questioned by me or anyone else. I took on the responsibility of primary caretaker for our children as well as household manager, cook, and cleaner. My husband has always been willing to help, but I’m naturally independent and don’t ask for much outside of his assigned household roles. Now, though, I am beginning to understand that maybe I accepted this mantle of society and tradition too willingly. Now I am working two part-time jobs and I’m still the primary caretaker and cook and house cleaner, while going to graduate school. I am slowly starting to understand that routines I started when I was young and unencumbered don’t fit my life today. Society tells me that I can keep a spotless house while working and keeping the family happy, entertained, and intact. Also, I will have time to go to the gym to maintain my perfect body. None of that works for me. My house is a mess and I don’t have a gym membership. I do have success on one front. My kids are intelligent and kind and it wasn’t until kindergarten that my daughter had even heard the word “bored.”

Studying about the women’s rights movements and women like Mary Wollstonecraft during this point of my journey has made me think critically about the roles I play in society. Not

only am I questioning my ignorance and nonchalance of the past, but I'm thinking about my daughter and what I want her to know for her future. Being half 1950s housewife and half 21st century woman has suited me. I consider myself a happy person in a happy family. However, I wonder about my daughter, who is seven. What parts of this feminine heritage do I want her to accept? What parts do I want her to disregard? These are issues that honestly, I hadn't thought much about until this course.

In her 1977 book, *The Feminization of American Culture*, Ann Douglas quotes an unnamed preacher who said that all women should participate in religion because their importance to society lies in their moral elevation. "Religion is far more necessary to you than self-sufficient men. In you, it would not only be criminal, but impolite to neglect it."³³

Along with my understanding of the Cult of Domesticity and my role in the spheres of world, I am also accepting my role as a spiritual leader both for my family and others around me. I am consciously and slowly stepping into that role. I completely disagree with the previous quote and I think the speaker might have as well. If men like that actually believed that women were spiritually superior, Godlier, more religious, or more pious, then reason says they would have encouraged ordination of women before the late 20th century. Popular opinion at the turn of the 20th century was that women were spiritually superior but it was also their duty to stay in the home. Although I am completely aware that these issues are much more complex than my bit of study in one semester at Brite, this seems to be a non sequitur. I look forward to continuing my

³³ Douglas, Ann. *The Feminization of American Culture*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1977.

theological study and better understanding the issues surrounding women and their roles in society and the church.

The other issue that has affected my worldview and understanding of faith is learning about piety. Before this course, I thought piety was what a pious person did. A pious person, in my understanding was someone who was condescendingly godly and holy, nearly untouchable. In class, I learned there were three major types of pietism. The first one is Biblical-evangelical, piety with an emphasis on return to the canonical Bible. The second one is spiritualist pietism, which is piety as a gift of and union with the Spirit. The third one is communitarian piety, which is piety that leads to a common, shared life together.³⁴ Learning about the Pietist movement gave me new language for concepts I knew about but didn't have language for. Putting a name to a familiar concept was enlightening. Understanding it opened up a new world for me.

The Pietism that Jacob Philip Spener preached about is an issue that I struggle with sitting in the church pew every Sunday. Am I attending church to just go through the motions or am I a deeply committed Christian? I think of myself as deeply committed, but often, if I can't relate to the sermon or music presented then I feel like I am just going through the motions, waiting for something to happen. I completely agree with Spener's management program for renewing the church. First, he said to establish conventicles.³⁵ In my life, my small group has helped me grow and mature spiritually. Participating in a small group has led me to feel more ownership and investment in the church. Leading my small group helped me recognize talents I didn't know I had. That recognition led me to Brite Divinity School.

³⁴ Duke, 2014.

³⁵ Ibid.

Secondly, he said to shift from clericalism to lay participation and responsibility.³⁶ I know firsthand the importance of this concept. In the United Methodist Church, our clergy itinerate, so lay leadership is crucial to continuity of programs and practices. Working on a church staff for three years has also made me aware of the large workload clergy carry day to day. Besides planning for Sunday worship, each of the clergy at my church leads Bible studies, makes hospital visits, performs funeral services, and leads the staff. They also help the congregation navigate their lives through issues small and large. It's a huge job and they cannot do it alone. Currently, one of the ministers is actively working to train lay people to help him in his work; he is teaching them how to make hospital visits.

Spener said that Christianity is more of an attitude, a disposition, and an orientation of the heart than it is belief and doctrine.³⁷ That is also my personal view of Christianity. I know many people, even the majority of my family would disagree with that statement, but everyone has their own personal theology, and this has been mine for quite some time. To me, all the denominational polity and principles are just details. What matters is your relationship with God and how it offers a frame of reference for your life.

The third point Spener made was that Christians should not offer polemic theology, but dispute only in love.³⁸ I do agree with this, but at the same time some issues cannot be ignored and must be dealt with in the church. Refusing to address concerns about homosexuality,

³⁶ Duke, 2014.

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Ibid.

women's rights, and other social issues makes the church irrelevant. In my opinion, the church is a safe place where polemic theology can be debated and discussed.

Spener said that seminaries and ministerial education are too doctrinal and intellectual.³⁹ This is my first semester at Brite and the only class I enrolled in, so I don't feel I have an educated opinion about seminary being too doctrinal or intellectual. I do know that I consider myself an intelligent individual and this class has stretched my brain.

The last point Spener made in his church management critique was to tell pastors to stop reading highfalutin essays for their sermons. Instead preach experientially, using vital experiences and speak from the heart.⁴⁰ I also agree with this point. Sermons that are too lofty in language or thought sometimes leave me daydreaming in the pew. Sermons that come from the preacher's life experience are much more interesting. I also enjoy hearing how others interpret scripture in their own lives.

History of Christianity II served to offer me several new lenses to see the world. The most important concept I learned is that nothing goes away. The issues Martin Luther struggled with are the same issues the church is debating today. The battles women fought to establish their role in society are still being fought today. Jacob Spener's instructions on piety could be read and applied to church life today. Church history isn't a timeline; it's one big circle.

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

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