

Adult Education Series

**The History of Christianity: From the Disciples to the Dawn of the Reformation**

**Professor Luke Timothy Johnson, Ph.D., Emory University**

**December 10, 2017 Through October 7, 2018**

8:50 - 9:50 a.m. Fireside Room

Christianity is the largest and most global religious tradition in history. For nearly 2,000 years, the Christian faith has remained at or near the center of Western moral debate and conceptions of human identity, just action, and ultimate meaning. It has both shaped history and responded to history, showing an extraordinary adaptability within greatly differing cultures. Its practice and influence appears in every land and every language, and one-third of humanity now affiliates in some way with Christianity. Now, in 36 enthralling lectures, "The History of Christianity: From the Disciples to the Dawn of the Reformation" tells the phenomenal story of Christianity's first 1,500 years, in all its remarkable diversity and complex dimension.

December 10, 2017 **1 The Historical Study of Christianity**

Begin by contemplating the massive historical trajectory of Christianity, as well as contemporary ignorance of its past. Consider the value of historical study of Christianity for reassessing the past and charting a path to the future. Look also at the methods and role of the historian, and the sources and limitations of historical knowledge.

December 17, 2017 **2 The First Cultural Context—Greece and Rome**

Understanding the cultural contexts of early Christianity is fundamental for grasping its history. Investigate the culture of the Mediterranean world in which Christianity was born, the legacy of Alexander, and the features of Greek politics, religion, and philosophy. Also learn about the nature of Roman rule and imperial order in the region.

December 24, 2017

*Christmas Eve - No Class Today*

December 31, 2017

*New Year's Eve - No Class Today*

January 7, 2018 **3 The First Cultural Context—Judaism**

Judaism is the most important cultural context for early Christianity. Contemplate the circumstances of Jewish life in ancient Palestine as well as in the Diaspora. In particular, examine cultural and ideological factors that divided the Jews, the tensions they faced between assimilation and separation, and their resistance to Greek culture and Roman rule.

January 14, 2018 **4 The Jesus Movement and the Birth of Christianity**

Consider the resurrection as marking the birth of Christianity, as rooted in the claims of the first believers to an experience of ultimate power and transformation. Also assess the contradiction perceived by his contemporaries between Jesus as the source of divine life and the degrading manner of his death.

January 21, 2018 **5 Paul and Christianity's First Expansion**

Christianity spread with amazing speed in the decades following Jesus's death. Begin by observing how this expansion happened and the broad adaptations Christianity made in a relatively short period. Then investigate the role of Paul's letters as a primary record of the convictions, culture, practices, and troubles of the early Christians.

January 28, 2018	<p><b>6 The Diversity of Early Christianity</b></p> <p>This lecture notes influences in early Christianity beyond the pivotal figures of Jesus and Paul. In particular, investigate the differences in conviction and perspective in the gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. Compare the four Gospels' distinct interpretations of Jesus's role, as well as their convergence on the nature of his character.</p>
February 4, 2018	<p><b>7 The Unpopular Cult—Persecution</b></p> <p>In tracing the Christian “age of persecution,” begin by examining the prior history of repression of both Jews and philosophers, and the problems posed by the Christians for the world around them. Study the evidence of early Christian persecution by the Jews, as well as the most significant persecutions by Rome.</p>
February 11, 2018	<p><b>8 Forms of Witness—Martyrdom and Apologetic</b></p> <p>In the 2nd and 3rd centuries, martyrdom and apologetic literature responded powerfully to the persecution of Christians. Investigate the phenomenon of martyrdom as the perfect form of discipleship, in the actions of martyrs who exalted in their sacrifice. See how apologetic literature created a reasoned case for Christianity in the wider world.</p>
February 18, 2018	<p><b>9 Extreme Christianity in the 2nd and 3rd Centuries</b></p> <p>Radical forms of Christianity continued the movement's original diversity in even more dramatic ways. Trace early accounts of wonder-working, and Christian social behavior that upset traditional mores. Also learn about ecstatic experience and asceticism, and the dualistic rupture of matter and spirit in Marcionism and Gnosticism.</p>
February 25, 2018	<p><b>10 The Shaping of Orthodoxy</b></p> <p>Here, identify the pivotal factors that secured the framework of Christianity, defining an orthodoxy based in tradition and reason. In particular, study the role of Irenaeus of Gaul in establishing the canonical scriptures, the rule of faith in one God, and the religious authority of the bishops.</p>
March 4, 2018	<p><b>11 Institutional Development before Constantine</b></p> <p>Christianity's growth, accompanied by its development of solid social structures, finally positioned it as an irresistible force. First, trace the movement's broad geographic expansion and increase in numbers. Then learn about its hierarchical structure of clerical orders under the supreme authority of bishops, and regional spheres of influence within the religion.</p>
March 11, 2018	<p><b>12 The Beginnings of Christian Philosophy</b></p> <p>Early Christian philosophy emphasized the religion as a way of moral transformation, and initiated a serious intellectual discourse with the wider world. In this lecture, grapple with Justin Martyr, Clement of Alexandria, and Origen, whose substantial writings and teachings gave birth to an authentically philosophical form of Christianity.</p>
March 18, 2018	<p><b>13 Imperial Politics and Religion</b></p> <p>Christianity made a dramatic turn in the 4th century, becoming the established religion of the Roman Empire. Investigate the pivotal roles the emperors Diocletian and Constantine played in this; in particular, Diocletian's political reforms, which refashioned imperial authority, and Constantine's bold initiative to place imperial power behind the church.</p>
March 25, 2018	<p><b>14 Constantine and the Established Church</b></p> <p>This lecture follows the complex process of the “conversion” of the empire to Christianity. Track the bold actions of Constantine in his patronage of the new faith, as well as the definitive imposition of Christianity under Theodosius I. Then, examine the benefits and stresses of the faith's new role.</p>

April 1, 2018

*Easter Day - No Class Today*

April 8, 2018

**15 The Extension of Christian Culture**

In the religion's new context, see how substantial territories became Christian through conversion under imperial authority. Then explore the church's expanding "liturgy" of public acts, incorporating architecture, art, ceremony, and pilgrimage, as well as the religious rituals of the sacraments and the celebration of the biblical past.

April 15, 2018

**16 Monasticism as Radical Christianity**

Monasticism exerted an enormous influence on Christianity from its inception. Trace its development in 3rd-century Egypt, and learn about the elements and principles of monastic life. Observe the appeal of this alternative culture that allowed Christians to express discipleship in a more radical, rigorous existence.

April 22, 2018

**17 The Emergence of Patriarchal Centers**

In the 4th and 5th centuries, prominent cities competed for authority within the imperial religion. Look first at the reasons for the early primacy of Rome, and Constantinople's later emergence as Rome's rival. Then study the rivalry of Antioch and Alexandria, and how they opposed each other in both intellectual and religious terms.

April 29, 2018

**18 Theological Crisis and Council—The Trinity**

Complex doctrinal disputes divided Christians in the 4th through the 6th centuries. Here, track the 4th-century controversy over the divinity of Jesus and the resulting Councils of Nicaea and Constantinople, key events in establishing the orthodox view of the equality of the Father and Son, and the nature of the divine as Triune.

May 6, 2018

**19 Theological Crisis and Council—Christology**

The controversy concerning the Trinity raged through the 5th and 6th centuries, now focused on the nature of Christ, the God-Man. Follow in detail the bitter opposition of two convictions—Christ's dual nature as both human and divine versus his singular divinity—leading to attempts to reach accord through imperial and papal intervention.

May 13, 2018

**20 The Distinctive Issues of the Latin West**

In grasping Christianity's development in the Western empire, investigate two major controversies, Donatism and Pelagianism, rooted in questions of moral rigor and personal holiness. Then, grapple with three religious leaders who shaped Latin Christianity: Ambrose of Milan, Jerome, and the monumental figure of Augustine of Hippo.

May 20, 2018

**21 Expansion beyond the Boundaries of Empire**

This lecture counters the tendency to think of Christianity as a European religion, charting its extensive geographical spread through the 6th century. Trace its Eastern expansion from Persia to Ethiopia, noting each region's rich and diverse Christian literature. Witness its historic encounter with Germanic tribes and extension to the British Isles.

May 27, 2018

**22 The Court of Justinian and Byzantine Christianity**

Here, evaluate the extraordinary legacy of the emperor Justinian of Byzantium. Follow his conquests to restore the greatness of the empire, his economic and legal achievements and patronage of art. Also study his interventions in religious affairs and his role in the growing rift between the Chalcedonian (Western) and Monophysite (Eastern) churches.

June 3, 2018

*Meadow Vista Pioneer Day - No Class Today*

June 10, 2018	<p><b>23 The Rise of Islam and the Threat of Iconoclasm</b></p> <p>In the 6th and 7th centuries, Byzantine Christianity faced both external and internal pressures. Track the dramatically rapid spread of Islam through military conquest and the threat it posed to the Byzantine Empire. Learn about the continuing theological controversy over Christ's nature, and the century-long battle over painted representations of Jesus.</p>
June 17, 2018	<p><b>24 Eastern Orthodoxy—Holy Tradition</b></p> <p>This lecture uncovers the remarkable cultural riches of the Orthodox tradition. First, see how a 9th-century Byzantine mission established Christianity in Russia and Ukraine. Then, delve into the compelling Orthodox rituals of worship, Orthodoxy's deeply integral monastic tradition, and its distinct form of contemplative mysticism, known as "Hesychasm."</p>
June 24, 2018	<p><b>25 From Roman Empire to Holy Roman Empire</b></p> <p>Now follow the dramatic political events that marked the transition from imperial Christianity to medieval Christianity. Witness the rise of the Germanic people called the Franks, under a series of powerful rulers culminating in the pivotal figure of Charlemagne. Study the structure of a new form of society: feudalism.</p>
July 1, 2018	<i>SUMMER BREAK - No Class Today</i>
July 8, 2018	<i>SUMMER BREAK - No Class Today</i>
July 15, 2018	<i>SUMMER BREAK - No Class Today</i>
July 22, 2018	<i>SUMMER BREAK - No Class Today</i>
July 29, 2018	<p><b>26 Benedictine Monasticism and Its Influence</b></p> <p>Benedictine monasticism played a foundational role in the shaping of medieval Christianity, and it continues to thrive today. Take a deep look at Benedict of Nursia's Rule for Monks; its principles of obedience and humility and detailed prescriptions for monastic life, promoting monasteries as centers of both Christian discipleship and learning.</p>
August 5, 2018	<p><b>27 Evangelization of Western Europe</b></p> <p>A spectrum of powerful figures fueled Christianity's expansion in the West. Reckon with the contributions of the popes Damasus I, Leo I, and Gregory "the Great" in strengthening the papacy and Latin Christianity. Also study the seminal work of the missionaries Saint Willibrord and Saint Boniface, and the monk-scholars Bede and Alcuin.</p>
August 12, 2018	<p><b>28 The Great Divorce between East and West</b></p> <p>In the 11th century, relations between Orthodoxy (East) and Catholicism (West) were severed, a schism that has remained for more than a thousand years. Here, explore the intricate and complex contributing factors, including cultural distance, centuries of political-ecclesiastical rivalries, and the doctrinal disputes and power plays leading to the split.</p>
August 19, 2018	<p><b>29 Monastic Reform</b></p> <p>Investigate the appeal of monasticism in the medieval world and why this dominant institution in the Catholic West required constant renewal. Look at three famous medieval monastic houses and the key reforms each implemented in their quest for a more complete realization of the ideals of the Rule of Benedict.</p>

August 26, 2018	<b>30 Cathedrals and Chapters</b>	The majestic cathedrals of European Christendom are a key to medieval Catholic life. Study the two archetypal cathedral styles, Romanesque and Gothic; their iconic architectural features; and their symbolic structure. Learn about the rituals of worship, cathedral “chapters” (staff), and the multiple social functions of these grand edifices.
September 2, 2018	<b>31 The Crusades</b>	The Crusades to recover the Holy Land from the Muslims represented deep ambiguities in Christian identity. Grasp the nature of these conquests as combined religious mission, popular movement, and political calculation. Then study the four most critical Crusades; their objectives, varied outcomes, and ultimate failure in both political and religious terms.
September 9, 2018	<b>32 Papal Revolution</b>	This lecture follows the ascending power of the papacy in Christian Europe. Assess the careers of two “super-popes,” Gregory the VII and Innocent III, as they aggressively consolidated papal authority in both religious and secular spheres. Learn about the Franciscan and Dominican orders, noting their role as instruments of papal policy.
September 16, 2018	<b>33 Universities and Theology</b>	Our contemporary universities have their origins in medieval universities that were entirely Christian. Trace the rise of universities in the West—their functions, curricula, and the development of scholastic theology with its methodology of dialectical reasoning. Assess the expression of Christian thought in the theology of Thomas Aquinas and John Duns Scotus and in the poetry of Dante Alighieri.
September 23, 2018	<b>34 The Great Plague</b>	The 14th century saw a period of natural and human-caused disasters that negatively affected society and the church. Track the extreme hardships of the Black Death, prolonged wars, and the terrors of the Inquisition. See also how the same era produced a flourishing of Christian mysticism and the beginnings of humanist literature.
September 30, 2018	<b>35 Corruption and the Beginnings of Reform</b>	By the late medieval era, systemic dysfunction within Christianity led to efforts at structural reform. Grasp the critical issues the church faced in the practice of theology and liturgy, as well as in deepening political and moral corruption. Learn about the courageous early reformers, whose daring voices anticipated the Protestant Reformation.
October 7, 2018	<b>36 The Ever-Adapting Religion</b>	The course concludes with reflections on the numerous cultural adaptations Christianity has made on its path to becoming a “world religion.” Contemplate the challenges posed to the faith in its journey from the Reformation to the modern era, and the question of Christianity’s identity within all its cultural permutations.

Dr. Luke Timothy Johnson is the Robert W. Woodruff Professor of New Testament and Christian Origins at Emory University's Candler School of Theology in Atlanta, Georgia. Professor Johnson earned a Ph.D. in New Testament Studies from Yale University, as well as an M.A. in Religious Studies from Indiana University, an M.Div. in Theology from Saint Meinrad School of Theology, and a B.A. in Philosophy from Notre Dame Seminary in New Orleans. A former Benedictine monk, Professor Johnson has taught at Yale Divinity School and Indiana University, where he received the President's Award for Distinguished Teaching, was elected a member of the Faculty Colloquium in Teaching, and won the Brown Derby Teaching Award and the Student Choice Award for teaching. At Emory University, he has twice received the On Eagle's Wings Excellence in Teaching Award. In 2007 he received the Candler School of Theology Outstanding Service Award. His most recent award is the 2011 Louisville Grawemeyer Award in Religion for the ideas set forth in his 2009 book, *Among the Gentiles: Greco-Roman Religion and Christianity*. Professor Johnson is the author of more than 20 books, including *The Real Jesus: The Misguided Quest for the Historical Jesus and the Truth of the Traditional Gospels* and *The Writings of the New Testament: An Interpretation*, which is widely used as a textbook. He has also published several hundred scholarly articles and reviews.