RETRIEVING HISTORY

Memory *and* Identity Formation *in the* Early Church

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To Fulga Pascu Dan and Emanuel Titus Dan†,
fellow pilgrims and citizens of the Heavenly City,
my first and best teachers,
who sped me along the path of historical studies
and always urged me to use my discipline
in the service of the church.

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Series Preface

The Evangelical *Ressourcement*: Ancient Sources for the Church's Future series is designed to address the ways in which Christians may draw upon the thought and life of the early church to respond to the challenges facing today's church. The term *ressourcement* was coined by French Roman Catholic writers in the mid-twentieth century as descriptive of theological renewal that declared Christians must return to the sources (*ad fontes*) of the ancient Christian tradition. The operative assumption was that the church is apostolic (formed and directed by the Old and New Testaments) and also patristic (indebted to the intellectual and spiritual legacy of the fathers of the church). Much of our understanding of the Bible and theological orthodoxy, directly or indirectly, has come through the interpretive portals of the early church, which is an integral part of the Protestant identity, no less than it is for Roman Catholicism or Eastern Orthodoxy.

Using the methods and tools of patristic scholarship, each series volume is devoted to a particular theme related to biblical and theological interpretation. Similar to the past practices of *ressourcement*, this series is not seeking to appropriate the contributions of the early church in an idealized sense but through a critical utilization of the fathers as the church's primary witnesses and architects for faithfully explicating the Christian faith. Series readers will see how (1) both Scripture and the early tradition were necessary for the process of orthodox teaching, (2) there is a reciprocal relationship between theology and the life of the church, (3) the liberty of the Spirit in a believer's life must be balanced with the continuity of the church in history, and

(4) the Protestant Reformation must be integrated within the larger and older picture of what it means to be catholic. In effect, it is the intention of this series to reveal how historical Protestantism was inspired and shaped by the patristic church.

As Protestantism confronts the postdenominational and, in many ways, post-Christian world of the twenty-first century, it is vital that its future identity not be constructed apart from the fullness of its historical foundations. Seminal to these foundations is the inheritance of the early church, "that true, genuine Christianity, directing us to the strongest evidence of the Christian doctrine" (John Wesley). Therein Christians will find not a loss of their distinctiveness as Protestants but, as the sixteenth-century Reformers found, the resources necessary for presenting a uniquely Christian vision of the world and its message of redemption.

Preface

The year 2014 marked the twenty-fifth anniversary of the government repression of protesters in China's Tiananmen Square. It also marked twenty-five years since the fall of the Berlin Wall and the Iron Curtain in Eastern Europe. As a commemoration, journalist and NPR China correspondent Louisa Lim released a volume in 2015 titled *The People's Republic of Amnesia: Tiananmen Revisited*.[1] For the Chinese people, the events of June 4, 1989, are a dim memory if a memory at all, since the government has chosen to suppress and expunge that event from the collective memory. No public commemorations of the event are allowed at the square, which has been repaved to cover traces of blood. Security is tight on anniversary days to prevent any public demonstrations. Government censorship of the internet ensures that information regarding the events remains scant and unavailable. Since a memory of the power of collective solidarity has been erased from the media and history books, millions of Chinese young people are growing up without any knowledge of the events of June 4, 1989. This has led to politically apathetic young people and a content but vigilant Communist Party propagating an "amnesiac drug of shallow nationalism."[2]

By contrast, Romania, which experienced the bloodiest revolution of all the Communist bloc countries, has sought to keep alive the memories of the 1989 revolution. In and around the central square in

1. Louisa Lim, *The People's Republic of Amnesia: Tiananmen Revisited* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015). Lim formerly reported for the BBC.

2. Andrew J. Nathan, endorsement for Lim, *People's Republic of Amnesia*, available at http://www.oupcanada.com/catalog/9780190227913.html.

my father's hometown of Cluj-Napoca, travelers can see inscriptions and monuments commemorating the unarmed civilians who were brutally slain by government forces. An especially moving sculpture of seven huge asymmetrical bronze columns stands in one corner of Union Plaza (Piaţa Unirii). It is called Stâlpii Împuşcaţi, literally translated as "Shot Pillars." The sculpture represents those who were killed in the square on December 21, 1989. In addition to this public memorial, in 2014 on the twenty-fifth anniversary, a volume of photographs documenting the events was released with the same title as the sculpture, commemorating "A quarter century with the Martyrs of the December 1989 Revolution in Cluj-Napoca."[3] My uncle Nelu explained to me that the sculpture represents those slain as present rather than absent. The dead are not gone, he explained; they are still present among us. For those who remain, the "martyrs'" example of courage is publicly visible, inspiring viewers to boldness in the face of repression, and confronting the socially and politically apathetic to action and hope. In fact, several groups present at the memorial displayed a banner that read, "History will not forgive us if we forget it." The eventual overthrow of the Communist Party and dismantling of its structures were a tribute to those who had risked their lives in the square that winter day. Despite its admission into the European Union in 2007, Romania has not fully recovered politically, socially, or economically. Nonetheless the people have a collective narrative of overcoming, examples of courage and sacrifice, and memories to remind them that a tyrannical atheistic regime cannot keep the faithful subjugated forever. It is God who raises up and topples regimes.

Not surprisingly, China's reaction to the Romanian revolution was to watch in dismay as the people prevailed while chanting Christian slogans on their knees and out in the open, after four decades of atheistic dominance. "God exists!" they shouted. The Chinese continue to be perturbed, no doubt, by pro-democratic demonstrators around the world (even in neighboring Hong Kong and Taiwan) who will not allow the suppression of China's collective memory. They understand that the loss of collective memory is closely followed by loss of identity as a people striving for freedom and democracy.

3. Radu Feldiorean and Ioan Cioba, *Stâlpii Împuşcaţi* (Eikon, 2014). This volume showcases the photographs of Razvan Rotta, documenting the events of December 21, 1989. Accessed at http://www.clujazi.ro/galerie-foto-cluj-napoca-25-de-ani-de-la-revolutia-din-1989/. For an interesting piece on political and ethnic statuary in Cluj-Napoca, see Paul Stirton, "Public Sculpture in Cluj/Kolosvár: Identity, Space and Politics," in *Heritage, Ideology, and Identity in Central and Eastern Europe: Contested Pasts, Contested Presents*, ed. Matthew Rampley (Martlesham, Suffolk: Boydell, 2012), 41–66.

The Importance of This Material

One more alarming example of the attempt to destroy collective memory is evident in the recent operations of ISIS. In the summer of 2014, ISIS devastated ancient Christian communities in Mosul, Iraq (ancient Nineveh), intentionally destroying Judeo-Christian religious archaeological sites and churches, as well as important archaeological ruins in the city of Palmyra in Syria the following year. These radicals are attempting to wipe out history, obliterating any indication of the presence of Christianity in the Middle East (admittedly their fanatical destructiveness is not limited to Jewish and Christian sites). They also understand that memory—that is, a sense of one's antiquity and received heritage—and identity are a powerful combination for the continued existence and sustenance of nations and religions.

The chief importance of the ancient texts examined in this work is that they demonstrate that the past affects the present and future, and they show how that process unfolded in a particular period within the church's history. Familiarity—and even more, direct engagement—with the sources both reveals and forms an identity: the encounter can elucidate for Christians our heritage of belief, devotion, and action, to be remembered, celebrated, emulated, and shared. This heritage was bequeathed to us by ancient disciples of Jesus; it constitutes "things we have heard and known and that our fathers have passed down to us," as described in Psalm 78:3 (HCSB). Like Israel, we have a responsibility to pass it further: "We must not hide them from [our] children, but must tell a future generation the praises of the LORD, His might, and the wonderful works He has performed" (78:4 HCSB). As the psalm proceeds, it sets up the polarities of remembering and forgetting, and the spiritual ramifications of each. When the Israelites remembered God and his deeds in the life of their nation, they remembered to keep the torah he established; when Israel forgot God and "the wonderful works He had shown them" (78:11 HCSB), the result was disbelief, apostasy, and outright rebellion.

Why Evangelicals Need This Book

Free Church evangelicalism has entered into a period of identity crisis, whether it is termed that way or not: churches increasingly reflect the culture of the moment, with its emphasis on faddishness, gimmickry, and entertainment, and turn to culture rather than mining their own heritage for stalwart examples of homily, liturgy, discipleship, leadership, evangelism, and so on. In fact, I wonder if the martyrs and other early Christians would recognize today's churches, modeled as they are

on the mall, warehouse, stadium, and theater. We must recognize the existing continuity between the ancient church and us—who we *were* shows us who we *are* and challenges us to be who we ought *to be* in the future. While Israel was admonished to "remember" and to stand at the crossroads seeking out the "ancient paths," the church today is merely looking *around* rather than looking *back*. Walking in the "good way" of those ancient paths was supposed to grant "rest for your souls" (Jer. 6:16). Instead, taking their cue from the surrounding Canaanite culture, Israel stumbled, choosing the "side roads, not the highway"; the cause for such a diversion is equally clear: "My people have *forgotten* me; they make offerings to false gods" (Jer. 18:15, emphasis added). Evangelicals can benefit from looking back in order to remember the work of God in building his church through faithful men and women who tried to live out the gospel under a wide range of circumstances. Historical and spiritual amnesia is not a viable option and can even prove disastrous.

Truthfully, there exist both similarities and differences between us and early Christians, and I do not suggest that they were just like us or the reverse. There does exist a clear continuity and "family resemblance," however, between the apostles, martyrs, mothers and fathers of the church, and believers today, so that we can derive immense and immediate benefit and even refreshment from reading the works of early Christians. Further, their works, which were intended for posterity, became our history in that many patristic writers composed historical material with an eye toward the future. In other words, they wrote for the church, and we are their intended recipients. We ought, therefore, to pay our forebears in the faith—the "cloud of witnesses" of Hebrews 11–12—the respect of looking at the material they left for us. Although much of it has been ravaged by time and circumstance, we ought to try our best to understand what they wanted to tell us.

Evangelicals also need to read this material to defuse the suspicion with which they often regard late patristic and early medieval Christianity. Evangelicals tend to accept (outright or implicitly) the idea of a chasm between New Testament Christianity and the Reformation, concluding that true and biblical Christianity was absent from the mainstream church between the apostles and Luther. These sectarian views rob their adherents of the benefit of a broader perspective on their own history as well as their place in a long and rich metanarrative.

Issues of Genre

Whereas patristic introductions typically deal with the fathers' doctrinal works, this book will focus primarily on their historical works.

It shows how diverse genres (spiritual biography, apology, heresiology) overlap with history because an author has taken a historical approach to such things as commemorating those who fell in persecution, depicting examples of discipleship, defending a sound faith or scrutinizing unsound challenges to that faith, and telling the story of the church. So while there is an attempt to distinguish between kinds of historical writing by introducing four historical forms, the fluidity of genre must also be taken into account. For example, some of the martyrological accounts may be characterized chiefly as hagiography, but they also contain apologetic and/or polemical speeches (as in the trials of Pionius and Apollonius). Irenaeus's heresiological work *Against Heresies*, while scathing in its polemic, also contains critical (and sometimes lilting) passages of constructive theology on the doctrines of creation and theological anthropology, expounding upon the pivotal importance of the *imago Dei* in humans. There also appears to be some degree of reciprocity between church history and apologetic literature, which intersect in some interesting ways.

Another Introduction to the Early Church?

A steady stream of recent publications serves as introductions to the church fathers. Recent examples include Paul Foster's volume *Early Christian Thinkers* (IVP Academic, 2010), Bradley Green's *Shapers of Christian Orthodoxy* (IVP Academic, 2010), Bryan Litfin's *Getting to Know the Church Fathers: An Evangelical Introduction* (2nd ed., Baker Academic, 2016), and Michael Haykin's *Rediscovering the Church Fathers: Who They Were and How They Shaped the Church* (Crossway, 2011). Joan Petersen's book *Handmaids of the Lord* (Cistercian, 1996) introduces the lives of some "church mothers," female ascetics from the patristic period, while Hans von Campenhausen's *The Fathers of the Church* (Hendrickson, 2000) combines his two classic and enduring volumes *The Fathers of the Greek Church* (1955) and *The Fathers of the Latin Church* (1960). This present book does not intend to be an introduction to patristics; it assumes that the reader already has some familiarity with the period, although I have taken some measures to introduce key figures who may be unfamiliar to the reader and to provide a bit of context for them. The volumes of the Evangelical *Ressourcement* series are building upon these introductory works, bolstered by a recent healthy uptick of interest in history and what it has to offer (John Fea, *Why Study History?* [Baker Academic, 2013]), as well as more technical and methodological interests (as in Jay Green, *Christian Historiography: Five Rival Versions* [Baylor University Press, 2015]).

This book spans the period (roughly) from the apostles to the Council of Chalcedon (451) and gives attention to some figures who are mainstays among the church fathers, but it does not focus *exclusively* on those in the mainstream. It also includes and introduces figures who are less well known outside the world of patristic scholarship. For example, chapter 4 on martyrology before the Constantinian "Peace" includes well-known martyrs like Polycarp, Perpetua, and the martyrs of Lyons, but also lesser known (but no less important) martyrs, such as Pionius, Carpus, Phileas, and Agape and her companions.[4] Chapter 5 on hagiography after the "Peace" features Athanasius's classic *Life of Antony*, but also treats in detail Gregory of Nyssa's *Life of Macrina* and Gerontius's *Life of Melania*. These Christians' friends and followers composed or preserved accounts of their lives and deaths that amply demonstrate the literary and historiographical features treated in this volume. Chapter 6 on church history includes Eusebius, the best-known writer (and pioneer) in this literary genre, yet we also want to look at the continuation of his legacy via several less well-known historians—Socrates Scholasticus, Sozomen, and Theodoret of Cyrus (also a bishop, apologist, and theologian).

Aim of This Work

My hope is that this book will ignite a powerful desire in readers to listen to the witness(es) of the past, who testified for Christ "in season and out of season" (2 Tim. 4:2). The importance of reading, understanding, and learning from history cannot be overemphasized: the act of remembering is a crucial exercise that ensures the church's survival as an institution in a way consistent with its own identity as the church established and sustained by Christ. History is one way to understand God's will and his providential working in the universe. The record of his dealings with his people (whether Israel or the church) across time inspires confidence in God's sovereignty, reliability, covenant faithfulness, and love. The call of believers into a life of discipleship remains the same across the ages, and valuable examples of lived-out discipleship beckon us through vivid narratives to follow and to persevere in the Christian life. To seek out, read, and engage these ancient texts and ancient Christians is not merely for the sake of intellectual curiosity; it is also critical for the formation and ongoing affirmation of Christian self-identity, even after two millennia.

4. More will be said about hagiography in later chapters, esp. chaps. 4–5.

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Stefana Dan Laing
June 1, 2016
Feast Day of Justin the Martyr,
remembering that there are martyrs still

Visit www.bakeracademic.com/RetrievingHistory to access discussion questions for each chapter.

Abbreviations

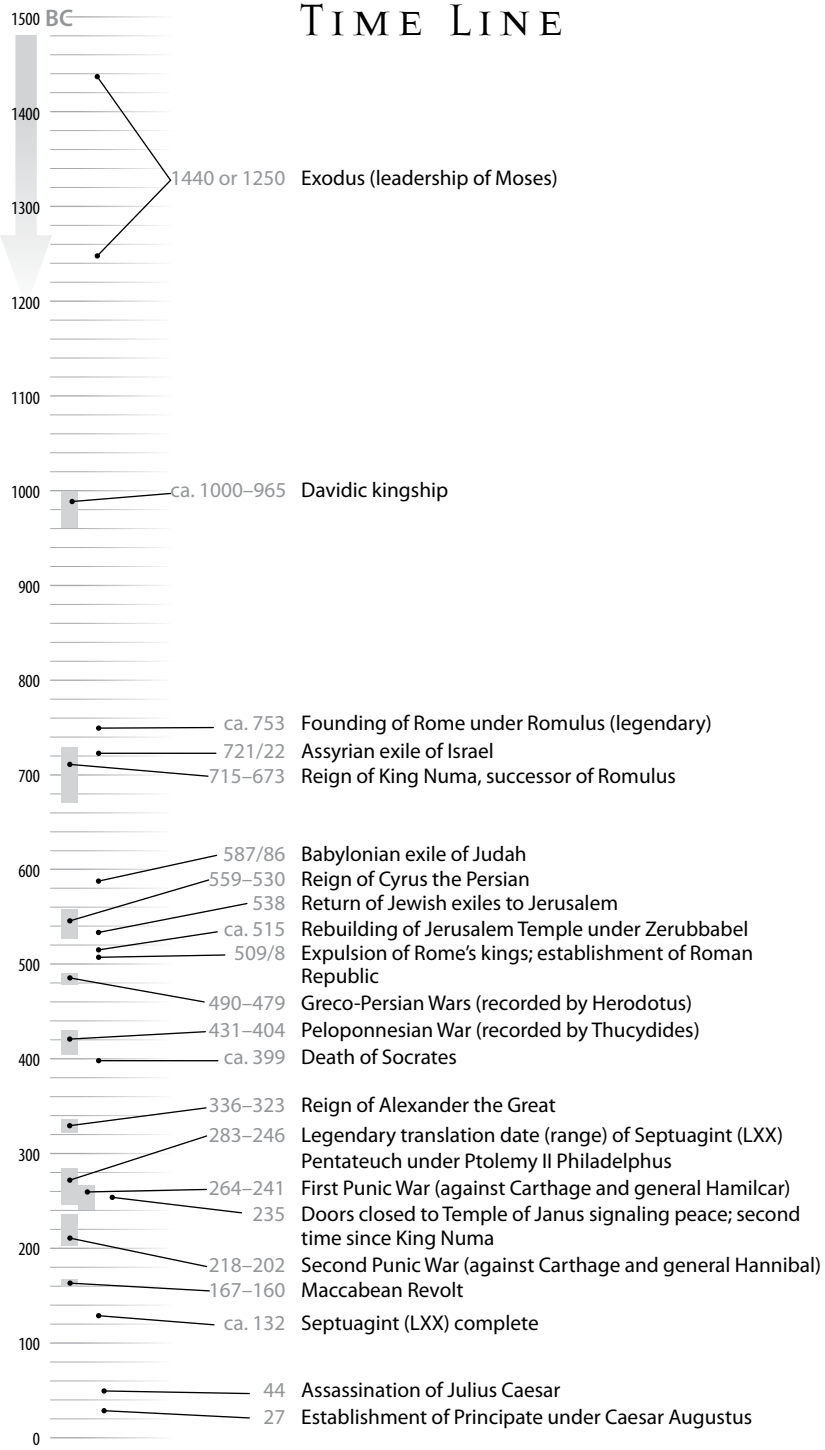
General

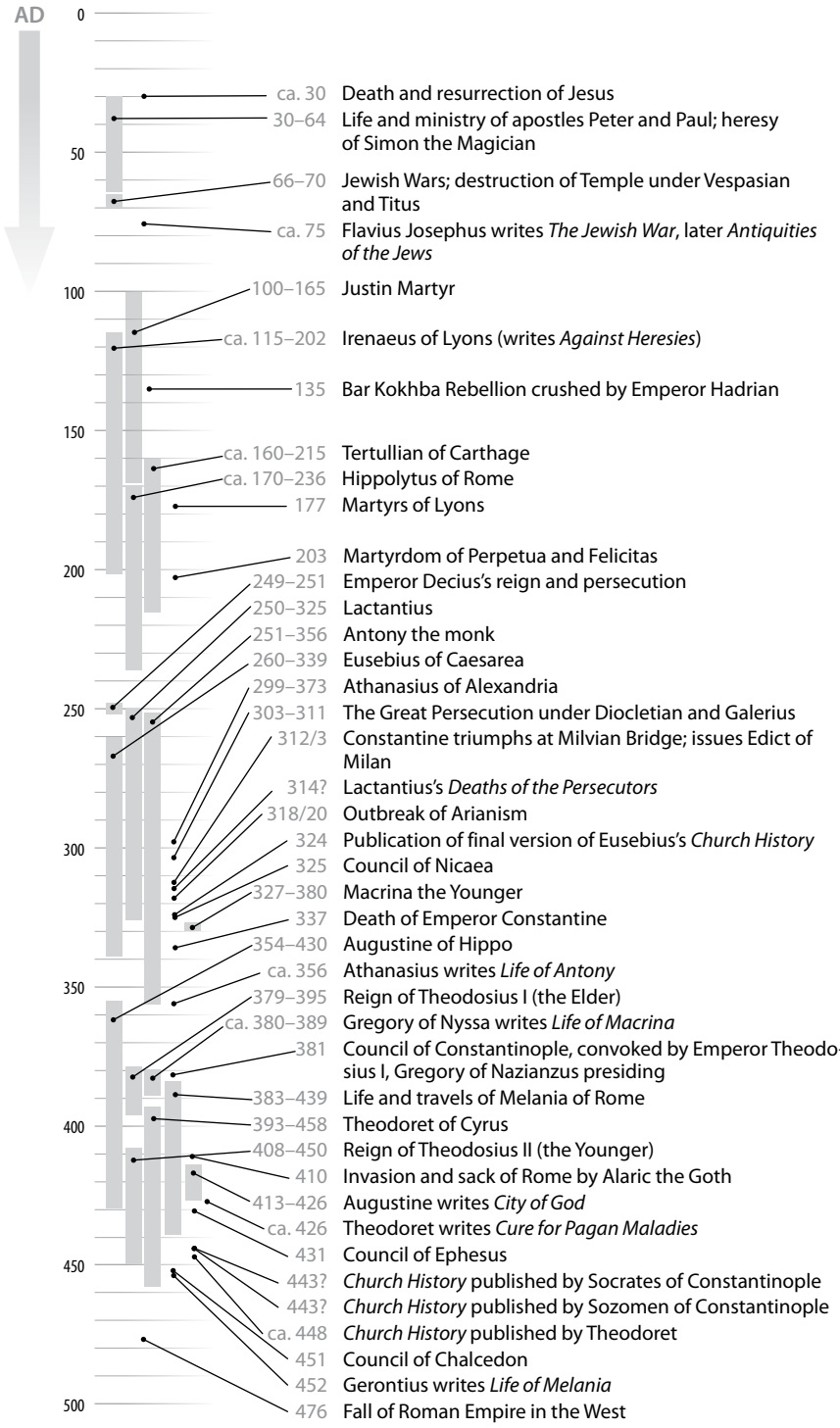
AD	anno Domini, in the year of our Lord
BC	before Christ
ca.	*circa*, about, approximately
chap(s).	chapter(s)
d.	died
esp.	especially
Gk.	Greek
r.	reigned

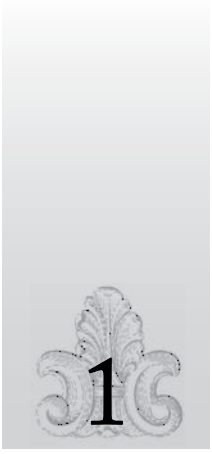
Bibliographic

AARSR	American Academy of Religion Studies in Religion Series
ACW	Ancient Christian Writers
ANF	*The Ante-Nicene Fathers*. Edited by Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson. 1885–87. 10 vols. Repr., Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1994.
EEC	*Encyclopedia of Early Christianity*. Edited by Everett Ferguson. 2nd ed. New York: Garland, 1997.
FC	Fathers of the Church
NICNT	New International Commentary on the New Testament
NovTSup	Supplements to Novum Testamentum
NPNF[1]	*The Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, Series 1. Edited by Philip Schaff. 1886–89. 14 vols. Repr., Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1994.
NPNF[2]	*The Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, Series 2. Edited by Philip Schaff and Henry Wace. 1890–1900. 14 vols. Repr., Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1996.
SBL	Society of Biblical Literature
SC	Sources chrétiennes

Time Line







1

Invitation to the Past

In my career I've found that "thinking outside the box" works better if I know what's "inside the box." In music (as in life) we need to understand our pertinent history, . . . and moving on is so much easier once we know where we've been.

—Dave Grusin, musician (this quote appears on a Starbucks cup in the series "The Way I See It," #182)

Before we can responsibly go into the future, we must go back.

—D. H. Williams, *Retrieving Tradition and Renewing Evangelicalism*, 13

The Past Is Trending

Most people have some interest in their origins, whether geographical, familial, or cultural; indeed many are self-consciously shaped by their past. Some also have an interest in their spiritual origins, allowing these to shape and form their spiritual identities, as well as their theology and worship. The latter is increasingly becoming the case, as a spirit of antiquity or appreciation of "the past" seems to be blowing through evangelicalism, even through such an ultracontemporary permutation

of evangelicalism as the Emergent Church movement.[1] It may even be part of a broader cultural movement, as suggested by the above quote from Dave Grusin, popularized by Starbucks. Many Christians are turning back to an earlier era, that of the church fathers, seeking renewal in their worship practices (liturgy) and doctrine. Some are revisiting the past to mine apologetic arguments and strategies for defending the faith against current opposition such as the New Atheism or cults, or just to learn from ancient apologists how to engage a hostile or unbelieving culture; others seek ancient wisdom for living as a Christian in a pluralistic and postmodern society, or for living as a disciple, growing and thriving spiritually in an age of affluence, freedom, godlessness, and pop spirituality.[2] Some appear to be searching for a sense of historical, personal, and theological identity in this age of the nondenominational megachurch.[3] All these groups have at least one commonality: they hope to somehow refresh their Christian walk and renew their witness in the world by revisiting and reclaiming their Christian roots. By reconnecting with the heritage of the ancient church, they are reminded of the "faith once for all delivered to the saints," as well as the particular saints who have lived it out in various forms of

1. See Brian McLaren, *Finding Our Way Again: The Return of the Ancient Practices* (Nashville: Nelson, 2008), and other volumes in that series, which attempts to reclaim and reintroduce the spiritual disciplines to a contemporary audience. The other volumes treat the practices/topics of fasting, pilgrimage, liturgy (of the church year), Sabbath, Eucharist, and prayer.

2. Robert Webber, *Ancient-Future Faith: Rethinking Evangelicalism for a Postmodern World* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1999), and other volumes in the series. Recent examples of evangelical responses to the New Atheism include Alister McGrath and Joanna McGrath, *The Dawkins Delusion* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2007); John D. Laing, ed., "The New Atheism," *Southwestern Journal of Theology* 54 (Fall 2011); Paul Copan and William Lane Craig, eds., *Contending with Christianity's Critics: Answering New Atheists and Other Objectors* (Nashville: B&H Academic, 2009); William Lane Craig and Chad Meister, eds., *God Is Great, God Is Good* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Books, 2009); "Evangelical Responses to Neo-Atheist Assaults on God's Goodness and Justice," theme of the Southwest regional meeting of the Evangelical Theological Society, Dallas, Texas, March 1–2, 2013. It should be noted that not many contemporary apologists seem to be delving into the so-called Apologetic Era of the second and third centuries in a sweeping way, but rather they seem to extract smatterings of the apologists' ideas without a broader appropriation of their approach, methodology, and rhetorical strategy. Happily, interest in the ancient church's apologetic tradition is currently rising.

3. See *An Evangelical Manifesto: A Declaration of Evangelical Identity and Public Commitment* (May 7, 2008), http://www.evangelicalmanifesto.com; Guy Davies, "The Great Evangelical Identity Crisis (1980–2010)," *The Gospel Truth Magazine*, November 2010; Jesse Carey, "Perspectives: The Evangelical Identity Crisis," on the Christian Broadcasting Network (May 2008); Lisa Miller, "An Evangelical Identity Crisis," *Newsweek*, November 12, 2006. Albert Mohler has written multiple articles on this issue, including a response to the *Evangelical Manifesto*, which he declines to sign. See, e.g., Mohler, "The Evangelical Identity Crisis: It's Really about Integrity," March 16, 2004, http://www.albertmohler.com/2004/03/16/the-evangelical-identity-crisis-its-really-about-integrity/.

witness down through twenty centuries. Scholars and clerics alike are turning to the fathers for theological as well as homiletic refreshment and renewal. Both Catholics and Protestants have been producing multivolume works—directed at students, pastors, and laypersons—that seek to give access in an accurate English translation to the riches of patristic theology, hermeneutics, and homiletics.[4]

This movement is not limited to clerics and theologians but is also present among the laity. Several personal examples can serve as cases in point. Bonnie, a friend from an evangelical Southern Baptist church, is a mom, director of Awana, and freelance writer for a denominational publication. She became interested in Athanasius, Augustine, and other patristic theologians who set the doctrinal foundations of Christianity. She said that knowing the origins of her faith gave her grounding and confidence in the doctrines that have defined Christians and have endured these twenty centuries. She and about ten others joined me in a discipleship group in which we read and discussed Augustine's *Confessions*. Many of the participants were amazed at the similarities between the philosophical and spiritual issues of the fourth and twenty-first centuries. Another friend, Walker (not his real name), is a dad and works in information technology. He became interested in Athanasius's works. I was stunned (and pleased) when he approached me one day and told me he was reading Athanasius's *On the Incarnation*. When I asked him why, he replied that his interest stemmed from his personal

4. See *Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture*, ed. Thomas Oden (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1998–); *The Church's Bible*, ed. Robert L. Wilken (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003–); see also the review by R. R. Reno of *The Church's Bible* in *First Things*, April 23, 2009, www.firstthings.com/web-exclusives/2009/04/the-churchs-bible. These projects are ongoing. The effort to provide access to the riches of the patristic corpus in the twentieth century actually began among French scholars like the priest J. P. Migne, who started to produce critical editions of various patristic works (the Patrologia Latina and Patrologia Graeca series between 1844 and 1866). Protestants soon followed, identifying strongly with the church fathers, led by the Tractarians of the Oxford Movement, and later by church historian Philip Schaff, who encouraged Protestants to reclaim the patristic heritage as their own as well, and not simply to abrogate those centuries of (undivided) Christianity to adherents of the "Great Tradition." Between 1886 and 1900, he and other Protestant evangelical scholars aimed to "furnish ministers and intelligent laymen who have no access to the original texts" or are not familiar with Greek and Latin "with a complete apparatus for the study of ancient Christianity" in English (*NPNF*[1] 1:v, preface). Schaff passed away in 1893, before the entire series was completed in 1900. In the twentieth century, Catholic scholars and clergy initiated the (continuing) series of critical editions of the church fathers called Sources chrétiennes beginning in the 1940s. This emphasis on the church fathers was a natural outflow of the ideology of *ressourcement*, which flourished in Catholic theological thought between 1930 and 1960. For a good introduction and overview of the history of patristics as a field of study, see Elizabeth A. Clark, "From Patristics to Early Christian Studies" in *Oxford Handbook of Early Christian Studies*, ed. Susan Ashbrook Harvey and David G. Hunter (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 7–41.

background. He had suffered from an abusive father and drew comfort from the view of God's fatherhood presented by Athanasius. Yet another friend, Ricky, is a dad and chemical engineer for a pharmaceutical company. He maintains a strong interest in Christianity's doctrinal foundations and is especially intrigued by developments in trinitarian doctrine up to the Council of Nicaea (325) and beyond. By his own account, his interest stems from his evangelistic and apologetic activities. Ricky bears witness to Christ through thoughtful conversations with his work colleagues, and he has become convinced that the nature of truth is under attack in contemporary culture. Through discipleship training classes, he trained others in our church to engage the culture effectively by becoming firmly grounded in Christian doctrine, especially in Christology and the doctrine of the Trinity. In his teaching material on the Trinity, he even developed his own curriculum after conducting some scholarly research, incorporating not only biblical exegesis but also historical study of doctrinal development from the earliest years of the church. Ricky finds value in studying doctrinal and apologetic arguments proffered by earlier Christians because there is no need to reinvent the wheel, so to speak.

An Ancient-Contemporary Example

As Augustine's *Confessions* demonstrate, the psychological and even theological issues of the fourth century offer some unexpected parallels to those of our own era. On many occasions during our discipleship class on Augustine, participants commented, "He could be talking about today!" For example, the tenets of Manichaeanism—a religion in which Augustine was involved for almost a decade—have strong affinities with the New Age teachings of Oprah Winfrey's spiritual guru, Eckhart Tolle. Both deny the reality of personal sin and the necessity for Jesus's atoning, sacrificial death.[5] Both emphasize knowledge, self-realization, and self-actualization.[6] Mani, the founder of Manichae-

5. Cf. Augustine, *Confessions* 4.15, 5.10; and Eckhart Tolle, *A New Earth* (New York: Plume, 2005), 9.

6. These similarities should not surprise us, however, given the Buddhist underpinnings of each system. In *New Earth*, Tolle cites most often the examples of the Buddha and Jesus as ones who lived a fully conscious, awakened, and present life (2, 3, 6, 9, 13, and 14, in the introductory chapter alone). Keith Yandell explains that Mani "claimed a revelation from God and saw himself as a member of a line [of prophets] that included the Buddha, Zoroaster, and Jesus" ("Manichaeanism," in *The Cambridge Dictionary of Philosophy*, ed. Robert Audi [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995], 460). For Mani, the "object of the practice of religion was to release . . . particles of light . . . and . . . Jesus, Buddha, the Prophets and

anism, also adhered to a dualistic/Gnostic understanding of God and reality. For Mani and his followers, all reality consisted of conflicts between diametrical opposites: light versus darkness, matter versus spirit, body/flesh versus soul, and good versus evil. This dualism pervaded their thought system, extending even to their view of the body (and matter in general) as *hostile* to the soul or mind.[7] For his part, Tolle clearly praises Gnostic thought and its emphasis on "realization and inner transformation."[8] Tolle also posits some degree of dualism in his own spiritual thought, namely, between what he calls the "pain-body" (a somewhat unclear concept) and the consciousness. While the pain-body is associated with darkness and negativity, the consciousness is associated with light and life.[9]

Further, both Tolle and Mani mingled their teachings with Christian concepts. They spoke in biblical terms and infused (if not twisted completely) Jesus's words with their own interpretations, thereby seducing even Christians with their message.[10] Augustine provides an especially illuminating example of the eerie similarity between the tactics of the Manichaeans and Tolle and his contemporary followers:

Mani had been sent to help in this task" (F. L. Cross and E. A. Livingstone, eds., *The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church* [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997], 1027). Although Cross and Livingstone (ibid.) aver that these particles were "imprisoned in man's brain," they were actually "imprisoned in the fruit" eaten by the Manichaean elect. The release happened through gastronomical processes, as Augustine explains in *Confessions* 3.10 (trans. R. S. Pine-Coffin [London: Penguin, 1961], 67–68); and in *On the Morals of the Manichaeans* 15.36–16.53 (*NPNF*[1] 4:79–83).

7. Augustine, *Confessions* 4.15, 5.10–11, 7.1–2. Tolle hails Gnosticism as "an intensification of the light of the original teaching" of Christianity, that is, the *true* understanding of Christianity (*New Earth*, 16).

8. Tolle, *New Earth*, 16.

9. The pain-body seems to be "an energy field of pain," that is, a sort of self-existing entity that tries to take over a person, to become that person, and to live through him or her, generating more pain as it feeds off of negative and destructive thinking. He speaks of this pain-body in terms such as "negative," "suffer," "dark shadow" (as opposed to the "light of your consciousness"), "afraid," "negative energy field," and "anti-life" of unconsciousness as opposed to the "life" of consciousness (Tolle, "The Pain Body by Eckhart Tolle," http://www.detoxifynow.com/et_pain_body.html).

10. Tolle writes that "there is only one absolute truth. . . . The Truth is inseparable from who you are. Yes, you *are* the Truth. . . . The very being that you are is Truth. Jesus tried to convey that when he said, 'I am the Truth and the way and the life. . . . Jesus speaks of the innermost I Am, the essence identity of every man and woman, every life-form, in fact." And so Tolle offers the teaching that each person possesses an inner God, a Buddha nature or Atman, "the indwelling God" (*New Earth*, 71, emphasis original). See also James A. Beverley, "Nothing New: Popular spiritual author and Oprah favorite Eckhart Tolle quotes Jesus a lot. Is he a Christian?," *Christianity Today* 52, no. 8 (August 2008): 50. He states that although Tolle "quotes freely from Jesus, Buddha, and others," nonetheless "Jesus is the most quoted teacher in both of Tolle's books."

> [The Manichaeans] baited the traps [to reel in converts from Christianity] by confusing the syllables of the names of God the Father, God the Son our Lord Jesus Christ, and God the Holy Ghost, the Paraclete, who comforts us. These names were always on the tips of their tongues, but only as sounds which they mouthed aloud, for in their hearts they had no inkling of the truth. Yet, "Truth and truth alone" was the motto which they repeated to me again and again, although the truth was nowhere to be found in them.[11]

Tolle claims that throughout his life he has been influenced by the Bible, and he purports to impart a true understanding of the Scriptures through his teachings; he believes that currently most biblical teachings are misunderstood by Christians.[12]

The point of this extended comparison is to emphasize the value and even the critical necessity of looking back to the early church's works. As the contemporary church faces current theological and ideological challenges, it is both comforting and instructive to realize that many of these challenges have already been confronted and answered. By rebutting pseudo-Christian ideologies, Augustine and other church fathers helped clarify Christian theology and thus lent definition to Christianity: by combating Manichaeanism, for example, Augustine defined not only what Christians believed, but also what they specifically *did not* and *should not* believe.

Impediments to the Backward Glance

Doctrinal grounding (as in the example above), pastoral needs, evangelism, and apologetic engagement are all good reasons to look back at

11. Augustine, *Confessions* 3.6 (Pine-Coffin, 60). Mani claimed direct revelation from Jesus (among other figures), in addition to styling himself the Paraclete (*Confessions* 5.5).

12. In fact the very title of his book represents a distortion of biblical teaching (Old and New Testaments) regarding the "new heaven" and "new earth." He writes, "We need to understand here that heaven is not a location, but refers to the inner realm of consciousness. This is the esoteric meaning of the word, and this is also its meaning in the teachings of Jesus" (*New Earth*, 23). Having drawn all these comparisons, we must nevertheless acknowledge that an exact one-to-one correspondence between Manichaeanism and Tolle's New Age thinking is lacking. The pantheistic Tolle does not believe in God as an objective entity, let alone a Person, whereas Manichaeans did believe in God, although their understanding was that "God" consisted of two cosmic forces—one good, the other evil—battling one another. Further, the Christologies of these two belief systems are diametrically opposed: the Manichaeans held Jesus to be completely spiritual, without a physical body (that is, they denied the incarnation), a belief known as Docetism; Tolle believes that Jesus was merely human—nothing more than a great, enlightened teacher (like the Buddha), a spiritually awakened man who lived ahead of his time (cf. Augustine, *Confessions* 5.9–10; Tolle, *New Earth*, 6).

the church's history and to mine that history for resources and answers. But some of these reasons are what we might call "cerebral." They contribute to aspects of the life of the mind that are somewhat abstract, and they retrieve information used for theological and/or philosophical engagement or debate. There are also more concrete and practical reasons to look back. Contemporary spirituality, liturgy, and discipleship can all be enriched by turning to past Christians and examining their lives and writings. An interest in these topics might seek to discover how Christians prayed and worshiped, and how they defined and maintained their identity as Christians within their culture.[13]

In addition to these solid but somewhat utilitarian reasons for a backward glance, I also suggest that evangelicals encounter some deeper issues that contribute to historical myopia, as evidenced by many in the Free Church tradition who may reject or be oblivious to the rich and far-reaching historical tradition from which we emerged. Some Reformed-leaning evangelicals are familiar with Reformation ideals and theological commitments, but we must look also to the tradition extending even further back to the patristic and apostolic eras. In my experience, Free Church evangelicals often relinquish the history of the church between the apostles and Luther to so-called Great Tradition churches or mainline liturgical churches, when in fact there is no reason to think that early Christians are not our own forebears as well, and their contributions were clearly acknowledged as foundational by the Reformers themselves.[14] This very phenomenon impelled late nineteenth-century Protestant scholars to produce English translations of the fathers' works in the series *Ante-Nicene Fathers* and *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*.[15]

Although American evangelicals seem to prioritize a sense of community (coffee shops in churches, small-group/cell-group studies, the peppering of the American evangelical landscape with "community" churches), it nonetheless appears that a Christian understanding of "community" in a broader, global, and historical sense is impoverished

13. Robert Wilken, *Remembering the Christian Past* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995); Wilken, *The Christians as the Romans Saw Them* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1984).

14. For example, see Anthony S. Lane, *John Calvin, Student of the Church Fathers* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1999). Luther's works also demonstrate his conversance with and theological indebtedness to the fathers, as his treatises are liberally peppered with citations from them, and from Augustine above all.

15. *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, ed. Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson, 10 vols. (1885–87; repr., Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1994). A. Cleveland Coxe, in the preface, makes this point, although in doing so Coxe admittedly evinces an anti-Catholic sentiment (*ANF* 1:v). This series was originally edited in Edinburgh from 1866 to 1872. The subsequent, complementary series was edited by the incomparable Swiss-American church historian Philip Schaff (*Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, First Series [1886–89] and Second Series [coedited with Henry Wace [1890–1900]).

by at least three factors: certain denominational/theological commitments, declining biblical literacy in the broader culture as well as within the church, and an attitude toward history (e.g., the church's memory) as an impractical and therefore optional discipline.

First, certain denominational convictions sometimes detract from a full appreciation of the global nature of the body of Christ. One contributing factor may be the *individualistic* emphasis, which is both ecclesiologically and soteriologically apparent. On the first count, many Free Churches are committed to local church autonomy as their primary ecclesiastical model. A Reformation emphasis on each person's individual responsibility and accountability to Christ is theologically and biblically true, but it tends to reinforce a sense of individualism, where each believer has a primarily vertical spiritual relationship with Jesus. Just to be clear, I do favor the idea of local church autonomy, and it does seem that the idea of "local church" is the primary use of the term "church" in the New Testament. There are good historical reasons for adhering to the idea of local church autonomy, and an insistence on this ecclesiology guards against any secular or even denominational group outside the church imposing its will upon a congregation.

I also hold that every believer's *primary* salvation relationship is with Jesus and not through any additional mediator (1 Tim. 2:5). Nevertheless, it still seems that this kind of confessional language *inside* the church, coupled with the American ethos of rugged individualism that pervades our lives *outside* the church, discourages a broader or even global sense of community in which the members of the body are accountable to one another, suffer and rejoice with one another, and always look to use their gifts for the benefit of the other members. As a constructive example, the article on the church in the Baptist Faith and Message 2000 begins with local church autonomy, but then it moves to the idea of a global and historical church in its final line: "The New Testament speaks also of the church as the Body of Christ which includes all of the redeemed of all the ages, believers from every tribe, and tongue, and people, and nation."[16] This idea of the global and era-transcending nature of the church seems somewhat secondary, but it is still affirmed and was historically intended to guard against the sectarian views of Landmarkism.[17] More positively viewed, the

16. Baptist Faith and Message, Article VI, The Church (June 14, 2000), http://www.sbc.net/bfm2000/bfm2000.asp.

17. Landmarkism is a belief held by some Baptist groups who believe that "the NT model for the church is only the local and visible congregation, and that it violates NT principles to speak of a universal, spiritual church." Mark Noll, "Landmarkism," in *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, ed. Walter A. Elwell (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1984), 619.

statement shows that autonomy with regard to church government and ecumenicity with the faithful of the ages are not mutually exclusive.

I am advocating neither the rejecting of local church autonomy nor the jettisoning of personal and direct accountability before Christ as Lord, grounded as this concept is in the Reformation idea of the priesthood of every believer, and in the Bible itself. However, a more robust focus on the body of Christ as the "redeemed of all the ages" needs to be restored if evangelicals are to have a healthy understanding in both faith and practice of a horizontal (and historical) rather than primarily vertical concept of community. The author of Hebrews used the phrase "so great a cloud of witnesses" (12:1), which included the faithful of many generations going all the way back to the first human family (11:4). The writer believed that reminding the congregation of these powerful stories of faith shaped their perspective; as they experienced hardship themselves, they received encouragement from the faithful witness of their ancestors who proved victorious under adverse circumstances. The testimonies of Christians through the ages can speak powerfully to our own times as well.

A second factor detracting from a historical sense of community involves declining biblical literacy. If we are to believe the alarmist notes sounded throughout evangelicalism for some time now, the decline in biblical literacy in both culture and church bodes disastrously for the life of the church.[18] If biblical literacy is to improve, we must do a better job of teaching biblical terminology and concepts in universities and colleges.

A third factor detracting from a sense of community and historical continuity is the diminishing of the nature and value of history itself. History is perceived as something of a theoretical, impractical discipline, whose relevance is easily outstripped by the concerns of living and working in the world. When Harvard University proposed a curriculum overhaul in 2006, "the question of relevance" came to the fore as educators determined what classes could fulfill program requirements.[19] Students (and some professors) indicated a preference for a curriculum "more connected to life after college," making it possible that some students "could graduate without taking a history course."[20] History, it seems, is optional and not a core requirement, and some students could not articulate the contemporary relevance of ancient history and art history.

18. Stephen Prothero, *Religious Literacy: What Every American Needs to Know—and Doesn't* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 2007), 111.

19. Tovia Smith, "Harvard Reconsiders Core-Course Requirements," National Public Radio, December 8, 2006, http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=6597183.

20. Ibid.

Conventional and popular ideas of history tend to envision formal narratives, characterized by chronology, scientific objectivity, occasional pedantry, a dash of obscurity, and a good dose of deadening dullness. The literature produced between the first and fifth centuries of the church possesses none of these attributes. Even if history is devalued in the culture at large, it should not be so among Christians, who believe and understand the critical importance of a historical grounding for their faith and doctrine, especially as it is manifested in the apostolic preaching and the incarnation, the enfleshed union of God and humanity in time. In fact, the diminution of the value of history contributes directly to the second factor above: a recent (and urgent) emphasis within evangelicalism on restoring biblical literacy is going hand in hand with an emphasis on "metanarrative," that is, the "big picture," the story of God's dealings with his people throughout the Bible.[21] This academic interest has recently given way to denominational interest as well, as exemplified in the current LifeWay-produced Sunday school curriculum, *The Gospel Project*, advertised as a "Christ-centered curriculum that examines the grand narrative of Scripture."[22] The writers emphasize that the Bible is "not a collection of stories," but is "one story, . . . the story of redemption. . . . And it's our story too."[23] Put out by the Southern Baptist Convention, this curriculum is being adopted by other denominations as well, who perceive value in placing the church within the gospel narrative; for example, the Evangelical Free Church in America's Greg Strand connects the value of "the Bible's storyline" with "our identity as Christ's ambassadors."[24] The majority of the story of God's dealings with his people is in the Historical Books of the Old Testament; unfortunately these books seem to be neglected by evangelicals in favor of a focus on end-times prophecy or devotional literature. However, the bedrock of the metanarrative remains the Historical Books (as well as the narrative portions of the Pentateuch), which also provide all the background for the prophetic preaching in the Major and Minor Prophets, and for much of the Wisdom literature (Psalms of David and of the pre- and postexilic

21. See, e.g., Walter Kaiser, *Recovering the Unity of the Bible: One Continuous Story, Plan, and Purpose* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2015); Kaiser, *The Promise-Plan of God: A Biblical Theology of the Old and New Testaments* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2008); Gregory K. Beale, *A New Testament Biblical Theology: The Unfolding of the Old Testament in the New* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2011); Michael W. Goheen, *A Light to the Nations: The Missional Church and the Biblical Story* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2011); Christopher J. H. Wright, *The Mission of God: Unlocking the Bible's Grand Narrative* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2006).

22. See www.gospelproject.com.

23. Ibid.

24. See https://www.gospelproject.com/efca.

community, and Proverbs and Song of Songs, which are attributed to Solomon). Without a grasp of the events in the Historical Books of Joshua, Judges, Ruth, 1 and 2 Samuel, 1 and 2 Kings, 1 and 2 Chronicles, Ezra, Nehemiah, and Esther, much of the significance of the Prophets is lost, including prophetic oracles about the Messiah. With respect to the Old Testament, Jesus said that he had come to fulfill the law, not to do away with it, and neither should we ignore the Old Testament since it speaks about him (Luke 24).

Despite these three negative factors, there is a segment of evangelicals who are taking a decided look at the era of the church fathers, and as they do look back to the church of earlier times, certain questions arise: Did the early Christians look back to their own history? For what reasons did they do so? Was their past important to them? Did they seek their place in the grand narrative of God's redemptive plan, both for their own times and for the ages? What was their concept of history, and how did that relate to their understanding of God's historical narrative? The first church historian, Luke, is the traditionally acknowledged author of the Gospel of Luke and the Acts of the Apostles. His historical work, Acts, spans the period from Jesus's earthly departure (ascension) up to Paul's first residence (imprisonment) in Rome. After Luke, the church father chiefly credited with composing the first official history of the church was Eusebius of Caesarea (ca. 263–339). If Luke wrote a history of the church in the first half of the first century, and Eusebius wrote in the early fourth century, the intervening 250 or so years of historiographical silence seem indicative of early Christians' lack of interest in their own history.[25] Can this be true? Did the past hold such little value for them?

Some scholars believe that there indeed was such disinterest. For almost two centuries, beginning in the early nineteenth century, New Testament historical-critical scholars almost completely failed to recognize the church's interest in its own history. The nature of this bias took various forms, including a theological agenda that was virtually divorced from historical contexts. One resultant idea in Christology, for example, was the disparity between the "Jesus of history and the Christ of faith," a phrase coined by Martin Kähler in 1892. This phrase described a bifurcated understanding of Christology in which Jesus the Jew in a historical first-century Semitic context had little or no relationship to the Christ in whom the church confessed its faith.

A closer look at patristic-era documents yields a somewhat more encouraging picture. Although a formal historical treatise on the church's history awaited the hand of Eusebius, historical material

25. R. L. P. Milburn, *Early Christian Interpretations of History* (London: Black, 1954), 25–26.

is not lacking. In fact, it seems that "prior to the fourth century, Christian writers referred to past events, but they did not produce linear, harmonious, pointed historical narrative."[26] What we do find requires different questions. How did early Christians' interest in their own past emerge? What form(s) did it take? Did their recollections stem from particular situations or needs? What events precipitated the written historical forms that have reached us? It is through these historical forms, these documents, that early Christians' lives are allowed to touch ours, essentially allowing the past to reach into the present and affect the church, so that it progresses into the future with a clear identity. Indeed, this goal of identity building is of the essence of "good historical writing," according to Rowan Williams.[27] This kind of writing "constructs that sense of who we are by a real engagement with the strangeness of the past, that establishes my or our identity now with a whole range of things . . . which have to be recognised . . . as both different from us and part of us."[28] While not many of the church fathers were historians per se, a number of them did write a kind of history, depending upon their purposes: apologetic, spiritual and devotional, or doctrinal. What we find, then, are *historical forms* of literature that all demonstrated a particular interest in recording events in the life of the Christian community, and this material was then shaped around a certain rhetorical, ethical, or theological goal.

The concept of collective or corporate memory is helpful as a framework for the discussions undertaken here. To produce a succinct definition of "collective memory" is no easy task, but Elizabeth Castelli's work on this subject is helpful.[29] Collective memory is sometimes called social or corporate memory, and it is actually a fruitful framework for "understanding the work that the past does in the present."[30] Within a community or "collective context," its memory or particular version of the past performs a preserving function, which "emphasizes continuity between the past and the present, establishing an attachment or bond across time."[31] In essence, Castelli writes, "collective memory does the work of 'tradition,' . . . (rendering) past experience meaningful in and

26. Jacob Neusner, "The Birth of History in Christianity and Judaism," in *The Christian and Judaic Invention of History*, ed. Jacob Neusner, AARSR 55 (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1990), 5.

27. Rowan Williams, *Why Study the Past? The Quest for the Historical Church* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005), 23.

28. Ibid., 24.

29. Elizabeth Castelli, "Collective Memory and the Meanings of the Past," in *Martyrdom and Memory: Early Christian Culture Making* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004), 10–32.

30. Ibid., 9.

31. Ibid., 12.

for present contexts."[32] Collective memory fashions a usable past for later readers, helping them make sense of their present. "Although the relevant modern terms—'collective,' 'social,' 'cultural' memory—are not found in the ancient sources," she continues, "the concern for the preservation of Christian memory is at the heart of early Christian culture."[33] The restoration of collective memory thus poses a positive challenge for Free Church evangelicals, since a retrieval of the past holds powerful promise for bolstering evangelical identity in the present.

The Scope of This Work

Part of the task of this book is to contribute to the establishment and strengthening of a "bond across time." My intent is to focus on historical writing by the Christian community of the first five centuries. In doing so, I delve into early Christian ideas of history and historical writing (historiography), the reasons for undertaking such historical works, and the value of those narratives for the developing Christian communities of the patristic era. By examining four historical forms, I demonstrate that the nature of early Christians' understanding of community was horizontal and corporate in nature, rather than purely vertical and individualistic. Christians' ideas of history and their reasons for recording historical events clearly demonstrate that the early church thought of itself in terms of a corporate memory stretching back to Jesus and the apostles, and including other disciples in the intervening years up to its own time. Their historical accounts also demonstrate how the church viewed itself vis-à-vis its social and religious environs at various stages of its historical and doctrinal development.

I also emphasize that there exists *continuity* between early Christian writers and biblical writers in their understanding of the nature and functions of historical narrative. The Old Testament historians as well as the apostles acknowledged history as the vehicle of God's providential deeds and God's prophetic message; for them, history was a way of understanding God's will and nature. Both groups also held that God was sovereign over history, guiding it in a distinct direction toward a certain goal, or telos, in the future: the eventual establishment of God's eternal kingdom in the world, reflecting the reality of his current reign in heaven. This idea clearly emerges in the Lord's Prayer given to the disciples by Jesus himself ("Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven" [Matt. 6:10]), and documents indicate that

32. Ibid.
33. Ibid., 24.

it was a sentiment widely shared by the martyrs of the second- and third-century church, by the fourth-century historian Eusebius as he wrote about the reign of the first Christian emperor, and by the fifth-century Augustine as he penned his massive historical apology, *The City of God*, and longed for God's reign, although not necessarily on earth. History can show how God has worked in past ages and how he still works in the present. God's nature as consistently sovereign ("not at the mercy of historical chance and change"),[34] good, and reliable also emerges. "Thus," continues Williams, "relation to God can be the foundation of a human community unrestricted by time or space, by language or cultural difference."[35]

There is also continuity in historiographical method, in that the church fathers fused the biblical view of history, as reflected in the tradition of the Deuteronomistic Historian and the Chronicler, with the classical methods bequeathed to them by the culture in which they were educated. So in addition to teaching theological truths through narrative, both biblical and patristic historians proffered lessons and models for Christian living. In these ways, historical works make an ongoing and valuable contribution to discipleship. I therefore encourage readers to broaden their understanding of history, memory, and community to include "the redeemed of all the ages,"[36] or as the Apostles' Creed says, "the communion of the saints," thereby recovering a corporate memory to replace the individualistic and almost exclusively vertical understanding of community toward which the Free Church often tends. Corporate memory is valuable precisely because it spells out the uniqueness of Christian salvation. Believers identify not only with Jesus in his relationship to the Father and Holy Spirit—a trinitarian community—but also with other believers across a vast expanse of time and space, all of whom belong to "one network of relations. . . . Historical understanding is not a luxury in such a context."[37]

This volume will first introduce readers to the concept of historical writing in antiquity, its nature and purposes, its importance in the world of the early church, and its contribution to the church's self-understanding (chap. 2). An examination of four related historical forms is then undertaken—roughly in the order in which they arose—followed by individual chapters specifically focused on each form. First examined is *historical apologetic* (chap. 3), which appears early in the book of Acts in the apostolic preaching, as the church found itself unwelcome in Jewish

34. Williams, *Why Study the Past?*, 10.

35. Ibid.

36. A phrase from the Baptist Faith and Message (2000), available at http://www.sbc.net/bfm2000/bfm2000.asp.

37. Williams, *Why Study the Past?*, 29.

society and later encountered increased hostility in the broader pagan society as well. Historical apologetic helped Christians to understand themselves as an ancient nation with a unifying faith. This chapter draws chiefly from Christian apologetic material of the second to fifth centuries, and specific authors such as Justin Martyr, Theophilus of Antioch, Tertullian of Carthage, and Augustine of Hippo. As we shall see, apologetic was not limited to the early centuries when Christianity was repressed by violence and punished as a capital crime. Apologetic defense continued to be composed whenever Christians were threatened or accused by outsiders, and it existed even into the later centuries.

Following on the heels of historical apologetic is *heresiology*, which in some way is the other side of the coin, so to speak, and will be subsumed under apologetic. The hostile culture was not the only foe Christian teachers and pastors faced: false doctrine *within* the church had to be combated as well. Although it tended to overlap with other forms, I consider how some of the church fathers (who simultaneously composed apologetic, theological, and antiheretical works) fought to debunk false teachings by using several kinds of historical arguments. Heresiology refers to the process of tracing a heretical notion through its various proponents over time and back to its original source. The historical elements involved here have to do with (on the negative side of things) evaluating the theological and moral integrity of the prime teacher of a heresy (heresiarch) as well as of those who followed him or her, and also deal with (on the positive side) the Christian method of proving the orthodoxy of the church's established teaching via the integrity of teachers in an unbroken line of transmission from its prime teacher, Jesus, through the apostles and the bishops and teachers that followed. This transmission is known as "apostolic succession" and is still followed by those in the Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox communions to define correct doctrine over against false doctrine. The most notable example is the pope, who represents the chief teacher in the Roman Catholic Church, purportedly standing faithfully in the doctrinal tradition of Jesus and the apostles, specifically Peter.

To say that heresiology aimed to prove that immoral and misguided teachers bred and transmitted false doctrine, while faithful and virtuous teachers produced correct doctrine, is putting the situation rather nicely. Heresiology was nothing if not strongly polemical, and even orthodox teachers (some of whom we now refer to as saints) could prove virulent protagonists: more often than not, they alleged that the prime teacher of heresiarchs was the devil! Writers adduced in this chapter include Irenaeus of Lyons against the Gnostics, and two other writers who largely followed his methodology and adapted his ideas during the next three centuries: Hippolytus of Rome and Tertullian

of Carthage. Heresiology continued to be written into the next several centuries, and many other examples could be offered, such as Theodoret, who also posited a "heretical succession" (from which he distanced himself) parallel to the apostolic succession (with which he associated himself). However, these representative examples suffice to illustrate the method of tracing a heresy's genealogy. Broadly speaking, apologetic engagement with the surrounding culture helped Christians define themselves historically as a noble people of ancient foundations and high ethical commitments leading to proper worship, while a genealogical treatment of heresies within the church helped Christians identify doctrinal boundaries among themselves. That is, the church fathers helped to define the boundaries of orthodoxy by showing its origins to be doctrinally legitimate, while heresies stemmed from illegitimate and false teachers.

After apologetics follow two chapters on the form of *hagiography*, which address issues of discipleship. Here two questions arise: What does a disciple look like in a church under siege (chap. 4)? What does a disciple look like in a church favored by the ruling power in the land (chap. 5)? Under the first scenario (before 312–13), we see martyrs becoming saints, while in the second scenario (after the so-called Peace of the Church), it seems that the saints desired to become martyrs. These chapters draw upon the *acta* (deeds/court proceedings) of the martyrs, as well as devotional or spiritual works (*vitae*, or lives/biographies) authored by Christians in more peaceful times, which look back to the tumultuous era of the martyrs. The crucible of persecution shaped Christians' consciousness and self-identity, and the formation and consolidation of this identity as primarily *Christian*—above any other loyalty of family, class, ethnicity, or political obligation—proved costly. The value of recording these accounts clearly emerges as later accounts referenced earlier ones, and many accounts of the vicissitudes of persecuted Christians were eventually incorporated into Christian worship as feast days (or anniversaries) of the martyrs, many of whom became inspirational role models for Christian devotional life and practice. While chapter 4 focuses on the martyrs, chapter 5 focuses on three specific lives under peacetime conditions: Antony, whose fourth-century biography was a best seller authored (or redacted) by Athanasius;[38] Macrina, the eldest sister in the illustrious Cappadocian family that included Basil of Caesarea and Gregory of Nyssa; and Melania the Younger, a celebrated fifth-century laywoman who funneled her massive wealth into various ecclesiastical and monastic projects. Each of these accounts demonstrates the desire of Chris-

38. Although it is true that Antony was born well before the Constantinian revolution.

tians to practice self-denial in ways that approximated the martyrs' sacrificial discipleship.

The fourth historical form is *ecclesiastical (church) history* (chap. 6). Here Eusebius's *Church History* is especially important, where he recounted the founding and establishment of the church by Jesus and the disciples, then continued the narrative down to his own time. Eusebius's continuators will also receive attention as they carried his historiographical legacy forward. The histories of Socrates Scholasticus, Sozomen, and Theodoret all emphasize the providential guidance of events by the God of history, whose will and rule are inexorable in the face of evil forces. Their works are recognizable as histories that are characteristically Christian in their emphases and interpretation of causes. As we shall see, the bishop-historians (Eusebius and Theodoret) more heavily emphasized the providential intervention of God in human affairs and distinctly appropriated the legacy of the apologetic tradition in attributing negative causation to the devil. The resultant works were simultaneously historical, theological, and apologetic, while the nonclerical historians Socrates Scholasticus and Sozomen kept to the classical models, emphasizing the importance of peace in a unified empire, which denoted a praiseworthy ruler. These historical accounts are critical for preserving Christian memory as the continuing narrative of God's dealings with believers, as well as highlighting the heroic struggles of bishops and teachers, who sought to consolidate and preserve sound doctrine and work for peace within the church.

Let us now travel further back into ancient history, to the era of the Greek wars, when the discipline of historical writing was forged. This foray is necessary to understand classical models and concepts of history with which later Christian writers were familiar, and which they would appropriate and adapt for their own works.