

Jones, Timothy Paul

Christian History Made Easy Participant Guide

17. Session 11: Ageless Faith in an Age of Reason (AD 1800–1900)

This chapter surveys how Christians answered the Enlightenment, which put science and reason above faith and pushed religion into a private, personal corner. It lays out five different responses to this new secular world—from missions to revivals to Catholic and liberal reactions—and closes with the five 'fundamentals' the church rallied around.

Key takeaways

- The Enlightenment ('Age of Reason') made faith a private matter, forcing Christians to show why the gospel is needed by everyone. Pearcy's 'two-storied house' pictures this split: public facts downstairs, private faith upstairs.
- Modern missions: William Carey launched the movement in 1792 ('Expect great things from God! Attempt great things for God!'), persevering through tragedy. Within a century of his death, Christians outside Europe and the Americas grew at least 1,000%.
- Revivalism spread the gospel through mass preaching—Cane Ridge, Charles Finney's 'philosophical' methods, D.L. Moody's crusades, and Charles Spurgeon's simple gospel focus.

- Theological liberalism: Friedrich Schleiermacher, the 'father of Protestant liberalism,' kept Christianity by downplaying doctrine (virgin birth, resurrection, deity) and elevating an inner awareness of God, treating Jesus as the supreme example of that feeling.
- Reform movements grew from Christian conviction: Sunday School (Robert Raikes), temperance, and abolition.
- Resistance: the First Vatican Council (1869) declared the pope infallible when defining doctrine, calling anyone who rejects it 'anathema'—a barrier to dialogue with Protestants and the Orthodox.
- The Niagara Bible Conference (1895) named five fundamentals: inerrancy of Scripture, deity of Christ, virgin conception, substitutionary atonement, and bodily resurrection.

Passages worth keeping

| *“Expect great things from God! Attempt great things for God!”*

Carey's motto—the missionary conviction that fueled the modern missions movement.

How it connects

The chapter's core tension—faith pushed into the private sphere—is exactly why the missions, revival, and 'fundamentals' movements insisted the gospel is public truth for all people, not just a personal preference.

Scripture referenced

- **Ephesians 2:10** -- God prepares works for us—cited to encourage attempting great things for God
- **Acts 17:22-34** -- Paul in Athens—held up against Schleiermacher's view of Jesus
- **Romans 12:1-2** -- offering ourselves as a living sacrifice—full consecration, tied to Moody
- **John 15:4-5** -- abiding in Christ—theme of Spurgeon's dependence on the Spirit
- **Romans 10:15-17** -- faithful proclamation as God's means of revival