**Round Top Church Christian Fellowship**

**Sermon**

***Ekklesia Series***

***God Never Stops***

 **April 28th, In the Year of Our Lord 2019**

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**(Unless otherwise noted, NAS text is quoted)**

**12 "I will surely assemble all of you, Jacob, I will surely gather the remnant of Israel. I will put them together like sheep in the fold; Like a flock in the midst of its pasture They will be noisy with men.**

 **13 "The breaker goes up before them; They break out, pass through the gate and go out by it. So their king goes on before them, And the LORD at their head." (Micah 2:12-13 NAU)**

 What brought the Western world out of the Dark Ages/Middle Ages?

1. God always has a **Spirit-remnant** in the world. Remember, the Ekklesia/Believer’s Church is not made of brick and mortar nor ecclesiastical temporal structures/creeds.
2. The eventual **collapse of the State Church legitimacy**. This is evident in the era of the three Popes.
3. The Crusade’s silver lining was when Greek writings from antiquity were found and brought back to European scholars. This includes New Testament manuscripts.
4. **Nationalistic physical and cultural boundaries**. Germans, Italian, Frenchmen, Englishmen, Poles all had disagreements with each other.
5. **Exploration** brought back new awareness of other cultures and opened thought and brought back new products to Europeans. This is realized with the trade travels of Marco Polo who lived between 1254 - 1324 A.D. For Europeans, the Age of Exploration spanned from early 1400’s to early 1700. Ships eventually sailed around the world.
6. **Influence of the Sciences**:

Nicolaus Copernicus (who was born Feb. 19, 1473 and died May 24, 1543) was a Renaissance-era mathematician and astronomer who dared to put forth the idea that the Sun was the center of our planetary system and not the earth. This along with the end of the ‘flat earth’ idea freed global shipping which opened the rest of the world to Europe. Therefore, the age of Renaissance, and later the age of Enlightenment, brought new structures to people.

The State Church had encompassed all of life including the sciences. No doubt, there needed to be progression away from theocratic investigations into nature and our being.

The Renaissance is a period in European history spanning from the 14th to the 17th centuries, marking the transition from the Dark Ages to a culture that was less centered on the State Church and its teachings of not only theology but how the world worked.

 Due to the failings of the State Church, many started looking for another foundation into which society could base its moral moorings. Unfortunately, since the State Church and its Latin Vulgate Bible failed, Europeans turned inward to themselves to men’s intellect as evidenced in time.

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For centuries the State Church, in cooperation with heads of States, did not allow the general population to possess the Bible. So, the average person did not read the Bible, and there was little influence on actual day-to-day life based on a biblical worldview. Man was left to devise his own thoughts. The State Church had mandated formulas through Papal edicts and Church Counsel creeds to structure life. Once their legitimacy was tattered, a void was created.

Humanism is a term that points to the idea that man is the center of all things. This stemmed in part from Greek philosophy that was discovered in writings brought back during the Crusades. Eventually, these ideas spread from southern Europe to the rest of the continent. Again, the spiritual vacuum left by the failing of the State Church was filled by man.

The Renaissance, a “rebirth” of man, eventually led to the Age of Enlightenment which is the full-frontal assault on the State Church and its God. God was viewed as a product of the State Church. To the common man, God was inaccessible. Only through the structures and offices of the State Church could the individual have any access to God. There wasn’t any personal connection to God. There was only God’s representatives that had to be pleased. The individual didn’t have any rights to God directly.

Due to the centuries of abuse from the State Church, it was not a stretch for the culture to come to the position of totally denying God’s existence and therefore the removal of God’s message to people. In reality, there was little to no access to God’s Word for the common person during the Dark Ages.

We are still in this period that broke away from the State Church. In that, the ideas and effects are being carried-out now. Scholars who keep track of such things say we are in the “Post Modern” world. We may be technologically advanced, but we are living with the philosophies of life from the Age of Enlightenment, the Age of Reason.

Mankind, the individual, from a European-Western perspective, was free from the State-Church. New Documents were produced. Early on, a precursor, and leading the way was:

**The Magna Carta** Libertatum (Medieval Latin for "the Great Charter of the Liberties"), commonly called Magna Carta (also Magna Charta; "Great Charter"), is a charter of rights agreed to by King John of England at Runnymede, near Windsor, on 15 June 1215.

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Magna_Carta>

There was much work to be accomplished regarding individual rights. However, the Magna Carta signaled a change in the historic winds of freedom.

Bouncing forward in history, we see the product of a long history for the struggle for the individual person against the old State-Church authority come full swing **in America with the U.S. Constitution Bill of Rights (1789)** prohibiting the government the establishment of a Theocracy and thus forbidding rule by creeds and church-men. At about the same time, the French followed suit.

**The Declaration of the Rights of Man** and of the Citizen (French: Déclaration des droits de l'homme et du citoyen de 1789), set by France's National Constituent Assembly in 1789, is a human civil rights document from the French Revolution.

The Declaration was drafted by the Abbé Sieyès and the Marquis de Lafayette, in consultation with Thomas Jefferson. Influenced by the doctrine of "natural right", the rights of man are held to be universal: valid at all times and in every place, pertaining to human nature itself. It became the basis for a nation of free individuals protected equally by the law. It is included in the beginning of the constitutions of both the Fourth French Republic (1946) and Fifth Republic (1958) and is still current. Inspired by the Enlightenment philosophers, the Declaration was a core statement of the values of the French Revolution and had a major impact on the development of freedom and democracy in Europe and worldwide.

The 1789 Declaration, together with the 1215 Magna Carta, the 1689 English Bill of Rights, the 1776 United States Declaration of Independence, and the 1789 United States Bill of Rights, inspired in large part the 1948 United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Declaration\_of\_the\_Rights\_of\_Man\_and\_of\_the\_Citizen

 In a nut-shell, as far as the intellectuals and many statesmen of Europe, by the time of the American and French freedom documents were ratified, the idea was growing that if God existed He only existed as a Creator who is now sitting back and watching but not interacting, to a belief that God does not exist and was a fabrication of the State Church used to rule oppressively. The latter view of “atheism” had taken hold in the growing scientific community. Take note that it was in the minds and hearts of the scholars of the day that led the way away from God as the Creator and planner for man. It should be kept in mind that experiencing centuries of life through the spiritual and physical inquisitions of the State Church, thinking people sought explanations of and purpose for living elsewhere. Thus, two plagues were unleashed upon the world. Darwinism (Evolution) and Communism. Both espoused God is dead.

On The Origin of the Species 1859 Charles Darwin

The Descent of Man 1871 Charles Darwin

Communist Manifesto 1848 Karl Marx and Fredrick Engels

Das Kapital 1867 Karl Marx

In time, these plagues cost tens of millions of people their lives. Even though slavery is an ancient institution, it is the writings of Darwin that gave justification to prejudices towards Black people, Africans and all non-white people. By the time the Civil War had started, the prevailing view of American politicians on both sides of the Mason-Dixon line was that Blacks were inferior. Abraham Lincoln was intent to preserve the Union and at the same time remove Black people from American soil. Lincoln saw Blacks as people guaranteed the same rights under the U.S. Constitution. However, he viewed them as inferior on the evolutionary scale. He was not alone in his views. This was the leading view of the day, substantiated by Darwin, was that Blacks were a few genes away from being monkeys. Lincoln developed a plan to transport over four million Blacks to Central America. Again, Lincoln, representing the vast majority of the White ruling class, believed that Blacks were to be separated from White culture. To demonstrate this prevailing view in the era, we can turn to the ruling of the U.S. Supreme Court in 1896 in Plessy verses Ferguson with the high court declaring that states could have separate but equal accommodations for Black people. The Age of Segregation after the Civil War had officially been declared by the North, the side that won the Civil War to free the slaves.

 Darwin’s writing gave the **Nazi party** justification to separate minorities from the White German population. It was not only the Jews sent to the death camps but all minorities that did not fit into parameters of the Master Race.

 **Planned Parenthood** spawned from Eugenics organizations after the civil war. These clinics were planted in minority areas as they are today. Abortion’s main goal is the keep the Black population low along with all minorities. See web site Maafa 21. I also have DVD of their account. The DVD is also on their web site that you can down load. <https://www.maafa21.com/> details the history of the Eugenics movement after the Civil war. Darwin’s writings are the basis of their reasoning and belief.

 **Published in 1844, Karl Marx, the author of the** **Communist** Manifesto stated that “The foundation of irreligious criticism is: Man makes religion, religion does not make man. Religion is, indeed, the self-consciousness and self-esteem of man who has either not yet won through to himself, or has already lost himself again. But man is no abstract being squatting outside the world. Man is the world of man – state, society. This state and this society produce religion, which is an inverted consciousness of the world, because they are an inverted world. Religion is the general theory of this world, its encyclopedic compendium, its logic in popular form, its spiritual point d’honneur, its enthusiasm, its moral sanction, its solemn complement, and its universal basis of consolation and justification. It is the fantastic realization of the human essence since the human essence has not acquired any true reality. The struggle against religion is, therefore, indirectly the struggle against that world whose spiritual aroma is religion.”

Religious suffering is, at one and the same time, the expression of real suffering and a protest against real suffering. Religion is the sigh of the oppressed creature, the heart of a heartless world, and the soul of soulless conditions. **It is the opium of the people.** https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Opium\_of\_the\_people

 Since Darwin, a growing religion called Scientism has taken hold of many in the scientific community. Science in its pure form is to be objective and let the observation and recordable facts unveil best known solutions and answers. But those in the field of Science who totally discount all other views than Darwinian are fanatically blind. The end result of Darwin and those that came after him, pursing his ideas, sold-out to his ideas is that God is dead. Man is left to lay his own principles of morality of what is right and wrong, what is good and bad. Again, these want to be there own god.

 Harkening back to the 1300’s, some State Church scholars leaned to God more than their overlords. Example being Wycliffe in England who published a New Testament in 1382 without the authority of his superiors.

One very notable man, Jan Hus was a Czech theologian, philosopher, master, dean, and rector of the Charles University in Prague who became a church reformer, an inspirer of Hussitism, a key predecessor to Protestantism and a seminal figure in the Bohemian Reformation.

After John Wycliffe, the theorist of ecclesiastical reform, Hus is considered the first church reformer, as he lived before Luther, Calvin, and Zwingli. His teachings had a strong influence on the states of Western Europe, most immediately in the approval of a reformed Bohemian religious denomination, and, more than a century later, on Martin Luther himself. Hus was burned at the stake for heresy against the doctrines of the Catholic Church, including those on ecclesiology (Assembly of the Word), the Eucharist, and other theological topics. Hus refuted that a person’s relationship with Jesus was through the State Church (Roman Catholic).

After Hus was executed in 1415, the followers of his religious teachings (known as Hussites) rebelled against their Catholic rulers and defeated five consecutive papal crusades between 1420 and 1431 in what became known as the Hussite Wars.[5] Both the Bohemian and the Moravian populations remained majority Hussite until the 1620s, when a Protestant defeat in the Battle of the White Mountain resulted in the Lands of the Bohemian Crown coming under Habsburg dominion for the next 300 years and being subject to immediate and forced conversion in an intense campaign of return to Catholicism. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jan\_Hus

**So,** what did all of these influences achieve for the advancement of God’s Church? “The Church of Spirit.” No man can prevent the Spirit of God from moving forward. Remember, Jesus stated clearly that He came to baptize with fire and Spirit. Thus, the Church moves forward by individual Believers who have the living God, the Christ in their hearts.

**Acts 1:5** for John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit in a few days."

**Act 11:16** I remembered the word of the Lord, how he said, John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit.

**Matthew 3:11-13**  11 "As for me, I baptize you with water for repentance, but He who is coming after me is mightier than I, and I am not fit to remove His sandals; He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. 12 "His winnowing fork is in His hand, and He will thoroughly clear His threshing floor; and He will gather His wheat into the barn, but He will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire." 13 Then Jesus arrived from Galilee at the Jordan coming to John, to be baptized by him.

**Luke 3:16** John answered them all, "I baptize you with water, but one who is more powerful than I am is coming. I am not worthy to untie the strap of his sandals. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire.

With God’s Spirit working inside the hearts of people, the Reformation was going to happen. We have observed earlier that there were many Believers outside the State Church as well as inside the State Church. Here is a list of a few known groups that were not part of the State Church through the Dark Ages.

 **Arnoldists** were a pre-Protestant Christian movement in the 12th century, named after Arnold of Brescia who criticized the great wealth and possessions of the Roman Catholic Church, and preached against baptism and the Eucharist[citation needed]. His disciples were also called "Publicans" or "Poplecans", a name probably deriving from Paulicians. The Arnoldists were condemned as heretics by Pope Lucius III in the Ad abolendam during the Synod of Verona in 1184.

Their tenets would later be addressed by Bonacursus of Milan, about 1190, in his Manifestatio haeresis Catharorum, which refuted Arnoldist evangelical poverty and the incapacity of sinful priests to administer the sacraments. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Arnoldists

**The Petrobrussians** numbered their hundreds of thousands. In the Middle Ages, they were a great and shining light. Historians agree that the Petrobrussians appeared in the South of France about 1104. Of their great leader — Peter de Bruys — Kurtz says: “He rejected the outward or visible church, and only acknowledged the true, invisible church in the hearts of believers. In his opinion all churches and sanctuaries should be destroyed, since God might be worshipped in a stable or tavern. He used crucifixes for cooking purposes; inveighed against celibacy, the mass and infant baptism; and after twenty years of continued disturbance ended his days at the stake by the hands of an infuriated mob in 1124. He was succeeded by one of his associates, Henry of Lausanne, formerly a monk of the order of Clugny. Under him the sect of the Petrobrussians greatly increased in numbers.”

<http://sglblibrary.homestead.com/files/jarrel/jarrelchapter14.htm>

**Waldenses,** members of a Christian movement that originated in 12th-century France, the devotees of which sought to follow Christ in poverty and simplicity. The movement is sometimes viewed as an early forerunner of the Reformation for its rejection of various Catholic tenets. The founder’s name was Valdes (also called Peter Waldo, or Valdo). As a layman, Valdes preached (1170–76) in Lyon, France,

The Waldenses departed from the teaching of the Roman Catholic Church by rejecting some of the seven sacraments. The confession of sins was guided by their leaders but did not require a priest; they rejected the use of indulgences. Baptism was to be by full immersion in water and was not administered to infants. Eventually, the elements of the Eucharist (bread and wine) were understood as symbols only, and the Waldenses denied the doctrine of transubstantiation. They also rejected the notion of purgatory and of prayers offered for the dead. Their views were based on a simplified biblicism, moral rigour, and criticism of abuses in the contemporary church. They accepted the Bible as the sole, total authority of all doctrine. Additionally, a formal church building was not viewed as necessary to worship God, and thus many Waldenses held services in their homes, stables, or other locations.

<https://www.britannica.com/topic/Waldenses>

**Albigenses**, also called Albigensians, the heretics—especially the Catharist heretics—of 12th–13th-century southern France. (See Cathari.) The name, apparently given to them at the end of the 12th century, is hardly exact, for the movement centred at Toulouse and in nearby districts rather than at Albi (ancient Albiga). The heresy, which had penetrated into these regions probably by trade routes, came originally from eastern Europe.

It is exceedingly difficult to form any very precise idea of the Albigensian doctrines because present knowledge of them is derived from their opponents and from the very rare and uninformative Albigensian texts which have come down to us. What is certain is that, above all, they formed an antisacerdotal party in permanent opposition to the Roman church and raised a continued protest against the corruption of the clergy of their time. The Albigensian theologians and ascetics, known in the south of France as bons hommes or bons chrétiens, were always few in number. The first Catharist heretics appeared in Limousin between 1012 and 1020. <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Albigenses>

**Montanism** /ˈmɒntəˌnɪzəm/, known by its adherents as the New Prophecy, was an early Christian movement of the late 2nd century, later referred to by the name of its founder, Montanus /mɒnˈteɪnəs/.

Montanism held similar views about the basic tenets of Christian doctrine to those of the wider Christian Church, but it was labelled a heresy for its belief in new prophetic revelations. The prophetic movement called for a reliance on the spontaneity of the Holy Spirit and a more conservative personal ethic. Parallels have been drawn between Montanism and modern-day movements such as Pentecostalism and the charismatic movement.

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Montanism>

**Anabaptism** (from Neo-Latin anabaptista, from the Greek ἀναβαπτισμός: ἀνά- "re-" and βαπτισμός "baptism", German: Täufer, earlier also Wiedertäufer[a]) is a Christian movement which traces its origins to the Radical Reformation. The movement is generally seen as an offshoot of Protestantism, although this view has been challenged by some Anabaptists.

Approximately 4 million Anabaptists live in the world today with adherents scattered across all inhabited continents. In addition to a number of minor Anabaptist groups, the most numerous include the Mennonites at 2.1 million, the German Baptists at 1.5 million, the Amish at 300,000 and the Hutterites at 50,000.

In the 21st century there are large cultural differences between assimilated Anabaptists, who do not differ much from evangelicals or mainline Protestants, and traditional groups like the Amish, the Old Colony Mennonites, the Old Order Mennonites, the Hutterites and the Old German Baptist Brethren.

The early Anabaptists formulated their beliefs in the Schleitheim Confession, in 1527. Anabaptists believe that baptism is valid only when the candidate confesses his or her faith in Christ and wants to be baptized. This believer's baptism is opposed to baptism of infants, who are not able to make a conscious decision to be baptized. Anabaptists are those who are in a traditional line with the early Anabaptists of the 16th century. Other Christian groups with different roots also practice believer's baptism, such as Baptists, but these groups are not seen as Anabaptist. The Amish, Hutterites, and Mennonites are direct descendants of the early Anabaptist movement. Schwarzenau Brethren, Bruderhof, and the Apostolic Christian Church are considered later developments among the Anabaptists.

The name Anabaptist means "one who baptizes again". Their persecutors named them this, referring to the practice of baptizing persons when they converted or declared their faith in Christ, even if they had been baptized as infants. Anabaptists required that baptismal candidates be able to make a confession of faith that is freely chosen and so rejected baptism of infants. The early members of this movement did not accept the name Anabaptist, claiming that infant baptism was not part of scripture and was therefore null and void. They said that baptizing self-confessed believers was their first true baptism:

I have never taught Anabaptism.... But the right baptism of Christ, which is preceded by teaching and oral confession of faith, I teach, and say that infant baptism is a robbery of the right baptism of Christ.

— Hubmaier, Balthasar (1526),

Anabaptists were heavily and long persecuted starting in the 16th century by both Magisterial Protestants and Roman Catholics, largely because of their interpretation of scripture which put them at odds with official state church interpretations and with government. Anabaptism was never established by any state and therefore never enjoyed any of the privileges that come with it. Most Anabaptists adhered to a literal interpretation of the Sermon on the Mount which precluded taking oaths, participating in military actions, and participating in civil government. Some groups who practiced rebaptism, now extinct, believed otherwise and complied with these requirements of civil society. They were thus technically Anabaptists, even though conservative Amish, Mennonites, Hutterites, and some historians consider them outside true Anabaptism. Conrad Grebel wrote in a letter to Thomas Müntzer in 1524:

True Christian believers are sheep among wolves, sheep for the slaughter... Neither do they use worldly sword or war, since all killing has ceased with them. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Anabaptism>

**Donatism** (Latin: Donatismus, Greek: Δονατισμός Donatismós) was a schism in the Church of Carthage from the fourth to the sixth centuries AD. Donatists argued that Christian clergy must be faultless for their ministry to be effective and their prayers and sacraments to be valid. Donatism had its roots in the long-established Christian community of the Roman Africa province (now Algeria and Tunisia) in the persecutions of Christians under Diocletian. Named after the Berber Christian bishop Donatus Magnus, Donatism flourished during the fourth and fifth centuries.

The Roman governor of North Africa, lenient to the large Christian minority under his rule throughout the persecutions, was satisfied when Christians handed over their scriptures as a token repudiation of faith. When the persecution ended, Christians who did so were called traditors—"those who handed (the holy things) over"—by their critics (who were mainly from the poorer classes).

Like third-century Novatianism, the Donatists were rigorists; the church must be a church of "saints" (not "sinners"), and sacraments administered by traditors were invalid. In 311 Caecilian (a new bishop of Carthage) was consecrated by Felix of Aptungi, an alleged traditor. His opponents consecrated Majorinus, a short-lived rival who was succeeded by Donatus. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Donatism>

**Acts 11:19-21 (CSB17)**

19 Now those who had been scattered as a result of the persecution that started because of Stephen made their way as far as Phoenicia, Cyprus, and Antioch, speaking the word to no one except Jews.

 20 But there were some of them, men from Cyprus and Cyrene, who came to Antioch and began speaking to the Greeks also, proclaiming the good news about the Lord Jesus.

 21 The Lord's hand was with them, and a large number who believed turned to the Lord.