

+Time-line of Christian history

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A Word About Church History

Scholars estimate there are over 2600 groups today who lay claim to being the Church, or at least the direct descendants of the Church described in the New Testament.

But for the first thousand years of her history the Church was essentially one. Five historic Patriarchal centers-- Jerusalem; Antioch, Rome, Alexandria, and Constantinople-- formed a cohesive whole and were in full communion with each other. There were occasional heretical or schismatic groups going their own way, to be sure; but the Church was unified until the 11th century. Then, in events culminating in A.D.1054, the Roman Patriarch pulled away from the other four, pursuing his long-developing claim of universal headship of the Church, in what became known in history as the Great Schism.

Today, nearly a thousand years later, the other four Patriarchates remain intact, in full communion, maintaining the Orthodox apostolic faith of the inspired New Testament record. The Orthodox Church and her history is described here, from Pentecost to the present day.

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33 Pentecost (A.D: 29 is thought to be more accurate).

49 Council at Jerusalem (Acts 15) establishes precedent for addressing Church disputes in Council. James presides as bishop.

69 Bishop Ignatius consecrated in Antioch in heart of New Testament era--St. Peter had been the first bishop there. Other early bishops include James, Polycarp, and Clement.

95 Book of Revelation written, probably the last of the New Testament books.

150 St. Justin Martyr describes the liturgical worship of the Church, centered in the Eucharist. Liturgical worship is rooted in both the Old and New Testament.

325 The Nicene Creed is established. The Council of Nicea settles the major heretical challenge to the Christian faith when the heretic Arius asserts Christ was created by the Father. St. Athanasius defends the eternity of the Son of God. The Arians continue their assault on true Christianity for years. Nicea is the first of Seven Ecumenical (Church-wide) Councils.

451 Council of Chalcedon affirms apostolic doctrine of two natures in Christ.

589 In a synod in Toledo, Spain, the filioque, asserting that the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father and the Son is added to the Nicene Creed. This error is later adopted by Rome.

787 The era of Ecumenical Councils ends at Nicea, with the Seventh Council bringing the centuries-old use of icons back into the Church.

988 Conversion of Russia begins. "We knew not whether we were in heaven or on earth, for surely there is no such splendour or beauty anywhere upon earth. We cannot describe it to you: only this we know, that God dwells there among men, and that their service surpasses the worship of all other places. For we cannot forget that beauty." - Envoys of the Russian Prince Vladimir, after experiencing the Divine Liturgy at the Church of the Hagia Sophia in Constantinople in the year 987.

1054 The Great Schism occurs. Two major issues include Rome's claim to a universal papal supremacy and her addition of the filioque clause to the Nicene Creed. The Photian schism (880) further complicated the debate.

1095 The Crusades begun by the Roman Church. The Sack of Constantinople by Rome (1204) adds to the estrangement between East and West.

1333 St. Gregory Palamas defends the Orthodox practice of hesychast spirituality and the use of the Jesus prayer.

1453 Turks overrun Constantinople; Byzantine Empire ends.

1517 Martin Luther nails his 95 Theses to the door of the Roman Church in Wittenberg, starting the Protestant Reformation.

1529 Church of England begins pulling away from Rome.

1794 Missionaries arrive on Kodiak Island in Alaska; Orthodoxy introduced to North America.

1854 Rome establishes the Immaculate Conception dogma.

1870 Papal Infallibility becomes Roman dogma.

1988 One thousand years of Orthodoxy in Russia, as Orthodox Church world-wide maintains fullness of the Apostolic faith.