



A Time Line of Church History

The following timeline and associated text provided further below is intended to provide the reader with a general and simplified overview of the development of the Christian Church. For a more detailed description of the history of the church, the reader is encouraged to read [The Byzantine Legacy in the Orthodox Church](#) by Fr. John Meyendorff and [Rome-Constantinople-Moscow Historical and Theological Studies](#) also by Fr. John Meyendorff. The first chapter in the latter reference begins with the following paragraph:

All historians agree today that the schism which eventually became a permanent form of separation between Eastern and Western Christians did not occur suddenly. It was the result of a progressive "estrangement" (the English term used by the French theologian Yves Congar), and cannot even be dated. The churches of Rome and Constantinople were often separated for long periods of time already between the fourth and the ninth centuries. Those early conflicts were sometimes caused by heresies, held in the capital of the Eastern empire (Arianism, 335-381; Monotheletism, 533-680; Iconoclasm, 723-787; 815-842) and rightfully rejected by Rome. Sometimes Rome and Constantinople differed in their attitude in the field of ecclesiastical oikonomia (the "Neo-Nicean" position, inherited from the Cappadocian Fathers, 381-ca. 400; the attitude to be adopted towards the Henotikon, also referred to as the "Acacian schism", 482-518), and communication was broken on those grounds. Whatever the issue and whoever was at fault, it is clear that, underneath the debate on a concrete theological or disciplinary problem, there was a developing difference on the respective authority of the "apostolic see" of Rome on the one side, and on the other, the idea of a conciliar consensus prevailing in the East.

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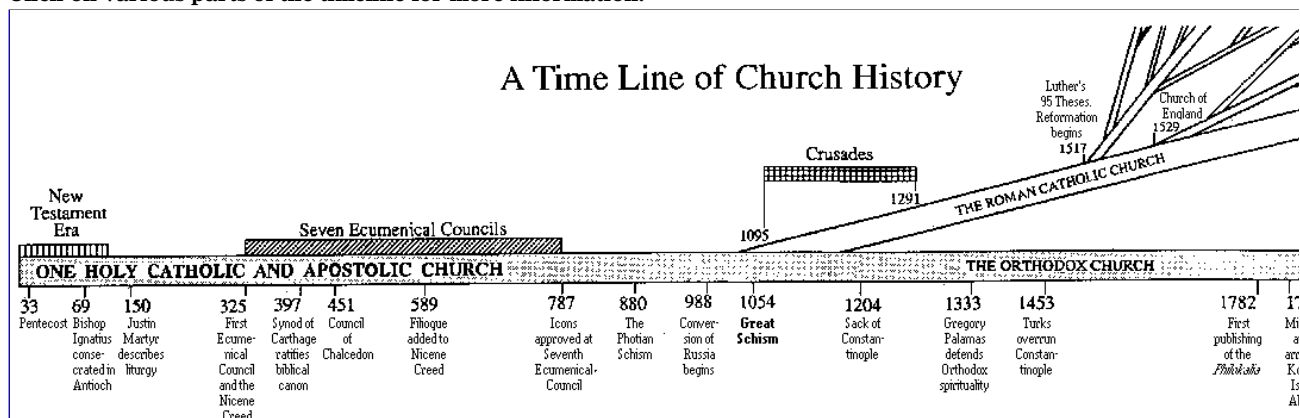
A Word About Church History

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. Repeat: 2600!

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.

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

Click on various parts of the timeline for more information.



33 Pentecost (A.D: 29 is thought to be more accurate). [Time Line](#)

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

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. [Time Line](#)

95 Book of Revelation written, probably the last of the New Testament books. [Time Line](#)

150 St. Justin Martyr describe's the liturgical worship of the Church, centered in the Eucharist. Liturgical worship is rooted in both

the Old and New Testament. [Time Line](#)

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. [Time Line](#)

451 Council of Chalcedon affirms apostolic doctrine of two natures in Christ. [Time Line](#)

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. [Time Line](#)

787 The era of [Ecumenical Councils](#) ends at Nicea, with the Seventh Council bringing the centuries-old use of [icons](#) back into the Church. [Time Line](#)

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. [Time Line](#)

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. [Time Line](#)

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

1333 St. Gregory Palamas defends the Orthodox practice of hesychast spirituality and the use of the [Jesus prayer](#). [Time Line](#)

1453 Turks overrun Constantinople; Byzantine Empire ends. [Time Line](#)

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

[Time Line](#) **1529** Church of England begins pulling away from Rome. [Time Line](#)

1794 Missionaries arrive on Kodiak Island in Alaska; Orthodoxy introduced to North America. [Time Line](#)

1854 Rome establishes the Immaculate Conception dogma. [Time Line](#)

1870 Papal Infallibility becomes Roman dogma. [Time Line](#)

1988 One thousand years of Orthodoxy in Russia, as Orthodox Church world-wide maintains fullness of the Apostolic faith. [Time Line](#)

