



How old is the orthodox faith?

If you are a Lutheran, your religion was founded by Martin Luther, an ex-monk of the Catholic Church, in the year 1517. If you belong to the Church of England, your religion was founded by King Henry VIII in the year 1534 because the Pope would not grant him a divorce with the right to re-marry. If you are a Presbyterian, your religion was founded by John Knox in Scotland in the year 1560. If you are a Congregationalist, your religion was originated by Robert Brown in Holland in 1582. If you are Protestant Episcopalian, your religion was an offshoot of the Church of England, founded by Samuel Senbury in the American colonies in the 17th century. If you are a Baptist, you owe the tenets of your religion to John Smyth, who launched it in Amsterdam in 1606. If you are of the Dutch Reformed Church, you recognize Michelis Jones as founder because he originated your religion in New York in 1628. If you are a Methodist, your religion was founded by John and Charles Wesley in England in 1774. If you are a Mormon (Latter Day

Saints), Joseph Smith started your religion in Palmyra, New York, in 1829. If you worship with the Salvation Army, your sect began with William Booth in London in 1865. If you are Christian Scientist, you look to 1879 as the year in which your religion was born and to Mary Baker Eddy as its founder.

If you belong to one of the religious organizations known as "Church of the Nazarene, Pentecostal Gospel," "Holiness Church," or "Jehovah's Witnesses," your religion is one of the hundreds of new sects founded by men within the past hundred years.

If you are Roman Catholic, your church shared the same rich apostolic and doctrinal heritage as the Orthodox Church for the first thousand years of its history, since during the first millennium they were one and the same Church. Lamentably, in 1054, the Pope of Rome broke away from the other four Apostolic Patriarchates (which include Constantinople, Alexandria, Antioch and Jerusalem), by tampering with the Original Creed of the Church, and considering himself to be infallible. Thus your church is 1,000 years old.

If you are Orthodox Christian, your religion was founded in the year 33 by Jesus Christ, the Son of God. It has not changed since that time. Our church is now almost 2,000 years old. And it is for this reason, that Orthodoxy, the Church of the Apostles and the Fathers is considered the true "one Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church." This is the greatest legacy that we can pass on to the young people of the new millennium.

by Rev. Dr. Miltiades Efthimiou

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

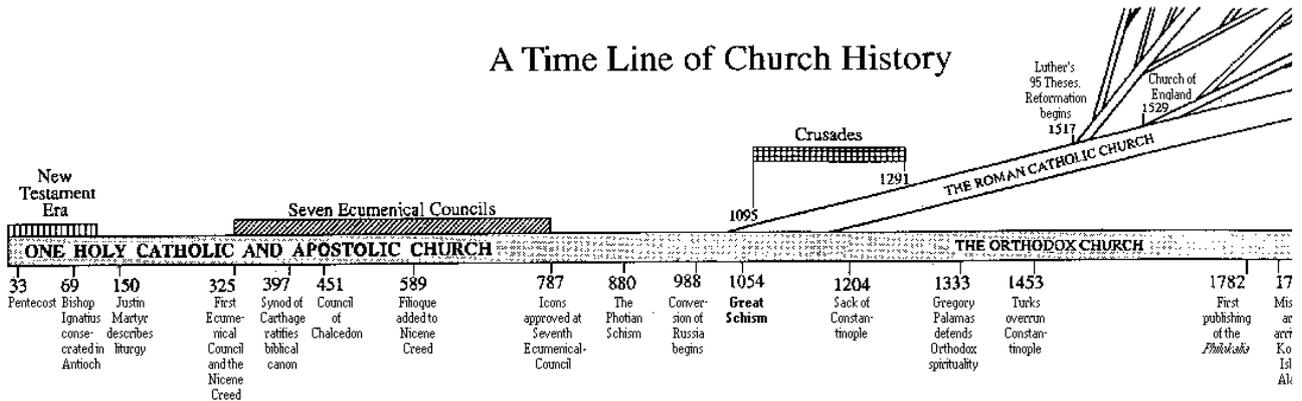
Scholars estimate there are over 2600 groups today who lay claim to being the Church, or at least the direct descendants of the Church described in the New Testament. Repeat: 2600!

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.

A Time Line of Church History



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 describe's 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 eternality 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 procedes 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 fulness of the Apostolic faith.