

A skeleton of Church History

Being a summary of the periods of Church History, with chief characters and events.

Such a summary must be brief and may result in questions, but these have to be answered elsewhere. Inclusion of people in the 'church leaders' list does not mean that they are evangelical, just that they were important. Many interesting features have had to be omitted of necessity or every section would increase substantially.

The Early Church: 30-95 AD

Important church leaders

- The eleven apostles plus Matthias.
- Luke and John Mark.
- Stephen
- Paul
- Barnabas
- Timothy
- Silas
- Apollos
- Key Churches: Jerusalem, Antioch, Ephesus.

Heresies and heretics

- Judaisers
- Early Gnostics

Significant church events

- Council of Jerusalem (Acts 15).
- Death (martyrdom) of apostles and saints. First persecution: 64. Peter & Paul martyred in 66.
- Ten persecutions by Roman Empire.
- Paul's missionary journeys
- Writing of scripture.
- The church stretches the breadth of the Roman Empire and beyond, from Britannia to India, Africa and China and into 'barbarian' lands in north Europe.

Significant secular events

- Claudius emperor, 41-54.
- Claudius poisoned, Nero becomes emperor, 54-68.
- Fall of Jerusalem to the Roman army, 70.

The sub-apostolic church: 95-140

Important church leaders (the 'Apostolic Fathers')

- Clement of Rome [c. 30-c. 100]
- Ignatius [d. 117].
- Hermas [late 1st c– early 2nd c].
- Polycarp [c. 69-160].
- Barnabus of Alexandria [late 1st c– early 2nd c].
- Papias [c. 60-c. 130].

Heresies and heretics

- Gnosticism.
- Ebionism.

Significant church events

- Persecution.
- Growing authority of bishops.

Significant secular events

- Hadrian builds a wall to keep out the Picts, 122-127.
- Revolt of Bar Cochba, 135.

The Early Church Fathers: 140-230

Important church leaders – Second Century Apologists:

- Quadratus [early 2nd c].
- Aristides [early 2nd c].
- Justin Martyr [c. 100-165].
- Tatian [110-172].
- Athenagoras [2nd c].
- Theophilus [d. 181].
- Melito [d. 190].
- Hegeippus [2nd c].

Important church leaders – Third Century Church Fathers: Controversialists

- Irenaeus [late 2nd c]
- Cyprian
- Hippolytus [c.170-c. 236]
- Archelaus

Important church leaders – Third Century Church Fathers: Commentators

- Pantaeus
- Clement of Alexandria [c. 150-c. 215]
- Julius Africanus [c. 160-240]

- Origen [c. 185- c.254]
- Gregory Thaumaturgos [c. 213-270]
- Pamphilus
- Dionysius

Important church leaders - Latin Church Fathers (writers in Latin)

- Tertullian [c. 160-c. 220]
- Cyprian [c. 200-258]

Heresies and heretics

- Montanism.
- Gnosticism.
- Marcionism.

Significant church events

- Persecution
- Formal organising of the church.
- Martyrdom of Perpetua & Felicitas, 202.
- Distinct schools of theology at Alexandria, Asia Minor and Carthage.
- Justin's apologetics.
- Writings of Tertullian, Origen, Irenaeus.
- Bishop of Rome assumes prominence as 'pope' c. 200.

Significant secular events

- Antonius Pius emperor, 138-161.
- Oldest Maya monuments, 164.
- Goths invade Asia Minor and Balkans, 220.

The Later Church Fathers: 230-476

Important church leaders

- Cyril of Jerusalem (wrote in Greek).
- Hilary of Poitiers (Latin).
- Athanasius (Greek).
- Eusebius (Greek).
- Ephraem the Syrian
- Cappadocian Fathers (Greek): Basil; Gregory of Nazianzus [c. 330-c. 390]; Gregory of Nyssa [c.330-c. 394]
- Theodore of Mopsuestia [(Greek) c. 350-428]
- John Chrysostom [(Greek) c. 374-407]
- Lactantius [(Latin) c. 240-320].
- Ambrose of Milan [Latin, c. 340-397]
- Jerome [Latin, c. 345-420]
- Augustine [Latin, 354-430]

- Theodoret (Greek).
- England: Patrick, Alban.

Heresies and heretics

- Manichaeism.
- Arianism.
- Pelagianism.
- Trinitarian & Christological errors.

Significant church events

- Persecution.
- Christianity introduced into Armenia, 300.
- Hymns formally introduced by Ambrose, 386.
- Canon of scripture formally accepted in, 397.
- Church becomes worldly and paganised.
- Ulfilas' apostolic mission to the Goths.
- Anthony starts monasticism, 270-320.

Significant secular events

- Decadence of Rome.
- Plotinus (205-270) and Neo-Platonism.
- Empire first divided into East & West 285, then again in 340, 364, 395.
- Earliest religious plays 300.
- Constantine becomes emperor 306. Toleration of Christianity, 313.
- Sunday observance as day of rest, 321.
- Growing barbarian problems, Romans leave Britain 383.

The Dark Ages: 476-1066

Important church leaders

- The British Celtic Church (e.g. Alban, Ninian, Aidan, Cuthbert, Columba and Patrick).
- John of Damascus [c. 675-749].
- Gregory the Great [540-604].
- Hildebrand.

Heresies and heretics

- Pelagianism
- Romanism.

Significant church events

- Augustine lands in Thanet, 587.
- The Synod of Whitby in 664 – England Romanised.
- Missionary work of English/Irish Celtic church.
- Growing power of Roman church and pope.
- Part of Bible translated into English by Alfred.

Significant secular events

- Alfred the Great.
- Bede: *Ecclesiastical History*.
- Fall of Rome, 476.
- Clovis 1 (king of Franks) converts to Christianity, 496.
- Britons defeat Saxons at Mt Badon, 500 (the inspiration for King Arthur legends).
- History written by Gildas, 542.
- Beginnings of chess in India, 550.
- Mohammed born, 570.
- Viking invasions, 800.
- Charlemagne revives empire 8th c.

The Middle Ages: 1066-1517

Important church leaders

- Thomas Aquinas
- Peter Abelard
- Anselm
- Bernard of Clairvaux
- Peter Lombard
- John Wycliffe
- Jan Hus
- Savonarola
- Erasmus
- Jerome of Prague
- Francis of Assisi.

Heresies and heretics

- Mysticism (e.g. Eckhart).
- Dualism
- Rationalism (Abelard).

Significant church events

- Compilation of Greek NT by Erasmus.
- Various attempts at church reform.
- Separation of East and West church, 1054.
- Development of independent, underground house churches in central Europe. Albigenses (Cathari), Waldensians, Bogomils, Paulicans.
- *Summa Theologica* (Aquinas).
- *Why God Became Man* (Anselm)

Significant secular events

- Norman invasion.
- Moslem invasions of Europe.

- The Crusades.
- Papacy leads West Christendom.
- Magna Carta, 1215.
- Inquisition begins, 1229.
- The Black Death wipes out over 33% of Europe, 1347.
- Renaissance, 1350+.
- 1453: Fall to Muslims of Constantinople.
- Gutenberg develops printing press, 1456.
- Columbus discovers America, 1492.

The European Reformation: 1517-1600

Important church leaders

- Martin Luther.
- John Calvin.
- Ulrich Zwingli.
- Guillame Farel.
- Martin Bucer.
- Theodore Beza.
- John Knox.

Heresies and heretics

- Arianism.
- 'Enthusiasm' (proto Charismania).
- Millennialism.
- Socinianism.
- Mysticism.
- Tritheism.
- Unitarianism.

Significant church events

- Diet of Worms.
- Reform in Geneva under Calvin.
- The radical reformation of the Anabaptists.
- Munster tragedy.
- Formula of Concord
- Discovery of Beza Codex of NT.
- Return of hymns in Church services.
- Calvin's *Institutes*.
- Luther's writings.
- *Heidelberg Catechism*.
- *Belgic Confession*.
- *German Bible*.

- 1534: Loyola establishes Jesuits.
- 1545-1563: Council of Trent (Counter-Reformation).
- Francis Xavier (1506-1552).
- Huguenots persecuted in France, 1563.

Significant secular events

- Peasant's Revolt in Germany, 1524.
- Dutch Revolt, 1572.
- Dutch republic starts 1579.

The English Reformation: 1517-1600

Important church leaders

- John Knox.
- Thomas Cranmer.
- Nicholas Ridley.
- Hugh Latimer.
- John Tyndale.
- John Hooper.
- Miles Coverdale.
- William Perkins.

Heresies and heretics

- Romanism.
- Early forms of Semi-Pelagianism (Arminianism).

Significant church events

- Translation of Bible into English.
- Church of England starts 1536.
- Church of Scotland (Presbyterian) founded 1560.
- Puritanism starts, 1560.
- *Thirty-nine Articles, Book of Common Prayer.*
- Foxe's *Book of Martyrs.*

Significant secular events

- Reign of Henry VIII (1509-1547).
- Reign of Edward VI (1547-1553).
- Reign of 'Bloody' Mary (1553-1558).
- Reign of Elizabeth I (1558-1603).
- Defeat of Spanish Armada 1597.

The Second Reformation: 1600-1660

Important church leaders

- John Owen.
- Stephen Charnock.
- John Bunyan.
- John Flavel.
- Thomas Goodwin.
- Thomas Watson.
- Thomas Brooks.
- William Ames.
- Richard Baxter.
- Netherlands: Wilhelmus à Brakel.

Heresies and heretics

- Arminianism.
- Amyraldism.
- Quakerism (Fox).
- Deism.

Significant church events

- Puritanism in England.
- Reformed church in Netherlands.
- *King James Bible*, 1611.
- First Baptist Church, 1611.
- Westminster Assembly.
- Savoy Conference.
- Synod of Dort.
- Pilgrim Fathers sail on the Mayflower, 1620.
- Congregationalism, 1620.
- Particular Baptists, 1630's.
- *Westminster Standards* (1646).
- *1644 First London Confession* (Particular/Calvinistic Baptist).
- *Savoy Declaration* (Independent). 1658.
- Books of the above; especially Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*.
- Oliver Cromwell and the Commonwealth.

Significant secular events

- English Civil War 1642-1646.
- 30 Years War (1618-1648).
- Charles I beheaded, 1649.
- Cromwell's Protectorate (Commonwealth) 1649-1658.

The Age of Mission & Revival 1660-1760

Important church leaders

- England: John Wesley, George Whitefield, John Gill, John Brown (Haddington).
- Wales - Howell Harris, Daniel Rowland,
- USA - Cotton Mather, Roger Williams, Jonathan Edwards.
- Missionaries: John Elliot, David Brainerd.

Heresies and heretics

- Arminianism.
- Amyraldism.
- Socinianism.
- Deism.
- Romanism.
- Shakers.

Significant church events

- English, Welsh and Scottish revivals.
- Puritan settlements in USA.
- First Great Awakening in USA.
- Ejection of Anglican Dissenters, 1662.
- Movements: Pietism (Philipp Spener, Francke); Moravians (Count Zinzendorf); Methodism (John Wesley).
- Books by all the above plus William Law; 1689 (Calvinistic) Baptist Confession.

Significant secular events

- 7 Years War, 1756-63.
- Restoration of English monarchy, 1660.
- Act of Union (England & Scotland), 1707.

The Age of Deepening Mission & Revival; 1760-1880

Important church leaders

- Scotland: Robert Haldane, Robert Murray McCheyne, Thomas Chalmers.
- Wales: Christmas Evans, John Elias.
- England: CH Spurgeon.
- America: RL Dabney, Charles Hodge, AA Hodge, WGT Shedd, James Thornwell, John L Girardeau, JL Dagg (Baptist).
- Missionaries: William Carey, Henry Martyn, Robert Morrison, Adoniram Judson, J Hudson Taylor, WC Burns, John Paton, David Livingstone, CT Studd, Mary Slessor.

Heresies and heretics

- Oberlin (Finney) perfectionism.
- Jehovah's Witnesses, Mormons, Christian Science.
- Unitarianism.

- 7th Day Adventists.
- Schleiermacher, Tübingen school.
- Edward Irving's proto charismatic church.
- Spiritualism.
- Mesmerism (Franz Mesmer: 1734-1815).

Significant church events

- 2nd Great Awakening in US.
- Foreign missions.
- William Wilberforce against slavery.
- Calvinistic Methodist Church of Wales.
- Free Church of Scotland.
- Baptist Missionary Society.
- London Miss. Soc.
- Methodist Camp Meetings in US.
- Revivalism of Finney.
- Dutch Reformed Church, Presbyterians and Baptists in US.
- Tractarian Mvt (High Anglican Church, Oxford Mvt., John Newman, Pusey).
- Paley's *Evidences*.

Significant secular events

- Steam engine, 1764.
- American Revolution, 1776.
- French Revolution, 1789.
- Act of Union (England & Ireland), 1800.
- Battle of Waterloo, 1815.
- Reign of Victoria (1819-1901).
- Crimean War (1854-6).
- Impressionists.
- The Alamo, 1876.
- Kant (1724-1804).
- Hegel (1760-1831).
- Development of existentialism by Kierkegaard (1813-55).
- Darwin's *Origin of Species* (1859).

The Modern Age 1: 1880-1950

Important church leaders

- Arminian crusade evangelists: DL Moody, Billy Sunday, RA Torrey, Billy Graham.
- Beginnings of Dispensationalism: JN Darby, CI Scofield, Charles Ryrie.
- The Brethren: John Darby, Henry Craik, AN Groves, BW Newton, George Muller, William Kelly followed by the second generation of Raven, Taylor etc.
- US Reformed theologians: BB Warfield, J Gresham Machen.
- Dutch Reformed theologians: Abraham Kuyper, Herman Bavinck.

- British theologians: AW Pink, James Denney, FB Meyer.
- Rogue 'Reformed' theologians: Karl Barth, GC Berkouwer.

Heresies and heretics

- Too many to list.
- Rise of Mind Sciences (syncretism of Christianity with hypnotism, the Occult and Hinduism): PP Quimby, Unity, New Thought, Christian Science.
- New Orthodoxy (Barthianism).
- Pentecostal theology.

Significant church events

- Kuyper becomes Prime Minister of The Netherlands, 1901.
- Moody's new type of crusade evangelism.
- Beginning of new Bible translations (Revised Version, ASB, RSV etc.).
- Keswick conferences.
- The Brethren Movement.
- Holiness Mvt.
- Higher Life Movement.
- Salvation Army
- Pentecostalism (William Seymour – Azusa Street, Charles Parham – Topeka Revival, F Bartleman, F Bosworth, John Lake, Maria Woodworth Etter, Aimee Semple McPherson, Smith Wigglesworth (UK), David du Plessis, AA Allen, Gordon Lindsay, George & Stephen Jeffreys (UK) and many others).
- Fundamentalism (evangelical reaction to Modernism, chiefly in America).
- Liberalism.
- Modernism.
- Higher Criticism (Bultmann).

Significant secular events

- Edison/Swan light bulb, 1887.
- Petrol engine (Daimler), 1884.
- X Rays, 1896.
- Boer War (1899-1902).
- Wright flies 30 miles, 1908.
- WW1 (1914-18), WWII (1939-45).
- Urbanisation.
- League of Nations/UN.
- Flying Saucers, 1947 onwards.
- Birth of Israel, 1948.
- Growth of technology.
- NATO founded, 1949.

The Modern Age 2: growing apostasy; 1950-2013

Important church leaders

- American: Billy Graham, Dennis Bennett, David Wilkerson, Bill Bright (Campus Crusade), John Wimber, C Peter Wagner, Rick Warren, John Piper.
- British: Martyn Lloyd-Jones, John Stott, David Watson, Jim Packer, CS Lewis.
- Others: Francis Schaeffer.
- Pentecostals: Oral Roberts, William Branham, TL Osborn, Morris Cerrulo.
- US Charismatics: Benny Hinn, Kenneth Hagin, Kenneth Copeland, Ft. Lauderdale Five, CJ Mahaney, Paul Cain, Lynn Green.
- British Charismatics: Arthur Wallis, Barney Coombs, Bryn Jones, Gerald Coates, John Noble, Michael Harper, Roger Forster, Terry Virgo.

Heresies and heretics

- Too many individual heresies to list. More heresies active than at any time in history.
- Agnes Sanford and Inner Healing techniques.
- Pentecostal Latter Rain theology (began 1948).
- Healing Revival Movement (began in 1950s).
- Word Faith Theology (Copeland, Hinn, Yonggi Cho etc.).
- American Shepherding Movement (apostles and prophets).
- British Restoration Movement (apostles and prophets).
- Multitudes of doctrinal errors (including the introduction of pagan ideas into the Charismatic Movement).
- Many practical aberrations, often based upon mysticism and emotionalism. Mysticism leading to Toronto Blessing type behaviour.
- Gradual downgrade of churches: authoritarianism, spiritual abuse, worldliness, financial impropriety, pagan & occult influences.
- Spiritual warfare techniques.
- New Apostolic Reformation (prophetic dominionist movement).
- Reformed errors: Federal Vision, New Perspective on Paul.
- Contemplative mystical meditation etc.; Richard Foster and many others. Some practice meditation techniques based upon the teaching of Roman Catholic mystics – transformational meditation.
- Rise of Psychoheresy methods; the syncretism of Christianity with psychiatry based upon the errors of Freud, Yung, Adler etc.
- Ecumenism.

Significant church events

- Works by the above.
- Multitudes of Bible versions; rise of paraphrase versions.
- Revival of interest in Puritan and Reformed books, e.g. Banner of Truth Pub.
- New-Evangelicalism: devaluation of doctrine and Biblical study, compromise with social sciences and liberalism. Harold Ockenga, Eugene Nida, Jack Van Impe, Bill Bright, John Stott, Chuck Colson, Tony Campolo, Lius Palau, Leighton Ford, Charles Swindoll, David Hocking, Billy Graham, Carl Henry, Bernard Ramm etc.
- Charismatic Mvt.

- Television Evangelism.
- Charismatic Conventions.
- Toronto Experience.
- Use of choruses instead of hymns.
- Audio and Video tape ministries.
- Worship meetings and leaders.
- Signs & Wonders Mvt.
- Word Faith Movement.
- Church Growth Mvt.
- Dominionism.
- Jewish Root Movement and Christian Zionism.
- Alpha Course.
- Ecumenism.
- Restorationism.

Significant secular events

- Korean ,War 1951.
- Suez Crisis, 1956.
- M1 part opened, 1959.
- Yuri Gagarin first man in space, 1961.
- Youth culture starts.
- Proliferation of nuclear weapons.
- Vietnam War.
- UK joins Common Market, 1973.
- Falklands War, 1982.
- Gulf War (1990).
- Iraq War (2003).
- Computer revolution.
- Postmodernism.
- Globalism.
- Green / Ecology movement.
- Gene technology.
- New Age Mvt.
- Banking crisis, 2008.
- Rise of austerity measures, 2010+.

Conclusion

Remember that this paper is a 'skeleton'; there is much important information that is left out. My purpose is to give the bare bones of church history so that the reader can have a scaffold to build further studies upon. It is to enable the student to see the wood for the trees. What is now necessary is to get interested in various epochs and add flesh to these dry bones so that the information lives. Once you start, you will keep learning.

The reason why church history is so important is that you learn sober lessons that are directly applicable today. There is nothing new under the sun and we can learn much from seeing how a certain idea, error or doctrine played out in church practice, and can learn from past mistakes. Many situations in the past prove an important commentary on what is happening today. Ignore it at your peril.

The Early Ecumenical Councils			
Place	Date	Key People	Doctrinal Statements
Nicea	325	Arius, Athanasius	The Son is co-equal, consubstantial and co-eternal with the father. Arius condemned, first draft of Nicene creed.
Constantinople	381	Gregory of Nazianzus and Gregory of Nyssa	Revised Nicene creed. Ended Trinitarian controversy. Affirmed deity of the Holy Spirit. Condemned Apollinarianism.
Carthage	397		The 66 books of the Bible accepted as the canon of scripture.
Ephesus	431	Cyril, Nestorius	Condemned Nestorianism and Pelagianism.
Chalcedon	451	Leo I, Dioscurus, Eutyches	Declared Christ's two natures unmixed, unchanged, undivided & inseparable. Condemned Eutychianism.
Constantinople	553	Eutychius	Affirmed Cyrillian interpretation of Chalcedon.
Constantinople	680-681		Rejected Monothelism. Condemned Pope Honorius as heretical.

These are not all the councils that met in this time, but they represent the key events.

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