

The Reformation (1517-1647)

Reform came with a fury. Martin Luther sounded the trumpet, but hosts of others like John Calvin rallied to the cause. This period marks the birth of four major streams of Protestantism: Lutheran, Reformed (Presbyterian), Anglican, and Anabaptist. By the mid-sixteenth century the Reformation had shattered the traditional unity of Western Europe and had bequeathed to modern times religious pluralism. The Church of Rome resisted this attack with all its might, but in the end, “Christendom” was supplanted by the denominational concept of the church. This allowed modern nations to treat churches as voluntary societies separated from the state. Another consequence is the endless fragmentation and schisms that plague us to this day.



John Calvin

- 1517** *Martin Luther posts his *95 Theses* to the Wittenburg Cathedral door at Worms, Germany
- 1522** Luther translates the New Testament into German
- 1519** Swiss Ulrich Zwingli spreads reform in Zurich
- 1525** The Anabaptist Movement begins
- 1534** Act of Supremacy: Henry VIII establishes the Anglican Church
- 1536** *John Calvin publishes his *Institutes of the Christian Religion*
- 1540** Loyola founds Society of Jesus/Jesuits to evangelize heathens
- 1545** The Counter-Reformation initiated by the Council of Trent
- 1549** Jesuit Francis Xavier begins mission to Japan
- 1557** French colonist Nicholas Durand de Villegaignon writes to John Calvin who sends two Reformed pastors to Brazil
- 1560** John Knox returns to Scotland to establish Presbyterianism
- 1603** Dutch Reformed theologian Arminius emphasizes free will
- 1611** *King James Version* of Bible published
- 1618** Dutch Reformed Synod of Dort (TULIP) rejects Arminianism
- 1630** Dutch colonists establish Dutch Reformed Church in Brazil
- 1636** Harvard College founded to provide New World with ministers
- 1646** *Westminster Confession* becomes the definitive Reformed standard for centuries, drafted in London
- 1647** George Fox founds Quaker movement (the Society of Friends)

Martin Luther • Monumental Reformer

Even if your job is a dishwasher or stable boy, yours is a divinely appointed vocation, as sacred as that of any pastor or church official. Even if you attend church twice every Sunday without fail, give most of your income to the poor, read your Bible and pray everyday, and live a rigorously moral life, you will not earn your acceptance with God and enter into heaven. That only comes as a free gift from God, apart from all of your religious dedication.

These were the kinds of things that Martin Luther proclaimed in a time when the church held a frightening control over the lives and consciences of the common people. These teachings changed the world.

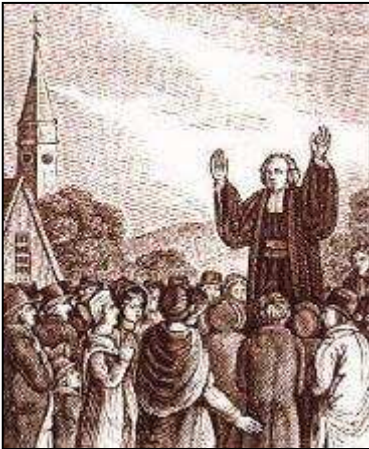
Ralph Waldo Emerson, 300 years after Luther, asserted: "Martin Luther the Reformer is one of the most extraordinary persons in history and has left a deeper impression of his presence in the modern world than any other except Columbus."



The Door at Wittenburg, Germany

The Age of Enlightenment and Revival (1648-1789)

New schools of thought filled the seventeenth century. None was more powerful than Reason itself. It asked: Who needs God? Are human beings self-sufficient? Christians objected vigorously, but the idea spread until secularism filled the public life of Western societies. God remained, but only as a matter of personal choice. Christians could no longer appeal to the arm of power to suppress such ideas. Many of them turned instead to the way of the apostles – prayer and preaching. The result was a series of evangelical revivals: chiefly Pietism (Puritanism), Methodism, and the Great Awakening. By preaching and personal conversions, evangelicals tried to restore God to public life.



George Whitefield leading revival

- 1648** End 30 Years' War between Catholics/Protestants
- 1652** Dutch Reformed Church of South Africa founded
- 1680** Already some 800,000 Roman Catholics in Vietnam
- 1692** Chinese emperor allows 300,000 Christian converts
- 1700** Slave trafficking from Africa increases dramatically
- 1706** *First American presbytery founded in Philadelphia
- 1707** Isaac Watts publishes *Hymns and Spiritual Songs*
- 1729** US Presbyterians adopt *Westminster Confession*
- 1738** John and Charles Wesley have evangelical conversions, eventually founding Methodism
- 1740** The Great Awakening is at its height in America
- 1741** Presbyterians split Old Side/New Side; reunite 1758
- 1773** *First independent Black Baptist Church in US
- 1780** Robert Raikes launches Sunday School Movement
- 1784** Sung Hun "Peter" Yi and Pyok "John the Baptist" Yi introduce Catholicism to Korea, converting in China
- 1788** *The General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church (USA) founded

The Presbyterians

John Calvin centered his reform in Geneva, Switzerland in 1533. He consciously sought a more thoroughgoing reformation than Luther had initiated. Calvin, supported by Zwingli, sought initially to stand with Luther in Luther's reformation; but when he could not agree with him on the scriptural teaching regarding the Lord's Supper, he went his own way and founded the "Reformed Movement". Calvin and his followers developed a more exacting reformation, discarding both things explicitly forbidden in Scripture and those things that could be deduced as implicitly forbidden by Scripture. Calvinism came also to be known as Presbyterianism in Scotland, and Puritanism in England. It significantly altered the religious map in Switzerland, France, Germany, Hungary, Holland, Scotland, England, and Eastern Europe. They sought to retain the early church emphasis on the catholic (universal) church concept, so mission was important.

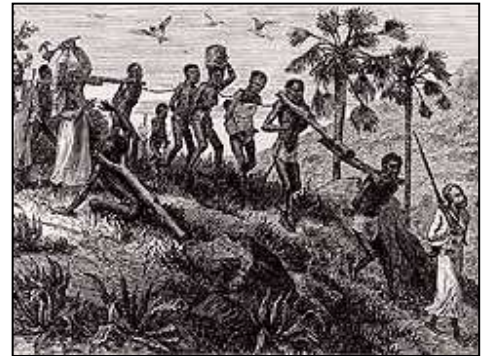
American Presbyterianism is a blend of continental Calvinism and the American frontier ethos. Globally, Presbyterians and Reformed are the second largest Protestant body after the Lutherans. Among all religious groups, Presbyterians are most evenly spread throughout the fifty states. Today, there are more Presbyterians in Korea than in the "mother country", the United States, or the "grandmother country", Scotland. There are also more Reformed Christians in Indonesia than in any other country in the world. Africa and Latin America are also proving to be fertile soil for Presbyterian church growth.



The Age of Progress and Mission (1789-1914)

The Age of Progress saw Christians wage a valiant struggle against the advance of secularism. Out of the evangelical awakenings came an effort to start a host of social ministries in industrialized Europe and North America. There was also a tremendous push into mission frontiers, and the gospel was being preached to lands never before seen. Increasingly, the dichotomy between “Man and Machine” and “Man and God” became wider. Christianity was slowly driven from public life in the Western world, and believers were left with the problem of exerting moral influence in both pluralistic and totalitarian societies where Christian assumptions about reality no longer prevail. In the midst of these battles, the church continued to struggle over its own idolatries, especially the evils of slavery and racism.

- 1793** William Carey sails for India launching modern Protestant missions
- 1795** Many American churches, beginning with the Baptists, begin divisions over slavery
- 1801** A “Plan of Union” adopted by Presbyterians/Congregationalists
- 1801** “Catholic Persecution of 1801” launched in Korea (repeated in 1815, 1819, 1827)
- 1807** *William Wilberforce, evangelical Christian, leads Parliament in abolishing slave trade in British Empire
- 1810** Cumberland Presbyterian Church founded in US
- 1810** American Board of Commission for Foreign Missions
- 1811** Disciples of Christ and Church of Christ founded
- 1816** African Methodist Episcopal Church (AME)
- 1819** Channing publishes *Unitarian Christianity*
- 1827** John N. Darby founds the Plymouth Brethren, popularizing dispensationalism
- 1828** Presbyterian Church of Ghana founded by Swiss
- 1844** First Adventist churches formed; YMCA/YWCA founded in London
- 1845** Issue of slavery causes split into Southern Baptist Convention and Northern (now ABC)
- 1848** Karl Marx publishes *Communist Manifesto*
- 1854** Immaculate Conception made dogma in Roman Catholic Church by Pius IX
- 1855** Dwight L. Moody and Charles Finney help launch “revivalism” in urban areas-
- 1857** South Africa’s Dutch Reformed Church allows racially segregated eucharist/communion, inaugurating apartheid (separateness); separate Coloured DRC established
- 1858** Presbyterian Church of Brazil (IPB) founded in Rio de Janeiro by Rev. Ashbel Simonton
- 1859** Charles Darwin publishes *On the Origin of Species*
- 1861** * “Old School” Presbyterian Church divides North and South over slavery
- 1865** J. Hudson Taylor founds China Inland Mission
- 1870** First Vatican Council declares papal infallibility
- 1878** William and Catherine Booth, devout Christians, found Salvation Army
- 1884** Presbyterian missionaries arrive in Korea, such as Dr. Horace Allen, Rev. Horace and Lillias Underwood, and Rev. Samuel Moffett (1890)
- 1887** Christian & Missionary Alliance (C&MA) founded by Presbyterian pastor Albert Simpson
- 1891** Presbyterian Church of East Africa (PCEA) founded in Kenya by Scottish Christians
- 1895** Evangelical Alliance declares five “fundamentals” of the faith against modernism: The inerrancy of Scripture, the deity of Jesus, the virgin birth, Jesus’ death as substitutionary atonement, his physical resurrection, and his imminent return
- 1906** Azusa Street Revival in Los Angeles launches modern Pentecostalism
- 1910** *World Missionary Conference at Edinburgh, precursor to WCC
- 1910** *The Fundamentals* published, starting modern fundamentalist movement
- 1911** Social Creed of the Churches adopted
- 1914** Pentecostals such as Assemblies of God, and later Church of God and Four-Square Gospel denominations form in the wake of Azusa Street Revivals



The African slave trade

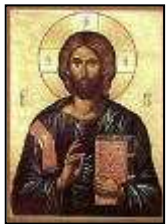
The Age of Ideologies (1914-1990)

The depth of the problem was apparent in the Age of Ideologies, when new gods arose to claim the loyalties of secular people. Nazism idolized the state; Fascism exalted the cult of personality; Communism worshiped the party; and American Democracy revered the rights of the individual. Supposedly “enlightened, modern, Christian” nations waged two global wars in an attempt to establish the supremacy of these new competing gods. When no single ideology prevailed, a cold war of coexistence settled upon the once Christian nations. Through these troubled times the denominations struggled over orthodox and liberal theologies, sought fresh ways to recover lost unity, and reflected a new hunger for apostolic experiences. After World War II, a vigorous new Christian leadership emerged in Asia, Africa, and Latin America, offering fresh hope for the old faith. The church has stagnated in North America, and declined inexorably in Western Europe. However, the church is gaining steadily in the developing world. Ironically, the future of the church appears to be in what was once considered by Western Christians to be “the ends of the earth.”

- 1914** World War I begins; ends in 1918
- 1925** *Modernists and Fundamentalists battle 40 years for control of PCUSA
- 1929** PCUSA Fundamentalists lose Princeton Seminary; Westminster founded
- 1930** Women become eligible for the office of ruling elder in Presbyterian Church
- 1934** *Barmen Declaration drafted by Karl Barth and the Confessing Church to counter “German Christians” and national Evangelical Church’s complicity with Nazism
- 1939** World War II begins; ends in 1945
- 1945** Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Lutheran pastor, hanged by Hitler for conspiracy to kill Hitler
- 1947** Dead Sea Scrolls discovered
- 1949** Billy Graham begins prominent career as evangelist to the world
- 1950** Evangelical Free Church of America, merger of Swedish and Norwegian/Danish
- 1956** Women become eligible for the office of ordained minister in Presbyterian Church
- 1956** Presbyterian Church of East Africa gains autonomy from Church of Scotland
- 1958** PCUSA and UPCNA merge to form UPCUSA (Northern stream)
- 1962** *Roman Catholic Church opens Vatican II: accepts Protestants as “separated brethren”, revokes excommunication of the Great Schism (East-West Schism of 1054), encourages mass in local vernacular
- 1964** MLK receives Nobel Peace Prize for Civil Rights
- 1973** Ultra-conservatives leave PCUS over women’s ordination, form Presbyterian Church in America
- 1983** *Mainline Presbyterians (North-UPCUSA/ South-PCUS) reunite to form historic PCUSA
- 1989** Fall of Berlin Wall precipitates end of communism
- 2004** *Church of All Nations chartered in Minneapolis



Postscript



At various times in the history of the church, Jesus Christ has been the Jewish Messiah of the believing remnant, the Wisdom of the Greek apologists, the Cosmic King of the imperial church, the Heavenly Logos of the orthodox councils, the Supreme Justice of papal courts, the Prime Mover of the scholastic thinkers, the monastic Model of apostolic poverty, and the personal Savior of evangelical revivalists. Truly, he is fully God and fully human. Our perception of Christ may change with the times, but the Word made flesh in Jesus endures forever.