

Christian Theology Timeline



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1534

- In the Act of Supremacy, Parliament declares King Henry VIII to be "supreme head on earth of the Church of England," thus breaking with the church of Rome and initiating the English Reformation.

1536

- Menno Simons begins ministering among the surviving Dutch Anabaptists after the Anabaptist takeover of the city of Munster is ruthlessly suppressed; he leads them in a resolutely pacifist direction so successfully that they came to be called Mennonites; John Calvin begins his work as pastor, teacher, and theologian in Geneva, becoming the most influential theologian in the Reformed tradition; the first of five editions of his *Institutes* is published.

1545-1563

- The Council of Trent meets- with numerous lengthy interruptions- and provides the official Roman Catholic response to Protestant theology as well as measures for the renewal of the Catholic church.

1549

- The first edition of the Book of Common Prayer of the Church of England is issued under the authority of King Edward VI.

1559

- The Act of Uniformity under Queen Elizabeth I establishes the Elizabethan Settlement, the mature form of the English Reformation.

1560s

- In the Vestiarian controversy, Puritan theology begins to take shape, initially as the more Reformed wing of the Church of England.

1563

- The *39 Articles*, the official confessional document of the Church of England, is issued under Queen Elizabeth I.

1567

- Rome officially condemns the teachings of Catholic theologian Michael Baius ("Baianism").

1572

- With John of the Cross as her confessor and spiritual director, Theresa of Avila comes to the ultimate state of inner union with God in this life, called spiritual marriage.

1577

- Anabaptists are granted toleration under William I of Orange in the Netherlands.

1580

- The *Formula of Concord* is published in the *Book of Concord* together with other Lutheran confessional documents such as the Augsburg Confession to settle a number of disputes among Lutheran theologians about free will, justification, and other issues.

1598-1607

- Formal debates on the help of grace (*de Auxiliis*) are held in Rome between Molinists and Thomists; the issue is ultimately left unresolved by the pope, thus legitimizing both positions as acceptable theological opinions.

1609

- Formation of the first English Baptist congregation from a Puritan Separatist congregation in exile in the Netherlands.

1616

- Francis de Sales publishes his major work, *Treatise on the Love of God*.

1618-1619

- Reformed theologians at the Synod of Dort in Holland reject Arminianism and formulate five points of Calvinism.

1640

- Posthumous publication of Cornelius Jansen's book *Augustinus*, which becomes the bone of contention in the Jansenist controversy.

1647

- The Westminster Confession, the most important Reformed confessional document in English, especially important among Presbyterians, is accepted by authority of Parliament in the course of the English Civil War.

1648

- In New England, the Cambridge Platform establishes the Congregationalist form of church governance.

1650

- The Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) begins to form around the preaching of George Fox in England.

1653

- Pope condemns five propositions attributed to Jansen's *Augustinus*, bringing the Jansenist controversy to a head in France.

1662

- In New England, the Halfway Covenant allows baptized but unconverted Christians to be members of the Congregationalist (Puritan) church.

1675

- Lutheran pastor Philipp Jakob Spener publishes his book *Pia Desideria* ("Pious Desires") in Germany, inaugurating the Pietist movement.

1687

- Rome condemns Quietism.

1689

- The Act of Toleration in England legalizes Protestant groups that dissent from the established Church of England.

1695

- The French church condemns Madame Guyon's teachings for their Quietist tendencies.

1696

- John Toland publishes the first major work of deism, *Christianity not Mysterious*.

1699

- Rome condemns Fénelon's "semi-Quietist" teaching of "pure love."

1722

- Protestants fleeing persecution in Moravia begin settling in Herrnhut, Germany, at the invitation of Count von Zinzendorf, who later becomes their bishop and the leading theologian of the Moravian church.

1734

- A period of revival begins in Jonathan Edwards's congregation in Northampton, Massachusetts, which he describes in his influential book *A Faithful Narrative of the Surprising Work of God* (1737), one of the founding documents of Revivalism.

1739

- John Wesley begins his career as itinerant preacher of revival and leader of the Methodist movement.

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- The Great Awakening, a revival of religion whose most important theological advocate is Jonathan Edwards, begins to spread throughout New England.

1764

- Voltaire publishes his *Philosophical Dictionary*, a collection of deist satirical essays highly critical of Christianity.

1794

- Thomas Paine publishes the first part of *The Age of Reason*, the most important work of American deism.

1799

- Friedrich Schleiermacher takes an initial step toward the founding of liberal Protestant theology by publishing his book, *On Religion: Speeches to Its Cultured Despisers*.

1811

- Schleiermacher becomes the first professor of theology at the new University of Berlin, soon to become one of the most influential universities in the world.

1824

- Charles Finney begins applying "new measures" in revival preaching, based on a much greater emphasis on free will than in Jonathan Edwards's Revivalist theology.

1832

- John Nelson Darby, a founding figure in Plymouth Brethren, begins teaching Dispensationalist theology.

1836

- Methodist teacher Phoebe Palmer begins leading the Tuesday Night Meetings for the Promotion of Holiness in her home in New York City, inaugurating the Holiness tradition.

1854

- In *Ineffabilis Deus* ("The Ineffable God"), Pope Pius IX defines the Blessed Virgin Mary's Immaculate Conception as a doctrine to be believed by all the faithful.

1864

- Pope Pius IX promulgates the *Syllabus of Errors*, denouncing a large number of modern beliefs.

1867

- The National Camp Meeting Association for the Promotion of Holiness begins spreading Holiness teachings.

1870

- Pope Pius IX, with the approval of the First Vatican Council, defines the doctrine of papal infallibility as well as the doctrine that God can be known by natural reason.

1875

- A meeting of Presbyterians and Anglicans in Keswick, England, begins the Keswick movement, which adapts Holiness teachings to non-perfectionist (that is, non-Methodist) traditions.

1879

- Pope Leo XIII's encyclical *Aeterni Patris* promotes "the restoration of Christian philosophy according to the mind of Saint Thomas Aquinas," thus giving a major boost to neo-Thomism.

1906

- Albert Schweitzer publishes *The Quest of the Historical Jesus*, arguing that the quest was a failure because the historical Jesus was an eschatological prophet belonging to his time, not ours; The Azusa Street Revival begins in Los Angeles; it lasts several years and gives birth to Pentecostalism.

1910-1915

- Publication of *The Fundamentals*, a series of books from which the Fundamentalist movement later took its name.

1917

- Publication of the second edition of the *Scotfield Reference Bible*, which becomes the most important text of the Dispensationalist movement.

1922

- Harry Emerson Fosdick's sermon "Shall the Fundamentalists Win?" defines the key issues on the modernist side of the Fundamentalist-modernist controversy.

1923

- J Gresham Machen's book *Christianity and Liberalism* defines the key issues on the Fundamentalist side of the Fundamentalist-modernist controversy.

1925

- The Scopes "Monkey Trial" results in the cultural discrediting and marginalization of Fundamentalism, and spurs anti-intellectualism within the Fundamentalist movement.

1950

- The papal bull *Munificentissimus Deus* (The Most Munificent God) defines the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary, her being taken body and soul into heaven, as doctrine to be held by all the faithful; the papal encyclical *Humani Generis* condemns theologies which deny that God could have created human nature without directing it to a supernatural happiness.

1962-1965

- The Second Vatican Council provides measures for the renewal of the Roman Catholic church as well as ecumenical openings toward non-Roman churches.