

Church History

Timeline By Century

Taken From Christianity.com

6th Century

We are now in the early Middle Ages. Frankly, this, the longest era in Christian history, is the one we find most difficult to grasp and interpret.

It seems such an alien time, yet there was an amazing and gradual progression that paved the way for us to receive the gospel. Then, as now, the pure molten gold of the gospel went forth in crucibles of iron.

At the risk of gross oversimplification, let me suggest ten "M" words to give some overview hooks for the Middle Ages:

- Migrations of barbarian tribes that reshaped Roman world
 - Missions--often heroic ventures that over seven centuries reached all Europe
- -- Monasticism--first a reaction against worldliness, becomes preserver of learning, Scripture and spearhead of missions and education
- -- Men of the papacy
- -- Manorial culture and economy
- -- Mutuality of Church and State
- -- Menace of Church divisiveness--quest for truth has never been easy nor always clean
- -- Islam which overtook established Christian centers and posed grave threat to Christianity

- -- Mentality of accommodation to paganism as "the stream imbibes the color of the soil through which it flows."
- Mysticism of High Middle Ages

As one who has always had difficulty understanding monks and popes, this by historian Norman Cantor has given me much to think about: The Latin church was preserved from extinction, and European civilization with it, by the two ecclesiastical institutions that alone had the strength and efficiency to withstand the impress of the surrounding barbarism: ...monasticism and the papacy.

The Civilization of the Middle Ages, p. 146 - Ken Curtis

- 529--Responding to growing secularization of the church, Benedict of Nursia establishes monastery of Monte Cassino and the Benedictine Order. Benedict's "Rule" for monks (c. 540) will become the most influential over future centuries.
- 530-532--Boniface II, first pope of Germanic ancestry
- Church and State are becoming more closely intertwined. Emperor Justinian (483-565) closes 1,000-year-old School of Philosophy in Athens 529, issues Code of Civil Laws reflecting Christian morals, sends missionaries as spies to China to smuggle out silkworms, reconquers N. Africa from the Vandals.
- Church buildings become more monumental. Justinian builds Hagia Sophia in Constantinople, dedicated to Christ as the "Holy Wisdom." Constructed 532-537.
- **Dionysius Exiguus** (d. c. 550), a monk in Rome, establishes modern system of dating, using events after Christ as "Anno Domini," in the year of our Lord. (He missed the date of Christ's birth by a few years.)
- **Columba** (c. 521-597) goes as missionary to Scotland. Mission headquarters at Iona.

- Conversion of barbarian groups continues. Recared, Visigoth King in Spain and an Arian, becomes Roman Catholic.
- By the end of century the Western church tolerates magic and other manifestations of pagan spirituality as diverse cultures are incorporated into the church.
- Pope Gregory the Great ((c.540-604) gives the mass much of the shape it has today.