

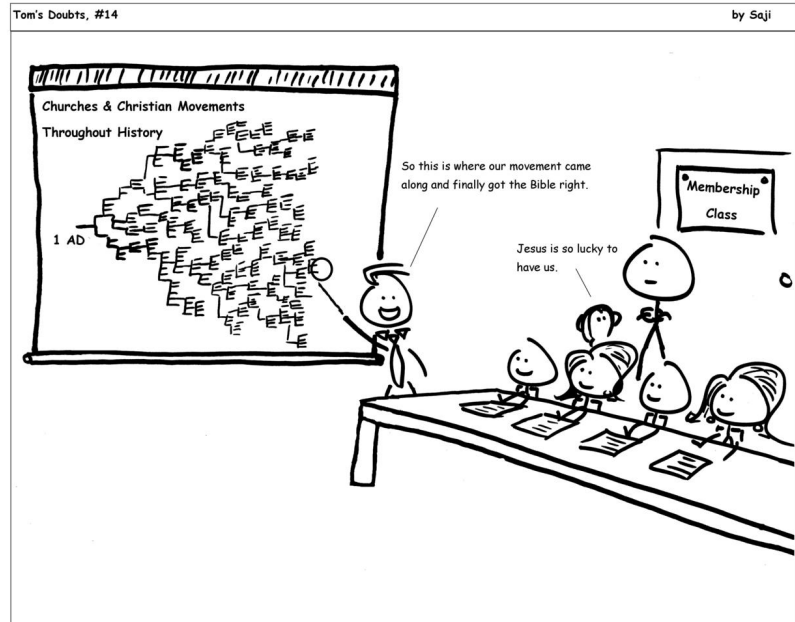
Presbyterians: John Knox to J. Gresham Machen

Further reading and source material

- *Seeking a Better Country: 300 Years of American Presbyterianism* by D.G. Hart and John R. Muether

Presbyterian derives from the Greek word “*presbuteros*” translated in the New Testament to “elder.”

- So, “Presbyterian” simply means “church by means of elders.”
- It is a branch of Protestantism that embraces biblical Reformation not just for our theology of salvation, but also for our theology of worship and our theology of church government.

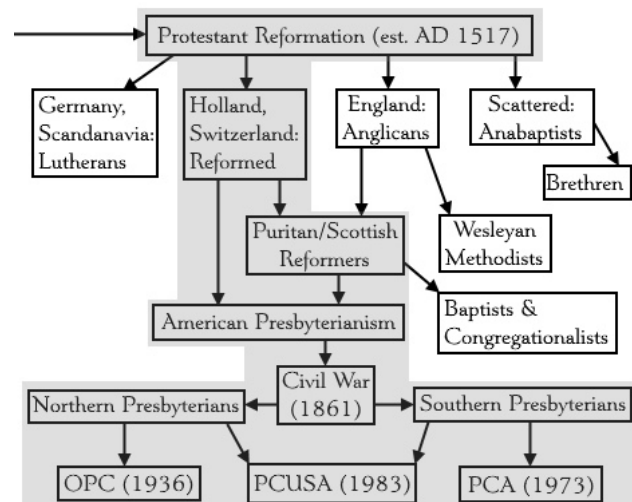


From Adam to John Knox in Scotland

- In 1560, John Knox (who had studied in Geneva with John Calvin) persuaded Scotland's Parliament to abolish the authority of the pope, prohibit the celebration of mass, and approve the Scots Confession.
- In 1564, the Scottish Church produced a Book of Common Order to facilitate Word-based worship and church government by elders.
- In the 1640s, the Westminster Confession and Catechisms, the Directory for Public Worship, and the Form of Presbyterian Church Government replaced these original documents
- In 1689–90, the British government officially established a (Presbyterian) Church of Scotland.

Scotland to North America

- ‘Covenanters’ and ‘Seceders’ were Scottish Presbyterians separate from the official Church of Scotland. Even after coming to America, they remained separate, continuing thus today: the Reformed Presbyterian Church of North America (RPCNA) and Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church (ARPC)
- Unlike the Covenanters and Seceders, many Scottish and Scots–Irish Presbyterian immigrants came to the American colonies without any support from a mother church, and without any ‘patronage’ from colonial governments—which governments were often controlled by Episcopalians or Congregationalists.



- The first Presbyterian church in America was organized in 1662 in Jamaica (now in Queens, NYC).
- In 1683, an Ulster (northern Irish) Presbyterian minister named Francis Makemie came to Maryland.
- By 1706, the first presbytery—the Presbytery of Philadelphia—was organized by seven ministers.
- By 1729, 43 ministers, 3 presbyteries (Philadelphia, New Castle, and Long Island) and 1 Synod

Three emphases in Reformed and Presbyterian churches:

Experiential Emphasized the importance of intense, personal Christian experience. Tended to be less formal and more subjective.	Theological Emphasized the importance of correct doctrine and organized churches. Tended to be less individualistic and more formal.	Transformational Emphasized the Puritan hope of a “city on a hill” that would bring Christian renewal to all of society.
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1720–1758 and the (First) Great Awakening

- In the late 1720s-1730s, Experiential Presbyterians were rejoicing at the outbreak of numerous local and regional revivals. Then in 1739-41, George Whitefield arrived and itinerated throughout the colonies—effectively “nationalizing” the revivals into a widespread “Great Awakening.”
- While all Presbyterians rejoiced in the genuine conversions occurring, the Theological Presbyterians were frustrated by how itinerating pastors disrupted local church ministry. They also found some of the itinerant ministers’ preaching “highly emotional and theatrical,” and potentially manipulative.
- In March 1740, the Experiential pastor Gilbert Tennent preached “The Danger of an Unconverted Ministry”
- 1745 Bitter infighting split the Presbyterians: “New Side” Synod of NY & “Old Side” Synod of Philadelphia
- Yet by 1749, even Gilbert Tennent had witnessed excesses he could not support. That same year he preached another sermon in which he recanted his extremism and called for reunion. When the two Synods finally reunited in 1758 (almost a decade later!), he was elected its moderator.

1766–1789 and the Revolutionary War

- From 1766 onward, Presbyterians began corresponding and meeting with Congregationalists from New England to work together on “spreading the gospel and preserving the religious liberties of the churches.”
- In 1775, as war loomed, the Presbyterian Synod issued a pastoral letter that:
 - Called for loyalty to King George III and allegiance to the British nation
 - Called for prayers and loyalty to the Continental Congress
 - Stated: “there is no example in history in which civil liberty was destroyed, and the rights of conscience preserved entire.”
- A Hessian (German) captain fighting for the British said, “Call this war... not an American rebellion, it is nothing more or less than an Irish-Scotch Presbyterian Rebellion.”
- Presbyterian ministers were labeled “ringleaders of rebellion” and arrested; sometimes their homes were ransacked. Services were disrupted. Churches buildings were razed; soldiers broke up pews for firewood!
- In 1783 as the war ended, the Presbyterian Synod issued another pastoral letter:
 - “We cannot help congratulating you on the general and almost universal attachment of the Presbyterian body to the cause of liberty and the rights of mankind.”
 - “The Synod, therefore, request you to render thanks to Almighty God... in a particular manner for establishing the Independence of the United States of America.”
- By 1789, the church had grown to 177 ministers, 16 presbyteries and 420 churches. This was too big for one synod, and so the church established a national General Assembly, 4 synods, and 16 presbyteries.
- Revise the WCF removing portions which gave civil authorities any administration or discipline of the church. *
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