

The Mustard Tree

The history of the Church and especially of Plymouth Brethren has been marked by many splits into smaller and smaller groups who do not associate with one another. The first diagram is based on information from www.request.org.uk and shows the larger branches of the Church. The second diagram is my attempt to show the details of one of the smaller branches, namely the Plymouth Brethren, reflecting the history of their divisions, and showing which groups were derived from which.

The historical evidence relating to this history is confusing and sometimes contradictory. The main sources that I used in order to cobble together this first model were as follows.

1. <http://www.brethrenonline.org/faqs/PBHIST.HTM>, produced by Shawn B. Abigail in September 1997
2. <http://www.brethrenonline.org/books/1870HIS.HTM> written by W. R. Dronsfield
3. <http://web.archive.org/web/20031017093443/www.exclusivebrethren.net/timeline.html>, which was produced by Dick Wyman, with some help from [Frank Marotta](#) of Elkton, Maryland, USA, [Alistair Deayton](#) of Paisley, Scotland, and [Jeremy Yallop](#) of England.
4. <http://www.mybrethren.org/history/framhist.htm> compiled by Gordon Rainbow in collaboration with Jeff Kuns.
5. My life, in and out of the brethren by Alistair Deayton, which you can find by going to <http://www.peebs.net> and clicking on *Library* followed by *Personal Stories*
6. <http://www.bruederbewegung.de/pdf/piepkorn.pdf> written by Arthur Carl Piepkorn
7. <http://www.request.org.uk/main/churches/denominations/denominations01.htm>
8. Wikipaedia. See http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Exclusive_Brethren#Further_Divisions_amongst_Post-Aberdeen_Brethren
9. <http://www.pembrokebiblechapel.com/closed.asp>

In a paper presented to a combined conference of the Romaine Park Christian Centre and Montello Baptist Church, May 1993, Rowland Croucher estimated that there are 22,800 Christian denominations. According to the World Christian Encyclopaedia (2001 Edition) there are 33830 Christian denominations. So it is clear that these diagrams show only the main branches without the twigs.

I shall be very grateful if people with access to historical evidence can check these diagrams for accuracy and perhaps fill in some missing dates and other details.

The title is derived from the parable of Mark 4:30-32, in which the Kingdom of Heaven is likened to a grain of mustard seed that grew into a tree with such big branches that it could provide shelter for all the birds of the air.

Ian C. McKay, June 2008

The Main Branches of the Church



