

# **Christian Heroes**

## **A Survey of Church History**

**Christian Biographies From**  
**The Early Church**  
**The Middle Ages**  
**The Reformation Era**  
**Modern Times**

**Compiled & Edited By**  
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**Dedicated to My Children,  
Jesse, Heidi, Emily, Jody, Peter, Nathan, Stephen**

# **Christian Heroes**

## **of the**

## **Early Church**

<b><u>Year</u></b>	<b><u>Name</u></b>	<b><u>Page</u></b>
	The Early Church	6
	Introduction	7
64	Peter	8
64	Paul	9
98	John	10
100	Clement of Rome	11
115	Ignatius of Antioch	12
132	Justin Martyr	13
155	Polycarp	14
177	Irenaeus	15
212	Tertullian	16
230	Origen	17
246	Cyprian	18
285	Antony	19
312	Constantine the Great	20
325	Athanasius	21
357	Basil the Great	22
374	Ambrose	23
386	Jerome	24
386	John Chrysostom	25
386	Augustine	26
431	Cyril of Alexandria	27
432	Patrick	28
451	Leo the Great	29

# Christian Heroes

## of the

# Middle Ages

<u>Year</u>	<u>Name</u>	<u>Page</u>
	The Middle Ages	32
	Introduction	33
527	Justinian I	34
529	Benedict of Nursia	35
540	Cassiodorus	36
563	Columba	37
590	Gregory the Great	38
692	Bede	39
732	Boniface	40
782	Alcuin	41
800	Charlemagne	42
994	Odilo	43
1073	Gregory VII	44
1093	Anselm	45
1115	Peter Abelard	46
1115	Bernard of Clairvaux	47
1170	Thomas Becket	48
1198	Innocent III	49
1210	Francis of Assisi	50
1261	Thomas Aquinas	51
1361	John Wycliffe	52
1402	Jan Hus	53
1429	Thomas a Kempis	54
1498	Savonarola	55

# Christian Heroes of the **Reformation Era**

<u>Year</u>	<u>Name</u>	<u>Page</u>
	The Reformation Era	56
	Introduction	57
1514	Erasmus	58
1517	Martin Luther	59
1521	Philip Melanchthon	60
1521	Ignatius of Loyola	61
1525	William Tyndale	62
1525	Ulrich Zwingli	63
1525	Conrad Grebel	64
1533	Thomas Cranmer	65
1534	Francis Xavier	66
1535	Hugh Latimer	67
1535	Contarini	68
1536	John Calvin	69
1536	Menno Simons	70
1559	John Knox	71
1562	Teresa of Avila	72
1567	John of the Cross	73
1620	William Bradford	74
1641	Richard Baxter	75
1650	George Fox	76
1654	Blaise Pascal	77
1666	Philipp Spener	78
1678	John Bunyan	79

# Christian Heroes

## of

# Modern Times

<u>Year</u>	<u>Name</u>	<u>Page</u>
	Modern Times	80
	Introduction	81
1700	Susanna Wesley	82
1707	Isaac Watts	83
1727	Jonathan Edwards	84
1737	Count Zinzendorf	85
1738	John Wesley	86
1739	Charles Wesley	87
1740	George Whitefield	88
1764	John Newton	89
1780	William Wilberforce	90
1784	Francis Asbury	91
1784	Thomas Coke	92
1793	William Carey	93
1794	Richard Allen	94
1837	Phoebe Palmer	95
1841	David Livingstone	96
1845	John Newman	97
1846	Pius IX	98
1850	Harriet Tubman	99
1854	Charles Spurgeon	100
1854	Hudson Taylor	101
1858	Fanny Crosby	102
1873	Dwight Moody	103

# Christian Heroes of the Early Church

000 – 500

**Christian Biographies  
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## **Introduction to the Early Church**

What happened to the Christian Church after Peter and Paul and all the Apostles died? How did the Christian faith withstand fierce persecution and attack from the Roman Empire during its early years? What enabled the Church to survive through the difficulties of the Middle Ages? How did the Reformation get started, and what was it all about? How did the faith come to the New World and take hold in America?

To answer these questions we need to move into the study of Church History. Of course, the history of the Christian Church covers a very long time – nearly two thousand years. So it is often conveniently broken down into smaller sections. We will follow this practice in our own study, covering our material in four sections:

The Early Church	000 – 500
The Middle Ages	500 – 1500
The Reformation Era	1500s – 1600s
Modern Times	1700s – 1800s

In this first section, we will consider various Christian Heroes of the Early Church – during the first five hundred years. In many ways the early history of Christianity is totally unique, since it laid the foundation for all that was to follow. The Christian faith had to be articulated and developed and lived out in the midst of a hostile and persecuting Roman Empire. Orthodox doctrine had to be hammered out and defended over and against a wide range of heresies and attacks. The Early Church had an urgency and a vibrancy all its own, and its Christian Heroes are so important that it is well that they are known to us today as the Church Fathers.

## Peter

### 64

Simon Peter the fisherman is without a doubt one of the most colorful persons of the New Testament. He was introduced to Jesus by his brother Andrew, and quickly became one of Jesus' twelve disciples. He was the first to declare publicly that Jesus was the Messiah, the Son of the Living God. But he was also the one who denied Jesus three times on the night of his arrest. After the resurrection, Peter was one of the first to meet the risen Jesus, who specifically restored him to his position as leader of the disciples. And after the ascension, Peter emerged as the leader of the Apostles, while also writing two of the books of the New Testament: the letters of **1 & 2 Peter**.

Peter's later life is somewhat obscure. He may have worked in Asia Minor, and perhaps visited Corinth, but ultimately settled in Rome. He is believed to have been martyred at Rome during the Emperor Nero's persecution of Christians, around AD 64.

After Peter's confession of Christ, Jesus said to him, "I tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell will not prevail against it." (Matthew 16:18) Many Christians have understood these words as indicating the "Primacy of Peter" and as instituting the office of Pope as the Vicar of Christ on earth. We will cover the lives of a number of the Popes during our study of Church History.

Peter's life and faith are perhaps best summed up in his own words: "*Praise be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead ...*" (1 Peter 1:3)

## Paul 64

The life of the Apostle Paul receives comprehensive coverage in the New Testament, both in the Acts of the Apostles and in his own writings. These include the letters of **Romans, 1 & 2 Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, 1 & 2 Thessalonians, 1 & 2 Timothy, Titus and Philemon** – thirteen letters in all, making up over half of all the books of the New Testament.

We know that Paul was born into a Jewish family in Tarsus, that he was a strict Pharisee, and that he was commissioned by the high priest to arrest Christians. But on his way to Damascus, Paul was converted through a vision of the Risen Christ. Eventually he emerged as the “Preacher to the Gentiles,” engaging in the evangelistic work which made him the most outstanding Christian missionary of at least the first century, if not of all time.

After three major missionary journeys which took him to such places as Cyprus, Asia Minor, Macedonia, Corinth and Ephesus, Paul was seized by a Jewish mob which opposed his message, and appealed to the Roman Emperor for justice. After two years in Rome (at which point the account in Acts ends) Christian tradition tells us that Paul was martyred in Rome along with Peter, during the Emperor Nero’s persecution of Christians in AD 64.

Paul’s theology, particularly with its emphasis on justification by grace through faith in Christ, has had an enormous impact on the Christian Church. Augustine in the early church, Luther in the Reformation era, and Wesley in modern times were all profoundly impacted by Paul’s concept of grace as a free and undeserved gift of God revealed in Christ’s death for sinners.

## John 98

John was probably a young man, perhaps still a teenager, when he and his brother James were called by Jesus and left their fishermen's nets to follow him. Although John and James were known by the nickname "Sons of Thunder," they matured under Jesus's guidance, and John came to be known as the "Apostle of Love." Much later in life, in fact towards the end of the first century as a very old man, John wrote several of the books of the New Testament: not only the **Gospel of John**, but also **1, 2 & 3 John**, and **Revelation**.

John's Gospel is often described as the most profound and mystical of all; while the other Gospels seem to focus more on the human side of Jesus, John is concerned more with the **divine side of Jesus**. His Gospel is written in simple and clear words, all to the end "that you may know that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name." (John 20:31) Included in this Gospel is perhaps the most famous verse in all of the Bible: "For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish, but have eternal life." (John 3:16). It is in this Gospel that we read the precious promises of Christ: "I am the bread of heaven ... I am the light of the world ... I am the good shepherd ... I am the door ... I am the way, the truth and the life ... I am the resurrection and the life ... I am the true vine."

The Book of Revelation is John's vision of heaven, received while he was in exile on the island of Patmos. Although many of the details of this book are difficult to interpret, still the central theme of Revelation shines clearly: no matter how dark and despairing the times may seem .... no matter how much persecution and evil and suffering .... Jesus is still the Sovereign Lord of all history.

## Clement of Rome

### 100

Clement was one of the early elders or presbyters or bishops of Rome, who died about the year 100. Very little is actually known of his life. Some people think he may have been the Clement mentioned by the Apostle Paul in Philippians 4:3, although this is far from certain. Others believe that Clement knew Peter and Paul personally, and was a kind of successor to them. While this is not certain either, it is true that Clement does make vague reference to the martyrdoms of Peter and Paul in a letter which many believe he wrote.

This letter to which Clement has been linked is in fact his primary “claim to fame,” for it is **the earliest surviving Christian writing apart from the New Testament**. Because of its association with Clement, the letter has been give the title **1 Clement**. It is an open letter from the church at Rome to the church at Corinth, after severe persecution of the Christians by the Roman Emperor. It was written to counter the disruption and disturbance in the church at Corinth, where some of the older leaders had been deposed by younger figures. The theme of the letter is that **order in the church can be preserved by recalling the evils of jealousy and strife, and by practicing the virtue of humility.**

The letter of **1 Clement** sheds interesting light on church life soon after the age of the apostles. There is no trace of a single ruling bishop; instead, the leaders of the church are called bishops, elders and deacons. In addition to its emphasis on maintaining order through humility, the letter stresses that Christian faith needs to be accompanied by good works. Other writings, such as **2 Clement**, have been wrongly ascribed to Clement of Rome.

**Ignatius of Antioch**  
**115**

Ignatius, as his popular name suggests, was the bishop of the church at Antioch early in the second century. The little that is known about him comes almost entirely from a series of **Seven Letters** which he wrote about the year 115, during his journey to Rome to be martyred for his Christian faith.

Ignatius was a colorful and even somewhat eccentric individual, given to strong ideas and forceful language. He believed that he possessed the Holy Spirit's gift of "prophecy." And yet his writings mark him clearly as an important leader in the early days of the church.

Ignatius strongly condemned some wrong ideas which were popular at that time, such as the teaching that Jesus only **seemed** to be a man, being only a pure spirit-being, uncontaminated by this material world. Against this false teaching, Ignatius emphasized **the true humanity of Jesus**. He also argued strongly that there should be **one "bishop" in charge of each congregation**, in order to prevent splits in the church and to ensure that correct beliefs were preserved. Further, he put high value on the **Eucharist, or Holy Communion, as a means of ensuring unity** and of stressing the reality of Jesus' becoming a man.

Ignatius was so **eager to become a martyr** and to die for his Christian faith that he begged the Christians in Rome not to prevent his expected execution. His death at Rome was asserted in later years by Polycarp, who had earlier gathered together the various writings of Ignatius into one collection for the benefit of all the Christian Churches.

## Justin Martyr

132

Justin Martyr was born to pagan parents in the land of Palestine, in the city which in Old Testament times was known as Shechem. As a young man, he was intent on finding intellectual peace and satisfaction, and he searched earnestly for the truth in all the leading philosophies of his day: Plato, Aristotle, and so on. Then one day, while meditating alone by the seashore at Ephesus, Justin met an old man who exposed the weaknesses of his confident thinking and then pointed him to Jesus as the “one sure worthy philosophy.” Justin had earlier been impressed by the witness of Christians facing death, and he was converted to strong faith in Christ as God’s perfect revelation of truth.

From his conversion in about the year 132, Justin sought to proclaim his newfound faith in Christ, and he taught in many of the leading cities of the ancient world, including Ephesus and Rome. His theme was that **God, who had been known only in part through the wisdom of the ancient world, was now perfectly revealed in Jesus Christ.** His appeals were vigorous and urgent.

Justin’s writings reveal him as a superb **apologist or defender of the Christian faith.** On the one hand, Justin defended Christianity against **pagan attacks.** His important work, **First Apology**, addressed to the Emperor, argued that Christian beliefs and practices reflect the highest reason and morality; and his Second Apology protested the execution of Christians. On the other hand, Justin also defended Christianity against **Jewish attacks.** His other important work, **Dialogue with Trypho**, a learned Jew, set forth Christ as the fulfillment of the Jewish law. Justin was martyred for his faith in Rome about the year 165.

**Polycarp**  
**155**

Polycarp served for many years as the Bishop of Smyrna (on the coast of modern Turkey). We know him as a strong Christian, a faithful pastor, a proclaimer of the traditions of the Apostles, and a strong defender of the orthodox Christian faith. Irenaeus, who studied under Polycarp, recalled as a young man hearing Polycarp describe his conversation with the Apostle John. This indicates that Polycarp had a direct link with an important eyewitness of Christ. His writings reveal strong warnings against the heresies which were attacking the Christian faith during his day.

Polycarp is best known, however, for his courageous martyrdom. In fact, an account of his death, which is entitled “**The Martyrdom of Polycarp,**” was addressed “to all the Christian congregations in the world.” Eusebius tells us about Polycarp’s death in his **History of the Church:**

On the appointed day, Polycarp was urged by the Roman proconsul to deny the charge against him of being a Christian, but he refused. “Deny Christ, and I will set you free,” the consul urged him. But Polycarp replied, **“For eighty six years I have been his servant, and he has never done me wrong – how can I blaspheme my King who saved me?”**

Later the proconsul threatened, “I’ll have you destroyed by fire, unless you change your attitude.” But Polycarp answered, “The fire you threaten burns for a time and is soon extinguished. But there is another fire you know nothing about – the fire of the judgment to come and of eternal punishment, the fire reserved for the ungodly.” And then Polycarp prayed, “O Father, I bless Thee for counting me worthy of this day and hour ...”

Irenaeus was born in Asia Minor (modern Turkey) and studied under Polycarp, bishop of Smyrna. In fact it was through Polycarp that Irenaeus claimed a link to the Apostolic tradition. He then went to Gaul (modern France) where he became bishop of Lyons in 177.

Two major writings by Irenaeus are available to us today. **Against Heresies** is a collection of writings defending the Christian faith against various attacks of the **Gnostics**. The Gnostics (the word comes from the Greek “gnosis” which means knowledge) claimed to possess secret knowledge of the way to salvation, but against this Irenaeus claimed that only the Church preserved the true teachings of the Apostles. His second major writing, **Proof of the Apostolic Preaching**, both defended and taught the Christian faith by expounding on the basics of Christian theology.

His writings reveal that **Irenaeus stressed the basic fundamental Christian doctrines, all of which were under attack in his day**. He affirmed that the world was created by one God; that Jesus Christ, Son of the Creator, died to save men; and that there will be a resurrection of the body. He defended the unity of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit in creation and redemption. He proclaimed the Incarnation (God becoming man in the person of Jesus Christ) as the great climax of God’s dealings with man and as the consummation of God’s plan for our salvation.

Irenaeus is important for his detailed recordings of the various heresies which were threatening the Church in his day, and for his bold defense of the Christian faith by his clear articulation of the basic Christian doctrines.

**Tertullian**  
**212**

Quinius Septimus Florens Tertullianus fortunately is known by the shortened name, Tertullian. One of the most influential leaders of the early Church, he was **the first of the Church Fathers to come from North Africa**, having been born in the middle of the second century in Carthage, North Africa, the city considered second in importance only to Rome in his time. His father was the captain of a Roman legion and provided him with the education and training to become a lawyer. But when he was about 40 years old, Tertullian was converted to Christianity. He exuberantly embraced the Gospel and used his legal skills to defend and advance Christianity.

Tertullian was **the first major Christian author to write in Latin**, and the first to be trained in the legal and rhetorical fields. He was therefore the first to use many of the technical words common in later Christian theological debates. He was the pacesetter as the church expanded its teaching and influence into the Latin speaking world, breaking new and fertile ground in theological understanding. For example, he **coined the word “Trinity”** (“Trinitas” in Latin), a word that does not appear anywhere in the Bible, to help us understand **God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit**.

Tertullian's thirty-one surviving Latin works cover a range of Christian subjects and issues, touching on all areas of human life. His masterpiece was the **Apology**, defending the Christian faith against pagan attacks, and insisting that the Church must not conform to the world. He saw that the persecution of the Church by the Romans actually strengthened the Church: “The oftener we are mown down by you, the more in number we grow ... **The blood of the martyrs is the seed of the Church.**”

## Origen

### 230

Origen was born into a Christian family in Alexandria, North Africa, about 185. He had a brilliant mind and became a teacher, becoming known as **the greatest scholar and most prolific author of the early church.** Thousands came to hear him, and many prominent pagans were converted under his teaching. A profound thinker, he focused on the relationship of philosophy and theology.

Origen is known as one of the Greek Fathers of the Church. Among his many writings, there are two that stand out. The **Hexapla** was a greatest piece of Biblical scholarship in the early church, laying out in parallel columns various texts and translations of the Old Testament; this work provided the basis for his church sermons and massive Biblical commentaries. Origen's major work in theology, **First Principles**, attempted to present the fundamental Christian doctrines systematically. He has been aptly referred to as "**the stone that sharpens us all.**"

Origen's brilliant work was not always understood or appreciated. Some did not agree with his teachings on literal, moral and allegorical interpretations of Scripture. Some of his speculations, such as the pre-existence of souls and universal salvation, were repudiated and condemned by the church.

Eventually the persecutions of the Roman Emperors ended his life. He was put in chains and tortured, placed in an iron collar and stocks, and confined to a dungeon. Although he was later released, he did not survive long after this ordeal, and died soon afterwards.

## Cyprian

### 246

Thascius Caecilius Cyprianus is fortunately known to us by the shortened name Cyprian. He was born around the year 210 to wealthy and cultured pagan parents in Carthage, North Africa. He was well trained in law and rhetoric and was probably destined for high government office when he was converted to Christ in 246. He described his conversion experience in these words: “A second birth created me a new man by means of the Spirit breathed from heaven.”

The new convert embraced his new faith so wholeheartedly that within two years, he had been made bishop of Carthage. But then the Roman Emperor began a severe persecution of the Church, and Cyprian became embroiled in a couple of difficult church disputes. One of these concerned the **treatment of “lapsed” Christians** who had denied the faith under pressure of persecution; another concerned whether Christian baptism could be received outside the mainstream church. Out of these controversies came Cyprian’s most important work, which was entitled, **The Unity of the Church**.

Cyprian was above all a **churchman**. He focused not so much on theological issues but on practical church matters. He liked to call together **regular councils of bishops**, because of his conviction that the church depended for its unity on the harmony and equality of the bishops. His love and concern for others was best shown when he helped people during the terrible plague of 252-54. Just four years after this plague, however, Cyprian was exiled under the Roman Emperor’s renewal of persecution, and beheaded outside Carthage. He faced martyrdom courageously for Christ.

Antony  
285

Antony is one of the most singularly striking figures in all of Christian history. He was born in Egypt to well-to-do Christian parents, but was unschooled because he was too shy to attend the classes! In fact, he may have been barely literate – all we have left from him are eight letters. Both of Antony's parents were dead by the time he reached adulthood.

As a young man of about twenty, Antony was in church one day and heard two Scriptures read containing pronouncements of Jesus. The first was Jesus's command to the rich young ruler: "If you want to be perfect, go, sell your possessions and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me." The second was Jesus's reminder to his disciples: "Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself."

Antony proceeded to bequeath all his property to the poor, and to place his sister in a convent. **He then went out to live the simple life of a monk by himself** – first near his house, then outside the town, then in a tomb further afield. Later seeking greater isolation, he crossed the Nile River to his "**Outer Mountain**," where he occupied a disused fort at Pispir for twenty years. Then finally he retreated to his remote "**Inner Mountain**," Mt. Colzim, near the Red Sea.

Antony was the first to attract great attention in leaving civilization for **the isolated life of a hermit**. He lived a life of great simplicity, severe hardship and incessant prayer. He is most responsible for the development of the Christian **monastic lifestyle**.

## Constantine the Great

### 312

Constantine the Great was the **first Roman Emperor to be converted to Christ**. He himself later told how his conversion came about. In the year 312, Constantine was preparing to face his great enemy, Maxentius. Alarmed by reports of Maxentius's supposed mastery of magical arts, Constantine prayed to the "Supreme God" for help. The response was a sign, a cross in the noonday sky above the sun, along with the words, "**Conquer By This.**" That night Christ appeared to him in a dream and commanded him to use this sign along with the first two letters of Christ's name as a safeguard in all engagements with his enemies. Constantine obeyed, and miraculously emerged victorious in the battle.

After this victory at the **Battle of Milvian Bridge**, Constantine became a Christian. His empire, however, remained largely pagan, and he retained many of the pagan practices; these facts have caused some to doubt the genuineness of his conversion. But in the year 312, Constantine in the **Edict of Milan decreed full legal toleration for Christianity**, and the Church enjoyed increasing favor during his reign. He gave property, gifts, financial aid and other important favors to the church and the clergy. He was a keen supporter of church building projects, especially in the Holy Land, where virtually all the shrines and churches date to his time.

One of Constantine's most important actions was the summoning of the ecumenical **Council of Nicea** in 325. This Council dealt decisively with various Christological heresies by formulating the **Nicene Creed**, which is still widely used today along with the Apostles' Creed. The Emperor also **moved the capital to Constantinople** in 330.

**Athanasius**  
**325**

Athanasius is one of the giants of Christian history because of his part in defining Christ as God. The **heretic Arius** and his followers were teaching that Christ was not the eternal Son of God, but was rather a **created being, made by God** the Father, and thus subordinate to God. Athanasius, however, insisted that if Christ was less than God then he could not be our Savior – only God could restore man to communion with himself; so **Jesus is indeed the eternal Son of God, fully God as well as fully man.**

Athanasius attended the **Council of Nicea in 325** as the secretary to the bishop of Alexandria, and had an important effect on the outcome of the Council through his notes and reports which were widely circulated. Then after the Nicene Creed was adopted, Athanasius stood like a rock in defense of the orthodox view of Christ, across many difficult years. He faced much opposition from many quarters and was exiled five times – this gave rise to the famous Latin phrase, **Athanasius Contra Mundum** (Athanasius against the world). But even in the face of such opposition, his personality, preaching and writings (such as his important early work, **On the Incarnation**) did more than anything else to achieve victory for the Nicene position.

The crucial role of Athanasius at such a critical moment in history cannot be overemphasized. In fact, one scholar says that Athanasius “**almost single-handedly saved the Church** from pagan intellectualism. By his tenacity and vision in preaching one God and Savior, he preserved from dissolution the unity and integrity of the Christian faith.” Athanasius’s work dealt not only with Christ and the Incarnation, but with the entire broad range of key theological doctrines.

## Basil the Great

### 357

Basil the Great was born into a distinguished and wealthy Christian family in Caesarea in Cappadocia (modern Turkey). In fact he and his brother Gregory of Nyssa and friend Gregory of Nazianzus are often referred to together as the “Cappadocian Fathers.”

After an excellent education in Constantinople and Athens, Basil briefly taught rhetoric. Despite being in great demand as a teacher, however, Basil had decided to devote himself to **the monastic way of life**, practicing asceticism (self-denial) while giving himself over to the devotional life of prayer. In preparation for this, after being ordained in about 357, he visited monastic settlements in Palestine, Syria and Egypt, which helped him to decide on the type of community he wanted to establish.

After a number of years, however, Basil was made bishop of Caesarea, a position which he filled ably. He showed great gifts of leadership in running the affairs of the church and in reaching out to meet the needs of the poor. And as a theologian and teacher, he exercised his strong personality and great popularity in upholding and maintaining the Nicene Creed of Athanasius; he prepared the way for the Council of Constantinople in 381 by being the first to refer to the Trinity in terms of one substance and three persons.

Basil's most important contributions, however, were in the field of **monastic life**. Up to that time monks had lived either in solitude or in small groups of two or three; Basil was the first to show how **monks could live together in communities**. This helped prepare the way for the later **community monasteries** which became very popular.

Ambrose  
374

Ambrose was born in Gaul (modern France) into a wealthy noble Christian family. He received an excellent classical education, and was trained in law, preparing to follow his father into an administrative career. He was appointed a provincial governor in northern Italy, residing in Milan.

In 374, however, Ambrose was elected **bishop of Milan** by popular acclaim, even though at that time he was not even baptized! He received baptism, ordination, and consecration as bishop. His very first act as bishop was to distribute his great wealth among the poor.

Ambrose made many important contributions as bishop of Milan. He was outstanding as a preacher and teacher, and took a strong stand against the heresy of Arianism, completing its overthrow in the West. He was also the first church leader to use his office successfully to force the Emperor to do his will; he said that the Emperor was “within the church, and not over it.”

Ambrose also became the friend and **teacher of Augustine** of Hippo, guiding him through his process of conversion to Christ and baptizing him. Augustine was later to emerge as the greatest of all the early church leaders. Ambrose, a man of many talents, also **loved to write hymns in Latin**, and was the first to introduce community and congregational hymn singing into the church. Our great heritage of congregational hymns actually goes back far beyond Fanny Crosby, Charles Wesley and Isaac Watts – to Ambrose! Our United Methodist Hymnal even has one of his hymns – can you find it? Hint: the first stanza in the original Latin goes like this:

Jesu dulcis memoria, Dans vera cordis gaudia:  
Sed super mel et Omnia, Eius dulcis praesentia.

## Jerome

### 386

Jerome was born to Christian parents in a small town in northeast Italy. Around the age of twelve, he went to Rome and studied Greek, Latin, rhetoric and philosophy. As a young man, while traveling through Gaul (modern France), he was baptized as a Christian and became committed to the ascetic (self-denying) life of a monk. This commitment led him to withdraw to the Middle East to live in the desert while mastering Hebrew, perfecting his Greek, and transcribing Biblical manuscripts.

After further travels and ordination, Jerome found himself in Rome, where he was commissioned by the Pope to make an improved **Latin translation of the Bible** (Latin was the common language of that day). In 386 he settled down to the monastic life in Bethlehem, where he spent the remaining 33 years of his life **completing his translation of the Scriptures into Latin, known as the Vulgate**, and writing commentaries on the books of the Bible.

Jerome was **the leading Biblical scholar of his time** in the western church. His scholarship and grasp of languages was unsurpassed in the early church. He used his considerable linguistic skills well in **working from the original Hebrew and Greek to translate the Bible into the language of his day**. His Latin translation, which came to be known as the Vulgate, took no less than 23 years to complete! His translation was especially important because he set the example of working from the original languages. The Vulgate has left a tremendous imprint upon the development of the church. Jerome's numerous Bible commentaries make him an early Biblical interpreter of the first order.

## John Chrysostom

### 386

John Chrysostom was born at Antioch to Christian parents. He studied philosophy and rhetoric, and was baptized as a Christian at the age of eighteen. His devotion to ascetic (self-denying) practices led him to live alone in a mountain cave for two years, an experience which ruined his health. Afterwards, returning to the city, he was eventually ordained in 386 and was appointed to preach in the principal church in Antioch.

**It was as a preacher that John excelled.** He has been called the greatest of the preachers in the early church, and one of the greatest preachers of all time. In fact, the name “Chrysostom” was given to him in the six century as a title of honor – Chrysostomos comes from two Greek words and means literally **“Golden-Mouthed.”** **He preached regular series of sermons based on various books of the Bible.**

In 398 John was made patriarch or bishop of Constantinople. It was not easy for him to serve in this position. He acquired many enemies, including the Empress, whom he angered by his bold preaching against sin. A brief exile was followed by bloodshed on Easter of 404, after which John was exiled and died three years later. His body was later brought back to Constantinople and buried in the Church of the Apostles.

Nearly all of John’s writings, including hundreds of sermons, have survived. He has been honored for his courage and piety and for his mastery of preaching – he was skilled at obtaining insights from the Scriptures and applying them practically to his listeners.

**Augustine**  
**386**

Augustine was a brilliant and gifted man who became the **greatest leader of the early church**. He was born in North Africa (modern Algeria). From childhood he was taught the Christian faith by his **devout mother Monica**, but his baptism was delayed until he was in his early thirties. He was earnestly seeking the truth, and his search caused him to seek for this truth in many of the religions and teachings of his day, but without satisfaction. Discouraged and disillusioned, he began to despair of reaching any certainty of the truth.

His travels eventually brought him to Milan, where he became friends with bishop **Ambrose**. They spent much time together, and as Ambrose worked patiently with him, Augustine discovered that Christianity could indeed satisfy all the yearnings of his mind and heart. He was now challenged to experience conversion from the world to Christ. He tells us of his conversion in his famous autobiography, known as **The Confessions**, which includes his very famous words: **“O God, you have made us for yourself, and our hearts are restless until they rest in you.”**

Eventually Augustine became **bishop of Hippo**, on the North African coast. He became a prolific writer and tireless defender of the orthodox Christian faith, insisting, **“I believe in order that I might understand.”** He emphasized and developed the doctrines of original sin, the necessity of God’s grace, the Trinity and the Church. His massive classic book, **The City of God**, focused on the coming disintegration of the Roman Empire, teaching Christians to endure the world (The City of Man) where evil reigns, while seeking the peace of the heavenly city (The City of God).

**Cyril of Alexandria**  
**431**

Very little is known of the early life of Cyril of Alexandria. He was probably destined for a career in the church, and may have learned theology among the desert monks. He was accepted into the clergy by his uncle Theophilus, and in 412 he became the patriarch or bishop of Alexandria, on the North African coast.

Recall that all through the earliest centuries of the new Christian Church, the doctrines on the person and work of Jesus Christ had to be developed and defined and defended against all kinds of misinterpretations and attacks. For example, we have already seen how Athanasius opposed the heresy of Arius (that Christ was not truly God) at the Council of Nicea in 325.

Now in Cyril's day, a man named Nestorius was teaching another incorrect view of Christ. Nestorius in his teaching was trying to explain how Christ could be both God and Man. Although it may seem somewhat strange to us today, **Nestorius actually split Jesus Christ into two distinct persons – one human, one divine.**

Over against this, Cyril of Alexandria insisted that Jesus Christ was **one person, in whom the human and divine natures were mysteriously united.** Cyril's views were expressed in his important treatise, "**That Christ is One.**" This controversy led to another important meeting – the **Council of Ephesus in 431**, which rejected the heresy of Nestorius and affirmed the orthodoxy of Cyril. Cyril's work, while somewhat ruthless and forceful and imperfect, was nonetheless important in preparing the way for Leo the Great and the definitive Council of Chalcedon in 451.

**Patrick**  
**432**

Patrick is one of the most famous figures in the early church – after all, every year we celebrate March 17<sup>th</sup> as “St. Patrick’s Day,” and most people have seen the “Prayer of St. Patrick” in one form or another. And yet, the fascinating story of his life and ministry for Christ is not always well known.

Patrick was born, not in Ireland, as one might suppose, but in Roman Britain, near the modern town of Dumbarton, Scotland. At the age of sixteen, while working on his father’s farm, Patrick was seized by raiders, taken away by ship, and **sold as a slave in Ireland**. While laboring as a slave in Ireland, Patrick, who had been raised in a Christian home, was converted and restored to faith in Christ. As he later wrote, “The Lord opened to me the sense of my unbelief, that I might remember my sins and that I might return with my whole heart to the Lord my God.”

After six years in slavery, Patrick managed to escape and return home to Scotland. But he did not remain home long, for the Lord spoke to him in a vision one night, and called him to **return to Ireland, this time as a slave of Christ**. He was obedient to the Lord’s call, and spent the last thirty years of his life in Ireland.

Patrick traveled throughout Ireland sharing the Gospel of Christ, with a considerable influence upon the Irish chieftains of his day. He broke the power of paganism in Ireland and planted a strong church for Christ. Influenced by contacts with monasteries in Gaul, he emphasized the role of the **monastery, led by the abbot**. He placed great importance on missions, which led to great numbers of Irish monks who evangelized Western Europe during the 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> centuries.

## Leo the Great

### 451

Leo the Great was born in Tuscany (modern Italy) and rose through the ranks to become bishop of Rome, or Pope as the position was becoming known, in 440. Leo made his mark as one the greatest administrators of the early church, combining Roman law with church procedure, and strengthening the place of Rome in the church structure. In fact, Leo was the first bishop of Rome to make extensive use of Jesus's words, "You are Peter," as speaking of the Pope himself. In his role as Pope, he vigorously enforced uniformity in church government and doctrine.

Leo was also a notable preacher who wrote and delivered many sermons. The essence of his teaching lay in his awe for the mystery of Christ and the Church. In his ministry, he defended the faith against a variety of heretical groups which were common at that time.

In fact, Leo's most significant contribution was probably his **Tome**, or letter, about the person of Jesus Christ. As we have seen, there were many false ideas being taught about the person of Jesus Christ: Athanasius had prevailed against Arius, and more recently Cyril had achieved victory over Nestorius. But this more recent controversy had not been fully settled, and it took the **Council of Chalcedon** in 451 to end the matter decisively. It was Leo's **Tome** which influenced the Council of Chalcedon to affirm the orthodox view of Christ – Leo stated that **Christ has both a fully human nature and a fully divine nature, and yet was not a split personality**. After the Council of Chalcedon, Leo was able to prevent the destruction of Rome by Attila the Hun and by the Vandals.

## The Seven Ecumenical Councils

1.

**AD 325**

### Council of Nicea

Athanasius vs. Arius

*Heresy: Christ is not God but yet more than man.*

*Orthodoxy: Christ is fully God as well as fully man.*

2.

**AD 381**

### Council of Constantinople

Basil the Great vs. Apollinarius

*Heresy: Christ is one person with the human spirit replaced by the divine logos.*

*Orthodoxy: Divine and human natures existing together in one person.*

3.

**AD 431**

### Council of Ephesus

Cyril of Alexandria vs. Nestorius

*Heresy: Christ is two persons side by side, God and man.*

*Orthodoxy: Christ is one person, in whom the human and divine natures are united.*

4.

**AD 451**

### Council of Chalcedon

Leo the Great vs. Eutyches

*Heresy: Denied the two natures of Christ by confusing them.*

*Orthodoxy: Affirmed two natures in one person.*

5.

**AD 553**

**Council of Constantinople**

vs. Monophysitism

*Heresy: Christ has one nature,  
with the human nature absorbed by the divine.*

*Orthodoxy: Christ has two natures,  
human and divine.*

6.

**AD 681**

**Council of Constantinople**

vs. Monothelitism

*Heresy: Christ has one will,  
with the human will absorbed by the divine.*

*Orthodoxy: Christ has two wills,  
human and divine.*

7.

**AD 787**

**Council of Nicea**

vs. Iconoclastic Controversy

*Heresy: Icons (Pictures/Crosses/Gospels)  
were being worshiped/honored.*

*Orthodoxy: The honor paid to the image  
passes on to what it represents.*

# Christian Heroes of the Middle Ages

500 – 1500

Christian Biographies  
Compiled By  
Pastor Paul R. Crikelair

## Introduction to the Middle Ages

Have you ever wished you were the leader of a big cathedral, or the lord of a great castle? Have you ever dreamed about knights and crusaders rushing off to battle against fierce enemies? Have you ever wondered what it would be like to live as a monk in a monastery? Have you ever imagined that you were a powerful Pope calling together all the bishops, or a famous scholar writing all kinds of books? Of course you have! Well, all these things were a very real part of the world long, long ago.

The period of history which is covered in this section stretches for about one thousand years, from about 500 to 1500. This period of about a thousand years is known by several names. Usually it is known as the **Middle Ages** because it is “in the middle,” between ancient history, which happened before 500, and modern history, which happened after 1500. Sometimes it is called the **Medieval** Period – the word “Medieval” comes from the Latin words for “Middle Ages.” And sometimes it is called the **Dark Ages** because during this time education and knowledge were almost lost, and ignorance and poverty were so widespread.

Many Christian Heroes will go marching across the pages of this section of history. One of them is a monk named Bede (pronounced “bead”), who reminds us why it is so important to study history. He says,

“If history records good things of good men, the thoughtful hearer is encouraged to imitate what is good ... and to follow what he knows to be good and pleasing to God.” So let’s study some of the Christian Heroes of the Middle Ages!

## Justinian I

### 527

One of the major events that lead to the beginning of the Middle Ages was the fall of Rome in 476 to wild barbarians from the north who were overrunning Europe. After Rome fell and the Western Roman Empire collapsed, the Eastern or “Byzantine” part of the Roman Empire became more prominent. **The capital of the Byzantine Roman Empire was Constantinople, and the greatest of the Byzantine Roman Emperors was Justinian I.** Justinian I made three major contributions to history.

First, he organized all Roman laws into one collection, which came to be known as the **Justinian Code**. This was no small feat, since travel and communication was difficult in those days, and since the large empire had not previously operated under one legal system. But the Empire could certainly function better with one authoritative set of laws.

Second, Justinian I loved to build, and he built many churches and other buildings on a grand scale. His most famous monument was the church of **Hagia Sophia** in Constantinople, which was the largest church in the world for many centuries, and today remains as one of the most beautiful ever built. Perhaps you can find a picture of Hagia Sophia at your library or on the Internet, or talk to someone who has been to the church.

Third, Justinian I was a careful defender of the orthodox Christian faith as expressed in the Council of Nicea. He worked to close pagan schools in Athens and to lead many pagans into the Christian faith, and to defend the true Christian doctrines against false attacks from various quarters.

## Benedict of Nursia

529

As his name reminds us, Benedict was born in Nursia, which is in northern Italy. He studied in Rome, and afterwards, tired of the city, he decided to leave and live alone as a hermit in a cave. From there he went on to become a monk in a small monastic community.

In 529, Benedict founded the monastery of **Monte Cassino** in Italy. He spent the rest of his life here, and while serving the monastery, wrote the **Rule of St. Benedict**, a book which lays out the rules for the organization of life in the monastery. Benedict's **Rule** emphasizes the authority of the Abbot, and focuses on prayer and work for the monks. Benedict's **Rule** came to be widely used in many monasteries. Here are some excerpts from the Rule:

“Let no one in the monastery follow his own inclinations, or brazenly argue with his Abbot ... The Abbot, for his part, should do everything in the fear of the Lord and in obedience to the Rule, knowing that he will have to account to God for all his decisions.”

“The brothers shall take turns to wait on each other so that no one is excused from kitchen work. At the brothers' meal times, there should always be a Bible reading. There shall be complete silence at table, and no whispering or any voice except the reader's should be heard.”

“Seven times a day we will praise God: at lauds, at the first, third, sixth, and ninth hours, at vespers and at compline we will carry out the duties of our worship. Idleness is the enemy of the soul. Therefore, at fixed times, the brothers should be busy with manual work.”

**Cassiodorus**  
**540**

Flavius Magnus Aurelius Cassiodorus Senator – how’s that for a long Roman name? Even the “Senator” is not a title, but an actual part of his name! Fortunately, we know him by the shortened name Cassiodorus. He was a Roman aristocrat who spent his life as a scholar and a monk. He encouraged learning and education. **He especially believed in studying both Christian and secular sources.** For instance, he favored studying both the pagan Greek philosophers such as Plato and Aristotle, and the Christian Church Fathers such as Origen and Augustine.

This emphasis on secular and Christian learning led Cassiodorus to **build a huge library in Rome**, which contained a fine collection of Christian and secular classics. He wanted to start a Christian Academy in Rome, and although he was not able to do this, he did build a monastery at **Vivarium** which became a major center for Christian and secular learning.

We are indebted to Cassiodorus because he emphasized the **copying and preserving of manuscripts** of the secular and Christian classics. He worked to create the vital monastic tradition of preserving classical and Christian culture. In doing this, he helped ensure that the monasteries kept the “lights of learning” burning all through what came to be known as the “Dark Ages.”

The spirit of Cassiodorus, bringing together secular and Christian learning, is captured in this excerpt of a letter he wrote to the Pope: “Seeing that the schools are swarming with students, let us have Christian schools with professors who will teach both the secular and Christian letters ...”

**Columba**  
**563**

Columba was born of noble parents in Ireland. It is not known for sure if Columba was his name at birth or if he adopted it later in life. Some think his name at birth was Crimthann (meaning “fox” in the Irish language; the name Columba in the Irish language means “dove”).

Although he was educated and ordained in Ireland, he developed a zeal for evangelism and missions, and in 563 he left Ireland, as he explained, “to go on a pilgrimage for Christ.” This life-long pilgrimage would later earn him the title of one of the **“Twelve Apostles of Ireland.”**

He sailed with twelve friends to **the island of Iona, off the west coast of Scotland, where he founded the monastery of Iona.** Can you find Iona on a map of Scotland? The focus and emphasis of this monastery was to be a base for training for **evangelists** who would go into Scotland and beyond with the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Columba himself was a very brave witness for Christ, traveling to various areas and preaching to dangerous pagans. His courageous and faithful preaching won many conversions for Christ. Rulers such as Brude, King of the Picts, were converted. Many churches were founded and much of the religious, political and social life of Scotland became Christianized.

And Columba had a big impact even beyond Scotland, as evangelists and missionaries went from Iona into England and beyond into the European continent. As a result of Columba’s commitment to evangelism, the monastery of Iona played a major role in bringing a revival of Christianity to Western Europe after the fall of the Roman Empire.

## Gregory the Great

590

Gregory was born in Rome into a distinguished aristocratic family with a long tradition of imperial service. Not surprisingly given this background, he began a promising career in public service. But as a young man, Gregory turned away from public life and from the ways of the world, and became a monk. And in the year 590, Gregory was elected Pope – the first Pope who had been a monk.

Gregory emerged as one of the greatest and most influential of all the Popes. His reign marks the beginning of the **Medieval Papacy**. He confirmed the authority and hierarchy of the papacy and the church, and he proclaimed the **“Christian Commonwealth”** in which the Pope and bishops were to be responsible for ordering society. In fact, Gregory’s most famous and enduring act was to make claim to the **Pope’s “Universal Jurisdiction” over all Christendom.**

Gregory exercised his influence in a variety of ways. He was a prolific writer, and wrote many books, including an important textbook used for the training of clergy. His writings helped give birth to the popular interest during the Middle Ages in the lives of the saints. His emphasis on education played an important role at that time in transmitting the wisdom of the ancient world and the early Church Fathers into the Middle Ages. He sent missionary monks to England, leading to the Christianization of much of that country.

Throughout the Middle Ages, he was also known as **“the Father of Christian Worship”** because of his exceptional efforts in revising the Roman worship of his day. In the Catholic Church, he is known as the patron saint of musicians, singers, students and teachers. The Protestant Reformer John Calvin called him the last good Pope.

**Bede**  
**692**

Bede (pronounced “bead”) was born and raised in northern England. He became a monk and lived in the monastery of Northumbria. When he was a young man, a terrible epidemic swept over the monastery, and nearly everyone died – in fact, Bede was one of only two people in the entire monastery to survive!

Bede never traveled, but managed to become one of the **greatest scholars in Europe during the Middle Ages**. He was so much respected that he is often known today as the **“Venerable Bede”** – the word “Venerable” means honored or respected. God gave to Bede a love of study, discipline and scholarship. He learned the Hebrew, Greek and Latin languages, and focused on studying the classics of the early Church Fathers such as Jerome and Augustine.

As a result of Bede’s influence, the monastery of Northumbria became a bright center of learning in the midst of the darkness of the Middle Ages. A careful scholar, Bede wrote many books. His most important book had the title, **An Ecclesiastical History of the English People** (the word “Ecclesiastical” means “Church”). This book in fact earned him the nickname, **“The Father of English History.”**

Bede’s attitude towards history is captured in his own words in this quote which should be learned by every student of history: “If history records good things of good men, the thoughtful hearer is encouraged to imitate what is good; or if it records evil deeds of wicked men, the religious hearer is encouraged to avoid all that is sinful and perverse, and to follow what he knows to be good and pleasing to God.”

## Boniface

732

Boniface was born, raised and educated in England. Many people believed that he would become an important leader in the church in England, but Boniface instead was called by the Lord to go over to Germany as a missionary bishop. He spent most of his life in Germany and had great influence in bringing Christ to that part of Europe. In fact, we know him today as the “**Apostle to the Germans.**”

Boniface had to be a strong leader in Germany, for the country was large and wild. He divided the country into geographical sections and organized churches with parishes called dioceses, and also formed monasteries in various sections of the country.

Great courage and bravery were shown by Boniface in bringing Christ to pagan peoples who were often wild and fierce and warlike. One story in particular captures Boniface’s bravery. In this story, there was a famous tree known as the “**Oak of Thor**” which was used by the pagans as a place of worship. Boniface wanted to put an end to this false pagan worship at the Oak of Thor, and he wanted to build a church in which the people could be taught to worship Christ. So – **he cut down the Oak of Thor and used the wood from this great tree to build a Christian Chapel!**

Boniface’s strong organization and great courage enabled much of Germany to come under Christian influence. Indeed, the impact of Boniface was felt even beyond Germany, as his work helped with the growth and unity of the Christian Church throughout Western Europe.

## Alcuin

### 782

How many names can one person have? Alcuin is also called Ealhwine, Albinus or Flaccus! Can you imagine answering to ***four different names?*** It could have been pretty confusing!

Alcuin was born and raised in York, in northern England, and for a time he was the master of the cathedral school in York. But many of his later years were spent in France as the Abbot of the Monastery of St. Martin of Tours and as the supervisor of the monastic school.

Alcuin became **one of the leading and most influential Medieval Christian scholars.** He was a prolific writer, producing hundreds of letters and manuscripts, Bible commentaries, and even a revised translation of the Bible. He contributed to the drawing up of church laws and regulations.

He was a leading theologian of his day, carefully upholding and defending the orthodox Christian beliefs of the Church. As a key advisor to Charlemagne, Alcuin profoundly influenced the intellectual, cultural and religious directions of Europe. A famous book, **The Life of Charlemagne**, which was written at that time, **called Alcuin “the most learned man anywhere to be found.”**

One of Alcuin's most enduring contributions was his development of a **standardized system of handwriting and spelling.** Up to that time, there were several different systems of handwriting and spelling in use – imagine how confusing that must have been! But Alcuin introduced one standard, modern method of writing and spelling, for which we can certainly be most thankful, for this makes our communication and learning today much simpler.

## Charlemagne

### 800

Throughout history, a number of especially important and influential leaders have come to have the words “The Great” added on to their name. We can think, for instance, of the Greek leader, Alexander the Great. Or we can recall several of the Christian Heroes we have already studied: Constantine the Great, Basil the Great, Leo the Great, Gregory the Great.

But there is only one leader who actually got “The Great” welded or grafted onto his name, so to speak. And that is Charlemagne, whose name is actually made up of Charles and the Latin word “magne,” meaning “Great.” Charlemagne literally means, “**Charles the Great.**”

And no wonder! He united most of Western Europe for the first time since the Roman Empire, and laid the foundations for modern France, Germany, Belgium and the Netherlands – he has been called “**the Father of Europe.**”

Charlemagne was the King of the Franks (Germans) who succeeded in conquering much of central Europe. On December 25, Christmas Day of the year 800, Charlemagne was crowned by the Pope as **Holy Roman Emperor** – the first of the Medieval Roman Emperors. As the result of this act, Charlemagne claimed power over both the church AND the state!

Charlemagne’s involvement in church affairs had a positive influence in the area of education. He acquired the great scholar Alcuin (see the previous page) as his chief advisor, and brought about a revival of education. Study of the pagan and Christian classics was revived, which brightened Western European culture in the midst of the Dark Ages.

## Odilo 994

The Middle Ages are often known as the “Dark Ages” because education and knowledge and even the basics of reading and writing were almost lost. Due to the influence of Medieval Christian scholars such as Cassiodorus, Bede and Alcuin, the Monasteries emerged as major centers of learning, where the lights of knowledge were kept brightly burning.

The **Monastery of Cluny** in central France was perhaps the greatest of all these centers of learning. One reason it became great was because it had several strong Abbots or rulers who exercised great influence. These Abbots included Odilo, who became the Abbot in 994 and led the Monastery of Cluny for over 50 years.

As a child, Odilo was partly paralyzed. One day he felt God calling him to crawl to the altar, after which he was miraculously cured and able to walk around the altar. He later dedicated his life to God as a monk and came to Cluny. Under Odilo’s strong leadership, the Monastery of Cluny continued to grow in its size and influence. The monastery was strongly organized and followed the **Rule of Benedict**: all monks were obedient to the Abbot, and all the Cluny’s branch houses were obedient to the central house at Cluny. Cluny emphasized scholarship and worship, and produced many distinguished bishops and Popes over the years.

We have a wonderful glimpse into the heart of Odilo himself in the year 1033 when there was a terrible famine across the land. Out of his great concern and compassion for the starving poor around him, Odilio sold many of the treasures of the Monastery – and used the money to buy food for the needy! What a beautiful and touching story, reminding us that knowledge without love is meaningless.

## Gregory VII

### 1073

Gregory VII, also known as **Hildebrand**, was born in northern Italy and educated in Rome. He was elected Pope in 1073 and, while not having quite the influence of the two greatest Popes of the Middle Ages (Gregory the Great before him and Innocent III after him), Gregory VII was a strong leader who brought about many reforms. He was not afraid to take control of both church and state, and was often in conflict with kings. His power struggle with King Henry IV of Germany, for instance, lasted for several years and was finally won by Gregory VII.

Gregory VII's single most important contribution to the development of the papacy was his influence in Canon or Church Law. His work in shaping this Canon Law impacted both ecclesiastical (church) and civic (state) policy for many years. He also famously introduced the "**Dictatus Papae**" (Sayings of the Pope), a series of statements giving a **summary of papal power**.

**Papal power** under Gregory VII's rule was declared to be **absolute**: all secular forces as well as all of the church owed him submission; he could depose kings and emperors according to his will; the church was superior to the state, and all were to obey the Pope. Gregory VII's emphasis on the absolute power of the Pope helped pave the way for the later reign of Pope Innocent III, who emerged as the most powerful Pope in all of the Middle Ages.

Because he helped make the power of the Pope so great, Gregory VII had many people who admired and respected him, but he also had many enemies who opposed him. The famous **Foxe's Book of Martyrs**, written in England during the Protestant Reformation, took a negative view of him.

Anselm  
1093

Anselm became one of the church's greatest philosophers and theologians. He was born and raised in Italy, but as a young man he quarreled with his parents and left home. After a number of years of wandering about, at the age of 26 he settled as a monk in France, and developed into a fine scholar.

Anselm marked the beginning of the “**Scholastic**” tradition, whose followers are often referred to as “**Schoolmen**.” **Scholasticism** was an approach to philosophy and theology which predominated in the later Middle Ages. It had to do with the **bringing together of faith and reason**, with the conviction that faith and reason could be reconciled to each other. But Anselm was careful to emphasize that it is faith that must lead to reason. As he said,

“**I believe, in order that I might understand,**”  
(or in Latin, “**Credo ut intelligam.**”)

Anselm is best remembered for two writings which are difficult to read but rewarding to study. One of these is his so-called “**Ontological Argument**” for the existence of God. He argued that if God is that being than which nothing greater can be conceived, and if a being which does exist is greater than a being that does not exist, then it follows that God must exist.

The other was his book, **Cur Deus Homo?** (Latin for “**Why Did God Become a Man?**”). In this work, Anselm makes the case that sin runs up a debt with God which humans can never themselves repay, but that Christ’s death satisfied God’s offended majesty and earned a reward. **Christ’s death thus brings atonement with God**, and this explains why God became a man.

**Peter Abelard**  
**1115**

Peter Abelard was born in France, where his father was a knight. After some years of wandering around the country in pursuit of learning, he went to study in Paris, the intellectual as well as political center of the country. Although his teachers were among the most respected of his day, Peter soon became convinced that he knew more than they, and arrogantly challenged them and quarreled with them on a variety of subjects. He soon withdrew from the schools to do his own teaching, and quickly became established as a brilliant debater and lecturer.

In fact, he began to acquire a reputation as Paris's brightest intellectual star, and was a major factor in helping to make Paris one of the great intellectual centers of Europe. At the age of 36 in 1115, he was engaged as a tutor for the beautiful **Heloise**, and their relationship became surrounded by controversy. But Peter was always surrounded by controversy of one kind or another – his ideas were not always understood or comprehended, and sometimes his books were even burned!

He was, nonetheless, **the major Christian thinker** of his period, wrestling with the major theological issues of the day, engaging in the great Scholastic task of bringing together faith and reason. His major contribution was his classic book, **Sic et Non** (Yes and No), in which he arranged seemingly contradictory statements from the Holy Scriptures and the Church Fathers to reconcile them. This book was all part of the larger **Scholastic** challenge of sorting out and organizing Christian beliefs, showing that Christian faith was both reasonable and consistent, seeking to bring **faith and reason** together. He has been called “**the keenest thinker and boldest theologian**” of his time.

## Bernard of Clairvaux

1115

Bernard of Clairvaux became the most influential Christian of his age. Born and raised in France, he became a monk, and at the age of 25, he led a dozen fellow monks to found the new house of Clairvaux.

Two words describe who Bernard was and what he wished to do. First, he was an **Ascetic**. An ascetic is one who practices **self-denial** through fasting and other means. Bernard wished to turn his back on all worldly comforts, and to engage in a life of simplicity. It was in fact his life of rigorous self-denial and strenuous asceticism which eventually wore him out and helped bring on his death.

Second, Bernard was a **Mystic**. A mystic is one who focuses on the truth that ultimately **God is a Mystery** who cannot be fully known to human beings. The mystic's response to the Mystery of God is to engage in a life of meditation, prayer and worship. Over against the Scholastics of his day who emphasized the role of the mind in knowing God, Bernard the Mystic emphasized **the role of the heart** in loving and experiencing God. As a mystic, Bernard wrote a number of beautiful hymns which are still with us today (including one in our United Methodist Hymnal – can you find it?).

A movement called the **Crusades** had recently been started and was to last for about two hundred years. The Crusaders were European Christian soldiers who traveled to the Holy Land to try to regain it from the Muslim Turks who had taken it over. Bernard was the preacher at the beginning of the **Second Crusade** in 1146. The Crusades, while successful for a while, ultimately did not gain back the Holy Land.

## Thomas Becket

### 1170

Thomas Becket was born of a well-to-do family in London, England. After his education in England and France, he obtained a position in the royal court, becoming the chancellor to King Henry II. Thomas and the King became good friends, and when the Archbishop of Canterbury died, Henry appointed Thomas the new Archbishop, believing that Thomas would be easy for him to control.

But once he became **Archbishop of Canterbury**, Thomas was transformed into a strong leader and a stalwart defender of the Church and its rights over against the rights of the King and the state. As a number of different issues arose that needed to be addressed, Henry said that the King had authority and power over the church. But Thomas refused to give in, and insisted on the right of the church to make its own decisions. The conflict grew so intense that Thomas had to flee to France.

Finally, under a truce, Thomas returned to Canterbury Cathedral for Christmas 1170. But on December 29<sup>th</sup>, four knights who had heard King Henry mutter, "**Who will rid me of this troublesome priest?**" appeared at the Cathedral and murdered Thomas.

All of Europe was shocked by this murder of Thomas, and his martyrdom turned him into an instant hero. Thomas was made into a saint, and the Canterbury Cathedral became a major shrine for pilgrims (Chaucer's **Canterbury Tales**, the great classic of English literature, involved a group of pilgrims exchanging stories while on the way to Canterbury). Meanwhile King Henry was forced to submit to the church and to do public penance. Thomas had been a brave defender of the rights of the Church.

## Innocent III

### 1198

Pope Innocent III was **the most powerful Pope** of the Middle Ages. There were several factors contributing to this. Of course, there had been great Popes before him even during the Middle Ages who had built up the power and prestige of the papacy, in particular Gregory the Great and Gregory VII. Innocent III was the consummation of this process of consolidating power in the office of the Pope. He was well suited for this personally, coming from an aristocratic background, having precise training in law and theology, and possessing outstanding personal abilities, with a keen intellect and an outstanding ability to deal with people and human relationships.

Innocent III's personality and skills enabled him to wield papal authority to a remarkable degree. Because he believed the Pope had unique authority as the "**Vicar of Christ**" and as the successor of Peter, he claimed the right to set aside any human actions since these were contaminated by sin.

For instance, when the candidate of his choice for German King failed to come to the throne, Innocent declared the election null and void, and placed his own favorite upon the throne! But he was not always successful, as for instance in England where he was unable to rescue King John from his rebellious barons after the signing of the Magna Carta.

The most important act of Innocent's papacy was the **Fourth Lateran Council** in 1215. This major Church Council established church policy for centuries, and symbolized the absolute mastery of the papacy over every feature of the Church. He also led the **Fourth Crusade**, which led to the sacking of Constantinople, and damaged relations between the Western and Eastern Churches.

## Francis of Assisi

### 1210

Francis, as his name reminds us, was from Assisi, which is in Italy. He was the son of a wealthy cloth merchant, and lived a happy, carefree life as a popular youth around town. Once he was even thrown into jail for starting a fight! His great dream in life was to become a knight.

As a young man, Francis had a conversion which brought him to Christ and changed his focus on life. There were several factors influencing his conversion – he went through a severe illness; he made a pilgrimage to Rome; he heard a powerful sermon on Matthew 10:7-10; and he had a vision in which he heard God calling him, “**Rebuild my church.**” He became convinced that he should give all his goods and possessions to the poor, and take up a life of poverty and service to the poor. When he left home to do this, he wore an old ragged cloak and rope belt from a scarecrow!

In his new life, Francis begged from the rich and gave to the poor. His personal charm, humility and kindness attracted a number of followers, and in 1210, with approval from Pope Innocent III, he founded a new order which came to be known as the **Franciscans**, dedicated to **caring for the poor** and sick.

Francis enjoyed the creation and is often pictured outdoors with the birds and other animals. His love for the creation was focused on the Creator, as he wrote in a beautiful hymn which is even in our United Methodist Hymnal today: “All creatures of our God and King, lift up your voice and with us sing!” Yet in fact most of his time was spent in the cities **among the poor**, offering humble service to them. Today, St. Francis is honored as one of the most noble, Christ-like figures who ever lived.

## Thomas Aquinas

### 1261

Thomas was born in Italy into a wealthy family and was sent off at the age of five to Monte Casino for an education. As a young boy, he was quite big and fat and slow and serious, and so he was given the nickname, “**The Dumb Ox.**” Little did anyone realize that he would grow up to become the **greatest theologian of all the Middle Ages!**

When he announced as a young man that he wanted to be a scholar and monk, his family objected, and even kidnapped him to prevent this from happening! They were unable to stop him, however, so he went off to Paris to study theology and philosophy, and he began to show his great brilliance in public disputation.

Thomas was a prolific writer who produced eighteen large volumes of work, including Bible commentaries and works on philosophy. The **Summa of Theology** was his greatest work – it was **like an encyclopedia**, consisting of many large volumes, and has been described as a massive and brilliant **summary of the Christian faith.**

Thomas was the greatest of the **Scholastics** who brought together **faith and reason**. He presented one of the most internally consistent systems of thought ever devised – one which has had an enormous impact on the Christian Church for hundreds of years.

One interesting thing about the work of Aquinas is that it was not always well accepted. In fact, his work was often criticized and rejected in his own day – but years later at the Council of Trent in the 1500s, leaders in the Roman Catholic Church drew heavily from his work, and in 1879 the Pope declared **Thomism** (Aquinas’s theology) “eternally valid.”

## John Wycliffe

### 1361

John Wycliffe came from the north of England, and became an important teacher of philosophy at England's oldest university, Oxford University. He was a brilliant scholar, and a master of the Scholastic tradition of bringing together faith and reason. Over the years he wrote many books and numerous pamphlets.

Gradually, however, Wycliffe **began to speak out** courageously against some things in the Medieval Church that he thought were wrong. He thought dishonest bishops should be punished. He disagreed with the church's teaching about Holy Communion. He believed that the Pope sometimes abused his power and authority.

Perhaps most importantly, though, Wycliffe believed that the Bible was the Word of God, and contained everything we need to know: what to believe and how to live. He began a new translation of the **Latin Vulgate Bible into the English** language so that ordinary English-speaking people, who were not trained in Latin, could read and understand the Word of God.

Wycliffe's criticisms of the powerful Medieval Church helped pave the way for significant changes that were to occur in the Protestant Reformation of the 1500s. For this reason John Wycliffe has often rightly been referred to as **“the Morning Star of the Reformation.”**

Today the “**Wycliffe Bible Translators**” is an organization named after him that is dedicated to translating the Bible into all the languages of the world, so that everyone can read and understand the Word of God.

## Jan Hus

### 1402

Jan Hus was from central Europe, from an area which was called **Bohemia** in his time but which for most of the 20<sup>th</sup> century was called Czechoslovakia, and is now known as the Czech Republic. He was ordained as a priest in 1402 and spent much of his career teaching at the University in Prague.

Hus became acquainted with the teachings of John Wycliffe in England, and was greatly influenced by his views. In fact, he joined Wycliffe in **speaking out** against some of the things that were happening in the Medieval Church that he thought were wrong. He believed that neither Popes nor bishops could establish doctrines which were contrary to Scripture, nor should any Christian obey an order from them which was plainly wrong. He wanted to see unfaithful bishops disciplined, and he criticized people for worshiping images and practicing superstitions.

Like Wycliffe, Hus emphasized the **role of Scripture** as the main authority for Christians. He lifted the **preaching** of the Bible to an important status in church services. In his own writing and preaching he dealt with the Bible's emphasis on personal holiness and purity of life. His major book, entitled **On the Church**, defined the Church as the body of Christ, with **Christ as its one and only head**.

As we might expect, Hus's bold criticisms of the powerful Medieval Church got him into trouble. Eventually, he was kidnapped, falsely tried and condemned, and burned at the stake without a real opportunity to explain his views. As a martyr, he became a **national hero to the Czech people**. He is also remembered for introducing various improvements into the **medieval Czech language**, including marks above the letters to mark accents and long vowels.

**Thomas a Kempis**  
**1429**

Thomas a Kempis decided as a boy to become a monk, and after being educated, he spent the rest of his life – about 70 years! – living in the same monastery house. Throughout all these years, **he worked as a copyist**. Remember that back in those days, there were no printing machines, and everything had to be copied out by hand. Thomas is said to have copied out the entire Bible at least four times!

Thomas also wrote books, in particular one book which has been one of the most widely read books in the world, described as “second only to the Bible,” a masterpiece written in Latin and titled **The Imitation of Christ**.

The Imitation of Christ is **a manual of devotion** to help the soul achieve communion with God. Its four parts are:

Some thoughts to help with the spiritual life.

Some advice on the inner life.

Spiritual comfort.

A reverent recommendation of Holy Communion.

The purpose of the book is to teach Christians the way of perfection through following Christ’s example. It is a wonderful book: Biblical, and totally centered on Christ. Here is a quote:

**“What can the world offer you, without Jesus?** To be without Jesus is hell most grievous; to be with Jesus is to know the sweetness of heaven. If Jesus is with you, no enemy can harm you. Whoever finds Jesus, finds a rich treasure, and a good above every good. He who loses Jesus loses much indeed, and more than the whole world. Poorest of all men is he who lives without Jesus, and richest of all is he who stands in favor with Jesus.”

## Savonarola

### 1498

Savonarola was an Italian preacher. Like John Wycliffe in England and Jan Hus in Czechoslovakia, Savonarola preached reform and urged changes in the Medieval Church, and was a major factor in preparing the way for the Protestant Reformation of the 1500s.

In the late 1400s, Savonarola became a popular preacher in **Florence, Italy**. Florence was a very wealthy, powerful city, and a major center of the Italian “**Renaissance**” or Rebirth of classical antiquity – a place where wonderful works of art were being produced by **Michelangelo** and others, but also a place of great sin and immorality. Savonarola warned in his thunderous preaching of a great judgment coming upon the city. This prediction seemed to be fulfilled when King Charles VIII of France invaded Florence and the corrupt leaders of the city fled.

Under the new government, Savonarola rose to a position of power through his preaching. He managed to change the city from a lax, corrupt, pleasure-loving place into a community more like a Christian monastery. One highlight of the transformation occurred during the big annual Carnival when he inspired the “**burning of the vanities**” – people made a great bonfire and burned up all their evil books and gambling equipment.

Eventually Savonarola’s reforms got him in trouble with the Pope and the powerful Medieval Church, and like Hus, he was falsely tried and burned at the stake. His opposition to the abuses of the Pope and his commitment to Biblical purity helped prepare the way for the **Protestant Reformation**; indeed, Savonarola became something of a hero to many of the early Protestants.

# Christian Heroes of the Reformation Era

1500s – 1600s

Christian Biographies  
Compiled By  
Pastor Paul R. Crikelair

## Introduction to the Reformation Era

Our survey of Christian Heroes now brings us to one of the most explosive and exciting moments in the history of the Christian Church – the Protestant Reformation. The changes which were brought about during this time were indeed tumultuous and dramatic, for the Protestant Reformation can truly be said to mark the end of the Middle Ages and the beginning of Modern Times.

There were several basic theological principles which guided the Reformation. The most important of these included: the principle of **Sola Scriptura** (the **Bible Alone** is the Word of God and the authority for faith and life); the principle of **Sola Gratia** (it is by God's **Grace Alone** that we are saved through our faith in the work of Christ); the principle of **Soli Deo Gloria** (**Glory to God Alone**); and the principle of the **Priesthood of All Believers** (each individual approaches God on his own through Christ, and serves God in and through his own calling).

Some special points need mentioning. It should be emphasized that the Christian Heroes covered in this section are both Protestant and Catholic. In fact, of the twenty-two figures covered here, sixteen are Protestant and six are Catholic. It also needs to be mentioned that strictly speaking, the time period covered here extends beyond the 16<sup>th</sup> century Reformation and into the 17<sup>th</sup> century, but for purposes of convenience, the 1500s and 1600s are here grouped together under the broad heading of “The Reformation Era.” And as a final point, it needs to be borne in mind that the editor’s place of residence has played an important role in the selection of several figures whose legacy has figured prominently in the religious history of Southeastern Pennsylvania.

**Erasmus**  
**1514**

Erasmus was born and educated in Holland, so he is known as Dutch. He had a fine mind and believed in the dignity of human reason, so he is known as a Humanist. But this Dutch Humanist is known most importantly as the last and most effective forerunner of the Reformation. As it has been said, “**Erasmus laid the egg that Luther hatched.**”

Having a fine mind and a good education, Erasmus was able to travel throughout Europe and to talk with many others. He began to speak out against the corruption of the Roman Catholic Church, and he wrote sarcastic criticisms such as **The Praise of Folly**, which went through over 600 editions on the **newly-invented printing press**.

His single most important contribution to the history of the church, however, was **the first Greek New Testament ever to be printed**. It was printed in 1516, the year before the Reformation began. He believed that the Bible was the Word of God and that making it available to all people would lead to Christian revival centered on Christ. His most famous words are:

*“I wish that the Scriptures might be translated into all languages, so that all people might read and understand them. I would to God that the plowman would sing a text of Scripture at his plow, that the weaver would hum them to the tune of his shuttle, and that the traveler would chase away the weariness of his journey with its stories. And to be brief, I wish that all communication of the Christian would be of the Scriptures.”*

## Martin Luther 1517

As a young man in Germany, Luther made a dramatic vow during a thunderstorm to become a monk. He was educated and ordained and became a professor of theology and Biblical studies at the University of Wittenberg. Despite years of searching, however, he was not able to experience peace with God until he broke through to the central basic teaching of the Gospel in the Bible: “For in the Gospel a righteousness from God is revealed, a **righteousness that is by faith** … This righteousness from God comes through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe.” (Romans 1:17, 3:22)

This realization led to his conversion: “Thereupon I felt myself to be reborn and to have gone through open doors into paradise.” With this recovery of the Gospel, Luther spoke out against the selling of indulgences (collecting money for the forgiveness of sins) by posting his **95 Theses** on the door of the Wittenberg church on **October 31, 1517**, setting in motion the events which led to the **Protestant Reformation**.

Through his fearless preaching and teaching, through his immense output of books and pamphlets, through the writing of stirring hymns, and through his translation of the Bible into the German language, all spread by the newly-invented printing presses, Luther advanced several basic principles which guided the Reformation: **Sola Scriptura, Sola Gratia, Soli Deo Gloria, and the Priesthood of All Believers** (see the Introduction to this section).

Luther’s most famous words, given as he defended his teachings at the **Diet of Worms**, were: **“I stand convicted by the Scriptures, and my conscience is held captive by the Word of God … Here I stand. I can do no other. God help me. Amen.”**

## Philip Melanchthon

### 1521

Philip Melanchthon was educated at several universities in Germany: Heidelberg, Tubingen and Wittenberg. He developed as a humanist and came to the attention of Erasmus. In 1518 he became a professor of Greek at Wittenberg and became good friends with Martin Luther. Through Luther's influence, he became a theologian and a reformer, and in fact emerged as **Luther's most important assistant.**

Melanchthon made many contributions to the Reformation. He often accompanied Luther on his important trips and debates, or filled in and provided leadership during Luther's absence. He lectured and wrote extensively on all the major themes covered by Luther. In fact his book **Commonplaces** was the first book which **organized, summarized and described clearly the teachings of the Reformation.** Among the many statements of faith which he wrote or helped to write, perhaps the most important was the Lutheran **Augsburg Confession** of 1530, which remains the chief statement of faith in the Lutheran churches.

After the death of Luther, Melanchthon took over the theological leadership of the movement he had begun. With his wide knowledge of history and his gift for logical consistency, Melanchthon's influence on Protestantism was immense, and in certain ways even greater than Luther's. Here is a quote from him which captures the heart of his Christian faith:

“What are these new doctrines? The Gospel? Why, that is 1,522 years old. The teaching of the Apostles? Why, they are almost as old as the Gospel ... We will try everything by the touchstone of the Gospel and the fire of Paul.”

## Ignatius of Loyola

### 1521

Ignatius was a Spanish nobleman who was born in a castle and became a professional soldier. While fighting in a battle in 1521, he was struck by a cannon ball and his leg was badly injured. While recuperating, Ignatius read about the lives of Christ and the saints, and he was inspired to become a soldier for Christ. He then hung up his sword at the altar and spent a year in prayer and meditation at a monastery, seeking total consecration to Christ. Out of this year-long experience came his **famous devotional manual**, the **Spiritual Exercises**.

After a pilgrimage to Jerusalem, Ignatius studied for about ten years, graduating from Paris University. Then he and six friends vowed to practice poverty and celibacy, and to give the rest of their lives to serve Christ by giving total obedience to the Pope. Thus was born the **Society of Jesus**, whose members were called **Jesuits**. Ignatius was elected “general” of the highly-organized society, and the new order grew rapidly as it emphasized obedience, discipline and efficiency. The Jesuits’ work was centered on three main tasks: **education, counteracting the Reformation, and missionary expansion in new areas.**

Ignatius was one of the most dramatic and powerful figures in Christian history. His **Spiritual Exercises** and his **Society of Jesus** have had a tremendous impact on the world. Here is a well-known **Prayer of Ignatius**:

Help us, good Lord, to serve you as you deserve; to give and not to count the cost; to fight and not to heed the wounds; to toil and not to ask for rest; to labor and not to ask for any reward save knowing that we do your will. Through Christ our Lord; Amen.

## William Tyndale

### 1525

William Tyndale was born and raised in England, and received his education at Oxford and Cambridge Universities. Employed as a tutor in a nobleman's home, Tyndale saw at first hand the ignorance of the local pastors. He declared to one of them: "**If God spare my life, before many years pass, I will cause a boy that driveth the plow shall know more of the Scriptures than thou dost.**" This task became his great life work.

The bishops in England had banned the English Bible since 1408 because they feared the followers of John Wycliffe, who used the English translation Wycliffe had made from the Latin Vulgate. Fleeing to the Continent, Tyndale set out to make a translation of the Bible directly from the original Hebrew and Greek.

He worked under difficult circumstances: shipwreck, loss of manuscripts, pursuit by secret agents, police raids on his printer, pirated editions and betrayal of friends. But in 1525 his New Testament in English was published in Germany. He was unable to complete the Old Testament because he was betrayed and arrested near Brussels in 1535. The following year he was strangled and burnt at the stake. His last words were a moving and powerful prayer: "**Lord, open the King of England's eyes.**"

Tyndale's translation has had an immense influence, and earned him the title of "**the Father of the English Bible.**" Every English New Testament until the 20<sup>th</sup> century was basically a revision of Tyndale's work – about **90%** of his words passed into the **King James Version**, and **75%** into the **Revised Standard Version.** Today, many Bibles and Christian books are published by Tyndale House Publishers.

## Ulrich Zwingli

### 1525

Ulrich Zwingli was the **leader of the Reformation in Switzerland**, and can rightfully be called the first of the **Reformed Theologians**. He was educated at Basel and Vienna, and became a priest, serving for a time as a chaplain for soldiers fighting in battle. He was able to meet Erasmus and was deeply influenced by him.

In 1516 Zwingli read Erasmus's printed edition of the Greek New Testament, which had an enormous impact on him. He copied it into notebooks and memorized much of it word for word. Under the influence of this deep exposure to God's Word, Zwingli began to have doubts about many practices in the church, and to preach against those teachings and practices which he felt diverged widely from the simple Christianity of the Bible.

He began to win a wide popular following in Zurich, and attracted large audiences by his preaching, which expounded the Scriptures book by book. Under his leadership, the Swiss Reformation went even further than Luther's in its breaks with the past tradition of the Medieval Church.

The **Swiss Reformation** led by Zwingli exposed conflicts among the Protestants. In 1525 more radical reformers led by Conrad Grebel, called **Anabaptists**, challenged Zwingli's rule. This led to the persecution and martyrdom of many of the Anabaptists, often by drowning, as a response to their practice of re-baptizing. In 1529 Zwingli and Luther met in the famous **Marburg Colloquy** to try to resolve their differences over Holy Communion, but were not successful. With Switzerland part Catholic and part Protestant, the tensions flared into civil war, and in 1531 Zwingli was killed while leading the Protestant forces against the Catholics.

**Conrad Grebel**  
**1525**

Here in Southeastern Pennsylvania where we live, one can be traveling along the country roads and come upon a family driving in a buggy pulled by horses. One can go into the stores and encounter folks dressed all in black, the women with bonnets, the men with beards. One can go into farms and homes in which there is no electricity. Many of these folks are known as Amish or Mennonites, and they all trace themselves back to a movement that began in Switzerland way back in 1525.

Conrad Grebel emerged as the primary leader of this movement. He was educated in Basel, Vienna and Paris, and then returned home to Zurich where he met Zwingli and studied Greek with him. In 1522 he converted to Biblical Christianity and worked for reform in Switzerland. But Grebel and other associates of Zwingli became dissatisfied with what they saw as an incomplete reformation carried out by Zwingli – they didn't think Zwingli went far enough in his reforms. They met together and diligently read and studied the Bible, searching for the true doctrine of the Church.

Because Grebel and his friends advocated more extreme changes than those made by Zwingli, their movement came to be known as the **Radical Reformation**. Because their focus was on adult Christian believers being re-baptized, they came to be known as the **Anabaptists (the re-baptizers)**. This Anabaptist movement was born in 1525 when Grebel and others were re-baptized. The Anabaptists were persecuted by Zwingli's followers, and many of them were martyred by being drowned, as a response to their practice of re-baptizing adult believers. Grebel himself died after being weakened by imprisonment.

## Thomas Cranmer

### 1533

Thomas Cranmer was the man most responsible for guiding and shaping the Protestant **Reformation in England**. He was born in Nottinghamshire and educated at Cambridge University, and remained a quiet scholar until he was suddenly consecrated as Archbishop of Canterbury in 1532, a position he held during the reigns of Henry VIII, Edward VI and, for a short time, Mary I.

During these difficult and turbulent years, Cranmer was able to bring about moderate doctrinal reform in England. Under King Henry VIII, he secured an official English translation of the Bible, known as the "**Great Bible**," for which he wrote the prefaces. Later under King Edward VI, he was responsible for the **Prayer Books** of 1549 and 1552, and for the **Articles of the Church of England** (which were later adapted by John Wesley in the Methodist revival movement).

Cranmer was a godly man who was led by several basic concerns. He desired to restore to the Church in England the catholic, apostolic Christian faith it had so long lost. He strove to make the Word of God freely available to all. He sought to restore a living theology based on the experience of the person and work of Jesus Christ. Along with his high view of Scripture and tradition, Cranmer emphasized the work of the Holy Spirit and the meaning of union with Christ.

When the Catholic Queen Mary came to the throne in 1553, Cranmer was imprisoned, and after much pressure he signed a number of recantations. But at his final trial in 1556, he put up a magnificent defense and died bravely at the stake, after first thrusting into the flames the hand that had once written the recantations.

## Francis Xavier

### 1534

Francis Xavier was born in a castle in Spain into an aristocratic family. He studied law and theology at the University of Paris, where he met and befriended Ignatius of Loyola. Xavier and six others became Ignatius' associates in the founding of the **Society of Jesus** in 1534, whose members became known as **Jesuits**. The newly-organized Jesuits vowed to follow Jesus and emphasized missionary expansion. Their greatest missionary of all time was Xavier, who came to be known as "**the Apostle to the Indies and Japan.**"

Xavier was a handsome, bright and cheerful young man, and after being ordained in Venice, he was sent to evangelize the East Indies. In 1542 he arrived in Goa, a Portuguese colony on the southwestern coast of India, to serve among the poor. He was very successful in evangelizing the pearl fishermen of Southwest **India**, baptizing thousands. He then extended his missionary outreach into present-day **Malaysia** and **Viet Nam**, and arrived in **Japan** in 1549.

His most remarkable mission was in Japan, where he established a strong Christian community which has survived to this day, despite numerous periods of persecution. Xavier died of a fever on an island when he was only 46 years old, while he was attempting to take the Gospel to **China**.

Xavier's outstanding missionary work in Asia aroused much European interest in overseas missions. The Jesuits have attributed over 700,000 conversions to him, and the Pope called him "**the Patron of Foreign Missions.**" Today, in recognition of his great impact on the world, many Catholic schools and universities are named after him – how many can you identify?

## Hugh Latimer

### 1535

Hugh Latimer was **the leading preacher** of the Protestant **Reformation in England**. He was born in Leicestershire and educated at Cambridge University, after which he emerged as a key reformer along with Thomas Cranmer. After being appointed bishop of Worcester in 1535, he was imprisoned twice for his beliefs during the turbulent years as the Reformation took hold in England. And ultimately, like Cranmer, Latimer became a martyr when he was burned at the stake during the reign of the Catholic Queen Mary.

Although the Reformation in England was often entangled in political controversies, Latimer recognized the central issue as the religious **matter of justification**. In a letter of 1533 he quotes Romans 5:1, “Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ,” and then adds, “If I see the blood of Christ with the eye of my soul, that is true faith that his blood was shed for me.” **He placed great emphasis on making the English Bible available to all**, and wrote an important homily, “A Faithful Exhortation to the Reading of Holy Scripture.”

It is as a **Preacher** that Latimer is best known and remembered. He believed that the preacher’s office was to convince of the truth and to confute error. His style was forceful and vivid, as shown in this sermon attacking unfaithful pastors:

“Since lording and loitering hath come up, preaching hath come down, for they that be lords will ill go to preach ... They hawk, they hunt, they card, they dice, they pamper their paunches, they munch in the mangers, they moil in their mansions ...”

Contarini  
1535

Gasparo Contarini was perhaps **the most important leader of reform in the Roman Catholic Church during the time of the Protestant Reformation.** He was born into a leading noble family in Venice, Italy, and studied at the University of Padua. In the following years he became known for his scientific studies and for his work in serving Venice as Ambassador to Emperor Charles V. Later he also served in Spain, England and Rome, and wrote a classic study of the constitution of Venice.

In 1511 Contarini underwent a religious conversion similar to Luther's, and became deeply concerned with religious reform. He wrote many tracts on the ideal bishop, the papacy, the sacraments and Lutheranism. In 1535 the Pope made him a Cardinal, and then named him chairman of a reform commission. But his proposals, urging reconciliation with the Protestants, were too radical for many.

Several years later, Contarini attended the Conference of Ratisbon, where he made a brave attempt to bring back the Lutheran movement into the Catholic Church. But the "**Treatise on Justification**" which he had composed was rejected by the other Catholics as going too far toward the Protestant doctrine, and he could reach no agreement with the Protestants on the sacraments. His views were rejected by both the Pope and Luther, and he died soon afterwards.

Contarini's life reflects, perhaps better than that of any contemporary, the **political, intellectual and religious crisis of Italy during the Reformation of the early 16<sup>th</sup> century.** It was a turbulent period in history, and Contarini tried hard to encourage dialogue and reconciliation with the Protestants, for which he is to be commended.

## John Calvin

### 1536

John Calvin was one of the greatest of the Protestant Reformers, **the creator and organizer of the Reformed tradition in Protestantism.** He was a Frenchman, born in Picardy, and educated at the University of Paris. He was a quiet and sensitive young man with an immovable will, and was a conscientious student. It was in Paris that he became acquainted with the teachings of Martin Luther, and experienced a sudden conversion.

In 1536, Calvin's **Institutes of the Christian Religion** was published – **the greatest summary and defense of the Reformation beliefs ever written.** Calvin was the great organizer and systematizer, who took up and re-applied the ideas of the first generation of Reformers. His work was characterized by intellectual discipline and practical application. His **Institutes** have been a classic statement of Reformed theology for centuries.

Here are some key elements in Calvin's Reformed theology. God is absolutely sovereign, and all knowledge of God and man is to be found only in the Word of God. We can only know God if he chooses to be known. Forgiveness and salvation are possible only through the free working of the grace of God. Even before the creation, God chose or predestined some of his creatures for salvation, and others for destruction.

After a brief stay in Geneva, Calvin pastored for several years in Strasbourg, and then was invited back to **Geneva** in 1541. There he set about attaining his aim of a mature church by carefully interpreting the Bible and preaching daily to the people. He founded the Geneva Academy to train students in Reformed theology.

## Menno Simons

### 1536

Here in Southeastern Pennsylvania where we live, there are many Mennonites. Some of these Mennonites have lifestyles that seem much like the Amish, while others have fully modern lifestyles. There is much diversity in the Mennonite movement – but all Mennonites are named after the leader, Menno Simons.

Menno was born and raised in Holland, and became a Roman Catholic priest there. While in his twenties, he began reading Martin Luther and other Reformers, and was attracted to the **Anabaptist** movement. In 1536 he joined the Anabaptists and became one of their leading figures. For the next 25 years he traveled throughout northern Europe, often facing great dangers and persecutions. He spread the Gospel, organized congregations, visited the scattered Anabaptist congregations, and inspired them with his night-time preaching.

Menno emphasized the idea of the **community** of believers, committed to a new life, sealed by **adult baptism**, tightly knit (no marriage outside the community), withdrawing from the secular world and its follies (hence, refusal to take part in politics or bear arms for the state). In fact, he was an **unswerving pacifist**, and his name came in time to stand for the movement's repudiation of violence. Menno said:

“The regenerated do not go to war, nor engage in strife. They are the children of peace who have beaten their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks, and know of no war ... Since we are to be conformed to the image of Christ, how can we then fight our enemies with the sword?”

## John Knox

### 1559

John Knox was the **leader of the Protestant Reformation in Scotland**. He was born at Haddington, near Edinburgh, educated at St. Andrews University, and ordained as a Roman Catholic priest in 1536. Several years later, however, he was converted to the Protestant faith and became the preacher at St. Andrews Castle. Later he was taken prisoner by the French and forced to serve as a galley-slave, chained to the long rowing-bench of a French war vessel. But even under these circumstances, and the added distress of severe illness, his courage did not desert him, and after a year or two, he was released and returned to England.

In England, Knox began to speak out against the abuses of the Roman Catholic Church, and when the Catholic Mary became Queen, he fled to the continent and studied under **John Calvin**, whom he intensely admired. In fact, Knox was enormously influenced by Calvin, and has often been described as Calvin's most fervent and eminent spiritual disciple.

Amidst great turmoil, the Protestant cause was gaining in Scotland, and finally in May of 1559, at the urging of the Protestant lords, Knox returned to Edinburgh. A man of great courage and conviction, Knox was just the man for leadership in this time of crisis, and he fearlessly led the Reformation in Scotland. He attacked the abuses of the Roman Catholic Church, and was opposed by the Catholic Mary Queen of Scots. But after Mary was beheaded, Knox consolidated the **Scots Reformation**. He drew up a **Confession of Faith**, a **Book of Discipline**, and a **Book of Common Order**, and wrote **The History of the Reformation in Scotland**. He is considered the founder of the Presbyterian Church in Scotland, and greatly admired by Presbyterians everywhere.

**Teresa of Avila**  
**1562**

As her name suggests, Teresa was born in Avila, Spain, into a wealthy Spanish noble family. As a young woman she committed herself to converting the heathen and healing the division with Protestants, and she entered the **Carmelite** Convent in Avila. She had to withdraw from the Convent for a time because of severe illness, but then was able to return.

Teresa was deeply moved by the need to reform the lax and often scandalous condition of the Spanish monasteries. Supported by wealthy relatives and friends, in 1562 she founded a reformed Carmelite Convent, St. Joseph's of Avila. In the years that followed, she founded sixteen more religious houses for both nuns and friars, receiving much help from John of the Cross. Meanwhile she traveled the length and breadth of Spain, inspecting and encouraging the monasteries and preaching reform.

Teresa is best known and remembered as a **Mystic**, one who believed that God was ultimately a mystery to be worshiped. Through the spiritual disciplines of prayer and meditation, she sought the life of perfection, and often experienced a state of **pure spiritual ecstasy**. She sought **oneness with God**, and was led to a profound experience and personal knowledge of God through her times of prayer and worship.

Teresa wrote many books on the mystical life, including the classic, **El Castillo Interior (The Interior Castle)**, in which she said: “Let everyone understand that real love of God does not consist in tear-shedding or in sweetness, but in serving God in justice, fortitude of soul, and humility.”

## John of the Cross

### 1567

John of the Cross was born Juan de Yepez y Alvarez in Old Castle, Spain, into a poor family of noble background. He joined the **Carmelites** at their monastery in Medina, and was ordained in 1567. After his ordination, Teresa of Avila persuaded him to join her in the reform of the Carmelites, and he helped to form the reformed or “barefoot” Carmelite order.

John of the Cross served for a time as the master of a Carmelite college, and then became confessor at the Convent in Avila. Opposition arose against the austerity and simplicity of the new Carmelite movement, and this led to John’s imprisonment at Toledo. After being in prison for nine months, John escaped, and then spent the rest of his life serving the **Carmelite monasteries** in a variety of ways.

Like his contemporary Teresa of Avila, John of the Cross is best known and remembered as a **Mystic** who sought union with God through worship. He was a faithful student of Scripture, was well acquainted with the works of Thomas Aquinas, and was influenced by his contact with Arabian Muslim mystics. He had deep personal mystical experiences, and as a result wrote several major poems with accompanying commentary, which instruct the soul on how to achieve union with God. These poems include three classics:

The Ascent of Mount Carmel  
**The Dark Night of the Soul**  
The Living Flame of Love

He reflects his faithful study of the Scriptures in this penetrating observation: “**If we are guided by divine Scripture, we shall not be able to err, for he who speaks in it is the Holy Spirit.**”

**William Bradford**  
**1620**

We all know the story of **the Pilgrims** who came to America and celebrated **the first Thanksgiving**. William Bradford of Yorkshire, England was one of the 102 Pilgrims to set sail on the Mayflower ship for the New World on September 6, 1620. It was 66 days before the Pilgrims landed in Massachusetts, and for about the next thirty years, William Bradford, the **Governor of the Plymouth Plantation**, was their leader.

Four of the Pilgrims had died on the Mayflower, and during the hard months of that first winter at Plymouth, about half of the settlers died. Of the twenty-six heads of families, only twelve survived that first winter; of eighteen married women, only three lived to see the coming of spring. William Bradford wrote **The History of Plymouth Plantation**, a masterpiece in which he described how it was God who providentially led and sustained the Pilgrims during this time. Here is how he described their arrival in November 1620:

“Being this passed the vast ocean, and a sea of troubles before in their preparation, they have now no friends to welcome them, nor inns to entertain or refresh their weather-beaten bodies; no houses or much less towns to repair to, to seek for succor. Indians were readier to fill their sides full of arrows than otherwise. And for the season, it was winter ... subject to cruel and fierce storms, dangerous to search an unknown coast. Besides, what could they see but a hideous and desolate wilderness, full of wild beasts and wild men? **What could now sustain them but the Spirit of God and his grace?** They cried to the Lord, and he heard their voice, and looked on their adversity.”

## Richard Baxter 1641

In the 1600s in England, there emerged the **Puritan** movement within the English Church, whose general aim was to implement a full **Calvinistic Reformation in England**. Puritanism became a way of life for many, stressing the need for a personal experience of Christ as Savior and Lord, emphasizing regeneration and sanctification, and seeking lives of Christian holiness. Bible reading and prayer in homes, regular Bible preaching from the pulpits, and weekly catechizing or teaching of parishioners in their homes were all strongly encouraged as part of the Puritan movement.

Richard Baxter was one of the most influential Puritan leaders. He exerted a godly Christian influence in his pastoral labors, especially at **Kidderminster from 1641 to 1660**, and in his many writings, which continue to impact Christians today.

In 1650, he wrote **The Saints' Everlasting Rest**, in which he discoursed on what heaven will be like for those who have trusted Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior: “O what will that joy be ... Thou poor soul, who prayest for joy, waitest for joy, complainest for want of joy, longest for joy – why, then thou shalt have full joy, as much as thou canst hold, and more than ever thou thoughtest on, or thy heart desired.”

In 1656, he wrote **The Reformed Pastor**, in which he challenged pastors to visit and to teach the Christian faith from house to house: “The minister’s work must be carried on purely for God and the salvation of souls. We must be serious, earnest, and zealous in every art of our work. The whole of our ministry must be carried on with great humility, and in tender love to our people.”

## George Fox 1650

George Fox was born in Leicestershire, England. Apparently having no formal schooling, he was apprenticed to a shoemaker, but as a young man he felt spiritually empty and left his family and friends to travel in search of the truth. After several years of seeking, and after a number of long, painful spiritual struggles, he had a deep and personal spiritual experience, and he came to rely on the “**inner light**” of the living Christ.

He began to preach that truth is to be found in this “inner light” of God’s voice speaking to the soul. His followers, emphasizing simple and silent worship, became known as Friends of Truth, or more commonly, as the Society of **Friends**.

In 1650, Fox and his followers became known as **Quakers**. Fox had been arrested and imprisoned on charges of blasphemy, and the judge sentenced him to six months in jail. When he exhorted the judge to “tremble in the fear of the Lord,” the judge laughed, for he knew how Fox and his followers sometimes shook with emotion. So he told Fox, “**You** folk are the tremblers, **you** are the quakers.”

The Quakers made a significant impact in England, and later Quakers exerted a great influence in the newly-emerging America. **William Penn, the founder of Pennsylvania and Philadelphia in 1680, was a Quaker**, and to this day there are many Quaker “meeting houses” and other Quaker institutions in and around Philadelphia. John Woolman of New Jersey in the mid 1700s was a Quaker who exerted great influence in advocating the abolition of slavery – in 1776 the Quakers of Philadelphia ended their practice of owning slaves.

## Blaise Paschal

### 1654

Blaise Paschal of France had one of the **greatest minds** in the history of Western civilization. He excelled particularly at **mathematics**, and made original contributions in the fields of geometry, calculus and probability. At the age of nineteen, watching his father staying up late at night making burdensome calculations for his work as a tax collector, Paschal put his mind to work and invented the first workable calculating machine. In the related field of physics, he formulated "**Pascal's Law**," which deals with the pressure of liquids and makes possible all modern hydraulic operations. In addition, he is also said to have created the first wrist-watch.

In 1654, at the age of thirty-one, Paschal became a Christian as a result of a mystical vision. He inscribed the details of his experience on a piece of parchment which he sewed into his coat! Although Paschal died at the age of only thirty-nine, he left a series of remarkable notes, later published as **Pensees (Thoughts)**, which became one of the world's great classics of literature and apologetics.

In his **Pensees**. Paschal made the case for a Christianity which is living, vital and experiential. He wrote that **God can only be known through Jesus Christ by an act of faith, which is itself given by God**. He insisted that a rational proof of God or Christianity would never displace the gift of faith:

"We come to know truth not only by reason, but still more so through our hearts ... **The heart has its reasons, which the reason does not know** ... We shall never believe with a vigorous and unquestioning faith unless God touches our hearts; and we shall believe as soon as he does so."

## Philip Spener 1666

Pietism was a movement that began in the Protestant Churches in the later 1600s in Germany and led to revival. By the mid-1600s, the ideas and teachings of the Reformers had become so systematized and schematized that there was little comfort to be found in them. In this “Age of Orthodoxy,” which also came to be known as the period of “Protestant Scholasticism,” there was little of the living, breathing, vital Christian faith that came from a personal experience of Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior.

The leader of the Pietist revival movement was Philipp Spener, who was a German Lutheran minister. Spener began a pastorate in Frankfurt in 1666, and proclaimed the necessity of personal conversion to Christ and holy living. He began to stress the value of a life of holy devotion rather than correct dogma. He started to hold **small group gatherings** for devotions, Bible study, prayer and worship. These gatherings, known as **Collegia Pietatis**, quickly multiplied and formed the basis for the Pietist revival movement.

In 1675 Spener wrote **Pia Desideria (Holy Desires)**, a plan intended to remedy the spiritual decay within the church by cultivating a true, living faith. **Pia Desideria** sets forth the essence of pietistic doctrines: the central importance of Bible study, a restoration of the doctrine of the priesthood of all believers (the **Collegia Pietatis** were for both pastors and laypersons together), true faith expressed not in knowing but in deeds of love to one’s neighbor, emphasis on the spiritual life and devotional literature, and preaching that brought forth the fruits of a living faith. In Spener’s later years, the University of Halle became the center of Pietism. He also was one of the godfathers of Count Zinzendorf, whom we will cover in the next section.

## John Bunyan

### 1678

John Bunyan was a **Puritan writer and preacher** who wrote the wonderful classic book that has been called “second only to the Bible in England” – **The Pilgrim’s Progress**. He was born at Elstow, Bedfordshire in England, the son of a poor tinker, and probably acquired his grasp of the English language from reading the Bible. As a youth he was involved in the English Civil War, after which he became married to a wife who tried to reform him.

Bunyan despaired over his spiritual state for several years, until finally he was converted to Christ and experienced assurance of God’s saving work in his life. He joined the independent congregation meeting at Bedford, and soon began to preach successfully. This led to his imprisonment in the Bedford jail – in fact, he was **in prison for twelve years**, from 1660 to 1672!

It was during these years in jail that Bunyan began to write. **Grace Abounding to the Chief of Sinners** (1666) was a vivid account of his own personal spiritual pilgrimage. And **The Holy War** (1682) uses warfare images to construct a complex allegory. But it was **The Pilgrim’s Progress** (1678) which became the world’s greatest classic of Christian literature.

This book is an allegory based on Bunyan’s own spiritual life. Christian sets out from the City of Destruction to the Celestial City. Along the way, he meets such characters as Evangelist, Faithful, Pliable and Giant Despair, and he travels through such places as the Slough of Despond, the Valley of the Shadow, Vanity Fair and Doubting Castle. Bunyan’s language is a happy mixture of homespun phrases and echoes of the English Bible, bringing comfort to many Christians.

**Christian Heroes**  
**of**  
**Modern Times**

**1700s – 1800s**

**Christian Biographies**  
**Compiled By**  
**Pastor Paul R. Crikelair**

## **Introduction to Modern Times**

**The United States of America** has a long and glorious history, to be sure, but the Christian Church has a history that is nearly ten times as long! So it is only in this last of four sections that we are finally arriving at the time in history when our nation gained its independence.

Although only a handful of the Christian Heroes covered in this booklet were actually born in America (a great many of them, as to be expected, came from England), yet many of them came to his country or impacted it indirectly through their work in another part of the globe.

The 1700s and 1800s brought explosive change and growth, not only in America, but all through the world. Our hearts can only be stirred at the incredible courage and vision of those Christians who came to the **New World** and who went to the far ends of the earth with the Gospel of Christ.

Due to the editor's Methodist connection, there is found in this section a particular emphasis upon the development and expansion of the **Methodist Revival**, on both sides of the Atlantic. Christians of all backgrounds can only be challenged and inspired by the transforming ministries of **John & Charles Wesley as well as Asbury & Coke**, just as Christians of all races can certainly be blessed by the life of **Richard Allen**. Women of today likewise can be especially encouraged by the unshakable Christian faith demonstrated by **Susanna Wesley, Phoebe Palmer and Fanny Crosby**.

May our response to this period of history be that of this last-named indomitable blind hymn writer:

***"To God the glory, great things he has done!"***

**Susanna Wesley**  
**1700**

One of the most remarkable women who ever lived was Susanna Wesley, who is often lovingly referred to as the **“Mother of Methodism.”** She was the gifted wife of Samuel Wesley, who was a Rector (pastor) in the Church of England, and she was the mother of nineteen children, including both **John and Charles Wesley**, the leaders of the 18<sup>th</sup> century Methodist revival in England which came to America.

Susanna taught her young children at home. Each child on his or her fifth birthday was taught the alphabet – she considered one day quite sufficient time for them to learn the alphabet. And by the age of ten, she expected all the children, both boys and girls, to be able to read and write in Greek, the language of the New Testament!

One of the most significant commitments Susanna made was to give each of the children one day in the week when she spent time alone with them, teaching them about the love of God. John was never to forget his own Thursday sessions with his mother. Here is an example of Susanna’s wisdom passed on to her children: “There are two things we must do with the Gospel – we must **believe** it and we must **behave** it.”

On February 9, 1709, while all the Wesley children were asleep, someone set fire to the rectory (parsonage). All escaped safely, although Susanna was slightly burned as she ran through the blazing doorway. But John had been left behind, and was only miraculously rescued just before the roof caved in. Susanna was convinced that God must have saved her son for some special purpose, and she said, **“Is this not a brand plucked out of the burning?”** This remark meant much to John later in life, in his work with the Methodist revival.

## Isaac Watts

1707

Isaac Watts is one of the greatest hymn writers of all time, and is known as “**The Father of the English Hymn.**” As a youth, Isaac complained to his father that the church music was boring – all singing in church at that time was limited to a type of repetitious and monotonous chanting of the Psalms. Isaac’s father replied, “Well, if you don’t like it, why don’t you come up with something better?” Whereupon Isaac began to write the first of his many hymns in beautiful verse. Before long, Isaac was putting *everything* into verse, and practically driving his family crazy. Upon being ordered by his father to stop putting everything into verse, young Isaac is said to have replied:

*“O Father, do thou some pity take,  
And I will no more verses make!”*

Watts did in fact, though, make many, many more verses – he wrote about 600 hymns in all. These hymns began appearing in **Hymns and Spiritual Songs**, which was first published in 1707 and which ran through sixteen editions during his lifetime. In his hymns, Watts expressed wonder, praise and adoration covering the whole range of Christian experience, creating rich images of a God who is sovereign over the epic swing of time and eternity.

His simple measures and familiar images literally brought about the advent of modern congregational hymn singing, and provided the foundation for Charles Wesley and other hymn writers who were to follow. Pick up a hymnal and sing through some of Watts’s incomparable hymns, including:

*O God, Our Help in Ages Past  
Jesus Shall Reign  
When I Survey the Wondrous Cross  
Joy to the World*

## Jonathan Edwards

1727

Jonathan Edwards has been called “**the greatest philosopher-theologian yet to grace the American scene.**” He was born in Connecticut, the son of a pastor, and was a precocious child, fluent in Latin, Greek and Hebrew by the time he was thirteen. In fact, he entered Yale University at that time, and graduated four years later at the top of his class!

After a short period as a minister in New York City, Edwards became a senior tutor at Yale. In 1727, he had a deep and powerful personal experience which gave him a new awareness of God’s absolute sovereignty, and of his own dependence upon God. At this time he became the pastor of the Congregational Church at **Northampton, Massachusetts**.

It was here that the “**Great Awakening**” occurred under his preaching in 1734-35, and following it, a geographically more extensive revival in 1740-41. Edwards was dismissed from his pastorate in 1750, and went as a missionary to the little frontier hamlet of **Stockbridge**, preaching to the Indians and white settlers. He reluctantly became president of **Princeton University** in 1758, but died one month later of the effects of a smallpox injection.

Edwards was a strong Calvinist who brought together great intellect and deep devotion – a union of the “head” and the “heart.” Some of his most famous writings are his sermon, “**Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God**,” his book, **Freedom of the Will**, and his take on the Great Awakening, “**A Faithful Narrative of the Surpassing Work of God**.” Reading Edwards is not always easy, but always makes for a rewarding experience.

## Count Zinzendorf 1737

The full name of this key 18<sup>th</sup> century German leader was Nikolaus Ludwig Count von Zinzendorf. His father died when he was only six weeks old, so the Count was raised by his grandmother, who was a friend of Philipp Spener and a devotee of Pietism. At the age of ten, Zinzendorf was sent to school at Halle, the center of the Pietist movement. There he founded “**The Order of the Grain of Mustard Seed**,” along with five other boys, all of whom pledged themselves “to love the whole human family and to spread the Gospel.” Zinzendorf went on to study law at the University of Wittenberg, and entered the civil service in 1721.

Around this time, however, the Count went on a grand tour of Europe, and was deeply moved by a painting in an art gallery showing Christ wearing the crown of thorns. Its inscription read, “All this I did for you. What are you doing for me?” Out of this experience, Zinzendorf decided to offer himself to Christ’s service. In 1722 he brought about the arrival of a group of Moravian refugees from Bohemia (the spiritual descendants of Jan Hus) and the creation of a **Christian community called Herrnhut** on his estate.

Gradually the Count emerged as their leader. After he was consecrated as a bishop in 1737, he came to America in 1741-43, **founding the city of Bethlehem, Pennsylvania, with its Moravian College**.

Count Zinzendorf was a man of many talents – pastor, teacher, theologian, missionary, hymn writer, liturgist, administrator. He emphasized a deep “heart religion” which was spiritual, mystical, experiential, and emotional, and he was a pioneer in ecumenism – the Moravians had a huge impact on John Wesley, the founder of Methodism.

**John Wesley**  
**1738**

John Wesley was born in Epworth, England in 1703, the 11<sup>th</sup> of 19 children of Susanna and Samuel Wesley. At the age of five, he was miraculously rescued from his burning house, and his mother believed he had been set apart by God for some special purpose. At ten years of age he was off to the Charterhouse School in London, after which he was educated at Oxford University, receiving his Masters degree and becoming ordained a priest in the Church of England.

Always in quest of an assurance of his salvation, Wesley organized the “**Holy Club**” which met regularly and whose members were derisively labeled “**Methodists**. ” He sailed to America to serve as a missionary in Georgia and, influenced by the Moravians, he returned to London and received this assurance on **Aldersgate Street on May 24, 1738**. He wrote in his journal: “**I felt my heart strangely warmed. I felt I did trust in Christ, Christ alone for salvation:** And an assurance was given me that Christ had taken away my sins, even mine, and saved me from the law of sin and death.”

From this evangelical conversion experience, the mighty **Methodist revival** swept across England, fueled by John’s **open-air preaching** to massive crowds of thousands, and led by the **fervent hymns of his brother Charles**. By the time Wesley died in 1791, Methodism had become established as the fastest-growing church in the newly-formed United States.

Today millions of Christians trace their roots to Wesley, embracing his “**holistic understanding of the Gospel**” – uniting both divine sovereignty and human responsibility, faith and works, head and heart, justification and sanctification, personal holiness and social engagement, revelation and reason, the sacramental and the evangelical.

**Charles Wesley**  
**1739**

Charles Wesley, the “Sweet Singer of Methodism,” is widely regarded as one of the greatest hymn writers of all time. He was the younger brother of John, and it can be argued that the Methodist revival was fueled as much by his hymns as by John’s preaching.

Charles shared much in common with his older brother John. Both were educated at Oxford University and were active in the famous “Holy Club” there; both sailed to America as missionaries in Georgia; both were strongly influenced by the Moravians; both had a vital and personal conversion experience – within three days of each other! – and both led the Methodist revival.

Charles testified after his own evangelical conversion: “I now found myself at peace with God, and rejoiced in hope of loving Christ.” He became one of the most gifted and untiring hymn writers the world has ever known – all told, he **wrote well over seven thousand hymns!**

Hymn singing, which often boldly took over the tunes used in the taverns as drinking songs, made an enormous contribution to the Methodist revival. The hymns not only expressed the joys of Christian experience, but also taught the truths of Scripture. **Pick up a hymnal and sing some of Wesley’s hymns with their rich Biblical teachings:**

*O For a Thousand Tongues to Sing  
Come, Thou Long-Expected Jesus  
Hark! the Herald Angels Sing  
Christ the Lord is Risen Today  
Ye Servants of God  
And Can It Be*

## George Whitefield

### 1740

George Whitefield, **one of the greatest preachers of the English Awakening**, was born in Gloucester, England, and educated at Oxford University. While there he became associated with John and Charles Wesley and the “Holy Club” out of which came the Methodist revival. He was converted in 1735, and at the invitation of the Wesleys, spent several years in Georgia. On a visit home to England, he had his first experience with **open-air preaching** at Bristol. In fact, it was at Whitefield’s urging that John Wesley himself first tried open-air preaching at Bristol in 1739.

Whitefield was to continue this practice of open-air preaching for the rest of his life, regularly delivering up to twenty sermons a week while covering vast distances. His evangelistic preaching took him all over England, Wales and Scotland, and his preaching tours took him on no less than **seven journeys to America**, where he died north of Boston.

Although eventually Whitefield and the Wesleys divided over theological disagreements, in many ways the work of Whitefield and the Wesleys complemented each other. Theologically Whitefield was a “**Calvinistic Methodist**” who focused on the basic and classic English Puritan themes of man’s sinfulness and Christ’s salvation.

His preaching was dynamic and compelling – he has been described as one of the greatest preachers in Christian history. He spoke with great fervor and urgency for the salvation of souls, constantly imploring, “Brethren, I beseech you ...” Yet his style was plain and unadorned, often colloquial, as he offered his listeners clear visions of heaven and hell and salvation in Christ.

**John Newton**  
**1764**

John Newton was born in England. His mother died when he was a child, and his father was often absent on voyages, so John had a difficult childhood and youth. As a young man he was a sailor in the merchant marine and was forced to join the Royal Navy. He tried to escape the Navy, and was arrested in West Africa and cruelly flogged. Later he was marooned for over a year in West Africa, where he was brutally treated as the servant (virtually the slave) of a slave-trader's wife.

Newton became increasingly involved in the **slave trade**, buying and selling human beings. In 1747, while he was sailing to England, a violent storm in the North Atlantic nearly sank him. For Newton it was a decisive moment, and he experienced a conversion to Christ. After six more years in the slave trading business – it was considered a respectable calling then – he gave up the sea, and in 1764 became a minister and hymn writer.

During this time, Handel's "Messiah" was making an enormous impact in London, and Newton preached a famous series of sermons on the Scripture texts Handel had used. After one of these sermons, he met **William Wilberforce**. One indicator of how thoroughly he had been changed by Christ is the fact that in his later years, Newton the former slave trader played a leading part in Wilberforce's political campaign which led to the **abolition of the slave trade**. **Newton is best known for his hymn Amazing Grace**, which captures the drama of his conversion experience:

*Amazing grace, how sweet the sound  
That saved a wretch like me!  
I once was lost, but now am found,  
Was blind, but now I see.*

## William Wilberforce

### 1780

William Wilberforce was born at Hull, England, and as a youngster, attended a number of different schools. He was so small that he would be lifted up onto the teacher's desk so that the other students could hear him read with his beautiful voice. In fact, during his adult years, the smallness of his stature was forgotten in the midst of his eloquence – as one of his friends put it, "**The shrimp grew and became a whale!**"

At the age of fourteen, William wrote a letter to a York newspaper about something which was to occupy much of his later life – **the evils of the slave trade**. Later he studied at Cambridge University, and then at the age of 25 he traveled through Europe with a friend. During this trip, through the careful reading of the New Testament and other books about Christ, and through many talks with his friend, Wilberforce was converted to faith in Christ and became a committed Christian. Later he wrote an influential book contrasting true Christianity with nominal religion.

In 1780, Wilberforce was **elected as a Member of Parliament (MP)**. Thus began a long and distinguished career in government, in which Wilberforce exerted a strong Christian influence upon British politics. Through his friendship with John Newton and others, and with the strong encouragement of John Wesley, Wilberforce was persuaded to put most of his energies into the **abolition of the slave trade**. Wilberforce and his friends gradually undermined the arguments favoring the slave trade, and in 1807 the slave trade in Britain was abolished. The complete abolition of slavery in the British Empire was not achieved until just before his death in 1833. In recent years, an excellent biography and film on Wilberforce have led to a renewed appreciation of his contributions.

## Francis Asbury

### 1784

Francis Asbury was born and raised near Birmingham, England, in a strong Christian home. At the age of fourteen, he experienced a religious awakening, and soon joined the Methodists. Since he had only limited schooling, he was apprenticed to an iron smelter for about six years. Then for about five years, he worked as a Methodist preacher, serving as an itinerant minister under the direction of John Wesley.

In 1771, in response to an appeal by John Wesley, Asbury volunteered to **serve in America**. During the Revolutionary War which came just a few years later, Asbury was the only one of Wesley's appointees to stay in America, and after some internal struggle, he chose to identify with the newly emerging nation.

In 1784, Wesley appointed Francis Asbury and Thomas Coke as joint Superintendents for America. At the famous **Christmas Conference in 1784** in Baltimore, against Wesley's wishes, Asbury along with Coke was ordained as **bishop** of the new Methodist Episcopal Church.

Francis Asbury became the major figure shaping American Methodism. Even though he was never of strong health and was constantly beset by numerous maladies, he traveled **300,000 miles on horseback** and endured the rigors of the American frontier to nurture the emerging denomination. He was a strong leader and was fervently committed to evangelism, sending out the Methodist "**circuit riders**" to preach the Gospel at **camp meetings along the frontier** as the country moved west. Under his guidance, membership grew from just a few hundred to over 200,000 – the Methodist Church became one of America's largest.

## Thomas Coke 1784

Thomas Coke was born at Brecon, England, and was educated at Oxford University. Called by God into the Christian ministry, he was made a deacon and served as curate (pastor) at South Petheron, becoming a doctor of civil law during that time.

In 1777 he became associated with John Wesley and the Methodist revival. He worked tirelessly as an itinerant preacher, and increasingly served as Wesley's right-hand man. He was set apart by Wesley as Superintendent for America. Wesley sent him off to America with the silver Communion chalice and the large Bible which is now at Old St. George's Church in Philadelphia, and gave him the famous charge: "**Offer them Christ.**" Thomas Coke presided as Superintendent over the **1784 Christmas Conference** in Baltimore which created the Methodist Episcopal Church of America; **he and Asbury were ordained as the first bishops** at that Conference.

Thomas Coke maintained links with the Methodist Church in England and America, often presiding over the Methodist Annual Conferences in both countries. In doing all this, he crossed the Atlantic Ocean no less than eighteen times, which in itself was an incredible feat for those days. He was a staunch opponent of slavery, and a vigorous promoter of overseas missions. He worked tirelessly to send out missionaries, organizing the Negro Mission in the West Indies, and developing missionary activity in Gibraltar, Sierra Leone, and Cape of Good Hope. For these reasons, Coke has been called "**the Foreign Minister of Methodism.**" Appropriately enough, he died at sea, on his way to Ceylon with a party of missionaries.

## William Carey 1793

William Carey, though largely self-educated, is known as **“the Father of Modern Missions.”** He was born near Northampton, England, and worked as a shoemaker’s apprentice from the age of sixteen to twenty-eight. He experienced a conversion to Christ at eighteen years of age, and became a preacher and then a pastor among the Calvinistic Baptists.

In 1792, Carey published a pamphlet. “An Enquiry into the Obligations of Christians to use Means for the Conversion of the Heathen,” in which he proposed the formation of a modern missionary society. In that same year, he preached his famous missionary sermon at a ministers’ meeting:

**“Expect Great Things from God;  
Attempt Great Things for God.”**

Just four months later, what eventually came to be known as the **Baptist Missionary Society** was founded. And the following year, in 1793, at the age of 32, Carey sailed for **Bengal, India.** At first destitute in Calcutta, he quickly mastered the language and was made manager of a factory. Soon, on top of his business, evangelistic and pastoral labors, he set to work translating the Bible into Bengali. To print it, he set up his own printing press! He also established schools and medical work.

**He never left India, but labored untiringly for the last forty years of his life** at a comprehensive pattern of missionary service: Bible translation and production, evangelism, church planting, education and medical relief. His influence spread throughout India and into other parts of Asia. He supervised and edited translations of the Bible into 36 languages – an amazing accomplishment.

**Richard Allen**  
**1794**

Richard Allen, a black man, was born a slave, and was sold to a farmer near Dover, Delaware. Then when this farmer had financial problems, he sold Richard's mother and three of his siblings, leaving him with only one older brother and sister. The three of them began to attend meetings of the local Methodist Society. Richard was converted to Christ under this Methodist influence, and having taught himself to read and write, he was permitted to hold services in master's home. Allen's preaching services resulted in the conversion of his master – and freedom for Allen and his family! Even after winning his freedom, however, life was not easy – Allen worked at woodcutting and hauling, while at the same time educating himself and preaching.

Allen was accepted as a Methodist preacher at the famous "Christmas Conference" in Baltimore in 1784 – the same Conference which marked the founding of the Methodist Episcopal Church and the ordination of Coke and Asbury as the first bishops. Following this, he made a number of preaching journeys with Francis Asbury. He preached occasionally at St. George's Methodist Church in Philadelphia, where his forceful approach attracted many Negroes, resulting in white protests.

In the face of these white protests, the blacks withdrew from St. George's and formed the "**Free African Society**" in 1787. From this body, Allen influenced the majority to form the **African Methodist Episcopal Church**, which Bishop Asbury dedicated in 1794. Fifteen other Negro churches joined them, including the historic Zoar Church in Philadelphia. Allen was ordained in 1799 and became the **first bishop in 1816**. Before his death in 1831, he won national standing for the new denomination.

**Phoebe Palmer**  
**1837**

Phoebe Palmer, the “**Mother of the Holiness Movement**,” was born in New York City in 1807 to devout Methodist parents; her father had been converted during the Wesleyan Revival in England before immigrating to the United States. Phoebe and her husband Walter, a homeopathic physician and also a devout Methodist, began reading the writings of John Wesley, the founder of Methodism, and developed a keen interest in Wesley’s doctrine of **Christian Perfection** – the belief that a Christian can live a life free of serious sin.

In 1837, while holding weekly prayer meetings with other Methodist women, Phoebe experienced what she called “**Entire Sanctification**.” The Tuesday Meetings for the Promotion of Holiness were held in her home, and as she ministered at churches, conferences and camp meetings, the concept of **Christian Holiness** spread throughout the United States. **The Way of Holiness**, which she wrote in 1843, was a foundational book in the **Holiness Movement**, and in 1864, she began editing the monthly **Guide to Holiness** magazine.

Reading Jesus’s words that “the altar sanctified the gift,” she believed that God would make her holy if she “laid her all upon the altar.” She divided Wesley’s perfectionism into a three-step process: consecrating oneself totally to God, believing God will sanctify what is consecrated, and telling others about it. She said, “God’s time is now. The question is not, What have I been? or What do I expect to be? But, Am I now trusting Jesus to save to the uttermost? If so, I am now saved from all sin.” Her “**Altar Covenant**” impacted Catherine Booth (Salvation Army) and Frances Willard (Women’s Christian Temperance Union), and gave rise to the **Church of the Nazarene**, the **Salvation Army**, the **Church of God**, and the **Pentecostal Holiness Church**.

## David Livingstone

### 1841

David Livingstone, one of the world's greatest missionaries and explorers, was born and raised in western Scotland. His parents were poor but godly, and at ten years of age David left school to work incredibly long hours in a cotton mill. But he kept a book beside him while he worked, and attended evening classes, often studying until midnight.

When Livingstone was about seventeen, he experienced a conversion to Christ, and dedicated his life to spreading the Gospel in other lands. Although he was poor and not a promising student, he saved in order to study theology and medicine. He heard God's call to go to Africa through the London Missionary Society, and arrived there in 1841. His travels were to take him an incredible **30,000 miles** across the **African continent**, much of it over unexplored territory.

In the 1850s he undertook what has often been called "the greatest journey of exploration ever made by one man." He walked from Cape Town on the South African coast north to the Zambesi River, then west to the Atlantic Ocean, and then east clear across the African continent to the Indian Ocean! In the course of his journey he discovered the falls on the Zambesi River which he named Victoria Falls, in honor of Queen Victoria. "**Dr. Livingstone, I presume?**" are the famous words spoken by Henry Stanley upon locating Livingstone in Africa.

One of his great motivations in his labors was to help drain what he called "**the open sore of Africa**" – **the slave trade**. Largely due to his efforts, it was not long before slavery was made illegal throughout the civilized world. When he died in 1873, his African friends carried his body back to the coast, and he was buried in Westminster Abbey in London.

## John Newman 1845

John Newman of England was a man who traveled on quite a journey during his lifetime – he started out in the Church of England, and ended up in the Roman Catholic Church! Along the way, he had immense influence within both churches.

The son of a banker, Newman began his education at a private school, and at the age of sixteen, had a conversion experience. In 1817 he entered Oxford University, and in the 1820s he was elected a fellow at one of Oxford's colleges, ordained a priest in the Church of England, and made the vicar (pastor) of St. Mary's Church in Oxford. His views began to change, however, under the influence of friends who, as he later said, “made me look with admiration towards Rome and dislike the Reformation.”

Through the preaching of his “Plain Sermons” and through the publication of his “Tracts for the Times,” Newman emerged as the leader of the **“Oxford Movement,”** gradually becoming convinced that the only true successors to the early Christian theologians were in the Roman Catholic Church. The inevitable outcome of all this was that he resigned from St. Mary’s, and in 1845 was received into the Roman Catholic Church.

Newman had great impact upon his new church, emphasizing the development of doctrines. In 1864, he wrote his **Apologia Pro Vita Sua (An Apology For My Life)**, his famous autobiography, in which he explained and defended his conversion to the Catholic Church. In 1879 he was made a Cardinal. One of Newman’s best-known writings is his hymn, **“Lead, Kindly Light.”**

**Pius IX**  
**1846**

Pius IX had the longest papacy in history to that time, serving as Pope from his election in 1846 until his death in 1878. These were years which encompassed significant changes and had a great impact on the office of the Pope. In fact, strange as it may seem, we might say that during Pius IX's reign, the office of Pope in the Roman Catholic Church became both weaker and stronger.

The office of Pope became **weaker** from a **political** point of view. For centuries, and especially since the Middle Ages, the Pope had exercised direct political control over vast lands and territories. But since the end of the Middle Ages, the fires of nationalism had been burning – various countries were emerging and gaining power. When Italian nationalists invaded Rome in 1848, Pius IX was forced to flee the city; and in 1870 the Pope was deprived of his vast church lands, retaining direct power over only a small segment of ground within Rome known as the Vatican City.

But from a **doctrinal** point of view, the office of Pope during Pius IX's reign became **stronger**. Pius IX was fully in favor of the view that focused all power in the Roman Catholic Church in the Papacy. In 1854, he used his authority to **proclaim as dogma the “Immaculate Conception” of the Virgin Mary** (teaching that Mary herself, as the Mother of God, was born without original sin). In 1864 he issued the **Syllabus of Errors, a list of heresies against and threats to the Church**. Also, he summoned the **First Vatican Council to meet in Rome in 1869-70**. This Council took a number of actions which served to strengthen the power and enhance the authority of the Pope. Through all these measures, his long papacy did in fact bring a spiritual renewal to the Roman Catholic Church in the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

## Harriet Tubman

### 1850

Harriet Tubman, an African American black woman, was born into slavery on a Maryland plantation around 1821. Like almost all slaves, she received no education, and could not read or write. In 1844, her owner forced her to marry a fellow slave, John Tubman.

Harriet was a woman of incredible courage and deep faith, and one summer night in 1849, she began to walk north toward her freedom. She was successful against many odds – but she later returned to help members of her family escape. Eventually she made some **twenty trips into the South** to guide **three hundred slaves** along what came to be known as the secret “**Underground Railroad**” to safe Northern havens. In doing this, she received much assistance from Christians, especially from the Quakers.

With the outbreak of the Civil War in 1861, Harriet traveled to South Carolina with the Union Army to serve as a nurse, cook, scout and spy. After the war she continued to work untiringly to improve freed slaves’ conditions. The first biography of Harriet, initially published in 1869, called her “**the Moses of Her People.**” Here is an excerpt:

“She turned her face to the South, and fixing her eyes on the guiding star, and committing her way unto the Lord, she started upon her long, lonely journey ... and so without money and without friends, she started on through unknown regions; walking by night, hiding by day, but always conscious of an invisible pillar of cloud by day, and of fire by night, under the guidance of which she journeyed or rested ... so **she brought away over three hundred pieces of living and breathing ‘property,’ with God-given souls ...”**

## Charles Spurgeon

### 1854

Charles Spurgeon of England became the greatest and most popular preacher of his age – in fact he is often referred to as “**the Prince of Preachers.**” His clear voice, his mastery of the English language and his keen sense of humor, allied with a sure grasp of Scripture and a deep love for Christ, produced his great preaching.

Spurgeon’s father and grandfather were Independent ministers, but it was a fiery uneducated Methodist lay preacher who got Spurgeon started as a teenager. Spurgeon had come into a Primitive Methodist Chapel during January of 1850 at the age of sixteen to escape a raging blizzard. Fixing his eyes upon the young Spurgeon, the simple preacher implored him again and again, “**Young man, look to Jesus!**” Spurgeon underwent a dramatic conversion, then was baptized and became a Calvinistic Baptist pastor in London.

Spurgeon had a ministry of nearly forty years in London, becoming renowned for his direct and powerful preaching. From 1861 to 1891 he preached in the specially-erected **Metropolitan Temple**, which seated 6,000 people. He injected his playful humor, common sense and gift for powerful, eloquent words into all his numerous works. Examples of some popular books of his still widely used today are **The Treasury of David** (a commentary on the Psalms), and **Morning & Evening** (a book of devotional readings), as well as **Lectures to My Students** (lessons on preaching).

Also in the course of his ministry, Spurgeon formed a college for training pastors, a society for distributing Christian literature, an orphanage, a temperance society, a clothing ministry, and a monthly magazine.

## Hudson Taylor

### 1854

Hudson Taylor was born in Yorkshire, England, the son of a Methodist chemist. At the age of seventeen, he underwent a deep conversion experience, and soon felt a strong call from the Lord to bring the Gospel to the almost closed far-off empire of China.

Taylor went to China for the first time in 1853 as a missionary with the Chinese Evangelization Society. In 1858, despite the opposition of other missionaries who viewed him as a “poor, unconnected Nobody,” he married Maria Dyer, and in 1860 he was forced by poor health to return to England. Here he completed his medical training, and in 1865 he founded the **China Inland Mission**, the first truly interdenominational feign mission society.

Taylor’s great burden was to bring the Gospel to every non-evangelized province of the Chinese Empire, which was now at last open to westerners. The example of George Mueller in England made him determined to rely on prayer to bring in supplies, and on careful administration to conserve them. He famously said,

**“God’s work done in God’s way  
will never lack God’s provision.”**

He introduced several innovations into the general mission practice of his day: accepting candidates who had no college training, requiring his missionaries to identify with the national peoples by wearing Chinese dress, and providing for the mission work to be directed on the spot. At the same time he believed in keeping Christians back at home fully informed, and in cultivating calls to the mission field. Taylor died in China in 1905.

## Fanny Crosby 1858

Fanny Crosby, the great American Methodist hymn writer, was born in Putnam County, New York in 1820. While she was **just six weeks old, she lost her sight due to a fever and a mistake in medication.** Despite her blindness, however, Fanny began writing verse at the age of eight, and published her first poems three years later.

At twelve years of age, she entered the New York City School for the Blind, where she later taught grammar, rhetoric, and Roman and American history. In 1858, she married a blind musician, Alexander Van Alstyne, and shortly afterwards began her amazing hymn writing career.

The total number of her religious verse has been estimated at 8,500! From 1864 she published **more than 2,000 hymns**, many of which are still commonly used. She popularized the writing of "**Gospel Hymns.**" Her songs spread throughout America and England by way of great evangelistic revivals led by **Dwight Moody and Ira Sankey.**

Much of her writing was published under various pen names, including Ella Dale, Kate Grinley, and Miss Viola VA. She remained a life-long Methodist, spending most of her life in New York City until her death in Connecticut in 1915. Among her many hymns are:

*All the Way My Savior Leads Me  
Blessed Assurance, Jesus is Mine  
Close to Thee  
I Am Thine, O Lord  
Jesus, Keep Me Near the Cross  
Pass Me Not, O Gentle Savior  
To God Be the Glory*

## Dwight Moody 1873

Dwight Moody became **the most noted evangelist** of his age, although life did not give him a promising start. He was one of nine children born into a Unitarian family in Northfield, Massachusetts. His father died while he was four, leaving the family in a struggling financial position. Moody left school at the age of thirteen to go to work, and at the age of seventeen, he moved to Boston to work in his uncle's shoe shop.

While in Boston, Moody was converted to Christ through the influence of his Sunday School teacher, Edward Kimble. But because of his ignorance of church doctrine, it was another year before he was allowed to join his church! In 1856, Moody left for Chicago, which was to become his home base for the rest of his life. He became a successful businessman, and by the age of twenty-three, had founded his own Sunday School. Soon he had devoted himself to full-time Christian work, with Sunday Schools and the YMCA.

It was Moody's **tour of Great Britain in 1873-75** which launched his career as a renowned evangelist. He had teamed up with the **song leader, Ira Sankey**, and together they drew over 2.5 million people to their evangelistic meetings in London. He devoted the rest of his life to conducting revival campaigns. Returning to America, Moody undertook successful evangelistic campaigns in New York City and Philadelphia, and then in many other cities. His meetings were marked by careful planning and cooperation with many churches. In 1886 he started what came to be known as the **Moody Bible Institute** in Chicago. During his campaigns, he was said to have traveled more than a million miles and preached to over **100 million people!**

## **Prayer of Surrender**

O Lord God Most High, Our Heavenly Father:  
Thank you for the witness of your Holy Scriptures,  
and the countless rich illustrations from Church History,  
both together converging and proclaiming the grand truth,  
    that I am a sinner helpless to save myself,  
that you in your love and grace and mercy have sent Jesus,  
    your one and only Son, your Holy and Anointed One,  
        to live a life of perfect love here on earth,  
to die on the Cross to pay the price for the forgiveness of my sins,  
and to be raised from the dead to be my living Lord and Savior:  
    breaking the bondage of Satan and sin and evil,  
making me by faith a new creation, and giving me all the power I need  
        to pursue personal and social holiness,  
to love you with all my heart and to love my neighbor as myself,  
    to do justice and love mercy and walk humbly with you,  
        to trust and follow and obey Jesus above all things,  
to the end that I might walk faithfully with him here on earth,  
    especially through seasons of suffering and affliction,  
filled with the hope and joy and peace of his Holy Spirit,  
    and enjoy him forever in the light and glory of heaven.  
    In Jesus' name I pray. Amen.