

# Timeline

## IMPORTANT EVENTS IN CHURCH HISTORY

### THE AGE OF JESUS AND THE APOSTLES

- 30 Crucifixion of Jesus; Pentecost
- 35 Stephen martyred; Paul converted
- 46 Paul begins missionary journeys
- 48 Council of Jerusalem
- 57 Paul's Letter to the Romans
- 64 Fire of Rome; Nero launches persecutions
- 65 Peter and Paul executed

### THE AGE OF EARLY CHRISTIANITY

- 70 Destruction of Jerusalem by Titus
- 110 Ignatius of Antioch martyred
- 150 Justin Martyr dedicates his *First Apology*
- 155 Polycarp martyred
- 172 Montanist movement begins
- 180 Irenaeus writes *Against Heresies*
- 196 Tertullian begins writing
- 215 Origen begins writing
- 230 Earliest known public churches built
- 248 Cyprian elected bishop of Carthage
- 250 Decius orders empire-wide persecution
- 270 Antony takes up life of solitude
- 303 "Great Persecution" begins under Diocletian

### THE AGE OF THE CHRISTIAN EMPIRE

- 312 Conversion of Constantine
- 312 Donatist Schism begins
- 313 "Edict of Milan"
- 323 Eusebius completes *Ecclesiastical History*
- 325 First Council of Nicea
- 341 Ulpian, translator of Gothic Bible, becomes bishop
- 358 Basil the Great founds monastic community
- 367 Athanasius's letter defines New Testament canon
- 381 Christianity made state religion of Roman Empire
- 381 First Council of Constantinople
- 386 Augustine converts to Christianity
- 390 Ambrose defies emperor
- 398 Chrysostom consecrated bishop of Constantinople
- 405 Jerome completes the Vulgate

- 410 Rome sacked by Visigoths
- 431 Council of Ephesus
- 432 Patrick begins mission to Ireland
- 440 Leo the Great consecrated bishop of Rome
- 445 Valentinian's Edict strengthens primacy of Rome
- 451 Council of Chalcedon
- 500 Dionysius the Pseudo-Areopagite writes
- 524 Boethius completes *Consolation of Philosophy*
- 529 Justinian publishes his legal Code
- 540 Benedict writes his monastic Rule
- 563 Columba establishes mission community on Iona

### THE CHRISTIAN MIDDLE AGES

- 590 Gregory the Great elected Pope
- 597 Ethelbert of Kent converted
- 622 Muhammad's *hijra*; birth of Islam
- 663 Synod of Whitby
- 716 Boniface begins mission to the Germans
- 726 Controversy over icons begins in Eastern church
- 731 Bede's *Ecclesiastical History* published
- 732 Battle of Tours
- 750 Donation of Constantine written about this time
- 754 Pepin III's donation helps found papal states
- 781 Alcuin becomes royal adviser to Charles
- 787 Second Council of Nicea settles icon controversy
- 800 Charlemagne crowned Holy Roman Emperor
- 843 Treaty of Verdun divides Carolingian Empire
- 861 East-West conflict over Photius begins
- 862 Cyril and Methodius begin mission to Slavs
- 909 Monastery at Cluny founded
- 988 Christianization of "Russia"
- 1054 East-West Split
- 1077 Emperor submits to pope over investiture
- 1093 Anselm becomes archbishop of Canterbury
- 1095 First Crusade launched by Council of Clermont
- 1115 Bernard founds monastery at Clairvaux
- 1122 Concordat of Worms ends investiture controversy
- 1141 Hildegard of Bingen begins writing
- 1150 Universities of Paris and Oxford founded

- 1173 Waldensian movement begins
- 1208 Francis of Assisi renounces wealth
- 1215 Magna Carta
- 1215 Innocent III assembles Fourth Lateran Council
- 1220 Dominican Order established
- 1232 Gregory IX appoints first "inquisitors"
- 1272 Thomas Aquinas's *Summa Theologica*
- 1302 Urban V proclaims papal supremacy
- 1309 Papacy begins "Babylonian" exile in Avignon
- 1321 Dante completes *Divine Comedy*
- 1370 Catherine of Siena begins her Letters
- 1373 Julian of Norwich receives her revelations
- 1378 Great Papal Schism begins
- 1380 Wycliffe supervises English Bible translation
- 1414 Council of Constance begins
- 1415 Jan Hus burned at stake
- 1418 Thomas à Kempis writes *The Imitation of Christ*
- 1431 Joan of Arc burned at stake
- 1453 Constantinople falls; end of Eastern Roman Empire
- 1456 Gutenberg produces first printed Bible
- 1479 Establishment of Spanish Inquisition
- 1488 First complete Hebrew Old Testament
- 1497 Savonarola excommunicated
- 1506 Work begins on new St. Peter's in Rome
- 1512 Michelangelo completes Sistine Chapel frescoes
- 1516 Erasmus publishes Greek New Testament

### THE AGE OF THE REFORMATION

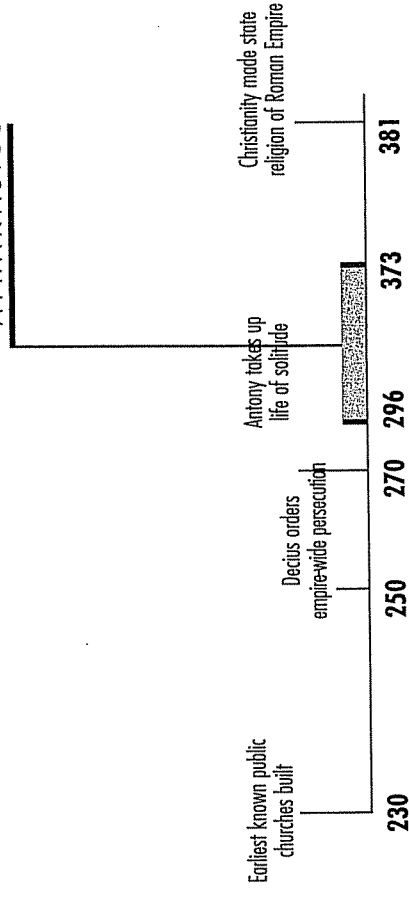
- 1517 Martin Luther posts his Ninety-Five Theses
- 1518 Ulrich Zwingli comes to Zurich
- 1521 Diet of Worms
- 1524 The Peasants' Revolt erupts
- 1525 William Tyndale's New Testament published
- 1525 Anabaptist movement begins
- 1527 Schleierheim Confession of Faith
- 1529 Colloquy of Marburg
- 1530 Augsburg Confession
- 1534 Act of Supremacy; Henry VIII heads English church
- 1536 John Calvin publishes first edition of *Institutes*
- 1536 Menno Simons baptized as Anabaptist
- 1540 Ignatius Loyola gains approval for Society of Jesus
- 1545 Council of Trent begins
- 1549 *Book of Common Prayer* released
- 1549 Xavier begins mission to Japan

- 1555 Peace of Augsburg
- 1555 Latimer and Ridley burned at stake
- 1559 John Knox makes final return to Scotland
- 1563 First text of Thirty-Nine Articles issued
- 1563 John Foxe's *Book of Martyrs* published
- 1565 Teresa of Avila writes *The Way of Perfection*
- 1572 St. Bartholomew's Day Massacre
- 1577 Formula of Concord
- 1582 Matteo Ricci and colleague begin mission in China
- 1589 Moscow becomes independent patriarchate
- 1598 Edict of Nantes (revoked 1685)
- 1609 John Smyth baptizes self and first Baptists
- 1611 King James Version of Bible published
- 1618 Synod of Dort begins
- 1618 Thirty Years' War begins
- 1620 Mayflower Compact drafted
- 1633 Galileo forced to recant his theories
- 1636 Harvard College founded
- 1636 Roger Williams founds Providence, R.I.
- 1647 George Fox begins to preach
- 1646 Westminster Confession drafted
- 1648 Peace of Westphalia ends Thirty Years' War

### THE AGE OF REASON AND REVIVAL

- 1649 Cambridge Platform
- 1653 Cromwell named Lord Protector
- 1654 Blaise Pascal has definitive conversion experience
- 1667 John Milton's *Paradise Lost*
- 1668 Rembrandt paints *Return of the Prodigal Son*
- 1675 Spener's *Pia Desideria* advances Pietism
- 1678 John Bunyan writes *The Pilgrim's Progress*
- 1682 William Penn founds Pennsylvania
- 1687 Newton publishes *Principia Mathematica*
- 1689 Toleration Act in England
- 1707 J.S. Bach publishes first work
- 1707 Isaac Watts publishes *Hymns and Spiritual Songs*
- 1729 Jonathan Edwards becomes pastor at Northampton
- 1732 First Moravian missionaries
- 1735 George Whitefield converted
- 1738 John & Charles Wesley's evangelical conversions
- 1740 Great Awakening peaks
- 1742 First production of Handel's *Messiah*
- 1759 Voltaire's *Candide*
- 1771 Francis Asbury sent to America

ATHANASIUS



THEOLOGAINS

# Athanasius

FIVE-TIME EXILE FOR FIGHTING "ORTHODOXY"

*"Those who maintain 'There was a time when the Son was not' rob God of his Word, like blunderers."*

"Black Dwarf" was the tag his enemies gave him. And the short, dark-skinned Egyptian bishop had plenty of enemies. He was exiled five times by four Roman emperors, spending 17 of the 45 years he served as bishop of Alexandria in exile. Yet in the end, his theological enemies were "exiled" from the church's teaching, and it is Athanasius's writings that shaped the future of the church.

### Challenging "orthodoxy"

Most often the problem was his stubborn insistence that Arianism, the reigning "orthodoxy" of the day, was in fact a heresy. The dispute began when Athanasius was the chief deacon assistant to Bishop Alexander of Alexandria. While Alexander preached "with perhaps too philosophical minuteness" on the Trinity, Arius, a presbyter (priest) from Libya announced, "If the

- 1880 Abraham Kuyper starts Free University
- 1885 Berlin Congress spurs African Independent Churches
- 1885 Wellhausen's documentary hypothesis
- 1886 Student Volunteer Movement begins
- 1895 Freud publishes first work on psychoanalysis
- 1886 Billy Sunday begins leading revivals
- 1901 Speaking in tongues at Parham's Bible school
- 1906 Azusa Street revival
- 1906 Schweitzer's *The Quest of the Historical Jesus*
- 1908 Federal Council of Churches forms
- 1910 Edinburgh International Missionary Conference begins
- 1910 *The Fundamentals* begin to be published
- 1912 Social Creed of the Churches adopted

### THE AGE OF IDEOLOGIES

- 1914 World War I begins
- 1919 Karl Barth writes *Commentary on Romans*
- 1924 First Christian radio broadcasts
- 1931 C. S. Lewis comes to faith in Christ
- 1934 Barman Declaration
- 1934 Wycliffe Bible Translators founded
- 1938 Kristallnacht accelerates Holocaust
- 1939 World War II begins
- 1940 First Christian TV broadcasts
- 1941 Bulmann calls for demythologization
- 1941 Niebuhr's *Nature and Destiny of Man*
- 1942 National Association of Evangelicals forms
- 1945 Atomic bomb dropped on Hiroshima
- 1947 Dead Sea Scrolls discovered
- 1948 World Council of Churches organized
- 1949 Los Angeles Crusade catapults Billy Graham
- 1950 Missionaries forced to leave China
- 1950 Assumption of Mary made dogma
- 1950 Mother Teresa founds Missionaries of Charity
- 1951 Dietrich Bonhoeffer's *Letters and Papers from Prison*
- 1960 Bennett resigns; charismatic renewal advances
- 1962 Vatican II opens
- 1963 Martin Luther King, Jr., leads March on Washington
- 1966 Chinese Cultural Revolution
- 1968 Medellín Conference advances liberation theology
- 1974 Lausanne Congress on World Evangelization
- 1979 John Paul II's first visit to Poland
- 1989 Fall of the Berlin Wall

- 1773 Jesuits suppressed (until 1814)
- 1779 John Newton and William Cowper publish *Olney Hymns*
- 1780 Robert Raikes begins his Sunday school
- 1781 Kant publishes *Critique of Pure Reason*

### THE AGE OF PROGRESS

- 1789 French Revolution begins
- 1789 Bill of Rights
- 1793 William Carey sails for India
- 1793 Festival of Reason (de-Christianization of France)
- 1799 Schleiermacher publishes *Lectures on Religion*
- 1801 Concordat between Napoleon and Pius VII
- 1804 British and Foreign Bible Society formed
- 1806 Samuel Mills leads Haystack Prayer Meeting
- 1807 William Wilberforce succeeds abolishing slave trade
- 1810 American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions
- 1811 Alexander Campbell begins Restoration Movement
- 1816 Richard Allen elected bishop of new AME church
- 1816 Adoniram Judson begins mission trip
- 1817 Elizabeth Fry organizes relief in Newgate Prison
- 1819 Channing issues *Unitarian Christianity*
- 1827 J. N. Darby founds the Plymouth Brethren
- 1833 John Keble's sermon launches Oxford Movement
- 1834 George Mueller opens Scriptural Knowledge Institute
- 1835 Charles Finney's *Lectures on Revivals*
- 1840 David Livingstone sails for Africa
- 1844 First Adventist churches formed
- 1844 Soren Kierkegaard writes *Philosophical Fragments*
- 1845 John Henry Newman becomes Roman Catholic
- 1845 Phoebe Palmer writes *The Way of Holiness*
- 1848 Marx publishes *Communist Manifesto*
- 1851 Harriet Beecher Stowe releases *Uncle Tom's Cabin*
- 1854 Immaculate Conception made dogma
- 1854 Charles Spurgeon becomes pastor of New Park St. Church
- 1855 D. L. Moody converted
- 1857 Prayer Meeting Revival begins in New York
- 1859 Darwin publishes *Origin of Species*
- 1859 Japan reopens to foreign missionaries
- 1860 U.S. Civil War begins
- 1864 Syllabus of Errors issued by Pope Pius IX
- 1865 J. Hudson Taylor founds China Inland Mission
- 1870 First Vatican Council declares papal infallibility
- 1878 William & Catherine Booth found Salvation Army
- 1879 Frances Willard becomes president of WCTU

Father begat the Son, then he who was begotten had a beginning in existence, and from this it follows there was a time when the Son was not." The argument caught on, but Alexander and Athanasius fought against Arius, arguing that it denied the Trinity. Christ is not of a like substance to God, they argued, but the same substance.

To Athanasius this was no splitting of theological hairs. Salvation was at issue: only one who was fully human could atone for human sin; only one who was fully divine could have the power to save us. To Athanasius, the logic of New Testament doctrine of salvation assumed the dual nature of Christ. "Those who maintain 'There was a time when the Son was not' rob God of his Word, like plunderers."

Alexander's encyclical letter, signed by Athanasius (and possibly written by him), attacked the consequences of the Arians' heresy: "The Son [then,] is a creature and a work; neither is he like in essence to the Father; neither is he the true and natural Word of the Father; neither is he his true wisdom; but he is one of the things made and created and is called the Word and Wisdom by an abuse of terms.... Wherefore he is by nature subject to change and variation, as are all rational creatures."

The controversy spread, and all over the empire, Christians could be heard singing a catchy tune that championed the Arian view: "There was a time when the Son was not." In every city, wrote a historian, "bishop was contending against bishop, and the people were contending against one another, like swarms of gnats fighting in the air."

Word of the dispute made it to the newly converted Emperor Constantine the Great, who was more concerned with seeing church unity than theological truth. "Division in the church," he told the bishops, "is worse than war." To settle the matter, he called a council of bishops.

Of the 1,800 bishops invited to Nicea, about 300 came—and argued, fought, and eventually fleshed out an early version of the Nicene Creed. The council, led by Alexander, condemned Arius as a heretic, exiled him, and made it a capital offense to possess his writings. Constantine was pleased that peace had been restored to the church. Athanasius, whose treatise *On the Incarnation* laid the foundation for the orthodox party at Nicea, was hailed as "the noble champion of Christ." The diminutive bishop was simply pleased that Arianism had been defeated.

But it hadn't.

### Bishop in exile

Within a few months, supporters of Arius talked Constantine into ending Arius's exile. With a few private additions, Arius even signed the Nicene Creed, and the emperor ordered Athanasius, who had recently succeeded Alexander as bishop, to restore the heretic to fellowship.

When Athanasius refused, his enemies spread false charges against him. He was accused of murder, illegal taxation, sorcery, and treason—the last of which led Constantine to exile him to Trier, now a German city near Luxembourg.

Constantine died two years later, and Athanasius returned to Alexandria. But in his absence, Arianism had gained the upper hand. Now church leaders were against him, and

they banished him again. Athanasius fled to Pope Julius I in Rome. He returned in 346, but in the mercurial politics of the day, was banished three more times before he came home to stay in 366. By then he was about 70 years old.

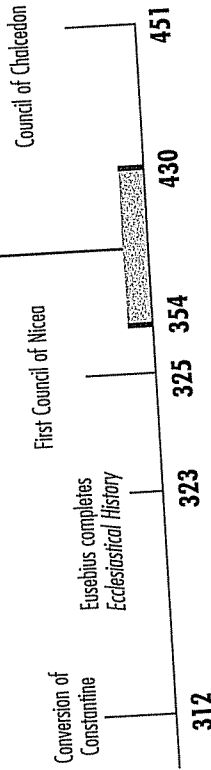
While in exile, Athanasius spent most of his time writing, mostly to defend orthodoxy, but he took on pagan and Jewish opposition as well. One of his most lasting contributions is his *Life of St. Antony*, which helped to shape the Christian ideal of monasticism. The book is filled with fantastic tales of Antony's encounters with the devil, yet Athanasius wrote, "Do not be incredulous about what you hear of him.... Consider, rather that from them only a few of his feats have been learned." In fact, the bishop knew the monk personally, and this saint's biography is one of the most historically reliable. It became an early "best-seller" and made a deep impression on many people, even helping lead pagans to conversion: Augustine is the most famous example.

During Athanasius's first year permanently back in Alexandria, he sent his annual letter to the churches in his diocese, called a festal letter. Such letters were used to fix the dates of festivals such as Lent and Easter, and to discuss matters of general interest. In this letter, Athanasius listed what he believed were the books that should constitute the New Testament.

"In these [27 writings] alone the teaching of godliness is proclaimed," he wrote. "No one may add to them, and nothing may be taken away from them."

Though other such lists had been and would still be proposed, it is Athanasius's list that the church eventually adopted, and it is the one we use to this day.

## AUGUSTINE OF HIPPO



THEOLOGIANS

# Augustine of Hippo

ARCHITECT OF THE MIDDLE AGES

*"Mankind is divided into two sorts: such as live according to man, and such as live according to God. These we call the two cities.... The Heavenly City outshines Rome. There, instead of victory, is truth"*

Barbarians surged into the empire, threatening the Roman way of life as never before. The Christian church also faced attack from internal heretics. The potential destruction of culture, civilization, and the church was more than an occasional nightmare—it was perceived as an immediate threat. And Augustine answered with such wisdom, his responses are still considered by some to be the church's most important writings after the Bible.

### Sex and fun

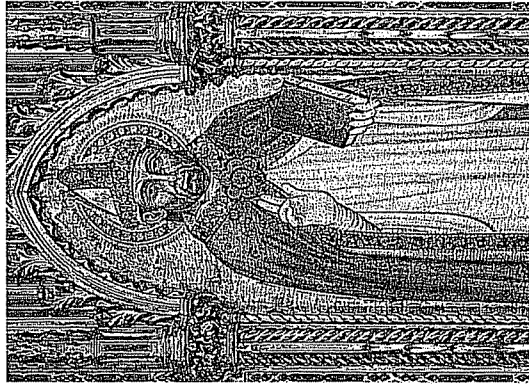
From his birth in a small North African town, Augustine knew the religious differences overwhelming the Roman Empire: his father was a pagan who honored the old Punic gods; his mother was a zealous Christian. But the adolescent

Augustine was less interested in religion and learning than in sex and high living—like joining with friends to steal pears from a neighbor's vineyard "not to eat them ourselves but simply to throw them to the pigs."

At age 17, Augustine set off to school in Carthage—the country boy in the jewel of North Africa. There the underachiever became enraptured with his studies and started to make a name for himself. He immersed himself in the writings of Cicero and Manichaeian philosophers and cast off the vestiges of his mother's religion.

His studies completed, Augustine returned to his home town of Thagaste to teach rhetoric—and some Manichaeism on the side. (The philosophy, based on the teachings of a Persian named Mani, was a dualist corruption of Christianity. It taught that the world of light and the world of darkness constantly war with each other, catching most of humanity in the struggle.) Augustine tried to hide his views from his mother, Monica, but when she found out, she threw him out of the house.

But Monica, who had dreamt her son would become a Christian, continued to pray and plead for his conversion and followed him to Carthage when he moved there to teach. When Augustine was offered a professorship in Rome, Monica begged him not to go. Augustine told her to go home and sleep comfortably in the knowledge that he would stay in Carthage. When she left, he boarded a ship for Rome.



### Darkness vanquished

After a year in Rome, Augustine moved again, to become the professor of rhetoric for the city of Milan. There he began attending the cathedral to hear the impressive oratory of Ambrose the bishop; he kept attending because of Ambrose's preaching. He soon dropped his Manichaeism in favor of Neoplatonism, the philosophy of both Roman pagans and Milanese Christians.

His mother finally caught up with him and set herself to find her son a proper wife. Augustine had a concubine he deeply loved and who had given him a son, but he would not marry her because it would have ruined him socially and politically.

Added to the emotional strain of forsaking his lover and the shift in philosophies, Augustine was struggling with himself. For years he had sought to overcome his fleshly passions and nothing seemed to help. It seemed to him that even his smallest transgressions were weighted with meaning. Later, writing about the pear stealing of his youth, he reflected, "Our real pleasure consisted in doing something that was forbidden. The evil in me was foul, but I loved it."

One afternoon, he wrestled anxiously about such matters while walking in his gar-

den. Suddenly he heard a child's sing-song voice repeating, "Take up and read." On a table lay a collection of Paul's epistles he'd been reading; he picked it up and read the first thing he saw: "Not in reveling and drunkenness, not in lust and wantonness, not in quarrels and rivalries. Rather, arm yourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ, spend no more thought on nature and nature's appetites" (Romans 13:13-14).

He later wrote, "No further would I read; nor needed I: for instantly at the end of this sentence, by a light as it were of serenity infused into my heart, all the darkness of doubt vanished away."

### From monk to bishop

Augustine's conversion sent shockwaves through his life. He resigned his professorship, dashed off a note to Ambrose telling of his conversion, and retreated with his friends and mother to a country villa in Cassiciacum. There he continued discussing philosophy and churning out books in a Neoplatonist vein. After half a year, he returned to Milan to be baptized by Ambrose, then headed back to Thagaste to live as a writer and thinker.

By the time he reached his home town (a journey lengthened by political turmoil), he had lost his mother, his son, and one of his closest friends. These losses propelled Augustine into a deeper, more vigorous commitment: he and friends established a lay ascetic community in Thagaste to spend time in prayer and the study of the Scriptures.

In 391, Augustine traveled to Hippo to see about setting up a monastery in the area. His reputation went before him. The story goes that, seeing the renowned layman in church one Sunday, Bishop Valerius put aside his prepared sermon and preached on the urgent need for priests in Hippo. The crowd stared at Augustine and then pushed him forward for ordination. Against his will, Augustine was made a priest. The laity, thinking his tears of frustration were due to his wanting to be a bishop rather than priest, tried to assure him that good things come to those who wait.

Valerius, who spoke no Punic (the local language), quickly handed over teaching and preaching duties to his new priest, who did speak the local language. Within five years, after Valerius died, Augustine became bishop of Hippo.

### Orthodox champion for a millennium

Guarding the church from internal and external challenges topped the new bishop's agenda. The church in North Africa was in turmoil. Though Manichaeism was already on its way out, it still had a sizable following. Augustine, who knew its strengths and weaknesses, dealt it a death blow. At the public baths, Augustine debated Fortunatus, a former schoolmate from Carthage and a leading Manichaean. The bishop made quick work of the heretic, and Fortunatus left town in shame.

Less easily handled was Donatism, a schismatic and separatist North African church. They believed the Catholic church had been compromised and that Catholic leaders had betrayed the church during earlier persecutions. Augustine argued that Catholicism was the valid continuation of the apostolic church. He wrote scathingly, "The clouds roll with thunder, that the house of the Lord shall be built throughout the earth; and these

frogs sit in their marsh and croak 'We are the only Christians!'"

In 411 the controversy came to a head as the imperial commissioner convened a debate in Carthage to decide the dispute once and for all. Augustine's rhetoric destroyed the Donatist appeal, and the commissioner pronounced against the group, beginning a campaign against them.

It was not, however, a time of rejoicing for the church. The year before the Carthage conference, the barbarian general Alaric and his troops sacked Rome. Many upper-class Romans fled for their lives to North Africa, one of the few safe havens left in the empire. And now Augustine was left with a new challenge—defending Christianity against claims that it had caused the empire's downfall by turning eyes away from Roman gods.

Augustine's response to the widespread criticism came in 22 volumes over 12 years, in *The City of God*. He argued that Rome was punished for past sins, not new faith. His lifelong obsession with original sin was fleshed out, and his work formed the basis of the medieval mind. "Mankind is divided into two sorts," he wrote. "Such as live according to man, and such as live according to God. These we call the two cities.... The Heavenly City outshines Rome. There, instead of victory, is truth."

One other front Augustine had to fight to defend Christianity was Pelagianism. Pelagius, a British monk, gained popularity just as the Donatist controversy ended. Pelagius rejected the idea of original sin, insisting instead that the tendency to sin is humankind's own free choice. Following this reasoning, there is no need for divine grace; individuals must simply make up their minds to do the will of God. The church excommunicated Pelagius in 417, but his banner was carried on by young Julian of Eclanum. Julian took potshots at Augustine's character as well as his theology. With Roman snobbery, he argued that Augustine and his other low-class African friends had taken over Roman Christianity. Augustine argued with the former bishop for the last ten years of his life.

In the summer of 429, the Vandals invaded North Africa, meeting almost no resistance along the way. Hippo, one of the few fortified cities, was overwhelmed with refugees. In the third month of the siege, the 76-year-old Augustine died, not from an arrow but from a fever. Miraculously, his writings survived the Vandal takeover, and his theology became one of the main pillars on which the church of the next 1,000 years was built.

Responding to the imperial volcano

He was born John Monsur, into a wealthy Arab-Christian family of Damascus. Like his father, he held a position high in the court of the caliph. About 725 he resigned his office and became a monk at Mar Saba near Bethlehem, where he became a priest. In this secluded place at the relatively advanced age of 51, John's lasting legacy began to unfold. It began when Emperor Leo III, in 726, outlawed the veneration of icons.

The conflict had been brewing for decades. It wasn't a question of bowing and kissing icons; this was a culturally acceptable way to show respect. The basic question went deeper: are Christians allowed to paint pictures of Jesus, or other biblical figures, at all? As Islam spread through the Mediterranean region, bringing its absolute interdiction of images, Christianity was feeling pressure to rid itself of images.

The main threat to icons came not from the Islamic caliph but from the heart of the Byzantine Empire. A few bishops from Asia Minor (now Turkey) believed the Bible, particularly the second commandment, forbade such images:

"You shall not make for yourself an idol in the form of anything in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the waters below. You shall not bow down to them or worship them."

The bishops' argument convinced Byzantine Emperor Leo III, who set about to convince his subjects to abandon iconography. But a natural disaster changed his approach. In 726 a violent volcano erupted in the middle of the Aegean Sea and terrorized Constantinople, the capital. Afterward, tidal waves buffeted the shores and volcanic ash extinguished the sunlight. Leo reasoned that God was angry about icons. That's when he outlawed their use.

In 730 Leo commanded the destruction of all religious likenesses, whether icons, mosaics, or statues, and iconoclasts ("image smashers" in Greek) went on a spree, demolishing nearly all icons in the Empire.

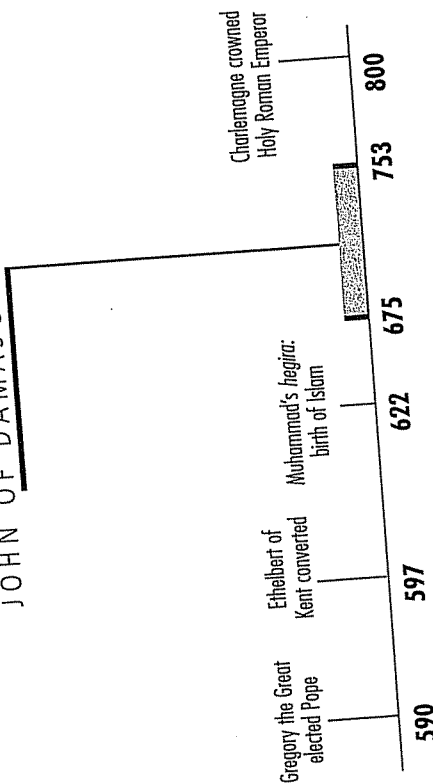
From his distant post in the Holy Land, John challenged this policy in three works. He argued that icons should not be worshiped, but they could be venerated. (The distinction is crucial: a Western parallel might be the way a favorite Bible is read, cherished, and treated with honor—but certainly not worshiped.)

John explained it like this: "Often, doubtless, when we have not the Lord's passion in mind and see the image of Christ's crucifixion, his saving passion is brought back to remembrance, and we fall down and worship not the material but that which is imaged: just as we do not worship the material of which the Gospels are made, nor the material of the Cross, but that which these typify."

Second, John drew support from the writings of the early fathers like Basil the Great, who wrote, "The honor paid to an icon is transferred to its prototype." That is, the actual icon was but a point of departure for the expressed devotion; the recipient was in the unseen world.

Third, John claimed that, with the birth of the Son of God in the flesh, the depiction of Christ in paint and wood demonstrated faith in the Incarnation. Since the unseen God had become visible, there was no blasphemy in painting visible representations of

JOHN OF DAMASCUS



THEOLOGAINS  
**John of Damascus**  
 IMAGE-CONSCIOUS ARAB

*"I do not worship matter, I worship the God of matter, who became matter for my sake and deigned to inhabit matter, I will not who worked out my salvation through matter. I will not cease from honoring that matter which works for my salvation. I venerate it, though not as God."*

Visitors to an Orthodox Church are confronted with many unfamiliar elements of worship: for example, the use of incense and Byzantine chant and the custom of standing throughout the service. But perhaps the most perplexing element is the icons, especially when Orthodox worshippers bow before and kiss them. Isn't this idolatry?

This very question raged through the Christian world in the eighth and ninth centuries, and it occupied the attention of two of the seven ecumenical (worldwide) church councils. The strongest defense of the practice came from a Christian living in

ILLUSTRATION: Islamic empire, John of Damascus.

Jesus or other historical figures. To paint an icon of him was, in fact, a profession of faith, deniable only by a heretic!

"I do not worship matter, I worship the God of matter, who became matter for my sake and deigned to inhabit matter, who worked out my salvation through matter," he wrote. "I will not cease from honoring that matter which works for my salvation. I venerate it, though not as God."

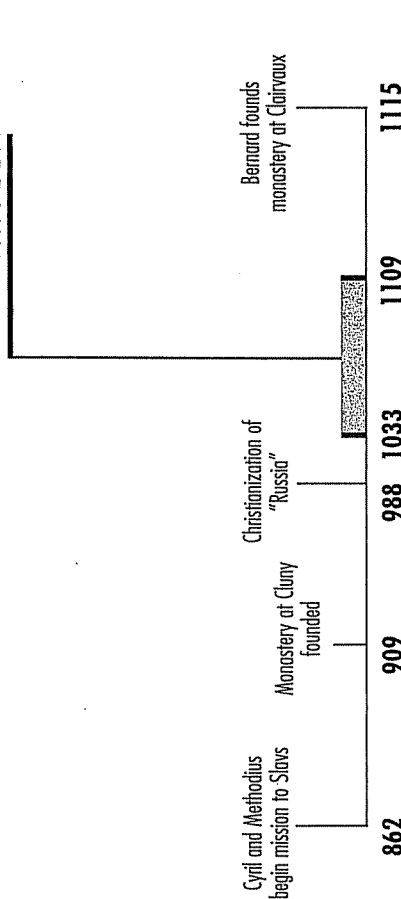
### Eastern theologian for the whole church

While the controversy continued to rage, John spent his days at Mar Saba monastery in the hills 18 miles southeast of Jerusalem. There he wrote both theological treatises and hymns; he is recognized as one of the principal hymnographers of Eastern Orthodoxy. His most important theological work, *The Fountain of Wisdom*, is a summary of Eastern theology. Tradition says that his fellow monks grumbled that such elegant writing was a distraction and prideful; so John was sometimes sent to sell baskets humbly in the streets of

Damascus, where he had once been among the elite.

After more dissension and bloodshed over icons (the decade after John's death, over 100,000 Christians were injured or killed), the issue was finally settled, and icons are an integral part of Orthodox worship to this day. His other writings were major influences on Western theologians such as Thomas Aquinas. In 1890 he was named a doctor of the church by the Vatican, and in this century, his writings have become a fresh source of theological insight, especially for Eastern theologians.

## ANSELM



THEOLOGAINS

# Anselm

RELUCTANT BISHOP WITH A REMARKABLE MIND

*"No one but one who is God-man can make the satisfaction by which man is saved."*

In the Middle Ages, it was customary for bishops-elect to make a show of protest to signify their modesty. When Anselm, an Italian monk from Normandy, was chosen to become archbishop of Canterbury, he protested too. The episcopal staff had to be held against his clenched fist. But his refusal was sincere: for Anselm, becoming the archbishop meant less time for his studies. His instincts, in fact, have proved correct: Anselm is remembered today not merely as a great archbishop but as one of the most profound thinkers of the Middle Ages.

### Pulled to higher office

The struggle between the scholarly life and that of high office began in Anselm's earliest years. His father, Gundulf, wanted to see him in politics and forbade him from entering the local abbey. When the abbot refused to accept the 15-year-old without his

## Productive in exile

Anselm no doubt felt relieved. He had hated his position at Canterbury. He had avoided getting involved in disputes and often became ill when he was required to arbitrate disagreements. On the other hand, if one of his monks drew him aside and asked a theological question, he at once became enthralled and, as he explained his answer, his spirits rose. So while in exile, he again begged the pope to relieve him, but the pope replied that he needed Anselm's theological mind.

While in exile, Anselm wrote *Why Did God Become Man?*, which became the most influential treatise on the atonement in the Middle Ages. He argued for the "satisfaction theory." Early theologians, like Origen and Gregory of Nyssa, held to the "ransom theory": humankind was held captive to sin and death by Satan, at least until Christ paid the ransom through his death, and in the Resurrection, broke the power of Satan's chains. Anselm argued instead that it wasn't Satan who was owed something but God. In Adam, all human beings had sinned against divine holiness. Furthermore, being both finite and sinful, people were powerless to make proper restitution. That could only be accomplished by Christ: "No one but one who is God-man can make the satisfaction by which man is saved."

With the ascension of Henry I in 1100, Anselm was invited back to Canterbury. But when the king demanded homage from the bishops, Anselm refused and would not consecrate bishops who had done so. The controversy raged for six years, but Anselm eventually won.

For his last two years, he was able to study in relative peace. On his deathbed, Palm Sunday, 1107, Anselm told his monks he was ready to die, but before he did, he wanted to settle Augustine's question of the origin of the soul. "I do not know of anyone who will be able to do the work if I do not," he told them. But by Tuesday morning of Holy Week, he was dead.

father's consent, Anselm prayed to become ill: he reasoned he could enter if he was in danger of death. He actually became seriously ill but was still refused admission.

After wandering Europe for years, looking to stretch his mind, Anselm settled at Bec, Normandy, to study under Lanfranc, a renowned scholar. Anselm felt here he could live the monastic life in obscurity, since the fame of Lanfranc would outshine his possible accomplishments.

But Anselm shined nonetheless. After three years, Lanfranc left the abbey to become archbishop of Canterbury, and Anselm replaced him as prior. He spent his time reading and reflecting on theological mysteries. Under his leadership, the monastery became famous for its scholastic excellence. When administrative duties interfered with his desired calling, he begged the local bishop to relieve him of some of his duties. Instead, the bishop told Anselm to prepare himself for higher office.

## A proof of God

At Bec, Anselm made his first great intellectual contribution: he attempted to prove the existence of God. He set out his famous ontological argument in his *Proslogion*. God is "that which nothing greater can be thought," he argued. We cannot think of this entity as anything but existing because a god who exists is greater than one who merely is an idea. The argument, though contested almost as soon as it was written, has influenced philosophers even into the twentieth century.

Anselm also thought deeply on the relationship of faith and reason. He concluded that faith is the precondition of knowledge (*credo ut intelligam*, "I believe in order to understand"). He didn't despise reason; in fact he employed it in all his writings. He simply believed knowledge cannot lead to faith, and knowledge gained outside of faith is untrustworthy.

## Squaring off against the king

In 1066 the Normans invaded England, and William the Conqueror gave the monastery at Bec several tracts of English land. Following the invasion, Anselm was summoned across the channel three times, where he impressed the English clergy. When Lanfranc died in 1089, they pressed William II to appoint Anselm to the archbishopric (formally the prerogative of the pope, but in practice the archbishop of Canterbury was the king's appointee). Anselm was reluctant, as was William II for political reasons, and the position went unfilled for four years. Then, one day, the king fell seriously ill and, fearing hell, appointed Anselm against his repeated pleas.

Anselm immediately exerted pressure on the king: he refused to do anything priestly for William until the king restored lands to Canterbury, recognized the archbishop as supreme in spiritual matters, and pledged his allegiance to Pope Urban II (who was embroiled in a power struggle with England). The king, also called William Rufus, agreed, but reneged on his promises when he recovered from his illness. In fact, he would not even let Anselm visit Rome. When Rufus denied permission the third time, Anselm



Benedict seven centuries earlier). At age 14, Thomas went to the University of Naples, where his Dominican teacher so impressed him that Thomas decided he, too, would join the new, study-oriented Dominican order.

His family fiercely opposed the decision (apparently wanting him to become an influential and financially secure abbot or archbishop rather than take a friar's vow of poverty). Thomas's brothers kidnapped him and confined him for 15 months; his family tempted him with a prostitute and an offer to buy him the post of archbishop of Naples.

All attempts failed, and Thomas went to Paris, medieval Europe's center of theological study. While there he fell under the spell of the famous teacher Albert the Great.

Wrestling with reason

In medieval Europe, all learning took place under the eye of the church, and theology reigned supreme in the sciences. Still, non-Christian philosophers like Aristotle the Greek, Averroes the Muslim, and Maimonides the Jew were studied alongside the Bible. Scholars were especially fascinated by Aristotle, whose works had been unknown in Europe for centuries. He seemed to have explained the entire universe, not by using Scripture but by his powers of observation and reason.

This emphasis on reason threatened to undermine traditional Christian beliefs. Christians had believed knowledge could come only through God's revelation, that only those to whom God chose to reveal his truths could understand the universe. How could this be squared with the obvious knowledge taught by these newly discovered philosophers? Thomas wanted to explore this issue, and he determined to extract from Aristotle's writings what was acceptable to Christianity.

His thoughts consumed him. According to one story, he was dining with Louis IX of France (later "Saint" Louis), but while others engaged in conversation, he stared off into the distance lost in thought. Suddenly, he slammed down his fist on the table and exclaimed, "Ah! There's an argument that will destroy the Manichees!"

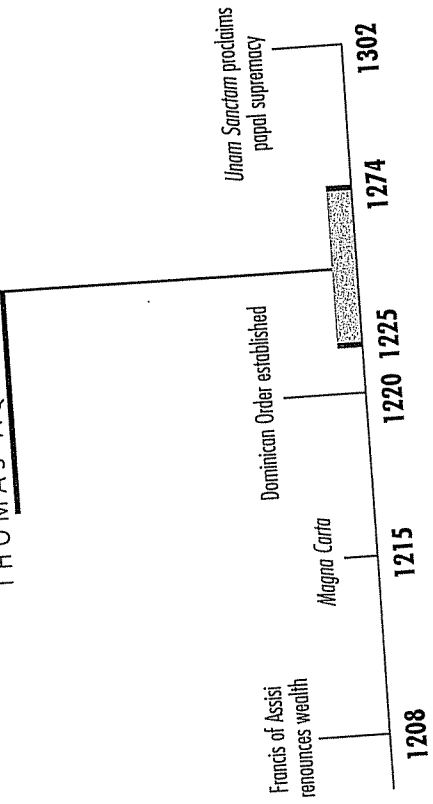
At the beginning of his massive *Summa Theologica* (or "A summation of theological knowledge"), Thomas stated, "In sacred theology, all things are treated from the standpoint of God." Thomas proceeded to distinguish between philosophy and theology, and between reason and revelation, though he emphasized that these did not contradict each other. Both are fountains of knowledge; both come from God.

Reason, said Thomas (following Aristotle), is based on sensory data—what we can see, feel, hear, smell, and touch. Revelation is based on more. While reason can lead us to believe in God—something that other theologians had already proposed—only revelation can show us God as he really is, the triune God of the Bible.

"In order that men might have knowledge of God, free of doubt and uncertainty," he wrote, "it was necessary for divine truth to be delivered to them by way of faith, being told to them as it were, by God himself who cannot lie."

In other words, someone looking at nature could tell that an intelligent creator exists. But that person would have no idea whether the creator was good or if he might work in history. Furthermore, though a person apart from Christianity can practice certain "natu-

THOMAS AQUINAS



THEOLOGAINS  
Thomas Aquinas

THE BRILLIANT "DUMB OX"

*"In order that men might have knowledge of God, free of doubt and uncertainty, it was necessary for divine truth to be delivered to them by way of faith, being told to them as it were, by God himself who cannot lie."*

No one claimed Thomas Aquinas got famous on his looks. He was colossally fat, suffered from edema (dropsy), and one huge eye dwarfed his other. Nor was he a particularly dynamic, charismatic figure. Introspective and silent most of the time, when he did speak, it was often completely unrelated to the conversation. His classmates in college called him "the dumb ox." Today, recognized as the greatest theologian of the Middle Ages, he is called "the doctor of angels."

Temptations of a future theologian

He was born in an Italian castle to "Count Lundulf" of Aquino (though he was probably not a count) and Lundulf's wife, Theodora. At age 5, the pudgy boy was sent to the school at the ... of Monte Cassino (a community founded by

ral virtues," only a believer can practice faith, hope, and love, the truly Christian virtues.

**Volumes of straw**

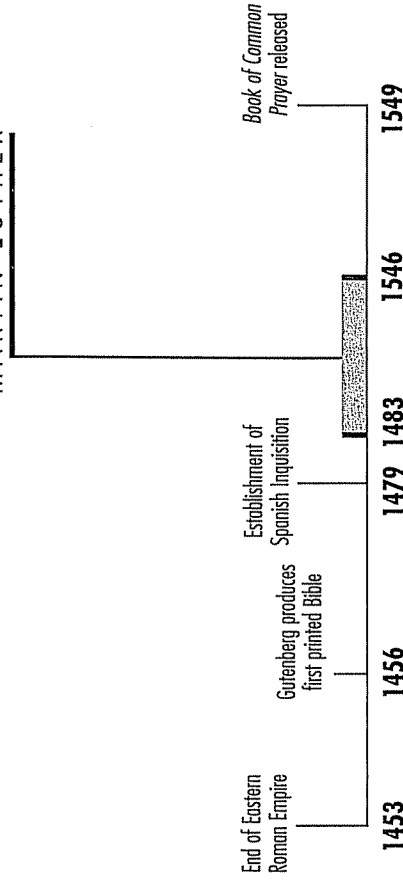
Thomas's writings (including the *Summa Contra Gentiles*, a manual for missionaries to the Muslims, which also contains several hymns) were attacked before and after his death. In 1277, the archbishop of Paris tried to have Thomas formally condemned, but the Roman Curia put a stop to the movement. Though Thomas was canonized in 1325, it took another 200 years before his teaching was hailed as preeminent and a chief bulwark against Protestantism. Four years after the Council of Trent, in which his writings play a prominent part, Thomas was declared a doctor of the church.

In 1879, the papal bull *Aeterni Patris* endorsed Thomism (Aquinas's theology) as an authentic expression of doctrine and said it should be studied by all students of theology. Today both Protestant and Catholic scholars draw upon his writings.

Thomas, however, would not necessarily be pleased. Toward the end of his life, he had a vision that forced him to drop his pen. Though he had experienced visions for years, this was something different. His secretary begged him to start writing again, but Aquinas replied, "I cannot. Such things have been revealed to me that what I have written seems but straw."

His *Summa Theologica*, one of the most influential writings of the Christian church, was left unfinished when he died three months later.

MARTIN LUTHER



THEOLOGAINS

# Martin Luther

PASSIONATE REFORMER

*"At last meditating day and night, by the mercy of God, I began to understand that the righteousness of God is that through which the righteous live by a gift of God, namely by faith. Here I felt as if I were entirely born again and had entered paradise itself through the gates that had been flung open."*

In the sixteenth century, the world was divided about Martin Luther. One Catholic thought Martin Luther was a "demon in the appearance of a man." Another who first questioned Luther's theology later declared, "He alone is right!"

In our day, nearly 500 years hence, the verdict is nearly unanimous to the good. Both Catholics and Protestants affirm he was not only right about a great deal, but he changed the course of Western history for the better.

**Thunderstorm conversion**

Martin was born at Eisleben (about 120 miles southwest of modern Berlin) to Margaret and Hans Luder (as it was locally pronounced). He was raised in Mansfeld, where his father worked

at the local copper mines.

Hans sent Martin to Latin school and then, when Martin was only 13 years old, to the University of Erfurt to study law. There Martin earned both his baccalaureate and master's degrees in the shortest time allowed by university statutes. He proved so adept at public debates that he earned the nickname "The Philosopher."

Then in 1505 his life took a dramatic turn. As the 21-year-old Luther fought his way through a severe thunderstorm on the road to Erfurt, a bolt of lightning struck the ground near him.

"Help me, St. Anne!" Luther screamed. "I will become a monk!"

The scrupulous Luther fulfilled his vow: he gave away all his possessions and entered the monastic life.

### Spiritual breakthrough

Luther was extraordinarily successful as a monk. He plunged into prayer, fasting, and ascetic practices—going without sleep, enduring bone-chilling cold without a blanket, and flagellating himself. As he later commented, "If anyone could have earned heaven by the life of a monk, it was I."

Although he sought by these means to love God fully, he found no consolation. He was increasingly terrified of the wrath of God: "When it is touched by this passing inundation of the eternal, the soul feels and drinks nothing but eternal punishment."

During his early years, whenever Luther read what would become the famous "Reformation text"—Romans 1:17—his eyes were drawn not to the word faith, but to the word righteous. Who, after all, could "live by faith" but those who were already righteous?

The text was clear on the matter: "the righteous shall live by faith."

Luther remarked, "I hated that word, 'the righteousness of God,' by which I had been taught according to the custom and use of all teachers ... [that] God is righteous and punishes the unrighteous sinner." The young Luther could not live by faith because he was not righteous—and he knew it.

Meanwhile, he was ordered to take his doctorate in the Bible and become a professor at Wittenberg University. During lectures on the Psalms (in 1513 and 1514) and a study of the Book of Romans, he began to see a way through his dilemma. "At last meditating day and night, by the mercy of God, I ... began to understand that the righteousness of God is that through which the righteous live by a gift of God, namely by faith.... Here I felt as if I were entirely born again and had entered paradise itself through the gates that



had been flung open."

On the heels of this new understanding came others. To Luther the church was no longer the institution defined by apostolic succession; instead it was the community of those who had been given faith. Salvation came not by the sacraments as such but by faith. The idea that human beings had a spark of goodness (enough to seek out God) was not a foundation of theology but was taught only by "fools." Humility was no longer a virtue that earned grace but a necessary response to the gift of grace. Faith no longer consisted of assenting to the church's teachings but of trusting the promises of God and the merits of Christ.

It wasn't long before the revolution in Luther's heart and mind played itself out in all of Europe.

### "Here I stand"

It started on All Saints' Eve, 1517, when Luther publicly objected to the way preacher Johann Tetzel was selling indulgences. These were documents prepared by the church and bought by individuals either for themselves or on behalf of the dead that would release them from punishment due to their sins. As Tetzel preached, "Once the coin into the coffer clings, a soul from purgatory heavenward springs!"

Luther questioned the church's trafficking in indulgences and called for a public debate of 95 theses he had written. Instead, his 95 Theses spread across Germany as a call to reform, and the issue quickly became not indulgences but the authority of the church: Did the pope have the right to issue indulgences?

Events quickly accelerated. At a public debate in Leipzig in 1519, when Luther declared that "a simple layman armed with the Scriptures" was superior to both pope and councils without them, he was threatened with excommunication.

Luther replied to the threat with his three most important treatises: *The Address to the Christian Nobility*, *The Babylonian Captivity of the Church*, and *On the Freedom of a Christian*. In the first, he argued that all Christians were priests, and he urged rulers to take up the cause of church reform. In the second, he reduced the seven sacraments to two (baptism and the Lord's Supper). In the third, he told Christians they were free from the law (especially church laws) but bound in love to their neighbors.

In 1521 he was called to an assembly at Worms, Germany, to appear before Charles V, Holy Roman Emperor. Luther arrived prepared for another debate; he quickly discovered it was a trial at which he was asked to recant his views.

Luther replied, "Unless I can be instructed and convinced with evidence from the Holy Scriptures or with open, clear, and distinct grounds of reasoning ... then I cannot and will not recant, because it is neither safe nor wise to act against conscience." Then he added, "Here I stand. I can do no other. God help me! Amen."

By the time an imperial edict calling Luther "a convicted heretic" was issued, he had escaped to Wartburg Castle, where he hid for ten months.

### Accomplishments of a sick man

In early spring of 1522, he was able to return to Wittenberg to lead, with the help of

men like Philip Melancthon, the fledgling reform movement.

Over the next years, Luther entered into more disputes, many of which divided friends and enemies. When unrest resulted in the Peasants' War of 1524–1525, he condemned the peasants and exhorted the princes to crush the revolt.

He married a runaway nun, Katharina von Bora, which scandalized many. (For Luther, the shock was waking up in the morning with "pigtrails on the pillow next to me.") He mocked fellow reformers, especially Swiss reformer Ulrich Zwingli, and used vulgar language in doing so.

In fact, the older he became, the more cantankerous he was. In his later years, he said some nasty things about, among others, Jews and popes and theological enemies, with words that are not fit to print.

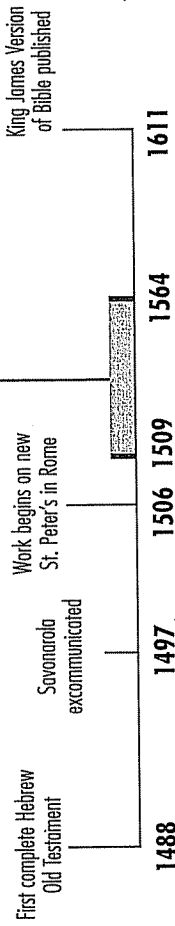
Nonetheless, his lasting accomplishments also mounted: the translation of the Bible into German (which remains a literary and biblical hallmark); the writing of the hymn "A Mighty Fortress is Our God"; and publishing his *Larger* and *Smaller Catechism*, which have guided not just Lutherans but many others since.

His later years were spent often in both illness and furious activity (in 1531, though he was sick for six months and suffered from exhaustion, he preached 180 sermons, wrote 15 tracts, worked on his Old Testament translation, and took a number of trips). But in 1546, he finally wore out.

Luther's legacy is immense and cannot be adequately summarized. Every Protestant Reformer—like Calvin, Zwingli, Knox, and Cranmer—and every Protestant stream—Lutheran, Reformed, Anglican, and Anabaptist—were inspired by Luther in one way or another. On a larger canvas, his reform unleashed forces that ended the Middle Ages and ushered in the modern era.

It has been said that in most libraries, books by and about Martin Luther occupy more shelves than those concerned with any other figure except Jesus of Nazareth. Though difficult to verify, one can understand why it is likely to be true.

JOHN CALVIN



THEOLOGAINS

# John Calvin

FATHER OF THE REFORMED FAITH

*"I labored at the task [writing The Institutes] especially for our Frenchmen, for I saw that many were hungering and thirsting after Christ and yet that only a few had any real knowledge of him."*

With his brother and sister and two friends, John Calvin fled Catholic France and headed to the free city of Strasbourg. It was the summer of 1536; Calvin had recently converted to the "evangelical" faith and had just published *The Institutes of the Christian Religion*, which articulated his Protestant views. He was a wanted man.

The party put up at an inn in Geneva, and word quickly passed to local church leader William Farel that the author of *The Institutes* was in town. Farel was ecstatic. He was desperate for help as he strove to organize a newly formed Protestant church in town. He rushed to the inn and pleaded with Calvin, arguing it was God's will he remain in the city.

Calvin said he was staying only one night. Besides, he was a scholar not a pastor. Farel, baffled and frustrated, swore a great oath that

God's sovereignty. He taught that original sin eradicated free will in people. Only by God's initiative can anyone begin to have faith and thus experience assurance of salvation.

In this and later editions, Calvin developed the doctrines of predestination, or election. More importantly, he argued for the indefectibility of grace—that is, grace will never be withdrawn from the elect. This was Calvin's pastoral attempt to comfort new believers. In medieval Catholicism, believers remained anxious about their spiritual destinies and were required to perform more and more good works to guarantee their salvation. Calvin taught that once a believer understands he is chosen by Christ to eternal life, he will never have to suffer doubt again about salvation: "He will obtain an unwavering hope of final perseverance (as it is called), if he reckons himself a member of him who is beyond hazard of falling away."

### God's city

After fleeing France to escape persecution, Calvin settled in Geneva at Farel's bidding. But after a mere 18 months, he and Farel were banished from the city for disagreeing with the city council. Calvin headed again for Strasbourg, where he pastored for three years and married Idellete de Bure, the widow of an Anabaptist, who brought with her two children.

By 1541 Calvin's reputation had spread: he wrote three other books and revised his *Institutes*. (Still more revisions came in 1550 and 1559, eventually amounting to 80 chapters.) He had become close friends with leading Reformers like Martin Bucer and Philip Melancthon. He was asked to return to Geneva by city authorities, and he spent the rest of his life trying to help establish a theocratic society.

Calvin believed the church should faithfully mirror the principles laid down in Holy Scripture. In his *Ecclesiastical Ordinances* he argued that the New Testament taught four orders of ministry: pastors, doctors, elders, and deacons. Around these, the city was organized.

Pastors conducted the services, preached, administered the Sacraments, and cared for the spiritual welfare of parishioners. In each of the three parish churches, two Sunday services and a catechism class were offered. Every other weekday, a service was held—later on, every day. The Lord's Supper was celebrated quarterly.

The doctors, or teachers, lectured in Latin on the Old and New Testaments usually on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays. The audience consisted mainly of the older schoolboys and ministers, but anyone could attend.

In every district, elders kept an eye on spiritual affairs. If they saw that so-and-so was frequently the worse for drink, or that Mr. X beat his wife, or that Mr. Y and Mrs. Z were seeing too much of each other, they admonished them in a brotherly manner. If the behavior didn't cease, they reported the matter to the Consistory, the church's governing body, which would summon the offender. Excommunication was a last resort and would remain in force until the offender repented.

Finally, social welfare was the charge of the deacons. They were the hospital management board, social security executives, and alms-house supervisors. The deacons were so

God would curse all Calvin's studies unless he stayed in Geneva.

Calvin, a man of tender conscience, later reflected on this moment: "I felt as if God from heaven had laid his mighty hand upon me to stop me in my course—and I was so terror stricken that I did not continue my journey."

To this day, Calvin's name is associated, for good and for ill, with the city of Geneva. And Calvin's belief in God's election is his theological legacy to the church.

### The "whole sum of godliness"

Calvin was born in 1509 in Noyon, France. His father, a lawyer, planned a career in the church for his son, and by the mid-1520s, Calvin had become a fine scholar. He spoke proficient Latin, excelled at philosophy, and qualified to take up the intensive study of theology in Paris.

Suddenly, though, his father changed his mind and decided John should achieve greatness in law. John acquiesced, and the next five or six years saw him at the University of Orleans, attaining distinction in a subject he did not love. During these years, he dipped into Renaissance humanism. He learned Greek, read widely in the classics, and added Plato to the Aristotle he already knew. He developed a taste for writing so that by age 22, he had published a commentary on Seneca's *De Clementia*.



Then word of Luther's teaching reached France, and his life made an abrupt turn, though his own account is reticent and vague: "He [God] tamed to teachableness a mind too stubborn for its years—for I was strongly devoted to the superstitions of the papacy that nothing less could draw me from such depths of mire. And so this mere taste of true godliness that I received set me on fire with such a desire to progress that I pursued the rest of my studies more coolly, although I did not give them up altogether."

He became marked out as a "Lutheran," and, when persecution arose in Paris (where he had returned to teach), he sought refuge in Basel. There he penned the first edition of a book that was to affect Western history as much as any other.

*The Institutes of the Christian Religion* was intended as an elementary manual for those who wanted to know something about the evangelical faith—"the whole sum of godliness and whatever it is necessary to know about saving doctrine." Calvin later wrote, "I labored at the task especially for our own Frenchmen, for I saw that many were hungering and thirsting after Christ and yet that only a very few had any real knowledge of him."

In *The Institutes*, Calvin outlined his views on the church, the sacraments, justifying faith, Christian liberty, and political government. His unique and overarching theme is

... Christian liberty and political government. His unique and overarching theme is

effective, Geneva had no beggars.

The system worked so well for so many years that when John Knox visited Geneva in 1554, he wrote a friend that the city “is the most perfect school of Christ that ever was in the earth since the days of the apostles.”

#### Unofficial authoritarian

Calvin, for his part, preached twice every Sunday and every day of alternate weeks. When not preaching, he lectured as the Old Testament professor three times a week. He took his place regularly on the Consistory, which met every Thursday. And he was either on committees or incessantly being asked for advice about matters relating to the deacons.

He was in no way the ruler or dictator of Geneva. He was appointed by the city council and paid by them. He could at any time have been dismissed by them (as he had been in 1538). He was a foreigner in Geneva, not even a naturalized citizen, until near the end of his life. His was a moral authority, stemming from his belief that, because he proclaimed the message of the Bible, he was God’s ambassador, with divine authority behind him. As such, he was involved in much that went on in Geneva, from the city constitution to drains and heating appliances.

His role in the infamous execution of Michael Servetus in 1553, then, was not an official one. Servetus fled to Geneva to escape Catholic authorities: he had denied the Trinity, a blasphemy that merited death in the 1500s all over Europe. Geneva authorities didn’t have any more patience with heresy than did Catholics, and with the full approval of Calvin, they put Servetus to the stake.

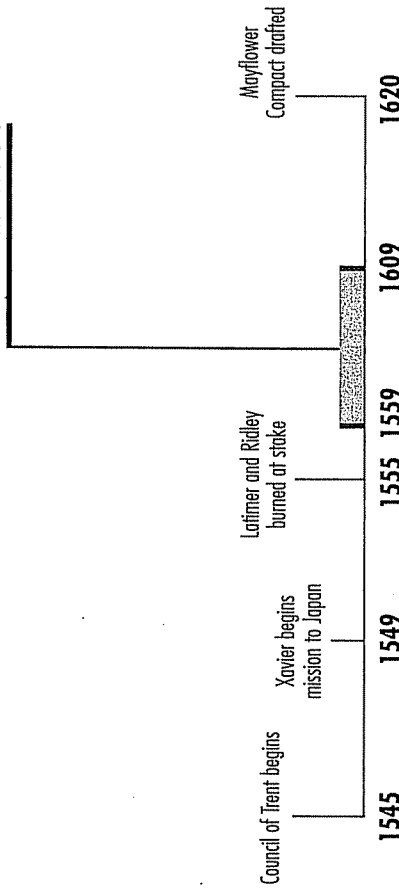
Calvin drove himself beyond his body’s limits. When he could not walk the couple of hundred yards to church, he was carried in a chair to preach. When the doctor forbade him to go out in the winter air to the lecture room, he crowded the audience into his bedroom and gave lectures there. To those who would urge him to rest, he asked, “What? Would you have the Lord find me idle when he comes?”

His afflictions were intensified by opposition he sometimes faced. People tried to drown his voice by loud coughing while he preached; others fired guns outside the church. Men set their dogs on him. There were even anonymous threats against his life.

Calvin’s patience gradually wore away. Even when he was patient, he was too unsympathetic sometimes. He showed little understanding, little kindness, and certainly little humor. Calvin finally wore out in 1564. But his influence has not. Outside the church, his ideas have been blamed for and credited with (depending on your view) the rise of capitalism, individualism, and democracy. In the church, he has been a major influence on leading figures such as evangelist George Whitefield and theologian Karl Barth, as well as entire movements, such as Puritanism.

Day to day, church bodies with the names “Presbyterian” or “Reformed” (and even some Baptist groups) carry forward his legacy in local parishes all over the world.

## JACOB ARMINIUS



THEOLOGAINS

# Jacob Arminius

IRENIC ANTI-CALVINIST

*“That teacher obtains my highest approbation who ascribes as much as possible to divine grace. . . .”*

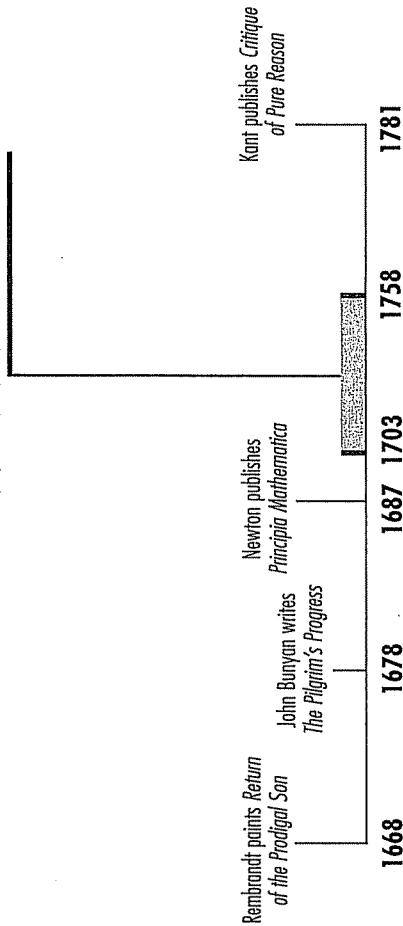
The year Jacob Arminius was born (in Oudewater, Holland), John Calvin was busy establishing the Genevan Academy to propagate his ideas of predestination. About that same time, Guido de Brès wrote the first edition of the Belgic Confession, which became one of the basic doctrinal standards of Dutch Calvinism. As Arminius grew up, arguments over Calvin’s teachings interrupted those over Spanish rule. By the time Arminius was 14, William the Silent, Holland’s king, was a Calvinist.

But by the time Arminius died, the theological landscape was shifting again, and Arminius’s anti-Calvinist theology was spreading rapidly across Europe.

#### Irenic reformer

Arminius began to question Calvinism (especially its view of grace and predestination) in his early 20s, but rather than fight for

JONATHAN EDWARDS



THEOLOGAINS  
 Jonathan Edwards  
 AMERICA'S GREATEST THEOLOGIAN

*"[I wish] to lie low before God, as in the dust; that I might be nothing, and that God might be all, that I might become as a little child."*

At age 14, Jonathan Edwards, already a student at Yale, read philosopher John Locke with more delight "than the most greedy miser finds when gathering up handfuls of silver and gold, from some newly discovered treasure."

He also was a young man with profound spiritual sensitivities. At age 17, after a period of distress, he said holiness was revealed to him as a ravishing, divine beauty. His heart panted "to lie low before God, as in the dust; that I might be nothing, and that God might be all, that I might become as a little child."

This combination of intellect and piety characterized Edwards' whole life.

Dispassionate revivalist

Edwards was born in East Windsor, Connecticut, and he received his master's degree from Yale in 1722. He apprenticed for

his views at the Geneva Academy, where he had studied under Calvin's successor, Theodore Beza, he left quietly. When Genevan authorities became angry at Arminius's defense of French humanist Peter Ramus, Arminius left for Basel. He was offered a doctorate there but turned it down on the grounds that his youth (he was only 24 or 25) would bring dishonor to the title.

It was his study of the Epistle to the Romans as an Amsterdam minister that set Jacob Arminius firmly against Calvinism. Faith, he believed, was the cause of election. "It is an eternal and gracious decree of God in Christ, by which he determines to justify and adopt believers, and to endow them with eternal life but to condemn unbelievers, and impenitent persons."

Though he was accused of Pelagianism (an overemphasis on free will) and other heresies, his critics brought no proof of the charges.

"That teacher obtains my highest approbation who ascribes as much as possible to divine grace," he assured them, "provided he so pleads the cause of grace, as not to inflict an injury on the justice of God, and not to take away the free will of that which is evil."

In 1606, while professor of theology at Leiden, Arminius delivered an address titled "On Reconciling Religious Dissensions among Christians":

"Religious dissension is the worst kind of disagreement," he wrote, "for it strikes the very altar itself. It engulfs everyone; each must take sides or else make a third party of himself."

Still, he continued to be disturbed by the determinism of Calvinism, and he called for a national synod to resolve the conflicts and to look critically at two crucial Calvinist documents, the Belgic Confession and the Heidelberg Catechism. The synod finally met but not until nine years after Arminius died (in

good standing with the Dutch Reformed Church), and eight years after the Remonstrance was issued, which developed and articulated the key themes of what is today called Arminian theology: Christ died for all (not just the elect) and individuals can resist grace and even lose salvation. Arminianism since has influenced key figures in church history, such as John Wesley, the founder of Methodism.



gational churches, Edwards encouraged the singing of new Christian hymns, notably those of Isaac Watts.

### Newton and the Bible

Edwards regarded personal conversion as critical, so he insisted that only persons who had made a profession of faith, which included a description of their conversion experience, could receive Communion. This reversed the policy of his grandfather and alienated his congregation, which ousted him in 1750.

For the next few years, he was a missionary pastor to Native Americans in Stockbridge, Massachusetts, and wrote, among other theological treatises, *Freedom of the Will* (1754), a brilliant defense of divine sovereignty. In it he argued that we are free to do whatever we want, but we will never want to do God's will without a vision of his divine nature imparted by the Spirit. Fascinated by Newtonian physics and enlightened by Scripture, Edwards believed that God's providence was literally the binding force of atoms—that the universe would collapse and disappear unless God sustained its existence from one moment to the next. Scripture affirmed his view that Christ is "upholding all things by his word of power" (Heb. 1:3 RSV). Such were the fruits of his lifelong habit of rising at 4:00 a.m. and studying 13 hours a day.

The College of New Jersey (later Princeton) called him as president in 1758. But soon after his arrival, Edwards died of the new smallpox vaccination. He was 55.

He left no small legacy: Edwards is considered (some would say with Reinhold Niebuhr) America's greatest theologian.

his grandfather, Solomon Stoddard, for two years before he became, in 1729, the sole preacher of the Northampton, Massachusetts, parish.

In the meantime, when he was 20, he had met Sarah Pierrepont. Their wedding followed four years of often agonizing courtship for the gawky and intense Edwards, but in the end, their marriage proved deeply satisfying to both. Edwards described it as an "uncommon union," and in a sermon on Genesis 2:21-25, he said, "When Adam rose from his deep sleep, God brought woman to him from near his heart." They eventually had 11 children.

In 1734 Edwards's preaching on justification by faith sparked a different sort of devotion: a spiritual revival broke out in his parish. In December there were six sudden conversions. By spring there were about thirty a week.

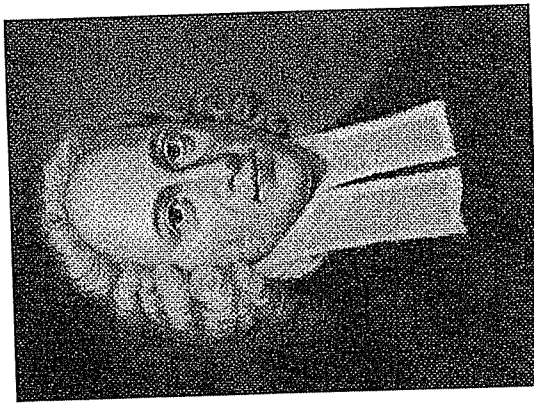
It was not due to theatrics. One observer wrote, "He scarcely gestured or even moved, and he made no attempt by the elegance of his style or the beauty of his pictures to gratify the taste and fascinate the imagination." Instead he convinced "with overwhelming weight of argument and with such intensity of feeling."

Edwards kept a careful written account of his observations and noted them in *A Faithful Narrative of the Surprising Work of God* (1737), and his most effective sermons were published as *Justification by Faith* (1738), which were widely read in America and England. These works helped fuel the Great Awakening a few years later (1739-1741), during which thousands were moved by the preaching of Britain's George Whitefield. Whitefield had read Edwards's book and made it a point to visit him when he came to America. Edwards invited Whitefield to preach at his church and reported, "The congregation was extraordinarily melted ... almost the whole assembly being in tears for a great part of the time." The "whole assembly" included Edwards himself.

During the Great Awakening, Edwards contributed perhaps the most famous sermon in American history, "Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God." Unfortunately it has since cast Edwards as an emotional and judgmental revivalist, when in fact he preached it as dispassionately as any of his sermons.

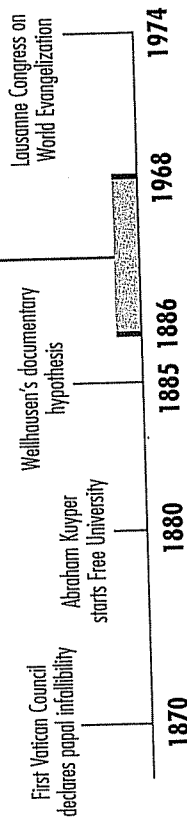
In spite of his dispassionate style, Edwards insisted that true religion is rooted in the affections, not in reason. He defended the emotional outbursts of the Great Awakening, especially in *Treatise on Religious Affections* (1746), a masterpiece of psychological and spiritual discernment, and in *Some Thoughts Concerning the Present Revival of Religion in New England* (in which he included an account of his wife's spiritual awakening).

And in a day when psalm-singing was almost the only music to be heard in congre-





## KARL BARTH



THEOLOGIANS

## Karl Barth

COURAGEOUS THEOLOGIAN

*"Faith is awe in the presence of the divine incognito; it is the love of God that is aware of the qualitative difference between God and man and God and the world."*

"The gospel is not a truth among other truths. Rather, it sets a question mark against all truths." Karl Barth not only said this, he spent his life setting question marks, in the name of Christ, against all manner of "truths." In the process, he did nothing less than alter the course of modern theology.

**Shocking liberalism**

He started out life conventionally enough: he was born in Basel, Switzerland, the son of Fritz Barth (pronounced "bart"), a professor of New Testament and early church history at Bern, and Anna Sartorius. He studied at some of the best universities: Bern, Berlin, Tübingen, and Marburg. At Berlin he sat under the famous liberals of the day (like historian Adolph von Harnack), most of whom taught an optimistic Christianity that focused not so much on Jesus Christ and the Cross as the fatherhood of God

and the brotherhood of man.

After serving a Geneva curacy from 1909 to 1911, Barth was appointed to a working-class parish in Switzerland, and in 1913 he married Nell Hoffman, a talented violinist (they eventually had one daughter and four sons).

As he pastored, he noted with alarm that Germany was becoming increasingly militaristic and that his former professors were supportive of this. Barth, dismayed with the moral weakness of liberal theology, plunged into a study of the Bible, especially Paul's Epistle to the Romans. He also visited Moravian preacher Christoph Frederick Blumhardt and came away with an overwhelming conviction about the victorious reality of Christ's resurrection—which deeply influenced his theology.

Out of this emerged his *Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans* (1919). He sounded themes that had been muted in liberal theology. Liberal theology had domesticated God into the patron saint of human institutions and values. Instead, Barth wrote of the "crisis," that is, God's judgment under which all the world stood; he pounded on the theme of God's absolute sovereignty, of his complete freedom in initiating his revelation in Jesus Christ.

He spoke dialectically, in paradox, to shock readers into seeing the radicalness of the gospel: "Faith is awe in the presence of the divine incognito; it is the love of God that is aware of the qualitative difference between God and man and God and the world."

The first of six heavily revised editions followed in 1922. It rocked the theological community. Barth later wrote, "As I look back upon my course, I seem to myself as one who, ascending the dark staircase of a church tower and trying to steady himself, reached for the banister, but got hold of the bell rope instead. To his horror he had then to listen to what the great bell had sounded over him and not over him alone." Liberal theologians gasped in horror and attacked Barth furiously. But Barth had given that form of liberalism a mortal wound.

His theology came to be known as "dialectical theology," or "the theology of crisis"; it initiated a trend toward neo-orthodoxy in Protestant theology.

In 1921 Barth was appointed professor of Reformed theology at the University of Göttingen, and later to chairs at Münster (1925) and Bonn (1930). He published works critiquing nineteenth-century Protestant theology and produced a celebrated study of Anselm.

In 1931 he began the first book of his massive *Church Dogmatics*. It grew year by year out of his class lectures; though incomplete, it eventually filled four volumes in 12 parts, printed with 500 to 700 pages each. Many pastors in the 1930s, '40s, and '50s, desperate for an antidote to liberalism, eagerly awaited the publication of each book.

**Fascist idolatry**

Barth fought not just with liberals but allies who challenged some of his extreme conclusions. When Emil Brunner proposed that God revealed himself not just in the Bible but in nature as well (though not in a saving way), Barth replied in 1934 with an article titled, "No! An Answer to Emil Brunner." Barth believed that such a "natural theology" was the root of the religious syncretism and anti-Semitism of the "German Christians."

those who supported Hitler's national socialism.

By this time, Barth was immersed in the German church struggle. He was a founder of the so-called Confessing Church, which reacted vigorously against the ideology of "blood and soil" and the Nazis' attempt to create a "German Christian" church. The 1934 Barmen Declaration, largely written by Barth, pitted the revelation of Jesus Christ against the "truth" of Hitler and national socialism:

"Jesus Christ ... is the one Word of God.... We reject the false doctrine, as though the Church could and would have to acknowledge as a source of its proclamation, apart from and beside this one Word of God, still other events and powers, figures and truths, as God's revelation."

When Barth refused to take the oath of unconditional allegiance to the Führer, he was fired. He was offered the chair of theology in his native Basel, however, and from there he continued to champion the causes of the Confessing Church, the Jews, and oppressed people everywhere.

#### Pastor Karl

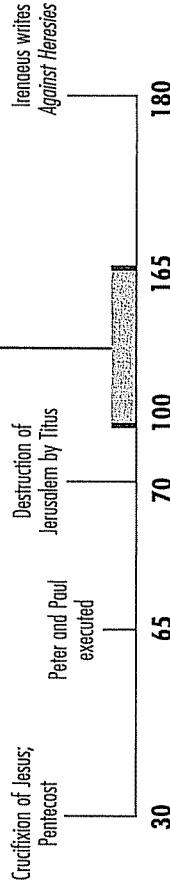
After the war, Barth engaged in controversies regarding baptism (though a Reformed theologian, he rejected infant baptism), hermeneutics, and the demythologizing program of Rudolf Bultmann (which denied the historical nature of Scripture, instead believing it a myth whose meaning could heal spiritual anxiety).

Barth also made regular visits to the prison in Basel, and his sermons to the prisoners, *Deliverance to the Captives*, reveal his unique combination of evangelical passion and social concern that characterized all his life.

When asked in 1962 (on his one visit to America) how he would summarize the essence of the millions of words he had published, he replied, "Jesus loves me this I know, for the Bible tells me so."

Though Barth made it possible for theologians again to take the Bible seriously, American evangelicals have been skeptical of Barth because he refused to consider the written Word "infallible" (he believed only Jesus was). Others gave up on Barth's theology because it overemphasized God's transcendence (to the point that some former Barthians began championing the "death of God"). Nonetheless, he remains the most important theologian of the twentieth century.

## JUSTIN MARTYR



EVANGELISTS AND APOLOGISTS

# Justin Martyr

DEFENDER OF THE "TRUE PHILOSOPHY"

*"I fell in love with the prophets and these men who had loved Christ; I reflected on all their words and found that this philosophy alone was true and profitable."*

When Justin was arrested for his faith in Rome, the prefect asked him to denounce his faith by making a sacrifice to the gods. Justin replied, "No one who is rightly minded turns from true belief to false."

It was in one sense an easy answer for Justin because he had spent most of his adult life discerning the true from the false.

#### Fire in the soul

Justin was born in the Roman city of Flavia Neapolis (ancient Shechem in Samaria). Raised by pagan parents, he sought to find life's meaning in the philosophies of his day. This only brought a series of disappointments.

His first teacher was a Stoic who "knew nothing of God and did not even think knowledge of him to be necessary." There followed a Peripatetic (itinerant philosopher), who seemed most