

Issue 28 • Reprint

# CHRISTIAN HISTORY

THE ✠  
**100**  
MOST  
IMPORTANT  
EVENTS  
IN CHURCH  
HISTORY

Special Bonus:  
Fold-out Timeline!

The foldout for this online edition is at the end.



## Welcome to This Special Issue

*Important information before you begin*

This issue is a first for **CHRISTIAN HISTORY**.

For twenty-seven issues, we have focused on particular individuals, movements, or events. But never have we stepped back to look at the broad, two-thousand-year sweep of Christian history. We have looked at individual trees—grand oaks such as Augustine and Cal-

vin—but not the forest.

The very idea seemed overwhelming. How could we possibly present an overview of church history in one issue? Latourette's classic *A History of Christianity* requires 1,552 pages of fine print to accomplish the same.

Yet readers had asked for an issue that would orient them to church history, an introductory guide that might be used in classes or discussion groups. And we wanted to show how the diverse figures covered in previous issues of **CHRISTIAN HISTORY**—Bernard of Clairvaux, John Wesley, and C. S. Lewis, to name three—fit into the sweep of history. By understanding each person's context, we can better understand his or her contribution.

I discussed these ideas with **CHRISTIAN HISTORY**'s

Charles Wesley's conversions—these events clearly changed the course of church history. In highlighting these key events, we hoped, we could help people see the big picture, the development and change of the Christian church over time. The project would be an adventure, but we felt it was worth the risk.

### How were the events selected?

Selecting only one hundred key events from church history is not easy. We felt as if we had been given only an afternoon to tour the Louvre, probably the finest collection of paintings in the world. Where do you start, when the museum holds works by Vermeer, Rubens, El Greco, Raphael, and Titian?

Still, a qualified tour guide could show you what are generally considered the more significant works: Rembrandt's *The Supper at Emmaus*, or Leonardo da Vinci's *Mona Lisa*. This issue of *Christian History* aims to be a similar guide through a history filled with treasures.

To determine the dates deserving coverage, extensive research was done by the Christian History Institute and by Christianity Today, Inc. First, a survey was sent to members of the Christian History Institute. Responses were tabulated, the list of events was refined, and a new survey was written.

This was sent to five hundred members of a professional church historians' society. The group represented a dazzling array of denominations, theological positions, and areas of historical study. Seventy-one percent of respondents hold doctoral degrees.

The survey listed nearly 150 events in church history—the Diet of Worms, the Second Vatican Council, and so on—and asked respondents to mark whether each event was “extremely important,” “very important,” “somewhat important,” “not too important” (or “not familiar” to them). The survey also invited respondents to suggest other church-history dates they considered extremely important.

Finally, the survey was sent to the editorial advisory board of **CHRISTIAN HISTORY**. These historians completed the survey and suggested still other events worthy of inclusion.

Survey results were tabulated, and “write-in” events were thoughtfully compared and evaluated. From this information, a list of the 100 most important events in church history was compiled. (And from that, a list of the 25 most important dates.)

We found the list interesting, educational—and at least in a few places, surprising.

### What does the list represent?

The word *important* was not narrowly defined on the survey, so respondents' choices may reflect various defini-



Cathedral in Aachen, the ancient spa from which Charlemagne ruled the Holy Roman Empire. His coronation, in 800, is included in the list beginning on page 50.

founder, Dr. Ken Curtis, and he mentioned a book he was planning: *The 100 Most Important Events in Church History*. The idea made sense for the magazine, too. Perhaps we couldn't draw a detailed map for every mile of the church's journey, but we could sketch the most significant landmarks, milestones, and turns in the road. The Council of Nicea, Luther's posting of *The Ninety-Five Theses*, John and



tions: the number of people the event affected, the length of time the event made a direct impact, the extent to which it changed the direction of a group or movement, its level of effect on the Christianity we know today. Most events on the list qualify as important for several of these reasons.

However, it's good to recognize the following factors about this list:

- We started our period of church history after (or at least outside of) the events recorded in the New Testament. We didn't feel it within our scope to select from among the biblical events.
- The list was developed by church historians from North America, primarily, so it reflects a Western view. Christians from the Two-Thirds World would compile a vastly different list.
- It's not always easy (or desirable) to separate sacred from secular history. Yet for the sake of this list, we tried to focus on events that were caused by, or that directly influenced, the church.
- History is shaped by complex and subtle processes as well as specific events. And often a movement or person could have been represented by another significant event.

Despite these built-in limitations, we found the list gave us a fresh way of looking at church history and revealed connections we'd missed in other treatments. For example, when Benedict founded his monastic community at Monte Cassino, he didn't know that 700 years later, the medieval church's greatest theologian, Thomas Aquinas, would attend grade school there.

### How were articles gathered?

Many of the leading twenty-five events were then assigned to scholars who specialize in those areas of study. Several contributors are members of *CHRISTIAN HISTORY*'s editorial advisory board.

The remaining articles were written by the authors of *The 100 Most Important Events in Church History* (Revell, forthcoming). Dr. Ken Curtis, director of the Christian History Institute, has guided that book and greatly in-



A page from the Gutenberg Bible (also known as the 42-line Bible or Mazarin Bible). The grand typeface and ornate rubrics make it one of the most beautiful books ever printed. For more on Gutenberg's history-shaping invention, see page 25.

fluenced this issue. J. Stephen Lang, a writer and editor who has contributed previously to *CHRISTIAN HISTORY*, deserves special thanks for writing all of the articles in the "Top 25 Events" section that do not indicate otherwise. And Randy Petersen, a frequent writer for *Christian History*, contributed the article on "75 Additional Events." We thank these writers for their hard work.

### What about events missing from the list?

Obviously, many important events could not be included in our list of 100. Some of those are included in an enlarged list—over 200 entries—on pages 33 and 34. Had space permitted,

we easily could have added to that. But one real benefit in setting forth a list is that it immediately creates discussion: What is important? Which events are missing?

We offer this list, then, to spark discussion, and we would love to hear from you. Tell us which dates you think also deserve inclusion, and why. In a subsequent issue, we will publish your responses as a way of continuing the discussion.

### Humbled by history

*CHRISTIAN HISTORY* has a clear publishing philosophy, and it begins by emphasizing historical humility. We present this list in that spirit. We remain humbled by our limited ability to see God's work and determine its importance. As *CHRISTIAN HISTORY*'s founder, Dr. Ken Curtis, has written: "We would not be at all surprised if someday we find out that God's list differs significantly from ours—should God humor us by giving us such a listing."

We can't fully fathom how God's Holy Spirit and people's energies have come together in the history of the Christian church. But we don't have to understand every detail of church history to celebrate it.

We hope this special issue of *CHRISTIAN HISTORY* gives you fresh understanding of—and gratitude for—what generations of Christians have accomplished.

KEVIN A. MILLER



# CHRISTIAN HISTORY®

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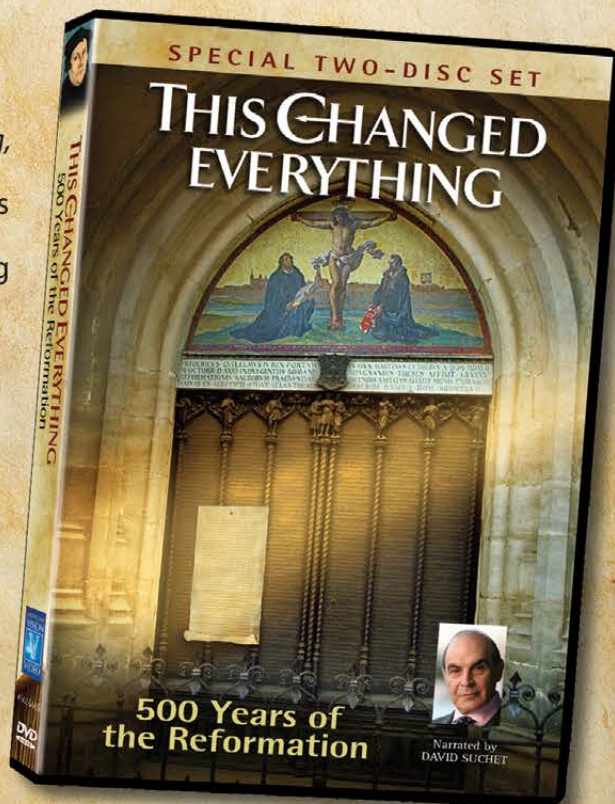
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Gessius Florus loved money and hated Jews. As Roman procurator, he ruled Judea, caring little for their religious sensibilities. When tax revenues were low, he seized silver from the

temple. As the uproar against him grew, in A.D. 66, he sent troops into Jerusalem who massacred 3,600 citizens. Florus's action touched off an explosive rebellion—the First Jewish Revolt—that had been sizzling for some time.

### Launching the Revolt

The Jewish Revolt began—and met its bitter end—at Masada, a hunk of rock overlooking the Dead Sea. The Romans had built a virtually impregnable fortress there. Yet the atrocities of Florus inspired some crazy Zealots to attack Masada. Amazingly, they won, slaughtering the Roman army there.

In Jerusalem, the temple captain signified solidarity with the revolt by stopping the daily sacrifices to Caesar. Soon all Jerusalem was in an uproar, expelling or killing the Roman troops. Then all Judea was in revolt; then Galilee.

Cestius Gallus, the Roman governor of the region, marched from Syria with twenty thousand soldiers. He besieged Jerusalem for six months, yet failed. He left six thousand dead Roman soldiers, not to mention weaponry that the Jewish defenders picked up and used.

Emperor Nero then sent Vespasian, a decorated general, to quell the Judean

# A.D. 70 Titus Destroys Jerusalem

When the Roman general sacked the temple, the Jews were forced into a new era—and so were the Christians.

rebellion. Vespasian put down the opposition in Galilee, then in Transjordan, then in Idumea. He circled in on Jerusalem. But before the coup de grâce, Nero died. Vespasian became embroiled in a leadership struggle that concluded with the eastern armies calling for him to be emperor. One of his first imperial acts was to appoint his son Titus to conduct the Jewish War.

### Crushing the Revolt

By now, Jerusalem was isolated from the rest of the nation, and factions within the city fought over strategies of defense. As the siege wore on, people began dying from starvation and plague. The high priest's wife, who once basked in luxury, scavenged for crumbs in the streets.

Meanwhile the Romans employed new war machines to hurl boulders against the city walls. Battering rams assaulted the fortifications. Jewish defenders fought all day and struggled to

rebuild the walls at night. Eventually the Romans broke through the outer wall, then the second wall, and finally the third wall. Still the Jews fought, scurrying to the temple as their last line of defense.

That was the end for the valiant Jewish defenders—and for the temple. Historian Josephus claimed that Titus wanted to preserve the temple, but his soldiers were so angry at their resilient opponents that they burned it. The remaining Jews were slaughtered or sold as slaves.

The Zealot band that took Masada held it for at least three more years. When the Romans finally built their siege ramp and invaded the mountain fortress, they found the defenders dead—they had committed suicide to avoid being captured by foreigners.

### Results of the Revolt

The Jewish Revolt marked the end of the Jewish state until modern times. The destruction of the temple also signified a change in the Jews' worship (although that change had begun as Jews had been scattering throughout the world for at least six hundred years). The first destruction of the temple, by the Babylonians in 586 B.C., had forced the Jews to become people of the Book. The temple's sad end slammed the door on the Jews' sacrificial system. They adjusted, of course, creating new rituals for home and synagogue. But the Sanhedrin was dissolved, and the center of Jewish religion moved to the educational institutions of Jamnia.

Where were the Christians? Out of town, basically. Many had been driven out of Jerusalem by persecution decades earlier. Eusebius wrote that when the revolt began, in A.D. 66, some of the remaining Jewish Christians fled to Pella, a city across the Jordan River.

It could be said that these events threw the young church's balance of power toward the Gentiles. Missionaries like Paul had originally dealt with a strong (and conservative) Jewish church, based in Jerusalem. But the Christian Jews' non-involvement in the revolt drove an obvious wedge between them and their traditional counterparts. After A.D. 70, Christians were not permitted in the synagogues.

The fall of Jerusalem, then, made the Christians even more distinct from the Jews and impelled the church to develop among the Gentiles. □

A detail from the Arch of Titus in Rome, showing Titus's victorious forces carrying the sacred Menorah from the Jewish temple.



Wikipedia. / Dnator 01. CC BY-SA 3.0



# The "Edict of Milan"

DAVID F. WRIGHT

The agreement shifted Christianity from being an illicit, persecuted sect to being a welcome—and soon dominant—religion of the Roman Empire.

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It came out of a two-man summit meeting in the northern Italian city of Milan in January 313. The two men were the Roman emperors—Constantine ruling the West and Licinius the East. They met "under happy auspices," as their joint communiqué put it. After years of power struggles for the imperial purple, the Roman world enjoyed a degree of peace. And after the failure of the Great Persecution (initiated by the emperors Diocletian and Galerius in 303–304), the Christian church had begun to recover its stability. Constantine and Licinius turned their minds to matters affecting the general welfare of the Empire.

They determined first of all to attend to "the reverence paid to the Divinity." This required a guarantee of full religious freedom to the Christians, setting them on a par with those who followed other religions. The so-called Edict of Milan provided for this. It marks the Roman Empire's final abandonment of the policies of persecution of Christians. The age of the martyrs was at an end. The transition to the era of the "Christian Empire" had begun.

## Provisions of the "Edict"

The conference at Milan undoubtedly resulted in a concordat. But its terms are known to us only from a rescript issued six months later by Licinius.

(This rescript was sent from his capital in Nicomedia—now Izmit in Turkey, just east of the Bosphorus—to the governor of the nearby province of Bithynia. The Christian writer Lactantius has preserved its original Latin, while the church historian Eusebius gives it in Greek.)

Here are the rescript's main provisions:

"Our purpose is to grant both to the Christians and to all others full author-

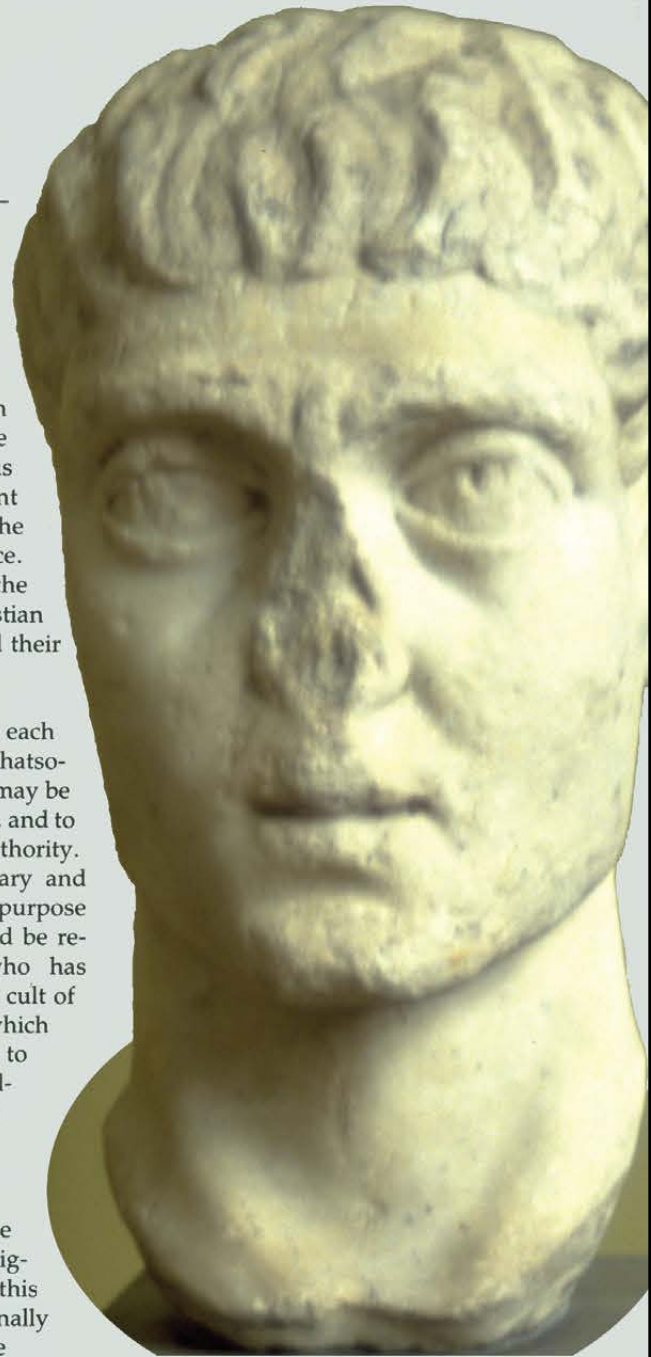
ity to follow whatever worship each person has desired, whereby whatsoever Divinity dwells in heaven may be benevolent and propitious to us, and to all who are placed under our authority. Therefore we thought it salutary and most proper to establish our purpose that no person whatever should be refused complete toleration, who has given up his mind either to the cult of the Christians or to the religion which he personally feels best suited to himself. It is our pleasure to abolish all conditions whatever which were embodied in former orders directed to your office about the Christians, . . . that every one of those who have a common wish to follow the religion of the Christians may from this moment freely and unconditionally proceed to observe the same without any annoyance or disquiet."

The rescript goes out of its way to ensure evenhanded treatment for all: "no diminution must be made from the honor of any religion." But the strongly pro-Christian flavor is tasted in the instructions to restore to the Christians all property that had been appropriated during the persecution. This applied to property belonging to individual Christians as well as to churches—and without regard for the present owners, who

A defaced bust of Emperor Constantine "the Great." With his counterpart Licinius, he gave Christianity legal freedom and restored Christians' confiscated property.

could apply to the state for compensation.

In implementing these rulings the governor was to give the Christians his



Tony Lane

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# The First Council of Nicea

BRUCE L. SHELLEY

At stake in the church's first general council was the simplest, yet most profound, question:  
Who is Jesus Christ?

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July 4, 325, was a memorable day. About three hundred Christian bishops and deacons from the eastern half of the Roman Empire had come to Nicea, a little town near the Bosphorus Straits flowing between the Black Sea and the Mediterranean.

In the conference hall where they waited was a table. On it lay an open copy of the Gospels.

The emperor, Constantine the Great, entered the hall in his imperial, jewel-encrusted, multicolored brocades, but out of respect for the Christian leaders, without his customary train of soldiers. Constantine spoke only briefly. He told the churchmen they had to come to some agreement on the crucial questions dividing them. "Division in the church," he said, "is worse than war."

## A new day

The bishops and deacons were deeply impressed. After three centuries of periodic persecutions instigated by some Roman emperor, were they actually gathered before one not as enemies but as allies? Some of them carried scars of the imperial lash. One pastor from Egypt was missing an eye; another was crippled in both hands as a result of red-hot irons.

But Constantine had dropped the sword of persecution in order to take up the cross. Just before a decisive battle in 312, he had converted to Christianity.

Nicea symbolized a new day for Christianity. The persecuted followers of the Savior dressed in linen had become the respected advisers of emperors robed in purple. The once-despised religion was on its way to becoming the state

religion, the spiritual cement of a single society in which public and private life were united under the control of Christian doctrine.

If Christianity were to serve as the cement of the Empire, however, it had to hold one faith. So the emperors called for church councils like Nicea, paid the way for bishops to attend, and pressed church leaders for doctrinal unity. The age of Christian emperors was an age of creeds; and creeds were the instruments of conformity.

## A troubling question

We can see this imperial pressure at work at Nicea, the first general council of the church. The problem that Constantine expected the bishops to solve was the dispute over Arianism.

Arius, pastor of the influential Baucalis Church in Alexandria, Egypt, taught that Christ was more than human but something less than God. He said that God originally lived alone and had no Son. Then he created the Son, who in turn created everything else. The idea persists in some cults today.

Arius made faith in Christ understandable, especially when he put his teaching in witty rhymes set to catchy tunes. Even the dockhands on the wharves at Alexandria could hum the ditties while unloading fish.

Arius's teaching held a special appeal for many recent converts to Christianity. It was like the pagan religions of their childhood: the one supreme God, who dwells alone, makes a number of lesser gods who do God's work, passing back and forth from heaven to earth.

*Dr. Bruce L. Shelley is professor of church history at Denver Seminary and a member of the advisory board of CHRISTIAN HISTORY.*

"most effective intervention," making sure the terms were published to all.

These actions, Constantine and Licinius concluded, would ensure that "the Divine favor toward us, which we have already experienced in so many affairs, shall continue for all time to give us prosperity and success, together with happiness for the state."

## Significance of the "Edict"

In reality, the subjects of Constantine in the Western Empire already enjoyed the toleration and property rights spelled out in this rescript. Nevertheless, the "Edict's" significance stands unchallenged (even though we must recognize the inaccuracy of its traditional title, since it was not an edict).

Only a few months earlier Constantine had become the first Roman emperor to throw in his lot with the Christians. Although the Milan summit decreed only strict parity for Christians alongside other religionists, hindsight reads between the lines and discerns the hint of things to come. Before the end of the fourth century, orthodox Christianity had become the sole official religion of the Roman Empire.

For Christianity, the changes were momentous. To this day state churches perpetuate the alignment between Christianity and the Empire worked out in the fourth century. Meanwhile, Christians in independent, "free" churches have long regarded the Constantinian revolution as little short of the fall of Christianity, almost as calamitous as the fall of Adam and Eve.

One thing is clear: The unqualified toleration for all decreed at Milan did not last long, nor has it often prevailed in later centuries. The rescript's noble sentiments surely warrant our attention today for that reason alone. □



Tony Lane

The Arch of Constantine, built to celebrate his decisive military victory the year before the "Edict of Milan."



These former pagans found it hard to understand the Christian belief that Christ, the Divine Word, existed from all eternity, and that he is equal to the Almighty Father. So Arianism spread, creating Constantine's concern.

Once the Council of Nicea convened, many of the bishops were ready to compromise. One young deacon from Alexandria, however, was not. Athanasius, with the support of his bishop, Alexander, insisted that Arius's doctrine left Christianity without a divine Savior. He called for a creed that made clear Jesus Christ's full deity.

In the course of the debate, the most learned bishop present, the church historian Eusebius of Caesarea (a friend and admirer of the emperor and a half-hearted supporter of Arius), put forward his own creed—perhaps as evi-

dence of his questioned orthodoxy.

Most of the pastors, however, recognized that something more specific was needed to exclude the possibility of Arian teaching. For this purpose they produced another creed, probably from Palestine. Into it they inserted an extremely important series of phrases: "True God of true God, begotten not made, of one substance with the Father. . . ."

The expression *homo ousion*, "one substance," was probably introduced by Bishop Hosius of Cordova (in today's Spain). Since he had great influence with Constantine, the imperial weight was thrown to that side of the scales.

After extended debate, all but two bishops at the council agreed upon a creed that confessed faith "in one Lord

Jesus Christ, . . . true God of true God." Constantine was pleased, thinking the issue was settled.

### An unsettled issue

As it turned out, however, Nicea alone settled little. For the next century the Nicene and the Arian views of Christ battled for supremacy. First Constantine and then his successors stepped in again and again to banish this churchman or exile that one. Control of church offices too often depended on control of the emperor's favor.

The lengthy struggle over imperial power and theological language culminated in the mid fifth century at the council at Chalcedon in Asia Minor (today's Turkey). There the church fathers concluded that Jesus was completely and fully God. And finally, the council confessed that this total man and this total God was one completely normal person. In other words, Jesus combined two natures, human and divine, in one person.

This classical, orthodox affirmation from Chalcedon made it possible to tell the story of Jesus as good news. Since Jesus was a normal human being, bone of our bone and flesh of our flesh, he could fulfill every demand of God's moral law, and he could suffer and die a real death. Since he was truly God, his death was capable of satisfying divine justice. God himself had provided the sacrifice.

The Council of Nicea, then, laid the cornerstone for the orthodox understanding of Jesus Christ. That foundation has stood ever since. □

Below Left: The Council of Nicea, summoned by Emperor Constantine and held in the imperial palace under his auspices. Constantine viewed the Arian teachings—that Jesus was a created being subordinate to God—as an "insignificant" theological matter. But he wanted peace in the Empire he had just united through force.



North Wind Picture Archives

When diplomatic letters failed to solve the dispute, he convened around 220 bishops, who met for two months to hammer out a universally acceptable definition of Jesus Christ.

Below Right: A Roman archway into Nicea (today Iznik, Turkey), through which participants to the council may have passed.



Leftke Gate, Iznik, Alamy



# Athanasius Defines the New Testament

CARSTEN PETER THIEDE

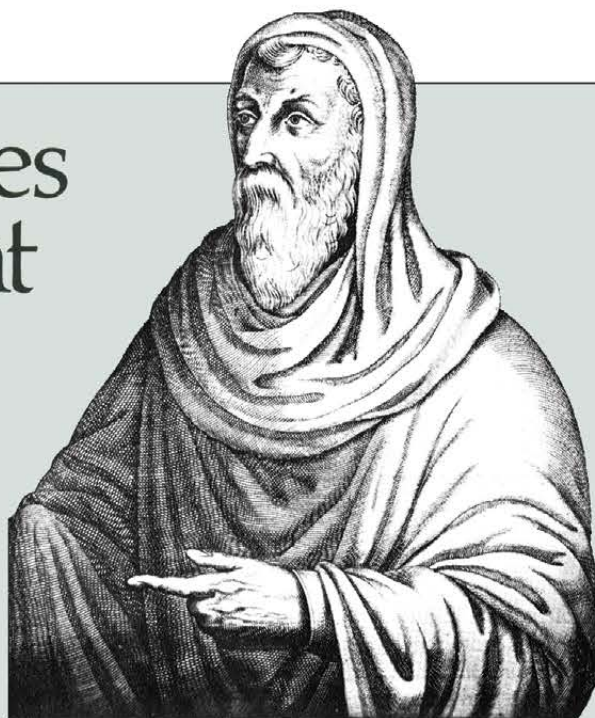
His letter is the earliest authoritative statement to fix the New Testament as we know it today.

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Since you know my will, grant free admission to all those who wish to enter the church. For if I hear that you have hindered anyone from becoming a member, or have debarred anyone from entrance, I shall immediately send someone to have you deposed at my behest and have you sent into exile."

These are the words of Emperor Constantine the Great, written c. 328 to Athanasius, bishop of Alexandria. Athanasius had not followed Constantine's growing interest in ecumenism. Instead, he had insisted upon excluding from the church anyone who did not subscribe to the Creed of Nicea. Consequently, Athanasius was deposed in 335 and exiled to Trier (today in West Germany, near the border with Luxembourg). Two years later, after Constantine's death, he returned to Alexandria, but he was removed from power again in 339 and fled to Pope Julius I, a supporter, in Rome. He returned in 346, only to be exiled three more times for various reasons. Athanasius finally resumed his bishopric in 366, which he held until his death in 373, at the age of 78.

Most of his writings defend the orthodox position against the influence of Arianism (*Three Speeches against the Arians*, c. 335), but he also ably defended the faith against pagan and Jewish opposition (*Speech against the Pagans* and *Speech on the Incarnation of the Word*, both



Firth, John B. *Constantine the Great*. New York: Putnam, 1905.

Athanasius, bishop of Alexandria, was deposed and exiled numerous times for his staunch defense of the orthodox (rather than Arian) teaching about Jesus Christ. He helped to define which writings would—and would not—be included in the New Testament.

c. 318). Another lasting contribution to church writings is his *Life of St. Anthony*, c. 357, one of the first lives of a saint that can justifiably claim authenticity. The book, an early best seller, widely disseminated information on monasticism.

## Famous festal letter

Perhaps Athanasius's single most influential writing, however, was his Thirty-Ninth Festal Letter of 367.

It had been customary after Epiphany each year [the Christian festival held twelve days after Christmas] for the bishops of Alexandria to write a letter in which the dates of Lent and Easter were fixed, and thus, all other festivals of the church in that year. These letters were also used to discuss other matters of general interest. Athanasius wrote forty-five festal letters; thirteen have survived complete in Syriac translation.

The Thirty-Ninth has been reconstructed by scholars from Greek, Syriac, and Coptic fragments. It contains a list of the books of the Old and New Testaments, which Athanasius describes as being canonical. The New Testament list is identical with the twenty-seven writings we still accept as canonical, and thus Athanasius's Thirty-Ninth Festal Letter has been regarded as the

first authoritative statement on the canon of the New Testament.

Athanasius wrote the list to end disputes about such texts as "The Shepherd of Hermas" or "The Epistle of Barnabas," which long had been regarded as equal to the apostolic letters. He also silenced those who had questioned the apostolic authenticity of Peter's letters or the Book of Revelation. Athanasius states that "in these [27 writings] alone the teaching of godliness is proclaimed. No one may add to them, and nothing may be taken away from them."

## Controversial canon

One document supports Athanasius's position: The famous Codex Vaticanus in the Vatican Library, a Greek codex of the Old and New Testaments. It consists of the same books in the same order as in Athanasius's festal letter—which is particularly noteworthy given the peculiar order: Gospels, Acts, Catholic Epistles (James, 1 and 2 Peter, 1, 2, and 3 John, and Jude), Pauline Epistles (including Hebrews between 2 Thessalonians and 1 Timothy), and Revelation. The Codex Vaticanus probably was written in Rome, in 340, by Alexandrian scribes for Emperor Constans, during Athanasius's seven-year exile in the

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# Augustine Converts to Christianity

A brilliant, profligate professor  
of rhetoric became the  
church's leading theologian  
for centuries to come.

city. It would thus predate the festal letter. Even though Athanasius was probably not far away when the Codex Vaticanus was written, one realizes that the establishment of the canon was not a sudden decision made unilaterally by a bishop in Alexandria, but a process of careful investigation and deliberation, documented in a codex of the Greek Bible and, twenty-seven years later, in a festal letter.

On the other hand, Athanasius's view did not meet with unanimous support, not even at Alexandria. Some twenty years after that Thirty-Ninth Festal Letter was written, the Alexandrian scholar Didymus the Blind did not accept 2 and 3 John as canonical, but he fully backed and quoted 2 Peter, which still was occasionally disputed by others. Didymus also apparently regarded the Shepherd of Hermas, the Epistle of Barnabas, and even Didache and 1 Clement to be equally authoritative. And there were many such examples of divergence of opinion all over the Empire, both in the East and in the West. However, after the end of the fourth century, such occasional divergences of opinion have not altered the received tradition.

What might have happened had Athanasius and others not established an accepted "closed canon"? Gnostic, theologically unsound writings like the Gospel of Thomas might have crept in, diluting the historical message of Christ with what we would now call New Age elements. Or later pressure groups might have excluded writings that did not suit their purpose—Revelation, for example, or 2 Peter (a book the Syriac churches attempted to exclude). Later, Martin Luther would dearly have loved to have excluded James, which he regarded as contradicting Paul. Indeed, why not add Martin Luther King, Jr.'s "Letter from a Birmingham Jail" of 1964, as was suggested by some modern writers, or eliminate epistles currently thought to be inauthentic?

The "closed canon" that prevails in all Christian churches forms a consensus that prevents such eccentricities. And that canon can be traced back to Athanasius, and to the year 367, which justly remains an important date in church history. □

## THE 100 MOST IMPORTANT EVENTS IN CHURCH HISTORY

Lord, make me chaste—but not yet." That was the prayer of a man who was flirting with Christianity, but who was also flirting with a lot of other things. Yet he became one of the greatest, most influential authors the church has ever known.

Who was this complex man? He was Augustinus Aurelius, better known as Augustine. Born in 354 in Tagaste (in what is now Algeria), Augustine had a devout Christian mother named Monica. His pagan father, Patricius, was a Roman official.

Augustine was brilliant, so his parents arranged for the best schooling. He studied rhetoric—persuasive speech—in Carthage. Reading Latin authors such as Cicero convinced him that *truth* is life's supreme goal. He couldn't find truth in Christianity because he saw it as a religion for the simple-minded. In his teens, Augustine took a mistress—a concubine—who bore him a son. In his later *Confessions* he wrote, "I came to Carthage, where a cauldron of unholy loves was sizzling and crackling around me."

### Restlessness

Augustine's intellectual restlessness led him to embrace Manichaeism, a popular religion of the day that held a dualistic view of the world as a battle between light and dark, flesh and spirit. (Even after his conversion to Christianity, his negative attitude toward sex reflected the Manichaean position.) After nine years of holding to Manichaeism, Augustine became disillusioned by the failure of a leading Manichaean teacher

to answer his questions. He gradually drifted into Neoplatonism. Meanwhile, vocationally, he moved from Carthage to Rome to Milan, teaching rhetoric.

In Milan, Augustine met the Christian bishop, Ambrose, who impressed him with his intellect and answered his objections to the Bible. Augustine also learned about saints who had conquered sexual temptation by surrendering themselves to God. This was the right combination: a faith that would overcome his sexual temptations *and* let him be a thinker.

In the late summer of 386 Augustine

The oldest known portrait of Augustine, from a fresco in the Lateran Palace in Rome. He is depicted as a scholar holding a scroll of his writings and studying an open Bible.





This Latin translation



Eusebius Hieronymus Sophronius, thankfully known as Jerome, took a roundabout path to becoming one of history's most significant Bible translators. He was born in northeast Italy in 345. By the age of 29, he was a disciplined scholar and an ascetic Christian. Then he had a dream that accused him of being preoccupied with secular learning ("You are a follower of Cicero," the dream said, "not of Christ"). So for the next several years Jerome lived an ascetic life in the Syrian desert, studying and transcribing the Scriptures and mastering Hebrew. He became secretary to Pope Damasus in 382, which proved to be his date with destiny. By the time he entered Damasus's service, he was probably the greatest Christian scholar in the world.

### Motivation

In Jerome's day, Common Greek, the language of the New Testament, was widely known throughout the Roman Empire. The Old Testament also existed in a popular Greek form, the Septuagint, so anyone who knew Greek had access to the entire Bible.

But some populations in the Empire knew no Greek. Thus, early translations appeared in various languages, notably Latin (becoming the standard language of the Western Empire), Syriac, and Coptic. Despite the early translators' zeal, they didn't always possess a good command of Greek. Soon many Old Latin manuscripts, poor in quality and often differing from each other, were in circulation.

In a letter to Pope Damasus, Jerome explained the problem and proposed a solution: "If we are to pin our faith to



sat in a garden in Milan and heard a child's sing-song voice: "Take it and read it; take it and read it." He picked up what was nearby, Paul's Letter to the Romans, and began reading Ro-

## Augustine's teaching has become so basic we don't realize how original he was.

mans 13:13-14, "Let us behave decently, as in the daytime, not in orgies and drunkenness, not in sexual immorality and debauchery, not in dissension and jealousy. Rather, clothe yourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ. . . ."

This was his conversion. On Easter eve in 387, Ambrose baptized him. Augustine returned to his joyful mother and spent time in retreat and study.

Augustine could have been happy living a quiet monastic life. But his reputation spread. While visiting Hippo Regius on the North African coast, he was sieged by the people and presented to the bishop to be ordained. He asked for time to develop his knowledge of Scripture, and in 391 he was ordained. Four years later he was consecrated bishop.

### Theology forged in controversy

Bishop Augustine was involved in every church controversy of the day. One was Donatism, a movement that refused to accept clergy who had handed over Scriptures to the authorities during persecution—or even to accept clergy who had been consecrated by such a person. There were thousands of Donatists, especially in Augustine's area.

Augustine wrote that there could be no rival church; the church is one, though it may include some less-than-holy persons in it. The sacraments—Communion and baptism—are effective not because of the priest's own righteousness, but because God's grace operates through the sacraments. (Augustine also defined a sacrament as "a visible sign of an invisible grace," which has become a standard definition.) Augustine's view on the Donatists prevailed, and the movement eventually

lost momentum.

A major heresy he fought was Pelagianism. Pelagius, a British teacher, emphasized man's ability to do good. He didn't really teach that people could save themselves, but he made it clear that they could take the first important steps apart from God's grace. Augustine was much more pessimistic—or, in his view, realistic. Individuals will not, he said, choose the good unless God leads them to. In fact, God has already predestined his *elect*, his redeemed ones, and nothing we can do will change the eternal decree. In 431, a year after Augustine's death, Pelagianism was officially condemned at the Council of Ephesus.

### Writings and influence

Augustine wrote hundreds of works, including the monumental *City of God*. When Rome fell in 410, people asked, "If Rome is fallen, has God abandoned us?" Augustine said no. The church endures forever, no matter what happens to nations. He also wrote the classic work *On the Trinity*, probably the best-known work on this difficult subject.

Augustine not only challenged heretics, he also wrote of his spiritual quest in his *Confessions*, a book that was probably the first true autobiography. The famous words "Our hearts are restless until they rest in You" are from its opening paragraph.

Augustine's teaching has become so basic that we don't realize how original he was at the time. His thought trickled down through both Catholic and Protestant theologians. Luther and Calvin, for example, liked his emphasis on God's grace and quoted him constantly.

Augustine wrote in Latin, and in this, too, he was a pacesetter. Greek had long been the language of theology; after Augustine, in the western part of the Empire, it was Latin.

Space doesn't permit us to do justice to Augustine. He was a grand figure, a thinker who put his vast mental abilities at the service of the church. He bequeathed to the church a pessimistic view of human ability—and perhaps a too negative view of sex. But his honesty about his sinfulness and his God-centered intellect continue to win admiration.

"The true philosopher is the lover of God," Augustine wrote, and that phrase sums up his achievement. □



# Completes the Vulgate

stood as the preeminent Bible text for centuries— and set the standard for future translators.

the Latin texts, it is for our opponents to tell us *which*; for there are almost as many forms of texts as there are copies. If, on the other hand, we are to glean the truth from a comparison of *many*, why not go back to the original Greek and correct the mistakes introduced by inaccurate translators, and the blundering alterations of confident but ignorant critics, and, further, all that has been inserted or changed by copyists more asleep than awake?"

Damasus suggested that Jerome produce a new Latin translation of the Bible, one that would throw out the inaccuracies of older translations. Damasus wanted the Western church to be clearly Latin; one way to accomplish this was to provide a trusted translation of the Bible in Latin.

## Production

Jerome began translating in 382. He also preached strict asceticism and won many women to his way of life. Soon, however, accusations about his relationship to them—and the charge that ascetic rigors led to one woman's death—caused Jerome to move from Rome to the Holy Land, shortly after Pope Damasus's death in 384. He settled in Bethlehem, writing and studying, overseeing a monastery, and advising some of the women who had followed him from Rome.

After twenty-three years of labor, Jerome finished his translation in late 404 or 405. If twenty-three years seems like a long time for a translation, consider that Jerome was working alone. Also, he was churning out volumes of commentaries and other writings, and he

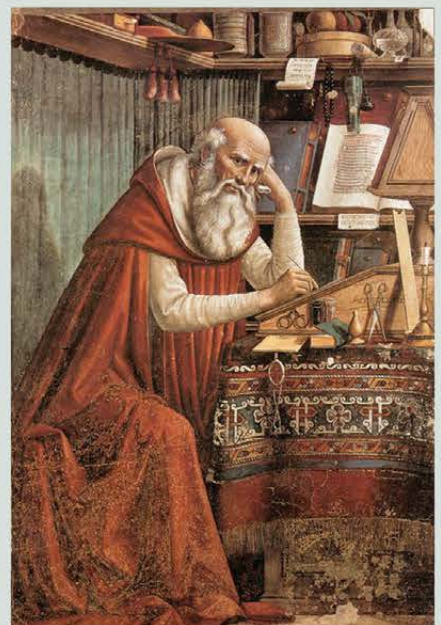
involved himself in every theological battle of the day, contributing some eloquent, often caustic, letters.

At first Jerome worked from the Greek Old Testament, the Septuagint. But then he established a precedent for all good translators: the Old Testament would have to be translated from the original Hebrew. In his quest for accuracy, Jerome consulted Jewish rabbis.

In translating the Old Testament, something struck Jerome: the books the Jews regarded as Holy Scripture did not include the books we know as the Apocrypha. These books had been included in the Septuagint, the basis of most older translations, and Jerome was compelled by the church to include them. But he made it clear that in his opinion the Apocryphal books were only *liber ecclesiastici* (church books to be read for edification), as opposed to the fully inspired *liber canonici* (canonical books to establish doctrine). Over one thousand years later, the leaders of the Reformation would follow Jerome's lead and not include the Apocrypha in the Protestant Bibles.

## Influence

"The Divine Library," as Jerome called the Bible, was finally available in a well-written, accurate translation in the language commonly used in the churches of the Western Empire. Jerome's translation, known as the *Vulgate* (from the Latin word *vulgus*, meaning "common" language), became the standard. A millennium later, for example, Martin Luther, though he knew Hebrew and Greek, quoted Jerome's *Vulgate* throughout his life. The *Vul-*



St. Jerome in His Study (1480), by Domenico Ghirlandaio—Wikipedia

St. Jerome (by Ghirlandaio, from the chapel of the Ognissanti, Florence). The brilliant, sometimes caustic, scholar gave the church a lasting and accurate translation of the Bible.

gate was highly regarded by scholars and was used as the basis for translations into other languages for a thousand years. The Council of Trent, in 1546, declared the *Vulgate* the only authentic Latin text of the Scriptures.

Sadly, the text of the *Vulgate* that circulated throughout the Middle Ages was a corrupt form of Jerome's work, encumbered by copyists' errors. (In the late sixteenth century, corrected editions were published.) Further, Jerome's work became so widely revered that until the Reformation, translators worked from the *Vulgate*; not for a thousand years did scholars again translate directly from the Greek New Testament. And ironically, Jerome's Bible added impetus to the use of Latin as the church's language, resulting centuries later in a worship service and a Bible that lay people could not understand—precisely the opposite of what Jerome had first accomplished.

In the *Vulgate*, Jerome left an enduring legacy of biblical scholarship. □

Enlarged detail of a page from the *Vulgate*, as it appears in a 13th-c. manuscript



Wikipedia



# The Council of Chalcedon

TONY LANE

THE  
100  
MOST  
IMPORTANT  
EVENTS  
IN CHURCH  
HISTORY

Perhaps the best-known story about Leo the Great, bishop of Rome from 440 to 461, is his encounter with Attila the Hun in 452. Attila and his army of Huns were marching on Rome. The Roman emperor and senate sought to dissuade him from attacking the city, so they sent an embassy of leading Romans, including Leo, who met Attila and managed to dissuade him from plundering Rome.

This story has acquired legendary accretions that magnify the role of Leo and introduce elements of the supernatural into the story. But what it does convey accurately is the formidable personality of Leo, one of the most imposing of the bishops of Rome. Another of Leo's exploits was his intervention in the Council of Chalcedon.

## Knotty questions

A central theological issue in the first few centuries was the person of Christ: In what sense was he God? At the beginning of the fourth century Arius claimed that only the Father was truly God. In response, the Council of Nicea proclaimed the full deity of Christ. But if Jesus was truly God, how could he be truly human as well? Indeed, was he? If he was, how can one person be both God and man? Was he, in fact, one person? These and other such questions were to dominate Greek theological debate for the next three-and-a-half centuries.

The Council of Chalcedon (451) comes in the middle—not at the end—of these debates. It marks a significant point at which four crucial issues concerning the person of Christ are clarified:

- against Arius, the full deity of

If Jesus was truly God, how could he be truly human as well? Leo the Great helped guide a critical council to a clear answer.

Christ is affirmed

- against Apollinarius, the full humanity of Christ is affirmed
- against Nestorius, it is affirmed that Christ is one person
- against Eutyches, it is affirmed that the deity and humanity of Christ remain distinct and are not blurred together.

Chalcedon was occasioned by the teaching of Eutyches, the last of these four heretics. Eutyches was an elderly monk who was theologically out of his

depth rather than willfully heretical. He was condemned at Constantinople (now Istanbul) for denying that Christ is fully like us and for blurring together the two natures of Christ, his humanity and divinity.

## Leo's Tome

Leo wrote a *Tome*, a theological treatise condemning Eutyches. But the eastern way of settling matters was to convene a general council of bishops. One met in 449, at Ephesus, and took a position different from that of Leo, whose *Tome* was not read at the council. Eastern leaders of a like mind to Leo were deposed. Leo called this gathering a "robber synod" and tried to have it reversed, without success.

The following year the emperor fell from his horse and died. His successor favored the approach of Leo, and so another council was called, which met at Chalcedon (by Constantinople) in 451. Leo did not attend in person, but he sent delegates. This council reversed the decisions of Ephesus and condemned Eutyches. Leo's *Tome* was read and approved, though not without some misgivings. Some bishops

From Wells Cathedral in England, a stained-glass depiction of Pope Leo I ("the Great"), a driving force behind the Council of Chalcedon.



Sonia Halliday

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wanted to stop there, but the emperor insisted upon a confession of faith to unify the empire. Thus was born the Chalcedonian Definition.

The Definition affirmed that Christ is "truly God," "perfect in Godhead," the Son of God who was "begotten of the Father before the ages." Yet he is also "truly man," "perfect in manhood" and was born of the Virgin Mary. The deity and humanity are "not parted or divided into two persons," but Christ is "one person and one being." Nor are his deity and humanity to be blurred together. "The difference of the [divine and human] natures is in no wise taken



# Benedict Writes His Monastic Rule

BENNETT D. HILL

away by reason of the union, but rather the properties of each are preserved." Thus Christ is "made known in two natures [which exist] without confusion, without change, without division, without separation."

## Dynamite-like effect

The emperor intended the Definition to unify the empire. Its actual effect was more like the explosion of dynamite. Large areas of the East would not accept Chalcedon, such as the Coptic churches in Egypt and Ethiopia. The Eastern church was split into two, and breakaway churches (the "Monophysite," or "One Nature," churches) formed that exist to this day. Various attempts were made to resolve the conflict, which led to further councils in 553 and 680/1. But the eastern emperor, in Constantinople, faced a fundamental dilemma. He could unite the East by dropping Chalcedon, but at the price of losing communion with the West. Alternatively, he could maintain union with the West by holding to Chalcedon, but at the cost of Eastern unity. Ultimately, the conflict ended because the dissenting churches were in areas that came under Muslim control. Today, however, the two sides are moving closer together.

The Chalcedonian Definition has been subjected to considerable criticism in the last two hundred years. The way in which it expresses itself is certainly not perfect. But its condemnation of the four basic heresies is an abiding and valuable contribution.

The Council's statement remains of considerable relevance since Nestorius's approach is very much alive in modern liberal christologies that speak of Jesus as a man with a special relationship to God rather than as himself being God incarnate. On the other hand, many who pride themselves on holding a conservative view think of Christ as having a single nature that is either divine (the error of Apollinarius) or a blend of the human and the divine (the error of Eutyches). □

His flexible, compassionate guidelines for Christian community forever shaped monastic life—and influenced Western society.

THE  
100  
MOST  
IMPORTANT  
EVENTS  
IN CHURCH  
HISTORY

We have, therefore, to establish a school of the Lord's service, in the institution of which we hope to order nothing that is harsh or rigorous," wrote Benedict in the prologue to his *Rule*. *The Rule of St. Benedict* is a short document, perhaps thirteen thousand words, yet it has influenced all forms of organized religious life, Protestant and Catholic, in the West.

## Reading The Rule

Scholars speculate that Benedict (c. 480–549) wrote the *Rule* in the early sixth century (a) as a constitution for his own monastery of Monte Cassino between Rome and Naples; or (b) at the request of other local monastic communities; or (c) in response to a papal petition for a normative guide for the many groups of monks and nuns throughout Italy and the Christian West.

The *Rule* represents the accumulated spiritual wisdom of earlier centuries of monastic experience. It draws upon the teachings of the desert fathers of Egypt, the practice of monastic life in southern Europe, and (especially) the *Rule of the Master*, a long, highly detailed, and exhortatory document. By classical standards, Benedict was not well educated: his *Rule* contains not one reference to an ancient Greek or



St. Benedict, as painted by 14th-century Florentine artist Agnolo Gaddi. The Latin text on his book comes from the *Rule*: "Hearken, O Son, to the precepts of the master and incline the ear of your heart and willingly receive the admonition of the pious father."

Latin author. But it displays a deep knowledge of the Scriptures, the writings of the church fathers, and the Egyptian monastic tradition as it came to the West in the *Institutes* and *Conferences* of John Cassian. Modern scholars stress the major influence of the Wisdom Literature of the Old Testament (and Apocrypha)—the Books of Psalms, Sirach, and Wisdom.

## Living the Rule

Benedict's *Rule* contains both theoretical principles for the monastic life and practical, everyday directives.

National Gallery of Art: The Andrew W. Mellon Collection



Benedict legislated for a community of laymen governed benevolently by an abbot—a community whose purpose was the glorification of God and the salvation of the individual monk. After a year's novitiate or probation, a monk professed three vows: stability, the reformation of the monk's life, and obedience. Benedictine life meant a routine done in a spirit of silence, dedicated to prayer and work, and characterized by moderation and flexibility in all things.

## Benedict's *Rule* was for ordinary men and women, not saints or mystics.

This flexibility, and what St. Gregory the Great called the *Rule's* "discretion," both distinguish the Benedictine from earlier, more austere forms of monastic life, and help explain the *Rule's* widespread adoption. For example, discussing food and drink, Benedict wrote (ch. 40): "Although we read that wine is not a proper drink for monks, yet, since in our own day they cannot be persuaded of this, let us at least agree not to drink to excess, but sparingly, 'because wine makes even the wise fall away' (Ecclesiasticus 19:2)."

Benedict intended that the monk's day be centered around liturgy, the *Opus Dei* (Work of God) "to which nothing ought to be preferred" (ch. 46). The liturgical code consisted of the night office (vigils or matins) and the seven day offices (lauds, prime, tierce, sext, none, vespers, and complin), as advised in Psalm 119:147, 164. At each office the monks recited psalms with refrains, and versicles, punctuated by silent prayer, a hymn, and readings from the Scriptures and from patristic commentaries on those Scriptures. In Benedict's day the practice was to recite the entire 150 psalms within a week's time.

St. Benedict planned the monastery as a self-sufficient socio-economic unit "so constructed that within it all the necessities, such as water, mill, and garden are contained and the various

crafts are practiced. Then there will be no need for the monks to roam outside, because that is not at all good for their souls" (ch. 66). Having stated that "Idleness is the enemy of the soul; therefore, the brethren should be occupied at stated times in manual labor, and at other fixed times in sacred writing" (ch. 48), the *Rule* prescribes that all monks in good health should spend part of the day in manual work. Here Benedict made a profound contribution to the concept of the dignity of labor. The ancient world considered manual labor demeaning and idealized the life of leisure. The free man, the gentleman, did not work with his hands. Benedict implied that manual labor, even apart from its economic import, was physically and psychologically healthful, that work was a worthy occupation.

Benedict called his monastery "a school of the Lord's service," and he used the word "school" in both a spiritual and an intellectual sense. In the monastery the monk learned to serve the Lord, slowly crushing his faults and sins and adoring the Almighty in worship. To praise the Lord in the *Opus Dei*, however, the monk had to learn to read. From Benedict's entirely spiritual conception, there gradually evolved schools within monasteries whose practical purpose was the education of young monks and the children of the local nobility. Between about 600 and 1000, the period that John Henry New-

man called "the Benedictine centuries," monastic schools provided much of the training available in Western Europe. Books are a necessity for any school, and the preparation of books and manuscripts became a distinctly monastic craft. Contrary to the popular modern view, however, most medieval monks were not involved in copying manuscripts. Aside from the obvious fact that many kinds of work are required for the operation of a large (or small) establishment, few people in any age have the inclination or discipline for long periods of literary and intellectual work.

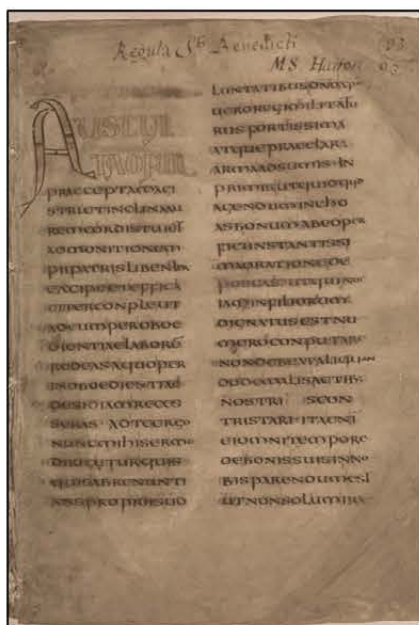
### Understanding the *Rule*

Benedict considered his *Rule* a guide for ordinary men and women, not saints or mystics or intellectuals. The *Rule* implies that the newcomer to the monastery has had no previous ascetic experience nor even a particularly strong bent to the religious life. In his advice to the abbot—"Let him make no distinction of persons in the monastery . . . Let not one of noble birth be put before him who was formerly a slave" (ch. 2)—Benedict anticipated the entrance of persons of all social classes. His advice to the monks—"Let them bear with the greatest patience one another's infirmities, whether of body or of character" (ch. 72)—clearly anticipated very different (and perhaps difficult) personality types within the community. And, again, in his recommendation to the abbot—"Let him always exalt mercy above judgment . . . let him keep his own frailty before his eyes and remember that the bruised reed must not be broken" (ch. 64)—Benedict urged compassionate, not dictatorial, government.

What accounts for the *Rule's* profound influence on Western culture? The *Rule's* compassion for weakness and failure while it sets forth high ideals; its flexibility and adaptability; its monarchical government but respect for individual freedom; and its proverbial discretion.

The enduring legacy of the *Rule of St. Benedict* to the modern world is a tradition of ordered and disciplined living, a deep appreciation for the ancient liturgy, the wisdom of a rich literary culture, a respect for the dignity of labor, and a compassionate understanding of the human condition. □

A page from the *Rule of St. Benedict*.



Tony Lane

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# Vladimir Adopts Christianity

The pagan prince of Kievan Rus' embraced a new faith, leading to the Christianization of the Ukrainian, Russian, and Byelorussian peoples.

THE  
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MOST  
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EVENTS  
IN CHURCH  
HISTORY

In 988 the Christian world celebrated the thousand-year anniversary of Christianity in Russia. Although 988 was indeed a pivotal year for Russian Christians, it isn't quite accurate to describe it as the birth year of Christianity there.

Christianity had, in fact, penetrated "Russia" by the early 900s, when at least one church had been built in the ancient city of Kiev. In the 950s, Olga, the grandmother of Vladimir, was baptized. She asked German king Otto I to send missionaries to her country, but apparently they met little success.

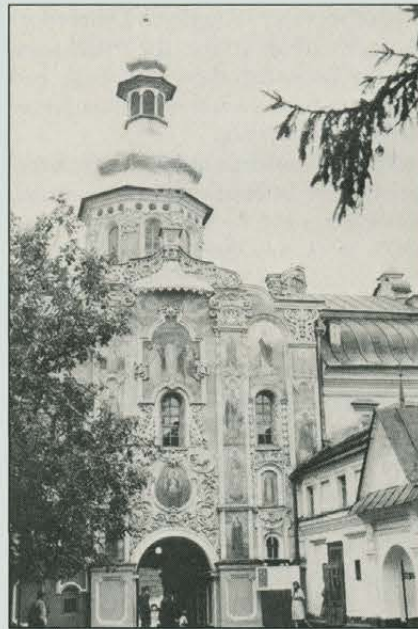
Olga's grandson Vladimir practiced the old religion. He built a number of pagan temples and was renowned for his cruelty and treachery. Vladimir had eight hundred concubines and several wives, and he spent his non-warring time in hunting and feasting. He hardly seemed the person to spread Christianity among the Ukrainians.

## Shopping for a church

Vladimir apparently wanted to unite the people under one religion, so around 988 he sent envoys to examine the major religions. The options? Islam, Judaism, the Catholic Christianity of Western Europe, and the Orthodox Christianity of Eastern Europe (though as yet, there was no official break between the Orthodox and Catholic Christians).

The story of Vladimir's choosing Orthodox Christianity is part legend, part fact. According to the tradition, Vladimir didn't like the dietary restrictions of Islam and Judaism. Catholic Christianity was all right, but what impressed the grand prince was the dazzling worship his ambassadors described seeing in the great Cathedral of Hagia Sophia in Constantinople: "We knew not whether we were in heaven or on earth, for surely there is no such splendor or beauty anywhere upon earth. We cannot describe it to you. Only we know that God dwells there among men, and that their service surpasses the worship of all other places. We cannot forget that beauty."

So Vladimir opted for Orthodoxy because of its beautiful worship. The name of Vladimir's chosen religion



The Petcherskaia Lavra (Monastery of the Caves) in Kiev, built only about 100 years after Vladimir's conversion. After having turned it into a museum in 1926, the Soviet government in 1988 and 1990 returned portions of the monastery to the Ukrainian Orthodox Church.

was, in fact, *Pravoslavie*, a word which meant "true worship" or "right glory." Orthodoxy was also the religion of the most powerful, wealthy, and civilized of Russia's border nations, the Byzantine Empire. And if Vladimir was impressed by Orthodoxy's beauty, he also was impressed by another beauty: Anna, sister of Byzantine emperors Basil II and Constantine, who offered her to Vladimir as a bride with the condition that he be baptized.

In 988 Vladimir was baptized. In 989 he married Anna. Neither act was a sign that he was submitting to the authority—religious or political—of the Byzantine Empire. Though it adopted the Byzantine religion, the "Russian" church has always been independent.

## Forging a national church

Significant for church history, Vladimir then ordered all the inhabitants of Kiev to appear at the Dnieper River for baptism or be considered enemies of the kingdom. This doesn't mean that the Slavic nation became a Christian society overnight. But with the help of monks, always a prime force in Eastern Orthodox Christianity, the new religion began to make its influence felt.

As for Vladimir himself, his lifestyle was clearly affected. When he married Anna, he put away his five former wives. Not only did he build churches, he also destroyed idols, abolished the death penalty, protected the poor, established schools, and managed to live in peace with neighboring nations. On his deathbed he gave all his possessions to the poor.

Centuries later, when Moscow, not Kiev, was the capital of Russia, Russian Orthodoxy had become such a force that Moscow considered itself the Third Rome, the new capital of a Christian empire. Vladimir didn't know it, but by embracing Christianity he was paving the way for a Russian republic described by one writer as "among the 'most Christian' nations in the world—a land with a rich, age-old history of churches and monasteries, the well-spring of numerous revered saints and martyrs, with a cherished and abundant legacy of sacred music, iconography, and spiritual literature."

Yet the Russian Orthodox Church became so closely aligned with the tsarist regimes that it was largely unprepared for the Bolshevik Revolution in 1917. Since then, the church has suffered greatly, but it continues to survive. The tale of the church that traces its roots to Prince Vladimir is not yet finished. □

Slavic Gospel Association



# The East-West Schism

GEORGE T. DENNIS

Long-standing differences between Western and Eastern Christians finally caused a definitive break, and Roman Catholics and Eastern Orthodox still remain separate.

THE  
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On Saturday, July 16, 1054, as afternoon prayers were about to begin, Cardinal Humbert, legate of Pope Leo IX, strode into the Cathedral of Hagia Sophia in Constantinople, right up to the main altar, and placed on it a parchment that declared the Patriarch of Constantinople, Michael Cerularius, to be excommunicated. He then marched out of the church, shook its dust from his feet, and left the city. A week later the patriarch solemnly condemned the cardinal.

Centuries later, this dramatic incident was thought to mark the beginning of the schism between the Latin and the Greek churches, a division that still separates Roman Catholics and Eastern Orthodox (Greek, Russian, and other). Today, however, no serious scholar maintains that the schism began in 1054. The process leading to the definitive break was much more complicated, and no single cause or event can be said to have precipitated it.

## Immediate causes of the break

In 1048 a French bishop was elected as Pope Leo IX. He and the clerics who accompanied him to Rome were intent on reforming the papacy and the entire church. Five years earlier in Constantinople, the rigid and ambitious Michael Cerularius was named patriarch.

Problems arose in Southern Italy (then under Byzantine rule) in the 1040s, when Norman warriors conquered the region and replaced Greek [Eastern] bishops with Latin [Western] ones. People were confused, and they argued

about the proper form of the liturgy and other external matters. Differences over clerical marriage, the bread used for the Eucharist, days of fasting, and other usages assumed an unprecedented importance.

When Cerularius heard that the Normans were forbidding Greek customs in Southern Italy, he retaliated, in 1052, by closing the Latin churches in Constantinople. He then induced bishop Leo of Ochrid to compose an attack on the Latin use of unleavened bread and other practices. In response to this provocative treatise, Pope Leo sent his chief adviser, Humbert, a tactless and narrow-minded man with a strong sense of papal authority, to Constantinople to deal with the problem directly.

On arriving in the imperial city in April 1054, Humbert launched into a vicious criticism of Cerularius and his supporters. But the patriarch ignored the papal legate, and an angry Humbert stalked into Hagia Sophia and placed on the altar the bull of excommunication. He returned to Rome convinced he had gained a victory for the Holy See.

Dramatic though they were, the events of 1054 were not recorded by the chroniclers of the time and were quickly forgotten. Negotiations between the pope and the Byzantine emperor continued, especially in the last

two decades of the century, as the Byzantines sought aid against the invading Turks. In 1095, to provide such help, Pope Urban II proclaimed the Crusades; certainly there was no schism between the churches at that time. Despite episodes of tension and conflict, Eastern and Western Christians lived and worshiped together.

In the latter half of the twelfth century, however, friction between the groups increased, caused not so much by religious differences as by political and cultural ones. Violent anti-Latin riots erupted in Constantinople in 1182, and in 1204 Western knights brutally ravaged Constantinople itself. The tension accelerated, and by 1234, when Greek and Latin churchmen met to discuss their differences, it was obvious they represented different churches.

## Underlying causes of the break

What caused the schism? It was not the excommunications of 1054; not differences in theology, discipline, or liturgy; not political or military conflicts. These may have disposed the churches to draw apart, as did prejudice, misunderstanding, arrogance, and plain stupidity. More fundamental, perhaps, was the way each church came to perceive itself.

The eleventh-century reform in the Western Church called for the strengthening of papal authority, which caused



Cathedral of Hagia Sophia in Constantinople, site of the excommunication of 1054. The building—today the St. Sophia Museum in Istanbul—reflects more recent additions of Islamic art and architecture.

Library of Congress



the church to become more autocratic and centralized. Basing his claims on his succession from St. Peter, the pope asserted his direct jurisdiction over the entire church, East as well as West.

The Byzantines, on the other hand, viewed their church in the context of the imperial system; their sources of law and unity were the ecumenical councils and the emperor, whom God had placed over all things, spiritual and temporal. They believed that the Eastern churches had always enjoyed autonomy of governance, and they rejected papal claims to absolute rule. But neither side was really listening to the other.

In addition, since the ninth century, theological controversy had focused on the procession of the Holy Spirit. In the life of the Trinity, does the Spirit proceed from the Father only, or from the Father *and* from the Son (*Filioque* in Latin)? The Western church, concerned about resurgent Arianism, had, almost inadvertently, added the word to the Nicene Creed, claiming that it made more precise a teaching already in the creed. The Greeks objected to the unilateral addition to the creed, and they strongly disagreed with the theological proposition involved, which seemed to them to diminish the individual properties of the three Persons in the Trinity. In 1439 Greek and Latin theologians at the Council of Florence, after debating the issue for over a year, arrived at a compromise that, while reasonable, has not proven fully satisfactory.

After the Byzantine Empire fell in 1453, the Eastern church lived on under Turkish rule and then in various nations. Millions of Orthodox Christians in those lands are still separated from the millions of Christians adhering to Rome. Today greater efforts are made to address the issues, but neither side seems willing to make the necessary concessions. As a result, Christians who share a common belief and accept Jesus as head of the church, feel that they cannot share his Eucharist. □

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## Pope Urban II Launches the First Crusade

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HISTORY

At the Battle of Manzikert, in 1071, the Seljuk Turks massacred the Byzantine Empire's armies. The feared Turks overran Asia Minor and began to threaten even the capital of Constantinople. Meanwhile, they had also conquered Jerusalem, preventing Christian pilgrimages to the holy sites.

In 1074, Pope Gregory VII proposed leading fifty thousand volunteers to help the Christians in the East and possibly liberate the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem. Finally, in 1095, in response

Waves of pilgrims and soldiers embarked for the Holy Land, beginning an era of exploration, conquest, defeat, and folly.



to desperate appeals from Eastern Emperor Alexius Comnenus, the new pope, Urban II, preached a stirring sermon at Clermont:

"A horrible tale has gone forth," he said. "An accursed race utterly alienated from God . . . has invaded the lands of the Christians and depopulated them by the sword, plundering, and fire." Toward the end, he made his appeal: "Tear that land from the wicked race and subject it to yourselves."

The people were riled. They began shouting, "Deus vult! Deus vult!" ("God wills it!") Urban II made "Deus vult" the battle cry of the Crusades.

### Why the crusaders went

The pope's representatives then traversed Europe, recruiting people to go to Palestine. The list of the First Crusade's leaders read like a medieval "Who's Who," including the fabled Godfrey of Bouillon. Soon waves of people—probably over one hundred thousand, including about ten thousand knights—were headed for the Holy Land. Thus began over three hundred years of similar expeditions and pilgrimages, which gradually became known as *crusades*, because of the cross worn on the clothing of the crusaders.

Why did so many respond?

A spirit of adventure, for one thing. Pilgrimages to the Holy Land had become a feature of medieval piety, and now the pilgrimage was coupled with the prospect of fighting to recapture the pilgrimage sites, to avenge the dishonor their Lord Jesus had suffered.

The crusaders also took on an arduous journey in dismal conditions for spiritual reward. This was a holy undertaking, so participants could receive an indulgence—remission of sins allowing for direct entry to heaven or reduced time in purgatory. Finally laypeople could do something that was nearly as spiritually noble as entering the monastery.

Further, many of the crusaders hoped to acquire land in the East, to plunder and grow rich.

### Progress of the First Crusade

The first crusaders ventured for Constantinople, slaughtering Jews throughout Germany and occasionally skirmishing with local peoples over food and foraging rights. By late 1096, Emperor Alexius found his city of Constantinople overrun with fifty thousand unruly visi-

tors. In exchange for the crusaders' oaths of fealty, he provided them with supplies and sent them on. The Muslims were divided into rival factions at this time, so the crusaders advanced fairly rapidly, capturing Antioch in 1098 and Jerusalem by the following July. The Crusaders followed a "take no prisoners" line; an observer at the time wrote that the soldiers "rode in blood up to their bridle reins." Following their conquest, the Crusaders set up four Latin states, including the Kingdom of Jerusalem under the rule of Godfrey of Bouillon. They built numerous structures, especially at the holy sites, and some still stand.

The First Crusade was the most successful. The Second, preached by Bernard of Clairvaux, was a stunning failure, and later ones did little to regain territory. The infamous Children's Crusade disintegrated before it reached the Holy Land, with most of the children dying or being sold into slavery. The last Christian stronghold in Syria fell in 1291 when the Muslims captured the city of Acre. The major waves of the Crusades had ended.

### Crusades' consequences

We find it hard to sympathize with the crusaders. Their holy wars seem like an incredibly unChristian waste of energy and time. The medieval mind, however, easily accepted the idea of fighting for—and dying for—a holy cause. Some crusaders were truly pious, while admittedly, others were just violently adventurous.

The Crusades deeply damaged Western Christians' relations with others. When, in 1204, the knights of the Fourth Crusade sacked Constantinople, the breach between Eastern and Western Christians became wide and lasting. The major calls to crusade invariably sparked pogroms against the Jews. And the crusaders' brutality worked only to make the Muslims more militant.

On an economic level, however, the Crusades increased trade and stepped up Europe's economic growth. They also led to a greater interest in travel, map making, and exploration.

Modern cynics point to the Crusades as an example of Christians' fanaticism and intolerance. In the 1990s Christians are still living down a reputation created by bands of medieval pilgrims and soldiers intent on liberating the Holy Land. □

The massive treatise set forth a theological system so influential it has been declared eternally valid.



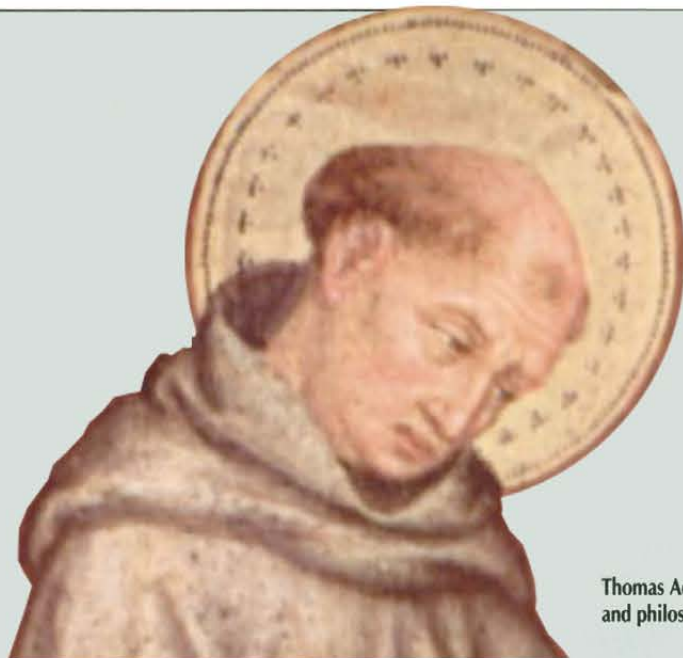
The Dumb Ox"—that was the name given by his college classmates to the heavy, quiet, and serious lad from the Count of Aquino's family. They might never have guessed that the Ox would produce eighteen huge volumes of theology, nor that the theological system he constructed would become an official theology of Catholicism.

The greatest theologian of the Middle Ages was born about 1225 to a wealthy and noble family. At age 5, the pudgy boy was sent to the school at the nearby monastery of Monte Cassino (the community founded by Benedict seven hundred years 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 fifteen 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





# Thomas Aquinas Concludes His Work on *Summa Theologiae*

Thomas Aquinas, the most prominent theologian and philosopher of the Middle Ages.

teacher Albertus Magnus, also known as Albert the Great.

## Thomas's educational climate

In medieval Europe, the idea of "secular education" had not occurred to anyone. All learning took place under the eye of the church, and theology reigned supreme in the sciences. Yet Thomas lived in a time when non-Christian philosophers were stirring the minds of many thinkers. Aristotle the Greek, Averroes the Muslim, Maimonides the Jew—their (and others') works were being translated into Latin. Scholars were fascinated particularly by Aristotle, whose works had been unknown in Europe for centuries. He seemed to have explained the entire universe not by using Scripture, but simply by using his powers of observation and logic.

The new (or newly translated) philosophies' emphasis on reason, however, threatened to undermine traditional Christian beliefs. Could an intellectual person who held to the reasonable new philosophies retain his or her faith?

## Thomas's *Summa*

Thomas avidly followed Aristotle. But, feeling more devoted to the church than to any brand of philosophy, Thomas determined to extract from Aristotle's writings what was acceptable to Christianity.

At the beginning of his massive *Summa Theologiae* (which means "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.

Thomas's theology is not easy reading. Few modern readers can sit through many pages of his intricate reasonings. Yet all can appreciate his attempt to harmonize revelation with reason. He showed that though revelation never contradicts reason—a conclusion many would dispute—reason alone is not sufficient to understand ourselves or God. Sense experience can explain some of nature's workings, but heavenly knowledge alone, which every believer will experience after death, gives clear knowledge of God. And though a person apart from Christianity can practice certain "natural virtues," only a believer can practice faith, hope, and love, the truly Christian virtues.

## Thomas's legacy

Thomas's work, along with his

many other writings (notably the *Summa Contra Gentiles*, a manual for missionaries to the Muslims, which also contains some lovely hymns) was not universally well received at first. Some of his statements were condemned after his death, though the condemnations were later reversed. But before long Thomas's system gained preeminence. When Catholicism faced the rise of Protestantism in Europe, it used the works of Thomas in drafting the decrees of the Council of Trent (1545–63). Four years later, Thomas was declared a "doctor of the church." And 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, and no one can claim to be a theologian unless he or she is familiar with his work.

Thomas Aquinas himself might not have approved. In spite of his stature as a teacher and author, he remained humble throughout his life. Consistently he turned down offers to be made bishop or abbot. More remarkable than this was an announcement he made three months before his death in 1274. He said, after apparently seeing a heavenly vision during a worship service, "All that I have hitherto written seems to me nothing but straw . . . compared to what has been revealed to me." He gave up all theological writing, and so the *Summa Theologiae* was never actually completed. □



# The Great Papal Schism

FRANCIS OAKLEY

When two popes, and later three popes, vied for supremacy, the medieval church entered a dramatic, forty-year crisis of authority.

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On Friday, St. George's Eve, there was another session," wrote an observer of the Council of Constance. "In this session Our Holy Father Pope Martin gave to all who were present at the Council of Constance permission to leave and likewise absolution from penalty and guilt. Afterward he gave the people his blessing in the upper court. Our lord King stood beside him, dressed as an evangelist, wearing his imperial crown and holding the orb in his hand while a man held a naked sword before him. Cardinal Conti proclaimed to the people in Latin the indulgence of seven years for mortal sins and seven Lents. Master Peter repeated it in German, and everyone was given permission to go home."

This passage, from Ulrich Richental's *Chronicle of the Council of Constance*, describes the closing session of that great council. The session took place on April 22, 1418, at a moment when the new pope, Martin V, with plague moving in on the city, was anxious to speed the council fathers on their way and make his own departure.

Constance may not exactly be a

household word—not even in the history of representative assemblies—but in size alone it was one of the most imposing of medieval gatherings. Nor was it distinguished by size alone. It was the greatest and certainly the most memorable of the general assemblies held by the medieval Latin Church (i.e., the Western church). When it assembled in 1414, it did so at a time of supreme crisis in the life of that church, when what later came to be known as the Great Schism of the West had endured for almost forty years.

## Causes of the Schism

In 1377, after the papacy had been resident for almost seventy years at Avignon, under the shadow of French royal power, Gregory XI had finally succeeded in bringing it back to Rome. He had done so despite the hostility of some of the Roman nobility and some of his own cardinals. When he died in March 1378, six of the twenty-two cardinals were still in residence at Avignon, where a considerable part of the papal bureaucracy was still functioning.

With Gregory XI's death, the Romans feared the election of a French pope and the removal of the papacy back to Avignon. As a result, the papal election that took place in April did so amid considerable confusion—rioting outside the conclave and dissension within. It ended with the election of a compromise candidate, Urban VI (1378–1389), an Italian who had served at Avignon.

But Urban VI's subsequent violent and abusive treatment of the cardinals caused them to fear for their lives and suspect him of insanity. That, combined with the turbulent conditions surrounding his election, gave rise to doubts about the validity of Urban VI's title. The cardinals publicly repudiated his election and selected one of themselves as Clement VII (1378–1394). By the summer of 1379, having failed to capture Rome, Clement took up residence at Avignon, and the stage was set for two rival papal "obediences," Roman and Avignonese.

As their previous political and diplomatic alignments might have suggested, France, Castile [a Spanish kingdom], and Scotland backed Clement. Meanwhile, England and much of the German Empire sided with Urban. As a result, neither of the rival claimants had a decisive edge of power. Neither pope being able to dislodge the other, and neither being willing to relinquish his claim, there began the most serious schism ever to disrupt the unity of the Latin Church.

Over time, loyalties hardened, and the rival papal courts strove to perpetuate their claims. At Rome, Boniface IX (in 1389), Innocent VII (in 1404), and Gregory XII (in 1406) were elected to succeed Urban VI. At Avignon, Benedict XIII was elected in 1394 to succeed Clement VII. The understandable results were widespread administrative confusion and jurisdictional conflict, as well as a mounting and debilitating spiritual anxiety.

Continued on p. 31

The elegant papal palace in Avignon, France, as it appeared during the fourteenth century. During the Great Papal Schism of the West, three rivals claimed to be pope—one in Rome, one in Pisa, and one here in Avignon.

Dr. Francis Oakley is president of Williams College in Williamstown, Massachusetts.





### The Council of Constance

Many attempts were made to end the schism, yet the most promising had led only to the addition (at Pisa) in 1410 of yet another line of claimants to the papal title. The intolerable situation of three rival popes ultimately led, through a complex process of ecclesiastical and secular diplomacy, to the Council of Constance. Although the council was summoned (under imperial pressure) by the Pisan pope, John XXIII (1410–1415), in its determination to end the schism, it did not hesitate to depose him along with his Avignonese rival, Benedict XIII, and to accept the “resignation” of the Roman claimant, Gregory XII. The council then proceeded to elect a successor, Martin V (1417–31), the first pope in forty years to be able to command the allegiance of the whole Latin Church.

The achievement of the council was considerable. Not only did it end years of turbulence in the church, but it did so by asserting these historically significant beliefs:

- the pope, however divinely instituted his office, was not an absolute monarch but in some sense a constitutional ruler;
- the pope possessed a merely ministerial authority delegated to him by the community of the faithful and for the good of the whole church;
- the community of the faithful had not exhausted its inherent authority in the mere act of electing its ruler but had retained whatever residual power was necessary to prevent its own subversion or destruction;
- the community of the faithful could exercise power via its representatives assembled in a general council—even, in certain critical cases, against the wishes of the pope and, if need be, it could judge, chastise, and even depose a pope.

The Great Schism of the West thus set forth a greatly expanded authority for general councils of the church. As the miseries of the schism receded into the background, however, a resurgent papacy succeeded in marginalizing this “conciliar” consciousness in the life of the church. But a strengthened role for councils never wholly disappeared, and, in the wake of the Second Vatican Council (1962–65), it has shown unambiguous signs of renewed vitality. □



This 1584 engraving, the earliest known depiction of Johann Gutenberg, shows the famous inventor holding a die for twelve letters of the alphabet.

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Last year saw a curious item: the entire Bible on a hand-held computer. The technological wonder can look up chapters and verses instantly and project them on its screen, saving the reader from flipping pages. Whether or not this invention will replace printed Bibles, however, it pales before the technological breakthroughs of a German printer over five hundred years ago. Indeed, it is hard to imagine a modern church, or world, apart from the mass-produced printed page he made possible.

### In search of efficient printing

Christianity, following Judaism, has always been a religion of the Book. For centuries scribes dedicated themselves to copying the Scriptures by hand—primarily on papyrus or animal skin parchment. With the rise of monasteries, copying the Scriptures became the occupation for some monks. But it was truly a labor. The idea that every believer or family could have a Bible was unthinkable.

In the 1440s, the German Johann Gutenberg began experimenting with novel, mysterious ways of approaching printing. So did many other Europeans, all looking for a faster, cheaper way to produce books. Usually, if Europeans didn't write by hand, they used hand stamps or woodcuts—an improvement, but still painfully slow. And the printing methods used in the Orient, primarily block printing, were

## Gutenberg Produces the First Printed Bible

Using his revolutionary invention—printing from movable type—he made the Scriptures potentially accessible to every person.

unknown in Europe.

Gutenberg had an advantage: he was skilled in engraving and metal working. While living in Strasbourg, Gutenberg perfected several unique ideas: a hand-held mold that could adjust to cast any letter accurately and in large quantities; a durable tin alloy that melted and solidified quickly and without distortion; an oil-based ink; and a modified printing press. By about 1440, he had assembled the necessary components for mass-produced printing, but if he printed anything in Strasbourg, it has not survived.

By 1448, Gutenberg returned to his hometown of Mainz and borrowed money for his printing business. He failed to repay the sizable loans, and in 1455, his creditor and partner foreclosed, taking possession of Gutenberg's typefaces for two projects underway: a Bible printed in forty-two lines per page, and a psalter. Thus, no printed material that bears Gutenberg's name has survived. Nor is there an authentic portrait of him or a copy of his autograph.

### The famous 42-line Bible

By the following August, however, a copy of Gutenberg's forty-two-line Bible—specifically, Jerome's Latin translation, the Vulgate—was completed. The Bible, which was printed simultaneously on six printing presses, was stunning. (See photograph on page 3.) Some collectors say this first printed book is also the most beautiful ever printed, and they pay astounding sums for the forty or fifty copies that



# The History of the Church

survive of the original two hundred. Gutenberg's typeface was not like ours; rather, it resembled the ornate handwritten letters the scribes had used for ages. Each chapter began with a large illuminated initial. Later, in the interest of economy, more straightforward typefaces developed—easier to cast, easier to read, but less beautiful.

Gutenberg's techniques remained a guarded trade secret in Mainz—but not for long. By the time Martin Luther was born, in 1483, every large European country had at least one printing press. Within fifty years of Gutenberg's first Bible, more copies of books were produced than in several of the previous centuries together.

## Revolution and the Reformation

Gutenberg's new process sparked a revolution in society and the church. Books could now be produced in quantities and at prices that made them available to many people, not merely to scholars and monks. The resulting explosion of knowledge continues to accelerate in our day.

In the church, the Protestant Reformation might have been impossible in the pre-Gutenberg age. (Indeed, the Reformation became, in some ways, a war of books, each party pointing out the errors of the others.) Everything the Reformers said about the priesthood of all believers was rooted in the assumption that people could have access to the Bible in their own language. Thus, Luther and the other Reformers worked to translate the Scriptures so that no priest, pope, or council needed to stand between the plowboy and the Word of God.

The chief book being printed was the Bible, thus spreading Christian teaching. As more were printed, more people became readers, and readers demanded more books, thus spreading literacy. And even for the illiterate, the Bible became more accessible, because the pastor could read from, and preach about, a Bible that was more readily available.

Christianity, the religion of the Book, was becoming universal in a new way. Religion did not have to end at the church door; thanks to the possession of Bibles, every household could become a training ground for faith. □

We hope the articles in this issue give you a new way of looking at the two-thousand-year sweep of church history—and whet your appetite for further study. We asked Mark Galli, associate editor of LEADERSHIP JOURNAL and a regular contributor to CHRISTIAN HISTORY, to recommend a short list of books that survey church history in an accurate and interesting way. His list is arranged alphabetically by author. —The Editors



The seal of Oxford University, c. 1300. Intimately associated with the church, Oxford became an incubator for the Renaissance and the Reformation.

Earle E. Cairns, *Christianity through the Centuries: A History of the Christian Church* (Zondervan, 1954, 1981). From a "conservative, non-denominational perspective," Cairns quickly scans the multifarious history of Christendom. Includes a fine bibliography at the end of each chapter, as well as many pictures, charts, and maps.

Jean Comby, *How to Read Church History*, 2 vols. (Crossroad, 1989). Comby's unique approach includes many excerpts from historical documents (nearly as much material as the narrative), helping the reader to do history as well as read it. Highlights Roman Catholic events, but gives a fair shake to Protestant developments too.

Tim Dowley, ed., *Eerdmans' Hand-*

*book to the History of Christianity* (Eerdmans, 1977; rev. 1990). Colorful charts, graphs, maps, and pictures bombard the reader of this combination history and dictionary. Each section includes major articles accented nicely with shorter pieces on important personalities, movements, and events. A book one can curl up with for hours.

Justo González, *The Story of Christianity*, 2 vols. (Harper & Row, 1984). With an economy of expression, González captures the character and significance of events and people. He also devotes substantial coverage to Christianity in Central and Latin America. Many visuals and chapter bibliographies fill out this engaging history.

Paul Johnson, *A History of Christianity* (Atheneum, 1977). Written as a "retrospect" and "balance sheet" now that Christianity's "period of predominance is drawing to a close." The fast-moving narrative, not always theologically orthodox, has a journalistic flavor: events are set in their political context, and Johnson's not unwilling to suggest the less noble side of things.

Kenneth Scott Latourette, *A History of Christianity*, 2 vols. (Harper & Row, 1975). A study of the "pulsations in the life of Christianity." Latourette charts the expansion of Christianity and its effect on the world. He attempts to cover everything with some depth, and he succeeds. A classic.

Bruce L. Shelley, *Church History in Plain Language* (Word, 1982). Shelley is a courageous historian: he does not hesitate to use gripping anecdotes and stories to crystallize periods and issues. To keep the reader engaged, he focuses on one major issue per chapter. Thoroughness is slighted, as he admits, but this book keeps the story in history.

Charles Williams, *The Descent of the Dove: A Short History of the Holy Spirit in the Church* (1939). Williams writes history as he does novels: as if the supernatural world view of Christians makes a difference. Regularly he notes that "our Lord the Spirit" permitted this or ordained that. This brief metaphysical, cultural, and spiritual history of the church, although dated, will still reward the patient reader. □

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# Luther Posts the 95 Theses

ERIC W. GRITSCH

An obscure monk invited debate on a pressing church issue—and touched off a history-shattering reform movement.

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HISTORY

Sometime during October 31, 1517, the day before the Feast of All Saints, the 33-year-old Martin Luther posted theses on the door of the Castle Church in Wittenberg. The door

functioned as a bulletin board for various announcements related to academic and church affairs. The theses were written in Latin and printed on a folio sheet by the printer John Gruenberg, one of the many entrepreneurs in the new print medium first used in Germany about 1450. Luther was calling for a "disputation on the power and efficacy of indulgences out of love and zeal for truth and the desire to bring it to light." He did so as a faithful monk and priest who had been appointed professor of biblical theology at the University of Wittenberg, a small, virtually unknown institution in a small town.

Some copies of the theses were sent to friends and church officials, but the disputation never took place. Albert of Brandenburg, archbishop of Mainz, sent the theses to some theologians whose judgment moved him to send a copy to Rome and demand action against Luther. By the early months of 1518, the theses had been reprinted in many cities, and Luther's name had become associated with demands for radical change in the church. He had become front-page news.

## The issue of indulgences

Why? Luther was calling for a debate on the most neuralgic issue of his time: the relationship between money and religion. "Indulgences" (from the Lat-

in *indulgentia*—permit) had become the complex instruments for granting forgiveness of sins. The granting of forgiveness in the sacrament of penance was based on the "power of the keys" given to the apostles according to Matthew 16:18, and was used to discipline sinners. Penitent sinners were asked to show regret for their sins (contrition), confess them to a priest (confession), and do penitential work to atone for them (satisfaction).

Indulgences were issued by executive papal order and by written permission in various bishoprics, and they were meant to relax or commute the penitent sinner's work of satisfaction. By the late eleventh century it had become customary to issue indulgences to volunteers taking part in crusades to the Holy Land against the Muslims; all sins would be forgiven anyone participating in such a dangerous but holy enterprise. After 1300 a complete commutation of satisfaction ("plenary indulgence") was granted to all pilgrims visiting holy shrines in Rome during "jubilee years" (at first every hundred years, and, eventually, every twenty-five years).

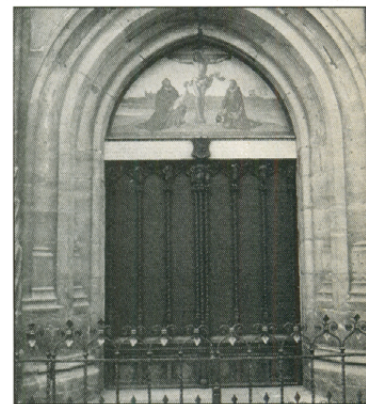
Abuses soon abounded: "permits" were issued offering release from all temporal punishment—indeed, from punishment in purgatory—for a specific payment as determined by the church. Some popes pursued their "edifice complex" by collecting large sums through the sale of indulgences. Pope Julius II, for example, granted a "jubilee indulgence" in 1510, the proceeds of which were used to build the new basilica of St. Peter in Rome.

In 1515, Pope Leo X commissioned Albert of Brandenburg to use the Do-



Top: Luther shows his Theses. The glamorized painting does capture the fact that "within a fortnight, every university and religious center was agog with excitement."

Right: The north door of the Castle Church in Wittenberg, Germany, which in Luther's day was a common bulletin board for local church and university announcements.



minican order to sell St. Peter indulgences in his lands. Albert owed a large sum to Rome for having granted him a special dispensation to become the ecclesiastical prince ruling three territories (Mainz, Magdeburg, and Halberstadt). He borrowed the money from the Fugger bank in Augsburg, which engaged an experienced indulgences salesman, the Dominican John Tetzel, to run the indulgences traffic; one half of the proceeds went to Albert and the Fuggers, the other half to Rome. Tetzel's campaign gave rise to the famous jingle, "As soon as the coin in the coffer rings, a soul from purga-

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tory springs."

The issue of indulgences had now become linked to the prevalent anxiety regarding death and the final judgment. This anxiety was fueled by a runaway credit system based on printed money and the new banking system.

### The message of Martin Luther

Luther attacked the abuse of indulgence sales in sermons, in counseling sessions, and, finally, in the Ninety-Five Theses, which rang out the revolutionary theme of the Reformation: "When our Lord and Master Jesus Christ said, 'Repent,' He willed the entire life of believers to be one of repentance" (Thesis 1).

By 1520, Luther announced that baptism is the only indulgence necessary for salvation. All of life is a "return to baptism" in the sense that one clings to the divine promise of salvation through faith in Jesus Christ alone, who by his life, death, and resurrection liberated humankind from all punishment for sin. One lives by trusting in Christ alone and thus becoming a Christ to the neighbor in need rather than by trying to pacify God.

It is this simple reaffirmation of the ancient Christian "good news," the gospel, that created in the church catholic the reform movement that attracted legions in Germany and other

European territories. The movement was propelled by slogans stressing the essentials of Christianity: faith alone (*sola fides*), grace alone (*sola gratia*), Christ alone (*solus Christus*). Many joined because Luther criticized the papacy, which had claimed to have power over every soul. "Why does not the pope whose wealth today is greater than the wealth of the richest Crassus (a wealthy Roman nicknamed "Fats," who died in 53 B.C.) build this one basilica of St. Peter with his own money rather than with the money of poor believers?" (Thesis 87).

The Ninety-Five Theses were the straw that broke the Catholic camel's back. When Luther was asked later why he had done what he did, he answered, "I never wanted to do it, but was forced into it when I had to become a Doctor of Holy Scripture against my will." Though condemned by church and state, Luther survived the attempts to burn him as a heretic.

Hindsight suggests that Luther's theses planted the seeds of an ecumenical dialogue on what is essential for Christian unity, indeed for survival, in the interim between Christ's first and second coming. That dialogue will bear fruit as long as it wrestles, as Luther did, with the proper distinction between the power of the Word of God and the power of human sin. □

# The Diet of Worms

Was the wayward Luther free to dissent?

A German council rendered a judgment.

ERIC W. GRITSCH

THE  
100  
MOST  
IMPORTANT  
EVENTS  
IN CHURCH  
HISTORY

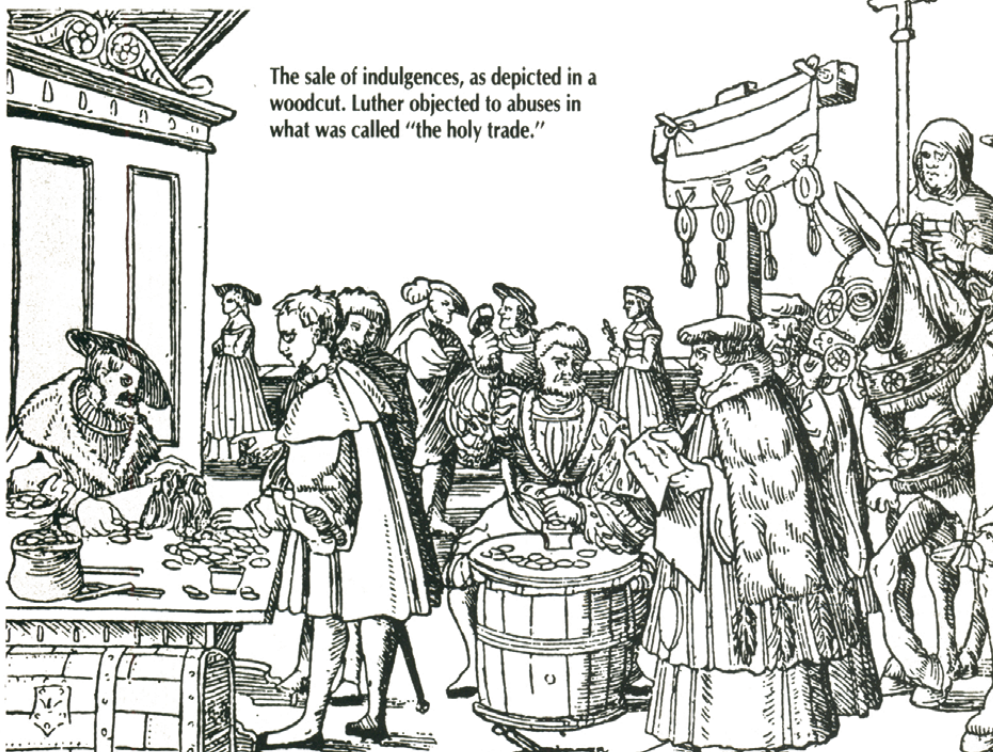
A complex constellation of events and circumstances dominated Europe in the first two decades of the sixteenth century. The rediscovery and study of pre-Christian Greek

and Roman culture, known as "renaissance" and "humanism," called into question much of the contemporary Christian culture. Discovery and exploration of a new, non-European world expanded trade and led to what was later called "capitalism." The Holy Roman Empire, a symbiotic relationship between spiritual and temporal rulers—pope and emperor—was being threatened by a massive invasion of Muslims led by Turkish sultans. Moreover, the unity of Christendom was being imperiled by the fast-growing reform movement started by Martin Luther. In this turbulent era, the diet (assembly) held at Worms in 1521 was one attempt to preserve that unity.

### Pressures for the diet

Politics and religion had become strange bedfellows in Germany. The "Golden Bull" of 1356 had provided for the election of an emperor by majority vote of four secular and three ecclesiastical princes. Two years before the Diet of Worms, the elector Frederick "the Wise" cast the deciding vote in favor of Charles I of Spain to become Charles V, Holy Roman Emperor. Luther was

Wikipedia



The sale of indulgences, as depicted in a woodcut. Luther objected to abuses in what was called "the holy trade."



Frederick's subject; thus, when the papacy moved to silence him, Frederick insisted that his professor—a growing attraction at the University of Wittenberg, newly founded by Frederick—be heard on German soil and treated fairly.

As a result, Luther had a hearing before a cardinal in Augsburg in 1518, and he could debate the issue of papal authority at a well-publicized event at the University of Leipzig in 1519. He was also free, in 1520, to publish his ideas on church reform through best-selling treatises such as *The Babylonian Captivity of the Church* (a stinging critique of the hierarchical system of sacraments) and *The Freedom of the Christian* (the exposition of a Christian stance liberated from bondage to a church claiming to have an inerrant structure).

In 1520, Rome threatened to excommunicate Luther unless he recanted, but the Wittenberg professor refused to do so. The letter threatening excommunication was burned in a festive bonfire staged by faculty and students in December. Luther's actual excommunication by papal bull in January 1521 only fueled the opposition to Rome. Under pressure from Elector Frederick and other princes, Emperor Charles V agreed to hear Luther at a German diet scheduled to meet in Worms in the spring of 1521.

### Proceedings of the diet

Rome hoped that the diet would reject Luther's cause, thus easing the task of a general council of bishops, chaired by the pope, who would be dealing with the religious issues raised. Virtually all of Germany was supporting Luther. As the official papal representative to the diet, Jerome Aleander, put it in his secret message to Rome, "Nine-tenths of the people are shouting 'Luther!' and the other tenth are crying 'Death to the Roman Court!'"

Luther appeared before the diet on April 17 at 4:00 P.M., after a triumphant journey from Wittenberg. Silence descended on the room where the diet was meeting. A representative of the emperor asked Luther to respond to two questions: Did he acknowledge the authorship of books that had been brought to the diet and bore his name? Would he stand by them or retract anything in them?

Luther asked for time to reflect before answering, and he was granted twenty-four hours. On April 18, 6:00 P.M., he gave his now-famous answer:

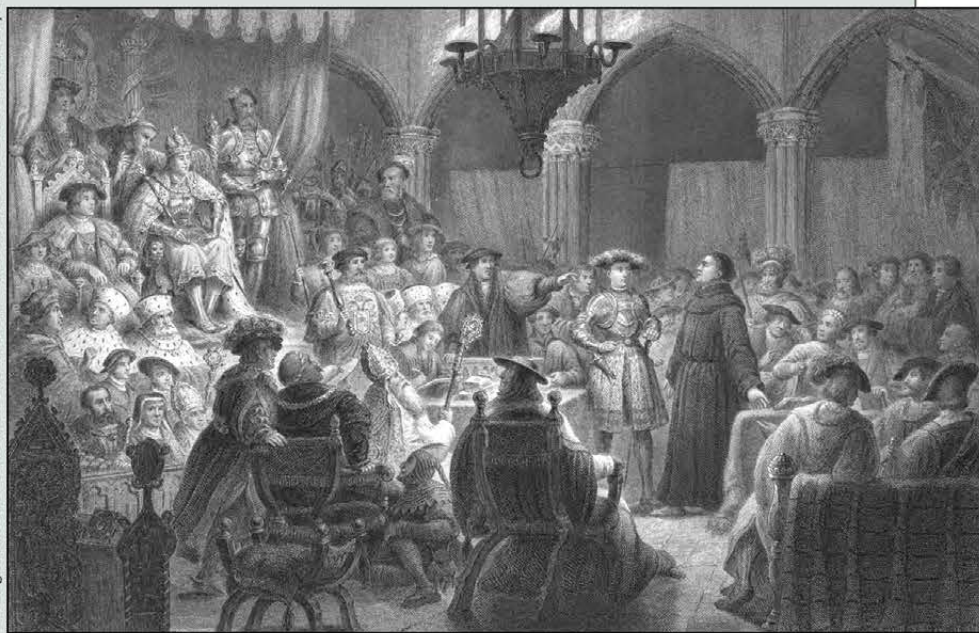
"Unless I am convinced by the testimony of Scripture or by clear reason (for I trust neither pope nor council alone, since it is well known that they have often erred and contradicted themselves), I am bound by the Scriptures I have cited, for my conscience is captive to the Word of God. I cannot and will not recant anything, since to act against one's conscience is neither safe nor right. I cannot do otherwise. Here I stand, may God help me."

The next day, the 19-year-old emperor called Luther "a notorious heretic" who would have to be silenced. A rump session of the diet approved a condemnation edict on May 26. The

there until March 1522 when unrest drove him to return to Wittenberg.

### Practical consequences of the diet

The Diet of Worms revealed two radically differing world views: Charles V, armed with the powerful weapons of ecclesiastical ban and imperial edict, embodied institutional authority; Luther stood for the Word of God as revealed in Holy Scripture, which promised freedom from all human bondage, including death. Luther summarized his view in two seemingly contradictory propositions: "A Christian is a perfectly free lord of all, subject to none. A Christian is a perfectly dutiful servant of all, subject to all." For Luther, faith in Christ frees humans from their human righteousness by binding them to the righteousness



Luther defends himself before Charles V, Holy Roman Emperor, at Worms. Luther had already been excommunicated by Rome. Would the state inflict its own penalty for his controversial teachings?

edict called Luther a criminal who had committed high treason; it demanded the capture of Luther and his disciples; and it condemned the "demon in the appearance of a man" as the leader of a notorious heresy that must be exterminated.

In short, Luther was condemned to death, albeit in absentia, for he had been persuaded to leave Worms earlier. Elector Frederick arranged a "kidnapping" of the homeward-bound Luther and hid him at Wartburg, his castle in Thuringia. Luther stayed

of Christ. Believers are subject to no human powers, although they are to serve neighbors in need as if they were slaves.

Luther's dissent at Worms was a testimony to Christian freedom. Subsequent dissent has often been grounded in notions of human rights like freedom of speech. Luther might or might not have agreed with these notions. It is clear, however, that he clung to the ancient biblical mandate to honor no power other than the power of the Word of God. □



# The Anabaptist Movement Begins

Hated by Protestants and Catholics alike, these “radical reformers” wanted to not merely reform the church but restore it.

THE **100** MOST IMPORTANT EVENTS IN CHURCH HISTORY

Living in an age of religious pluralism, we wonder why people in the sixteenth century would be tortured or drowned over the issue of mode of baptism.

When Luther, Zwingli, and others led their movements away from Catholicism, many practices were changed; but infant baptism, the accepted mode for most of Christian history, was not. Baptizing only adults—that is, people who *chose* to be baptized—was a radical idea that cut at the heart of both church and state. Yet it was just one of many revolutionary ideas typical of a diverse group called Anabaptists. Their movement is also known as the Radical Reformation.

## Anabaptist origins

The immediate issue creating the Anabaptist movement was not just baptism, however, but also civil government. (The two were related. To be baptized was a civil issue, and to refuse it tore a “seamless Christian society.”)

Under Ulrich Zwingli and the city council in Zurich, the Reformation was proceeding. But Conrad Grebel, Felix Manz, and other associates of Zwingli didn’t feel the Reformation was going far enough. They wanted to do away with the tithe, usury, and military service. Further, some of these radicals wanted a totally self-governing church, free of government interference.

Zwingli, who wanted gradual, orderly change, parted ways with them. On January 21, 1525, the Zurich council forbade the radicals from disseminating their views. That wintry evening, in a nearby village, the radicals met—and baptized each other. The name *Anabaptist*, meaning “rebaptizer,” was later given them by detractors.

## Anabaptist distinctives

These believers didn’t want to merely reform the church; they wanted to wholly restore it to its initial purity and simplicity. Such a church, they held, consists only of people who present themselves to be baptized.

Congregationalism was another key belief. The Anabaptists could find no justification for elaborate church bureaucracies. Decisions should be made not by a hierarchical leader but by the entire local assembly. In fact, the Anabaptists were the first to try to practice democracy in the congregation.

Another central teaching was the separation of church and state. The church, they said, is to be composed of free, “uncompelled” people. The state is not to use coercion on people’s consciences.



The church in Münster, site of a disruptive episode that led to increased persecution of Anabaptists. Bodies of slaughtered Anabaptists were displayed in the cages above the steeple clock.

Jesus taught the way of nonviolence, the Anabaptists believed, and so pacifism became another important feature of their lives. Even the hated Turks must not be fought with a sword. By obeying Jesus’ clear commands, his followers should be distinct from society, even a society claiming to be Christian.

Didn’t Luther and the other great Reformers see the wisdom of the Anabaptists? They didn’t—partly because they thought the Anabaptists’ theology was amiss, partly because the Anabaptists seemed disorderly. In one extreme case in Münster in 1534–5, Anabaptists came to power and took up arms (temporarily throwing aside their taboo on violence), practiced polygamy (citing Old Testament precedents), and claimed bizarre revelations from God. To both Catholics and Protestants these extremes justified persecuting the Anabaptists, executing them by fire or sword or drowning.

## Anabaptist development

In spite of persecution, the movement spread, mostly among the lower classes. Since the Anabaptists had no official sanction, they had to increase their numbers by outright evangelism, something new in supposedly Christian Europe. Some courageous leaders emerged, particularly the former priest Menno Simons (1496–1561), a gifted organizer whose name has settled on the group called Mennonites. Other leaders included Conrad Grebel, Thomas Müntzer, Hans Hut, Pilgram Marpeck, Melchior Hoffmann, Jacob Hutter, and Balthasar Hubmaier. As you can guess from the names, most Anabaptists were from German-speaking territories, always the area of their greatest strength. Though no one person tied the movement together, Anabaptists shared many central beliefs, which were set forth in the Schleitheim Confession in 1527.

Today you would not find a listing for “Churches—Anabaptist” in your local Yellow Pages. You would probably find listings for their descendants—Mennonite and Brethren churches, for example. There are hundreds of such churches in the U.S. and in the world. Though small in numbers compared with, say, Baptists or Methodists, their influence has been great, particularly in the areas of pacifism, community, and service. □



Henry VIII, king of England from 1509 to 1547, formative years of the Protestant Reformation. He was deeply devoted to Catholic practice; on days when he hunted, he heard three masses, and sometimes on other days, he heard five.



# The Act of Supremacy

Breaking from Rome, the English Parliament declared King Henry VIII "the only supreme head on earth of the Church of England."

THE  
100  
MOST  
IMPORTANT  
EVENTS  
IN CHURCH  
HISTORY

The joke in church circles is that the Episcopal church is the only denomination that started because of a divorce. In fact, as part of an advertising campaign in the 1980s, the Episcopal church designed a poster featuring Henry VIII that stated: "The Episcopal Church welcomes divorced people." (The Episcopal Church in the U.S.A. is, of course, part of the global Anglican Communion, rooted in the Church of England.)

The English Reformation is far more complicated, however, involving not only the marital woes of much-married

Henry, but also a turbulent theological and political situation in England.

## Rumblings in England

When Luther posted his *Ninety-five Theses* in 1517, they did not go unnoticed in England. In 1521, young King Henry wrote (probably with assistance) a book attacking Luther's view of the sacraments. The pope graciously replied by bestowing on Henry the title "Defender of the Faith," a title still used by British monarchs.

Like the rest of Europe, however, England was restless with its church situation. Many bishops were rich landowners, priests and monks were often scandalously immoral, and the religion

of the common people was woven with superstition. Earnest leaders like John Colet of Oxford called for reform. At Cambridge, a group of scholars met to discuss Protestant ideas; they became known as "Little Germany" because of their affection for Luther's teachings. In addition to these theological rumblings, there was a growing feeling of nationalism, a higher devotion to England than to the Roman church. The stage was set for a break with Rome.

## Rumblings in the king's marriage

Henry VIII, a lustful, selfish ruler, justifiably feared for England's stability if he failed to produce a son to succeed him. (He had at least one illegitimate son, of little use for succession.) Yet his wife of many years, Catherine of Aragon, was in her early forties and had produced only one surviving child, daughter Mary.

Henry sought an annulment, claiming that since Catherine had been his brother's widow, she could not legally be his wife. (He based his claim on Leviticus 20:21.) The pope stalled, partly because Catherine was the aunt of the mighty Emperor Charles V, a party the pope did not want to offend.

Henry, who was already drawn to dark-haired Anne Boleyn, couldn't wait. ("I would you were in mine arms or I in yours, for I think it long since I kissed you," he wrote her.) Henry knew the anti-clerical feeling in England made the time right for a break. He appointed Thomas Cranmer as Archbishop of Canterbury, and Cranmer declared the marriage invalid. Henry married Anne, already six months' pregnant by him, in 1533.

## Rupture with Rome

Pope Clement VII then excommunicated Henry, which only fueled dissent. Parliament passed a series of acts restraining the clergy and increasing Henry's power over them. In 1534 came the Act of Supremacy, declaring Henry to be "the only supreme head on earth of the Church of England." England now had a national church, with the king at the helm. The Arch-



# John Calvin Publishes

with the king at the helm. The Archbishop of Canterbury held the highest clergy office in the realm.

But Henry was no Protestant. He just wanted a Catholic church without a pope. He had broken with Rome, but not with its theology or ritual. In 1539 he issued the *Six Articles*, which insisted on continuing practices such as private confession, clerical celibacy, and private masses.

Yet in two ways, Henry departed significantly from Catholic practice. He closed the monasteries and confiscated their vast holdings of land and wealth. The proceeds went into the royal treasury to support campaigns against France, and the land was transferred to nobles in hopes of increasing their loyalty to the crown.

Henry also ordered that an English Bible be installed in all churches. Henry had no real interest in the English people's studying the Bible, but an English Bible was another way of promoting English nationalism, for the churches would no longer be dependent on a Roman Latin Bible.

Henry died in 1547, having successfully acquired four more wives after Anne Boleyn's execution. His successor was the puny Edward VI, son of his union with the third wife, Jane Seymour. During Edward's brief reign, England began to be truly Protestant. But Henry died thinking himself a good Catholic; his will provided for masses to be said for the welfare of his soul.

## Repercussions of Henry's reign

The day of the church's political supremacy was over, as seen by the fact that Henry could call himself head of the church in England. A century earlier, a king so audacious might have been assassinated. But Henry wasn't, and for an obvious reason: the English felt more pride in being English than in being Catholic. Nationalism was to be a permanent feature on the landscape of Europe.

The Act of Supremacy broke England from Rome—decisively. Though England briefly returned to Catholicism under Henry's daughter Mary, England was, forever after, not Catholic. Henry's selfish acts paved the way for a church that sought the *via media*, the "middle way" between adherence to the pope, and aggressive dissent. □



Wikipedia



There is not one blade of grass, there is no color in this world that is not intended to make us rejoice." These words were penned by a man who has been accused of generating a joyless Christianity. He is remembered as the man who taught predestination, an idea repugnant to modern minds. As historian Will Durant complained, "We shall always find it hard to love the man who darkened the human soul with the most absurd and blasphemous conception of God in all the long and honored history of nonsense."

Yet those who know Calvin well regard him as a saint. Philip Schaff wrote that Calvin "must be reckoned as one of the greatest and best of men whom God raised up in the history of Christianity."

## Calvin's Geneva

This controversial theologian was born in 1509 in Picardy, part of France. Calvin was brilliant. Initially he intended to be a priest, but his father induced him to study law. Calvin studied at dif-

ferent universities, including Paris, sharpening his already logical mind and avidly reading the Greek and Latin classics.

About 1533 Calvin had what he called a "sudden conversion": "God subdued and brought my heart to docility." Apparently he had encountered the writings of Luther. He broke from Catholicism, left France, and settled in Switzerland as an exile.

In 1536, in Basel, Calvin published the first edition of one of the greatest religious works ever written, *The Institutes of the Christian Religion*. The title, perhaps better translated as "Principles of the Christian Faith," introduced a book designed to "hand on some elementary teaching by which anyone who had been touched by an interest in religion might be formed to true godliness." At the age of 27, Calvin had already produced a systematic theology, a clear defense of Reformation teachings.

His writings impressed people, including Guillaume Farel, a reformer in Geneva, Switzerland. On his way to Strasbourg, Calvin stopped overnight in Geneva. When Farel learned that the author of the *Institutes* was in town, he sought him out and pled with him to stay and help the church in Geneva. Calvin refused, wanting only a quiet life of study. So Farel swore a curse on Calvin's studies unless he stayed. "I felt as if God from heaven had laid his hand on me," Calvin said, and Geneva was to be his home (with one brief exile) until he died in 1564.

Calvin pastored the St. Pierre church, preaching almost daily. He produced commentaries on almost



# Institutes of the Christian Religion

Title page of the first edition of Calvin's *Institutes*. This edition, a slim volume of only 6 chapters, was revised and expanded by Calvin five times; the final 1559 edition contained 79 chapters. It is largely the *Institutes* that has caused Calvin to be considered "one of the great seminal minds . . . in the development of Western culture and civilization."

every book of the Bible and wrote dozens of devotional and doctrinal pamphlets. (He managed to do all this while constantly battling various ailments, including migraine headaches.) He also married and fathered a child. Sadly, his wife died young, as did their son. Calvin refused to remarry, feeling his work would keep him busy. It did.

Calvin wanted Geneva, a city of notoriously lax morals, to be a holy city.

## At the age of 27 Calvin had already produced a systematic theology.

His influence was felt everywhere, notably in the schools. He urged excommunicating church members whose lives did not conform to spiritual standards, and every citizen of Geneva had to subscribe to his confession of faith.

Some balked at the moral restrictions, but Geneva became a moral magnet, attracting Protestant exiles from all over Europe. One, John Knox, described Geneva as "the most perfect school of Christ since the days of the apostles."

### Calvin's *Institutes*

What is so grand about the *Institutes*? For one thing, no other reformer ever stated Protestant beliefs so systematically. Calvin's book, which he kept enlarging throughout his life, covered all the bases.

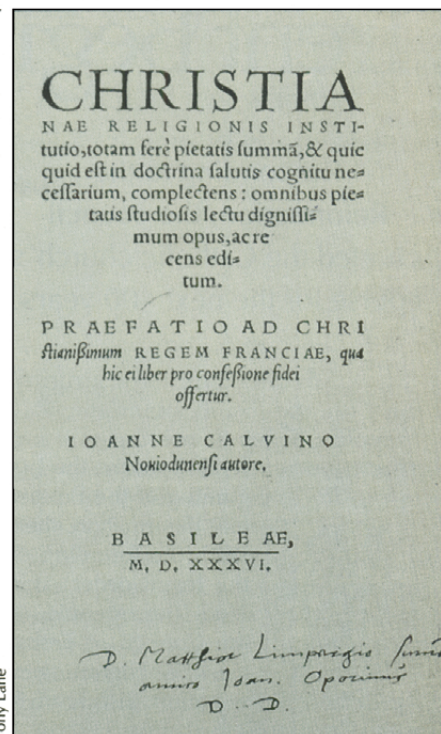
Calvin, ever logical, took a logical starting point: the Apostle's Creed, accepted by all Christians. He saw that it has four major points: "I believe in God the Father . . . Jesus Christ . . . the Holy Spirit . . . the holy catholic church." Those are the four divisions of the *Institutes*. Drawing on his wide reading, and building on the work of other reformers, Calvin stated a theology and its practical application in church life.

Book III of the *Institutes* has received much attention. In considering the Holy Spirit, Calvin examined the question of regeneration—that is, How are we saved? He claimed that salvation is possible only through the grace of God. Even before creation God chose some people to be saved. This is the bone most people choke on: predestination. Curiously, it isn't particularly a Calvinist idea. Luther believed it, as did most of the other reformers. Yet Calvin held it so absolutely and stated it so forcefully that the teaching is forever identified with him.

For Calvin, God was—above all else—sovereign. Calvin's constant theme was this: *If you are saved, it is God's doing, not your own.* God alone knows who is elect (saved) and who isn't.

But, Calvin said, a moral life shows that a person is (probably) one of the elect. Calvin himself, an intensely moral and energetic man, impressed on others the need to work out their salvation—not to be saved, but to show they are saved.

Calvin's *Institutes* also set forth the presbyterian system of church order. Book IV of the *Institutes* describes a



Tony Lane

church under the guidance of elders (*presbyteroi* in Greek), moral leaders elected by the church. Other orders of ministry are pastor, doctor (teacher), and deacon. With modifications, this system is still followed in churches called Presbyterian or Reformed.

In emphasizing God's sovereignty, Calvin's *Institutes* also leads the reader to believe that no person—king or bishop—can demand our ultimate loyalty. Calvin never taught a right to revolution, but his teaching laid the groundwork for this idea. In this sense his works are amazingly "modern," and he is regarded as a father of democracy.

### Calvin's influence

A single article cannot do justice to Calvin's influence. Calvin's theology found a home in places as far apart as Scotland, Poland, Holland, and America. Volumes have been written about him, some applauding him, some calling him a puritanical fiend. But it is safe to say that few Christians have been more brilliant, more energetic, more sincere, more moral, and more dedicated to the purity of the Christian church. □



# The Council of Trent Begins

Responding to the Reformation, the council charted the Catholic church's course for the next 400 years.

THE  
100  
MOST  
IMPORTANT  
EVENTS  
IN CHURCH  
HISTORY

If 1517 marks the beginning of the Protestant Reformation, then 1540 (the founding of the Jesuit order) and 1545 (the opening of the Council of Trent) mark the beginning of the Catholic Reformation, also known as the Counter-Reformation.

When Luther sounded the call for reform, not all Catholics fled their church and became Protestants. Instead, many stayed, hoping for renewal. Pleasure-loving Pope Leo X was not the right person to bring reform. But a later pope, Paul III (1534–1549), appointed a commission to examine the state of the church. The commission's report, *Concerning the Reform of the Church*, was pointed: Popes and cardinals had become too worldly; bribery to gain church office was widespread; monasteries had lost their discipline; and the selling of indulgences was widely abused. (Protestants obtained a copy and published it as evidence of the church's corruption.)

## Conflicting interests

In 1537, Paul III called for a council, but political squabbles postponed its opening for eight years. The council finally began, in the northern Italian city of Trent, in 1545. The council held a number of meetings, with the three main sessions occurring in 1545–7, 1551–2, and 1562–3. The drawn-out sessions, and long delays between them, meant that representatives changed over the course of the council. And attendance was small; the opening session attracted only 34 leaders, and the

largest meeting of the third session had only 255.

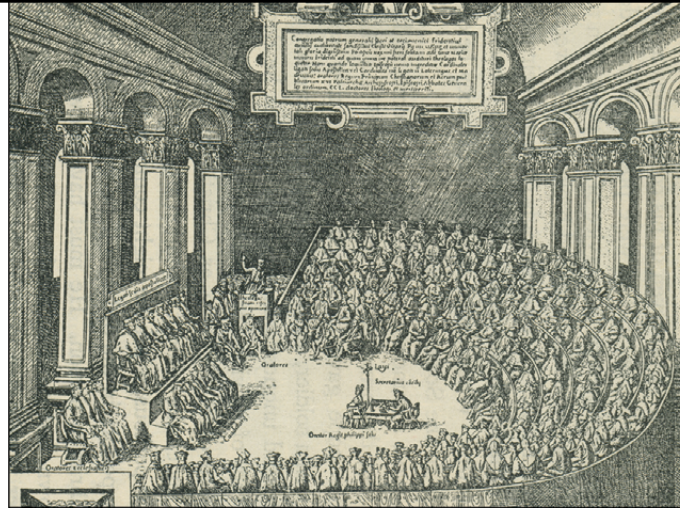
The council brought together a variety of competing agendas. Some churchmen, particularly members of the papal curia, resisted any reforms that would hinder their lifestyles. Bishops from Spain and France wanted a stronger, independent role. The Jesuits, on the other hand, stood firmly for papal supremacy. Some council delegates, like Emperor Charles V (who faced a Protestant challenge in his realm, the vast Holy Roman Empire), wanted Protestants and Catholics to reach a compromise. (Under his pressure, the council allowed Protestants to attend the second session, and informal talks were held. But when Protestant demands were not put on the agenda, the Protestants left, in 1552.) In a few instances, the delegates came to blows.

## Resolutions

Reform was high on the agenda. On the issue that had sparked the Reformation—the selling of indulgences—the council abolished indulgence sellers and halted some of the worst abuses. In addition, the council passed numerous measures to halt clerical corruption. Acknowledging that Luther's revolt had been prompted by the “ambition, avarice, and cupidity” of clergy, it called for leaders to avoid “even the smallest faults.” Many abuses were condemned, such as holding several cathedral churches, offering favors to relatives, and having mistresses.

The council dealt extensively not only with morality, but also with doctrine. It reaffirmed the traditional medieval understanding—and rejected contemporary Protestant teaching—on nearly every subject.

The council held that there are seven sacraments, not two as the Protestants claimed, and that these are necessary



Robinson. Medieval and Modern Times. Boston: Ginn and Co., 1919.

for salvation. All the Protestant interpretations of Communion were condemned, and transubstantiation (the belief that the bread and wine become in substance the body and blood of Christ) was re-affirmed. Protestants were worshipping in their own languages, but the council upheld the Latin Mass, and it defined more precisely the sacrificial understanding of the Mass.

On the critical issue of justification, the council could not support the Reformation understanding of salvation by faith alone. It affirmed that no person can know for certain he or she is justified, and that good works do contribute to a right standing with God.

On the issues of Scripture and authority, the Catholic church moved further from Protestants. Reformers such as Luther had been translating the Bible into the common language of the people. The council held instead that the only official version of the Bible was the Latin Vulgate, and that no private interpretations of Scripture could depart from the church's teachings. It also rejected the Protestant view of “Scripture alone” and declared that along with the Scriptures, tradition as preserved by the church was a source of authority.

## Results

The Council of Trent helped to bring much-needed reform to the Catholic church. It also refined the church's structure and marshalled its forces for the years ahead.

On matters of doctrine, however, the council made the gulf between Catholics and Protestants deep and lasting. Any remaining hopes of reunion were dashed.

The Council of Trent defined what the church would be for four centuries. Not until Vatican II, in the 1960s, did a major reexamination take place. □



# Publication of the King James Bible

A team of scholars produced an English Bible translation unsurpassed in linguistic beauty and longevity.

THE  
100  
MOST  
IMPORTANT  
EVENTS  
IN CHURCH  
HISTORY

To the most high and mighty Prince James by the Grace of God." So begins the dedication in the most popular English Bible of all time, the Authorized Version, widely known as the King James Version. The much-loved KJV, as it is often abbreviated, may have fallen out of favor in recent years as more readable translations are published for twentieth-century readers. But generation after generation of readers has absorbed its phrases. We can safely say that no other translation will ever have such an effect on the English language.

## King James

Who was the "mighty Prince James" whose name has been stamped on millions of Bibles? He was the son of Mary Queen of Scots, executed by her half-sister, England's Queen Elizabeth I. When the childless Elizabeth died, James, next male in the royal line, and already king in his native Scotland, marched south to London to be crowned king of England too. He is known to history as James I of England and James VI of Scotland.

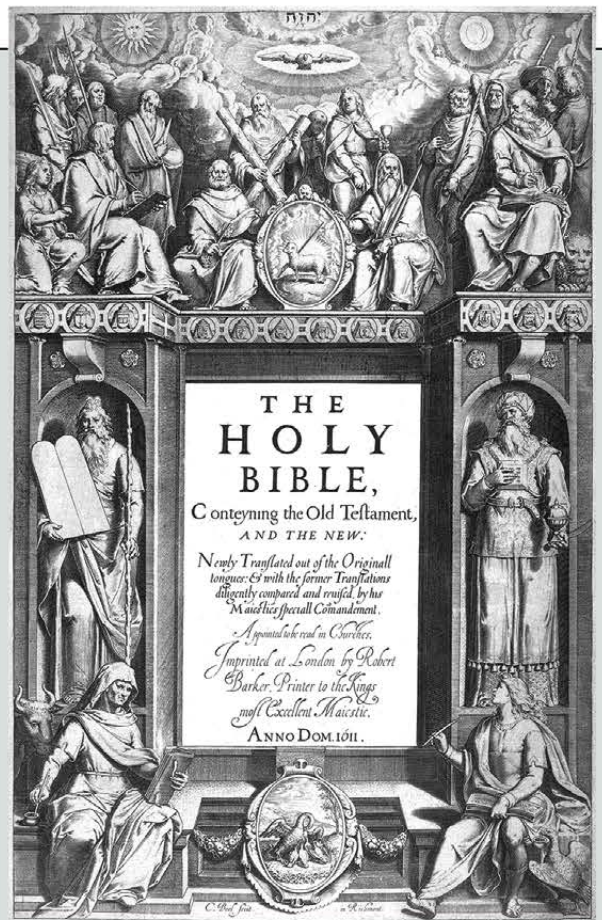
Under Elizabeth, the Church of England had assumed an episcopal form of Protestantism. The growing number of Puritans felt Elizabeth had created a "compromise" church that wasn't Protestant enough. They wanted to "purify" the church of anything that resembled Catholicism, including bishops, clerical garb, and high ritual.

Before James had even reached London, the Puritans presented him with the Millenary Petition (so called because it had a thousand signatures), asking for moderate changes in the Church of England.

But James liked the Church of England's episcopal structure and its title for the king, "Defender of the Faith." James was, in fact, rather pretentious and committed to the idea that kings ruled by divine decree. (His contemporaries called him "the wisest fool in Christendom" and snickered that he was hardly the person to insist on kings' divine rights.) James agreed to a conference, which met in January 1604 at Hampton Court. Here, however, James warned the Puritans that if they did not conform, he would "harry them out of the land." The conference was a failure for the Puritans, except on one point: James gave his approval to the making of a new translation of the Bible.

## Translation or revision?

James wanted something to replace the popular Geneva Bible. This 1560 version was much loved by the people (and probably the version Shakespeare read), yet it had a perceived Calvinistic slant, something James didn't like. The Puritans, meanwhile, disliked the Bishops' Bible, an authorized 1568 ver-



Title page of the Authorized ("King James") Version, published in 1611.

sion read in churches but not widely accepted by the common folk. England needed one version that both churches and individuals, and both the Church of England and the Puritans, could read with benefit.

In 1607, James appointed nearly fifty scholars and divided them into six companies. For two years and nine months they worked individually and in conference, and then the whole text was gone over by a committee of twelve. While the scholars used the original Hebrew and Greek, they closely followed previous translations. In fact, it may be inappropriate to call the King James Version a translation. As the "Preface of the Translators" explains, it is more accurately a revision of earlier versions. For example, the work of William Tyndale, the first major English translator, is evident in many passages.

The KJV has been called the "Authorized Version," although, oddly, no proof has survived that James formally approved it. Officially, the new version was "appointed to be read in churches," replacing the Bishops' Bible. But it was a long time before it



# John & Charles Wesley

replaced the Geneva Bible as the Bible of the individual reader.

## Bible English

Once established, however, the KJV was unshakable. Even though some critics said its language was archaic in the very year it appeared, later generations loved its "Bible English." As the language evolved, becoming less and less like the language of James's day, English-speaking Christians continued to express themselves in terms echoing the KJV. For example, many Christians still address God as "Thee" and "Thou."

And how the language has been affected! Even if the KJV were to someday go out of print—which is unlikely—our language still bulges with such immortal expressions as "the skin of my teeth," "Woe is me!" "a drop in the bucket," "my brother's keeper," "holier than thou," and many others.

But the effect goes beyond phrases. There is a cadence, a sentence rhythm, in the KJV that has never been matched in other English Bibles. If this beauty has detracted some readers from hearing the message, it has nevertheless been incredibly memorable and, therefore, *memorizable*. If learning

**Most people who can quote the Bible quote a version published in 1611.**

Scripture is important, then committing it to memory is paramount, and we know that poetry—or poetic prose—is easier to memorize than flat prose. Today, almost four hundred years later, most people who can quote the Bible quote a version published in 1611.

Modern-day translators may rightly feel humble, knowing they can never produce a work that will so mold a language and shape an entire culture. □



John and Charles Wesley were two of nineteen children born to Samuel and Susannah Wesley. Samuel pursued the labors of an Anglican clergyman in Epworth, England, while Susannah, ever the model Christian, formed both the spiritual and academic inclinations of her children.

Although quite different in temperament, John and Charles pursued similar academic and religious interests. Both entered Christ Church, one of Oxford's largest colleges; John began in 1720 and Charles in 1726. After receiving his education, John was elected Fellow at Lincoln College, Oxford, and ordained two years later.

## "Holy Club" and failed mission

Charles's first year at Oxford was uneventful, but by his second year he settled down to a more serious life. He and a number of friends formed a "Holy Club." They covenanted with each other to live disciplined Christian lives given to serious study of the Bible, prayer, fasting, and charitable works. Charles was the first of the group to be derisively labeled "Methodist" by fellow students, but his title became a badge of honor for these seekers of the Christian way. John Wesley joined the club after an absence from Oxford to help his ailing father in the parish ministry, and he eventually became its leader.

In 1735 the brothers Wesley sailed with General Oglethorpe on his second expedition to Georgia, but even in

this missionary service, the old doubts about their experience of salvation surfaced. Neither John nor Charles could find assurance that he was indeed the child of God by grace. They returned to England believing their lives and ministry had failed. John Wesley wrote of his experience in Georgia, "I went to America to convert the Indians; but, oh, who shall convert me?"

## Hearts "strangely warmed"

The answer to his question came shortly after his return from America. Both he and Charles were influenced by Moravian friends who bore witness to salvation by grace through faith in Christ.

Charles Wesley was the first of the two to be justified by faith, and on Whitsunday, May 21, 1738, he experienced Pentecost. He wrote in his journal that the Spirit of God "chased away the darkness of my unbelief." The prolific hymnist (eventually he wrote six-to seven-thousand hymns) wrote a hymn to commemorate his day of salvation. While scholars debate which of three possibilities was this conversion hymn, one likely candidate is the hymn that asks, "And can it be that I should gain an interest in the Saviour's blood?" The last verse triumphantly proclaims:

*No condemnation now I dread,  
Jesus, and all in Him, is mine:  
Alive in Him, my living Head,  
And clothed in righteousness Divine,*

*Dr. Roger J. Green is professor and chair of biblical and theological studies at Gordon College in Wenham, Massachusetts.*



# Experience Conversions

ROGER J. GREEN

*Bold I approach th' eternal throne,  
And claim the crown, through Christ,  
my own.*

Three days later, on May 24, 1738, John's seeking for the grace of God ended in a meeting house on Aldersgate Street in London. He wrote in his journal that now-famous account of his conversion: "In the evening I went very unwillingly to a society in Aldersgate Street, where one was reading Luther's preface to the Epistle to the Romans. About a quarter before nine, while he was describing the change which God works in the heart through faith in Christ, I felt my heart strangely warmed."

John immediately shared the good news with Charles. Charles wrote that "Towards ten, my brother was brought in triumph by a troop of our friends, and declared, 'I believe.' We sang the hymn with great joy, and parted with prayer."

Until their conversions the Wesleys had what John described as "a fair summer religion." They were both ordained. They both preached, taught, wrote, composed hymns, and even gave themselves to missionary work—all to no avail. They had not Christ, or rather, Christ did not have them. They lived by good works, but not by faith.

## Herculean ministry

With the established church closed to his ministry, John Wesley took to the fields, preaching to coal miners and commoners. Despite recurring opposition, his itinerant evangelism soon expanded throughout the British Isles. It is estimated that he rode over 250,000

miles on horseback and preached over 40,000 sermons. He also published selections of his sermons and wrote voluminously. His use of lay preachers and small "societies" spread the movement to some 120,000 followers by the time of his death.

Brother Charles also preached widely, eventually settling in London. He became the most prolific and skilled hymnwriter in English history, writing hymns that are sung widely today, such as "O for a Thousand Tongues to Sing" and "Love Divine, All Loves Excelling."

Yet the conversions and subsequent ministries of John and Charles Wesley were not isolated events whose impact ended with the passing of the eighteenth century. Their lives continue to greatly affect the church. Many Methodist denominations today (worldwide, the Methodist communion numbers some 50 million people) still embrace those notable elements of the Wesleys' ministry: an emphasis upon preaching; the organization of small groups for prayer and Bible study (the equivalent of the Methodist societies, and an important element of present church-growth strategies); the importance of book and tract distribution; and a concern for the poor, oppressed, and disenfranchised which to the Wes-

leys and their followers was the natural expression of the religious life.

The theology of John and Charles Wesley also has an ongoing influence outside of strictly Methodist denominations. The Wesleys' emphasis upon the role of the Holy Spirit in the life of the believer and the church has affected the holiness movement, the Pentecostal movement, and even the recent charismatic movement.

An educated clergy and a knowledgeable laity were also concerns of the brothers Wesley, leading to the founding of many Wesleyan colleges and seminaries. The balance between the life of the mind and the life of the spirit is still critical to the Wesleyan tradition, which seeks to preach the gospel to whosoever, convert the sinner, and raise up the saint. □



Stained-glass depictions of John (left) and Charles Wesley. The clock above John Wesley's head is set at about a quarter till nine, the time of his conversion. The brothers were converted just three days apart, and both from reading or hearing the writings of Martin Luther.



# The Great Awakening Peaks

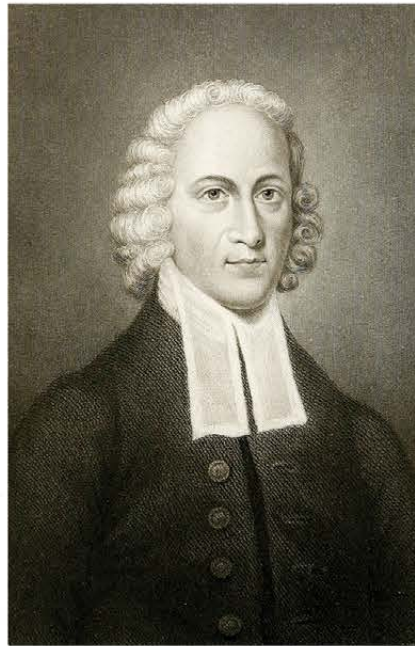
MARK A. NOLL

A mighty wave of revival washed across North America, forever altering the religious landscape.

THE  
100  
MOST  
IMPORTANT  
EVENTS  
IN CHURCH  
HISTORY

In the fall of 1740, a farmer near Hartford, Connecticut, heard life-changing news. Nathan Cole was a conventionally religious man whose conscience had been increasingly troubled by an unmet need for God. The news was that the young revivalist George Whitefield would be preaching twelve miles away in Middletown. Immediately, as Cole later wrote, "I . . . ran to my pasture for my horse with all my might," and with his wife hastened to Middletown "as if we were fleeing for our lives." They arrived just in time to see Whitefield mount the scaffold that had been erected for his sermon. To Nathan Cole the young British evangelist "lookt almost angelical." But it was Whitefield's message that changed his life: "My hearing him preach gave me a heart wound; by Gods blessing my old Foundation was broken up, and I saw that my right-

eousness would not save me." After several more months, Cole was confident that he had been reconciled to a gracious God.



Jonathan Edwards, who interpreted the Awakening in his many writings, is considered by many the greatest theologian America has ever produced.

## First stirrings

Nathan Cole and his wife were among the thousands who thrilled to the message of George Whitefield at the high-water mark of America's Great Awakening. But the roots of this revival extended deep in time before Whitefield, and its fruits could be observed for generations. First stirrings occurred during the early decades of the eighteenth century. Preaching aimed at "awakening" the spiritually sluggish or "harvesting" those with a new interest in God's grace took place in New England Congregational churches, in Dutch Reformed congregations in New Jersey, and among scattered Presbyterians in Pennsylvania and New Jersey. Solomon Stoddard (grandfather and predecessor of Jonathan Edwards as minister

in Northampton, Massachusetts), Theodore Frelinghuysen (a Dutch minister trained by Continental Pietists), and several members of the Tennent family (Presbyterian immigrants from Northern Ireland) were the pioneers of this work.

Then, in the mid-1730s, the Northampton congregation that Edwards had inherited from his grandfather was deeply stirred by Edwards's dramatic preaching on justification by faith. His account of this stirring, *A Faithful Narrative of the Surprising Work of God in the Conversion of Many Hundred Souls in Northampton* (1737) was read widely in America and the British Isles and stimulated other ministers to look for similar renewal in their congregations.

## Fiery Whitefield

General revival, however, awaited the arrival of Whitefield. This young Anglican had been a colleague of John and Charles Wesley and had already experimented with preaching out-of-doors in Britain. His nominal reason for being in America was to supervise an orphanage in Georgia. His real reason was to preach. A person of nearly overpowering charisma, Whitefield also intuited something about the changing circumstances of his day. Whitefield's dramatic appeal to individuals represented a Christian adaptation of the old gospel to the kind of free market that was speedily developing in trade and ideas. It was to the individual (not as positioned in a traditional hierarchy, not as bound by family constraints, not as member of a local congregation) that Whitefield made his appeal. Whitefield preached more than fifteen thousand sermons in his thirty-five-year career as an itinerant, but none were more effective than in 1740. On a New England preaching circuit in the fall of that year, when he was heard by Nathan Cole and his wife, Whitefield addressed crowds of up to eight thousand people nearly every day for over a month. That tour may have been the most sensational event in the history of American religion.



Harper's Weekly



In his wake Whitefield left thousands asking "What must I do to be saved?" He also left some of the colonies' leaders wondering what such religious "enthusiasm" would do to the social fabric, and not a few ministers dismayed about this radical new approach. The attacks that eventually rose against Whitefield and his message led to lingering disputes. But they also prompted careful, discriminating defenses of awakened piety from Jonathan Edwards. Edwards's defense of the Awakening's revivalistic Calvinism became a major component of the theological work that sets him apart as America's most powerful Christian theologian.

### Forceful changes

Revivals like those promoted by Whitefield and defended by Edwards soon spread throughout the colonies. Some, like awakenings under Henry Alline in the Canadian Maritimes, rejected the Calvinism that had undergirded Whitefield's message. Others, like those encouraged by Isaac Backus in New England and Shubal Stearns in North Carolina, were led by Baptists, a group that grew in great numbers as a result of the Awakening. Still other currents of renewal helped prepare the way for the later expansion of the Methodists.

The colonial Awakening stamped American Protestantism with a revivalistic character that it has never lost. Although its leading spirits (Frelinghuysen, the Tennents, Whitefield, and Edwards) were Calvinist members of state churches, its primary institutional legacy was among Baptists and Methodists who rejected Calvinism, the establishment of religion, or both. Historians ponder deeply the connection between the revivalists' willingness to break with religious tradition and the eagerness of Americans only a few decades later to throw off the hereditary rule of England. Christians will be impressed by that possibility, but even more by the renewal of faith that was the revival's gift to humble hearers like Nathan Cole. □

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# The Second Vatican Council

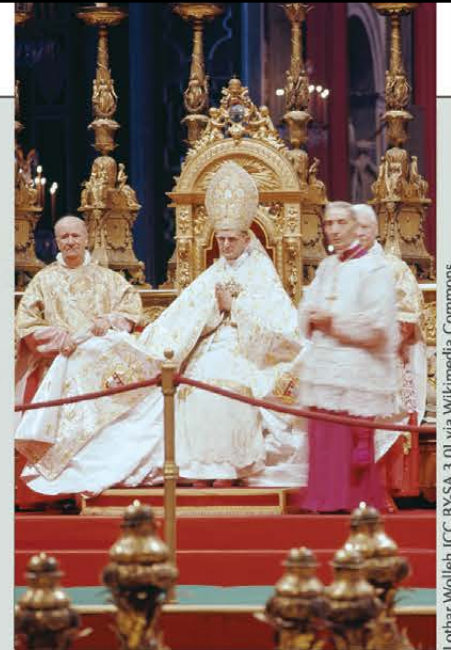
JOSEPH A. KOMONCHAK

In an epochal council, the Catholic Church undertook its most searching self-examination ever—and renewed itself for a modern world.



By nine o'clock on the morning of October 12, 1962, a brilliant Italian sun had broken out after a torrential rain. Twenty-four hundred Roman Catholic bishops began a long procession through St. Peter's Square toward the Basilica for the solemn opening of the Second Vatican Council. Inside the splendidly appointed church, the bishops took their places in long rows to take part in the ceremony. Near the altar sat observers from other Christian communities invited to attend the council.

Pope John XXIII's opening address had the character of a *Magna Carta*. He distanced himself from "prophets of doom" who could see nothing in the modern world but ruin. He invited the bishops to consider whether a new age might not be dawning for the church. Instead of condemning the ills of church and society, he called for a positive presentation of the Christian message based on a new appropriation of the Scriptures and tradition, and on a careful discernment of the needs and opportunities of the day. The basic content of the faith was one thing, he said; how it is presented is another, and the council was a great opportunity for a new, pastorally oriented exer-



Pope Paul VI presiding over the introductory ingress of the council.

cise of the church's teaching authority.

### End of the Counter-Reformation?

Over two years had already gone into the preparation of the council, which John had announced on January 25, 1959. The most extensive consultation of the bishops in the history of the church had produced over nine thousand proposals for the agenda. On this basis, ten preparatory commissions had produced draft-documents for the bishops now to consider. Throughout this work, the prospect of the council had evoked widespread interest, not only among Catholics, but also among other Christians. The pope had regularly insisted that the council should work not only for the spiritual renewal of the Catholic Church and its adaptation to the contemporary world, but also toward the reunion of Christianity.

The Council met in four sessions over the autumns between 1962 and 1965. The first session was by far the most dramatic and set the direction for the other three. It saw the assembled bishops elect the conciliar commissions, clearly opt for substantial liturgical reform—and, above all, refuse to be

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Lothar Wolleh [CC BY-SA 3.0] via Wikimedia Commons



# Martin the

guided by the defensive attitude dominant in the doctrinal texts prepared by a preparatory theological commission controlled by "prophets of doom." When the bishops rejected the draft text on the sources of revelation because of its academic, negative, and unecumenical character, people began to speak of epochal change: the end of the age of Constantine, the end of the Counter-Reformation.

Pope John XXIII saw only the beginning of the council, but when he died, his successor, Paul VI, immediately announced his intention to continue it. The three sessions over which he presided saw the bishops produce sixteen documents, all passed with overwhelming majorities, in which the Catholic Church undertook its most searching self-examination ever.

Structurally and in spirit, the council differed considerably from the two most recent ecumenical councils. The Council of Trent (1545) was convoked in the midst of the Reformation crisis and involved a small number of bishops, drawn almost exclusively from the Latin (European) Church. Vatican I (1869) also met with a sense of crisis, caused largely by the spread of a liberalism that was redefining the role of the church in the modern world, and it was rather strictly controlled in its mode of operations. Vatican II, however, was not called by John XXIII to respond to a particular crisis, but to renew the church in the light of the gospel and to reform it to meet the demands of the late twentieth century. It involved bishops from all over the globe, who were given freedom to set the agenda, choose structures, and write texts.

## What the council said

The council's text on the liturgy called for the thoroughgoing reform of the church's worship. The text on divine revelation returned to the rich biblical springs of the church's central message, proposed an ecumenically sensitive notion of tradition, and urged a greater biblical knowledge and awareness among the people.

In external matters, the church stopped its foot-dragging and committed itself to the work of repairing the divisions of Christians. The council also made important progress in overcoming attitudes of anti-Semitism.

Finally, the bishops addressed in two documents the challenges of the contemporary world. In the text on the church in the modern world, they discussed the opportunities and difficulties presented by modernity, with a confident belief that the message of Christ could welcome and redeem them, and provided particular proposals for the worlds of culture, politics, economics, and the family. In a brief text on religious freedom, the church stated that the inalienable rights of conscience must govern relationships between church and state, thus going beyond the nostalgia for earlier political arrangements that had dominated Catholic thought until the very recent past.

The conciliar texts in general reflect Pope John's initial orientations. Theologically, they endeavored to recover the broad tradition that the struggles of the last four centuries had obscured. Pastorally they replaced suspicion and condemnation of the modern world with openness and dialogue. Ecumenically, they insisted on the centrality of the biblical Word and the communion in faith and grace already existing among Christians.

## The council's impact

There is scarcely an element in the Catholic Church's internal life or in its relationship with others that has been unaffected by the Second Vatican Council.

Internally, all of the rites have been reformed and are now celebrated in vernacular languages; a far greater access to the Scriptures is common among Catholics; lay people now exercise many more ministries and have more opportunities for participation; a spirit of collegiality now affects every level of church activity; local churches have assumed responsibility for their own life and mission.

Externally, dialogue has replaced suspicion in relations with other Christian communities, with other religions, and with the world itself. The Catholic Church sees itself much more as a partner in the common task of creating a more human world.

It is no exaggeration, then, to say that the Catholic Church has changed more in the twenty-five years since Vatican II than it had in the previous two hundred. □

A Baptist preacher had a dream that guided one of the most profound social movements of our times.



On August 28, 1963, more than 200,000 blacks and whites from all over the United States gathered for a gigantic civil-rights demonstration in the nation's capital. It was

the largest demonstration in the history of Washington, D.C. Young and old, black and white, Jew and Gentile marched shoulder to shoulder from the Washington Monument to the Lincoln Memorial. The purpose was to demand passage of a civil-rights bill and immediate implementation of the basic guarantees of the Declaration of Independence and the Thirteenth, Fourteenth, and Fifteenth Amendments to the Constitution.

Regarded by many as the apex of the nonviolent civil-rights movement, the march brought together all of the major civil-rights organizations and many religious groups. Among the strong supporters of the march were the American Jewish Congress, the National Conference of Catholics for Interracial Justice, and the National Council of Churches. Never before had leading representatives of the Catholic, Protestant, and Jewish faiths identified so visibly with black demands. It also marked the first large-scale participation of whites in the civil-rights movement, and the first determined efforts by the white clergy.

## "I Have a Dream"

Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., gave the keynote address at the march. In his memorable "I Have a Dream" speech,



# Luther King, Jr. Leads March on Washington

WESLEY A. ROBERTS



Library of Congress

**Martin Luther King, Jr., speaks with the press while visiting the White House in 1963 to discuss civil rights with President Johnson.**

delivered in the style of the Southern black Baptist preacher, Dr. King articulated a dream big enough to include all Americans. "I have a dream," he said, "that one day on the red hills of Georgia the sons of former slaves and the sons of former slave owners will be able to sit down together at the table of brotherhood. . . . I have a dream my four little children will one day live in a nation where they will not be judged by the color of their skin but by the content of their character . . . and when we allow freedom to ring . . . we will be able to speed up that day when all of God's children—black men and white men, Jews and Gentiles, Catholics and Protestants—will be able to join hands and sing in the words of the old Negro spiritual, 'Free at last, free at last, thank God almighty, we are free at last.'"

Millions of white Americans heard for the first time the message Dr. King had been trying to articulate since the civil-rights movement began in Montgomery, Alabama, in 1955. This speech, which is perhaps the best-known and most-quoted speech that Dr. King delivered, made his voice fa-

miliar to the world and lives as one of the most moving orations of our time. Millions of people accepted the dream as their own and the dreamer as the conscience of the nation.

## King's legacy

The March on Washington was better covered by television and the press than any event in Washington since President Kennedy's inauguration. Usually African-American activities commanded press attention only when violence was likely to occur. The march was perhaps the first black-organized activity that received coverage commensurate with its importance.

In addition to being a summation of years of struggle and aspiration, the march also symbolized certain new directions, such as a deeper concern for the economic problems of the masses, and more involvement by white moderates in the black struggle for civil rights. Over the following ten months, the white churches proved to be the most effective champions of the civil-rights bill. They exerted considerable influence on Congressional representatives from the Midwestern and Rocky Mountain states, where the black population was relatively small. The result was the passing of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Voting Rights Act of

1965, which reiterated the constitutional rights of African-Americans by mandating equal voting privileges and access to public accommodations, jobs, and housing.

The March on Washington etched a place in history for the black Baptist preacher from Atlanta, Georgia. Combining his philosophy of nonviolence with the folk religion and revival techniques of his black religious tradition, Dr. King projected a new image of the black church. His tremendous appeal to the black masses lay in his ability to use familiar religious language and old biblical images to articulate their passion for racial justice. The sonorous words of his dream delivered at the Lincoln Memorial are now an important legacy of hope for millions of Americans, black and white, who celebrate once a year his life and contributions. □



Library of Congress

Martin Luther King, Jr. (1929–1968). The year following the March on Washington, King was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize, and just five years later was assassinated in Memphis.

*Dr. Wesley A. Roberts is pastor of Peoples Baptist Church of Boston and a member of the advisory board of CHRISTIAN HISTORY.*



# 75\* OTHER IMPORTANT EVENTS IN CHURCH HISTORY

A brief listing of significant dates that also earn a place in the "CHRISTIAN HISTORY 100"

65—Peter and Paul are executed; martyrdom of the church's two greatest apostles forces church leadership into a new era. 150—Justin Martyr's *First Apology*, the work of the first major scholar-apologist, makes Christianity reasonable to thinking pagans. 180—Irenaeus's *Against Heresies* leads the fight against the powerful Gnostic heresy. 196—Tertullian begins writing, with his legal-trained mind, major writings that promote purity of life and doctrine. 215—Origen begins writing brilliant works that "provided a foundation for the great ecumenical councils to come."

230—the earliest known public churches are built, signaling a shift in Christians' life and practice. 250—Empire-wide persecution under Emperor Decius causes thousands to fall away and produces a major schism in the church. 270—Anthony takes up solitude, attracting many to asceticism and prayer and paving the way for monasticism. 312—The Donatist Schism, over treatment of apostates from the Great Persecution, challenges thinking about the church.

## Christian empire

358—Basil the Great founds a monastery, laying foundations for religious communities ever after. 381—First Council of Constantinople ratifies the Nicene Creed and condemns Apollinarianism, safeguarding a high view of Christ. 390—Ambrose defies Emperor Theodosius, refusing him Communion after his brutal killing of thousands in Thessalonica; the act influences church-state relations for generations. 432—Patrick's mission to Ireland breaks heathenism and fosters Christianity, leading to a flourishing Celtic church. 529—Justinian's *Code* is published; it becomes the basis for later canon law in the West, thus shaping medieval society.

## Middle Ages

590—Gregory the Great becomes pope: The "first of the medieval popes" takes on civil power and lays the foundations for the papal state. He also commissions, in 597, Augustine's mission to England, which converts the pagan Angles. 663—Synod of Whitby decisively aligns the English church with Rome for the next nine centuries. 716—Boniface's mission to the Germans spreads Christianity to pagan northern Europe, preparing the way for the later Holy Roman Empire. 732—Battle of Tours: Frankish general Charles Martel halts the seemingly unstoppable Muslim invasion, keeping Europe under Christian control. 800—Charlemagne crowned Holy Roman Emperor: With the help of his adviser, Alcuin, the seven-foot-tall king brings Europe political unity, a stronger church, and a renaissance of learning.

910—the monastery at Cluny is founded, the genesis of a reform movement that spreads to over 1,000 communities and revitalizes monastic life for hundreds of years. 1093—Anselm named archbishop of Canter-

Innocent III, the greatest medieval pope, convened the Fourth Lateran Council.



Ulrich Zwingli, the Swiss Reformation leader

bury, a post from which he writes lasting works on the Atonement and proofs for God's existence. 1115—Bernard founds monastery at Clairvaux: The "father of Western mysticism" strengthens the monastic tradition.

In approximately 1150, the Universities of Paris and Oxford are founded, fostering higher education and, eventually, a modern world view. 1208—Francis of Assisi renounces wealth in order to preach a simple, passionate gospel, and later founds the Franciscan Order. 1215—Innocent III calls the Fourth Lateran Council, which climaxes the rule of the medieval church's most influential pope and defines transubstantiation. 1220—Dominic establishes Order of Preachers, who travel barefoot, teach, and convert heretics.

1321—Dante's *Divine Comedy* gives masterful poetic expression to medieval concepts of heaven, hell, and purgatory, and shapes later thought. 1370—Catherine of Siena's *Letters*, a treasure of Western mysticism, are begun. 1380—John Wyclif supervises Bible translation, leaving the first complete English Bible. 1453—Constantinople falls to the Turks, ending a millennium of Christianity in the Eastern Roman ("Byzantine") Empire. 1479—The Spanish Inquisition, under Ferdinand and Isabella, begins against baptized Jews and Moors.

## Reformation

1518—Ulrich Zwingli is called as people's priest in Zurich, where he begins his radical break with Catholic practices and lays the foundation of Reformed theology. 1529—Colloquy of Marburg: Here, however, Zwingli and Luther's differing views on the Lord's Supper lead to separate Reformed and Lutheran churches. 1530—Augsburg Confession,



written largely by Philipp Melancthon, definitively expresses Lutheran beliefs. **1540—Ignatius Loyola receives approval for the Society of Jesus**, the Jesuit “soldiers of Christ” who help preserve and extend Catholicism.

**1549—Book of Common Prayer**, the service book of the Church of England, is drafted by Thomas Cranmer. **1559—John Knox returns to Scotland** and, despite being outlawed, champions a bloodless Reformation, secured the following year. **1598—The Edict of Nantes** officially ends persecution of French Protestants (Huguenots), whose years of suffering included the infamous St. Bartholomew’s Day Massacre in 1572. **1609—Separatist pastor John Smyth baptizes himself** and about forty adults, the start of modern Baptist denominations.

**1633—Galileo is forced by Rome to**



Slavery was abolished in Britain through the untiring effort of Christians led by Wilberforce.

**recant** his belief in the Copernican theory (that the earth revolves around the sun); tensions heighten between Christianity and modern science. **1646—Westminster Confession**, the definitive statement of Presbyterian beliefs, is drafted. **1648—the Peace of Westphalia ends the Thirty Years’ War**, settling European wars of religion and effectively ending the papacy’s political control over large areas.

### Age of Reason and Revival

**1652—George Fox founds Society of Friends** (“Quakers”), gathering 50,000 followers in just eight years. **1675—Jakob Philipp Spener’s Pia Desideria** (*Pious Desires*) launches the influential Pietist movement. **1678—Jailed Baptist preacher John Bunyan writes Pilgrim’s Progress**—next to the Bible, the most-popular English-language book of all time. **1707—Isaac Watts’s Hymns and Spiritual Songs**, with 600 hymns

including “When I survey the wondrous Cross,” moves the church from nearly exclusive singing of metrical psalms to the hymn singing we know today. **1732—First Moravian missionaries**, spurred by an earlier religious awakening in their small community of Brethren, launch the modern missionary movement. **1735—George Whitefield is converted** and soon begins dramatic open-air evangelism in the U.S. and England. **1780—Robert Raikes begins Sunday school** to teach poor local children, creating a lasting institution.

### Age of Progress

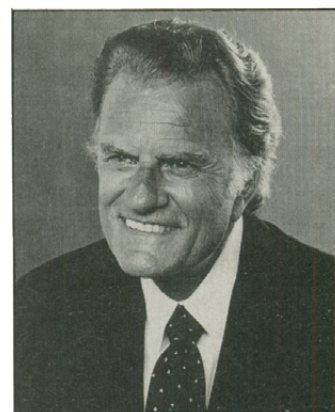
**1789—The Bill of Rights** guarantees freedom of speech, assembly, and religion to Americans; **the French Revolution** leads later to the Festival of Reason and deChristianization of France. **1807—William Wilberforce’s efforts lead to the abolition of the British slave trade**. **1816—Richard Allen becomes bishop of the new African Methodist Episcopal church**, which later publishes the first African-American newspaper and magazine.

**1835—Charles Finney’s Lectures on Revivals** is published, explaining the “scientific” methods the revivalist used in converting 500,000 people. **1833—John Keble’s sermon launches the Oxford Movement**, encouraging high-church worship, authority, and tradition within the Church of England. **1844—Søren Kierkegaard’s Philosophical Fragments** is published; his works attack formalized Christianity in favor of the personal leap of faith. **1845—Phoebe Palmer writes The Way of Holiness**, spurring the Holiness movement, while strengthening women’s ministries and encouraging the Prayer Meeting Revival. **1855—D. L. Moody is converted** and goes on to become the greatest evangelist of his era. **1864—Syllabus of Errors**, issued by Pope Pius IX, rejects modern societal trends, including liberalism and socialism. **1870—The First Vatican Council declares papal infallibility** (when the pope speaks *ex cathedra* on matters of faith or morals). **1878—William and Catherine Booth found the Salvation Army**, soon a worldwide thrust for social and spiritual salvation. **1886—Student Volunteer Movement begins**, ultimately stirring 20,000 college students to become Christian missionaries. **1906—The Azusa Street Revival begins** in Los Angeles under William

Seymour’s leadership, spreading Pentecostalism.

### Age of Ideologies

**1910—The Edinburgh Missionary Conference**, an interdenominational gathering chaired by John R. Mott, births the modern ecumenical movement. **1910—The Fundamentals**, a twelve-paperback series presenting conservative doctrine, is launched, signaling the rise of fundamentalism. **1919—Karl Barth’s Commentary on Romans** rocks the theological world by breaking with liberalism for a “neo-orthodoxy.” **1931—C. S. Lewis’s conversion** gives rise to numerous theological and apologetic books that explain Christianity to twentieth-century people. **1934—Wycliffe Bible Translators begins** under Cam Townsend, providing Scriptures for hundreds of language groups with no Bible. **1940—First Christian television broadcasts** are made. **1941—Rudolf Bultmann calls for demythologization of the New Testament message** into terms acceptable for moderns. **1945—Dietrich Bonhoeffer’s Letters and Papers from Prison** call for costly discipleship in a difficult world. **1948—The World Council of Churches** is formally constituted,



Billy Graham, whose evangelistic crusades have yielded two million decisions for Christ

uniting nearly all major Western denominations. **1949—L. A. Crusade catapults Billy Graham to prominence**, and with ensuing crusades he preaches to more people than any evangelist in history. **1954—United Methodists grant full ordination to women**, signaling increasing leadership for women in mainline and other churches. **1960—Charismatic renewal advances** following national attention given to Episcopal rector Dennis Bennett’s experience. □



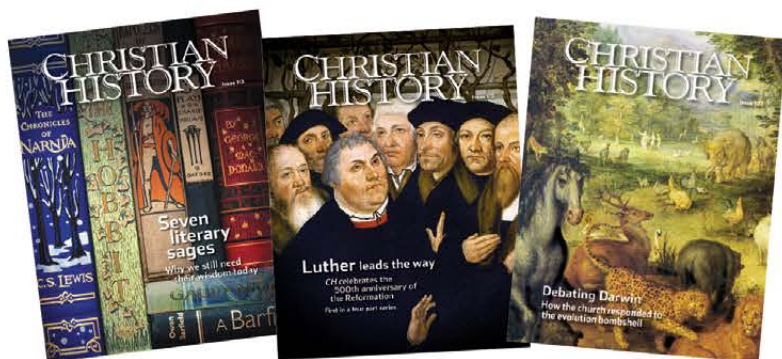


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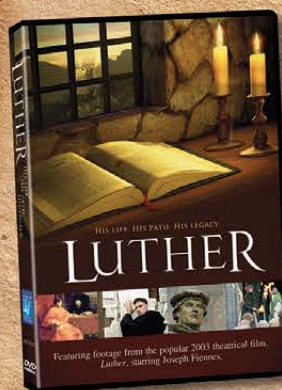
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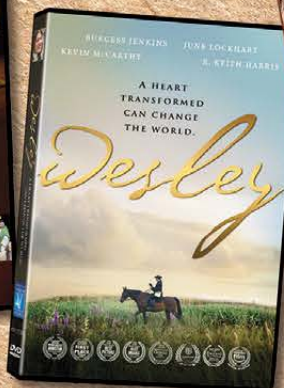


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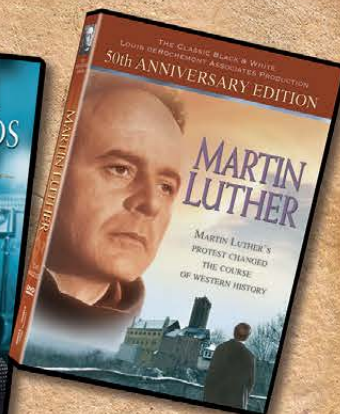
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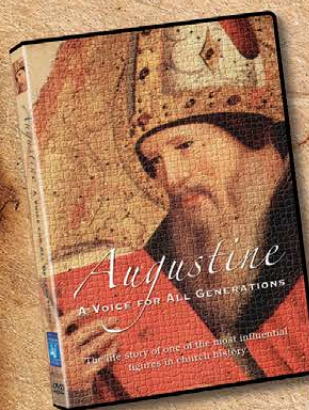
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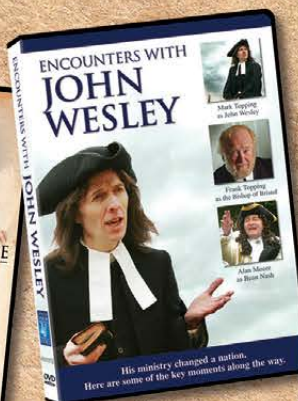
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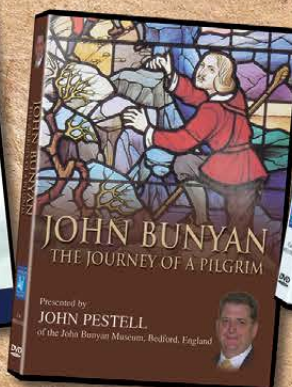
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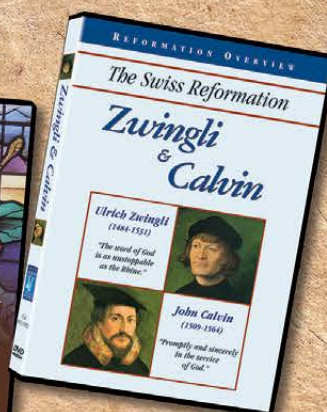
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# Important Events in Church History

A selective chronological listing

The following list is based on extensive surveys with scholars belonging to several groups: a professional society of church historians; the Christian History Institute; and the editorial advisory board of CHRISTIAN HISTORY magazine. It should be remembered, however, that such lists are never exhaustive and they reflect the particular interests of those who write them—in this case, church historians from North America and Western Europe. And many dates, especially from the early centuries of the church, are approximate.

We hope the list provides an enlightening overview of the fascinating history of the church—and sparks further discussion and study. —*The Editors of CHRISTIAN 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 Anthony 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 Ulphilas, 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 hegira: 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 2nd 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 Theologiae*
- 1302 *Unam Sanctam* 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 Wyclif supervises English Bible translation
- 1414 Council of Constance begins
- 1415 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 Luther posts his *Ninety-Five Theses*
- 1518 Ulrich Zwingli comes to Zurich
- 1521 Diet of Worms
- 1524 The Peasants’ Revolt erupts
- 1525 Tyndale’s New Testament published
- 1525 Anabaptist movement begins
- 1527 Schleithem Confession of Faith
- 1529 Colloquy of Marburg
- 1530 Augsburg Confession

- 1534 Act of Supremacy; Henry VIII heads Eng. church
- 1536 Calvin publishes first edition of *Institutes*
- 1536 Menno Simons baptized as Anabaptist
- 1540 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 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 Ricci and Ruggieri begin mission in China
- 1589 Moscow becomes independent patriarchate
- 1598 Edict of Nantes (revoked 1685)
- 1609 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 Pascal has definitive conversion experience
- 1667 Milton’s *Paradise Lost*
- 1668 Rembrandt paints *Return of the Prodigal Son*
- 1675 Spener’s *Pia Desideria* advances Pietism
- 1678 Bunyan writes *The Pilgrim’s Progress*
- 1682 Penn founds Pennsylvania
- 1687 Newton publishes *Principia Mathematica*
- 1689 Toleration Act in England
- 1707 Bach publishes first work
- 1707 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
- 1773 Jesuits suppressed (until 1814)
- 1779 Newton and 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 Wilberforce leads abolition of slave trade
- 1810 Amer. Board of Commiss. for Foreign Missions
- 1811 Campbells begin 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 Mueller opens Scriptural Knowledge Institute
- 1835 Finney’s *Lectures on Revivals*
- 1840 Livingstone sails for Africa
- 1844 First Adventist churches formed
- 1844 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 Spurgeon becomes pastor of New Park St. Church
- 1855 D. L. Moody converted
- 1857 Prayer Meeting Revival begins in New York
- 1859 Darwin publishes *On the 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
- 1880 Abraham Kuyper starts Free University
- 1885 Berlin Congress spurs African indep. churches
- 1885 Wellhausen’s documentary hypothesis
- 1886 Student Volunteer Movement begins
- 1895 Freud publishes first work on psychoanalysis
- 1896 Billy Sunday begins leading revivals
- 1901 Speaking in tongues at Parham’s Bible school
- 1906 Azusa Street revival
- 1906 Schweitzer’s *Quest of the Historical Jesus*
- 1908 Federal Council of Churches forms
- 1910 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 Barmen Declaration
- 1934 Wycliffe Bible Translators founded
- 1938 *Kristallnacht* accelerates Holocaust
- 1939 World War II begins
- 1940 First Christian TV broadcasts
- 1941 Bultmann 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 Bonhoeffer’s *Letters and Papers from Prison*
- 1960 Bennett resigns; charismatic renewal advances
- 1962 Vatican II opens
- 1963 King leads March on Washington
- 1966 Chinese Cultural Revolution
- 1968 Medellin Conference advances liberation theology
- 1974 Lausanne Congress on World Evangelization
- 1979 John Paul II’s first visit to Poland
- 1985 Gorbachev Gen. Sec’y. of Soviet Communist Party



# Church History in Brief

BRUCE L. SHELLEY

A capsule overview of the movement Jesus started.

Today, after two thousand years, Christianity is the faith, at least nominally, of one-third of the earth's population. From a handful of fishermen, tax collectors, and youthful troublemakers in an obscure province of Judea, the faith has spread over the globe to claim the loyalty of almost two thousand million inhabitants of our planet.

## The Age of Jesus and the Apostles

The way forward usually meant a studied look backward, back to the image of God revealed in the story of Jesus. Christians have always considered the age of Jesus and his apostles a kind of model for all the other ages. It gave to the church its faith in Jesus, the resurrected Messiah, and the hope of forgiveness of sins through him. And the age demonstrated, in the life of Paul, that the gospel of grace recognizes no boundaries of nation, race, sex, or culture.

## The Age of Catholic Christianity (70–312)

The catholic Christianity, which accepted this truth, spread rapidly throughout the Mediterranean world. It confronted the alien ideas of Gnosticism, Marcionism, and Montanism and called a lie a lie by appealing to the apostolic writings and to the orthodox bishops who guarded them. At the same time, Christians faced the persecuting power of Rome and dared to die heroically as martyrs, witnesses to other believers to follow in their train. This seed of martyr's blood, as Tertullian called it, eventually bore abundant fruit in the conversion of the Empire.



Tony Lane



Wikimedia Commons

## The Age of the Christian Empire (312–590)

The Imperial Age began in 312 when Constantine caught a vision of Christ. Before the fourth century closed, Christianity became the official religion of the sprawling Roman state. A church in the catacombs was one thing, but what does Christianity have to do with palaces?

Under the emperor's tutelage, the church learned to serve the seats of power by formulating the faith for the masses. Hence the age of great councils. Those Christians who had no yen for palaces headed for the wilderness in search of another way to grace. Revered hermits soon found themselves in the vanguard of a movement, monasticism, the wave of the future.

## The Christian Middle Ages (590–1517)

Most Christians, however, saw the hand of God in the happy wedding of Christian church and Roman state. In the East the marriage continued for a millennium. A mystical piety flourished under the protection of orthodox emperors until 1453 when invading Muslim Turks brought the Byzantine Empire to its final ruin. The fall of Constantinople, however, meant the rise of Moscow, the new capital of Eastern Orthodoxy.

In the West it was a different story. After the fifth century, when barbarian Germans and Huns shattered the Empire's defenses and swept into the eternal city of Rome itself, men turned to Augustine's *City of God* for explanations. They found a vision for a new age. We call these centuries "medieval." People who lived in them considered them "Christian."

Their reasons lie in the role of the pope, who stepped into the ruins of the fallen empire in the West and proceeded to build the medieval church upon Rome's bygone glory. As the only surviving link with the Roman past, the Church of Rome mobilized Benedictine monks and deployed them as missionary ambassadors to the German people. It took centuries, but the popes, aided by Christian princes, slowly pacified and baptized a continent and called it Christendom, Christian Europe.

Baptized masses, however, meant baptized pagans. By the tenth century spiritual renewal was an obvious necessity. It started in a monastery in central France called Cluny and spread until it reached the papacy itself. The greatest of the reforming popes was Gregory VII. His zealous successors carried the papal office to the zenith of earthly power. No longer the cement of the Roman empire, the church of the twelfth century was itself a kind of empire, a spiritual and earthly kingdom stretching from Ireland to Palestine, from



Constantine

Wikipedia / Jean-Christophe BENOIST cc by 2.5



Catherine of Siena

Wikipedia / Bartolomeo de Landi (1475)

earth to heaven. The crusades and scholastic philosophy were witnesses to this papal sovereignty.

Power, however, corrupts. The church gained the world but lost its soul. That, at any rate, is what a steady stream of reformers preached: Waldensees, Franciscans, Albigensees. Amid the strife for earthly power and the evidences of barren religion in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, many Christians turned to the Bible for fresh vision and renewal.

## The Age of the Reformation (1517–1648)

Reform came with a fury. Martin Luther sounded the trumpet, but hosts of others rallied to the cause. The period we call the Reformation marks the mobilization of Protestantism: Lutheran, Reformed, Anglican, and Anabaptist. By the mid-sixteenth century the Reformation had shattered the traditional unity of western Europe and had bequeathed to modern times religious pluralism.

The Church of Rome resisted this attack upon tradition. She mustered new troops, especially the Society of Jesus. She sent out fresh waves of missionaries to Asia, Africa, and Latin America. She waged war in France, the Netherlands, and Germany. But in the end, Christendom slipped into yesteryear. In its place arose the denominational concept of the church, which allowed modern nations to treat the churches as voluntary societies separated from the state.



Luther

Wolf, Lutherans in America.

## The Age of Reason and Revival (1648–1789)

Novel schools of thought filled the seventeenth century. None was more powerful than Reason itself. It asked, "Who needs God? Man can make it on his own." Christians screamed their objections, but the idea spread until secularism filled the public life of western societies. God remained, but only as a matter of personal choice.

Christians could no longer appeal to the arm of power to suppress such heresies. So, many of them turned instead to the way of the apostles—prayer and preaching. The result was a series of evangelical revivals: chiefly Pietism, Methodism, and the Great Awakening. By preaching and personal conversions, evangelicals tried to restore God to public life.



Wesley

Lelievre, M. John Wesley.

## The Age of Progress (1789–1914)

The Age of Progress saw Christians of all sorts wage a valiant struggle against the advance of secularism. Out of the evangelical awakenings came new efforts to car-



Spurgeon

Pilgrim Publications

ry the gospel of Christ to distant lands, and to begin a host of social service ministries in industrialized Europe and North America. From the ramparts of Rome, a defensive papacy fired a barrage of missiles aimed at the modern enemies of the Catholic faith. In spite of Christians' best efforts, however, Christianity was slowly driven from public life in the Western World. Believers were left with the problem we recognize in our own time: How can Christians exert moral influence in pluralistic and totalitarian societies where Christian assumptions about reality no longer prevail?

## The Age of Ideologies (1914–1990)

The depth of the problem was apparent in the Age of Ideologies, when new gods arose to claim the loyalties of secular people. Nazism exalted the state; Communism worshiped the party; and American Democracy revered the individual's rights. Supposed enlightened, modern nations waged two global wars in an attempt to establish the supremacy of these new deities. When no single ideology prevailed, a cold war of coexistence settled upon the once Christian nations. Through these troubled times the denominations struggled over orthodox and liberal theologies, sought fresh ways to recover a lost unity, and reflected a new hunger for apostolic experiences.

After World War II, vigorous new Christian leadership emerged in the Third World, offering fresh hope for a new day for the old faith. Had missionaries from the neo-pagan nations of Europe and North America succeeded in giving Christianity a stake in the future by carrying the gospel to Africa and Latin America?

Only time will tell. But Christians can hope because faith always reaches beyond earthly circumstances. Its confidence is in a person. And no other person in recorded history has influenced more people in as many conditions over so long a time as Jesus Christ. The shades and tones of his image seem to shift with the needs of people: the Jewish Messiah of the believing remnant, the Wisdom of the Greek apologist, the Cosmic King of the imperial church, the Heavenly Logos of the orthodox councils, the World Ruler of the papal courts, the monastic Model of apostolic poverty, the personal Savior of evangelical revivalists.

Truly, he is a man for all time. In a day when many regard him as irrelevant, a relic of a quickly discarded past, church history provides a quiet testimony that Jesus Christ will not disappear from the scene. His title may change, but his truth endures for all generations.

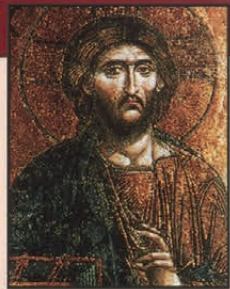


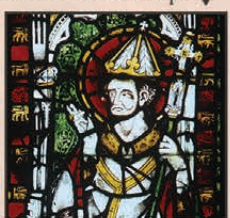
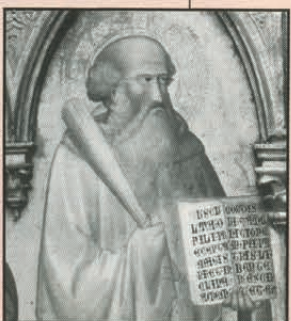


























Bonhoeffer

Christian History Institute.



## Important Events in Church History

	100	200	300	400	500	600	700	800	900
<b>LEADERS &amp; WRITINGS</b>	 30 Crucifixion of Jesus; Pentecost 35 Stephen martyred; Paul converted 57 Paul's Letter to the Romans	150 Justin Martyr's First Apology 155 Polycarp martyred 180 Irenaeus's Against Heresies 196 Tertullian begins writing	215 Origen begins writing 248 Cyprian bishop of Carthage ▼ 	323 Eusebius's Ecclesiastical History 386 Augustine's conversion ▼ 398 Chrysostom bishop of Constantinople 	440 Leo the Great becomes Pope ▼ 	523 Boethius's Consolation of Philosophy 590 Gregory the Great becomes Pope 	731 Bede's Ecclesiastical History 781 Alcuin becomes royal adviser to Charles 		
<b>ORDERS &amp; DENOMINATIONS</b>		 270 Anthony takes up life of solitude		358 Basil the Great founds monastery 	431 Council of Ephesus 451 Council of Chalcedon 	540 Benedict's Rule 			909 Monastery at Cluny founded 
<b>COUNCILS, CREEDS, &amp; CONTROVERSIES</b>	48 Council of Jerusalem	172 Montanist movement 		312 Donatist Schism 325 First Council of Nicea 381 First Council of Constantinople			663 Synod of Whitby 	726 Controversy over icons in East 787 2nd Council of Nicea settles icon controversy	861 East-West conflict over Photius 
<b>MISSIONS</b>	46 Paul begins missionary journeys 		342 Ulphilas's mission to Goths 	432 Patrick's mission to Ireland	563 Columba's mission on Iona 597 Mission to England; Ethelbert converted		716 Boniface's mission to Germans 750 Donation of Constantine 754 Pepin's donation helps found papal states	862 Cyril and Methodius's mission to Slavs 	988 Christianization of "Russia" 
<b>CHURCH &amp; STATE</b>	64 Fire of Rome; Nero's persecutions 65 Peter & Paul executed		230 Earliest known public churches 250 Empire-wide persecution 	303 "Great Persecution" 312 Conversion of Constantine 313 "Edict of Milan" 381 Christianity state religion 390 Ambrose defies emperor	445 Valentinian's Edict 	529 Justinian's Code 	750 Donation of Constantine 754 Pepin's donation helps found papal states	800 Charlemagne Holy Roman Emperor 	
<b>BIBLE</b>	150 Marcion's canon rejects OT		343 Ulphilas's Gothic Bible 367 Athanasius's letter defines NT canon	406 Jerome's Vulgate		500 Ravenna mosaics flourish 	600 Gregory's chants 650 Iconography flourishes 698 Lindisfarne Gospels	730 First known church organ 	965 First English polyphony 
<b>ARTS</b>									
<b>WORLD EVENTS</b>	70 Destruction of Jerusalem 			410 Rome sacked 		622 Birth of Islam	732 Battle of Tours 	843 Treaty of Verdun 	



1000

1100

1200

1300

15

1600

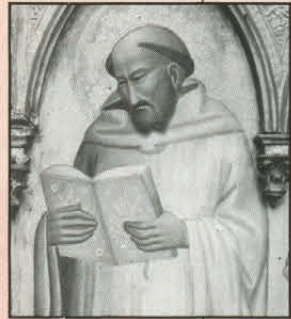
1700

1800

1900



1093 Anselm  
archbishop of  
Canterbury



1141 Hildegard of  
Bingen begins  
writing



1272 Aquinas's *Summa  
Theologiae*

1208 Francis of Assisi  
renounces wealth  
1220 Dominic  
establishes order

1232 Gregory IX  
appoints  
"inquisitors"  
1215 Innocent III calls  
4th Lateran  
Council ▼



1373 Julian of Norwich  
receives  
revelations  
1370 Catherine of  
Siena's *Letters* ▼



1309 Papacy's  
"Babylonian"  
exile to Avignon  
1378 Great Papal  
Schism

1302 *Unam  
Sanctam*  
proclaims  
papal  
supremacy

1380 Wyclif supervises  
translation

1321 Dante's *Divine  
Comedy*

1348 Black Death ▼



1415 Hus burned at  
stake  
1418 à Kempis's  
*Imitation of Christ*  
1431 Joan of Arc  
burned at stake



1414 Council of  
Constance  
1479 Spanish  
Inquisition  
1497 Savonarola  
excommunicated



1456 Gutenberg Bible  
1488 1st complete  
Hebrew OT

1476 Chaucer's  
*Canterbury Tales*

1453 Constantinople  
falls; end of E.  
Roman Empire  
1492 Columbus lands  
in W. hemisphere

1517 Luther posts *Ninety-Five Theses* ▲  
1518 Zwingli comes to Zurich  
1536 Calvin's *Institutes*, 1st ed.  
1536 Menno Simons baptized as  
Anabaptist  
1549 *Book of Common Prayer*  
1559 Knox returns to Scotland  
1563 Foxe's *Book of Martyrs*  
1565 Teresa of Avila's *Way of  
Perfection*

1525 Anabaptist movement begins  
1530 Augsburg Confession  
1534 Act of Supremacy;  
Henry VIII heads Eng. church  
1540 Ignatius Loyola's Society of  
Jesus approved  
1562 Heidelberg Catechism  
1563 First text of Thirty-Nine Articles  
1577 Formula of Concord

1521 Diet of Worms  
1527 Schleithem Confession  
1529 Colloquy of Marburg ►  
1545 Council of Trent  
1572 St. Bartholomew's Day  
Massacre  
1598 Edict of Nantes  
(revoked 1685)



1549 Xavier's mission to Japan  
1582 Ricci and Ruggieri's mission to  
China

1555 Peace of Augsburg  
1589 Moscow independent  
patriarchate

1516 Erasmus's Greek NT  
1522 Luther's German NT  
1525 Tyndale's English NT  
1535 Coverdale Bible  
1560 Geneva Bible

1506 Work begins on new St. Peter's  
1512 Michelangelo's Sistine Chapel  
frescoes  
1562 Genevan Psalter

1517 Luther's *Ninety-Five Theses*  
1524 Peasants' Revolt in Germany  
1588 English defeat Spanish Armada



1603 Arminius appointed professor  
at Leyden  
1628 Jan Comenius flees  
1654 Pascal's conversion  
1675 Spenser's *Pia Desideria*  
1678 John Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*

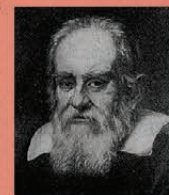


1609 Smyth baptizes self and 1st  
Baptists  
1618 Synod of Dort  
1652 George Fox founds "Friends"  
1646 Westminster Confession

1618 Thirty Years' War  
1636 Roger Williams founds  
Providence  
1648 Peace of Westphalia  
1653 Cromwell Lord Protector  
1689 Toleration Act in England

1611 King James Version  
1667 Milton's *Paradise Lost*  
1668 Rembrandt's *Return of the  
Prodigal Son*  
1678 Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*

1605 Shakespeare's  
*MacBeth*  
1620 Mayflower  
Compact  
1633 Galileo forced  
to recant ►  
1642 English  
Civil War



1729 Jonathan Edwards pastor at  
Northampton  
1738 John & Charles Wesley's  
conversions  
1739 George Whitefield starts open-  
air preaching  
1771 Francis Asbury sent to America  
1780 Raikes begins Sunday school  
1799 Schleiermacher's *Lectures on  
Religion*



1773 Jesuits suppressed (until 1814)  
▼ 1784 Wesley provides for  
"Conference of Methodists"

1732 First Moravian missionaries  
1793 William Carey sails for India

1789 Bill of Rights

1707 Watts's *Hymns and Spiritual Songs*  
1738 Bach's *Mass in B Minor*  
1742 Handel's *Messiah*  
1779 Newton & Cowper's *Olney Hymns*

1740 Great Awakening  
1759 Voltaire's *Candide*  
1776 American Revolution  
1789 French Revolution



1807 Wilberforce leads abolition of  
slave trade  
1817 Eliz. Fry leads prison relief  
1835 Finney's *Lectures on Revivals*  
1836 Müller opens orphanage  
1844 Kierkegaard's *Philosophical  
Fragments*  
1845 Phoebe Palmer's *Way of Holiness*  
1854 Spurgeon comes to New Park St.  
1855 D. L. Moody converted  
1864 Newman's *Apologia Pro Vita Sua*

1811 Campbells begin Restoration  
Movement  
1816 Richard Allen bishop of new  
AME church  
1827 Darby founds Plym. Brethren  
1844 First Adventist churches  
1885 Berlin Congress spurs African  
independent churches  
1878 Booths found Salvation Army

1833 Keble's sermon launches  
Oxford Movement  
1854 Immaculate Conception dogma  
1864 *Syllabus of Errors*  
1870 First Vatican Council declares  
papal infallibility

1810 Amer. Board of Commissioners  
for Foreign Missions  
1816 Judsons sail for Asia  
1825 American Tract Society  
1840 Livingstone sails for Africa  
1865 Taylor's China Inland Mission  
1886 Student Volunteer Movement

1801 Concordat between Napoleon  
& Pius VII



1804 British  
and Foreign  
Bible  
Society  
1873 Moody & Sankey's *Sacred Songs  
& Solos*  
1880 Dostoevski's *Brothers Karamazov*

1804 Napoleon emperor  
1848 Marx's *Communist Manifesto*  
1851 Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin*  
1859 Darwin's *Origin of Species*  
1861 U.S. Civil War  
1895 Freud on psychoanalysis

1914 World War I  
1917 Bolshevik Revolution  
1920 U.S. women's suffrage  
1929 Great Depression  
1939 World War II/Holocaust  
1945 Atomic bomb  
1963 King's March on Washington  
1966 Chinese Cultural Revolution  
1985 Gorbachev comes to power

AGE OF PROGRESS (1789–1914)

1906 Schweitzer's *Quest of the  
Historical Jesus*  
1919 Barth's *Commentary on Romans*  
1931 C. S. Lewis's conversion  
1941 Niebuhr's *Nature and Destiny of  
Man*  
1941 Bultmann calls for  
demythologization  
1945 Bonhoeffer executed  
1949 L. A. Crusade catapults Billy  
Graham

1906 Azusa Street sparks  
Pentecostalism  
1950 Mother Teresa founds  
Missionaries of Charity  
1960 Charismatic renewal advances

1908 Federal Council of Churches  
1910 *The Fundamentals*  
1912 Social Creed of the Churches  
1934 Barmen Declaration  
1942 National Assoc. of Evangelicals  
1948 World Council of Churches  
1954 Methodists ordain women  
1962 Vatican II  
1968 Medellin Conference

1910 Edinburgh Missionary Conf.  
1924 First Christian radio broadcasts  
1940 First Christian TV broadcasts  
1950 Missionaries forced to leave  
China  
1974 Lausanne Congress

1979 John Paul II's first visit to  
Poland

1934 Wycliffe Bible Translators  
1946 Revised Standard Version NT  
1947 Dead Sea Scrolls  
1971 The Living  
Bible

1935 Eliot's  
*Murder  
in the  
Cathedral*

1914 World War I  
1917 Bolshevik Revolution  
1920 U.S. women's suffrage  
1929 Great Depression  
1939 World War II/Holocaust  
1945 Atomic bomb  
1963 King's March on Washington  
1966 Chinese Cultural Revolution  
1985 Gorbachev comes to power

AGE OF IDEOLOGIES (1914–Present)

AGE OF THE REFORMATION (1517–1648)

AGE OF REASON & REVIVAL (1648–1789)



1054 East-West Split



1077 Emperor  
submits to  
Pope over  
investiture

1122 Concordat of  
Worms ends  
investiture  
controversy  
1170 Becket murdered

1150 Mystery plays  
flourish

1150 Univ. of Paris  
and Oxford



1215 Magna Carta

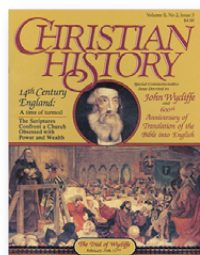




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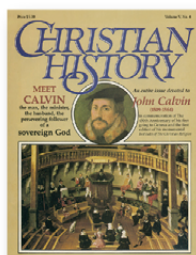
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#3

John Wycliffe



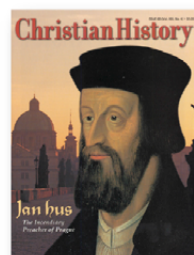
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John Calvin



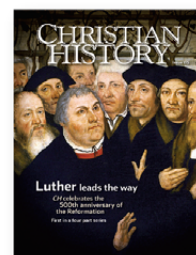
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Thomas Cranmer



#68

John Hus



#115

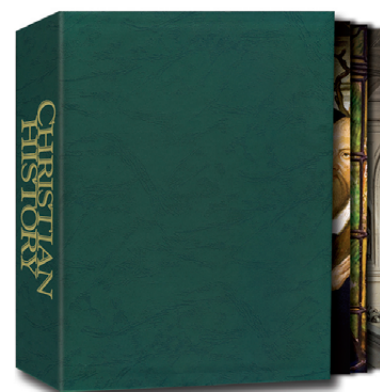
Martin Luther

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