

10 Christians Every Christian Should Know (but usually don't)...

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Introduction

- *What are the criterion for being included in this list?
- *Who are the people who have been behind the theology of the Christian Church?
- *How was their thought shaped and formed?
- *What were their lives like and what was going on in history at the time they lived and taught?

TOP 10 LIST OF MOST IMPORTANT CHRISTIANS EVERY CHRISTIAN SHOULD KNOW

1. **St. Athanasius (296-373)** He laid the theological foundation for the church by offering an extensive doctrine of the divine trinity and an apology for what became the orthodox doctrine of Christology, namely that Jesus Christ is both fully God and fully human.
2. **St. Augustine (354-430)** He defended the Christian Faith in the face of criticism that asserted that Christianity had destroyed the Roman Empire by presenting a Christian doctrine of human history and a theology for the times that changed the times by writing a theological autobiography and more.
3. **St. Anselm of Canterbury (1033-1109)** He offered the church an answer to the relationship between faith and reason, as well as a restatement of the Christological doctrine of the atonement.
4. **St. Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274)** He was known as the “dumb ox” and the “doctor of angels: as he presented one of the most extensive rationalistic presentations of the Christian faith ever written, which has been foundational to Roman Catholic Christianity ever since.
5. **Martin Luther (1483-1546)** He was known as the “radical monk of Wittenberg” as he challenged the Roman Catholic Church and its theology to the very core of its existence, focusing upon the doctrine of justification by faith and its implication for the doctrine of the church in the world.
6. **John Calvin (1509-1564)** He was known as “the intellectual giant of the Protestant Reformation” as he challenged the Roman Catholic Church and its theology to the very core of its existence too, focusing upon the sovereignty of God in all matters of faith and practice, while also offering a new alternative to the question of faith and politics.
7. **Jonathan Edwards (1703-1758)** He became known as “America’s Theologian” as he presented a new “puritan” vision for the American Church and soon to be nation through a rare combination of rationalistic theology and a deep spiritual piety that contributed to what became known as “the Great Awakening.”
8. **Friedrich Schleiermacher (1768-1834)** He became known as the “prince of liberal theology” as he presented a theology not based on revelation or reason, but upon the experience of “absolute dependence” upon God.
9. **Karl Barth (1886-1968)** He became known as “the greatest, most prolific theologian of the 20th century” as he sought to reverse the trend started by Schleiermacher (see above) by reasserting the doctrine of divine revelation as the true starting place for all Christian theology, all within a Trinitarian Christological framework.
10. **Dietrich Bonhoeffer (1906-1945)** He was the German pacifist pastor and theologian who dared to confront Hitler, the Nazis and the German Church in its attempt to “hijack” the Christian faith and the Christian Church for its own political purposes and paid with his life as he called people to a radical Christocentric faith that is to be lived out in communities of “costly grace”.

*****Others who did not make the TOP 10 LIST but deserve to be mentioned and I really would have included if we had A LOT more time...FROM THE PATRISTIC PERIOD** (Ignatius of Antioch 35-107; Justin Martyr 100-165; Irenaeus 130-200; Origen 185-254; Tertullian 160-225; Cappadocians [Basil; Gregory of Nazianzus; Gregory of Nyssa]; Ambrose 339-397; Jerome 345-420)... **FROM THE MIDDLE AGES** (John Duns Scotus 1265-1309; William Ockham 1285-1349; John Wycliffe 1329-1384)... **FROM THE REFORMATION AND COUNTER-REFORMATION** (Desiderius Erasmus 1467-1536; William Tyndale 1494-1536; Philip Melancthon 1497-1560; Ulrich Zwingli 1484-1531; Martin Bucer 1491-1551; Jacobus Arminius 1560-1609; Menno Simons 1496-1561 and the Anabaptists [George Fox/Nikolaus von Zinsendorf]; Ignatius of Loyola 1491-1556; Thomas Cranmer 1489-1556...); **FROM THE 17TH TO THE 19TH CENTURY** (including the Puritans and Revivalists) John Owen 1616-1683; John Bunyan 1628-1688; John Wesley 1703-1791; George Whitefield 1714-1770; Charles Finney 1792-1875; Soren Kierkegaard 1813-1855; Princeton Theologians [Warfield and Hodges]; John Henry Newman 1801-1890; Albrecht Ritschl 1822-1889; Adolf von Harnack 1851-1930; Walter Rauschenbusch 1861-1918; PT Forsyth 1848-1921...); **FROM THE 20TH CENTURY** (Rudolf Bultmann 1884-1976; Reinhold Niebuhr 1892-1971; HR Niebuhr 1894-1962; Paul Tillich 1896-1965; Karl Rahner 1904-1984; Emil Brunner 1889-1966; CS Lewis 1898-1963; Helmut Thielicke 1908-1986; Lesslie Newbigin 1909-1998; John Howard Yoder 1927-1997 ...); **FROM THE PRESENT AND STILL LIVING...How will history see them?** (Wolfhart

Pannenberg; Jurgen Moltmann; Hans Kung; Carl Henry; TF Torrance; Stanley Hauerwas; Gustavo Gutierrez; Rosemary Ruether/Elizabeth Johnson; Donald Bloesch; Alister McGrath; Stanley Grenz; Colin Gunton; Millard Erickson; George Lindbeck...)

*****Others who are not “theologians” but I would also include...**Blaise Pascal : Richard Baxter; John Newton; John Nelson Darby; Johann Sebastian Bach; George Frideric Handel; Ludwig Beethoven; Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart; Fyodor Dostoyevsky; Victor Hugo; George MacDonald; GK Chesterton; Dorothy Sayers; Dante; Chaucer; John Donne; George Herbert; John Milton; TS Eliot; JRR Tolkien; Alexander Solzhenitsyn; Martin Luther King Jr.; Isaac Watts/Charles Wesley/Fanny Crosby; Bernard of Clairvaux; Dominic; Francis/Clare of Assisi; Phoebe Palmer; St. Patrick/Columbanus; Francis Xavier; Thomas a Kempis; Teresa of Avila; John the Cross; Brother Lawrence; Venerable Bede; John Foxe; Francis Bacon; Immanuel Kant; George Hegel; Galileo; Copernicus; Michaelangelo; Billy Graham; Mother Teresa; Pope John xxiii and Pope John Paul II...

REFLECTION QUESTION:

Who has most influenced you in how you think as a Christian and why?

I. ST. ATHANASIUS (296-372) He laid the theological foundation for the church by offering an extensive doctrine of the divine trinity and an apologia for what became the orthodox doctrine of Christology, namely that Jesus Christ is both fully God and fully human.

A. The Life of Athanasius

- *296 birth (in Alexandria to Christian parents, heavily influenced by the Desert Fathers of Egypt)
- *319 ordained a deacon as the secretary of the bishop of Alexandria
- *325 attends Council of Nicea called by Constantine to unite the empire (spends the rest of his life defending the decisions of this council, including labeling Arius a heretic and his teaching as heretical)
- *328 elected bishop of Alexandria
- *335 removed from office (by Constantine for refusing to admit the Arians)
- *337 returned to Alexandria (after the death of Constantine)
- *339-346 removed from office again and goes to live in Rome
- *355 exiled (by Constantine 2)
- *362 exiled AGAIN but returned in 363
- *373 death

B. The Struggle against Arianism

1. Arius' position stated: "If the Father begat the Son, then he who was begotten had a beginning in existence and from this it follows there was a time when the Son was not." Jesus is therefore the "highest created being" created by God.
2. Athanasius countered that if Jesus Christ was not God then Jesus Christ as Savior was not possible, for how could one creature/human actually save another creature/human before God. If this were so, then the church was guilty of idolatry. Ultimately, Athanasius reaffirms the doctrine of the trinity (On the Incarnation).

C. The Nicene Creed 325/The Constantinople Creed 381/The Chalcedon Creed 451

D. The recognition of the 27 Books of the New Testament as being canonical (367)

E. A retelling of the life of the monastics in the desert (The Life of Anthony)

II. ST. AUGUSTINE of Hippo (354-430) He defended the Christian Faith in the face of criticism that asserted that Christianity had destroyed the Roman Empire by presenting a Christian doctrine of human history and a theology for the times that changed the times by writing a theological autobiography and more. Father of the Western Church.

A. The Life of Augustine

- *354 birth in North Africa (pagan father/devout Christian mother) (present day Algeria)
 - *371 first visit to Carthage
 - *372 takes a mistress
 - *373 Augustine's son is born (Adeodatus) and becomes a follower of Manichaeism (dualistic, Gnostic (salvation through a special knowledge) perversion of Christianity which argued in the eternality of God and Satan/good and evil/Light and Darkness within which humanity is caught up in the cosmic struggle)
 - *383 Goes to Rome with mistress and son
 - *384 Becomes a "public orator" at Milan, becomes friends with Bishop Ambrose of Milan and separates from his mistress
 - *386 Converts to Christianity ("take up and read...Romans 13:13-14" and writes his first book *Against the Skeptics and Soliloquies*)
 - *387 Baptized in Milan
 - *388 Returns to North Africa
 - *391 Ordained a priest
 - *395 Consecrated as the bishop of Hippo
 - *399 Begins writing *The Trinity* (finishes in 419)
 - *400 Completes *Confessions*
 - *410 Rome is over-run and sacked
 - *413 Begins writing *City of God* (finishes in 427)
 - *430 Death during the siege on Hippo (fever, not warfare)
- B. The Theological Struggles of St. Augustine
1. Manichaeism (see above)
 2. Donatism a protest movement against the church's leaders who had not withstood persecution and called upon the church to be an "exclusive place" for the saved not for sinners...(the first "puritans"/ "Anabaptists" calling for the purity of the church and the rebaptism of all Christians who were baptized by a bishop who had cooperated with the emperor)
 3. Pelagianism a denial of the doctrine of original sin and a denial that humanity's salvation came through an act of divine grace, but rather that human beings either have the ability to save themselves or at least enter into a cooperative effort with God to effect one's salvation
 4. The Fall of Rome which led many people to maintain that the Edict of Milan (312/13 whereby Constantine named Christianity the religion of the Empire) led to the fall of Rome.
- C. The Writings of St. Augustine: "I think/exist therefore I am."
1. *The Confessions*
 2. *The Trinity*
 3. *The City of God*

III. **ST. ANSELM OF CANTERBURY (1033-1109) He offered the church an answer to the relationship between faith and reason, as well as a restatement of the Christological doctrine of the atonement.**

- A. The Life of St. Anselm
- *1033 birth in Italy
 - *1060 enters the abbey at Bec in Normandy (France) as a monk
 - *1078-1092 becomes the prior of Bec
 - *1092 organizes a monastery in Chester, England (St Werburg)
 - *1093 becomes Archbishop of Canterbury
 - *1103-1107 sent into exile
 - *1109 death
- B. The Teaching of Anselm
1. Monologion/Proslogion: Proof for the existence of God (the ontological argument)
 - "God is that which nothing greater can be thought,"
 - "Credo ut intelligam" (I believe in order to understand)
 - "fides quarens intellectum" (faith seeking understanding)
 2. Cur Deus Homo: Why did God become human?

The doctrine of the atonement: “no one but one who is God-human can make the satisfaction by which human beings are saved.”

IV. ST. THOMAS AQUINAS (1225-1274) He was known as the “dumb ox” and the “doctor of angels: as he presented one of the most extensive rationalistic presentations of the Christian faith ever written, which has been foundational to Roman Catholic Christianity ever since (In 1879 Pope Lei XIII declared Aquinas’ theology as the official teaching of the Roman Catholic Church.)

- A. The Life of St. Thomas Aquinas
- *1225 birth in Italy
 - *1224 becomes a Dominican priest/monk
 - *1252-1255 teaches in Paris
 - *1259-1263 teaches in Italy
 - *1261-1264 writes the Summa contra Gentiles
 - *1266-1272 writes the Summa Theologica
 - *1274 dies in Italy on his way to the Council of Lyons
- B. Christian Scholasticism (based on the philosophical system of Aristotle): 5 Rational Proofs for the Existence of God
1. The argument from motion: all things in motion need a mover, therefore there must be something unmoved that sets other things into motion---God as the Unmoved Mover.
 2. The cosmological argument: all effects have causes, therefore there cannot be an infinite series of causes into the past---God is the first Uncaused Cause.
 3. The contingency argument: all things exist in a dependent relationship with something/someone else (contingent), therefore there must be something that is absolutely independent from all other things or people: God is the first Necessary Being.
 4. The perfection argument: there appears to be an increased degree of “perfection” among things and therefore there must be a being who is perfection defined in being and action: God is the Perfected Being.
 5. The teleological argument: there is an obvious and observable design and purpose in the universe which suggests that there is an architectural being behind the intelligent design and purpose to the universe: God the intelligent Creator/Designer/Artist.
- ***faith as “assent to Catholic doctrine” not just personal trust.

V. Martin Luther (1483-1546) He was known as the “radical monk of Wittenberg” as he challenged the Roman Catholic Church and its theology to the very core of its existence, focusing upon the doctrine of justification by faith and its implication for the doctrine of the church in the world.

- A. The Life of Martin Luther
- *1483 Birth at Eisleben
 - *1501 Enters University of Erfurt
 - *1505 Enters Augustinian monastery
 - *1507 Ordained a priest
 - *1508-1511 Taught at Wittenberg and Erfurt Universities
 - *1512 Awarded degree of Doctor of Theology
 - *1517 Posts the 95 Theses on the Door of Wittenberg: traditional method to invite academic discussion and debate within the academic community
 - *1519 The Leipzig Disputation (debated John Eck on “religious authority” Bible or Popes/Councils)
- *1520 Wrote Address to the German Nobility (government’s role in the reform and unity of the church), The Babylonian Captivity of the Church (3 sacraments not 7: baptism, communion and penance and that every Christian is a priest/minister for others), On the Freedom of the Christian (human beings are free as they stand before God in faith...as the free lord of all and the slave to all...the Law condemns and leads to repentance, but the Gospel is the grace of God which leads to forgiveness through faith alone).
- *1521 The Diet of Worms (Pope Leo X called upon Luther to recant or be

excommunicated...”Here I Stand I can do no other!”)

*1525 The Peasant Revolt/War...Marries Katherine von Bora (a former nun)...Wrote On the Bondage of the Will against Erasmus’ On the Freedom of the Will

*1527 Dispute with Ulrich Zwingli concerning Holy Communion

*1530 Augsburg Confession (written by Melancthon)

*1534 Publication of the first complete German language Bible

*1546 Dies in Eisleben

B. The teaching of Martin Luther

***In addition to the above sources

1. Table Talk

2. A Mighty Fortress is Our God

VI. John Calvin (1509-1564) He was known as “the intellectual giant of the Protestant Reformation” as he challenged the Roman Catholic Church and its theology to the very core of its existence too, focusing upon the sovereignty of God in all matters of faith and practice, while also offering a new alternative to the question of faith and politics.

A. The Life of John Calvin

*1509 Birth in Noyon, Picardy France

*1521-1526 Attends University of Paris in Arts

*1526-1531 Attends Orleans University in Law

*1529-1530 Attends Bourges University and converts to Protestantism

*1535 Exiled from France and moves to Basel (Switzerland)

*1536 Publication of the first edition of the Institutes of the Christian Religion; moves to Geneva

*1538-1541 Exiled from Geneva and ministers in Strasbourg

*1540 Marries Idelette de Bure

*1541 Returns to Geneva

*1542 Ecclesiastical Ordinances become law in Geneva

*1553 Servetus is executed

*1559 Last edition of the Institutes of the Christian Religion is published and the University of Geneva opens

*1564 Dies

B. The Teachings of John Calvin (The Institutes of the Christian Religion)

1. The doctrine of revelation (Bible and Jesus Christ) and human knowledge

2. The sovereignty of God and human freedom

3. The glory of God and the grace of God

4. The doctrine of predestination and the total depravity of humankind

5. The role of government in the rule of God (Calvin’s Geneva)

***The rise of Calvinism (synod of Dort in 1618-1619) which summarized Calvinism as TULIP (total depravity, unconditional election, limited atonement, irresistible grace and the perseverance of the saints) in reaction to Arminianism (Jacobus Arminius 1560-1609) which stated that “predestination” is based upon God’s foreknowledge as to whether a person would have faith or not in Christ...thereby affirming that salvation is a matter of each person’s exercise of their free choice and if salvation can be freely chosen it can be freely lost.

VII. Jonathan Edwards (1703-1758) He became known as “America’s Theologian” as he presented a new “puritan” vision for the American Church and soon to be nation through a rare combination of rationalistic theology and a deep spiritual piety that contributed to what became known as “the Great Awakening.”

A. The Life of Jonathan Edwards

*1703 Born the only son of Timothy Edwards who was the pastor of the Congregational Church of East Windsor, Connecticut

*1720 Graduates from (College of Connecticut) Yale College during which he says he underwent a complete conversion to the Christian faith (I Timothy 1:17)

*1724 Becomes a tutor at Yale

*1728 Marries Sarah Pierrepont

- *1729 Becomes the pastor of the Congregational Church at Northampton, Massachusetts (his grandfather's (Solomon Stoddard) church)
- *1735 Becomes deeply involved in the great spiritual awakening throughout New England (wrote Narrative of Surprising Work of God in Conversions 1737, Justification by Faith 1738, The Distinguishing Marks of a Work of the Spirit of God 1741, Thoughts on the Great Revival 1742, Religious Affections 1746, The Diary of David Brainerd 1749), closely linked with George Whitefield and the work of the Wesleys (despite differing theological convictions) and encouraged the singing of songs other than the Psalms and become a strong advocate for the hymns of Isaac Watts.
- *1750 Dismissed as the pastor of the Congregational Church at Northampton and becomes a missionary to native Americans at Stockbridge, Massachusetts (David Brainerd's former mission)
- *1754 Writes the Freedom of the Will: human beings through the exercise of their free will cannot undermine the sovereignty of God although they are accountable to God because even though they are "naturally" able to do what is good, they are morally unable to do what is good because of their sinful, depraved nature.
- *1757 Invited to become the president of the College of New Jersey (Princeton) and writes The Great Christian Doctrine of Original Sin Defended (published shortly after his death)
- *1758 Arrives at Princeton in January and dies in March (side-effects of the new small pox vaccination)

B. The Teachings of Jonathan Edwards

1. The Freedom of God and the freedom of humankind---we are free to act as we choose but what we choose is the result of the strongest "affections" that we believe leads us to the greatest good.
2. The total depravity of humankind and the justice of God---God judges us not based upon ones achievements, but on what Jesus Christ has achieved for humankind on the cross.
3. The importance of the gracious justifying work of God in Christ appropriated by faith
4. True religion is a matter of the "affections" (heart, emotions, will) not the mind alone.
5. A new school of theology (New England Theology of his son Jonathan Edwards Jr. 1745-1801) and later the New Haven theology of Charles Finney 1792-1875.

VIII. Friedrich Schleiermacher (1768-1834) He became known as the "prince of liberal theology" as he presented a theology not based on revelation or reason, but upon the experience of "absolute dependence" upon God.

A. The Life of Friedrich Schleiermacher

- *1768 Born in Breslau (Poland) the son of a Reformed army chaplain within a pietistic, Moravian family
- *1783-1787 Educated at the Moravian pietist school and seminary
- *1788-1789 Out of dissatisfaction, he went to University of Halle and the University at Drossen
- *1790 Passed his theological exams at Berlin and was appointed tutor at Schlobitten
- *1794 Ordained and became pastor in Landsberg
- *1796 Became chaplain at the Charite Hospital in Berlin
- *1799 Published Religion: Speeches to its Cultured Despisers
- *1804 Appointed professor of theology and university preacher at Halle
- *1807-1808 Left Halle after Napoleon took over the city and moved to Berlin where he helped establish the University of Berlin and became a professor there until 1834
- *1811 Publishes first edition to A Brief Outline on Theology as a Field of Study (revised in 1830)
- *1821-1822 Publishes The Christian Faith (revised in 1830/1831)
- *1834 Dies in Berlin

B. The Teachings of Friedrich Schleiermacher

1. Religion: Speeches to its Cultured Despisers: attempted to defend Christianity against the various forms of skepticism by offering a new "definition" of religion: the consciousness of being absolutely dependent upon God. True Religion is the sense and taste for the infinite.
2. A Brief Outline on Theology: the purpose of theology is to be practical; to serve all members of the church in their common life and ministry. Theology therefore is the systematic reflection and

description of people's feeling and experience of their consciousness of being absolutely dependent upon God.

3. The Christian Faith: Christian doctrines are accounts of the Christian religious affections set forth in speech.

IX. Karl Barth (1886-1968) He became known as “the greatest, most prolific theologian of the 20th century” as he sought to reverse the trend started by Schleiermacher (see above) by reasserting the doctrine of divine revelation as the true starting place for all Christian theology, all within a Trinitarian Christological framework.

A. The Life of Karl Barth

- *1886 Born in Basel Switzerland
- *1908 Ordained to the ministry of the Reformed Church
- *1908-1909 Pastored and studied at Marburg
- *1909-1911 Pastored and studied at Geneva
- *1911-1921 Pastor of the Parish Church of Safenwil
- *1913 Marries Nellie Hoffman
- *1919 Publishes his commentary on Romans (revised 1922)
- *1921-1925 Professor at Gottingen
- *1925-1930 Professor at Munster
- *1930-1935 Professor at Bonn
- *1932 Publishes first volume of Church Dogmatics (last partial volume published in 1968)
- *1934 Authors the Barmen Declaration/Confession
- *1935 Professor at Basel
- *1948 Gives major address at the WCC first assembly in Amsterdam
- *1962 Makes a trip to the USA
- *1966 Makes a trip to Rome and the Vatican (post Vatican II)
- *1968 Dies in Basel

B. The Teaching of Karl Barth

1. The biblical, theological and ethical bankruptcy of theological liberalism
2. The doctrine of divine revelation as the authority and source for Christian theology (in its 3 fold form)
3. The reaffirmation of faith seeking understanding
4. The sovereignty of God as God's “loving in perfect freedom”
5. Jesus Christ as the electing God and the elected human being

X. Dietrich Bonhoeffer (1906-1945) He was the German pacifist pastor and theologian who dared to confront Hitler, the Nazis and the German Church in its attempt to “hijack” the Christian faith and the Christian Church for its own political purposes and paid with his life as he called people to a radical Christocentric faith that is to be lived out in communities of “costly grace”.

A. The Life of Dietrich Bonhoeffer

- *1906 Born in Breslau (Poland) to a prominent German family
- *1923-1927 Studied theology at Tubingen and Berlin (doctoral dissertation Communion of Saints)
- *1927/28 Ordained a Lutheran pastor
- *1928-29 Student pastor to a German speaking congregation in Barcelona
- *1929-30 Lectures and pastors at Berlin, completes second dissertation Act and Being
- *1930-31 Lecturer and Student at Union Seminary in NYC (Reinhold Niebuhr)
- *1931 Meets Karl Barth and becomes lecturer at Berlin and chaplain at a local college
- *1932 Lectures on Creation and Fall/Temptation at Berlin
- *1933 Lectures on Christology (Christ at the Center) moves to London to become pastor of 2

German speaking congregations

- *1934 Joins Karl Barth, Martin Niemoeller and others at the Synod of the Confessing Church at Barmen (see Barmen Declaration/Confession)
- *1935 Becomes the director of the Confessing Church's Seminary at Zingst and then Finkenwalde (outlawed in 1935 and closed down by the Gestapo in 1937)
- *1937 The Cost of Discipleship is published
- *1938 Exiled from Berlin, makes first contacts with leaders of the resistance, all pastor's required to take the oath of allegiance to Hitler, publishes Life Together.
- *1939 Invited to USA by Niebuhr to teach at Union Seminary in NYC, arrives and goes home in a few weeks, becomes a member of the Abwehr (military intelligence)
- *1940 Writes Ethics
- *1940-1943 Travels extensively throughout Europe
- *1943-1945 Becomes engaged to Maria von Wedemeyer in January, arrested in April, begins writings which are later called Letters and Papers from Prison, moved from prison to prison
- *1945, April 9 Executed by hanging at Flossenburg

B. The Teaching of Dietrich Bonhoeffer

1. The centrality of Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior
2. The intimate relationship between Jesus Christ and the Church
3. The importance of Genesis 1-3 as theological first principles
4. The centrality of grace (cheap vs. costly)
5. The centrality of the Sermon on the Mount for Christian living

Conclusions

*What have we learned?

*From whom have we learned most?

*Why is Christian theology and its history (un)important for you as a Christian?

*Where is Christian theology going in the future?