# Biographical Notes

**Anan ben David** (fl. 8th c.). Babylonian Jewish theologian. Anan ben David and his followers, the Ananites, challenged the validity of the Talmudic (or rabbinic) tradition, asserting that theology should be based strictly on Scripture. This position came to be called *Karaism*.

**Aquila** (fl. 130). Jewish scholar and translator. Born in Pontus (now Turkey), Aquila is known for his translation of the Hebrew Old Testament into Greek. Aquila's literal translation was favored by many Jews who challenged the Christian understanding of the LXX, or Septuagint (translated in the 3rd century B.C.E.).

**Athanasius** (c. 296–373). Bishop of Alexandria and Doctor of the Church. In 325, Athanasius attended the Council of Nicea, where he was a major force in the rejection of Arianism, which challenged the divinity of Jesus. The council produced the Nicene Creed, which teaches that Jesus was fully man and fully God.

**Augustine of Hippo** (354–430). Bishop and Doctor of the Church. Augustine fought the heresies of Manichaeism (the idea that the physical world was completely evil and the spiritual world was the only good); Donatism (a North African separatist movement); and Pelagianism (which overemphasized natural human goodness).

**Bar Hebraeus** (1226–1286). Jacobite Syrian bishop who, among his many other achievements, gathered together and standardized versions of the Bible from the Peshitta and other Syriac translations, in addition to versions from Hebrew, Greek, and Asian sources. Bar Hebraeus was widely respected for his encyclopedic knowledge of theology, philosophy, history, grammar, medicine, and poetry.

**Benedict of Nursia** (c. 480–c. 550). Patriarch of monasticism in the West. He founded the Order of Saint Benedict at Monte Cassino (Italy). The *Rule* of Saint Benedict emphasized the centrality of work, prayer, and communal life. Benedictine monasteries were often repositories of learning and had a major impact on European culture.

**Theodore Beza** (1519–1605). French Calvinist theologian. When John Calvin died in 1564, Beza became leader of the Geneva Church and head of Calvin's academy in Geneva, Switzerland. He assisted in developing editions of the New Testament in Greek and Latin, intended to supersede Erasmus's editions.

**John Calvin** (1509–1564). A French theologian whose ideas, along with those of Martin Luther, guided the Protestant Reformation. Central to Calvin's thought were the ideas of total depravity (man is completely dependent on God's grace) and predestination (God's sovereign will has determined in advance who will achieve salvation). He wrote commentaries on 23 Old Testament books and virtually the whole New Testament. The Geneva Bible, which appeared in 1560, has an introduction by John Calvin, and its many notes reflect Calvin's pro-reform and anti-Catholic bias.

**Constantine the Great** (274?–337). The Roman emperor whose Edict of Milan in 313 completely legalized Christianity in the empire. Previously, the empire's official religion had been Greco-Roman polytheism. After the 4th century, Christianity was the privileged and powerful religion of the Roman Empire. Constantine's concern for unity led him to call the Council of Nicea in 325 to settle the doctrinal disagreements caused by Arianism.

**Thomas Cranmer** (1489–1556). Archbishop of Canterbury and a major figure in the English Reformation. Cranmer was influential in efforts to have the Bible translated into English and to secure a royal proclamation (1538) to have Bibles distributed to all parishes in England. During the reign of Edward VI, Cranmer wrote and compiled much of the Book of Common Prayer (published in 1549; revised in 1552). Cranmer's 42 Articles (1553) was the basis for the 39 Articles, a document that officially defines Anglican belief.

**Saint Cyril** (827–869). Monk, missionary, and linguist. Born into a prominent Greek family in Macedonia, Cyril and his brother, Methodius, were sent as missionaries among the Slavic peoples in Moravia, where they taught in the vernacular. Before his death, Cyril invented a Slavic alphabet called Glagolitic and began to write liturgical works in Slavonic.

**Erasmus of Rotterdam** (1469–1536). One of the greatest of Christian Humanists, Erasmus produced an edition of the Greek New Testament with his own translation into classical Latin in 1516. This translation, along with contributions by a number of other scholars, formed the basis for the "received text" underlying the King James Bible.

**Thomas Erastus** (1524–1583). Swiss Protestant theologian. In his *Explicatio* (written in 1568; published in 1589), Erastus argued that the sins of Christians should be addressed through civil law rather than through the Church's practice of excommunication. His argument was later expanded into what is known as *Erastianism*, which asserts the state's absolute supremacy over the Church—a more sweeping declaration than that originally made by Erastus.

**Eusebius** (c. 260–c. 340). A bishop of Caesarea (in Palestine); commonly called the father of Church history, Eusebius wrote the *Life of Constantine*, which glorified the accomplishments of the emperor who legalized Christianity.

**Gregory the Illuminator** (240–332). National saint and patron of Armenia. Gregory baptized King Tiridates III around 300, and Christianity was made the Armenian state religion. The ancient realm of Armenia was the first kingdom to officially welcome Christianity.

**Johannes Gutenberg** (c. 1398–1468). Credited with fundamental contributions to printing in the West. Beginning in 1436, he developed movable metal type, oil-based inks, a mold for casting type accurately, and a new kind of printing press based on those used in wine-making. By 1450, Gutenberg began work on printing the Bible and, in 1455, published a two-volume version of the Vulgate, known as the Gutenberg Bible.

**Judah ha Nasi, Judah the Prince** (135–c. 220). Revered Jewish scholar and patriarch in Palestine. For five decades, he studied the Jewish Oral Law, codifying it into the Mishnah, the oldest (after the Bible itself) compilation of the Jewish Oral Law. Judah ha Nasi's work was the basis of the Babylonian Talmud and the Talmud of the Land of Israel.

**Henry VIII** (1491–1547). English monarch. Henry challenged the theology of the Reformation, and as a result, the pope bestowed upon him the title "Defender of the Faith." However, Henry's desire to divorce Catherine of Aragon led to a break with Rome in 1533. Henry VIII dissolved the monasteries in England in 1536 and 1539.

**Theodor Herzl** (1860–1904). The "father" of modern Zionism. Born in Vienna, Herzl was a journalist whose experiences covering the Dreyfus affair in Paris during the 1890s convinced him of the critical necessity of a Jewish homeland. In 1896, the English translation of his *Der Judenstaat* (*The Jewish State*) appeared, and a year later, Herzl organized the First Zionist World Congress in Basel, Switzerland. Herzl's ideas anticipated the creation of a Jewish state 50 years later.

**Irenaeus of Lyons** (c. 130–c. 202). Bishop, pastor, teacher, and missionary. Irenaeus worked to establish a defined collection of writings by which to measure Christian teaching and is said to have been the first Christian writer to list the four Gospels—Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John—as authoritative. He devised a threefold strategy for Christian self-definition: rule of faith, canon of Scripture, and apostolic succession. Most important was his affirmation of the "Old Testament" as an authoritative witness to the work of God continuous with God's revelation in Jesus.

**King James I** (1566–1625). English monarch. During his reign, scholars developed one "authorized" English translation of the Bible, known as the King James Version. Published in 1611, it was, for many years, the official Bible for English-speaking Protestants throughout the world and went through five editions.

**Saint Jerome** (c. 342–420). Doctor of the Church and translator of the Bible into the standard Latin version called the Vulgate. His personal translations and his oversight of other revisions resulted in a single, seamless Scripture that captured the "imaginative world of the Bible" from beginning to end. Together with Saint Augustine's *On Christian Doctrine*, Jerome's Vulgate became the source and shaper of liturgy, literature, and learning during the Middle Ages in the West.

**Martin Luther** (1483–1546). German leader of the Protestant Reformation in the 16th century, which explicitly challenged medieval Catholicism on the basis of the Bible. Luther's principle of *sola fide* asserted that man's salvation lay in faith alone, with good works secondary to faith. His principle of *sola scriptura* set forth the supreme authority of the Bible—rather than Church officials—as the criterion for judgments in the area of faith and morals. Luther translated the Bible into German—the New Testament in 1522 and the Old Testament in 1534.

**Mesrob** (d. 440). Armenian missionary and translator. Bishop Mesrob is credited with developing the Armenian alphabet; overseeing the translation of the Bible (based on the Syriac version) into Armenian; and later, supervising the revision of the Armenian Bible on the basis of Greek manuscripts. The translation of the Bible into Armenian marked the birth of that nation's literature.

**Saint Methodius** (c. 826–885). Monk, scholar, and archbishop of Great Moravia. Along with his brother, Saint Cyril, Methodius served as a missionary among the Slavs of Moravia. Methodius's greatest achievement was the translation of the Bible into Old Church Slavonic, using the Glagolitic alphabet developed by his brother.

**Moses ben Maimon** (Maimonides) (1135–1204). Jewish philosopher, theologian, and physician. At a time of persecution, Moses ben Maimon wrote his *Guide for the Perplexed*, which sought to demonstrate the continuities between the philosophy of Aristotle and Scripture. He also seriously engaged Islamic scholars. Many consider his most important achievement to have been the first full systemization of Mosaic and rabbinical laws, called the Mishneh Torah.

**Eberhard Nestle** (1851–1913). A biblical scholar who played a key role in the effort to establish a fully "critical text" of the Bible in the original languages of Hebrew and Greek. The Nestle-Aland is now in its 27th edition and forms the basis of the United Bible Societies' edition for translators, the most widely used critical edition.

**Philo of Alexandria** (c. 20 B.C.E.–c. 50 C.E.). Jewish philosopher. His writings, which sought to synthesize Judaism and Greek philosophy, influenced later Christian theologians, including Clement of Alexandria, Tertullian, and Origen. At a time when Jews in the Mediterranean world were sometimes divided about what constituted "Torah" (the definitive texts for Jewish identity, culture, and worship), Philo appears to have focused on the Law of Moses, although he was also aware of the Prophets and other writings.

**Pompey** (106–48 B.C.E.). Roman general. A rival of Julius Caesar, Pompey conquered Palestine, asserting Roman dominance in 63 B.C.E.

**Saadia (ben Joseph) Gaon** (c. 880–942). Babylonian rabbi, grammarian, and religious philosopher. He was an ardent opponent of Karaism, a set of ideas challenging the rabbinic tradition of Judaism. In an attempt to preserve religious and cultural identity among Babylonia's Jewish elite, who were drawn to the Arabic language and Muslim culture, he translated virtually all of the Bible into Arabic, wrote the first book of Hebrew grammar and a Hebrew dictionary, and attempted to reconcile Judaism with the thought of Plato and Aristotle, who were highly esteemed in the Arab world.

**Cyrus Scofield** (1843–1921). American Protestant pastor and author of the *Scofield Reference Bible* (1909). Scofield was a popularizer of dispensationalism, a set of theological ideas asserting that a restored nation-state of Israel would be important in the "end days," during which the Church on Earth would be destroyed and caught up in "rapture" to heaven, and a Jewish kingdom, consisting of Jews who had accepted Jesus as the Messiah, would then become God's kingdom on Earth. Dispensationalism was a precursor of Christian Zionism, whose proponents see the modern state of Israel as one aspect of this prophecy's fulfillment.

**Rabbi Solomon ben Isaac** (1040–1105). Jewish biblical interpreter, grammarian, and legal authority. Known by the acronym Rashi, Rabbi Solomon ben Isaac is regarded as the greatest medieval commentator both on the entire Bible and on the Babylonian Talmud. His insistence on *peshat*—which affirms the literal sense of biblical interpretation—was especially important as a way of countering Christian messianic claims.

**Symmachus** (fl. late 2nd century). Scholar and translator. Also called Symmachus the Ebionite, he translated the Old Testament into Greek. His excellent mastery of the Greek language was recognized by Saint Jerome, who used Symmachus's Greek text of the Bible in the writing of the Vulgate.

**Tatian** (c. 110–c. 180). Second-century Christian apologist. Thought to have been born in Syria, Tatian received a Greek education, converted to Christianity in Rome, and became a student of Justin Martyr. Two works for which he is noted are his *Oratorio ad Graecos*, which denounced paganism and sought to prove the superiority of Christianity, and his Diatessaron, which attempted to show the continuity of Jesus' life among the varied accounts of the four Gospels. The Diatessaron was the primary, if not the only, Gospel text in Syria during the 3rd and 4th centuries.

**Tertullian** (c. 155–c. 225). Christian apologist. He is important as an early witness to Latin translations of Scripture and for the development of a distinctive Latin theology. He was a pivotal figure in the acceptance of Latin (rather than Greek) as a language for the Church's life and teaching. Among his most famous works were the *Apologeticus* (*Apology*), which defended monotheism and countered pagan accusations that the Church was immoral and aimed to overthrow the power of the state, and *De praescriptione haereticorum* (*On the Claims of Heretics*), which asserted that the Church was the sole authority in the matter of Christian orthodoxy.

**Theodotion** (mid-2nd century). A Hellenistic Jewish scholar who wrote a Greek translation of the Old Testament. This translation was included along with those of Aquila of Pontus, Symmachus, and others in Origen's famous

*Hexapla*, a comprehensive work that attempted to compare and contrast the LXX (Septuagint) with the Hebrew text and other Greek translations. Origen relied on Theodotion's translation for information not contained in the LXX and other translations. Much of the ordinary Greek translation of Jeremiah and Job comes from Theodotion.

**William Tyndale** (c. 1494–1536). English scholar and religious reformer. Tyndale translated into English the first printed version of the Bible in 1525, and much of his work is apparent in the King James Version, published in 1611. A follower of Martin Luther, Tyndale was burned at the stake for heresy.

**Ulfilas** (c. 311–383). Translator and missionary, often called the "Apostle to the Goths." Trained in Constantinople, Ulfilas invented a Gothic alphabet out of Greek and Latin characters, as well as Gothic runes, which enabled him to translate the Bible into the vernacular language of the Goths. This translation of the Bible was a key element in the success of Ulfilas's missionary activity.

**Valentinus** (c. 100–c. 153). A Gnostic scholar whose ideas were the most widely disseminated of the Gnostic heresies. Gnosticism asserted that all matter, including the body, was evil and that a special "spiritual" knowledge was given only to a select few. Educated in Alexandria (Egypt), Valentinus established schools in that city and Rome. He was condemned by Irenaeus, Clement, and other fathers of the Church. In 1945, Coptic Gnostic papyri were found at Nag Hammadi, one of which—the *Gospel of Truth*—is believed to be linked to Valentinus.

**Constantin von Tischendorf** (1815–1874). A German biblical scholar who recovered the Codex Sinaiticus, a $4^{th}$-century manuscript containing a portion of the Old Testament, the entire New Testament, and two other early Christian works known before this only by title. He discovered the Codex Sinaiticus at Saint Catherine's Monastery on Mt. Sinai.

**John Wycliffe** (c. 1330–1384). English philosopher and theologian; Wycliffe translated the first complete version of the Bible into English (1382). Increasingly discouraged by religious institutions, he developed a theory of the Church that separated the earthly, "material" Church from the divine, "ideal" Church. He argued for the supremacy of civil over ecclesiastical authority and opposed the authority of the pope and religious orders because he believed they were not supported by Scripture.