

The following are thinkers, writers and leaders whose ideas and writings shed light on important aspects of early Christian belief and practice. While not everything these scholars contributed can be endorsed, and while their own views and writings may have evolved beyond their initial calls for a church fully and exclusively aligned with the teachings and traditions of Jesus and His apostles, each provides a valuable contribution to that pure strain of Christian practice that has existed from the beginning. Please let us know of anyone we've missed!

- **Justin Martyr** (c. 100–165 CE): Philosopher-apologist whose *First Apology* (c. 155 CE) offers one of the earliest surviving descriptions of Christian worship as simple, communal gatherings without elaborate clergy. While writing primarily as an apologist to imperial authorities rather than as a restitutionist, his testimony provides a crucial window into the pre-creedal, non-clerical patterns that later restoration movements would seek to recover.
- **Montanus and the Montanists** (fl. c. 165–200 CE): Phrygian prophet with prophetesses Priscilla and Maximilla, led Spirit-guided, egalitarian communities rejecting emerging clerical hierarchies, emphasizing apostolic worship practices and direct revelation over institutional forms.
- **Clement of Rome (Pseudo-Clementine Literature)** (c. 150–200 CE): Jewish-Christian texts (*Homilies*, *Recognitions*) attributed to Clement, promoting apostolic simplicity, communal sharing, and rejection of Gentile church structures, critiquing wealth and coercive power.
- **Tertullian** (c. 155–240 CE): North African theologian whose early works (*Apology*, c. 197 CE) defend nonviolent, countercultural Christian communities; his later Montanist writings critiqued ecclesiastical hierarchies as deviations from apostolic purity.
- **Origen of Alexandria** (c. 185–254 CE): Scholar whose *Contra Celsum* (c. 248 CE) and homilies emphasize personal discipleship, spiritual equality, and voluntary poverty. Though he worked within the emerging institutional framework, his emphasis on interior faith and universal priesthood over external hierarchy influenced later anti-institutional and primitivist thought.
- **Peter Waldo** (c. 1140–1205): French merchant and founder of the Waldensians, inspired by the Gospels to embrace apostolic poverty and lay preaching, rejecting Catholic hierarchy and wealth in favor of simple, non-clerical communities, deemed heretical for challenging ecclesiastical authority.
- **Francis of Assisi** (1181–1226): Italian mystic whose *Rule of 1221* and sermons emphasize Gospel simplicity, communal poverty, and care for the marginalized. While he remained within the Catholic hierarchy, his radical embrace of apostolic poverty and lay preaching

inspired later movements—from the Fraticelli to modern communarians—to push beyond institutional control toward primitive Christian practice.

- **William of Ockham** (c. 1287–1347): English Franciscan theologian whose *Dialogus* (1330s) critiques papal absolutism and advocates for apostolic poverty and scriptural authority. His political thought laid groundwork for separating coercive church power from voluntary faith communities, influencing later anti-hierarchical and restorationist movements.
- **Menno Simons** (1496–1561): Dutch Anabaptist whose *Foundation of Christian Doctrine* (1539) calls for New Testament-based churches with believer's baptism and nonviolence, rejecting state and ecclesiastical hierarchies for autonomous, communal worship.
- **Roger Williams** (c. 1603–1683): Puritan minister whose *The Bloody Tenent of Persecution* (1644) advocates religious liberty and New Testament church simplicity, rejecting state and clerical coercion for voluntary, covenant-based congregations.
- **George Fox** (1624–1691): Quaker founder whose *Journal* (1694) promotes egalitarian, Spirit-led gatherings without clergy or rituals, emphasizing the Inner Light and nonviolence, rejecting state churches for apostolic simplicity.
- **John Locke** (1632–1704): Philosopher whose *A Letter Concerning Toleration* (1689) and *The Reasonableness of Christianity* (1695) advocate voluntary faith communities based on rational examination of Scripture and Gospel ethics. His rationalist approach to the New Testament and insistence on religious toleration provided intellectual foundations for later restorationists such as Alexander Campbell, who applied similar rational precision to reconstruct first-century church practice.
- **John Toland** (1670–1722): Rationalist whose *Christianity Not Mystical* (1696) calls for a reason-based Christianity free of post-apostolic traditions, envisioning churches as voluntary, egalitarian associations without clerical dominance.
- **Isaac Backus** (1724–1806): Baptist minister whose *An Appeal to the Public for Religious Liberty* (1773) promotes separation of church and state, believer's baptism, and New Testament-based congregational autonomy, rejecting institutional hierarchies.
- **William Godwin** (1756–1836): Anarchist philosopher whose *Enquiry Concerning Political Justice* (1793) critiques institutional authority and praises Jesus' teachings as models for egalitarian, non-coercive community. Though not an ecclesiastical restitutionist, his political philosophy helped shape the anarchist-Christian synthesis that informs anti-institutional, primitive Christian thought.

- **Alexander Campbell** (1788–1866): Restoration Movement co-founder whose *The Christian System* (1835) seeks to restore New Testament church unity through immersion baptism, weekly communion, and congregational autonomy, rejecting creeds and hierarchies.
- **Barton W. Stone** (1772–1844): Restoration Movement leader whose *An Address to the Christian Churches* (1821) calls for rejecting denominationalism and creeds, reviving apostolic simplicity in Spirit-led, non-hierarchical communities.
- **George Müller** (1805–1898): German-born evangelist and orphanage director whose *Narrative of Some of the Lord's Dealings with George Müller* (1837–1895) chronicles faith-based support for orphans without human aid or institutional funding, rejecting debt, committees, and ecclesiastical hierarchies in favor of prayer-led, autonomous communities modeled on New Testament trust in God's provision.
- **Johann Christoph Blumhardt** (1805–1880): German Lutheran pastor whose revival at Möttlingen (1840s) emphasized faith healing, communal solidarity, and holistic victory over evil. While not primarily an ecclesiological primitivist, his model of Spirit-led, interdependent community life anticipated the holistic, non-hierarchical patterns of primitive Christian practice.
- **Pope Leo XIII** (1810–1903): Pontiff whose *Rerum Novarum* (1891) established Catholic Social Teaching, introducing principles of **subsidiarity** and **solidarity** that distribute authority and ownership toward the lowest competent level. These concepts fed later communitarian and distributist movements, including Dorothy Day's Catholic Worker houses, by providing a theological framework for pushing power and control downward in hierarchies and grounding economic life in family-centered, apostolic mutual aid.
- **Søren Kierkegaard** (1813–1855): Danish philosopher whose *Attack upon Christendom* (1854–1855) critiques institutionalized Christianity, calling for passionate, individual discipleship modeled on the early church's simplicity and rejection of societal conformity.
- **Christoph Blumhardt** (1842–1919): German theologian and politician whose *The Gospel of God's Reign* advocates for God's kingdom through justice and community. Though active in social democratic politics, his critique of church and state power and his emphasis on nonviolent, holistic reform influenced later apostolic and anti-hierarchical Christian movements.
- **Leo Tolstoy** (1828–1910): Russian Christian anarchist whose *The Kingdom of God Is Within You* (1894) interprets Jesus' teachings as nonviolent resistance to authority, rejecting church and state for primitive, communal living.

- **Dorothy Day** (1897–1980): American journalist and Catholic Worker Movement co-founder whose *The Long Loneliness* (1952) advocates house-of-hospitality communities modeled on early Christian sharing, rejecting church and state hierarchies for nonviolent, apostolic mutual aid.
- **Dietrich Bonhoeffer** (1906–1945): German theologian whose *The Cost of Discipleship* (1937) and *Life Together* (1939) emphasize radical obedience to Christ's teachings and communal, non-hierarchical Christian living, critiquing institutional complicity with state power, exemplified by his resistance to Nazism.
- **Watchman Nee** (1903–1972): Chinese leader whose *The Normal Christian Church Life* (1939) promotes autonomous, house-based churches without clergy, restoring New Testament patterns of every-member ministry.
- **Jacques Ellul** (1912–1994): French theologian whose *Anarchy and Christianity* (1988) aligns Jesus' teachings with anarchist rejection of coercive authority, promoting nonviolent, margin-based communities.
- **Vernard Eller** (1927–2007): American theologian whose *Christian Anarchy* (1987) argues for radical discipleship and nonviolence, viewing institutional structures as contrary to the primitive church's communal equality.
- **Wayne A. Meeks** (1932–2012): American scholar whose *The First Urban Christians* (1983) reconstructs Pauline house churches as egalitarian, non-institutional communities. As a descriptive historian rather than a prescriptive reformer, his work nonetheless provides the essential scholarly foundation for primitivist movements seeking to restore decentralized, participatory first-century practice.
- **Robert Banks** (born 1938): Australian scholar whose *Paul's Idea of Community* (1980) examines New Testament house churches as decentralized, participatory networks, advocating restoration of apostolic "body life" over institutional forms.
- **Wolfgang Simson** (born 1954): German theologian whose *Houses That Change the World* (1999) outlines house churches as the biblical model, rejecting hierarchical structures for networked, apostolic communities.
- **Alexandre Christoyannopoulos** (born 1979): British scholar whose *Christian Anarchism* (2010) synthesizes Gospel-based rejection of coercive authority, advocating nonviolent, primitive Christian communities.
- **Frank Viola** (born 1964): American author whose *Pagan Christianity?* (2008) and *Finding Organic Church* (2009) call for Christ-centered, participatory house churches, rejecting clericalism and post-apostolic traditions.