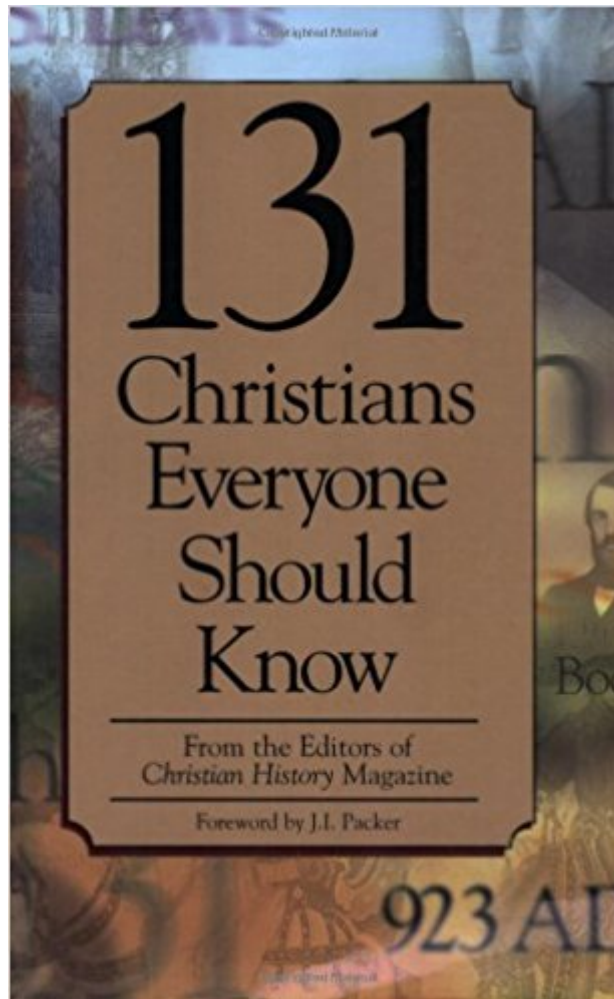


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131 Christians Everyone Should Know (Holman Reference)



Synopsis

This book offers a succinct yet thorough introduction to 131 of the most intriguing, courageous, inspiring Christians who ever lived. It tells how they lived, what they believed, and how their faith affected the course of world history. Includes a timeline with a historical context for each individual, key quotes from or about each personality, and more than 60 photos.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

This book is a pretty good way to introduce yourself to many of the most influential thinkers and doers of the Christian tradition. It's easy to nibble at this salad bar of biographies, and it's easy to become addicted to nibbling. I have two gripes. First, a predictable complaint about the choices. Only two scientists are included (plus Pascal, as an apologist) -- but not Neuton, Kepler, Faraday, Kelvin, or Lister. At the same time, a few minor characters like William Miller and Aimee McPherson are, apparently to pad the "denominational founders" number. It is also hard to understand why no Latin Americans, black Africans, Indians, or Chinese (Watchman Nee? Wang Ming Dao?) made the grade. Isn't one purpose of this book is to help us Anglo-Saxon Christians become less parochial? My other complaint is that the authors, or editors, talk down to their readers. The back cover of the book opens, "If you think history is boring. . . ." Well if I thought that, I wouldn't buy the book. The authors give less than a page and a half to Francis Bacon, clutter that little space up with irrelevant biographical detail (no doubt to make the story "interesting"), and never get around to telling us why he is worth knowing or what he achieved. Perhaps at times the problem is they lack

the necessary breadth of knowledge to tackle some of their subjects. They give the usual caricature of Pascal as promoting "faith" rather than "reason," in lieu of the more complex truth, that he wrote of both brilliantly, and did not agree to the conflict that we moderns read into the relationship between the two. They claim that G. K. Chesterton had no masterpieces -- which made me wonder if they read or understood *Everlasting Man*. The authors present Harriet Beecher Stowe as "the author of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*," which they describe as "contrived, unreal," and "romanticized." They fail to mention that the woman did have some real talent; perhaps they didn't notice it. They also skipped over one of the most attractive qualities of her story, the mutual loyalties between herself, her famous father and brother, and her husband, and how out of the matrix of such personal support that Stowe began to develop, in later life, a Christian feminism rooted in respect between the sexes, that contrasted with the radical feminism of George Eliot, for example. All that could have been fitted into the white space at the end of Stowe's third page, and made the story much richer. This is a pretty good introductory reference or self-education book for a church or personal library, or as a text for homeschooling. I did learn a little about a lot of people I wanted to know more of. But I wish Christian editors would stop dumbing down their books. What would have been helpful is a bibliography, so readers who catch the passion for history the authors want to promote, could go further with it. I guess they don't want to tax their readers.

Author, *Jesus and the Religions of Man*

The good, the bad, and the ugly, they're all here: Preachers, theologians, scientists, philosophers, writers, artists, musicians, martyrs, mystics, 131 Christians (or people who have identified themselves as Christians) in all who have impacted history. And believe me, calling some of these people Christians is a stretch. (Will I see King Henry VIII in heaven when I get there? I guess it's not for me to judge, but...) Indeed, not all of these people would be considered saints as some would define sainthood, but there is a certain comfort one can take in the flaws found in many of these individuals. And, of course, many are saints in every sense of the word. In reading about these people one cannot avoid becoming acquainted with the great events of Christian history and the history of the world. But history is about people, and that's where this book shines. Of course, there are some omissions (the omission of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. borders on inexcusable), but for a good reference on figures you've heard about but didn't know very well if at all, this book is hard to beat.

The approach of this book is extremely simple, yet the product is absolutely fantastic. The editors of *Christian History* magazine (an outstanding periodical that I would recommend to anyone) have

compiled a list of 131 key leaders in the history of Christianity, starting with Ignatius of Antioch and ending with Billy Graham. These key church figures are organized by category (Theologians, Poets, Missionaries, etc.), rather than by chronology, which can be helpful or annoying, depending on the readers' reason for reading it. Each person is described in two to four pages, with an interesting mix of significant events and trivial factoids. As with any list of this nature, one could quibble about their choice of 131 Christians. It seems odd that William and Catherine Booth were given two separate slots when so many other worthy candidates were omitted. Nonetheless, no one will ever agree upon such a selection process, and I'm sure that the editors themselves found it to be a most onerous task. In any case, I used this book as a supplemental text as I studied church history for two seminary courses. These snippets into the lives of my spiritual forefathers were not especially profound but did a fantastic job of summarizing and highlighting the key moments in their lives, while managing to maintain a more engaging storytelling approach than an encyclopedia or other general reference book. I would recommend this book to anyone interested in reading some fascinating snapshots into the lives of the key players in the story of Christianity. It would serve pastors well in helping to provide context for sermons. It would serve seminarians well as a quick reference to previous coursework that might need refreshing. And it would serve any faithful Christian well who is interested in reading about those who have gone on before us, providing the spiritual landscape that we now inhabit.

Was very informative about Christians, but there are many they could have put in the book and left some of the others out. There were many that were doubtful if they really were Christians. The authors were just grabbing at straws for drama.

Whether you are a Christian or not, this book is a priceless tool. It recounts historical information, gives personal traits to famous thinkers and activists, and puts events on the timeline in a new and fresh way. The book dedicates a few pages to each person so its easy-to-read design makes it even more attractive. I highly recommend it for all.

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