

**GOD, THE CHURCH AND THE WORLD – biographies of people and movements**

<p><b>Constantine (280-337)</b> Constantine is best known as the first Christian Roman emperor. He brought together the Christian faith and the Secular state, so that allegiance to one also meant allegiance to the other. Under his direction, Christianity became the official religion, supported by the full power and authority of those who governed the Empire. As a result, Constantine got involved in church discussions about Christian doctrine, and gave state money for the building of churches.</p>	<p><b>John Wesley (1703-91)</b> Wesley, the founder of Methodism, was a staunch High Church Tory who said that the Church should defend and honour the King. Recent memories of the English Civil War, when new forms of religion were seen as doctrinally suspect and politically subversive, meant that Wesley wanted to prevent the new Methodists being associated with dissent. However Wesley spoke out against social injustices such as slavery, practiced prison visiting and promoted the education of the poor.</p>
<p><b>Augustine (354-430)</b> Augustine was a very significant leader in the early church and wrote a book called the <i>City of God</i>. He argued that Christians belong to the heavenly city to come, but that meanwhile here on earth the church and the secular state have different functions and purposes. The two should not be confused. God can use secular, political powers to control evil, seek peace, and even make sure people do not stray into heresy. But they cannot achieve our salvation.</p>	<p><b>Martin Luther King Jr (1929-1968)</b> King was a Baptist pastor in the USA who became a leader of the civil rights movement, seeking an end to racial segregation. On more than one occasion, he was arrested and imprisoned, and was also the subject of frequent death threats. Though a leader of acts of civil disobedience, such as a bus boycott, he was committed to nonviolence throughout his life. He was assassinated shortly after a famous speech, 'I have a dream'.</p>
<p><b>Amish Communities</b> The Amish people live in communities in the USA and Canada and have roots in the Anabaptist and Mennonite traditions. Many of them live very simply, trying to be obedient to Bible teaching. They place high value on community and family, refuse many of the benefits of modern technology, and resist contact with the rest of the world. They would not accept help from the state and nor would they ever serve in the military. Their commitment is to model an alternative way of discipleship living that keeps them apart from the rest of society.</p>	<p><b>The Diggers (1600s)</b> This was a revolutionary movement to emerge in England in the 1640s and 50s, involving such figures as Gerrard Winstanley. Its vision was both to improve the lot of the hungry and landless by cultivating common land, and also to create a propertyless and moneyless society. They said the earth is for all to share so should not be bought and sold. They took direct action to support their political aims, argued their case from scripture, were very impatient with the failure of the church to support them, but they were quickly suppressed.</p>
<p><b>Dietrich Bonhoeffer (1906-45)</b> Bonhoeffer grew up in Germany. As a pastor and theologian, he grappled with how, as a Christian, he should respond to the rise of Nazism. He reluctantly concluded that he could not ignore or support the actions of the ruling party. Following Christ meant being in active opposition to the Nazi ideology. After much heart searching, he participated in a plot to kill Hitler, and was eventually imprisoned and executed.</p>	<p><b>Gustavo Gutierrez (1928- )</b> Gutierrez is from Peru and is described as a liberation theologian. He has lived and worked amongst the slum people of Lima. His deep involvement in the life of the poor has led him to argue that our Christian faith calls us to work to revolutionise the social and political structures in our world. He draws on people like Marx, as well as the Gospels, to support his call for liberation for the poor.</p>

