

Trial and Triumph

TRIAL AND TRIUMPH

STORIES FROM CHURCH HISTORY

RICHARD M. HANNULA



Canon Press

MOSCOW, IDAHO

Special thanks to my wife, Kathy, for her support and patience; to Linus Breul, whose much needed advice improved the stories substantially; to Bob Rogland, Doug Bond, and Peggy King Anderson for their helpful comments; and to Rob Rayburn for encouragement given and books lent.

Richard M. Hannula

Trial and Triumph: Stories from Church History

© 1999 by Richard M. Hannula

Published by Canon Press, P.O. Box 8729, Moscow, ID 83843

800.488.2034 | www.canonpress.com

06 07 08 09 10 11 12 13 15 14 13 12 11 10 9 8

Cover design by Paige Atwood

Cover painting: King Gustavus Adolphus of Sweden before the Battle of Luetzen, 1632: oil on canvas, 1891, by Ludwig Braun. The Granger Collection, New York.

Interior illustrations: Marcus Mashburn Illustrations

Printed in the United States of America.

Scripture quotations in this publication are taken from the *Holy Bible: A New International Version*. Copyright 1973, 1978, 1984 by the International Bible Society/Zondervan Publishing House.

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopy, recording, or otherwise, without prior permission of the author, except as provided by USA copyright law.

ISBN-13: 978-1-885767-54-7

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Hannula, Richard M.

Trial and triumph : stories from church history / Richard M. Hannula. — 8th ed.

p. cm.

Includes bibliographical references.

Summary: “[Presents brief biographies of various Christian men and women who helped to shape the Christian faith and church throughout history. Written for ages seven and up]”—Provided by publisher.

ISBN-13: 978-1-885767-54-7 (pbk.)

ISBN-10: 1-885767-54-4 (pbk.)

1. Christian biography—Juvenile literature. 2. Church history—Juvenile literature. I. Title.

BX1704.H36 2006

270.092'2—dc22

[B]

2006011729

With love to my children:
Teri, Kelly, John, Kimberly, and Marie

Contents

Introduction	11
--------------------	----

Early Church: Facing Persecution, Fighting Heresy

1. Polycarp Witness in the Arena (69-155)	17
2. Blandina Martyr of Lyons (155-177)	21
3. Constantine Defender of the Church (272-337)	25
4. Athanasius Against the World (296-373)	31
5. Ambrose Bishop of Milan (339-397)	35
6. Monica and Augustine Christian Mother and Son (354-430)	39
7. Patrick Missionary to the Irish (389-461)	45

Middle Ages: Light from Darkness

8. Pope Gregory I Servant of the Servants of God (540-604)	55
9. Boniface Missionary to the Germans (680-754)	61
10. Charlemagne Protector of the Church (742-814)	65
11. Alfred the Great Christian King (847-899)	71
12. Anselm Theologian, Monk, Archbishop (1033-1109)	77
13. Bernard of Clairvaux Lover of Christ (1090-1153)	83
14. Peter Waldo and the Waldensians Faithful to the Word (1130-1217)	89
15. Francis of Assisi The Lesser Brother (1181-1226)	95
16. Elizabeth of Hungary Servant of the Poor (1207-1231)	101

17. John Wyclif	
Morning Star of the Reformation (1330-1384)	107
18. John Huss	
Forerunner of the Reformation (1369-1415)	113

Reformation: The Gospel Clarified

19. Martin Luther	
Father of the Reformation (1483-1546)	121
20. William Tyndale	
Translator of the English Bible (1485-1536)	127
21. John Calvin	
Theologian of the Reformation (1509-1563)	131
22. Anne Askew	
The Lord's Bold Witness (1521-1546)	137
23. Latimer, Ridley, and Cranmer	
The Bishop Martyrs (1485-1556)	141
24. John Knox	
Scottish Reformer (1514-1572)	147
25. Jeanne d'Albret	
Reformation Queen (1528-1572)	151
26. Renee	
Duchess of Ferrara (1510-1575)	157

Post-Reformation: Great Courage and Great Awakening

27. Gustavus Adolphus	
Warrior King (1594-1632)	167
28. Richard Cameron	
Lion of the Covenant (1644-1680)	173
29. The Two Margarets	
The Solway Martyrs (1622-1685)	177
30. John Bunyan	
Happy Pilgrim (1628-1688)	181
31. Jonathan Edwards	
Great Awakening Theologian (1703-1758)	187
32. George Whitefield	
Great Awakening Preacher (1714-1770)	193

33. John Wesley	
The World His Parish (1703-1791)	199
34. John Newton	
Slave Trader Saved by Grace (1725-1807)	205

***Modern Missions:
The Gospel to the Ends of the Earth***

35. David Brainerd	
Preacher to the	
North American Indians (1718-1747)	213
36. William Carey	
Father of Modern Missions (1761-1834)	219
37. David Livingstone	
Missionary Explorer (1813-1873)	227
38. John Paton	
Witness to the Cannibals (1824-1907)	233
39. Hudson Taylor	
The China Inland Mission (1832-1905)	239
40. Amy Carmichael	
Mother to Outcast Children (1867-1951)	245

Recent Times: Standing for Christ

41. Charles Spurgeon	
Prince of Preachers (1834-1892)	253
42. Chinese Christians	
In the Boxer Rebellion (1900-1901)	259
43. Abraham Kuyper	
Theologian and Statesman (1837-1920)	265
44. J. Gresham Machen	
Valiant for Truth (1881-1937)	271
45. C. S. Lewis	
Chronicler of Narnia (1898-1963)	277
46. Richard Wurmbrand	
Tortured for Christ (1908-2001)	283

Further Reading	
for Parents, Teachers, and Older Children	293

Introduction

For Christians, this book is a family history. Our sister, Blandina, faced the snapping jaws of wild beasts rather than renouncing Christ. Our brother, Ambrose, gave away his vast wealth to the poor and proclaimed the gospel to emperors and paupers. William Tyndale, our father in the faith, lived on the run and died at the stake to give us the Bible in English that we might read it for ourselves. If we do not know about our Christian forebearers, we cannot draw inspiration and encouragement from their lives nor praise God for His grace and power at work in them.

The Psalmist calls us to praise the Lord and “tell of His works with songs of joy.” God’s greatest works are not the creation of the mountains and seas but His acts of saving love, which transform sinners into children of God. These stories were not written to exalt great Christian men and women. They were written to exalt the Lord who made them great.

The book of Acts tells the story of the growth of the church under the leadership of the apostles. Through great trials they spread the good news of Jesus throughout the Roman world. The stories found in this book are drawn from the lives of those who served God in the years after the apostles rested in the grave. Within these pages, you will encounter Christians from widely different places, times, and stations—from slaves laboring in chains to regal monarchs reigning over vast empires. The stories are not

fiction but historically accurate, biographical sketches. The background events and actions of the subjects were drawn from the most reliable sources, and all quotations were taken directly from the subjects' own speeches and writings.

I wrote the sketches originally for my own children, but if other readers may, in some small way, find inspiration in these stories from church history, I will be pleased and grateful.

Early Church

Facing Persecution, Fighting Heresy

The early church endured persecution from without and false teachers from within, but through every trial God proved faithful to bless and preserve His church. The first two stories portray the martyrdom of an old minister and a Christian slave girl, and it may seem odd to begin a book written to encourage young Christians with stories of believers suffering cruel deaths. The pagans hoped through brutal killings to wipe out Christianity, but God strengthened His children to stand firm in the face of death. The martyrs' faith and courage inspired many to follow Christ—"Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints" (Ps. 116:15).

- Polycarp
Witness in the Arena
- Blandina
Martyr of Lyons
- Constantine
Defender of the Church
- Athanasius
Against the World
- Ambrose
Bishop of Milan
- Monica and Augustine
Christian Mother and Son
- Patrick
Missionary to the Irish

Polycarp

Witness in the Arena

Polycarp c. A.D. 69–155

“I will build my church,” Jesus said. “And the gates of hell will not prevail against it.” And He built it with shocking and glorious power. Christ burst from the tomb, showed Himself alive, and sent the Spirit in tongues of fire. This transformed the cowardly and confused disciples into valiant soldiers of the cross. They healed the sick, raised the dead, and boldly proclaimed the gospel. Thousands streamed into the Kingdom of God. Nothing like it had ever been seen before.

The Jewish religious leaders flogged the disciples and warned them to stop speaking about Christ. “Judge for yourselves,” the disciples answered, “whether it is right in God’s sight to obey you rather than God, for we cannot help speaking about all we have seen and heard.”

Fearing the growing number of Christians and hating their refusal to bow down to the pagan gods, the Roman emperors declared that following Christ was a crime punishable by death. They began blaming Christians for every calamity. One early Christian sighed, “If the rivers flood, or if there is drought or famine or plague, the pagans cry: ‘Throw the Christians to the lions!’”

The Romans put to death many of the first disciples of Christ, beheading Paul, crucifying Peter, and killing others by fire, sword, and beasts. They died with the words of Jesus ringing in their ears: “If the world hates you, keep in mind that it hated me first. If they persecuted me, they will persecute you also.”

In the face of terrible persecution, the church grew stronger, expanding to the four corners of the Roman Empire

and beyond. A new generation of Christian leaders arose to take the place of the apostles and disciples. One of the foremost of these was a man named Polycarp. Here is part of his story.

Crouching low, hugging the sand, a lion circled the young man standing in the center of the arena. The crowd watched without making a sound. From the imperial box in the grandstands, the Roman governor looked on with a grin. The rulers of the Roman Empire called Christians “godless” because they refused to bow down to Roman gods or offer incense to the emperor. Here in Smyrna, the governor had ordered that any Christians unwilling to renounce their faith would be executed. So now this young man stood still, circled by the lion.

“Come now,” the governor shouted to the man. “You are young. A lifetime awaits you. It’s not too late. Some of your friends have just sworn the oath to Caesar. I will remove the beast, if you will do it. Swear the oath and you will live.”

The young man shook his head and stood his ground as the lion crept nearer. The lion paused and then pounced. In an instant the two were intertwined, with the animal tearing at the man with powerful swipes. The lion closed his massive jaws, and the young man went limp. The crowd cheered. “Death to the godless!” some shouted.

One of the Roman leaders spoke up. “He was just a follower.” Another shouted, “We want Polycarp, their leader! Death to the godless! Death to Polycarp!” Soon the chant sounded throughout the arena, “Death to the godless! Death to Polycarp!” The order was given, and a small troop left to arrest Polycarp, the bishop of Smyrna.

Polycarp had been taught in his youth by the Apostle John, and he had led many people to faith in Jesus Christ. When the soldiers found Polycarp, they rushed him to the arena and hauled him before the Roman governor of the

province. Upon seeing Polycarp, the crowd erupted with a roar, “Death to the godless! Death to Polycarp!”

Dressed in an embroidered robe of purple and gold, the governor stood in the imperial box, glaring down at Polycarp in his dusty tunic. He waved his hand and quieted the crowd. “Are you Polycarp, the teacher of the Christians?” the governor asked.

“I am,” Polycarp answered.

“Have respect for the honor of your old age,” the governor said. “Swear by Caesar and save yourself. Point to the Christian prisoners there and say ‘Away with the godless.’”

Polycarp turned from the Christian prisoners, pointed to the pagan crowds, lifted his voice to heaven, and said, “Away with the godless.”

The people gnashed their teeth at the insult. “How dare he call us godless!”

The governor tempted Polycarp a second time, “Swear the oath to Caesar and I will release you. Deny Christ!”

Polycarp stood straight and answered in a clear voice, “For eighty-six years I have been His servant, and He has done me no wrong. How then can I blaspheme my King who saved me?”

“Swear by Caesar!” the governor shouted.

“You try in vain to get me to swear by Caesar. Hear me plainly, I am a Christian!”

“I have wild beasts here,” the governor said. “I will throw you to them unless you change your mind.”

“Call for them,” Polycarp answered.

“If you are not afraid of the beasts, I will have you burned alive.”

“You threaten me with fire that burns for a little while and goes out,” Polycarp said. “But you are ignorant of the fire of eternal punishment which is prepared for the ungodly. Why do you wait? Come and do what you want with me.”

“This is the teacher of Asia,” someone cried, “the

father of the Christians, who teaches many not to worship our gods. Burn him!”

Soldiers tied Polycarp to a post and surrounded him with straw, oil-soaked kindling, and timber. Polycarp prayed aloud, “O Lord God Almighty, the Father of your beloved Son, Jesus Christ, through Whom we have received the knowledge of you: I bless You for granting me the honor of this day and hour that I might be numbered among the martyrs. You are the faithful and true God. To You be glory both now and for the ages to come. Amen.”

A long torch ignited the bonfire and a mighty flame leapt upward.

Polycarp’s courage in the face of death emboldened persecuted Christians throughout the empire to remain faithful to Christ.

• • •

Charlemagne

Protector of the Church

Charlemagne c. 742-814

Around the year 780, shoppers in a public market on the west coast of Frankland beheld a strange sight. Above the cackling of the chickens and the cries of the hawkers of fish, they heard two Irish monks calling, "If anyone wants some wisdom, let him come to us and receive it; for it is wisdom which we have for sale." The Franks gaped wide-eyed at the strangers from the famed monasteries of Ireland where the Scriptures and ancient writings were preserved and studied. For several days, they showed no wares and displayed no books but only cried out, "Wisdom for sale, come to us for wisdom!" Most of the onlookers laughed and thought them crazy, but one man, knowing that the king admired and pursued wisdom, sent word to the royal palace. King Charlemagne summoned the Irishmen at once.

The monks went to the palace and were led into the throne room, their palms sweating, for Charlemagne was known as a fierce warrior, a man of iron. Charlemagne's six-foot, muscular body towered over them. His thick, white hair fell to his shoulders, and his large, piercing eyes seemed to gaze right through them. His legs were wrapped in bands of white cloth, and he wore a long blue cloak and a shimmering black vest of otter skin. Strapped to his side hung a long, golden-hilted sword.

"Is it true," the king asked, "as everyone is saying, that you have brought wisdom with you?"

Bowing low, the Irishmen answered, "Yes, we have wisdom, and in the name of God, we are prepared to teach it to any worthy people who seek it."

Charlemagne ran his eyes over the strangers from the

Anne Askew

The Lord's Bold Witness

Anne Askew 1521–1546

Late in the reign of King Henry VIII, when the Church of England still clung to many false beliefs, an enraged husband burst into his home shouting for his wife, Anne. A priest had just taunted him saying, “Your wife is a heretic! She openly renounces the teachings of the church.”

Anne Askew, a beautiful young woman, came running to her husband. Grabbing her by the arm, he dragged her to the front door and violently threw her out of the house.

“Get out and never return,” he cried. Banished from her home and uncertain where to turn, Anne went to live near her brother in London. Her brother, a soldier in King Henry VIII’s bodyguard, introduced her to the Queen, Catherine Parr, and several devout Christian ladies of the court. Catherine was Henry’s sixth wife. Henry divorced two of his previous wives and had two others beheaded.

Before long, Askew and the Christian ladies were meeting daily in the queen’s private rooms to hear a sermon, pray, and study the Bible. Although the king had decreed all such religious meetings illegal, he did nothing to stop her. This was a difficult time for the Protestants of England. For although Henry VIII had separated the churches in England from the Church of Rome, he did so not because he embraced the ideas of the Protestant Reformation, but because he wanted a divorce, which the pope refused to grant. Henry and his supporters in the Church of England clung to the doctrines of the Catholic Church, many of which were against the clear teachings of the Bible.

The churchmen who hated the Reformation decided to make an example of Anne Askew. By attacking her, they

Richard Wurmbrand

Tortured for Christ

Richard Wurmbrand 1908–2001

In August 1944, one million Russian troops overran Romania and installed a communist government. Like the government of the Soviet Union, it was a brutal dictatorship, jailing and murdering tens of thousands of innocent people. Hoping to control and eventually wipe out Christianity, the communists confiscated church property and forbade ministers to work without licenses from the government. Soon after taking power, they convened a congress of all the Christian bodies in Romania. Four thousand priests, bishops, and ministers assembled in the great hall of the Parliament building before a huge portrait of Stalin, the Russian dictator. Under fear of imprisonment, torture and death, one Christian leader after another praised the new communist government, declaring that communism and Christianity had similar goals and could thrive together.

Sitting in the meeting were Richard Wurmbrand, a tall well-educated Lutheran pastor, and his wife, Sabina.

Sabina turned to her husband with flaming eyes and said, “Richard, stand up and wash away this shame from the face of Christ. They are spitting in His face.”

Richard whispered to her, “If I do so, you lose your husband.”

“I don’t want to have a coward as a husband,” Sabina replied.

So Richard arose and requested permission to speak. He walked to the rostrum, looked out over the sea of faces, and spoke into the microphone which broadcast the message live to the whole country. “It is our duty as ministers,” Wurmbrand reminded the audience, “to glorify Christ.