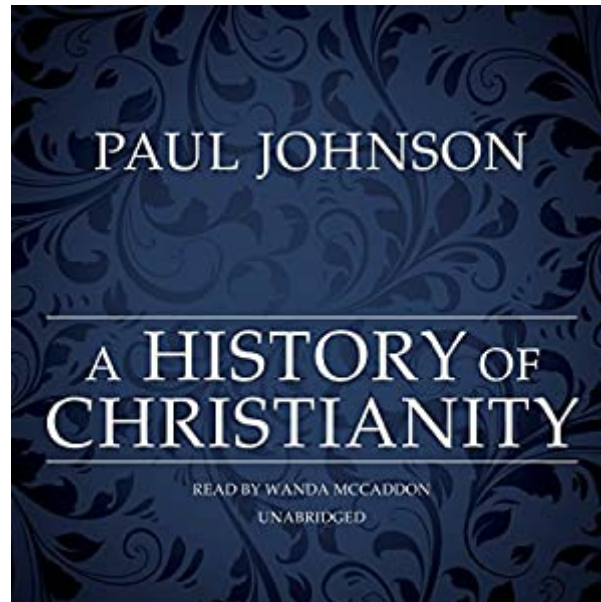




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A History Of Christianity



Synopsis

First published in 1976, Paul Johnson's exceptional study of Christianity has been loved and widely hailed for its intensive research, writing, and magnitude. Weaving a great range of material, the scholar and author Johnson creates an ambitious panoramic overview of the evolution of the Western world since the founding of a little-known "Jesus sect". With an unbiased and overall optimistic tone, Johnson traces the fantastic scope of the consequent sects of Christianity and the people who followed them, from the time of the apostle Paul through the Second Vatican Council. Information drawn from extensive and varied sources around the world makes this history as credible as it is reliable. Invaluable understanding of the framework of modern Christianity and its trials and tribulations throughout history has never before been contained in such a captivating work.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Paul Johnson is a fine historian who has given us a broad view of the history of Christianity with sufficient detail to give an insight into the human as well as the political factors that effected the story. I particularly appreciated his post-reformation account of the development of the Protestant churches. He is strongest on those originating in England, but give us a good background for understanding how we have gotten to where we are. I have read History of Christianity several times before and always find something new within it.

If there is a problem with this book, it is the title. This is the story of mainline Christianity (primarily the Catholic Church). It gives short shrift to other branches of Christianity. With this reservation, it is the best comprehensive history of the Church. Paul Johnson's approach is intellectual and fair. He ties the theological development of Christianity into the times. He makes the complicated development of these themes understandable -- a great accomplishment. I cannot believe that I had not stumbled on this book many years ago. It would have made clear many other things about which I had studied. Any serious reader interested in the history of Christianity will enjoy and value this book.

This is a must read for Christian and non-Christian alike. It is an honest reflection of the institution of Christianity with all its trouble reviewed. I wonder what Christ would think of the institutions so called for his name. And I pray for a person such as Desiderius Erasmus to bring back the beauty and majesty of the true faith which is Christ's message of hope.

Paul Johnson's "History of Christianity" is an in-depth history of the Christian church, from the first century through most of the 20th century. It is a deep, intellectual dive into church history. This is an institutional and ideological history of the Christian church. The chapters are long and aren't focused on the details but are focused on the evolution of the ideas. At times Johnson writes almost stream-of-consciousness, with one thought and theme flowing into another. However, despite the breadth and depth of the book, it is not a comprehensive history full of every little detail of church history. For example, Johnson doesn't even mention the adoption of the Nicene Creed, and the papacy's move to Avignon is mentioned in passing. Thus, it would not serve as a good reference. Johnson focuses on the conflict in the church and doesn't shy away from its institutional faults. However, he is a believer and does not bring cynicism to the table, just honesty. He does ultimately conclude that the church has provided hope and civilization to the West, and maybe it is God's will that church is in turmoil.

My first introduction to Paul Johnson was his *Modern Times Revised Edition: The World from the Twenties to the Nineties* (Perennial Classics). I really enjoyed his perspective on things and his prose was very easy to read and understand. I decided to follow up with this volume since I have always had a fascination with Christian History. Most of my previous experience with Christian history was gleaned out of Durant's "Story of Civilization" series and snippets of early Christian History from Josephus and Gibbon. This is really my first time reading a volume dedicated to

Christian History. I found that this book met my expectations. As expected it is difficult to compress 2000 years of history into a 500 page volume, but Johnson did an excellent job picking out highlights of Christian history. He weaves these facts into a big picture and brings out several things that I had not noticed before. An example would be roles the different orders of Monks played in society. I hadn't realized how diverse the different societies were, and some actually did play an important role in society at various times. The book consists of eight parts looking at the beginnings, the transition to a state religion, the time as a state religion, the rise of opposition within the church, the reformation with focus on Erasmus, the time of warring between Protestantism and Catholicism, a look at missionary work and the expansion outside of Europe, and finally a look at Triumphalism. Beyond that division though, there were no subdivisions, so it is difficult to use this as a reference book. There is an index that helps, but this is mainly a good book to get the big picture of Christian history. I recommend this book for someone looking for a good overview of history, but not for someone looking for a good reference book.

For someone who has just turned to this subject of history. I was very pleasantly surprised by this massive, well written and fact filled book about Christianity. I particularly like the section on the Early Church and the Dark Ages. One point put forth that hit hard was the theory that because Christianity was not a fixed religion as it pertains to dogma. This caused the easy conversion of the majority of Christians in the Middle East to Islam with its theory of one God as opposed to the Trinity. It also helped strengthen the Papacy by ending competition with the various forms of competing theology for control of Europe's soul. Also the background on Judaism and how it became the base or foundation of the early church was very well written and covered. Altogether this book is well worth the time & money spent.

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