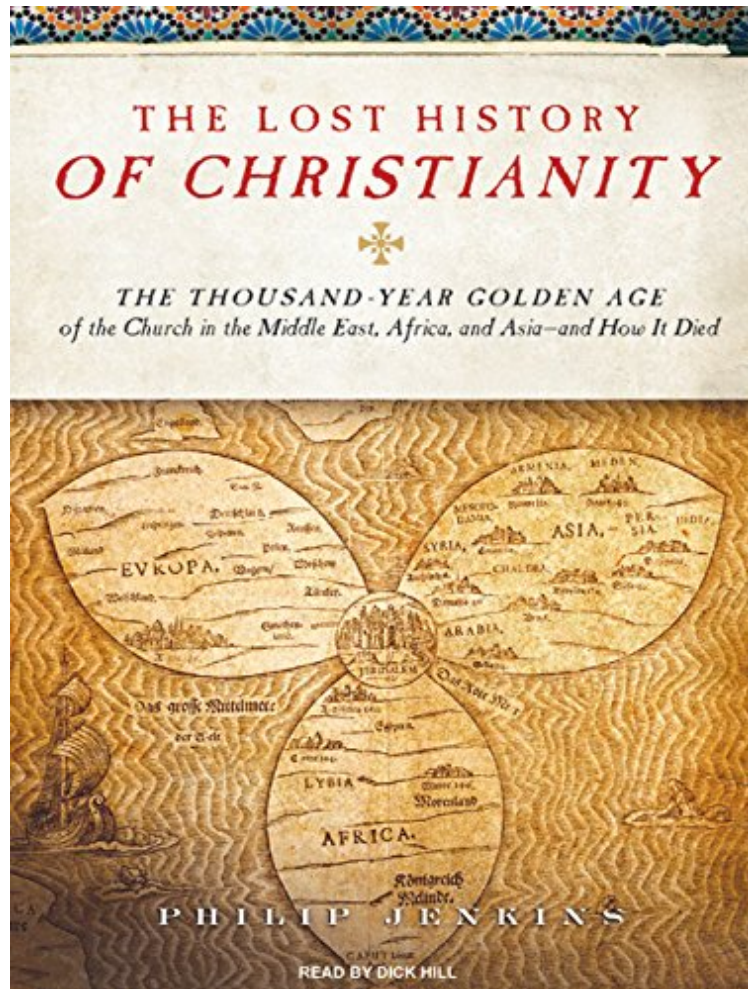


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The Lost History of Christianity: The Thousand-Year Golden Age of the Church in the Middle East, Africa, and Asia---and How It Died

Philip Jenkins

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Philip Jenkins : The Lost History of Christianity: The Thousand-Year Golden Age of the Church in the Middle East, Africa, and Asia---and How It Died before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Lost History of Christianity: The Thousand-Year Golden Age of the Church in the Middle East, Africa, and Asia---and How It Died:

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. The Original Middle Eastern Church: An important and brilliant historical survey of a little known aspect of Church history By Ranger The Middle East is a blind spot for most

Americans. With the exception of the crusades and 20th century events surrounding the Arab-Israeli conflict, most Americans and Europeans know little of the region's history. Few today are aware of the Middle East's diverse, pre-Islamic culture or the religious, political and ethnic environment that birthed a Christian heresy called Islam, a heresy that became a movement with a worldview and dogma that eventually dominated the region. Yes, the Middle East had a pre-Islamic history and for a thousand years after the death and resurrection of Christ, that history was largely Christian. Jenkins has provided a real service to the church in tracking the growth, dominance and eventual decline of the Asian church, including forgotten sects and sub-groups like the Jacobites, Nestorians, Arians and Syriacs. Eastern missions to places like China and Central Asia are narrated here. And the strengths of surviving sects such as the Copts of Egypt are studied alongside neighboring churches such as the one in Tunisia that simply disappeared during the advent of Islam. Finally, Jenkins also shows how Islam was able to co-opt Christianity in its once glorious strongholds through a mixture of cunning intimidation and outright brutality, as fit the times. *The Lost History of Christianity* is of interest to students of religion (Christian and Muslim), Middle Eastern and Church history, and Christian ministry. It would also help students of prophecy better grasp the issues captured by John in the Revelation -- a Bible book that was written to and for the Middle Eastern Church. This is by far the most interesting, informative and enjoyable history book I've read all year. Highly, highly recommended.

3 of 3 people found the following review helpful. Highlights of little known Christian evangelists

By Pogophile

Lot of emphasis on certain little known / little documented personalities, presented as a series of anecdotal stories -- but not strict chronological order. Considering the available evidence, a pretty good job of transmitting the knowledge. Still, would have liked a broader scope written in a more linear fashion that would keep the flow of history more clearly in the foreground of the text.

40 of 42 people found the following review helpful. My greatest critique would be Jenkins seeming distaste for Catholic Orthodoxy

By Aaron Duvall

The Lost History of Christianity covers an area of Christian History that is sorely lacking attention. Jenkins reminds us that the so called "dark ages" were actually a time of flourishing and progress in the Eastern church. He also lines up arguments against modern criticism that Christianity is simply a white Eurocentric religion, by recognizing the roots and influence the Eastern Church had up till 1500. I was struck by the seeming evidence that we have romanticized that the Church is built on the blood of the martyrs. While this may be true in some or even many forms of Christianity, it is also evident that there are places where Christianity was crushed, burned, and persecuted almost entirely out of existence. The overall tone is generally charitable, recognizing that while there is nothing inherent in Islam to cause it to be more brutal or persecutory, than Christianity or Judaism, there have certainly been mass exterminations in the name of Allah, perhaps the most brutal during the Armenian Genocide in the early 1900's. Jenkins, however, is an equal opportunist and shows where the Catholic Church was at times less tolerant, and more prejudice towards the Eastern Church than the Islamic movement was. My greatest critique would be Jenkins seeming distaste for Catholic Orthodoxy. He takes random potshots, and at times goes to great lengths to show how problematic Catholic rule was. He seems to revel in the idea that groups left the church early on and still flourished, and also enjoys pointing out how the Eastern Church preferred Islamic rule over Catholic subjection. (After starting this review I did some research and found out that Jenkins is a former Catholic who has converted to Anglicanism. Perhaps this is part of the issue.) Within this critique I was moderately frustrated with his treatment of general orthodoxy which he shrugs off as European and Catholic. The councils, while perhaps imperfect, must be seen with at least some sense of authoritative Spirit involvement, if not we lose a large portion of what most if not all would call orthodoxy. (He does agree that the Nestorians were not as far removed from Christianity as the gnostic heresy, which I appreciated). My second critique is the pace. At times Jenkins seems to bog down into every possible (and at times un-needed) detail, then at others times he will gloss over from so high it's difficult to see the major themes. All things considered "*The Lost History*" pays attention to a part of Christianity that is rarely considered. It looks charitably at the major players involved, and it pieces together a backstory that helps frame much of the turmoil we are still seeing in the Middle East.

The Lost History of Christianity will change how we understand Christian and world history. Leading religion scholar Philip Jenkins reveals a vast Christian world to the east of the Roman Empire and how the earliest, most influential churches of the East--those that had the closest link to Jesus and the early church--died. In this paradigm-shifting book, Jenkins recovers a lost history, showing how the center of Christianity for centuries used to be the Middle East, Asia, and Africa, extending as far as China. Without this lost history, we can't understand Islam or the Middle East, especially Iran, Iraq, and Syria. Complete with maps, statistics, and fascinating stories and characters that no one in the media or the general public has ever heard of, *The Lost History of Christianity* will immerse the listener in a lost world that was once the heart of Christianity.

From Publishers Weekly

Starred . Revisionist history is always great fun, and never more so than when it is persuasively and cogently argued. Jenkins, the Penn State history professor whose book *The Next Christendom* made waves several years ago, argues that it's not exactly a new thing that Christianity is making terrific inroads in Asia and Africa. A thousand years ago, those continents were more Christian than Europe, and Asian Christianity in particular

was the locus of tremendous innovations in mysticism, monasticism, theology and secular knowledge. The little-told story of Christianity's decline in those two continents hastened by Mongol invasions, the rise of Islam and Buddhism, and internecine quarrels sensitively and imaginatively rendered. Jenkins sometimes challenges the assertions of other scholars, including Karen Armstrong and Elaine Pagels, but provides compelling evidence for his views. The book is marvelously accessible for the lay reader and replete with fascinating details to help personalize the ambitious sweep of global history Jenkins undertakes. This is an important counterweight to previous histories that have focused almost exclusively on Christianity in the West. (Nov.) Copyright Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved. From Booklist*Starred * Jenkins turns from the recent history and trend projections of such invaluable books as *The Next Christendom* (2002) and *Gods Continent* (2007) to a much broader canvas, roughly from the fifth century to the twentieth, within which the first global Christian establishment persisted for a thousand years. The predominant churches of that establishment were Nestorian and Jacobite, sufficiently different in conceptions of the nature of Christ to be considered heretical by Catholics and Orthodox. They consisted of hundreds of bishoprics from Egypt and Abyssinia to India and China, with the greatest concentration in Mesopotamia. For centuries, they got along well with neighbor faiths, especially Islam. But the pressure of invaders into Islamic-ruled lands, from the East (Mongols and Turks) even more devastatingly than from the West (the Crusades), and the fact that Christians often allied with those invaders, eventually provoked savage reaction from Muslims, especially, and, most lethally, from Islamicized Turks. So secular politics tolled the long death knell of Nestorian-Jacobite Christianity. In leaner, clearer prose than ever before, Jenkins outlines and analyzes this history, which few present-day Christians have even heard of. This may be the most eye-opening history book of the year. --Ray Olson Jenkins is one of America's top religious scholars. (Forbes). . . persuasively and cogently argued . . . marvelously accessible for the lay reader and replete with fascinating details to help personalize the ambitious sweep of global history Jenkins undertakes. This is an important counterweight to previous histories that have focused almost exclusively on Christianity in the West. (Publishers Weekly, starred review) In leaner, clearer prose than ever before, Jenkins outlines and analyzes this history, which few present-day Christians have even heard of. This may be the most eye-opening history book of the year. (Booklist) Philip Jenkins' book is a tour de force in historical retrieval and reconstruction, a work of scholarly restoration that strikes an overdue balance in the story of Christianity. It is studded with insight, with the story presented in a lively and lucid style. (Lamin Sanneh, Professor of World Christianity and Professor of History, Yale University) Philip Jenkins always writes well on very interesting topics. This time his topic is more than interesting—it is essential reading for anyone with any interest in the history of Christianity. (Rodney Stark, author of *The Rise of Christianity*)...an exceptionally fine study of a great swathe of Christian history, hugely important in the Christian story but very little known. This thoughtful, elegant and learned survey will remedy the neglect of a subject which students of religion absolutely need to know about. (Diarmaid MacCulloch, Professor of the History of the Church, University of Oxford and author of *The Reformation*) In this highly readable and sobering exploration of how religions - including our own - grow, falter and sometimes die, Jenkins adds a unique dimension to present day religious studies in a voice and style that non-specialists can also appreciate. (Harvey Cox, Hollis Professor of Divinity, Harvard University) [Jenkins] depiction of the long Christian history of Asia, Mesopotamia, and the greater Middle East is both a much-needed education and a spiritually fruitful provocation. (Books Culture) *The Lost History of Christianity* is a fascinating study of the first thousand-plus years of the Church--a Church rooted in the Middle East, Africa, and Asia. We have much to learn from the tale of its reach, its particular way of being Christian, and its eventual decomposition (Beliefnet.com (One of the Best Religious Books of 2008)) Using his skill to discredit murky thinking and propose new understandings where the old no longer serve a good purpose, Jenkins offers yet another jewel in what is becoming a crown of paradigm-shattering studies. [This book] will amply reward your investment of time and attention. (America)