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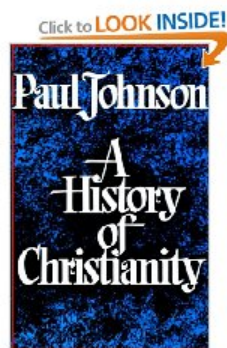
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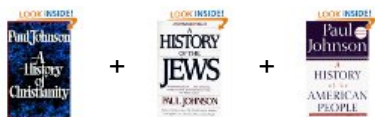
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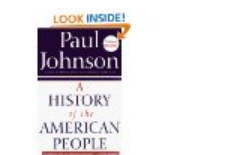


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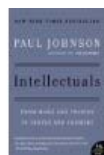
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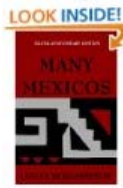
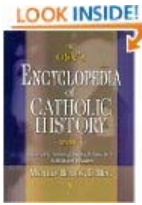
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**solid introduction to the history of Christianity,**

January 19, 2003

By [Yalensian](#) - [See all my reviews](#)

Given the two millennia which the history of Christianity fills, Johnson's work is necessarily limited in what it covers and in the detail it devotes to certain topics. In a book of this nature (one designed for a general readership), much is left out. But the "spine" is there, and Johnson traces the development of the Church from the time of Christ (with some brief background information on Jewish sects before Christ) through, approximately, Vatican II and Humanae Vitae.

The Catholic Church is more the topic of the book than is Christianity in general. Perhaps this results from the age of Catholicism versus the age Protestant denominations. After all, for three quarters of the period covered, the Catholic Church was virtually alone on the scene, at least as far as Western Europe (Johnson's focus) was concerned. But even in the post-Reformation era, Protestantism receives attention that pales in comparison to that given Catholicism. And the Eastern Orthodox churches are mentioned virtually not at all after the 1054 split, except to compare the Church's adherence to Latin while the Orthodox churches accepted the native tongues of its members. All of this is fine, of course, but the title is somewhat misleading in this regard. A better title might have been "A History of Catholicism" or "A History of Christianity in the West."

That said, this is still an excellent book, and the material it includes is examined excellently. Theological doctrine and debates necessarily enter the story (such as the Trinity and the Pope's infallibility), but this is not a history of doctrine and its development. Rather, Johnson focuses on the evolution of Christianity (or, if you like, the Church) as a political, social, legal, and economic institution, one centered in Western Europe but also attempting to radiate outward--through the Crusades, missionary work, and, later, attempting to establish a foothold in North America. A key element of the story is the church-versus-state relationship, which changed over time. At times, the Church was the dominant player, and at other times, it yielded much authority to European monarchs. Much of the history witnesses series of give-and-take between church and state and, of course, concludes with the triumph of the state and also with the virtual separation of the world into two (sometimes competing) spheres.

This is an excellent treatment of Christian history, summarizing in 500 pages what could legitimately fill (and has filled) many thousands of pages. It is more than mere narrative as well, for Johnson includes many insightful analyses and draws thought-provoking conclusions. The book does not assume too much pre-existing knowledge of the subject (although having read the Bible, or at least Acts, would probably be helpful for the first part of the book), and it serves as a very fine starting point for studying the history of Christianity.

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110 of 118 people found the following review helpful:

**Excellent work by Johnson, historian and mistress-spanker,** October 27, 2000By [Hans Friedrich](#) (Greenwood, CA United States) - [See all my reviews](#)

Paul Johnson is easily the best pop-historian writing today. He's so good, his books almost qualify as serious academics- really the only thing that keeps them "popular" literature is their astonishingly ambitious scope, far too wide to facilitate truly serious study. But it is this breadth of scope which I love most about them. Johnson writes these sweeping studies of peoples, movements and centuries that provide a framework for understanding that is simply invaluable. In his History of Christianity, he

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**Tendentious and Misleading, even if "Entertaining"**

Paul Johnson passes as an "entertaining" or "popular" writer of history largely because he is provocative and one-sided.

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Published 12 months ago by Charles F. Shonk

**Very readable and interesting look at Christian history**

My first introduction to Paul Johnson was his Modern Times Revised Edition: The World from the Twenties to the Nineties (Perennial Classics). [Read more](#)

Published 13 months ago by Jeffrey Van Wagoner

**Tracing your christian roots**

This author does a great job of discussing what is known and what is generally accepted about the history of the Christian religion from Jesus' time to modern day.

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Published 18 months ago by Michael R. Beatty

**A good solid read about a very complex subject**

For some one 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.

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Published 22 months ago by David D. Lawson

**best history**

This is the best history in modern times and newer histories fall short of content and readability.

Published 23 months ago by Kenneth B. Robinson

**It is a very anecdotal book**

Undoubly, this is a book written by a very documented and undstanding author, but what is written not let the reader makes a great christianity hisToRy picture.

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Published on February 26, 2007 by José

has done it again.

I've heard that Johnson is Roman Catholic, but he doesn't come across that way in his book. He's very unbiased toward any one tradition. But that's not to say he's an impartial observer. He alternately lambastes and praises almost every major figure in church history from Augustine to John Calvin to the spineless Pius XII.

The narrative is constructed as a tension between the forces of humanism in the church, and the more conservative elements. Both sides have had their problems, often springing from dogmatism and overzealous application of their own philosophies to the lives of others, through the instrument of the state. Of all the personalities treated in the book, his favorite seems to be Erasmus, who he sees as almost the ideal Christian- intellectual, but with conviction, open-minded, but with a foundation for his thought.

There's not much pre-A.D. history provided as background in the book, but this doesn't detract from the quality of the history that is given. I assume that A History of Christianity takes up where Johnson's History of the Jews left off, so I plan on reading it before long. My only real regrets about this book are that it doesn't deal more with the Eastern Orthodox church and that it ends in 1970. I'm also interested in reading an academic study of American fundamentalism, a movement which I find fascinating in its strangeness, although Johnson only touches on it briefly here. I'd highly recommend A History of Christianity to anyone with even a passing interest in church history. The context it provides for further study is invaluable and the book, although a long read, is a delight.

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58 of 62 people found the following review helpful:

**Popular, but solid history**, August 4, 2006

By [R. W. Schwerdt](#) (Colorado Springs) - [See all my reviews](#)

This review is from: [History of Christianity \(Hardcover\)](#)

I needed to use this for a graduate level course. For that, I thought it was less than suitable. But this is a solid history, that gives some depth on a popular level. It's aimed at a general audience, and has little citation of direct sources. Still, Johnson is a solid historian, and I'd recommend the book to anyone interested in the history of the Christian faith and church.

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### Complete, Non

#### denominational

This book is not an easy read but neither is it covering an easy subject. It starts from the Immediate pre-Christian era and continues to the modern period.

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Published on February 16, 2007 by C. D. Eddie

### Well done

For such a major topic, I think he covers it quite well. It is indeed the history of Christianity. Though a Christian himself he neither glosses over Christian atrocities nor... [Read more](#)

Published on February 7, 2007 by Lesley J. Hahn

### Major Flaw

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Published on December 4, 2006 by Munir

### Good summary of Christian

#### history

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