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The First Thousand Years: A Global History Of Christianity



Synopsis

How did a community that was largely invisible in the first two centuries of its existence go on to remake the civilizations it inhabited, culturally, politically, and intellectually?Â Beginning with the life of Jesus, Robert Louis Wilken narrates the dramatic spread and development of Christianity over the first thousand years of its history. Moving through the formation of early institutions, practices, and beliefs to the transformations of the Roman world after the conversion of Constantine, he sheds new light on the subsequent stories of Christianity in the Latin West, the Byzantine and Slavic East, the Middle East, and Central Asia. Through a selected narration of particularly noteworthy persons and events,Â Wilken demonstrates how the coming of Christianity set in motion one of the most profound revolutions the world has known.Â This is not a story limited to the West; rather, Christian communities in Ethiopia, Nubia, Armenia, Georgia, Persia, Central Asia, India, and China shaped the course of Christian history.Â The rise and spread of IslamÂ had a lasting impact on the future of Christianity, and several chapters are devoted to the early experiences of Christians under Muslim rule. Wilken reminds us that the career of Christianity is characterized by decline and attrition as well as by growth and expansion.Â Ten years in the making and the result of a lifetime of study, this is Robert Louis Wilkenâ€™s summa, a moving, reflective, and commanding account from a scholar at the height of his powers.

Book Information

Paperback: 416 pages

Publisher: Yale University Press (November 12, 2013)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0300198388

ISBN-13: 978-0300198386

Product Dimensions: 6.2 x 0.9 x 9.2 inches

Shipping Weight: 1.3 pounds (View shipping rates and policies)

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Best Sellers Rank: #49,985 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #180 inÂ Books > History > Ancient Civilizations #207 inÂ Books > Christian Books & Bibles > Churches & Church Leadership > Church History #207 inÂ Books > History > World > Religious > Christianity

Customer Reviews

Robert Louis Wilken's "The First Thousand" years is an exemplary survey of Christianity's first millenium. Wilken starts with the life of Jesus and follows an approach encyclopedically organized

around topics and geography to close with the Christianization of the Slavs in the 10th Century. Along the way, he touches on chapters devoted to architecture, christological issues, the rise of Islam, music, China, India, Northern Europe, Justinian and Charlemagne. That's a lot of ground to cover. Wilken is a wonderful prose stylist and his writing is graceful and informative. He also brings his own perspective to the survey and so we are treated to insights and topics that readers don't normally get in usual surveys. For example, those familiar with Wilken's previous works will greet the discussions of Celsus [from *The Christians as the Romans Saw Them*] and the Cappadocian Fathers and Maximus the Confessor [from *The Spirit of Early Christian Thought: Seeking the Face of God*] like they were renewing an acquaintance with old friends. As a survey, Wilken does cover some familiar ground - and strangely he does repeat information provided under one topic when he moves to tangentially related topics - but by and large Wilken's choice of topics is new, particularly in the decision to give non-European Christianity the attention it deserves.

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