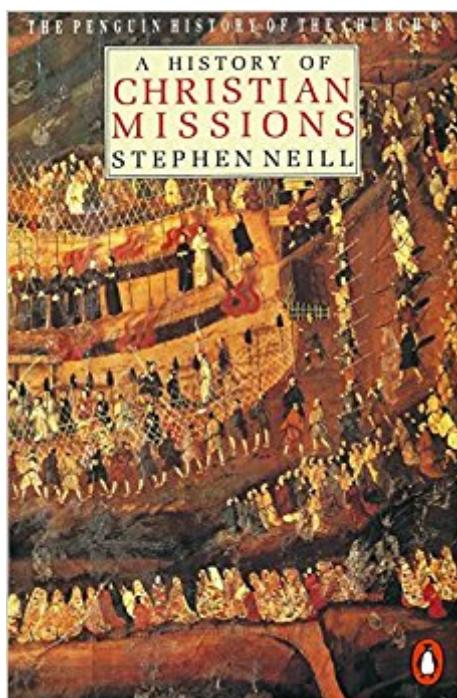


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A History Of Christian Missions (Penguin History Of The Church)



Synopsis

A History of Christian Missions traces the expansion of Christianity from its origins in the Middle East to Rome, the rest of Europe and the colonial world, and assesses its position as a major religious force worldwide. Many of the world's religions have not actively sought converts, largely because they have been too regional in character. Buddhism, Islam and Christianity, however, are the three chief exceptions to this, and Christianity in particular has found a home in almost every country in the world. Professor Stephen Neill's comprehensive and authoritative survey examines centuries of missionary activity, beginning with Christ and working through the Crusades and the colonization of Asia and Africa up to the present day, concluding with a shrewd look ahead to what the future may hold for the Christian Church.

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Customer Reviews

Stephen Neill (1900-1984) was the Anglican Bishop of Tirunelveli in southern India. Reverend Owen Chadwick is considered one of the foremost historians of church history. He is a former Regius Professor of Modern History at Cambridge and was Vice-Chancellor of the university. He is also an ordained Anglican priest.

Stephen Neill's *The History of Christian Missions* provides a concise overview of the spread of the global church that is quite solid and thorough in its discussion of

Neill's "old world" missions from the apostolic era through the colonial period of the 1800s, but is lacking in its treatment of missions from 1900 onward, and particularly in the regions of North and South America. In the first half of the book, Neill provides exemplary and well-researched discussion of the church's spread through the Roman Empire and medieval Europe. He goes to great lengths to avoid the "Western bias" that has plagued treatments of the ancient church, being careful to recount not only the spread of mainstream Christianity through the Roman Church, but also the spread of minority movements such as the Copts and the Celtic missionaries, and even sects that were decreed heretical, such as the work of Ulfilas (a follower of Arius) and the ancient Nestorian outreach into China. Neill is to be commended for this section of his work. Writing from his own background as an Anglican missionary in India, Neill tends to favor discussion of Indian and South Asian Christianity. His strongest and most detailed accounts deal with India, China, Japan, and Southeast Asia. His accounts of European and African evangelization are also remarkably thorough. As his study draws on through the period of the Protestant Reformation, Neill's ecclesiology tends to show stronger and stronger, as he gives more time and emphasis to detailed discussions of the complexities of the high church polity on the mission field, with less emphasis on the low church missionaries and their work. This devolves into blatant editorial bias as he delves into twentieth-century missions and the ensuing split between liberal and fundamentalist groups. His treatment of this era focuses exclusively on the mainline denominations that formed the World Council of Churches, and there is no mention of the many early Fundamentalist and later Evangelical missions that arose and eventually eclipsed the mission outreach of the mainline denominations. Tellingly, the updated edition published in 1986 makes absolutely no mention of the Lausanne Convention or its effects on world missions. Neill's perspective is blinded to certain major factors in world missions due to his "high ecclesiology" that tends to emphasize geographic expansion of the church across political rather than ethnic boundaries. He tends to consider an entire nation "reached" once some branch of the church has become sufficiently established to support itself. (The exception to this statement would be Neill's treatment of India, presumably since he is quite aware from personal

experience of the need for a distinct manifestation of the church in each of India’s many people groups.) This is most glaringly evidenced in his discussion of the history of missions in the Americas. He provides a brief discussion of how the church became established in the early colonial areas of Canada and the United States, but gives hardly any discussion to the later evangelization of the various indigenous groups across the American and Canadian West. Similarly, he considers the work of missions in Latin America to have been completed once the formal organization of the Roman Catholic Church in those regions was finished. After discussion of the Roman Catholic expansion during the colonial era that ended in the late 1700s (143-150), Neill provides no further mention of outreach in South America until his brief, condescending dismissal of Protestant outreach in the late 1800s (328-330). He gives no consideration to the fact that many indigenous people groups in Latin America are still without the gospel, even though they might technically fall under the jurisdiction of a Roman Catholic diocese. Neill is highly critical of later protestant efforts to evangelize these groups, arguing that they were simply attempting to “re-evangelize” Roman Catholic areas (328). Indeed, his discussion of twentieth-century missions in Latin America focuses nearly exclusively on the development of liberation theology, with the exception of two pages that briefly summarize some mainline Protestant efforts in the region (470-472). Considering Neill’s extraordinary efforts to provide an all-inclusive treatment of world missions in the early periods of Church history, his bias towards mainline denominations in later periods is a significant flaw in his work. His work could demonstrate more balance if he was to reduce the amount of space given to the complex minutiae of ecclesiastical polity in India, and instead include a more well-rounded discussion of missions in the New World. One can hardly consider a “complete” history of world missions that lacks any mention of Nate Saint, William Cameron Townsend, or the 1974 Lausanne Convention!

The history of Christian missions is a fascinating and multifaceted topic, and Stephen Neill does a decent job of distilling it in his book. Given that from the issuing of the Great Commission to the present, Christian missions have had nearly two millennia to spread throughout the globe, a comprehensive study would take several volumes. (Such a comprehensive study was attempted by Kenneth Scott LaTourette in his seven-volume "History of the Expansion of Christianity." This work, which is detailed beyond belief, suffers only in that it covers only to around the middle of the twentieth century.) All of which is to say that Neill’s work is not comprehensive. However, it provides a decent introduction to the major periods in the mission of the church over its history. Even so,

some of the fascinating stories are told more briefly than I would have liked. (Although Neill makes a valiant attempt to describe the Jesuit missionary work in Asia during the age of exploration and shortly thereafter, I found that he glossed over many of the fascinating details of the penetration of Christianity into cultures, such as the Chinese, that were initially thoroughly resistant.) I should also note that the Second Edition, which is the last update (as far as I know), was done in 1986. As a result, many of the more recent stories are left untold, such as the rapid spread of Christianity in sub-Saharan Africa and the Pentecostal revival in South America, the reopening of the former Communist countries of Eastern Europe to the Gospel, and the advance of the faith in the face of persecution in China. Perhaps some day someone will do us a service and will update this book so that it will include these fascinating stories.

good school book

This book is very interesting. It is written as scholarly work and takes a lot of attention to understand. But it is a great book for anyone who wants to know the history of Christian Missions from the very beginning.

Good

I got the book soon and book is okay. come together with another book . I don't have much requirement, just want it come on time and it did. no big issue on the book.

Ordered it as required reading for a seminary course. Great book.

Fast Deliver/Good Product

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