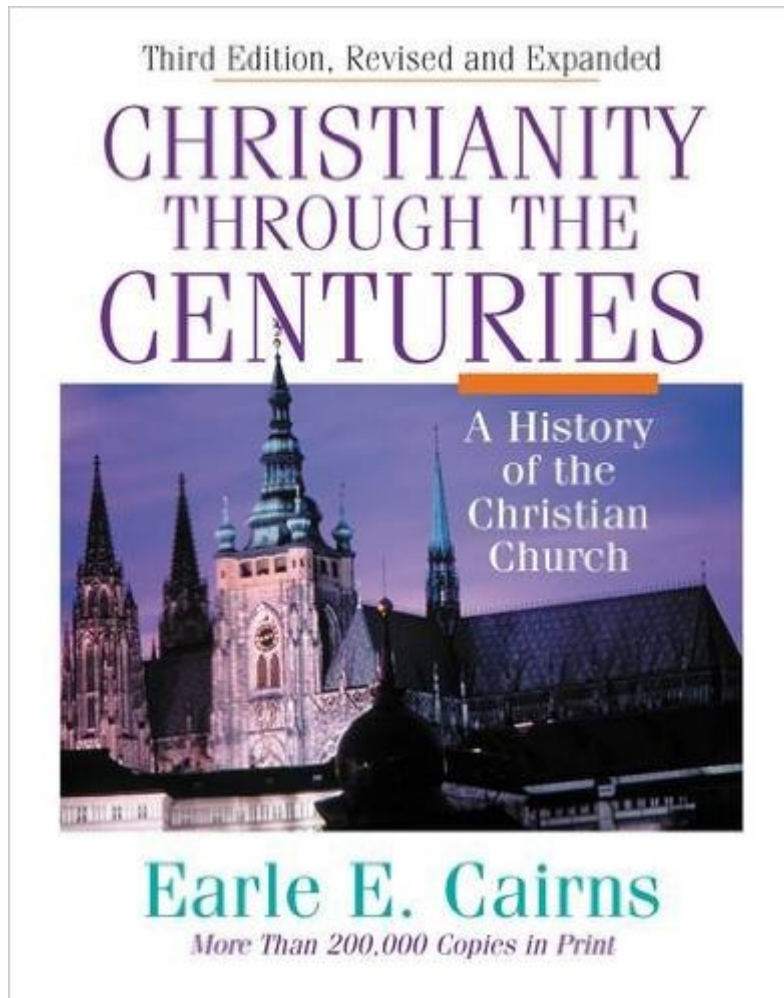


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Christianity Through The Centuries



Synopsis

The third edition of Christianity Through the Centuries brings the reader up-to-date by discussing events and developments in the church into the 1990s. This edition has been redesigned with new typography and greatly improved graphics to increase clarity, accessibility, and usefulness. - New chapters examine recent trends and developments (expanding the last section from 2 chapters to 5) - New photos. Over 100 photos in all -- more than twice the number in the previous edition - Single-column format for greater readability and a contemporary look - Improved maps (21) and charts (39) Building on the features that have made Christianity Through the Centuries an indispensable text, the author not only explains the development of doctrines, movements, and institutions, but also gives attention to "the impact of Christianity on its times and to the mark of the times on Christianity."

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Earle Cairns take the reader on an epic journey of the history of the church from the day of Pentecost to the middle of the last decade of the 20th Century. The 560-page volume gives the reader an overview of the people, events, movements, doctrines, and cultures that sometimes shaped the church and that the church often shaped. The author shares little known details (Charlemagne was 7 foot tall), while presenting the broad-brush stroke of two thousand years of history. The book was written from a conservative, nondenominational perspective. Though the author is from the Reformed tradition, I thought the book was thoughtful, fair, and balanced. It is easy to read and contains an abundance of pictures, photographs, maps and charts. Christianity

Through the Centuries is an outstanding introductory presentation of Church history that I would heartily recommend. Earle E. Cairns is professor emeritus at Wheaton College in Wheaton, Illinois. He is a member of the American Society of Church History, the American Historical Association, and the Conference on Faith and History.

I believe this fine work by Dr. Cairns is in process of becoming a conservative evangelical classic. Almost everyone I have talked with who has gone through a seminary or Bible College survey of Church History course has used this text in some capacity. It is very accurate and surprisingly readable. Cairns does a great job of showing Church History in the context of world history, and the interdependencies of the two. Although a strong Christian world-view is evident, Cairns objectively analyzes various movements and events and does not bless or condemn in wholesale fashion. The purchase price is a bargain for the wealth of information and this is a keeper for the library. You'll refer to it again and again. I do hope that the publisher will continue to update it, as the decade which has passed since the last edition has been ripe with significant events and movements.

This book is a good introduction to the history of Christianity. Cairns was a former professor of history at Wheaton College several decades ago. As such he writes from a conservative, evangelical perspective. The book has several benefits to recommend it:

- * It is written as a simple introduction to the history of Christianity, and so one can read it without having a background in church history.
- * The book does as good a job as can be expected integrating the history of Christianity with general history. The history of Christianity is shown in its broader historical context.
- * The book is written as a textbook. As such, it is clearly organized with an explicit outline. The whole scope of the history of Christianity is divided and subdivided into periods; each chapter is further outlined.
- * The book has several helpful charts.
- * The style of the book is clear, informative, and engaging.
- * Many books are recommended at the end of each chapter as guides for further study.

The book has a few drawbacks, but they aren't very significant. Cairns can get a bit preachy in a few places. The chapters about recent history read like a descriptive lists of groups and movements rather than an analysis of the relationships between groups and broader movements, but the earlier chapters are much better. On the whole, this is the book that I would recommend to anyone who either wanted to read just one book on church history or who is beginning the study of church history.

What is good about this book is its clarity and readability. It also contains many maps and charts.

Although I am myself Protestant I am ashamed of the strong calvinist bias of this book. Very little is said of the Catholic Thomas Aquinas, although he is probably the greatest philosopher and theologian of all times. Worse: the little that is said about Aquinas is false (accusing him of creating a two contradictories realms of knowledge, truths, whereas it is on the contrary Aquinas who solved this problem). The views of Augustine are also misrepresented (Cairns follows the common protestant myth that Augustine believed that faith was prior to reason, p. 229), this just to name a few examples. Some Catholic major thinkers of the 20th century (Maritain, Gilson) are simply ignored. All what is Catholic is under- and misrepresented. Calvinists thinkers are on the contrary over-represented, and too well spoken of. Concerning Christian movements, the book contains also many mistakes (e. g. that Darby founded the Brethren movement! He never did, only joined them later; when he had become influential he created a schism and took full control of a large fraction, the "exclusive" brethren). Or for example there is no mention that the montanist heretics were charismatic. The author is very (too) enthousiast about some charismatic ideas such as the (short term) growth movement of the third charismatic wave. It is a pity that he never speaks of the authentic spiritual revival happening through the work of Norman Geisler and J. P. Moreland. Although I am also an evangelical, I must say that I find the author much too uncritical of the evangelical movement (there is no mention of the scandal of the evangelical mind, and the emphasis on experiences and emotions).

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