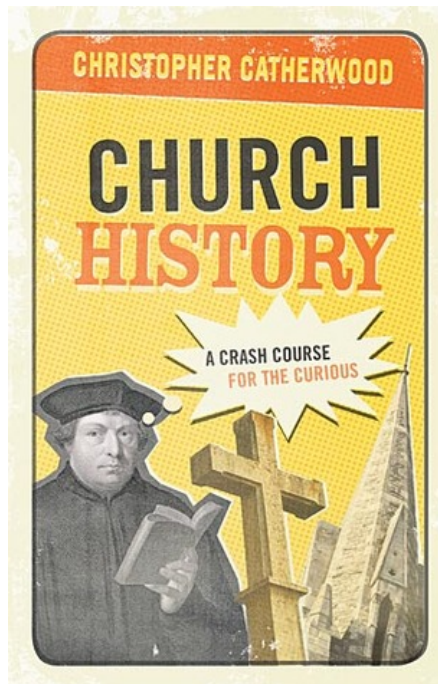




Church History: A Crash Course for the Curious

Christopher Catherwood

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In this concise, accessible guide, author Christopher Catherwood takes his readers through the history of the faith, educating them about the uniqueness of Christianity from its birth to the diverse, global Evangelical Church we know today. *Church History* is the perfect place to start for anyone who wants to know where to begin this quest for knowledge.

Enjoy discovering more about the lives of men and women from various times and places, not only to better understand the church, but also to know how to live wisely in this age. These are some of the many reasons why history is so important.

From those who desire to learn more about their fellow followers of Jesus Christ throughout history to those who want to learn more about church for themselves, this book will test you to dig deeper in your faith.

Church History: A Crash Course for the Curious Details

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From Reader Review Church History: A Crash Course for the Curious for online ebook

Rob Sumrall says

Christopher Catherwood's *Church History: A Crash Course for the Curious* is a mixed bag of tricks. While there were flashes of brilliance, the book only superficially dealt with history of the church and left me (and lots of other readers, I would assume) still curious.

Let's start with the positive....

Catherwood's handling of religious influence on the founding of America is brilliant. I find many modern voices over-emphasizing the religious influence on America's founding fathers, turning a willfully blind eye towards the Deistic views that informed some Founders' seemingly Christian speech. Many of our founders, based upon their own writings, would fall outside of orthodox Christianity. However, other liberal voices negate any Christian influence on the founding of America. Such a view is also anachronistic and ignorant. Catherwood, as a Brit, speaks in a balanced way when it comes to America's founding. He writes, "So while it is natural for us as evangelicals to emphasize the Puritans - so many of whose views and values we share as deeply as ever today - it is historically quite inaccurate to see the origins of the USA through Puritan spectacles. When we talk - anachronistically it should be said - of reclaiming America, do we mean Puritan New England or Cavalier Virginia? Both, for good or ill, are equally America" (144).

Catherwood also offers the best definition of 20th Century neo-orthodoxy I have ever read. He calls it "a fuzzy, halfway house theology that recognized the failings of Liberalism and yet was unable to make a full return to biblically orthodox theology" (193). I wish my seminary professors had been this clear when describing Karl Barth and his contemporaries!

Church History falls short on several accounts. Most significantly, it gives far too superficial a treatment to most major historical events that shaped Christianity. For example, Luther, who is given a far more generous treatment than others, is covered in 8 pages. Poor Calvin gets three pages. Johnathan Edwards gets only one page. Curious readers should consider instead *Christian History Made Easy* by Timothy Paul Jones or, for the more ambitious reader, Justo Gonzalez's excellent two volume *The Story of Christianity*.

Did you know that Catherwood was the maternal grandson of Martyn Lloyd-Jones? If you didn't, you will after you read this book. Catherwood mentions his relationship to Lloyd-Jones on **numerous** occasions. One can hardly fault Catherwood for his sense of pride being connected to Lloyd-Jones. After all, the Good Doctor may have been THE preeminent preacher of the preceding century. However, the frequency with which Dr. Lloyd-Jones is mentioned and quoted is off-putting. The book could have been titled, *Church History: Through the eyes of Dr. Martyn Lloyd-Jones*.

In closing, I think this is a nice book written by an author who is vastly more knowledgeable and talented than this book demonstrates. I think there are better options for the reader curious in church history.

Chris Wray says

This was OK, good in parts but overall not especially good. I think it lacks the focus it would have needed to really work well as a brief outline of church history.

My main issue with the book is that it was trying to be a primer on church history and also draw some of the outlines of evangelical theology, and ends up doing neither particularly well. I understand what the author was trying to do, as all human history (and particularly church history) has a theological component, I just feel that it could have been executed better, and I was left a bit disappointed. It's always going to be difficult to cover 2000 years of church history in 200 pages, and some sections were very tightly written and gave a great overview of events, but overall it had a bit of a muddled feel.

Some of the chapters didn't really give an outline at all, and felt like a pick and mix of assorted thoughts on church history and theology - enjoyable enough to read but not giving a coherent outline. I don't think I'd particularly recommend this as a church history overview, and I probably won't revisit it.

Lindsey says

Good overview of themes for certain time periods. Easy enough to follow to get a big picture view. Worth re-reading until you get really familiar with the material.

ron smith says

Fascinating

Once I started reading this book, I could not get away from it. A must read for those who want to learn about Christ's church, in an easy but intellectual read!

Elise Parrish says

Wonderful! I have been taking a seminar from the author, and his unique voice and knowledge base shines through in this readable but insightful book. I only wish that the secular (non-seminary) version were still in print.

Jeff Bettger says

So fast it makes your brain hurt. It really is a crashcourse. I have read this book a few times now and always feel refreshed.

Eddie Williams says

It's a solid "Crash Course" on church history.

expect it to be simple, quick and sometimes over simplifying. If you do, you will like the book.

Some readers may have expected a more in depth writing, but the title says its a quick run through. If you

expect that, you will be satisfied

Michael Locklear says

I would like to meet Christopher Catherwood someday and talk with him about his late grandfather, Martyn Lloyd-jones, a man I have grown to admire through the reading of his books. I thoroughly enjoyed Catherwood's book, "Church History" and would encourage others to take the 'crash course.'

Michael says

Not so much an intro to history as a intro to theology from an avowed evangelical-baptist-episcopalian. The flow of the book was so poor it was really hard to follow or get a clear outline of church history.

Jacob Stevens says

The structure of the book was a little difficult to figure out at first. Instead of telling the history by ages and then getting into specifics with people, places, and events, the author picks major events and speaks about them in decent detail. It was just what it said it was, a crash course. I enjoyed hearing the author's outsider views of the American church (He is a British Evangelical). Those were very insightful and often challenging. There were many times when I thought the author was Very over eager to plug Crossway books. Not that I disagree with him, but I didn't need to read, "a Crossway author" after every mention of a person.

Amy says

Definetely a "crash course". Though interesting and pretty good for a quick overview, a lot of the stuff is oversimplified and the statement that King Henry VIII broke from the Catholic church purely for political reasons made my head hurt. But, if you're curious, this has got the content ;)

Sean says

More than a few good insights here and there. However, the book as a whole is not very well-written, for the writer's opinions and commentary too often override any objective analysis of historical events.

Adam says

Loved it! Catherwood does exactly what he sets out to do—give a whirlwind introduction to church history. Inevitably this means the book is not exhaustive nor extensive, but it doesn't purport to be. So, for what it is

(a "crash course"), I found it interesting, easy-to-read, and lucid, with some insightful analysis. Catherwood does his best to remain fair and balanced, though he inevitably writes from a Reformed evangelical perspective (which is perhaps what endeared the book to me...?). I must say, though, I found Catherwood's repeated reference (at least 5 times by my count) to "Crossway author Mark Dever" slightly odd...

Sean says

Catherwood does a great job making his book live up to its title. If you are looking for in depth analysis of the history of the church, don't start here. But if you have a general interest in Church history, this is a great place to begin researching it.

The book reads much like a survey course in college. The chapters cover several centuries in balanced detail. Catherwood takes special care to mention as many important people, dates, and events as he can without having to exegete every detail. He leaves that up to the reader to research further. For example, if I wanted to know more about John Calvin, I could definitely research more about him. But Catherwood shows enough of Calvin's life and ministry for me to feel comfortable in my understanding of how he fits in the history of the Church.

But, Catherwood explains just enough detail for the reader to have a good, intro-level understanding of the history of the church, starting with Jesus and ending with postmodernism.

This truly is a crash-course for the curious because Catherwood paints in broad strokes the history of the Church leaving room for the reader to pursue the subtleties that have been purposely omitted.

Michelle says

The material is interesting, but addressed far too quickly. There wasn't always enough info for me to really understand why that material was included. I wouldn't read this book again, but I would give the author another shot.

John Brackbill says

This is not a reliable history. It is driven by personal perspective and bias. The propensity to name drop was unfortunate as well.

Adam says

There are no dry facts in this introduction to church history. Catherwood is an affable and somewhat chatty, conversational author intent on conveying both events and their theological implications. A truly informative--and effortless--read.

Ken Sweet says

I picked this book up looking for an objective view of the history of the church, but I should have paid closer attention to the back of the book. The author is an Evangelical Christian and the church history is approached from his standpoint, and it is my own fault for not paying close enough attention to have realized it before picking it up.

That said, Mr. Catherwood does try to incorporate other views somewhat, although he often disparages them. In the author's defense, he very much acknowledges the church's long and tumultuous role in killing other Christians, interfering with government, and persecuting other religions, along with all the good things it has accomplished. So it is not an entirely one-sided story, which helped keep my interest enough to read it through.

Also, the book taught me a lot of church history I wasn't aware of, for such a small volume. The facts are there, albeit with an evangelical slant. I would have given "Church History" 2.5 stars had there been the option, possibly a 3 had it been a bit more in-depth, but after some deliberation I have decided to rate it "OK."

If you are looking for a purely historical and fully objective view of the history of the church (if such a book exists,) this is not it. However, I do recommend this for Christians seeking a crash course in the knowledge of the Christian religion, its roots, and its many branches and effects on history.

Randall Birtell says

Average Overview

Reads well. A bit disappointed so little time was spent on Aquinas. Only 5 mentions of his name compared to 24 occurrences of Martyn Lloyd-Jones. Seems a bit out of balance.
