



Christianity: How a Despised Sect from a Minority Religion Came to Dominate the Roman Empire

By Jonathan Hill, Fortress Press, 2011, 256 pp., ISBN 978-0-8006-9777-8, \$29.95.

Christianity is a splendid book with glossy photos, detailed maps and topical sidebars. The book provides interested readers with a non-technical but informative and readable introduction to the first four hundred years of Christian history. Though Jonathan Hill's *Christianity* will appeal to a general audience, the same scholarly research evidenced in Hill's earlier works forms its foundation. Gone are the overly pious tones of a much earlier era of writers of Christian history. Hill depicts the unromantic emergence of the Christian faith, "founded by a group of fishermen and peasants from Galilee, a rural backwater in an unimportant region of the Roman Empire" (7). The table of contents includes the various elements of a typical history of Christianity (Jesus and the first Christians, opposition and persecutions, Christian philosophy, battles of heresy and orthodoxy, development of monasticism, emergence of the official Church and the role of the Empire). Hill's engaging narrative is punctuated with full color images and enhanced by an attractive layout. Though the topic is sectarian, the book would be appropriate for any library.

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