



# Volume Introduction

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This book is a short survey of the last two millennia of world history. The focus is the political, economic, social, and cultural events that provide context for the history of Christianity. It should come as little surprise, given the aims of this text, that the emphasis remains primarily on Europe and the Middle East until after the sixteenth century. It is also important to know that this book does not explore church history in depth. It has been written as a companion volume to a church history textbook or course.

The book begins with the Roman Empire because this is the context within which Christianity arose. Chapters 2 and 3 examine the Middle Ages both in the Middle East and throughout Europe as Christian missionaries converted people well beyond the old borders of the Roman Empire. The next three chapters focus on the early modern world with the discovery of the New World, the founding of colonial empires, and the development of a much wider vision for taking Christianity “to the ends of the

earth.” Chapters 7 and 8 emphasize the twentieth and twenty-first centuries and attempt to place events in many countries within a wider, global viewpoint. Each chapter has suggested readings for more information.

Whether or not the reader is hoping to gain a foundation for understanding Christian history, this volume provides a broad overview of some of the more critical changes that have created the world as it is today. It offers the opportunity to better understand the larger historical context of current issues and events. For those using this text in conjunction with a church history text or as part of a course, it is hoped that the overall narrative will allow the reader to place Christianity within the wider history that has shaped its development.