White's "Brief Christian Histories: Getting a Sense for Our Long Story" (Book Review)

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with his thoughts on the classic poem. Substantial historical context is also included in the commentary. Along with Tolkien’s translation, fans of his work will enjoy Sellic Spell, his retelling of Beowulf, and his illustrations of the dragon and Grendal’s lair.

This new Beowulf translation brings a fresh look to a classic tale. This will be a welcome addition to the library of Old English language scholars. A book like this could serve as textbook for an Old English literature or linguistic college class. This book is very technical; however, parts of it will appeal to admirers of Tolkien’s work.

**Brief Christian Histories: Getting a Sense for Our Long Story,**
ISBN 9781556352430

Reviewed by Gary G. Merriman, Head Librarian, Life Pacific College, San Dimas, CA

Brief Christian Histories is an introductory level history, which traces four major themes through biblical and ecclesiastical history: the People of God, Christian Ethics, Practices and Piety, and Christ and Culture Interacting (p. 3). James W. White is the former pastor of First Congregational United Church of Christ in Colorado Springs and author of Christianity 101: Tracing Basic Beliefs and Intergenerational Religious Education: Models, Theory, and Prescription for Interage Life and Learning in the Faith Community. As can be observed by the titles, the author writes with church instruction in mind and Brief Christian Histories is no exception. While the book may be useful as a resource for college students, seminarians, and resource librarians, it will be most helpful for “learners about Christianity generally and Christian laypeople in particular” (p. 4).

This book is novel in its thematic approach and provides the ability to maintain focus when trying to place events from different locations and times into a coherent picture, which can be a problem when reading more exhaustive histories. The conversational language makes for an easy read, and the repetition of walking through the same eras of time (the author lists nine eras) while focusing on different themes helps the reader get a “sense of the whole Christian story” (p. 5). Another bright spot of the book is its intentional effort to identify noteworthy women in the history of Christianity such as St. Paula and St. Catherine (p. 22). The bibliography is useful, but far from exhaustive.
The term “brief” in the title is apropos as each theme is developed over approximately fifty pages. The limited space allotted for each section, and the broad time frame the author tries to address (2000 BCE - Present), necessitates such brevity when discussing key individuals and events that often the reader is presented with no more information than a name, date, and possible location. In this regard, very little knowledge is conveyed, and there is a decided lack of clarity about what role people played in larger movements and ideas within church history. For instance, both Ignatius and Polycarp are listed among the early church fathers, but no connection with the apostle John is mentioned (p. 21). Likewise, men like John Hus are mentioned as contributing to “variant Christian formations,” but there is a decided lack of discussion about how these individuals helped lay the groundwork for the Reformation era (p. 33). This problem, however, is primarily limited to the first theme (The People of God) as later chapters are much more concerned about the evolution of practices and ideas. While not overwhelming, there are times when the author tends to reveal presuppositions (JEDP) and theological interpretations (Adam and Eve, Jesus as a model), which are unnecessary for the development of his histories, and not typical of more academic works.

Overall, this book would be a welcome addition to church libraries, institutes, and Bible colleges. While it is too brief to be useful for academic research associated with upper-division and graduate level work, it can provide a valuable introduction for laypeople and students who are just entering college.

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**Candle Bible for Kids,**

Reviewed by Barbara Walker, Administrative Assistant to the Dean of Libraries, Roberts Library, Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, Fort Worth, TX

This children’s Bible is a delightful read for an adult to use with babies and small children. The illustrations are bright and colorful and will draw the attention of children. Each story is easy to read and is short enough that a very young child can sit through one story. Older children will enjoy listening to more than one story at a sitting. This Bible starts with creation and includes well-known Old and New Testament stories that end with the resurrection of Jesus. The construction of this book is durable and will last for many years.