

Christianity: A Very Short Introduction

By Linda Woodhead

Exploring the cultural and institutional dimensions of Christianity, and tracing its course over two millennia, this book provides a fresh, lively, and candid portrait of its past and present. Addressing topics that other studies neglect, including the competition for power between different forms of Christianity, the churches' uses of power, and their struggles with modernity, Linda Woodhead concludes by showing the ways in which those who previously had the least power in Christianity - women and non-Europeans - have become increasingly central to its unfolding story.

Questions for thought and discussion

- What features of Christianity might explain why it has had such an enduring influence, growing to become the world's largest religion?
- Is Jesus Christ the heart and soul of Christianity?
- What do you think it means to say God is 'Trinity'?
- Is there some essential core of Christianity, or are there many different Christianities with only family resemblances?
- Why do more mystical forms of Christianity prove attractive to some modern men and women?
- Why is Christianity declining in Europe?
- How can we explain the success of evangelical and Pentecostal Christianity in the 20th century, especially outside Europe?
- Do you think that the clergy and the churches are the best friend or worst enemy of Christianity, especially in modern times?
- Why did the Bible become increasingly important in Christianity over time?
- Should Christianity keep itself separate from politics, or is that a betrayal of its message and hope?
- Why is Christianity more successful in the USA than most parts of Europe?
- What makes a good Christian?
- Is Christianity good or bad news for women?
- Is Christianity somehow an 'unmanly' religion?
- Do you think Western societies and culture are still Christian, or are they now post-Christian?
- Was the dream of Christendom a high or the low point of Christian history?
- Looking back over its history, do you think Christianity is more a conservative force, or a force for change?

Further Reading

Ole Riis and Linda Woodhead, *A Sociology of Religious Emotions*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010.)

Linda Woodhead, Koko Kawanami, Chris Partridge (eds) *Religions in the Modern World*. 2nd fully revised edition. (London: Routledge, 2009.)

Paul Heelas and Linda Woodhead, *The Spiritual Revolution. Why Religion is Giving Way to Spirituality*. (Oxford, UK and Malden, USA: Blackwell, 2005.)

Linda Woodhead, *An Introduction to Christianity*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004.)