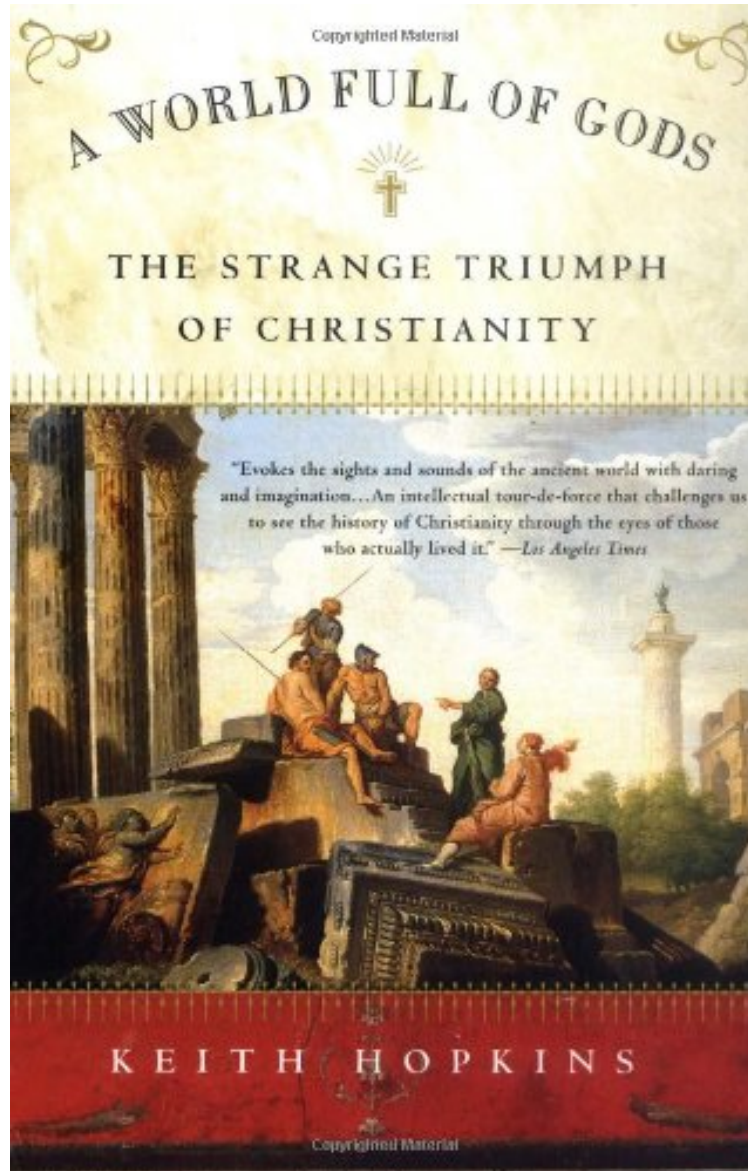


[Free download] A World Full of Gods: The Strange Triumph of Christianity

## A World Full of Gods: The Strange Triumph of Christianity

Keith Hopkins

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**Keith Hopkins : A World Full of Gods: The Strange Triumph of Christianity** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised A World Full of Gods: The Strange Triumph of Christianity:

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Interesting insights into the molding of the Christian religionBy MaryDr. Hopkins does an excellent job of explaining all of the social pressures that resulted in Christianity being ruled

the state religion of the Roman Empire in the 4th century.0 of 0 people found the following review helpful.  
DisappointmentBy Compulsive ReaderOdd mixture of experimental and academic writing--neither very pleasing.  
Doesn't really explain the "strange triumph...", " either.0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. A truly  
scholarly monument of erudition and sound ideas about ...By ANGELA truly scholarly monument of erudition and  
sound ideas about the origin and early development of Christianity in its Jewish, Greek and Roman religious, political  
and cultural context. .

Evokes the sights and sounds of the ancient world with daring and imagination An intellectual tour-de-force that  
challenges us to see the history of Christianity through the eyes of those who actually lived it.Los Angeles TimesIn  
this provocative, irresistibly entertaining book, Keith Hopkins takes readers back in time to explore the roots of  
Christianity in ancient Rome. Combining exacting scholarship with dazzling invention, Hopkins challenges our  
perceptions about religion, the historical Jesus, and the way history is written. He puts us in touch with what he calls  
"empathetic wonder"imagining what Romans, pagans, Jews, and Christians thought, felt, experienced, and believed-by  
employing a series of engaging literary devices. These include a TV drama about the Dead Sea Scrolls; the first-person  
testimony of a pair of time-travelers to Pompeii; a meditation on Jesus' apocryphal twin brother; and an unusual letter  
on God, demons, and angels.

.com A World Full of Gods: The Strange Triumph of Christianity by Keith Hopkins is a rollicking work of revisionist  
history about Christianity's ascent as the dominant religion of the West. In its tour of Roman paganism, Judaism,  
Christianity, and Gnosticism, A World Full of Gods employs a range of techniques of description, analysis, and  
historical reportage. The first chapter is a report from two time-travelers visiting Pompeii just before the eruption of  
Mt. Vesuvius; soon after comes a description of the ascetic Jewish sect at Qumran that produced the Dead Sea Scrolls--  
in the form of a TV drama. Hopkins, a professor of ancient history at King's College, Cambridge, justifies his  
experimental style by asserting that "to reexperience the thoughts, feelings, practices, and images of religious life in  
the Roman empire, in which orthodox Christianity emerged in all its vibrant variety, we have to combine ancient  
perceptions, however partial, with modern understandings, however misleading." Rather than presenting a focused  
argument, A World Full of Gods offers immersion in a sensibility--a history of Christianity that has little interest in the  
historical Jesus and instead traces the influence of imagination on the growth of Christianity. Jesus, Hopkins argues,  
"is not just, nor even primarily, a historical person. Rather, like the sacred heroes of other great religions, he is a  
mirage, an image in believers' minds, shaped but not confined by the images projected in the canonical gospels." --  
Michael Joseph GrossFrom Publishers WeeklyJudging by sober historical criteria, Hopkins fails to provide a  
convincing explanation of why Christianity defeated its rivals among the mystery cults, Gnostics and Hellenized Jews  
in Roman antiquity. Yet this is nevertheless a magnificent, rollicking failure, one that has readers laughing out loud in  
one paragraph and feeling dizzy in the next, struck by an insight so powerful that it demands reconsideration of what  
seemed secure knowledge just moments before. Hopkins is a Cambridge classicist and historian, but here he breaks  
every rule of historiography (except the need for copious endnotes). He opens with a pair of time travelers poking  
around ancient Pompeii, remarking on everything from the all-too-public toilets to the astonishingly libidinous  
artwork. Later, Hopkins has a television crew interviewing a survivor of the Qumran sect that produced the Dead Sea  
Scrolls. Throughout, he includes invented letters from academics offering criticism of the work as it unfolds. In the  
end, however, the book is less than the sum of its parts. Readers learn much about Roman religiosity and the fluid  
conceptions of Jesus in the first three Christian centuries, but will arrive at the book's end still lacking an answer to the  
question with which Hopkins began: Why did this sect prevail? The view from the top is disappointing, but it remains  
an exhilarating climb. (Aug.) Copyright 2000 Reed Business Information, Inc.From Library JournalIn this somewhat  
daring experiment, Hopkins (ancient history, Cambridge Univ.; Conquerors and Slaves) attempts a new way of  
presenting the history of early Christianity. Believing that history must always be a subtle mixture of imagination and  
critical analysis, he juxtaposes fiction, scholarly analysis, informal "friendly letter" responses by other scholars, and  
carefully footnoted corrections of mistakes committed by his fictional characters. This makes for an unusual narrative;  
more is required of readers than in "normal" scholarly works or fiction if they are to follow his combination of  
"empathetic wonder, knowledge, pseudo-objective analysis, ignorance, competing assumptions, and disagreements."  
Many will consider this amalgam quite effective, but others will find it simply disconcerting. Hopkins makes a real  
effort to explicate the inevitable ambiguities and biases of historical researchIncluding his own. At the same time, he  
elucidates Christianity's Jewish and pagan roots. This is a fascinating experiment, to be read carefully, critically, and  
thoughtfully. Recommended for public and academic libraries.DEugene O. Bowser, Univ. of Northern Colorado,  
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