

Chapter 1 : Project MUSE - The Spirit of Early Christian Thought: Seeking the Face of God (review)

In chapters on topics including early Christian worship, Christian poetry and the spiritual life, the Trinity, Christ, the Bible, and icons, Wilken shows that the energy and vitality of early Christianity arose from within the life of the Church.

Posted on April 3, by ritchemarmacoy Chapter 1 Christianity is marginalized: For Greeks and Romans, Christianity is irrational because it never corresponds with their philosophy. Despite of downplaying, Christian doctrines have spread out all over the known worlds. Christian thinkers understand that Christianity has deeply rooted with knowledge of God: Christianity is, therefore, not an irrational religion. Neither yield easily to conventional philosophy, nor promoting senseless religious practices as Greeks and Romans. Origen holds firm the biblical doctrine of election, monotheism and incarnation of Christ as Biblical doctrines. He also believes that Israel is instrumental to let all people know and understand that He is God- to him alone our worship is due. Chapter 2 Christian thinkers are dedicated to prayers and thanksgiving, as well as integrating philosophy and Christian theology. For them, Christianity is not about thinking and writing at all to counter argue other claims but also translation of Christian doctrines into practicality: Interestingly, early Christianity is promoting pre-figured heavenly worship. For early Christians, worship is significant church activity. It has also to be practiced along with the administration of the Eucharist and declaration of Scriptures properly: Further, Christian thinkers uplifted the supremacy of Scriptures in preaching. Their preaching in liturgy is not just about words: Chapter 3 Greek-Roman intellectuals and Christian thinkers have two different reading passions. The former loves to read and reflect the known ancient Greek-Roman writings, while the latter reflects Scriptures. The former never acknowledged Scriptures as source of wisdom, but the latter thought otherwise. Moreover, Christian thinkers never undermine philosophical-intellectual contribution of Greek-Roman literatures. Like Bible, they believe that these are helpful in acquiring wisdom and understanding pp. Among the Christian thinkers, Clement of Alexandria has embarked substantial points to uplift the Word of God and Christ as divine logos as well as source of true wisdom p. He often cites OT and NT passages along with other literatures when teaching. Further chapter 3 testifies that the Bible is far better than other literatures, e.

Chapter 2 : "The Spirit of Early Christian Thought"- chapter summary | ritchemarmacoy

"The Spirit of Early Christian Thought is a delight to read. It is written as history ought to be, especially for nonspecialist readers."—Richard A. Kauffman, *Christian Century* *"The book is a compelling invitation to enter more deeply into the contemplative hearts of the early Church Fathers."*—Kay Kettenhofen, *Cistercian Studies Quarterly*.

Aug 05, Charles rated it it was amazing This book is not a polemic or a book of apologetics; it is instead an exposition of what early Church theologians thought about important topics in Christian belief, and how those thoughts evolved and grew. If you think all theology is merely empty wind or arguments about angels dancing on the head of a pin, this is not the book for you. But if you want to know how early Christians developed their thought about the Trinity, or theological views on Christ being simultaneously fully human and full This book is not a polemic or a book of apologetics; it is instead an exposition of what early Church theologians thought about important topics in Christian belief, and how those thoughts evolved and grew. But if you want to know how early Christians developed their thought about the Trinity, or theological views on Christ being simultaneously fully human and fully divine, or how they viewed faith through the prism of reason, this is the book for you. While it is not intended as such, this book is also a rebuke and response to the currently fashionable New Atheist set of such imagined luminaries as Dawkins and Harris as well as other similarly shallow thinkers on the topic such as Gibbon. A key premise, always unexamined, of the New Atheists is that Christian thought is an oxymoron, and that they have discovered this key fact as a revelation missed by all prior opponents of Christianity. The conflict between the New Atheists and Christians is not an abstract philosophical argument—it, or the issues under discussion, have very real consequences. All Western morality is premised on Christian thought and principles. And it is a very different moral code than that of non-Christian societies, since it is a pure myth that the Golden Rule has any core relevance to any religion but Christianity. The New Atheists believe that without God societies can still retain a moral core—Steven Pinker actually argues that morality is merely the outcome of people finding positive-sum games. Only God can give ultimate purpose to our deepest convictions, for example, the dignity of the human person, and provide grounds for communal life that transcend self-interest. Human history suggests the opposite. These are all pre-medieval, or at least pre-High Medieval, thinkers—while later theologians, like St. Aside from the specific topics, Wilken maintains two threads throughout the book. The first is the importance of Biblical exegesis to all these thinkers. The Bible, Old and New Testament, suffused all their analyses, even the most complex. This is in contrast to the popular Protestant view that before Martin Luther, the Bible was ignored. And this Biblical analysis was extremely focused and subtle, using both comparisons of different passages from the Bible and sophisticated reasoning, which is in contrast to the modern tendency to view each personal analysis, even of the uneducated and stupid, as equal, and to view purely literal interpretations as somehow superior. In its simplest and crudest form, the idea is that the Judaic Christianity of Christ and the Apostles was hijacked by Saint Paul and his Neoplatonist progeny. Instead, he emphasizes the concrete roots of all early Christian thought in the Scriptures; informed sometimes, to be sure, by Greco-Roman philosophical ideas, but those ideas flavored rather than supplanted the Scriptures and traditions of the Apostles. I personally found the discussions of the Trinity and the simultaneous divinity and humanity of Christ the most interesting. Similarly, the early Christians struggled with the apparent paradox of simultaneous divinity and humanity i. For those keeping score at home, the mainstream Christian position that was converged on over the centuries is that in Christ there are two natures and two wills; each retaining its own properties, and together united in perfect harmony in one substance and in one single person. As to faith itself, Wilken explains how Christians have always viewed faith not as some required unreasoned belief—quite the contrary. Outsiders, non-Christians or the non-religious, view religious faith as an inverse invincible ignorance. Wilken notes that Christian faith has been a key point of attack by non-Christians from the very beginning, citing Galen and Celsus, through many later thinkers. But Wilken carefully shows how Christians, from earliest times, have instead viewed faith as a combination of recognition of the testimony of reliable people who had come before, reasoning, and concrete evidence. That said, Wilken also acknowledges that faith is not at all a matter of pure reason, as the Manichees

would have it. It is only in loving surrender that we are able to enter the mystery of God. It is only in giving that we receive, only in loving that we are loved, only in obeying that we know. First, the essential characteristics of early Christian thought that Wilken proposes at the beginning recur over and over again throughout each chapter. Yet these characteristics recur naturally, giving the reader assurance that Wilken is not forcing his ideas on the data, but that these ideas emerged from the data. Second, Wilken draws from the writings of the early Christians themselves to walk his readers through their thought processes. For example, when he discusses how the early Christians would allegorize Scripture, he gives several examples of how Augustine, Gregory of Nyssa, and Gregory the Great did just that. Third, Wilken seems to have really captured the spirit, not just the ideas, of the early Christians. Thus, while well-researched and accurate, the book is also unavoidably devotional, pulsating with the love for Christ that saturated the hearts and minds of these Christian forerunners. Readers looking for a critique of early Christian doctrinal thought especially from a Protestant perspective will not find it here. Despite its uncritical reporting of areas in which the early Christians deviated from Scripture, students can also expect it to be an ongoing source of spiritual refreshment and inspiration. Besides these benefits, Wilken has offered tantalizing glimpses of these heroes of the faith, enticing his readers to journey back to those first centuries and make their personal acquaintance.

Chapter 3 : Spirit of Early Christian Thought

The Spirit of Early Christian Thought intends to describe the way in which early Christians thought about their faith in the Hellenistic milieu, or as the title expresses: to examine the spirit of early Christian thinking. The work does not seek to trace out the specific teachings or ideas of early Christianity, as many other works have done.

Distinctive marks of Christian thinking: Earliest Christian writings were composed by Christians for Christians. Middle of 2nd century – Christians wrote for others. God known through historical events. Used faith and discernment VS. Justin Martyr Origen Knowledge of God: Leads to a change in worship. For Greeks, God was the conclusion of an argument. For Christians, God was the starting point, and Christ the icon that displays the face of God. Jesus Christ changed human reason. Now one reasons from Christ to other things, not from other things to Christ. They did not argue that there is a God because there is order; rather, they saw design in the universe because they knew the one God. God was not a principle of explanation. In seeking God they sought to understand the God they already knew Reason became more certain of its starting point, more confident, less abstract, and more purposeful. Leo the Great Chapter 2: Liturgy is always in the present tense. Was a communal celebration of the entire community. Moral test prior for adults. What was read in the Scriptures is fulfilled in the Eucharist. No Christian thinking without the Church. The communion of saints was a living presence in every celebration. Faithful departed were welcomed into the liturgy as participants. The Bible appeared fresh and astonishing to thinkers schooled in ancient literature and disclosed a world unlike anything they had known before. Reading and expounding the Bible left a lasting imprint on their vocabulary and altered their patterns of thought. The Bible had power. Our Wisdom Clement of Alexandria: A book about Christ: For Clement the Bible was a book about Christ. Single story of scripture – a going out from God, an exitus, and a return to God, a reditus. Christ brings to completion what had been partial and imperfect the fall for Irenaeus was a necessary stage in the growth to maturity The Inevitability of Allegory The Bible, although containing plain and inelegant words, burst forth with a power so palpable, said Augustine, that they pummelled his heart. Augustine Figurative speech in the natural clothing of religious thought. Allegory helped Christians to read the Bible as a single book about Christ. Seek His Face Always Focus: Recapitulates first 3 chapters to illustrate how history the Resurrection of Christ , the Trinitarian formulas of Christian worship, and the Scriptures all worked together to forge a Christian doctrine of the Trinity. Resurrection of Christ changes everything – Jesus is God! The Resurrection alters the conditions under which reason worked. Titles for Christ should NOT be taken in isolation. Christian thinking works off the language of the Bible and the res, the reality to which the Scriptures and Christian worship testify. Finding God and Seeking God St. Augustine wants to find the Trinity through burning love, a pure mind and open heart that changes him in his finding. All finding leads to further seeking. The work of Christ. Difference on important matters is a mark of intellectual seriousness. Monothelite One Will Controversy: Did Christ have a human will or divine will? Agony of Christ event: Nestorius wanted christotokos instead of theotokos for Mary.. People thought it tore Christ into 2 independent agents loosely joined. How were the divine and the human united in the actual life of Christ? Always grounded in Scripture. Glory in the destruction of death for the life of all – Christ became 1st man to conquer death and corruption. Maximus the Confessor combines intellectual fireworks with emotional force in his writing. If Christ does NOT have a human will he cannot be fully human. Our will, our self-determination, is the characteristic feature of our human nature, and freedom its supreme token. In the garden of Gethsemane, Christ the man willed the salvation of the world. The End Given in the Beginning Focus: The account of creation in the first chapter of the book of Genesis. Specifically, through the writings of Basil of Caesarea and Gregory of Nyssa, two key lines: Their goal was to forge a view of creation and of human beings that was biblical, yet intelligible and coherent to all reasonable persons. Continuity within Christian families over several generations helped spark the flowering of the Christian intellectual life in the late 4th century St. Basil example with grandmother taught by Gregory the Wonderworker. The study of cosmology begins with the things of the spirit, one reason why Moses is such a reliable guide. Christian thinking about the origin of the world was shaped by the creation account in Genesis.

Genesis cannot be taken literally – impossible for one part of nature to be created before other parts. On the Making of Man Gregory of Nyssa – 1st to deal systematically with the Christian doctrine of man in its fullness. Only in Christ that we know what was made in the 1st creation. Maximus the Confessor, pg. Augustine The soul needs the body to complete the perfect measure of its being and find perfect joy. The Christian doctrine of the Resurrection shaped Christian understanding of the human person and in turn formed the culture of the West. The Christian intellectual life shows the reasonableness of faith. Faith is the way of reason. Since all historical knowledge demands faith on the veracity of those who have witnessed the event, Christian thinking is inescapably bound to the witness of others. We are confident in the martyrs, the Greek word for witness. Faith is the distinctive way we know God. Augustine, in his City of God, wrote the 1st treatise that dealt in depth with the relation of Christianity to social and political life. Augustine states that justice and peace can only be found where the one true God is worshiped. If Rome does not worship the one true God, it is a city devoid of true justice and peace. Although we are on pilgrimage and will never fully realize these goals on earth, we are full citizens and must take full efforts to achieve peace and justice. A society that has no place for God will disintegrate into an amoral aggregate of competing, self-aggrandizing interests that are self-destructive of the commonweal. Christianity was beginning to create its own distinctive culture. Christian poetry begins with the Bible. Prudentius – 1st Christian poet who saw poetry as his vocation. Wedded religious, civic and literary themes to edify the soul, please the mind, and delight the ear. He presented martyrs as new heroes for Rome. Ambrose – 1st Christian poet to achieve genuine success. Ambrose wrote metric hymns. Prose hymns not popular because divorced from Latin literary traditions. Making This Thing Other Painting and icons. Became objects of veneration. John of Damascus defended idolatry accusations. Rooted in the incarnation. Because God had taken flesh it was possible to paint an image of God. Matter is good and has the potential to become an image of God and of the things of God. Images become essential to mature Christian piety. Anagogical sense – in looking at the image one is able to anticipate seeing God face to face. Without the icon, the Incarnation would become an illusion. Likeness to God In the 3rd century, Christians began to write about the lives of their holy men and women. Used to teach virtue.

Chapter 4 : The Spirit of Early Christian Thought by Robert Louis Wilken – The Prodigal Catholic Blog

"The Spirit of Early Christian Thought is a delight to read. It is written as history ought to be, especially for nonspecialist readers."—Richard A. Kauffman, *Christian Century* "[His] unusual insight gives a fresh perspective to everything Wilken says as he goes through the usual history of the councils and theological controversies.

Seeking the Face of God. Yale University Press, Reviewed by Peter C. Whereas this earlier book presents the thought of ancient critics of Christianity, its later sibling surveys what ancient Christians themselves thought about their own religion, its beliefs, its moral code, and its devotional practices. Since the book is not a history of early Christian thought, Wilkins does not follow the chronological method. Rather, to make the pattern of early Christian thinking emerge more clearly, he adopts the thematic approach. The book comprises twelve chapters, grouped into five sections. The first section deals with foundations: The second section deals with Christian teachings: The third section deals with the believer: The fourth section deals with Christian culture: Christian poetry chapter 9 and Christian iconography chapter The last section deals with Christian life: Throughout the book Wilken is concerned to highlight the distinctiveness of early Christian thinking in comparison with Greek and Roman philosophies. His succinct characterization of Christian originality deserves quoting in full: Christians reasoned from the history of Israel and of Jesus Christ, from the experience of Christian worship, and from the Holy Scriptures and early interpretations of the Scriptures, that is to say, from history, from ritual, and from text. Theory was not an end in itself, and concepts and abstractions were always put at the service of a deeper immersion in the res, the thing itself, the mystery of Christ and of the practice of the Christian life. The book succeeds admirably in showing this distinctiveness of early Christian thought, but in this lies also its limitation. Because Wilken is primarily concerned with demonstrating the inner coherence and organic pattern of early Christian thinking, he does not pay sufficient attention to, nor is the non-specialist reader made aware of, the many conflicts, not only theological and ecclesiastical but also political and cultural, that preceded and followed the fragile and precarious doctrinal consensus forged in conciliar debates. Indeed, many of these doctrinal statements, even those regarding the Trinity and the person of Christ, paper over serious disagreements among various factions of the early church that still remain even today subject to intense theological discussion. But, in our postmodern, fragmented, and conflictive age, we need them as teachers, not only with their common theological heritage but also, and perhaps more, with their living examples of how to negotiate differences, even fundamental ones, and to live fruitfully before God with doubts and uncertainties.

Chapter 5 : The Spirit of Early Christian Thought: Seeking the Face of God by Robert L. Wilken

From a scholastic perspective, The Spirit of Early Christian Thought should be read as an introductory work, pointing the reader to some of the broad themes and concerns of the early church, and also pointing to a wealth of source material.

Get Full Essay Get access to this section to get all help you need with your essay and educational issues. Specifically, the book was written for every reader Through this book, the author wishes to convey his thoughts and ideas as fruits of his learning. It offers a special message to its readers by bringing to mind the works of remarkable teachers of the early church. What drove the author to write this book was his attraction with the magnitude of early Christian thoughts that went beyond the contrite. Instead of writing a sequel to his book entitled *The Christians as the Romans Saw Them*, Wilken showed the consideration of each of those measures. About the Book Every chapter of the book takes up an extensive argument drawn through a prolific and fine analysis of selected authors. This is a written illustration of early Christian thinking rather than about the early Christian life. Wilken successfully discusses the five main viewpoints of early Christian thought in a language easily understood by all readers of his work. First, Wilken presented that patristic thought is not guided by reckless considerations but is based in the story of Jesus and in the veneration and prayer of the church. He reveals to us readers that the Scripture is an ever-present and alive element. The third viewpoint the writer presented was his intense argument for the knowledgeable characteristic of the patristic writers. The same writers who bravely claimed that faith and love were essential ways of knowing reality as created by God. On his fourth treatise, Wilken shows the profoundly spiritual telos of patristic thought. Its exhortation is to bring about the that such change or transformation is real in the moral predilection and ways of believers. It must be understood that Christian learning is actually seeking the face of God Wilken. The fifth standpoint Wilken wishes to convey in his book is that this same motivation extends beyond the expansive tradition through the Christian assumption and translation of poetry, politics and the art. This book generally reviews what early Christians thought about their own religion, sentiments, its ethics and its religious ardor. Adopting the thematic approach, the book is composed of twelve 12 chapters organized into five sections. Admirably, the book shows a sweeping goal of how ancient Christian thought develops into a common notion. One of the outstanding phrase of quote from the book that is worth mentioning is the following: Christians reasoned from the history of Israel and of Jesus Christ, from the experience of Christian worship, and from the Holy Scriptures and early interpretations of the Scriptures , that is to say, from history, from ritual, and from text. Theory was not an end in itself, and concepts and abstractions were always put at the service of a deeper immersion in the res, the thing itself, the mystery of Christ and of the practice of the Christian life. Conclusion The book comes through in demonstrating the uniqueness of the early Christian thought. Wilken is mostly concerned with illustrating the intimate consistency and natural ideal of early Christian thinking. Many statements in the Christian world, even today, are prone to various disagreements from different areas. Expectedly, there will be sectors who will disagree to one or more statements found in this book. Theological discussions are likely to receive disagreements one way or the other. To realize this, it requires more than just an appreciation. It is important that we examine how those patristic feelings, how that spirit of early Christian thought, will be literally applied on the penchants and usage of theologians today. Not only are these teachers needed in this time and age for their theological legacy, we shall be forever amazed with their living examples of how to settle disputes or difference and to live productively before God free from doubts and uncertainties. More essays like this:

Chapter 6 : Catholic Books Review: Robert Louis WILKEN: The Spirit of Early Christian Thought.

The Spirit of Early Christian Thought Book Description: In this eloquent introduction to early Christian thought, eminent religious historian Robert Louis Wilken examines the tradition that such figures as St. Augustine, Gregory of Nyssa, and others set in place.

Chapter 7 : The Spirit of Early Christian Thought: Seeking the Face of God - Robert Louis Wilken - Google

In this eloquent introduction to early Christian thought, eminent religious historian Robert Louis Wilken examines the tradition that such figures as St. Augustine, Gregory of Nyssa, and others set in place. These early thinkers constructed a new intellectual and spiritual world, Wilken shows, and.

Chapter 8 : The Spirit of Early Christian Thought (Audiobook) by Robert Louis Wilken | www.nxgvision.com

*The later of these works was an effort to examine ancient Christian critics and thus serves as a preliminary work to the present one being reviewed, *The Spirit of Early Christian Thought*. Wilken intended this work to be an examination of the response of early Christian thinkers to their critics.*

Chapter 9 : A Discussion on "The Spirit of Early Christian Thought" by Robert L. Wilken | Essay Example

Given the assumption of the Spirit's effects in early Christian thought, the leading intellectual lights of the church are placed front and center, but always as men of the church and as redemptive agents of and within culture, each and all expressing by means.