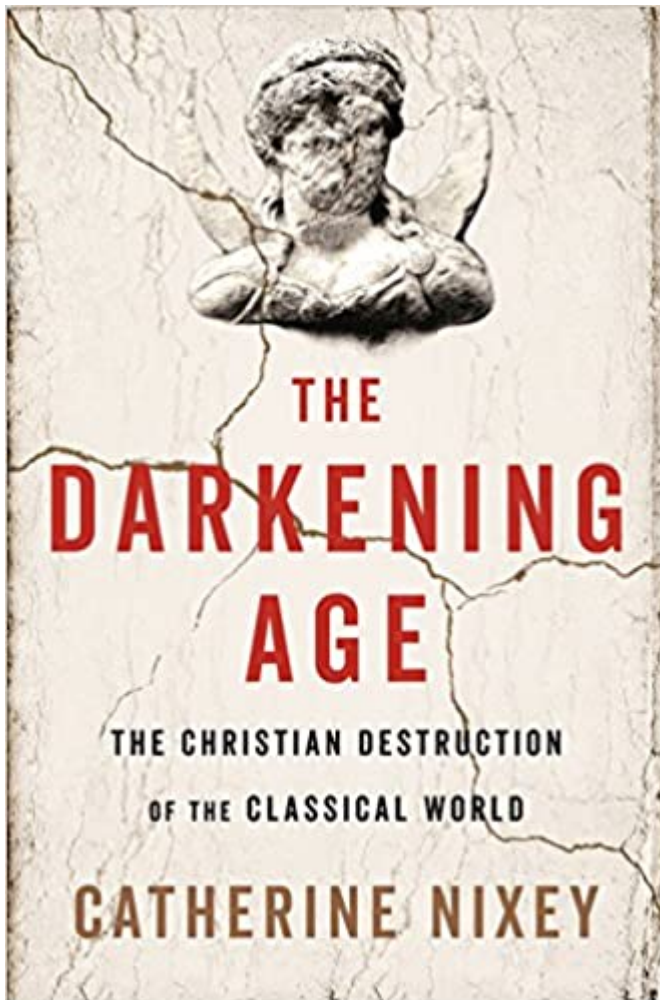


"The Darkening Age: Christian Destruction of the Classical World" - By Catherine Nixey (2018)

Post by "Cassius" of August 14, 2020 at 8:32 PM

I am thinking that this looks worthwhile, but am wondering if anyone can recommend it or assess just how worthwhile it might be. Wikipedia:

The Darkening Age: The Christian Destruction of the Classical World is a 2018 book by Catherine Nixey. It discusses historical accounts of how early [Christianity](#) played a role in the book has been chosen as one of the New York Times' year lists of the Telegraph, the Spectator, the



Post by “Don” of August 14, 2020 at 9:00 PM

Yes. It's been a little while, but I seem to remember giving it an enthusiastic (albeit depressing) thumbs up. So much lost momentum by losing the classical learning.

As I remember, the book opens with a book burning of Epicurean texts.

Post by “Philos Armonikos” of August 16, 2020 at 3:30 AM

Hi Cassius,

I am currently working through this book. Unfortunately as I understand it, academic historians do not like to engage in broad sweeping historiographic narratives which may be overly simplistic (the biggest example of this usually given is Edward Gibbon's 1776 History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire). Apparently Stephen Greenblatt's The Swerve is also held in a similar level of contempt. That being said, I intend to eventually go through it and develop my own opinion, though I am certainly out of my area of expertise here as regards to historical textual criticism and historiography.

My preconceptions on these kinds of popular histories has been shaped by the historians at these links:

<https://historyforatheists.com/the-great-myths/>

https://www.reddit.com/r/AskHistorian...tm_source=share

https://www.reddit.com/r/AskHistorian...tm_source=share

https://www.reddit.com/r/AskHistorian...tm_source=share

You may want to try "The Triumph of Christianity" by Bart Ehrman instead. Bart is a New Testament scholar who has journeyed from evangelical Christian to liberal Christian to agnostic atheist in the span of his career and writes even-handed, relatively unbiased historical accounts based on the available evidence to the best of my knowledge.

Post by “Cassius” of August 16, 2020 at 6:08 AM

<https://www.epicureanfriends.com/thread/1663-the-darkening-age-christian-destruction-of-the-classical-world-by-catherine-nixe/>

Thank you Philo!

Post by “Joshua” of August 17, 2020 at 1:35 AM

Quote

Unfortunately as I understand it, academic historians do not like to engage in broad sweeping historiographic narratives which may be overly simplistic (the biggest example of this usually given is Edward Gibbon's 1776 History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire).

This is certainly the case, even when it has nothing to do with theology; Frederick Jackson Turner's Frontier Thesis and Jared Diamond's *Guns, Germs and Steel* both elicit a similar response, and the debate proceeds forever and forever *ad nauseum*.

My own observation is that those who detract the historical thesis that they dismiss as merely a "Whig Fable" do so by trying to prove too much. I once read an argument put forward suggesting that the totemic power ascribed to books by medievals was a sign of their love of literacy. This could not, of course, be further from the truth; what could be a more obvious sign of *illiteracy*, than to think of books as sacred or totemic!? A literate person reads books, hungry only for what they contain. They reproduce books so that they can save them from oblivion, or else pass them on to other readers. It is only the illiterate who content themselves with the dry crust of the thing itself.

And does it matter whether Giordano Bruno was murdered for free inquiry or for occult heresy? In either case the salient point remains; he was murdered by a tyrannical and imperious church for holding the wrong opinion. With nearly all of these quibbles, the fault-finding historians succeed only in failing to grasp the obvious. St. Paul delivered his most powerful sermon on the Areopagus in Athens, and he left that city a free man. He preached in a synagogue in Jerusalem, and he left Jerusalem in chains.

Post by “Godfrey” of August 17, 2020 at 2:38 AM

This is meandering somewhat in that this doesn't directly discuss philosophy. About midway through this podcast there is a discussion of the reasons rulers embraced monotheistic religions

instead of local gods. Simply put: to consolidate power.

<http://blogs.getty.edu/iris/podcast-g...-the-year-1000/>

Post by “Cassius” of June 27, 2025 at 9:34 AM

This is a subject I don't know much about and think it would help us to discuss more. I therefore want to dramatically expand this discussion. We'll set up a separate forum for History and have a section for the conflict between monotheism and Epicurean and other non-monotheistic cultures. I'll change the title of this thread to make it more descriptive, and we can add other threads for other similar works.

When we set up the Forum section, we'll set up threads (or subforums) for at least the following works:

1. *The Rise and Fall of Alexandria*, by Justin Pollard and Howard Reid

There are a few chapters in this book that deal with the rise of Christianity, the murder of Hypatia, and the destruction of the Serapeum. The decline of Alexandria was also captured by the mournful verses of the pagan poet Palladus: "Is it not true that we are dead, and living only in appearance, we Hellenes, fallen on disaster, likening life to a dream, for while we remain alive our way of life is dead and gone."

2. Gibbon's *Decline and Fall* (Sections on the rise of Christianity and its contribution to the fall of Rome)
3. *Historia Ecclesiastica*, by Socrates Scholasticus

A history of the church written by a Christian living in the 5th century

4. *Criminal History of Christianity* - (German work by Karlheinz Deschner (1986-2013))

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kriminalg...es_Christentums

If anyone is aware of similar books/works that should be included, please post.

Post by “Cassius” of June 27, 2025 at 10:52 AM

<https://www.epicureanfriends.com/thread/1663-the-darkening-age-christian-destruction-of-the-classical-world-by-catherine-nixe/>

I suspect that either [Joshua](#) or @Eikadistes or both have included notable / infamous dates in the suppression of "paganism," closing of the schools, destruction of the temples, etc.

I would like to see us have a timetable of those major events so we could begin to form a mental outline about the most significant of them. Maybe one of them already knows of such a listing / timeline.

Post by “TauPhi” of June 30, 2025 at 3:39 PM

It happened few centuries after classical antiquity but Massacre of Verden in 782 somehow always stuck with me as a great example of Christianity spreading its love to pagans. Few people lost their heads over king Charlemagne's pious decree. Funnily, he almost got canonised if I remember correctly.

Post by “kochiekoch” of June 30, 2025 at 5:21 PM

This guy makes very interesting historical videos about the late Roman Empire, in this case life for late Pagans. (Who he said, interestingly enough, called themselves "Hellenes").

He's worth a look.

[How Was Life For Pagans In The Late Roman Empire?](#)