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BOOK REVIEW

# More than Conquerors – the Churches and the Early Christians in the Roman Empire from Jerusalem to Chalcedon

by Nigel Scotland. 227 pages Sacristy Press 2026 £20

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**Keywords:** Early Christianity History, Church History Book Review, Ante-Nicene Church Development, Nigel Scotland More than Conquerors, Early Christian Heresies and Persecution

The following analysis judges Nigel Scotland's *More than Conquerors*' strategic relevance, methodological rigor, and contribution to early ecclesiastical studies. This history of early Christianity from the day of Pentecost to the fifth century is easy to read, and accessible because it avoids academic language (incorporates contemporary vocabularies and quotations). Yet the work remains theologically sound and adequate for seminary use.

1. Author's Thesis Statement:

The author argues that Christ successfully built His Church during its first five hundred years despite internal heresies (particularly Gnosticism in the second Century and Arianism in the fourth) and external Roman persecutions.

2. Strengths:

- a. The synopsis highlights the processes of structuring church leadership, the impact of Church Councils, the formulation of the doctrine of God as Trinity (expressed in the Apostles', Nicene and Athanasian creeds), and overcoming the threats posed by false teachings and teachers, and Roman persecution.
- b. The author presents arguments from different schools of thought.
- c. Key ecclesiastical and doctrinal evolution, and environmental factors for early expansion are addressed sequentially.

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- d. A unique feature of the work is the consistent use of the double titles for each of the fifteen chapters. These pair a catchy, timeless theological theme with a specific subordinate clause that delineates historical issues, significant real-life persons and crucial events. This ensures that while the reader engages with the "conquering" nature of the Church they remain anchored in the main historical shifts of the period.
- e. A timeline provides appropriate dates (lists of emperors, theologians, church councils and significant events) and an index.
- f. The bibliography lists both early Christian texts and modern sources.

### 3. Appraisal

- a. The non-academic language is designed for a general audience rather than scholars. This limits its use to being a supplementary text at seminary level.
- b. Ten of the fifteen chapters do not have conclusions. Some of the five chapters with conclusions have gaps between the chapter arguments and the respective conclusion. Except for chapter 9, the conclusions usually lack depth, are too brief and do not adequately make implications for the contemporary church. For example, the conclusion on the contemporary relevance of Arianism, in chapter ten, has great value but is too brief. Each chapter would have benefitted from a conclusion section to restate the thesis statement and explain the broader meaning and significance (so what?) of the arguments. Besides, only five sections provide closure and resolution to topical issues. This book could have had more such sections on other topical issues. Finally, the absence of pedagogical tools such as maps, charts, and timelines hinders the reader's ability to track the geographical spread of missionary journeys.
- c. Critical source interaction is lacking. The text frequently presents information from reputable sources without vigorous engagement. Taking source documents "at face value" limits their critical utility. Furthermore, the work lacks primary source depth. It requires more reliance on primary patristic sources rather than secondary summaries to enhance its historiographical depth.
- d. While the book mentions the multi-cultural nature of the early Church—citing Nelson Mandela's observation that the gospel chose "all mankind"—the narrative remains largely Western-centric. Thus, it misses the opportunity to bridge ancient history with non- Western contexts.

- e. The bibliography is dated; less than one-fifth of the cited books were published within the last twenty years, with one book in the "modern source" category dating back to 1894.

#### 4. Recommendation

More than Conquerors is a valuable resource for clergy and lay Christians seeking a theologically sound synthesis of the early Church's foundational roots. The book has doctrinal and ethical integrity. Its overarching focus on moral uprightness of the "conquering" Church in a changing world remains a timely and relevant contribution. The book is highly recommended. It provides a concise synthesis of the foundational creeds and structures of the Christian faith.

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