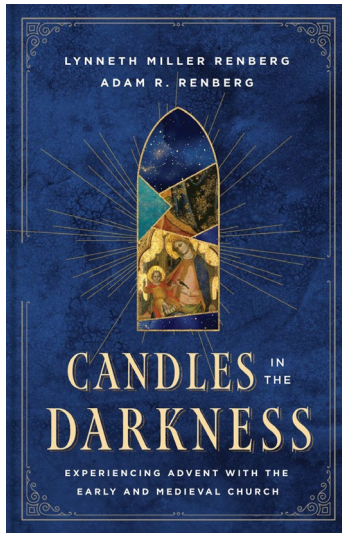




Q & A

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Candles in the Darkness

Experiencing Advent with the Early and Medieval Church

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In *Candles in the Darkness*, historian Lynneth Miller Renberg and theologian Adam R. Renberg invite us to travel back in time and encounter faithful voices from many walks of life, including bishops and mothers, monks and nuns, priests, pastors, and noblewomen. For each day of Advent and the Christmastide, this thoughtful devotional will connect you to the global and historical body of Christ, offering a new, deeper experience of the season through rediscovering treasures from Christians of long ago.

Scripture, Saints, and Prayers for Advent and Christmas

What led to your interest in the historical church and now sharing from the voices of the Christian tradition in a devotional?

Lynneth Miller Renberg and Adam R. Renberg: In our own work as scholars of church history and theology, we have found reading the works of past believers to be edifying, challenging, and strengthening to our own faiths. Believers from different times and places see different mysteries, challenges, and marvels in the biblical text than we do; reading their reflections has helped us both to understand the fullness and majesty of God more fully. That is the purpose of this book: to help believers in a modern context learn from the historical church in order to better know God and to strengthen their faith to better withstand the challenges of a skeptical post-truth culture. This feels particularly vital during the season of Advent, a season full of mystery and hope. What does it mean for God to become flesh and dwell among us? How does that Incarnation affect our daily lives today? And what hope does it give us for the future? In a culture saturated with presentism and pessimism, a book that counters both modern frameworks with the timeless, global truth of the gospel through the diverse voices of the church is particularly needed. Reading these diverse past figures has helped us to better understand the richness and beauty of God's church and God's plan. It has grounded our faith and given us confidence in the God whom we serve. Our hope is that by bringing these diverse voices to a broader audience, we can help others likewise feel at home within God's church and see the splendor of God from another perspective, to strengthen their own faith in challenging times and seasons.

What is your main thesis in *Candles in the Darkness*?

L. Miller Renberg and A. Renberg: As seasons full of theological significance, Advent and Christmas can also be seasons that feel repetitive to believers reading the same Scripture passages about the birth of Christ along with modern reflections or commentaries year after year. By incorporating the voices of women and men from very different chronological, geographic, and theological traditions within church history, this devotional seeks to enrich our readings of familiar Scripture passages with new perspectives and insights from past brothers and sisters in Christ. Other devotional materials that seek to engage with figures from early church history are more limited in scope (either by gender or theological tradition or geographic/chronological scope). Our devotional seeks to reflect the fullness of the body of Christ and to center the voices of diverse past believers over modern theological divisions.

What do you hope your book contributes to the study of church history?

L. Miller Renberg and A. Renberg: First, in a field that often prioritizes the voices of the "greats," this book intentionally centers men and women from across the Christian tradition to challenge and edify. Second, this book makes many known and unknown figures accessible through lengthy primary source quotations and a further resources section. In this sense, it acts as a sort of "primary source" reader for those who do not have the knowledge of the early and medieval church. Third, ancient figures are often treated solely for their historical interest or from what can be taken from them. This work pulls out the spiritual dimensions of historical texts, encouraging readers to treat historical figures as brothers and sisters in Christ.



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