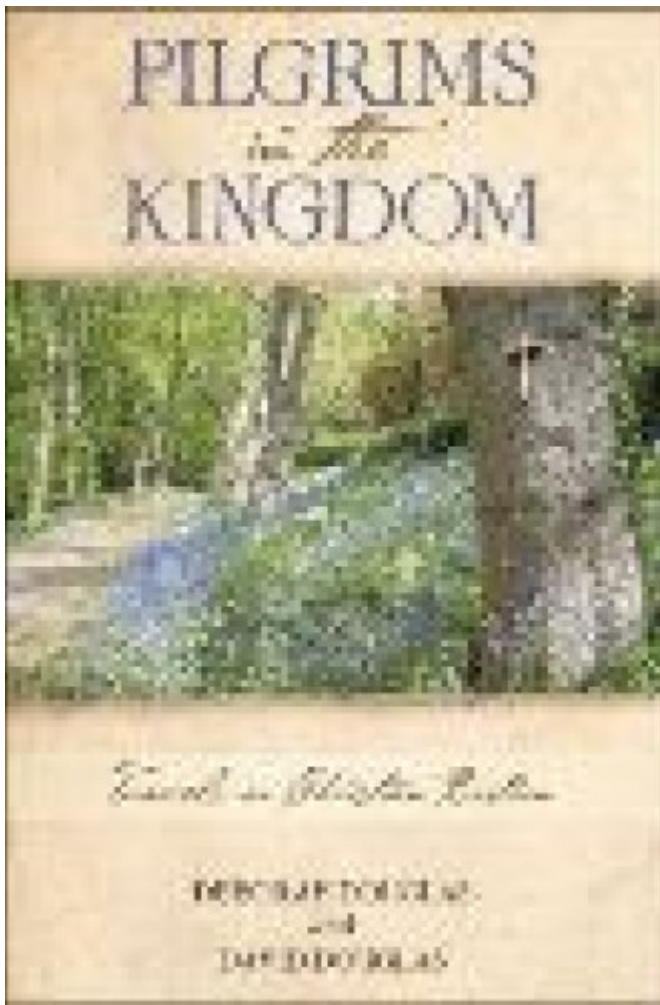


Pilgrims in the Kingdom: Travels in Christian Britain

reviewed by [J. Nelson Kraybill](#) in the [July 13, 2004](#) issue

In Review



Pilgrims in the Kingdom: Travels in Christian Britain

Deborah Douglas and David Douglas
Upper Room

From Columba at Iona to Evelyn Underhill at Pleshey, British men and women of past generations yearned to know God and follow the way of Jesus. This artistic and wistful volume—which could well serve as a travel guide—takes us on a provocative journey across Britain to learn from such saints.

Deborah and David Douglas bring exceptional gifts and backgrounds to their writing: a passion for English literature, experience in spiritual direction, and environmental work in developing countries. Often traveling individually rather than as a pair, these two Americans made multiple journeys to Christian sites across Britain over a period of years and wrote a chapter about each foray. Matching the depth of their insights are outstanding black-and-white images by award-winning photographer Joan Myers.

Sixteen of the chapters introduce the habitat and witness of one or more bygone saints. These include Catholic, Protestant, nonconformist and evangelical luminaries such as St. Cuthbert, Thomas à Becket, Julian of Norwich, George Fox, John Wesley and C. S. Lewis. The reader can make a virtual (or literal) visit to the sites in any order. Despite the book's occasional lapses into romanticism (an occupational hazard for anyone touring holy places in Britain), it is packed with spiritual and historical insights. The authors include good endnotes for each chapter and a helpful appendix with Web site, travel directions, opening hours and other practical information for visiting each holy place.

Having done my own journeying and writing about Christian Britain, I resonate with the spirit and content of this beautiful book. But I was sorry that it includes no glimpse of hope and life in the present-day British church. The Douglasses make provocative observations about justice and personal spirituality, but they say little about the vital congregations and communities that do exist in today's Britain and that are essential if contemporary followers of Jesus are to sustain the kind of courageous witness given by the saints of old. In order to avoid spiritual individualism and historical romanticism, readers may want to make the connection with contemporary Christian renewal in Britain for themselves.