



Lost Mission

Athol Dickson

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What haunting legacy waits deep beneath the barrios and wealthy enclaves of Southern California?

An idyllic Spanish mission collapses atop the supernatural evidence of a shocking crime. Twelve generations later the ground is opened up, the forgotten ruins are disturbed, and rich and poor alike confront the onslaught of resurging hell on earth. Caught up in the catastrophe are . . .

A humble shopkeeper compelled to leave her tiny village deep in Mexico to preach in America

A minister wracked with guilt for loving the wrong woman

An unimaginably wealthy man, blinded to the consequences of his grand plans

A devoted father and husband driven to a horrible discovery that changes everything

Will the evil that destroyed the *Misión de Santa Dolores* rise to overwhelm them, or will they beat back the terrible desires that left the mission's good Franciscan founder standing in the midst of flames ignited by his enemies and friends alike more than two centuries ago?

From the high Sierra Madres to the harsh Sonoran desert, from the privileged world of millionaire moguls to the impoverished immigrants who serve them, Athol Dickson once again weaves a gripping story of suspense that spans centuries and cultures to explore the abiding possibility of miracles.

Lost Mission Details

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Author : Athol Dickson

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From Reader Review Lost Mission for online ebook

Phyllis Wheeler says

Lost Mission by Athol Dickson, a review

Published by Simon & Schuster, 2009, 345 pages

Genre: “Magical realism” according to the publisher. I will call it supernatural suspense. Suitable for teens and adults.

There are two alternating story lines, each with its protagonist, that unfold as the book progresses. One takes place around 1772 and the other in modern times. Both story lines focus on the same location near Los Angeles.

The two stories, while seemingly not similar at first, become more and more alike. A small three-paneled painting is common to both stories, as is a certain character, described as an Indian with shining hair, who I think must be an angel.

In 1772, three Franciscan friars and some Spanish soldiers set out on a missionary journey northward from Baja California. They eventually start a mission in a desert spot near an Indian village. We readers know from the beginning that the mission fails and that just one of the three friars, Fray Alejandro, and an Indian miraculously survive the fire that burns the place down.

The sad tale of the failed mission unfolds as the book progresses. The other two friars, keeping secrets, are at cross purposes. The superior of the three routinely mistreats the Indian converts. Through it all, Fray Alejandro works on his assigned task, painting the three-panel altarpiece painting, but oddly cannot make any headway.

In the modern tale, a devout young Mexican woman, Lupe, feels called to travel to the US and confront Americans with their wickednesses. She’s a missionary to the lost in the modern U.S. Miraculously she survives walking through the desert to California, carrying two panels of the three-panel painting (given to her by the village priest). We readers learn that the painting shows something extraordinary—apparently Lupe’s own face is in it, along with faces of others.

The other two main characters connect with Lupe in Orange County, California, a suburb of Los Angeles. Eventually we can figure out that these two characters, a rich man and a preacher, are given parallel personalities to the wayward friars in the earlier story.

As I read the modern day and historical stories, I tried to guess the outcome for the modern story and the reason for failure for the historical story. I must say, I missed the mark widely for both. I did figure the painting had something to do with the outcome, and that was true.

Both stories contrast grace and redemption to punitive, limited, prideful versions of faith. The book will cause a wise reader to stop and take stock: am I acting like a prideful pharisee? Where am I unrepentant? What are my own sins that I, a sinner, am too blind to see?

This complex book is intended for adults and would make a fine read for teenagers as well. There are even some discussion questions included at the end.

Full of symbolism and parallels, this work is a reach feast for a reader, hard to put down and wonderful to savor.—Phyllis Wheeler

Bruce Judisch says

This was remarkable. Just remarkable.

Athol Dickson's writing credentials are impeccable, and one need only read *Lost Mission* to discover why. Painstakingly researched and masterfully told, the story bookends lives separated by 200 years in time, but intertwined in eternity.

In 1767, Fray Alejandro left his Franciscan monastery in Italy in response to a call to minister to the heathen natives of New Spain. Adventures and misadventures befall the holy man as he strives to establish La Misión de Santa Delores in Alta California with his abbot, Fray Guillermo, and brother priest, Fray Benico. All three padres are forever changed in their endeavor. Fray Alejandro bequeaths an unlikely legacy that changes the lives of all who behold it. Especially four lives in our present day.

Lupe de la Garza of Rincón de Delores, home village to Fray Alejandro in his final days, senses a similar call to witness the Gospel to the lost Americanos north of the border. Carrying Fray Alejandro's legacy in a cloth sack, Lupe sets off on her mission. Enter Ramón Rodriguez, on a quest to earn money for his family and his dream back in Mexico, who leads her into the desert wilderness over the border only then to lose her. Discovered and saved by newly ordained Tucker Rue, himself seeking divine guidance in the solitude of the desert, Lupe joins him in his ministry to the Latinos of Wilson City. Seeking to renew her call to preach to the Americanos, Lupe leaves Tucker's ministry and ends up in the employ of the rich and powerful Delano Wright. The stage is now set.

The lives and fortunes of these four people, who couldn't be farther apart on the spiritual and socio-economic spectrums, become inextricably enmeshed--glued fast by Alejandro's legacy and a mysterious figure who himself spans the centuries. Faith and principle collide with temptation and human weakness with predictable results. Well, maybe not so predictable.

The story reaches its climax when the dormant and lethal specter of the long-lost Misión de Santa Delores arises and engulfs modern-day Alta California as it did in Fray Alejandro's day. Redemption is granted, restitution is exacted, and nothing is left to fate.

There are many lessons we learn from Mr. Dickson skillful pen, perhaps the most notable being that the consequences of our actions, words and even thoughts--good and bad--affect not only our own lives, but the lives of those around us. And yes, even of those who come ages after us, those whom we will never meet this side of eternity.

This is simply a must read for both the story and the storytelling. Like an intricate and costly tapestry, the storyline is illuminated and enhanced by a frame of extraordinary prose. It isn't just a great read, it's an emotional, intellectual and spiritual investment.

Cindy says

Lost Mission
Athol Dickson
2009
Howard Fiction
Fiction/Christian/General

Reviewed by Cindy Loven

Athol Dickson has brought us a complex novel. Set in both modern and ancient times, he often moves from one setting to the other unexpectedly, which makes you have to go back and read again. This was not an aspect of the novel that I enjoyed.

Bring forth the history of the Mission of the three Franciscan priests, who came to “New Spain” to evangelize among the Indians. The history of the building of the mission, and how it was wiped out by the small pox, was presented along with the modern story.

The modern story was one of Lupe, a young Mexican woman who came to the United States to evangelize to the lost Americans. She nearly died in the desert when she came across the border, but was rescued by a young minister Tucker Rue. She and Tucker quickly developed feelings for each other, but Lupe was sure that God had called her to this missionary call, and would not allow herself the freedom of having love in her life.

Leaving the mission that Tucker has began, Lupe finds herself in the employ of a very rich man, who is a religious zealot, but she is not sure he knows her Saviour. Knowing that God has placed her there for a reason, Lupe prays for the “mister” and lives a life of faith before him.

This story is not light reading, I am an avid reader and usually read a book in several hours and this book took me several nights to read because of the careful attention needed to keep the ancient story separate from the modern. Athol Dickson, shows his extreme writing skill, by keeping it all straight. A reader's guide and author interview is at the end of the book. 345 pages US \$14.99 3 stars

Tim Martin says

I didn't realize what I was getting into when I started listening to Athol Dickson's novel, "The Lost Mission". It took me a few chapters to understand the dual-timeline structure, and my rational brain was constantly looking for clues as to when and where the events were happening, but the end result was an enjoyable look into the individual faiths and failings of the Saints. The author does a spectacular job evoking the diverse cultures of the book, from 18th century native american beliefs to present day illegal immigrant communities and concerns. The audio version was skillfully read by Jonathan Davis, who is an excellent job (to my untrained ears) with the Spanish and English, and - along with the author - evoking the feelings of those who try to communicate in a language that is not their own.

The book is definitively Christian in nature, but shows the followers of Christ in a truthful light - people with desires for revenge and greed, deceit and doubt. When there are so many characters in the fiction-verse that are formulaic in their strengths and weaknesses, Dickson does an admirable job juxtaposing the saintly sinner with their logic for sin.

The only complaint - and it is a minor one, to be sure - that comes to mind is the handling of doubt and humility. They seem nearly interchangeable in the main characters, and I would like to have seen a bit more discussion on where the line is drawn between them.

Over all, *Lost Mission* is a strong read and a rewarding one. I recommend picking it up.

Jody Link says

Great writing but the things the main character said did not seem realistic. Also I kept on with the story but ending was disappointing to me. Mostly just wasn't my cup of tea.

Rebecca LuElla says

From my review at A Christian Worldview of Fiction: Like anything else we read, we must think and look to Scripture and compare and ask questions and pray. This book pushed me to do a lot of the above. I highly recommend *Lost Mission* for those who are ready to tackle a book that disturbs and makes them think about God and His work and His ways. The book doesn't give the answers, and that's why it is so powerful.

Rick Bavera says

Overall, I enjoyed this book.

Setting: Mexico and California

Story of a Spanish mission from latter part of the 1700s in California/Mexico, and modern-day events that are connected to them through a site and artifact.

My biggest 'gripe' about the story is that when it goes from past to present in the story, there is no 'physical' break in the text--no beginning a new chapter, no 'blank space' or line of some sort of characters that indicate a shift in perspective or setting. The story just sort of 'jumps'. That was very jarring, and confusing. I eventually caught on to what the author was doing, but still didn't like it.

Kaylea says

It took a couple (actually four) chapters for me to get into the rhythm of Dickson's writing style. At first, I

found his method of switching between the past and present a bit jarring. But I stuck with it.

Once I became "hooked" into the manuscript, I wanted to continue reading until I discovered the "ultimate" crime - what caused the collapse of the Spanish mission, so I could find out how it was impacting the present day lives.

The novel, at the very least, will make you think. Dickson weaves in themes of witnessing to "non Christians," immigration, Homeland security, greed, the impact a mega church can have in the world, and the disparity between rich and poor.

Bit take note: It's a novel that won't necessarily leave you with a "happy, happy, joy, joy" feeling at the end.

The novel will however, stay with you, as you examine the world created by Dickson and realize that some issues - no matter what people may tell you - are not black and white for Christians, but rather, filled with shades of grey.

It will also make you think about how you treat the service person you may find yourself interacting with - the person who cuts your lawn, cleans your business and maybe even runs your household.

It may even remind you that Jesus came to save everyone, regardless of age, race or monetary status.

It would definitely be a good book for a book club - because it will stir on a lively conversation.

Michelle says

I wish there was a way to give this story 4.5 stars but since I have to choose I'd say it's closer to four than five. The reason for this has more to do with a few minor things, like how the story dragged in the beginning. But that's because it was written in a "telling" style of storytelling at the outset. To give you an idea of what I mean, think about the movie Ella Enchanted and how it starts out...Once upon a time there was a little girl named Ella...etc. Anyway, it starts out with the Mexican Spanish settlements and the Catholic padres in California in the 1700s and each chapter morphs into the present day almost seamlessly and sometimes even in the same paragraph.

However, the transition is not always subtle, like when it says...but two hundred years from that day such and thus happened, then it breaks back into the story. It's the oddest style, but it's different and I have to say that was hooked on this story once I started to see what the author was trying to do. Some people might not give the story a chance, but I'd say if you find the beginning a bit dry, give it a chance. It all goes together nicely when you see the pattern. I also didn't agree with some of the theology, but in spite of that I found some of the spiritual lessons and insights to be profound and compelling.

I love it when a story makes me think, especially when there is tragedy upon tragedy that could've been prevented. You can see the ship sinking, but there are many unforeseen waves that rise up and hit you, the reader, along the way. Mr. Dickson knows how to torture his characters so that you feel their pain. This makes the story a page turner for me. I didn't know what to expect and I love that when I'm reading a book. I also love stories that show us just how deceitful and wicked our own hearts can be and why we need a savior every day and not just when we find faith convenient or something to be used for our benefit. Well done, Athol. I enjoyed this story because it made me think about my life. Highly recommended.

Michelle R. Wood says

I have to think of this book as a fable or parable in order to appreciate it. We're not given fully realized characters in those stories; instead, the characters are meant to prompt reflection on our own actions. They are not more archetypal than fictional. This description is not a detraction. The characters themselves are fascinating, and the entire basis of the story is their search for spiritual truth. To take a turn from Francis Bacon, some books are meant to be savored like a delicacy, to be considered and turned over in our minds long after we have finished them and moved on. I believe *Lost Mission* is such a book.

The three main characters of the book are:

- * Guadalupe "Lupe" Soledad Consuelo de la Garza, a Mexican shopkeeper divinely inspired to preach the gospel in America,
- * Pastor Tucker Rae, a young pastor seeking to minister to a disadvantaged migrant immigrant population,
- * Delano "Dal" Wright, a wealthy yet moral businessman shattered by personal tragedy.

The story floats back and forth between these three people in the present, and three friars in eighteenth-century Spanish America who seek to found a new mission to reach the local native population. The thrust of the novel is centered around what Christian obedience actually means, and is especially targeted at the notions of piety developed in upper middle class American Protestantism. The story itself is "simple," which does not mean trite or idiotic. Instead, as is perfectly natural for a fable, many layers of reality are excluded.

As an example, young Pastor Tucker is distraught when a local megachurch, Grace Tabernacle, chooses not to keep up the same level of support for his outreach ministry Sanctuaria, due to the fact that this church was his only source of funding. This situation works nicely to setup his internal conflict, but left me with many questions. Is Sanctuaria a registered nonprofit organization? If so, he should be able to apply for federal or state grants. Why doesn't he apply to area business grants, or work in conjunction with other local nonprofits?

These questions are neatly answered by *Lost Mission* serving as a parable. The mission is managed so differently then it would be in reality in order to serve as a dramatic foil for the megachurch, as Tucker himself is a dramatic foil for Del. Rather than show any of the work Tabernacle does, we're only pointed to the fact that they do not support Tucker's ministry as well as he thinks they should. These two churches are not meant to be realistic but "truer" than reality. The focus on a few specific characteristics contrasts the different spiritual approaches Dickson wishes to explore.

Fortunately, this author is able to tell a parable well by focusing on what matters in a story like this: the characters.

In essence, this parable illustrates a Goldilocks scenario of ministerial character types: the too hot, too cold, and just right. Dal and one of the friars are both too hot, not in their fervor for God, but in their obsession with a personal opinion of service that blinds to the truth. This obsession leads to hypocrisy, as their personal rules of obedience become so entrenched as to become a stumbling block and provoke guilt when the characters are unable to follow their own standards.

I also appreciated the depiction of characters who became "too cold." Tucker and his historic alter ego both lose sight of what is right in favor of what is good; the present day pastor in particular bends the rules to suit

his own agenda. He is just as obsessed with money as those megachurches he disdains, shown by his unwillingness to accept prayer or volunteer support over monetary funds. I am so glad the novel highlighted the slippery slope such reasoning produces.

The truth is: Tucker's and Del's sins are the same, because they amount to selfishness. In Dal's case, he believes his version of personal Christian living is superior, whereas Tucker believes his method of Christian service is better. Both have lost sight of who defines being a Christian: Jesus. Thus both pursue courses of action that are ultimately destructive to themselves and others.

But *Lost Mission* also takes a divine look at success and failure than a myopic human one. Lupe and the last of the Spanish friars both attempt to find a middle ground, a means of serving God and their fellow man with compassion and integrity. When those around them bring catastrophe, both suffer sorrow over their perceived failure. Unlike the other characters, though, they continually reject the trap of self pity or justification, instead seeking God's help to overcome obstacles. In both instances, God uses their weak, imperfect, but steadfast service to accomplish something they can't see and could never have imagined.

Lost Mission is not the book you might think it is. Don't look for reality. Instead, allow the unreality of the story and its plot points to direct you inward and then outward. The message of the story overshadow the leaps of faith the plot requires. Allow this 200-year tale to lift you up, and you will be inspired.

Jane Maritz says

This is the fictional account of a mission in California. Skillfully navigating back and forth between the 1700s and the present day, the author tells of the people involved in the founding of the mission, and points out the parallels in the lives of people in the same area today. The mission was buried centuries ago, but a construction project disturbs the ruins, and the secrets of the past impact the present...

With an international mission background myself, I found the book intriguing. But I must say *Lost Mission* is a loaded book. It addresses many of those gray areas that may really be black and white, but are difficult to take a stand on.

To start with, it brings out the age-old debate of where missionaries should draw the line in respecting their host culture. The past tactic of converting the locals to a western culture may be too much, but what do you do when the local culture is steeped in spiritualism and witchcraft? How do you identify what's really important?

And the book, while not outwardly condemning the mega church movement or the religious right political faction, certainly brings some values into question. Is it wrong for someone to illegally cross a border to provide a better life for his family? Is it wrong for someone to illegally cross a border to serve as a missionary in another country? Is it wrong to provide aid to those who have illegally crossed the border, for whatever purpose? Is it wrong to steal from those who have much, in order to simply sustain those who have nothing? Is it wrong to build up Christian communities that isolate your family from the rest of the "sinful" world?

There aren't black and white answers to every question. I do appreciate the ultimate answer; the litmus test of all questionable actions; that the book seems to leave you with: LOVE. "Greater love has no one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends." John 15:13. And while it is a beautiful answer, it is hard to grasp the

concept of pure, unselfish, godly love. I'm still searching...

If you're looking for a feel-good light read, I probably wouldn't recommend this book. Even the romance in *Lost Mission* is heavy and complicated. Yet it is definitely a thought-provoking, attention-grabbing read.

Cindi says

The story is told from various characters' points of view both in the present and in the past; the basis for the modern-day tale has its roots firmly in what took place nearly 300 years ago at the site of a no longer existent Spanish mission by the name of Mision de Santa Dolores. What happened at that mission, both the natural and the supernatural, will be revealed in ways completely unexpected to those that live in the area today. While clearly a work of fiction, the story has much to say about how one lives out their faith and how one views the illegal immigration situation in California and other border states.

But the story is more than that. It's a moving story of the commitment of some to follow what they believe God is calling them to do no matter what the cost to their own personal satisfaction and happiness. Of course, sometimes that determination can get in the way of truly hearing what God has to tell us, but as Romans 8:28 states,

And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose.

Good fiction stays with you for a while and enters casual conversation on occasion. Great fiction never really lets you go and continually turns up in conversation both casual and in-depth. "*Lost Mission*" is one of those books that keeps pulling readers back to it again and again whether to reread it or in one's thoughts. Athol Dickson has a writing style that is fine-tuned and has a way of whispering to you even after you have turned the last page.

Read this entire review!

<http://www.examiner.com/review/review...>

Joleen says

Except for a couple left leaning stuff about the self absorbed rich, and not sending kids to private schools, and a leaning towards helping illegals, this book is very unique, and very well written....seriously well written. So although I wasn't fond of those ideas in the book I could not in good conscience give it anything but a 5. This was such a good book.

The author has two story lines going. One is set on the 1700s in Alta California, which I believe is our current Southern California. The setting was a mission run by an abbot no one would want as their abbot. He's unfeeling toward the natives and basically has them as slave labor for the building of their mission. There are good friars working with him, some of whom can see discrepancies between what he's doing and the truth of the scriptures. But because they are to be obedient, they have to follow and work with the others. The other story is 20th century, set in the same area.. The mission is buried and no one knows it was ever there, until parts of it are unearthed. And covering it up wrought evil events.

A woman from Mexico who is on a mission she knows is from God to bring the gospel to the people of the United States, manages to follow a coyote (guide) and a bunch of Mexicans across the border. She carries a package called The Burden of Frey Alejandro. Later in the book you find out what it is and what is so significant about it.

There are two men in her life that are significant, the wealthy man that offers her a job, and the man who finds her in the desert after she gets lost trying to cross into California and nearly dies. She helps him begin his own mission to illegal aliens until she realizes staying with him may be keeping her from the mission she was sent to accomplish.

Many things happen, some tragic, but how the author deals with them is amazing. Also amazing is how seamless he moves from one time period to the others... At times it made me giggle, because it was so creative.

Adam Blumer says

I had read *The Cure* and *River Rising* by Athol Dickson—and loved them, so I was looking forward to *Lost Mission*. Once again the writing was superb, the characters fascinating, and the storyline engaging with one exception. Spanish history and Mexican culture have never appealed to me, so the historical storyline was a bit challenging to get through, though Dickson deserves special notice for how deftly he wove in a past storyline involving Catholic monks establishing a mission in old-time California. I must admit that I sometimes found myself wanting to skip these parts and just get back to the modern storyline. It just wasn't an interesting storyline for me. Mexican culture is also pretty foreign, so I couldn't really appreciate much of the local color.

This well-written and often poetic novel raises complex ethical and spiritual issues that make readers think. He tackles illegal immigration and appears to be sympathetic toward it by the fact that Lupe, the main character, is an illegal immigrant from Mexico. Tucker, who is running his own mission, takes water to the desert to help illegals who may be crossing the desert to California. Another theme has to do with mega churches who seek to separate themselves from the world, especially from illegal immigrants, and live in their own utopia. It's clear that these churches, overflowing with wealth, aren't doing enough to reach out to those who truly need help, even the basics like food and clothing. The complex issues are thought provoking and make the reader grapple with the moral dilemma of reaching out to people who according to our laws shouldn't even be in our country.

One aspect of the novel that disappointed me was Dickson's sympathetic treatment of Catholics. Catholic doctrine does not embrace the true gospel due to its works-based salvation. Yet the novel's main character is Catholic at the beginning and Catholic at the end; she even "preaches" to those who need to hear the truth, yet I'm baffled as to what that truth could be. If she's a devout Catholic, she doesn't personally possess the truth of grace alone by faith alone. If I personally met a Lupe who loved God and wanted to serve Him, I would first challenge her faith to be sure she wasn't depending on works for salvation. If she did depend on grace alone, then I would have strongly encouraged her to leave the Catholic Church. The novel is highly sympathetic toward Catholics, a disappointment for me. I kept hoping that Tucker or someone would probe Lupe's faith and tell her the truth about Catholic false teachings, but no one does.

In the end, the novel is superbly written and often poetic, and the complex modern storyline kept me reading. But due to complex and controversial issues that deserved a clear biblical answer, I felt divided over the novel's final message. Athol's message is clear that mega churches that seek to separate from the world and

ignore those who need help are bad and that Christians who run a small mission and help illegal aliens are good. In the end, neither those who run the mega church are completely wrong, and neither are those who help illegal aliens completely right. Still, *Lost Mission* was a fascinating, if not tragic, read. Athol presents some of the best writing I've ever seen in Christian fiction, and I'll certainly read him again.

Arwen says

A strange story that tries to be a supernatural thriller, but ends up being a jumpy ride between characters with a let down ending. There are several threads in this book; one in the distant past at the Mission, two in modern times with Lupe (a lovely lady, who come illegally to the USA to preach to the "lost gringos",) Delano Wright a rich American, and Tucker a Christian man who is dedicated to helping poor immigrants so dedicated that he loses sight of right and wrong.
