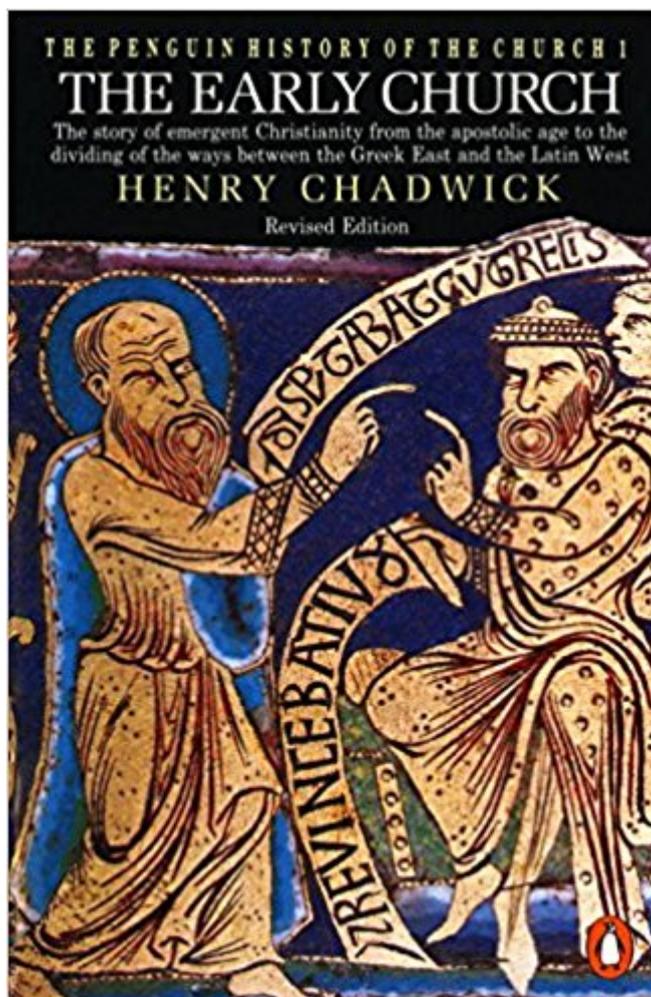


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The Early Church (The Penguin History Of The Church) (v. 1)



Synopsis

Examines the beginning of the Christian movement during the first century AD, and the explosive force of its expansion throughout the Roman world.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

With the recent resurgence of interest in the historic churches, histories of the early Church have attracted a greater audience. While this development is surely welcome, there is a growing tendency to quote (or misquote) the Church Fathers to support one's own theological position. There have also been works of Church history where the sole purpose appears to be "spinning" historical facts in order to validate theological presuppositions. Such polemical volumes are generally aimed at a large audience and so are often written in a popular style. More impartial works are often comprehensive tomes poorly suited to those seeking an introduction to the patristic era. Henry Chadwick's *The Early Church* goes a long way in solving this problem. Written as part of Penguin's *History of the Church* series, this excellent work is a great place for those with an interest in early Church history to begin their investigations. Chadwick arranges the sections thematically rather than chronologically - allowing a clearer focus for the reader - and masterfully covers all the major currents in the patristic era without leaving his audience adrift in a sea of minutiae. Beginners to the subject of Church history may find it useful to read the book, digest the information, and then reread it, as they will be better prepared to see how the various theological and political currents interacted in the development of Christian orthodoxy. Those who approach the topic with a theological axe to grind will not find solace in this book. Chadwick is nothing if not an honest

historian and both sides in the Protestant/Roman Catholic apologetics wars may feel a bit uncomfortable at times.

Chadwick has written an engaging, readable introduction to an era that is difficult to distill. There are many cross-cutting trends (from a chronological point of view) and Chadwick does a nice job of maintaining narrative coherence. If you are interested enough to be looking at this page, you will probably find the book captivating. And the coverage is very good, focusing both on theological developments and socio-political developments surrounding the milieu of the early Christian church. So this stands as a very profitable introduction. One specific drawback is that the "filioque" controversy, whether the Spirit proceeds from the Father alone or from the Father and the Son, is glossed over without the attention it deserves. This is one of the major doctrinal disputes to this day between the Eastern Orthodox and Roman Catholic churches, and was critically important at the time covered in this book (especially since the subtitle claims the book will take you down to the parting of ways between East and West). One general drawback is that the internecine theological squabbles aren't really placed in their proper context with respect to everyday church life. They wind up seeming much more important to the laity than they probably really were. Two caveats, not necessarily drawbacks: it's best to know a little something about the Roman empire, like the broad outlines of its history. Chadwick doesn't assume that you are an expert, but this book comes in at just under 300 pages -- an achievement -- and the sacrifice is that the whole historical environment can't be treated in depth. Also, it's important to have some working knowledge, like one gets from living in the West, of the culture of the church.

The Early Church, Editorial Digest: Henry Chadwick's Story of Emergent Christianity is an early contribution to the Oxford History of the Church. This first fairly slim book is one of the best concise introductions to the early church available in a single volume. It is delightful to read and engaging to study. He has produced a masterpiece, covering every aspect of the life of the early church. Professor Chadwick's conclusions are novel, but not tendentious, trying to be unbiased as possible to the historical evidence. The book is perfect for getting an overall view of the early church without going into too much detail, and in this respect his footnotes do not disappoint us. The Early Church, Content: Drawing on recent historical research, Professor Henry Chadwick shows how Christianity had its roots in a synthesis of contemporary ideas and beliefs, and analyses the causes of its persecution under Diocletian, the fanaticism of its martyrs and its bitter internal controversies. The conversion of Constantine and the edict of Theodosius meant that the church had to reconcile its

spiritual duties with a new, worldly role as an establishment for better government throughout the empire, and Professor Chadwick completes his history by demonstrating how this conflict of responsibilities led to the emergence of the two pillars of Christianity the monastic movement, and bishoprics. Description in Consensus: Marked by an originality both of scope and narrative, this book is a brilliant introduction, that provides a full and enjoyable narrative history of the first centuries of the Christian Church, an account of the history of the early Church, particularly in the East.

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