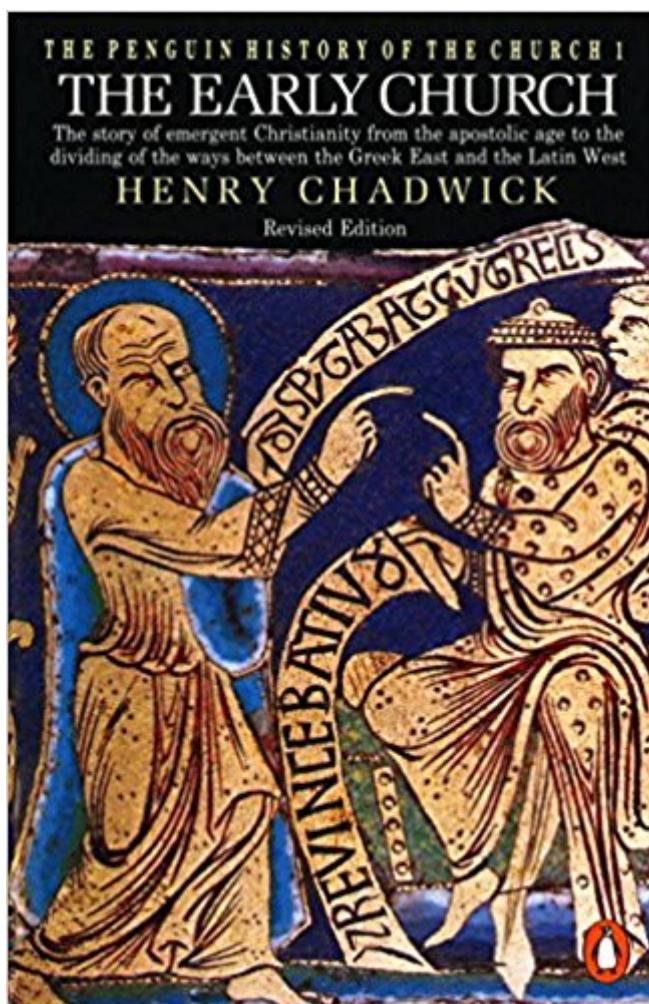


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The Early Church (The Penguin History Of The Church) (v. 1)



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

Reverend Henry Chadwick is a former Dean of Christ Church, Oxford, and has been a Regius Professor at both Oxford and Cambridge. He is also an ordained Anglican priest.

I found this book very useful. I'm a Christian who wanted more knowledge of church history. It is dense and does expect you to have a decent bit of general background knowledge, but with that being said, I merely cross-referenced the things I didn't know about already with a quick Wikipedia search and was good to go! Highly recommend.

This is a very good introductory book on the early Christian church. It covers the development of church doctrine and shows how Orthodoxy emerged as Christianity established itself as a legitimate religion. Chadwick's knowledge of his subject is vast yet he did not get into long diatribes on any one subject. The pace of the book is steady yet the reader feels well informed upon finishing it. Chadwick shows how the church responded to gnostic writings and how the more conservative elements came to give validation to those scriptures they believed canonical. Gnosticism was perhaps the greatest threat ever to face the early church and once it was subdued it became easier for the church to deal with future heretical teachings. Two other dogmas receive ample coverage in

Chadwick's book, Arianism, and the Catholic/Donatist debates. Chadwick also gives mini biographies of several key players from both the orthodox school as well as those deemed heretics. Tertullian, Marcion, Augustine, Origen, the early Popes, and even certain emperors are given enough coverage to show how their lives impacted the early church. While Chadwick covers the church well, at times his book suffers a bit from political insufficiencies. The split of the Roman Empire into east and west is not fully explained, even from how it impacted the church's history. He only gives a few sentences on the barbarian sack of Rome in 410 and the removal of the political seat of government to Ravenna. Also there was a mutual distrust between the Roman church and its counterpart in Constantinople, but these issues are not elaborately explained. Persecutions are not detailed to a great extent. But perhaps the intent of Chadwick was to provide enough background information to pique the reader to seek further knowledge. If that was the case then this book is remarkably successful. It may not be the book of choice for college level survey courses, but this book works well in its specific niche and should remain popular for years to come.

The Early Church by Henry Chadwick is a survey of early church history from the time of St. Paul to the schism between East and West. There are certain threads that come up and an abundance of sub-plots. It was fortunate to have the internet handy to help make sense of it all. There is an endless sea of happenings going on and I suppose to his credit or the credit of the subject itself, much seems to become important and one would like more details. Origen was a major figure, maybe a major corrupting figure, he synthesized Christianity with a Platonic view of God. Arian and Arianism or the interpretation that Christ was only human was another that really made many people mad. The Council of Nicaea was called by Constantine to primarily to get the Christian Leadership to agree what they were not; while Constantine had his feet in two religions, Sun worship and Christian. Almost every question about the church imaginable in modern times for or against, was also asked in the very early stages; including whether or not the church should be so interconnected to the state and its authority. Another question and dispute was a definition of Christ's relationship to God and as God. Is it like water: being solid, liquid, and steam; or something else. The discussion made many upset and there was a lot of debate and rivalry between Rome, Antioch, Constantinople, Alexandria, and Jerusalem as well as Carthage until Islam swept all of Rome's competition away (Islam stealing much of Christendom away) and Rome basically won by being the sole survivor and by successfully converting the German barbarians to its way of seeing things, or something close to that. The effect of Music with the Christian's cause and its admiration and contribution to conversions was also something noteworthy. The Early Church had very convincing musical effects

on convincing unbelievers as well as their sense of community and helping those on the fringe. The early formation of one's religion and the early formation of one's country, especially its laws, seems to be two of the most important areas of history one could study. The early Christians were a spiritual people and they radiated something including hope that created many followers. They faced a vast array of outer and inner conflict which the book describes. It is one of the those books that will probably raise more questions than answers in the end. (One of those questions is did the Manichaeists manage to sneak, primarily through St. Augustine, an interpretation of the meaning behind Adam and Eve that stuck and is still sticking but should be considered unchristian).

Henry Chadwick writes in great detail. He gives references from the New Testament about the historical event he describes. If you take the time to look up the reference, it adds even more depth to your understanding. Even if you don't look up the references, it is great reading!

The book description and reviews indicated this would be a good read for someone who is new to learning about the history of Christianity. I was disappointed to see that the book seems to be written for biblical scholars. It reads like a textbook. Within the first pages of the book, I had to look up multiple words that are not used outside of a religious context. I read about 10 pages before I felt sure this was not the book for me. I'm sure it's a fascinating book for someone with all the necessary prior knowledge, but not for a layman like myself. I'm hoping to get a refund, as I feel the book was misrepresented.

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