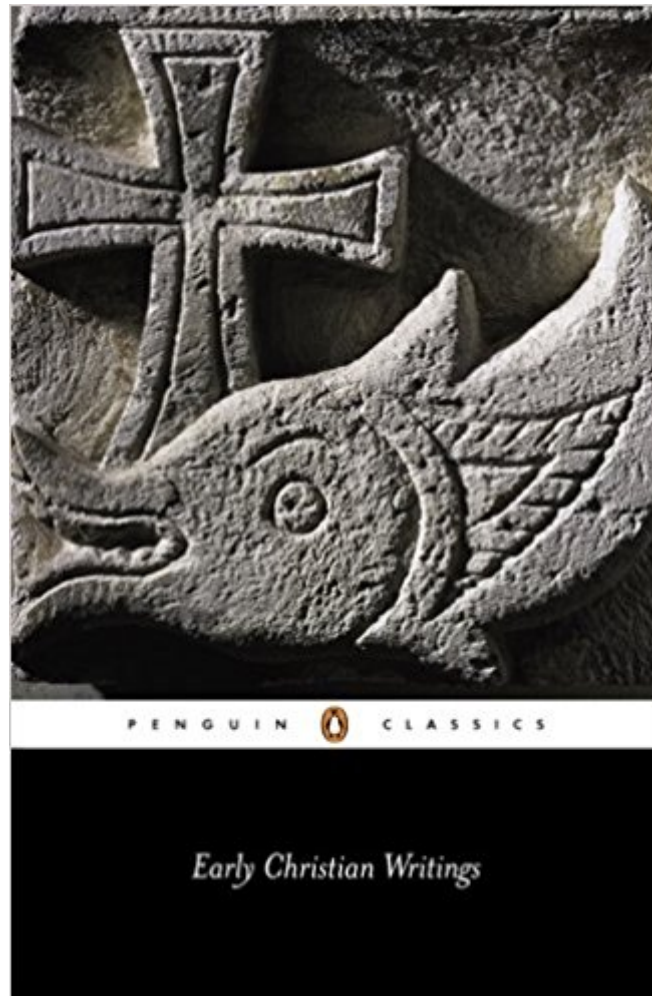




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# Early Christian Writings: The Apostolic Fathers



## Synopsis

The writings in this volume cast a glimmer of light upon the emerging traditions and organization of the infant church, during an otherwise little-known period of its development. A selection of letters and small-scale theological treatises from a group known as the Apostolic Fathers, several of whom were probably disciples of the Apostles, they provide a first-hand account of the early Church and outline a form of early Christianity still drawing on the theology and traditions of its parent religion, Judaism. Included here are the first Epistle of Bishop Clement of Rome, an impassioned plea for harmony; The Epistle of Polycarp; The Epistle of Barnabas; The Didache; and the Seven Epistles written by Ignatius of Antiochâ "among them his moving appeal to the Romans that they grant him a martyr's death. For more than seventy years, Penguin has been the leading publisher of classic literature in the English-speaking world. With more than 1,700 titles, Penguin Classics represents a global bookshelf of the best works throughout history and across genres and disciplines. Readers trust the series to provide authoritative texts enhanced by introductions and notes by distinguished scholars and contemporary authors, as well as up-to-date translations by award-winning translators.

## Book Information

Paperback: 208 pages

Publisher: Penguin Classics; Revised edition (September 1, 1987)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0140444750

ISBN-13: 978-0140444759

Product Dimensions: 5.1 x 0.5 x 7.8 inches

Shipping Weight: 5.6 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.6 out of 5 stars 60 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #21,820 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #13 in Books > Christian Books & Bibles > History > Historical Theology #27 in Books > Literature & Fiction > Ancient & Medieval Literature > Ancient & Classical #69 in Books > Christian Books & Bibles > Churches & Church Leadership > Church History

## Customer Reviews

Text: English, Greek (translation)

Andrew Louth, born in Lincolnshire and brought up in the north of England, studied Theology at the

universities of Cambridge and Edinburgh. From 1970 to 1985 he was Fellow and Chaplain of Worcester College, Oxford, and University Lecturer in Theology, teaching principally Patristics. In 1985 he became Reader in History at Goldsmith's College, London. He is the author of *The Origins of the Christian Mystical Tradition* (1981), *Discerning the Mystery: An Essay on the Nature of Theology* (1983) and *Denys the Areopagite* (1989). He has also edited *Early Christian Writings* for the Penguin Classics.

This is a wonderful collection of early Christian writings. The notes and introductions are helpful, and Staniforth gives a great translation (as he does for Penguin's edition of the "Meditations.") I wish that 2nd Clement and the Shepherd of Hermas were included. I own both the paperback and the kindle version. The paperback would receive 5 stars, but there are some errors in the kindle version that are quite distracting (though some are consistent.) Consider the following: "love first the Lard thy creator", "in quiet submission to Hun" (these are two common errors) as well as some others: "we ought surely txo detect...", "m my sight", "the hope of as all", or "who did not sin, neither VMS guile found in his mouth." These are just a few. There are many, and while you can usually figure out the meaning, the mistakes are distracting.

Excellent translation of very important early texts. Nice, brief introductions to each text, as well as a few explanatory notes on obscure sayings or references. There were quite a few typos, obviously indicating that whatever software was used to convert the original written form into electronic text needs to be checked. I noted and sent in about 20 such errors as I read the book. As far as the content is concerned, these are must read texts for Christians, especially in the West. They provide a peek into what Christianity originally was...not what it has become as reflected in modern Evangelicalism. I think that there is no true Christian who can read these works and not be convicted and challenged. After reading this I'm moving on to Eusebius's 'Ecclesiastical History' in the hope of more completely filling in the picture of Christ's Church in its earliest days. I'm finding that there is a profundity and treasure in the old that simply has been lost in most quarters of the Church today. I'm also beginning to wonder if the reason that there are not many martyrs in the West, is because there is not much actual Christianity. Surely the residual peace from a now waning Christian culture is partly the reason (and something to be thankful for!), but deep down, I think many professing Christians struggle with the thought of actually living and rendering this kind of ultimate witness to Christ. And, I think that this is because so many haven't actually found the living Christ or are not sure about their own individual faith (another matter for another time). Reading the writings of these

first post-Apostolic Fathers is to enter a world of belief and confidence of faith that speaks of truly knowing Christ as the resurrected Lord of all the earth. These men--these martyrs--knew Him and the power of His resurrection, thus desiring to be conformed to Him even in His death. There is nothing here that resembles the "your best life now", "Blessed!" type religion that passes for Christianity in today's affluent West. This is a raw look at the true Church of the Savior of the world. Read it and be ready to be rocked. Read it and be ready to be edified and roused and surprised by a depth of faith that you (or at least some of us) have not yet experienced.

I found this book to be invigorating and inspiring. The idea is amazing to know that the new testament are not the only writings we have from the early church in the new testament. What if I told you we have writings from the followers of Paul? What if it were the followers of Paul addressed to the same Corinthian church in the new testament? It is the case. What if I told you we have the writings of the Apostle John direct disciples? These writings are just that; with a handful of other jewels from the infant church. In my humble opinion, I do not feel this book is only for the man going through seminary, or getting his degree in the early church. This is a book that every Christian (and non-Christian) should read to understand what the infant church was like in the first several centuries.

What more can be said of the Apostolic Fathers? They provide a fascinating glimpse into early post-apostolic Christianity. They're a must-read for anyone interested in early Christianity. This is a nice, cheap edition of the Apostolic Fathers. Included in this volume are: 1 Clement, The Epistles of Ignatius, The Epistle of Polycarp to the Philippians, The Martyrdom of Polycarp, The Epistle to Diognetus, The Epistle of Barnabas, The Didache. Notably absent are 2 Clement and The Shepherd of Hermas, which are included in Michael Holmes' *The Apostolic Fathers: Greek Texts and English Translations*. It's my understanding that Holmes' volume is the standard edition of these works today. But this volume is cheaper, and I feel much more comfortable writing all over its margins.

This anthology of several of the early apostolic fathers epistles and other writings provides a window into early Christianity that will delight the lay reader and remind the curious of the basic foundations of Christian dogma and theology. Included in the anthology are the epistles of Ignatius of Antioch, Polycarp, Clement of Rome, The Epistle of Barnabas, the Didache, the Martyrdom of Polycarp and others. Before each major element, the editor provides the reader with a brief biography and theological and historical context for the work, as well as extensive and interesting end notes. I will

concur with several of the other reviewers that there are other writings, such as the Shepard of Hermas, that are perhaps even more poignant and valuable in a study of early Christian writing, however, this collection is excellent and belongs in any library where this subject or similar subjects are contemplated and studied.

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