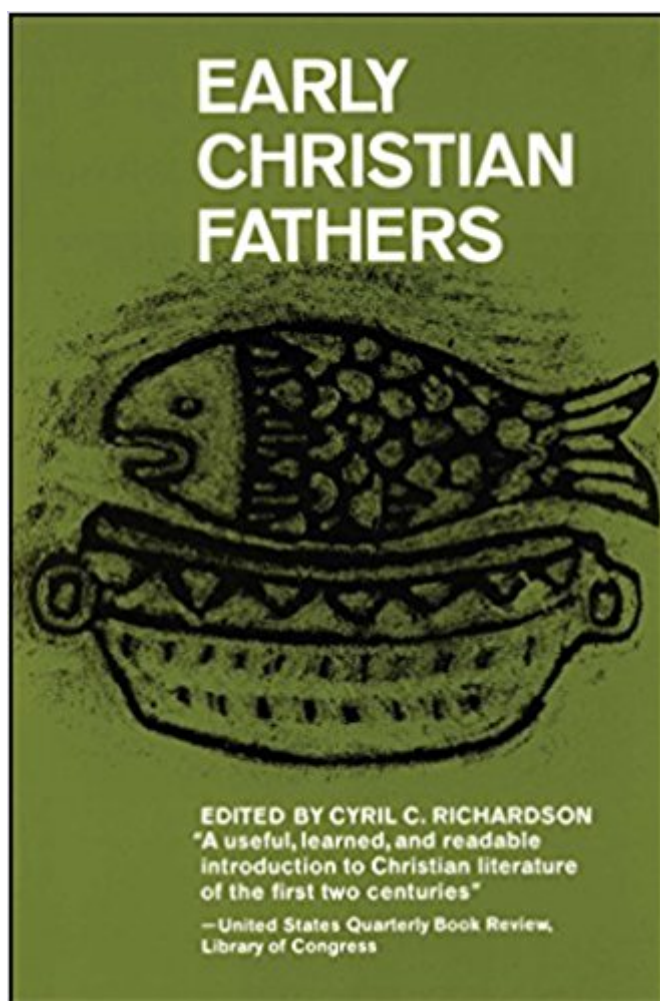


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# Early Christian Fathers (Library Of Christian Classics)



## Synopsis

This selection of writings from early church leaders includes work by Clement of Rome, Ignatius, Polycarp, Irenaeus, Athenagoras, and Justin Martyr. Long recognized for the quality of its translations, introductions, explanatory notes, and indexes, the Library of Christian Classics provides scholars and students with modern English translations of some of the most significant Christian theological texts in history. Through these works--each written prior to the end of the sixteenth century--contemporary readers are able to engage the ideas that have shaped Christian theology and the church through the centuries. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

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## Customer Reviews

Cyril C. Richardson was for many years Washburn Professor of Church History at Union Theological Seminary in New York City. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

This is not a book for a casual reader; rather it is a compendium of the earliest documents written by the early Christians, other than the New Testament. This is an important resource for anyone interested in the development of the world's largest religion. There are very few original sources for the first two centuries of Christianity, other than those bequeathed to us by the early Christians themselves. The Romans uncharacteristically failed to analyze and record the history of the new faith slowly spreading through their Empire, a faith which would ultimately transform and replace the

traditional structures upon which the Empire rested. The Introduction is a masterpiece and succeeds in orienting the reader to the problems and issues that create difficulties in understanding the historical evolution of the early Church. Clement's first letter is a powerful document that is one of our earliest and most reliable sources outside of the NT, while the letter of Ignatius gives a clue to powerful emotions that this strange new faith could inspire. Two pieces by Polycarp, who was martyred round 110 CE under Emperor Trajan, illuminate the Anatolian congregations as they had developed under the influence of John, who had such a prominent impact on the new religion. They also give us insight into the "heresies" (or different interpretations of the nature and meaning of Jesus' mission) that flourished at this time. This aspect of the book is also fortified by the inclusion of material by Irenaeus, that dedicated hunter of heresy. An excellent cross-section of the available sources regarding the rise of the Church in the early days of the Roman Empire.

I originally purchased this for a college course. As usual, I expected it to be only informative. This was much more. This book is a compilation of classical works written by the early Christian fathers. Each work is given a preface that is exciting for people interested in translation, date of authorship, historical background, etc. The real meat is the works written by the different authors. This book includes works from North Africa, Southern Europe, and the Middle East. The writings date from late first century through the late second century. I highly recommend this read for both personal enrichment and historical enlightenment.

"Of special interest to the scholar is the extensive book list included in the volume." Concordia theological  
Fathers of the Church: Who could rightly be called an 'Early Church Father'? Keep in mind that a 'Father of the Church' is not an ecclesiastically conferred distinction for which the Eastern Orthodox or the Roman Catholics have an undisputed list, as is the case of its teachers 'Doctor of the Church.' Early Church Fathers is a title that came to be applied to few early Christian role models who led by their truthful faith, holy living, and orthodox teaching, that the ancient churches of Alexandria, Antioch and Rome gradually accepted them as practical interpreters of Christianity. Their qualification would seem to fit the apostles, along with early Christians of the New Testament like Timothy, who is never referred to as Early Church Father. On the other hand, there are some of those regarded as "Fathers of the Church," whose generally orthodox teaching was marred by some doctrinal controversy (e.g. Origen), or whose lives were far from being exemplary (e.g. Hippolytus).  
Early Fathers Writings: The Writings of those early Christian writers produced in the first and second centuries, were referred to as the Apostolic Fathers. Ante Nicene writings of the

Fathers from Clement of Rome to Athanasius cover the period from the close of the New Testament writings down to the Council of Nicea (AD 325). The authors of these writings were considered to be the next generation of Apostles and as a result were named The Apostolic Fathers. Perceived by many scholars to be the most important collection of post-New Testament writings, a number of these texts were in fact considered for the Canon of the New Testament but dropped later. A good example was *Dydimus the blind*, eminent dean of Alexandrine Didascalia, reverence for 'The Shepherd of Hermas' considering as one of the most inspired of all writings, and it is included in the Sinaiticus Codex.

Cyril Richardson work: This is one of the best books on the "Early Church Fathers" of the second century, essential for understanding the thought and exegetical writings of the Church Fathers, who lived and wrote during the founding time of the early church. This first volume of The Library of Christian Classics, long acclaimed for its quality translations, contains most of the basic Christian writings of the first two centuries of the Christian Church, with the exception of the Epistle of Barnabas, and the Shepherd of Hermas. These patristic guides are very helpful, providing introductions, explanatory notes, and indices. The series ensures that modern English translations of some of the most significant Christian works are available for scholars and students, allowing searching readers to better understand the early Christian church. Describing this representative work as introductory overlooks the fact that, for the reader to appreciate the writings, he should have a knowledge of Early Church History, as narrated by H. Chadwick, or even some exposure to the Fathers thought in Historical Theology, as exposed by J. Danielou, translated into English by eminent Patristic RPC Hanson.

Cyril Richardson work is partly complemented with Lightfoot's classic 'The Apostolic Fathers', recently revised by M. Holmes. Those novice readers who want to read selections from the fathers writings, in order to determine the turning points in Church doctrine are thus advised to explore H. Bettenson's *The early Christian fathers (Clement of Rome to Athanasius)* since the latter was the first of the fathers who dramatically influenced Christian thought beyond Nicea.

I own five books on the Church Fathers and their writing and this is easily one of the best. Richardson, to my knowledge, is a Protestant but there is no scholarly disagreement to the means in which he portrays the included Fathers. The historical setting, quick biography, and major themes are discussed in detail but also in brevity. Richardson really packs the information. Best of all, it is easy to read and navigate. There is no objection so far to the book. It stands for me, a Masters in Theology student, a go-to source along with others (always have more than one source!).

I have enjoyed this book very much. The author went to great effort to tie each early Christian writer into the historical situation of the time so that you could see what the thinking was that he was writing to correct, and what the debates were for the Christians on how to word ideas upon which they agreed, but also how they answered pagan or heretical writers in defense of the orthodox path. It was interesting and well worth the purchase price. I'd gladly pass it on to adults and teenagers who were wanting more than the elementary level introductions to the Early Church Fathers found in most books. For the younger kids, I'd hand them one of the books by Mike Aquilina instead. But for the older kids who are ready for it, this is a really good book.

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