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Early Christian Writings: The Apostolic Fathers (Classics)



PENGUIN CLASSICS

Early Christian Writings



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 Antioch - among them his moving appeal to the Romans that they grant him a martyr's death.

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Customer Reviews

Early Christian Writings is an excellent collection of the works of the Post-Apostolic Church Fathers. It is for anyone looking for literature that opens a window into the Post-Apostolic Early Church. The epistles included are The First Epistle of Clement to the Corinthians; The Epistle of Ignatius to the

Ephesians, Magnesians, Trallians, Romans, Philadelphians, Smyrnaeans, and to Polycarp; The Epistles of Polycarp to the Philippians; along with the Epistles to Diognetus and Barnabas. The book also includes the Didache and the martyrdom of Polycarp. For some reason Louth did not include the Shepherd of Hermas and the fragments of Papias, though he does mention them as being part of Cotelier's collection of writings by the Church Fathers. If you are interested in the writings of the Church Fathers, and have never read such a collection, you can have some enjoyable and moving reading ahead of you. In reference to his pending martyrdom Ignatius writes, "I am His (God's) wheat, ground fine by the lions' teeth to be made purest bread for Christ" (Romans 4). He also says, "To die in Jesus Christ is better than to be monarch of earth's widest bounds. He who dies for us is all I seek; He who rose again for us is my whole desire" (Romans 6). The Epistle to Diognetus contains a vivid and compelling description of the early Christians. The second half of the Didache is full of interesting guidelines and instructions to the early believers on such things as baptism and fasting. Louth includes some good commentary about the fascinating account of the martyrdom of Polycarp. The translation by Staniforth is very readable. The introductions by Louth are interesting, helpful, and well written.

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