

Introductions

[Bradley, James E., and Richard Alfred Muller. *Church History: An Introduction to Research, Reference Works, and Methods*. 1995.](#)

Written by two seasoned historians, this text is the gold-standard manual for students embarking on serious historical research in theology and church history. Far more than a simple listing of resources, the authors provide a step-by-step introduction to the historian's craft, detailing how to find and evaluate primary sources, navigate complex bibliographies, and formulate sharp historical arguments. Muller's expertise in post-Reformation scholasticism and Bradley's background in early modern history combine to deliver an essential roadmap for turning raw ecclesiastical documents into rigorous, professional historiography.

Extended Works

[Schaff, Philip. *History of the Christian Church*. 1858–1893](#) . Spanning from the Apostolic Age through the Swiss Reformation, this monumental eight-volume set remains one of the most comprehensive single-author church history projects ever written in the English language. Philip Schaff, a Swiss-born, German-educated theologian who spent his career in the United States, masterfully synthesized rigorous European historical criticism with a deep, narrative warmth. Known for its extensive footnotes, deep engagement with primary texts, and remarkably balanced handling of doctrinal conflicts, this collection is an foundational reference work for pastors, students, and church historians exploring the development of Christian thought and institutions.

Eight Volumes: [Volume 1](#) , [Volume 2](#) , [Volume 3](#) , [Volume 4](#) [Volume 5](#) , [Volume 6](#) , [Volume 7](#) , [Volume 8](#)

The Patristic Period

[Eusebius of Caesarea. *The Church History of Eusebius* . Translated by Arthur Cushman McGiffert. Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, Second Series, Vol. 1 \(NPNF2-01\). 1890.](#)

Commonly hailed as the "Father of Church History," Eusebius of Caesarea provides the single most important eyewitness narrative of the early Church's development, tracking its history from the time of the Apostles down to the pivotal reign of Emperor Constantine. Writing in the early 4th century, Eusebius preserves invaluable fragments of lost early Christian writings, tracks the succession of bishops, catalogs early heresies, and provides harrowing, first-hand details of the

Roman persecutions. This classic NPNF volume, featuring exhaustive historical introductions and dense explanatory footnotes by Arthur Cushman McGiffert, remains a foundation stone for any digital or physical library dedicated to patristic research.

[Socrates Scholasticus. *Church History* . Born c. 380. \(Read on-line\)](#) Intended as a direct continuation of Eusebius's foundational history, this crucial 5th-century work chronicles the fortunes of the Christian Church from the abdication of Diocletian (305) down to the author's own day in 439. Writing from Constantinople, Socrates—a legally trained layman—offers a remarkably objective and structurally sound look at a chaotic era. His history serves as one of our premier primary sources for the complex geopolitical fallout of the Arian controversy, the inner workings of early ecumenical councils, and the escalating tensions between Church and State in the Late Roman Empire. His distinct legal eye and extensive use of public archives make this text a pillar of early Byzantine historiography.

[Theodoret. *Ecclesiastical History* . \(Read on-line\)](#) Completing a triad of major 5th-century continuations of Eusebius alongside Socrates and Sozomen, Theodoret—the brilliant theologian, apologist, and Bishop of Cyrrhus—covers the turbulent period from the rise of Arianism (325) to the deaths of Theodore of Mopsuestia and Emperor Theodosius II (450). Written from a distinctly Antiochene theological perspective, Theodoret's history is particularly rich in primary documents, preserving numerous imperial letters, synodal decrees, and episcopal correspondence not found elsewhere. Despite his own heavy involvement in the Christological controversies of his day, his history offers an invaluable, deeply detailed window into the monastic movements, liturgical developments, and doctrinal battlegrounds of the Eastern Roman Empire.

[Sozomen. *Ecclesiastical History* . \(Read on-line\)](#) The final piece of the legendary triad of 5th-century historians who continued the work of Eusebius, Sozomen was a Christian lawyer practicing in Constantinople. His history covers the pivotal years between the rise of Constantine (324) and the reign of Theodosius II (439). Drawing heavily on public records, imperial edicts, and the lost work of Olympiodorus of Thebes, Sozomen offers an especially rich account of the rise and daily life of early Christian monasticism, which he deeply admired. Though covering much of the same political and theological ground as his contemporary, Socrates Scholasticus, Sozomen's elegant literary style and extensive focus on the expansion of Christianity outside the borders of the Roman Empire make his work a vital primary source for Late Antiquity.

[Bingham, Joseph. *Origines Ecclesiasticæ; or, The Antiquities of the Christian Church, and Other Works* . 1668–1723.](#) This monumental multi-volume collection

remains one of the greatest achievements of post-Reformation Anglican erudition. Joseph Bingham, a brilliant Oxford scholar and clergyman, dedicated his life to producing a vast, systematic encyclopedia of the liturgy, architecture, discipline, offices, and daily practices of the early Christian Church (spanning the first several centuries). *Origines Ecclesiasticæ* served a vital polemical and historical purpose, demonstrating the structural and liturgical continuity between the early patristic church and the Church of England. For modern researchers, it remains an astonishingly rich, well-indexed treasure trove of primary source citations regarding early Christian life and worship.

The Eastern Church

[Neale, John Mason. *A History of the Holy Eastern Church* . 1847.](#) Written by the brilliant English hymnwriter, scholar, and prominent figure within the Oxford Movement, this classic text stands as the first major, sympathetic attempt in the English language to write a comprehensive history of the Eastern Orthodox, Oriental Orthodox, and Assyrian Churches. Disappointed by the lack of Western knowledge regarding Eastern Christianity, Neale spent years analyzing primary liturgical texts and historical records. The resulting multi-volume project provides a deeply detailed look at Eastern liturgy, ecclesiology, and history—particularly focused on the Patriarchates of Alexandria and Antioch. It remains a fascinating monument of 19th-century church scholarship and an important bridge in early Anglican-Eastern Orthodox dialogue.

[Volume 1](#) , [Volume 2](#) , [Volume 3](#)

The Western Church

[Trench, Richard Chenevix. *Lectures on Medieval Church History, Being the Substance of Lectures Delivered at Queen's College, London* . 1879.](#) Originally delivered as a series of foundational lectures to students in London, this volume by the celebrated Anglican archbishop and philologist offers a remarkably accessible yet sophisticated overview of the Middle Ages. Trench avoids drowning the reader in dry dates, opting instead to sketch the broad theological, cultural, and political movements that shaped medieval Christendom. Covering everything from the rise of the papacy and the monastic orders to the Crusades and the pre-Reformation stirrings of Hus and Wycliffe, this work is highly valued for its elegant literary style and its balanced Protestant assessment of the medieval Catholic heritage.

[Workman, Herbert Brook. *The Church of the West in the Middle Ages* . 1900.](#) Written by a prominent Methodist historian and educator, this two-volume study provides a sharp, analytical chronicle of Western European Christianity from the dawn of the dark ages to the height of the medieval papal empire. Workman focuses heavily on the structural and institutional evolution of

the Western Church, tracing how the Roman see consolidated its immense political power and how monastic reforms (like the Cluniac and Cistercian movements) constantly sought to revive the spiritual core of the institution. It serves as an excellent, classic narrative history that balances political realities with genuine theological development.

[Volume 1](#) , [Volume 2](#)

History of The Roman Empire

[Gibbon, Edward. *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* . 1872.](#) While primarily a work of secular history, Gibbon's literary masterpiece is a vital, historically controversial text for theological libraries. Spanning from the height of the Roman Empire to the fall of Constantinople, Gibbon famously (and controversially) identified the rapid rise and institutionalization of early Christianity as one of the primary catalysts for the collapse of Roman civic virtue. His notoriously critical 15th and 16th chapters sparked immense theological pushback in the 18th and 19th centuries, prompting generations of Christian apologists and historians to refine their own historical methodologies. Celebrated for its biting irony and prose, this text remains essential for understanding Enlightenment-era historical skepticism and the intersection of Church and State in Late Antiquity.

[Volume 2](#) , [Volume 3](#) , [Volume 3](#) , [Volume 4](#)

[Glover, Terrot Reaveley. *The Conflict of Religions in the Early Roman Empire* . 1909.](#) Written by a distinguished Cambridge classical scholar and Baptist layman, this influential work explores the rich, messy psychological and cultural environment of the first three centuries of the Christian era. Glover masterfully recreates the world into which the Gospel was preached, analyzing Christianity's main ideological competitors—from popular Roman Stoicism and the mystical fervor of the Isis cults to the philosophical critiques of Celsus and Lucian. Rather than treating early church history in a vacuum, Glover demonstrates how early Christian thinkers successfully engaged, critiqued, and ultimately transformed the classical Greco-Roman mind, offering a brilliant look at historical apologetics in actio

[Woodward, Ernest Llewellyn. *Christianity and Nationalism in the Later Roman Empire* . 1916.](#) Published early in the career of the eminent Oxford historian, this sharp monograph explores the deep sociopolitical undercurrents of the 4th and 5th-century Church. Woodward challenges the traditional view that early christological controversies (like Arianism, Donatism, and

Monophysitism) were fought purely over abstract theology. Instead, he convincingly demonstrates how these theological movements frequently served as proxy battlegrounds for brewing regional nationalisms and anti-Imperial sentiments against Constantinople and Rome. It remains an essential, highly focused resource for understanding the complex intersections of local culture, imperial politics, and church schisms in the Late Roman Empire.

[Bury, John Bagnell. *History of the Later Roman Empire: From the Death of Theodosius I to the Death of Justinian \(A.D. 395 to A.D. 565\)*. 1923.](#) Written by the legendary Regius Professor of Modern History at Cambridge, this monumental two-volume set is widely considered the absolute masterpiece of early 20th-century Byzantine studies. Covering the vital era between the definitive split of the Western and Eastern Empires up to the absolute height of Justinian's reign, Bury offers an incredibly detailed look at the political, military, and institutional structures of the Mediterranean world. For church historians, this text provides a peerless secular foundation for understanding the rise of the early Papacy, the complex geopolitical fallout of the Nestorian and Monophysite controversies, and the legal codifications under Justinian that bound the Church to the Roman legal system for centuries.

[Volume 1](#) , [Volume 2](#)

[Rostovtzeff, Michael Ivanovitch. *The Social and Economic History of the Roman Empire*](#) . A towering masterpiece of classical scholarship, this seminal work by the brilliant Russian-American historian revolutionized how we look at antiquity by shifting the spotlight away from emperors and battles onto the daily economic lives of ordinary Roman subjects. Rostovtzeff uses an extraordinary blend of literary texts, archaeology, and papyrological data to map the empire's trade routes, urban middle classes, and massive agricultural underbelly. For the biblical and church historian, this text provides an incomparable backdrop for understanding the socioeconomic strata of the earliest Christian communities, the financial mechanics of Greco-Roman cities where Paul preached, and the sweeping economic decay that deeply altered late antique church-state dynamics.

[Volume 1](#) , Volume 2 (unavailable)

History of The Byzantine Empire

[Treadgold, Warren T. *A History of the Byzantine State and Society*](#) . [Stanford University](#)

[Press, 1997. \(Read on-line \)](#)

Widely regarded as one of the most comprehensive single-volume histories of the Byzantine Empire ever written, this massive work charts the millennium-long survival of Eastern Rome from Diocletian's reforms in 284 to the fall of Constantinople in 1453. Treadgold brilliantly weaves together military narrative, administrative structures, economic shifts, and social trends. For church historians, this text is indispensable: it tracks how Orthodox theology, the ecumenical councils, and the imperial crown became completely inseparable. Offering deep coverage of the Iconoclastic controversies, the monastic networks, and the Great Schism of 1054, Treadgold provides the essential civic context needed to understand Eastern Christian history.