



Early History of the Christian Church: From its Foundation to the End of the Fifth Century (Volume I)

Louis Duchesne

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This is the first volume of a 3-volume set entitled "Early History of the Christian Church: From its Foundation to the End of the Fifth Century." (NY 1909-1924). Originally published in French as "Histoire ancienne l'Eglise" (Paris, 1905-1910) . Fully edited with linked footnotes.

This first volume covers the period from the foundation of the Christian Church to the end of the Third Century.

Duchesne's classic work served as the standard introduction to the early church for many years. Orthodox Catholic historian Warren H. Carroll, the late founder of Christendom College, lauded the work as "excellent and thorough," noting: "Though privately an early modernist, Duchesne, in this classic did not challenge orthodox doctrine nor engage in indiscriminate debunking."

Louis Duchesne (1843-1922) was a French church historian of first rank. He was ordained to the priesthood in 1887 and completed his theological studies at Rome. His interest in the history of the early church was intensified by his travels in Greece and Asia Minor. He became a professor of ecclesiastical history at the Institut Catholique in Paris in 1885. In 1895 he was nominated director of the French School at Rome, a position he held until his death. He was elected a member of the French Academy in 1910. He died in 1922, in Rome, and is buried in the cemetery of Saint-Servan.

His major works concentrate on early church history and the early documents of papal history.

Historians today concede that Catholic historical scholarship came to a legitimate maturity in the 19th century, especially through the publication of sources. Duchesne, by his close study of these sources, called into question some of the legends of the saints. Considered too modernist by the Church during the time when the movement of Modernism was formally condemned under Pope Pius X, Duchesne's 3-volume "Early History" was placed on the Index of Forbidden Books in 1912. Around the same time, Pope John XXIII, then just a professor of church history at the seminary in Bergamo, was similarly denounced for recommending Duchesne's "Early History" to his students.

Pius' successor, Pope Benedict XV, while still condemning Modernism, dismantled what some have called the "witch hunt" engendered by the "Modernist crisis" and called for freedom of discussion when the Church had not pronounced on an issue. The Index of Forbidden Books was essentially abolished in 1966 by Pope Paul VI.

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