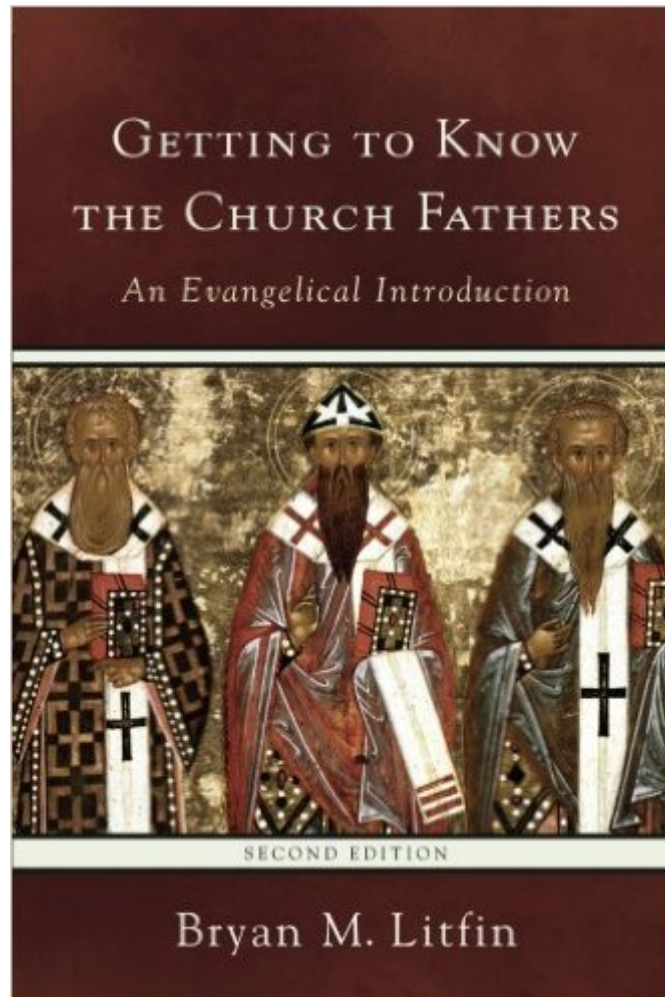


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Getting To Know The Church Fathers: An Evangelical Introduction



Synopsis

A Trusted Introduction to the Church Fathers This concise introduction to the church fathers connects evangelical students and readers to twelve key figures from the early church. Bryan Litfin engages readers with actual people, not just abstract doctrines or impersonal events, to help them understand the fathers as spiritual ancestors in the faith. The first edition has been well received and widely used. This updated and revised edition adds chapters on Ephrem of Syria and Patrick of Ireland. The book requires no previous knowledge of the patristic period and includes original, easy-to-read translations that give a brief taste of each writer's thought.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

For many of those cracking open the pages of Bryan Litfin's book, *Getting to Know the Church Fathers*, this is their first real glimpse of the ancient Christian church. Rather than returning to old, familiar friends, they are embarking on an exploratory journey that will hopefully enrich and deepen their appreciation for the church fathers (p.1). As the book's subtitle indicates, it's oriented towards evangelical readers who might not know much about the Patristic era. Litfin, who is himself an evangelical professor at Moody Bible Institute, has a task made more difficult by the suspicion and skepticism towards the early church fathers held by some parts of the evangelical community. It seems that keeping his audience in mind is important for properly understanding the purpose of Litfin's efforts. He is striving to accomplish two main goals: acquaint readers with some of the early church fathers (and a mother), and dispel harmful misconceptions held about them by some (thought not all) parts of contemporary Christianity. Learning about the Fathers Rather than mainly

recounting the development of Christian doctrines, Litfin focuses more on introducing his readers to the church fathers as individual personalities • (p.5). He tells readers that, "I want to help you get to know some folks who are part of your own spiritual legacy and heritage in the faith • (p.5). What does it mean to call someone a church father? This term strikes some as odd given Jesus' words in Matthew's Gospel, "And call no one your father on earth, for you have one Father—the one in heaven • (23:9, NRSV). Jesus also speaks out against calling people "teachers" or "instructors" in the same passage, terms that are regularly used without much controversy.

For many evangelicals today, church history looks something like this: the Bible . . . the Reformation . . . my denomination's founding . . . my church's founding. Or it might be more like this: the Bible . . . something something something . . . my church's founding (within the last couple of decades). In my experience, lots of churches express a desire to have a biblical church or first-century church but have little regard for two millennia of history between then and now. (To be clear, I am writing as a conservative evangelical in the U.S., and acknowledge my own limited experience.) Bryan Litfin definitely writes from a quintessential American Evangelical perspective. His father, Duane Litfin, taught at Dallas Theological Seminary and was a long-time president of Wheaton College. Bryan Litfin went to DTS and now teaches at Moody Bible Institute. Even with that pedigree, Litfin holds the early church, including the Church Fathers of the first several centuries of church history, in high regard. In *Getting to Know the Church Fathers: An Evangelical Introduction*, Litfin invites his fellow evangelicals to appreciate the importance of these early shapers of the faith we share. For *Getting to Know*, Litfin selects his "top ten list" of early Christians whose writing, leadership, and theology shaped the church. His list includes obvious choices like Origen, Augustine, and Justin Martyr, but also includes a "church mother," Perpetua of Carthage, and Patrick of Ireland, who (I don't think) is not typically counted among the church fathers.

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