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## ITBB - Facultatea de Teologie Baptistă – Departamentul de Teologie Baptistă Pastorală

Str. Berzei, nr.29, sector 1, 010251, București;  
Tel. 021-3159108, Fax 021-3181593, E-mail: office@itb.ro, www.itb.ro

# Curente teologice, filosofice și relații sociale în NT, în contextul Imperiului Roman

## NT în contextul cultural al primelor 3-4 secole

ITBB, anul universitar 2025 – 2026

### 1. Date despre program

|                               |                                                               |
|-------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1.1. Instituția de învățământ | INSTITUTUL TEOLOGIC BAPTIST DIN BUCUREȘTI                     |
| 1.2. Facultatea               | Facultatea de Teologie Pastorală                              |
| 1.3. Departamentul            | Teologie Baptistă Pastorală                                   |
| 1.4. Domeniul de studii       | Teologie Baptistă pastorală                                   |
| 1.5. Ciclu de studii          | Masterat (ISCED level 7 – EQF level 7)                        |
| 1.6. Programul de studii      | Masterat Teologie Aplicată. Lucrarea cu tinerii și familiile. |

### 2. Date despre disciplină

|                            |  |                                                              |                |                          |                     |                                 |          |   |                          |  |         |
|----------------------------|--|--------------------------------------------------------------|----------------|--------------------------|---------------------|---------------------------------|----------|---|--------------------------|--|---------|
| 2.1. Denumirea disciplinei |  | Curente teologice și filozofice în perioada Noului Testament |                |                          | 2.2. Cod disciplină |                                 | MCNT0102 |   |                          |  |         |
| 2.3. Titularul de curs     |  |                                                              |                | Conf. dr. Baban Octavian |                     |                                 |          |   |                          |  |         |
| 2.4. Titularul de seminar  |  |                                                              |                | Conf. dr. Baban Octavian |                     |                                 |          |   |                          |  |         |
| 2.5. Anul de studiu        |  | I                                                            | 2.6. Semestrul |                          | 2                   | 2.7. Tipul de evaluare (E/C/VP) |          | E | 2.8. Regimul disciplinei |  | OB - DT |

### 3. Competențele specifice acumulate

|                         |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
|-------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Competențe profesionale | C1. Interpretează texte religioase. (ESCO)<br>C2. Predă texte religioase (ESCO)<br>CP1. Cunoașterea mesajului de ansamblu al NT<br>CP2. Înțelegerea interacțiunii culturale dintre autorii NT – societatea antică.<br>CP3. Înțelegerea modalităților NT de prezentare a evangheliei în mod contextualizat. |
| Competențe transversale | CT1. Dezvoltarea capacității de analiză a mesajului NT, în contextul său.<br>CT2. Dezvoltarea capacității de dialog cultural.<br>CT3. Crearea unor repere clare de apreciere și de urmărire a vieții creștine și a mesajului revelat în NT                                                                 |



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### **4. Obiectivele disciplinei** (reieșind din grila competențelor specifice acumulate)

|                                       |                                                                                                                                                                               |
|---------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 4.1 Obiectivul general al disciplinei | OG1. Dezvoltarea unei bune înțelegeri a conținutului și relevanței culturale a Noului Testament.                                                                              |
| 4.2 Obiectivele specifice             | OS1. Dezvoltarea capacității de a formula și aplica forme adaptate cultural ale fundamentelor teologice ale Noului Testament.<br>OS2. Dezvoltarea abilităților argumentative. |



## 5. Conținuturi - curs

| 5.1. Curs                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           | Metode de predare: prelegeri, discuții, material, prezentări | Observații |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------|------------|
| <p><b>A. Introducere: cultură elenistă în NT. Dialog și influențe reciproce. Relevanță lucrarea cu familiile și cu tinerii – dinamica socială și teologia</b></p> <p>Influențe reciproce, fenomene comune, context general. Fenomene concurente în timpul scrierii NT și a deciderii canonului NT: 1. atticismul ca reîntoarcere la o cultură elenistă pură, 2. dezvoltarea culturii și literaturii latine și traducerea Vulgata, 3. scrierea Talmudului ca alternativă la interpretarea VT în NT, 4. dezvoltarea legendelor de taumaturgi moderni (Apollonius din Tyana), 5. interacția cu gnosticismul și delimitarea de el, 6. interacția cu religiile misterelor grecești și iranieni și delimitarea de ele (Mithra, Bachus, misterele din Eleusis), 7. sintezele neoplatoniste, 8. definirea crezului creștin și a canonului (Niceea, Chalcedon, erezia lui Arius, Constantin cel Mare și medierea neînțelegerilor teologice în creștinism).</p> <p>În lumea elenistă, aria culturală influențată de Alexandru Macedon și cuceririle sale, limba de comunicare era greaca zisă comună (<i>koine</i>). Romanii o acceptau și ei, <b>limba latină</b> era de abia la începuturile culturii sale ridicate.</p> <p>Ca fenomen lingvistic asociat în Grecia și Alexandria se dezvoltă <b>atticismul</b>. Între timp în Roma se dezvoltă literatura romană, de limbă latină, care începe să prospere în același timp cu scrierea NT și dezvoltarea creștinismului.</p> <p>În același timp, se dezvoltă și literatura <b>talmudică</b>, în contrast cu reinterpretările iudaismului și ale VT, promovate de Biserică.</p> <p>Curente filosofice din timpul NT.<br/>Etapele filosofiei grecești. Curente grecești filosofice. Platonism, stoicism, epicureism, cinicism, <b>neoplatonism</b>.</p> <p>Diferențe culturale esențiale: greci și barbari, romani și greci, bărbați și femei, <b>sclavi și liberi și stăpâni de sclavi</b>. Internaționalismul roman și centralizarea vieții religioase la Roma sub conducerea lui Cezar pontifex.</p> <p>Sociale – politice: creștinii și familia antică, creștinii și statul (imperiul), creștinii și sclavagismul, creștinii și teatrul (cultura), creștinii și știința, creștinii și identitatea de gen,</p> <p>În ciuda persecuțiilor, creștinismul s-a răspândit foarte rapid. În primele trei secole creștinii au ajuns să reprezinte aproximativ 15% din imperiul roman.</p> <p>Interacțiuni culturale: gnosticismul, religiile misterelor. Sinteze neoplatonice: arianism, origenism, școala de la Alexandria și trinitarianismul. Creștinismul și practicile magice și medicale.</p> <p><b>Bibliografie orientativă</b></p> <p>Philostratus, <i>Apollonius din Tyana</i>, (TA EK TON TYANEA APOLLWNION, F.C. Conybeare, Loeb Classical Library, 1969) © by Iași: Polirom, 1997, 8-14.</p> <p><a href="#">Johnson, Among the Gentiles Greco-Roman Religion and Christianity</a></p> <p><a href="#">F.W. Groves Campbell, Apollonius of Tyana a study of his life and times</a></p> |                                                              |            |



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### ***B. Interacția cu religiile lumii***

#### **2. Creștinismul și speranțele mesianice: creștinii și iudaismul redefinit. Identitate socială și religioasă. Mesianism imperial roman.**

Așteptându-l pe Mesia.

#### **5. Creștinismul și religiile misterelor. Creștinismul și magia. Identitate religioasă**

Forțele care conduc lumea.

#### **6. Creștinismul și ascetismul**

### ***C. Interacția cu filozofiile vremii***

#### **3. Filozofiile stoice, epicureice, cinice și creștinismul. Identitate filosofică**

În ce fel înțelegem lumea.

#### **4. Creștinismul și curentele neo-platoniste. Identitate filosofică**

Concepții despre lume și viață.

### ***D. Creștinismul și imperiul***

#### **7. Creștinismul și istoriografia elenistă. Identitate istorică**

Creștinismul are o istorie pe pământ?

#### **8. Creștinismul și ideologia imperială romană. Identitate socială și politică**

Rolul creștinului în Imperiu, relația sa cu politica.

#### **10. Creștinismul și serviciul public administrativ și militar. Identitate socială**

Serviciul social activ în administrație și armată.

### ***E. Creștinismul și viața socială***



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### 7. Creștinismul și concepțiile despre familie. Identitate socială

Familia, modelele ei antice, noua generație și vechile generații.

### 9. Creștinismul și instituția sclaviei. Identitate socială

cum ne raportăm la muncă și la instituția sclaviei. Justiția socială și munca.

### 11. Creștinismul și practicarea medicinei. Identitate socială

Angajarea în serviciul medical, convingeri medicale, jurământul lui Hipocrate.

### *F. Creștinismul, tehnica și artele*

### 12. Creștinismul și arhitectura

### 12. Creștinismul și artele. Identitate socială și artistică

Creștinii și artele (arhitectura, pictura, sculptura, design interior și exterior, reprezentarea divinității, moda vestimentară etc.).

### 13. Recapitulare. Concluzii. Perspective finale

### 14. Examinare

### 10. Coroborarea conținuturilor disciplinei cu așteptările reprezentanților comunității epistemice, asociațiilor profesionale și angajatori reprezentativi din domeniul aferent programului

Lucrările de tip eseu științific, studiile de caz și ale lucrările practice se efectuează conform metodologiei proprii științelor teologice, filozofice și social – istorice.

### 6. Evaluare

| Tip activitate        | 10.1 Tip de evaluare | 10.2 Metode de evaluare                                                      | 10.3 Pondere din nota finală |
|-----------------------|----------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------|
| 6.1 Curs              | Evaluare finală      | Exameninare prin eseu lung                                                   | 80%                          |
| 6.2 Seminar/laborator | Evaluare pe parcurs  | Verificarea prezenței și a implicării în activitățile de seminar semestriale | 20%                          |

### 6.3 Standard minim de performanță:

Lucrare / eseu: De ex.: Cunoașterea interacțiuni culturale și sociale în NT (evangelii, epistole, apocalipsa), 2000 cuvinte

Lectură: O. Baban, *De la Isus la evanghelii și la Faptele Apostolilor*, București: Ed. Universitară, 2009



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Data completării

15.11.2024

Semnătura titularului de curs

.....

Semnătura titularului de seminar

.....

Data avizării în departament

Semnătura directorului de departament

### Bibliografie

The standard, and most comprehensive, treatment is that of Mitchell, Young, and Bowie, eds.,

Lössl offers a shorter introduction that is useful as an initial orientation. Green treats Christianity in Rome in the first three centuries, but is a useful entry point for a study of the formation of orthodox Christianity.

Bingham, ed. treats the development of Christianity as a history of ideas, an approach that might appeal to some but which sits awkward with newer emphases on the rhetoricality and discursivity of history.

The two works by Frend are still regarded as classical even though traditional church histories of the formation of Christianity.

Mitchell, Margaret Mary, Frances M. Young, and K. Scott Bowie, eds. *Origins to Constantine*. Cambridge History of Christianity v. 1. Cambridge ; New York, N.Y.: Cambridge University Press, 2006.

A comprehensive introduction to early Christianity, from the historical figure of Jesus of Nazareth through various trajectories, the various early divisions (the apostolic era) and then in the later regional varieties of Christianities. The complex process of Christian identity making into an imperial Christian culture is set in relation to its material conditions, location and institutionalization.

Lössl, Josef. *The Early Church: History and Memory*. London; New York, N.Y.: T & T Clark, 2010.

A history of early Christianity from a religious studies perspective, with focuses on theory and definition, framing early Christian history as culture and memory making, as well as dealing with the reception history of early Christianity in contemporary cultural production. Lössl covers the diversity of trajectories that made up early Christianity as well as the way Christian identities were produced.

Green, Bernard. *Christianity in Ancient Rome: The First Three Centuries*. London; New York, N.Y.: T & T Clark, 2010.

Surveys the growth of Christianity in Rome from Jewish sect to predominantly Gentile Christian community, the development of authority structures such as the papacy, schisms and di-



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versity, gradual predominance of Rome, and the eventual patronage of Constantine in the making of a Christian empire. Highlights how various trajectories of Christian formation intersected in the course of the first three centuries.

Bingham, D. Jeffrey, ed. *The Routledge Companion to Early Christian Thought*. Abingdon; New York, N.Y.: Routledge, 2010.

This volume is strong on the interaction between nascent Christian tradition and its contemporary context. It treats Christianity and its “other” through the lens of the literary traditions, but this is also its strong point in that it provides extensive introduction to the literature and ancient authors, with comprehensive references to ancient authors and modern scholarship on these.

Frend, W. H. C. *The Early Church*. Minneapolis, Minn.: Fortress Press, 1982 [1965].

The history of the Roman Empire forms the framework for the history of Christianity. Part one covers early Judaism, and then follows early Christianity from the apostolic period through the main second century schisms and main Christian centers to the great persecutions, leading up to Nicaea. Part two covers the Constantinian revolution and the Christianization of the Empire up to the Council of Chalcedon, with some emphasis on main figures like Origen and Augustine.

Frend, W. H. C. *The Rise of Christianity*. Philadelphia, Pa.: Fortress Press, 1984.

In a broad sweep Frend interprets the history of Christianity from its Jewish matrix through the earliest figures through to the emergence of two distinct Christianities, Greek-speaking Eastern and Latin-speaking Western up to Pope Gregory I in the seventh century C.E. The formation of Christian organizations, internal diversity and relations to the Roman Empire including the Constantinian revolution get attention.

### Foreign language overviews

The volumes by Fischer, Tröger, Haendler, and Winkelmann in the German series *Kirchengeschichte in Einzeldarstellungen* (some volumes are out of print) are more traditional histories of early Christianity, but taken together, very comprehensive in their treatment of the history of Christianity in the formative centuries (although the literature lists are somewhat dated). A very recent introduction to early Christian history is the work of Koch (in German as well) which focuses on the religious and political context of early Christianity from the Jesus movement to the sub-apostolic era.

Koch, Dietrich-Alex. *Geschichte des Urchristentums. Ein Lehrbuch*. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2013

Addressing the Roman social, political, and religious context, the Jewish religious context, the Jesus movement, with a very substantial section on the early expansion and mission of the apostle Paul up to the first Jewish War. That is followed by sections on the developments in early Christian groups and conflicts with the surrounding Graeco-Roman society up to Hadrian's reign.

Fischer, Karl Martin. *Das Urchristentum*. Vol. I/01. 2nd ed. *Kirchengeschichte in Einzeldarstellungen*. Leipzig: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 1991.



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Fischer treats the growth of Christianity from Jesus through the apostolic and sub-apostolic eras to the emergence of Christianity as visible cultural entity, the first persecutions, the parting of the ways between Judaism and Christianity, all set within the political, cultural, and religious context of the Roman Empire, as well as Judaism in the Roman Empire.

Tröger, Karl-Wolfgang. *Das Christentum im zweiten Jahrhundert*. Vol. I/2. Kirchengeschichte in Einzeldarstellungen. Leipzig: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 1988.

Extensive presentation of the social, cultural, and religious context of the Roman Empire in the second century, and the place of Judaism with the Empire. Tröger describes the expansion of Christianity into its main centers as well as the development of diversity in Christianity as well as the first creeds. It closes with a section on the organization of Christian communities and the problems of persecution and internal strife or the development of heresies.

Haendler, Gert. *Von Tertullian bis Ambrosius. Die Kirche im Abendland vom Ende des 2. bis zum Ende des 4. Jahrhunderts*. Vol. I/3. 4th ed. Kirchengeschichte in Einzeldarstellungen. Leipzig: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 1992.

Chapters on Tertullian and his context in North Africa; substantial section on developments in the church in Rome, from the rise of the papacy to Cyprian and the first heresiologies; Constantine and his role in the first councils as well as the Arian controversies; the role of Ambrosius; the bishops of Rome and the relation to Constantinople; overview of heretics and monasticism in North Africa, Gaul, Spain and Italy.

Winkelman, Friedhelm. *Die Östlichen Kirchen in der Epoche der Christologischen Auseinandersetzungen (5. Bis 7. Jahrhundert)*. Vol. I/6. 4th ed. Kirchengeschichte in Einzeldarstellungen. Leipzig: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 1994.

Covers the division of the Empire and the early history of the Byzantine Empire; a substantial section on the history and developments of Christology in the East; the major councils and the leading figures between Constantinople I over Chalcedon to Constantinople IV (692); with a section on the development of anti-Chalcedonian churches; concluding with a discussion of the nature of the church as Byzantine imperial church.

Haendler, Gert. *Die abendländische Kirche im Zeitalter der Völkerwanderung*. Vol. I/5. 4th ed. Kirchengeschichte in Einzeldarstellungen. Leipzig: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 1995.

Focuses on Augustin, his work and his legacy, and on Leo the Great; then covers the spread of Christianity and the Christianization of Germans, Ostrogoths, Visigoths, Vandals and the Franks; concludes with Gregory the Great and the church in Britain.

### Christendom and late Antiquity

Herrin takes the history of early Christianity to the end of Late Antiquity up to the emergence of a Western and Eastern Christendom and the rise of, and initial confrontation with Islam. The work of Bowersock, Brown, and Grabar, eds. does not deal with Christianity as such, but sets the later period of early Christianity in its historical and material cultural context. This should be read in conjunction with Markus who investigates the issue of the inculturation of Christianity in the world of the later Roman Empire, as well as the essay by Lincoln as a kind of theory of the emergence of Christianity as an epiphenomenon of the transition to the post-ancient world.



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- Herrin, Judith. *The Formation of Christendom*. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1987.  
Covers the social and cultural transformations that characterized the later Roman Empire, the formation of two empires and their subsequent divergent histories. Herrin sets out the two types of Christendom arising from this division and its interaction with Islam, as well as the formation of Byzantine culture.
- Bowersock, Glen W., Peter Brown, and Oleg Grabar, eds. *Interpreting Late Antiquity. Essays on the Post-classical World*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2001.  
A comprehensive overview of what constituted “Late Antiquity”; chapters deal with revisionings of history, the refashioning of sacred landscapes and the self, the rise of new constellations of religious communities, reconstitutions of demographics with the border of the late Empire, the making of a Christian (Byzantine) Empire, the rise of Islam, and lifestyles in Late Antiquity.
- Markus, Robert A. *The End of Ancient Christianity*. Cambridge; New York, N.Y.: Cambridge University Press, 1990.  
Considers the cultural changes brought about by the Christianising of the late Roman Empire by tracking changes in Christian identity formation, as well as different understandings of sacred time and sacred space.

### Theory and method

In addition to Ashbrook-Harvey and Hunter, eds., and Clark mentioned above, in matters theoretical the essay by Lincoln noted here should be required reading. It has established itself as one of the most famously cited essays on method in the interpretation of religion and religious texts.

- Lincoln, Bruce. “Theses on Method.” *Method & Theory in the Study of Religion* 17, no. 1 (2005): 8–10; now republished in idem. *Gods and Demons, Priests and Scholars. Critical Explorations in the History of Religions*. Chicago, Ill./London: University Of Chicago Press, 2012: 1–3.  
Famous statement on method in religious studies and, in general, the reading of religious texts. Cautions especially against taking the authority encoded in the text as descriptive of historical reality as it was for everyone.

### Encyclopedias

Some of the many standard encyclopedias that contain authoritative entries on key figures, institutions, periods, or geographic locales are included here. Standard encyclopedias are *Religion Past and Present* (originally German: *Die Religion in Geschichte und Gegenwart*), *Theologische Realenzyklopädie*, *Brill's New Pauly* (original German: *Der kleine Pauly*), and *The Encyclopedia of Christianity* (original German: *Evangelisches Kirchenlexikon*). Encyclopaedia entries are ideal for shorter introductions and overviews, especially when focused on specific issues such as early Christian and ancient authors, religious movements, early church/early Christianity, Jewish Christianity, etc. Entries also contain references to further readings. All encyclopedias mentioned here are available online.



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Betz, Hans Dieter, Don S. Browning, Bernd Janowski, and Eberhard Jüngel, eds. *Religion Past & Present: Encyclopedia of Theology and Religion*. 13 vols. Leiden; Boston, Mass.: Brill, 2007.

A comprehensive historical encyclopedia covering the history of religion from antiquity to the present. It includes thematic entries relating to early Judaism and early to late antique Christianity, early Jewish and early Christian literature, figures, authors, rituals and other phenomena.

Cancik, Hubert, Helmuth Schneider, Christine F. Salazar, and David E. Orton, eds. *Brill's New Pauly: Encyclopaedia of the Ancient World*. 15 vols. Leiden ; Boston, Mass.: Brill, 2002--2009.

A modern edition of the famous encyclopedia of classical history. While mostly focused on classical history it also has entries on early Christian authors, figures, events, and rituals from the earliest Jesus movement into the Byzantine period.

Fahlbusch, Erwin, Jan Milic Lochman, John Mbiti, Jaroslav Jan Pelikan, and Lukas Vischer, eds. *The Encyclopedia of Christianity*. 5 vols. Grand Rapids, Mich.; Leiden/Boston, Mass.: Eerdmans ; Brill, 2003.

Covers the 2000 year apostolic tradition and Christian history. In between entries on the later history of Christianity there are entries on early Christian history, figures, authors, groups, and rituals. (Based on the third, revised edition of the German *Evangelisches Kirchenlexikon*.)

Müller, Gerhard, Horst Balz, James K. Cameron, et al., eds. *Theologische Realenzyklopädie*. 36 vols. Berlin; New York, N.Y.: de Gruyter, 1977--1988.

A massively comprehensive and wide-ranging encyclopedia of theological research covering topics from antiquity to the present as well as entries relating to cognate disciplines, including other religions. It also contains detailed entries on early Christianity, its context, authors and literature, figures, historical events and groups, and rituals.

## Surveys of scholarship

The most important resource for surveys of scholarship on aspects of early Christianity is the multi-volumed *Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt*, a compendious multilingual collection of material on the Roman world, published since 1972 (Part I) and 1974 (Part II), and still not completed (articles in English, German, French, and Italian; a Part III, on Late Antiquity/Spätantike is still in planning). The volumes concerned with early Christianity are II.23.1 to II.27.4, with some volumes still in preparation. The early Christianity volumes deal with pre-Constantinian Christianity (vorkonstantinisches Christentum), and apart from numerous articles on early Christian literature and early Christian groups, some volumes deal specifically with the relation between early Christianity and the Roman Empire and Graeco-Roman religions. Most of the current volumes on Christianity stem from the early 1980s to early 1990s, consequently may in some respects be now dated, but for surveys of scholarship over the past century are still unsurpassed.

Temporini, Hildegard, Wolfgang Haase, eds. *Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt (ANRW) / Rise and Decline of the Roman World. Geschichte und Kultur Roms im Spiegel der neueren Forschung*. Berlin; New York, N.Y.: de Gruyter, 1972--

Available online: <http://www.degruyter.com/view/serial/16624?rskey=4Ux3b6&result=1&q=aufstieg%20und%20niedergang>. Up-to-date, searchable online contents pages have been prepared by the Institute for the Classical Tradition, Boston University, and can be fo-



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und at <http://www.bu.edu/ict/anrw/pub/index.html>. Many articles deal with specific early Christian literary works. However, of special relevance here are those essays that cover the relationship of early Christianity with the Roman Empire and the Graeco-Roman religious context (volumes 23.1; 23.2); formation of early Christian literary corpuses (volume 26.1); intersections with Graeco-Roman philosophy (volume 26.1); developments of social formations, organization, and authority structures (volume 26.2); and aspects of Jewish-Christian relations (volume 26.3).

### Religio-historical context of early Christianity

It is almost impossible to gain an adequate overview of the religio-historical context of early Christianity. This is due to many reasons, some related to definitional issues (disputes regarding the essentialization of concepts like “religion,” and “Christianity,” whether to include philosophy or ruler cult in the comparison, for instance), some related to the vast amount of data of varied nature (texts which are themselves often rhetorical in nature; material objects – inscriptions, archaeological finds, which add their own interpretive challenges; material culture and practices, which sometimes add an antithetical layer of meaning to the textual tradition); some related to theoretical issues (e.g., the vicissitudes of the key concept of syncretism; the broad range of discourse theory and its impact on redescribing Graeco-Roman religious worlds; the tendency to treat different “religions” as discrete entities, as well as the neglect to study religious traditions longitudinally in their diachronic changing shapes). However, even while keeping the caveats in mind, one cannot dispense with overviews of the religious field, but researchers should be careful when consulting works in this field because ideological positions encoded in scholarship often determine the presentation of evidence and conclusions. This is particularly visible in the way Christianity is presented as subsisting in the wider Graeco-Roman religious world as on a continuum with the latter, as one manifestation of a Graeco-Roman cult group (with issues of the comparability of Christianity with its context to the fore), or, on the other hand, the tendency to emphasize the difference between early Christianity and its surrounding context (comparison with the purpose to negate comparability; usually identified with a more theological approach). Some of the general treatments listed above and some of the volumes in ANRW contain material on the Graeco-Roman religious context of early Christianity, but here reference is made to works specifically focusing on the Graeco-Roman religious context. In addition, this presentation is limited to works that relate Graeco-Roman religions to early Christianity and omit reference to the very many works on Greek and Roman religion per se. Due to the importance to understanding the emergence of early Christianity, a separate section is devoted to the relation between early Judaism and early Christianity. Finally, a note of caution: one should not neglect paying attention to the many standard and detailed works specifically on Greek, Roman, and other religious traditions from antiquity, but read these overviews mentioned below in conjunction with such works, as well as filling in the gaps with study of ancient material culture (archaeological finds and inscriptions, for instance).

### Early Christianity and Graeco-Roman Religions and Philosophy

While, arguably, most religio-historical studies of early Christianity tend to treat it as a unique, sui generis phenomenon due to a theological bias in the discipline, the perspective taken here is one of Christianity/-ies as one distinctive set of Graeco-Roman cult formations and thus stand in interac-



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tive-interrelations with other cults formations in the era, as epiphenomal discourses shaped in the crucible of the other discourses (social, cultural, political, etc.) of the times. This implies that one should read all of the mentioned sources below in the theoretical frameworks spelled out in some of the other rubrics elsewhere in this essay.

### The general religious context of early Christianity

Klauck and Ferguson offer two different but complementary approaches. Klauck focuses solely on Graeco-Roman religions and cults but does so by setting his approach in explicit contrast to that of earlier religio-historical scholarship and is structured by a systems-theoretical approach derived from social sciences. Ferguson, on the other hand, is more wide-ranging but also more overtly theological in orientation, in that the book emphasizes the uniqueness of Christianity as religion (but it still is a balanced treatment). Erlemann et al, eds. provide a more social and cultural context to early Christianity, even though the volumes are offered as “*New Testament and Ancient Culture*” and thus limit their intended focus to the canonical literature.

Klauck, Hans-Josef. *The Religious Context of Early Christianity. A Guide to Graeco-Roman Religions*. Translated by Brian McNeil. Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 2000.

Introduces the study by reference to theoretical issues relating to religio-historical scholarship. Discusses Graeco-Roman religions from the perspective of private cults, mysteries, divinized humans and ruler cults, popular religiosity, philosophy as life orientation, and Gnosticism as the search for divinization. Includes extensive literature lists for further reference as well as some evaluation of the comparative issues at hand.

Ferguson, Everett. *Backgrounds of Early Christianity*. 3rd ed. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2003.

The “Backgrounds” are the political history of the Mediterranean world from Persia to the Roman Empire, plus various aspects of Roman social and cultural life. Then follows ancient Greek and Roman religion, personal and civic cults, mysteries and oriental cults, various forms of Gnosticism, and Hellenistic-Roman philosophies. The last sections are devoted to Judaism and Christianity, showing their diversity and developments over time.

Erlemann, Kurt, Karl Leo Noethlichs, Klaus Scherberich, and Jürgen Zangenberg, eds. *Neues Testament und Antike Kultur*. 5 vols. Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 2004.

Volume 1 deals with theory and sources for early Christian history, as well as historical contexts, transformations of Judaism in the course of the first two centuries, Diaspora Judaism. Volume 2 contains material on families, cities, ancient economy, and education. Volume 3 describes worldviews, religion and piety. Volume 4 contains maps, and volume 5 contains selections of ancient texts in translation.

### Early Christianity and Graeco-Roman philosophies

Malherbe has become a classic sourcebook for comparison between Graeco-Roman philosophers and early Christian moral instruction.

Downing’s work has become standard for understanding the radical world-renunciation of the Jesus movement in the context of Cynic philosophy.



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Rasimus, Engberg-Pedersen, and Dunderberg, eds. provide an extensive overview of Stoic philosophy as most important philosophical school of the first two centuries of the Christian era and its impact on and presence in early Christian literature.

Malherbe, Abraham J. *Moral Exhortation: A Greco-Roman Sourcebook*. Vol. 4. Library of Early Christianity. Philadelphia, Pa.: Westminster John Knox Press, 1989.

Contains translations from selected Graeco-Roman philosophers on topics that relate to moral formation but also suggests ways in which early Christian writers were both indebted to philosophical thinking of the times, as well as how early Christian writers responded to their context. In this sense early Christianity contributed to the mix of philosophical viewpoints obtaining in the Roman Empire.

Downing, F. Gerald. *Cynics and Christian Origins*. Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1992.

Downing describes Cynicism as a philosophy in the context of the Roman Empire with a social description of the classes of adherents of Cynic philosophy. He sketches the Cynic features of the earliest Jesus movement and traditions, followed by the Cynic legacy in early Christianity. According to Downing early Christianity looked like 'and was a variant of popular and pervasive Cynicism.'

Rasimus, Tuomas, Troels Engberg-Pedersen, and Ismo Dunderberg, eds. *Stoicism in Early Christianity*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Academic, 2010.

Introduction describes the period 100 B.C.E. to 200 C.E. as a transitional period in ancient philosophy characterized by flexible relationships between the main philosophical schools but, for the period, with Stoicism dominating. Various essays track the interrelationship between Stoic philosophy and early Christian writings from the canonical New Testament to later Christian and Gnostic literature.

### Christianity and Graeco-Roman religions: comparisons and interactions

Limberis and Benko treat an important facet of later developments in early Christianity, namely the rise of the cult of the Virgin Mary as divine figure, both relating the cultic veneration of the Virgin and the formation of a Christian divine Mother image to vestiges of Graeco-Roman traditions of divine female figures in Christianity.

In a book that has become a classic, Lane Fox, describes the religious context of cult and divine mediation defining the Mediterranean world in which Christianity emerged, but also how distinctive Christian ways of mediating the divine together with distinctive Christian practices and organizational forms helped define formative Christianity.

Macmullen provides a detailed overview of the difficult and drawn-out process of Christianizing the Roman Empire, but also shows how the old customs and cultures lived on in a Christian world.

Macmullen and Lane is a sourcebook illustrating the intertwined nature of the relationship between the newly emerging Christianity and its surrounding social context and religious cultures.



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As a counterpoint, Wilken provides a perspective on early Christianity as it appeared to leading non-Christian intellectuals of the day from which one gains a fuller insight into the organization and discourse practiced by early Christian cult groups.

Vaage, ed., is part of a series of geographically focused studies of religious interactions in Graeco-Roman antiquity, this being a final volume of synthesis on religious rivalries and competition in the wider context of the Roman Empire around the time of the rise of Christianity (other volumes were on North Africa, Caesarea Maritima, and Sardis and Smyrna). It is different in scope from the other works referred to in this section in that it explicitly focuses on the contentious process of making religion in antiquity, setting this in the material context of urban environments in the Roman Empire.

Limberis, Vasiliki. *Divine Heiress: The Virgin Mary and the Making of Christian Constantinople*. London; New York, N.Y.: Routledge, 1994.

Examines the rise of the cult of the Virgin Mary as divine protectress of Constantinople and of the later Christian Empire in general, set in the religious context of the Mediterranean world. Limberis demonstrates the afterlife of traditions, myths, and images of Graeco-Roman female deities like Demeter/Persephone, Isis, Hecate and Athena in the making of this significant feature of the later stages of formative Christianity.

Benko, Stephen. *The Virgin Goddess: Studies in the Pagan and Christian Roots of Mariology*. Vol. 59. Studies in the History of Religions. Leiden; New York, N.Y.: Brill, 1993.

Traces the rise of the cult of the Virgin Mary or Mariology in early Christianity as well as how the cult encodes cultic traditions of female deities in the Graeco-Roman world, especially Caelestis, Isis, the Syrian Goddess, and Cybele (plus the cult of Dionysus as a cult closely related to that of the Great Mother).

Lane Fox, Robin. *Pagans and Christians: In the Mediterranean World from the Second Century AD to the Conversion of Constantine*. London: Viking, 1986.

Lane Fox highlights the shared cultural world in which Christianity and 'paganism' subsisted. He draws the contours of the religious world obtaining in the Mediterranean world as well as the rise of Christianity in the Graeco-Roman world with respect to the new distinctive lifestyle, new systems and technologies of divine mediation, the effects of martyrdom and the construction of authorities and institutions. Concludes with the transition to a Christian Empire.

MacMullen, Ramsay. *Christianity and Paganism in the Fourth to Eighth Centuries*. New Haven, Conn.; London: Yale University Press, 1997.

Provides evidence of the transition to Christian culture taking longer than normally conceived, and that many traditions and cultural customs from the 'pagan' Graeco-Roman world persisted within the newly emerged Christian world. Describes many of the practices that survived into Christianity as well as the complex and often conflictual process of Christianising the Roman Empire.

MacMullen, Ramsay, and Eugene Lane, eds. *Paganism and Christianity, 100-425 C.E.: A Sourcebook*. Minneapolis, Minn.: Fortress Press, 1992.

Selected documents from Christian and non-Christian sources that illustrate topics and themes related to the complex world of lived religion and social context in the period in which Christianity originated and showing the intertwinedness of Christianity in its formative phases with the surrounding cultures.



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Wilken, Robert Louis. *The Christians as the Romans Saw Them*. 2nd ed. New Haven, Conn.; London: Yale University Press, 2003.

Depiction of early Christianity from the perspective of learned Greek and Roman critics of the new religion: Pliny, Galen, Celsus, Porphyry, and the emperor Julian. In the eyes of the public early Christianity appeared as an association, philosophical school, burial society, as off-shoot from Judaism, as well as a despised 'tribal religion' with questionable origins and strange morals.

Vaage, Leif E., ed. *Religious Rivalries in the Early Roman Empire and the Rise of Christianity*. Studies in Christianity and Judaism. Waterloo, Ont.: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2006.

Contains essays on the urban environment of religious competition among religious groups; ways of winning adherents; with a section on why Christianity became so successful in propagating itself.

### Early Judaism and Early Christianity

There is divided opinion on the topic of the relation of early Judaism and early Christianity, especially with regard to the so-called parting of the ways, and the character, prevalence, and influence of Jewish Christianity (and how to define the latter). Some scholarly constructions put the break early, dates ranging from late first century to first half of second century. Other scholarly constructions see a continued coexistence only ending after the through-set of the Constantinian revolution, late fourth and first half of fifth century C.E. The issue has obvious relevance for the interpretation of early Christian literature, discourse and theology, social formations and identity constructions. However, while not in the immediate focus of this article, it is recommended to consult the relevant essays in Horbury, Davies, Sturdy, eds., especially those essays that deal with interactions between early Judaism and early Christianity.

Barclay has a comprehensive overview of Judaism in the Mediterranean Diaspora, important since the Diaspora is the major arena for the interaction between early Judaism and early Christianity.

Dunn, ed. contains the essays from a major collaborative conference between scholars from Durham and Tübingen that explored the contours of the "parting of the ways" from a point of view that the parting was by and large completed by the time of the second Jewish war.

Dunn's 2006 book (the 2<sup>nd</sup> edition) surveys the issues that marked the distinctiveness of early Christianity against contemporary Judaism but softens his position on the dating of the parting somewhat in that he accepts it may have taken place over a longer period, into the fourth/fifth centuries.

Lieu reflects on the making of Christian identity, but devotes the first part of the book to the issue of boundary drawing on both sides as well as the historical modeling that allows scholars to speak of two distinct traditions. By contrast to Dunn, Becker and Reed, eds. and Boyarin take the opposite viewpoint, namely that the ways never really parted, or that it is problematic to speak of two clearly distinct traditions in our period. The real issue is the imposition of borders and identities by authority instances on to complex, real-life dynamic processes of everyday religious discourse.



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The compendious volume of Skarsaune and Hvalvig, eds. takes a more balanced mediating position in that it, too, takes definitional matters seriously, but then with less polemic delineates the phenomenon of Jewish believers in Jesus in early Christian sources, concluding that Jewish believers in Jesus constituted a bigger portion of early Christians and of longer duration than previously held.

Horbury, William, W. D. Davies, and John Sturdy, eds. *The Cambridge History of Judaism. Volume 3. The Roman Period*. Vol. 3. The Cambridge History of Judaism. Cambridge ; New York, N.Y.: Cambridge University Press, 1999.

Of particular relevance are the articles on the various Jewish “sects”: Pharisees, Sadducees, Essenes, Samaritans, baptist sects, the “trouble makers” (inter alia on the earliest Jesus followers), Jesus, Paul, and Jewish Christianity.

Barclay, John M. G. *Jews in the Mediterranean Diaspora: From Alexander to Trajan (323 BCE to 117 CE)*. Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1996.

Comprehensive survey of the Jewish Diaspora in Egypt (substantial first part of the book), with a second part on the Diaspora in other areas of the Mediterranean world (Rome, Asia, Africa, and Syria), ending with a synthesis on Jewish identity in the Diaspora (part three). In each part deals with aspects of assimilation as well as key authors and texts illustrating issues of Jewish identity in the Diaspora.

Dunn, James D. G., ed. *Jews and Christians: The Parting of the Ways A.D. 70 to 135. The Second Durham-Tübingen Research Symposium on Earliest Christianity and Judaism (Durham, September, 1989)*. Grand Rapids, Mich.; Cambridge, UK: Eerdmans, 1999.

Various essays address the divergence of early Judaism and early Christianity from the textual evidence of such a split, mainly from New Testament evidence as well as some 2<sup>nd</sup> century authors, but also from the perspective of rabbinic writings. Apart from considering divergent developments in apocalypticism and mysticism, the issue of early Christian anti-Semitism and divergent reactions to the destruction of the temple are considered.

Dunn, James D. G. *The Partings of the Ways: Between Christianity and Judaism and Their Significance for the Character of Christianity*. 2nd ed. London: SCM, 2006.

Dunn slightly modifies his stance on the “parting of the ways” in that here he accepts that the process may have taken longer than previously assumed and was probably not a singular, linear process. A survey of 19<sup>th</sup> to late 20<sup>th</sup> century scholarship on the issue is followed by an extended discussion of the four fundamental aspects of Second Temple Judaism (monotheism, temple, election/covenant, Torah) and the way in which early Christian writings relate to these issues.

Lieu, Judith. *Neither Jew nor Greek? Constructing Early Christianity*. London; New York, N.Y.: T & T Clark, 2005.

Lieu addresses the construction of early Christian identity, devoting much space to the interactions between early Judaism and early Christianity, questioning the assumptions underlying the “parting of the ways” model. Lieu argues that the boundaries between early Judaism and early Christianities were more fluid than commonly assumed, and that the textual tradition by its very performativity and rhetoricity was instrumental in creating separate identities.

Becker, Adam H, and Annette Yoshiko Reed, eds. *The Ways That Never Parted: Jews and Christians in Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages*. Minneapolis, Minn.: Fortress Press, 2007 [2003].



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The result of a Princeton-Oxford collaborative project on religions in Late Antiquity, questions fundamentally the assumption of a singular “parting of the ways” between two neatly delineated traditions. Various contributions consider issues of historiography, textual evidence, and theory of identity formation in relation to the continued overlapping, intertwining, and mutual shaping even as both traditions interacted with the surrounding context.

Boyarin, Daniel. *Border Lines: The Partition of Judaeo-Christianity*. Divinations: Rereading Late Ancient Religion. Philadelphia, Pa.: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004.

Boyarin’s main argument is that the border lines between early Judaism and early Christianity have been imposed “from above” rather than being the natural result of divergent developments of two distinct religions. The final partition of the two into distinct religions occurred in the context of the newly Christianized empire after the 4<sup>th</sup> century, when Judaism became a religion alongside “paganism”.

Skarsaune, Oskar, and Reidar Hvalvik, eds. *Jewish Believers in Jesus. The Early Centuries*. Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 2007.

Considers problems of definition and methodology and investigates the evidence for Jewish Christians in the New Testament. Surveys the literary remains of Jewish Christians and provides historical reconstructions of Jewish Christian groups, including archaeological evidence. They argue that Jewish Christians were perhaps more numerous than previously thought, and continued as a significant influence in developing Christianity for longer than previously accepted.

### Early Christian Archaeology, Art and Iconography

This section deals with the material remains of early Christianity in so far as these allow reconstructions of early Christian habitus and living contexts as well as interpretations that draw on material artifacts to imagine overarching social and ideological discourse in formation.

### Early Christian Archaeology

There is a wealth of studies on particular sites and detailed aspects of early Christianity ranging from spaces and objects to inscriptions, many of which are of essential importance to reconstruct the living world of early Christianity. The artifactual remains add their own layer of meaning to the study of the formation of early Christianity as lived habitus, and should be interpreted themselves through an array of social, cultural, discourse, and representation theories. Archaeological remains often stand in tension to the literary traditions of early Christianity.

Focusing on five important centres relating to early Christianity, namely Ephesos, Pergamon, Corinth, Thessaloniki, and Rome, the works of Koester, ed., Daniel N. Schowalter and Steven J. Friesen, eds., Laura Nasrallah, Charalambos Bakirtzis, and Steven J. Friesen, eds., and Lampe draw on archaeological data to construct the social and religious contexts of these sites and to relate this to aspects of early Christianity, its practices and organization.



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### Early Christian archaeology: history

Recent emphases in the human sciences and the study of religion on the discursive constructedness of knowledge and the role of empire in conceiving of religion requires a new approach to the archaeology of early Christianity. In this context what counts as 'archaeological data and knowledge' is a product of discourse – social, cultural, political, etc. As such, Frend's work should be read in conjunction with recent theories of Christian origins (see below) as well as recent studies on the metahistory and metatheory of the discipline of early Christian studies as discourse. The work by Frend is a historicization of archaeology, an exposition of this history of the history of archaeology. The wide-ranging book by Frend covers the history of archaeology of early Christianity and shows how, since the earliest beginnings, it was deeply implicated in issues of rising European nationalism and religious definition, and yet provided important insights into Jewish-Christian relations in the first centuries and long-ignored popular religion and non-orthodox, often questioning the conventionally held views of the origins and formation of Christianity.

Frend, W. H. C. *The Archaeology of Early Christianity. A History*. Minneapolis, Minn.: Fortress Press, 1996. Surveys the history of the archaeology of early Christianity from antiquity through the Renaissance to the modern period with a special emphasis on the 19<sup>th</sup> century and the pursuit of archaeology as a matter of nationalist and imperial pride, with three last chapters on recent developments and outlook.

### Early Christian archaeology: general conceptualizing contexts for early Christian life

Work on early Christian archaeology should be read in conjunction with other studies that touch on social aspects of early Christianity, its social formations and identity making processes, women in early Christianity, Christian origins, as well as diversities manifesting in a material cultural manner. In this manner early Christian archaeology interprets the material remains of other domains of discourse formation and practice.

Focusing on the unwritten evidence (the material remains), Macmullen constructs the lived religion and practices of early Christians in a wide range of geographical and spatial contexts. Drawing conclusions about cult practices and numbers, he brings to life a Christianity not easily seen from the written, literary tradition which mainly encodes authority voices. In the same vein, Snyder shows how the earliest Christian archaeological evidence depicts themes that circumscribe a Christian discourse not centered on a theology of the cross, but on healing, care, and safety from threatening circumstances. T

he work of L. Michael White Volume 1 and Volume 2 describe the development of Christian architecture of religious meeting spaces within the context of religious architecture in the wider Graeco-Roman world, using textual and archaeological data to highlight the social discourses that led to the development of specifically Christian religious buildings from original house churches as meeting places.

David L. Balch and David L. Balch and Annette Weissenrieder, eds. relate archaeology and art and the function of spaces in Roman temples and houses of various kinds to early Christian discourses, narratives, and practices, and show how spaces/spatial arrangements and visual arts encoded imperial social values but also the many places where these intersect with Christian values and discourses.



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MacMullen, Ramsay. *The Second Church: Popular Christianity A.D. 200-400*. Vol. 1. Writings from the Greco-Roman World Supplement Series. Atlanta, Ga.: Society of Biblical Literature, 2009. Covering the eastern provinces of the Roman Empire, Greece and the Balkan, Italy and the Northwest, and Africa, surveys the archaeological data for different kinds of Christian meeting places and meeting practices, concludes about social composition of Christian groups and the religious life of ordinary Christians.

Snyder, Graydon F. *Ante Pacem. Archaeological Evidence for Church Life Before Constantine*. revised edition. Macon, Ga.: Mercer University Press, 2003.

Method and theory informs the interpretation of early Christian symbols as well as the different kinds of sources. Pictorial representations of biblical narrative are interpreted. A number of significant data sites (church buildings, cemeteries, baptisteries) are described as well as inscriptions, graffiti, and papyri. The symbols give a different picture of early Christian social contexts and discourse than what one would guess from the written tradition.

White, L. Michael. *The Social Origins of Christian Architecture. Volume 1. Building God's House in the Roman World: Architectural Adaptation Among Pagans, Jews, and Christians*. Valley Forge, Penn.: Trinity Press International, 1996.

Contains an introduction on archaeology and the description of Christian religious architecture; section on interpretive models for Christian religious spaces; the "housing" of private cults; Jewish synagogues in the Diaspora; phases of church building; conclusion on Christian adaptation to the social environment. Early Christian meeting spaces are indicative of their social status.

White, L. Michael. *The Social Origins of Christian Architecture. Volume 2. Texts and Monuments for the Christian Domus Ecclesiae in Its Environment*. Valley Forge, Penn.: Trinity Press International, 1997.

Primary data for Christian religious spaces are interpreted in three sections: literary evidence for early Christian assemblies from Christian and non-Christian sources, archaeological evidence, and comparative evidence from Mithraism and Diaspora Judaism. Concludes with a catalogue of Christian archaeological sites.

Balch, David L. *Roman Domestic Art and Early House Churches*. Vol. 228. Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2008.

Starts with an introduction of Roman religion and its function in Roman interior decoration. Discusses Pompeian houses, shops, multistory buildings as spaces for Pauline house churches. Chapters 2 to 6 analyses the intersection of typical motifs and representations in Roman art with early Christian discourse topics and narrative representations. A final chapter analyses the values represented in Pompeian dining rooms.

Balch, David L, and Annette Weissenrieder, eds. *Contested Spaces: Houses and Temples in Roman Antiquity and the New Testament*. Vol. 285. Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2012.

Section A concerns interpretive issues pertaining to representations of worship and its relation to Roman interior decoration and visual representation. Section B (Contested domestic spaces) surveys spatial arrangements in the domus, villae, and insulae of Roman cities. Section C (Contested sacred spaces) surveys the intersection of the discourses of temple, imperial cult, and Mithraea with Christian discourse.



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### Early Christian archaeology: specific centers of early Christianity

As indicated in the previous section, the focus on specific centers of Christianity serves to ground the study and interpretation of Christian identity and social formation in material contexts. As such they are not an external 'extra' to the evidence of textual discourses, but an integral part of the theorizing, analysis, and interpretation of early Christianities in their diverse material manifestations. Focusing on five important centres relating to early Christianity, namely Ephesos, Pergamon, Corinth, Thessaloniki, and Rome, the works of Koester, ed., Daniel N. Schowalter and Steven J. Friesen, eds., Laura Nasrallah, Charalambos Bakirtzis, and Steven J. Friesen, eds., and Lampe draw on archaeological data to construct the social and religious contexts of these sites and to relate this to aspects of early Christianity, its practices and organization.

Koester, Helmut, ed. *Ephesos, Metropolis of Asia. An Interdisciplinary Approach to Its Archaeology, Religion, and Culture*. Vol. 41. Harvard Theological Studies. Valley Forge, Penn.: Trinity Press International, 1995.

Multidisciplinary overview of the most important archaeological finds of the past century setting out the material, urban context of the city of Ephesus, religious and social contexts, and the place of Christianity in that urban setting, one of the most important centers in the establishment of Christianity.

Koester, Helmut, ed. *Pergamon, Citadel of the Gods. Archaeological Record, Literary Description, and Religious Development*. Vol. 46. Harvard Theological Studies. Valley Forge, Penn.: Trinity Press International, 1998.

Presentation of archaeological work in the site of ancient Pergamon including descriptions of the ancient city's famous temples and sanctuaries, with extensive discussions of Roman imperial shaping of the urban environment, and its effects on religious institutions and organizations. The city was a center of the Roman imperial cult and early center of Christianity, mentioned in Revelation 2 as one of the seven churches in Asia.

Schowalter, Daniel N., and Steven J. Friesen, eds. *Urban Religion in Roman Corinth: Interdisciplinary Approaches*. Harvard Theological Studies 53. Cambridge, Mass.; London: Harvard University Press, 2005.

The history, topography, and urban development of Corinth together with investigations of civic and private religious practices form the context to interpret the urban environment in which the apostle Paul operated. Seeks to explain how Christianity emerged as the dominant religion.

Nasrallah, Laura, Charalambos Bakirtzis, and Steven J. Friesen, eds. *From Roman to Early Christian Thessalonike: Studies in Religion and Archaeology*. Vol. 64. Harvard Theological Studies. Cambridge, Mass.; London: Harvard University Press, 2010.

Investigates the social, political, and religious life in Roman and early Christian Thessalonike, the first 'Christian' city in Europe. It situates Christian practices and discourses in the urban context of Thessaloniki, and profiles these against the material culture obtaining in the city up to the Byzantine period. Focuses on how the formation and institutionalization of Christian identity helped make the city a Christian city.

Lampe, Peter. *From Paul to Valentinus: Christians at Rome in the First Two Centuries*. Translated by Michael Steinhauser. Edited by Marshall D. Johnson. Minneapolis, Minn.: Fortress Press, 2003.



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Presents the history of Christian groups in Rome indicating their topographical spread and social strata occupied, investigating evidence of known figures, leaders, named persons and groups. A last section on fractions and diversity in Christian cult groups in Rome, contestations, issues of governance and exercise of authority closes the book.

### Early Christian Art and Iconography

Grabar is the classical work on Christian iconography. Jensen is well-known for her expertise on early Christian art. Her three works listed here focus on different aspects of early Christian artistic representations and their interpretation. Spier covers the history of Christian art at its beginning in the third century as well as the sources for Christian artistic depictions (symbols, motifs, narratives) including the interpretation of these, church decorations and manuscript illustrations with overviews of archaeological research. A very different perspective is offered by Elsner. He surveys the role of art in making and maintaining 'Romanness' and thus in the making of the Roman Empire, the role of art in religious formations, and the role of art in the successful through-set of Christianity in the newly Christianised Roman Empire. Kirschbaum, Bandmann, and Braunfels, eds., have been for four decades a standard encyclopaedic reference work on Christian iconography. It covers all periods from late antiquity to the present, with the last four volumes devoted to the iconography of saints. A new ten volume edition is in preparation.

Grabar, André. *Christian Iconography: A Study of Its Origins*. Vol. 10. A.W. Mellon Lectures in the Fine Arts. Taylor & Francis, 1980.

Richly illustrated interpretation of the origins of Christian imagery and their relation to other forms of piety. Part one deals with the formation of distinctive Christian iconography through assimilation of contemporary imagery. Part two sets out Christian use of portraits and narrative representations, showing the significance of imperial iconography in the making of Christian imagery. Part three considers the expression of Christian doctrines in image and representation.

Jensen, Robin Margaret. *Face to Face: Portraits of the Divine in Early Christianity*. Minneapolis, Minn.: Fortress Press, 2005.

The book focuses on images and portraiture in the Graeco-Roman world, with special reference to saviours and philosophers, emperors and gods as the context for a Christian discourse on portraying the divine. Later Christian controversies regarding the portrayal of God are discussed as well as the intersection of imagery with theology. Concludes with portraits of saints and the issue of likeness.

Jensen, Robin Margaret. *Understanding Early Christian Art*. London; New York, N.Y.: Routledge, 2000.

This introduces the study of early Christian iconography and its interpretation, and also extensively interprets Christian use of classical symbols and motifs as well as images of biblical narratives. An important section interprets images of Jesus Christ from wonder worker to imperial Christ as well as key theological concepts.

Spier, Jeffrey, with contributions by Herbert L. Kessler, Steven Fine, Robin M. Jensen, Johannes G. Deckers, Mary Charles-Murray et al. *Picturing the Bible. The Earliest Christian Art*. New Haven, Conn.; London: Yale University Press, 2009.

Published version of the exhibition catalogue (Kimbell Art Museum, Fort Worth, Texas;



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2007—2008). Ranging from the first century to the eighth century, and covering most of the Christian Graeco-Roman world, the book introduces a wide range of representative examples of visual artifacts. Informed by archaeology the essays interpret the early Christian appropriation and invention of images in the pre- and post-Constantinian periods.

Jensen, Robin Margaret. *Baptismal Imagery in Early Christianity. Ritual, Visual, and Theological Dimensions*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Academic, 2012.

Chapters interpret the intersection of scriptural discourse with architectural space, ritual practice and pictorial representation of early Christian baptism with respect to five models for understanding baptism: baptism as cleansing from sin and sickness; as incorporation into the community; as sanctification and illumination; as dying and rising; and as new creation.

Elsner, Jaś. *Imperial Rome and Christian Triumph: The Art of the Roman Empire AD 100-450*. Oxford History of Art. Oxford; New York, N.Y.: Oxford University Press, 1998.

The book is about the role and history of visual arts in Roman culture and its role in the promotion of imperial power. It also focuses on the role of Roman art in the construction of identity and Romanness. It offers an important contribution on artistic representations indexing transformations in religion, especially new forms of religiosity from 'oriental' and mystery cults to Christianity.

Kirschbaum, Engelbert, Günter Bandmann, and Wolfgang Braunfels. *Lexikon der christlichen Ikonographie*. 8 vols. Revised edition. Freiburg: Herder, 1990.

Covering the whole history of Christian iconography from the early centuries to the present so that entries on early Christian representations need to be specifically searched out. The Lexikon consists of two parts: part one (volumes 1 – 4) focuses on general iconography, while part two (volumes 5 – 8) focuses on iconography of saints. (A completely new and reworked edition is planned for publication from 2012 – 2019 to comprise ca. 10 volumes.)

### Diversity in Early Christianity

The character of early Christianity remains a contested terrain, with two broad scholarly traditions discernible. On the one hand, there is an emphasis on the essential unity of early Christianity as expressed in a limited range of attitudes to Jesus Christ (however this is defined, e.g., core creedal statements, belief practices, spirit experiences) with a clear demarcation from marginal, non-orthodox groups, scriptures, and traditions. In this view there is a linear development from the figure of Jesus Christ through the apostolic and post-apostolic eras over the various later councils and thus constituted a tradition of orthodox Christianity from the beginning, or at least features that allow for a positing of a unifying strand in the multiple traditioning. On the other hand, the opposite view holds that first came diversity with the multiple group formations of a wide variety of Christ cult groups, many of which espoused discourses and practices that later were considered unorthodox or heretics. In this view orthodox Christianity was the product of intentional practices of boundary drawing at later stages of the formation of early Christianity which resulted in the main doctrinal positions formulated in the important church councils. However one wishes to understand the issue of diversity in early Christianity, it is a central issue in the conceptualization of the history of early Christianity/-ies, early Christian identity formations, and Christian origins.



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### Unity or diversity in the conceptualization of the formation of early Christianity

In the context of modern scholarship on early Christianity, the work by Bauer has become a classic, and one which still sets the terms for debate and functions as point of reference. Bauer was responsible for making the view dominant that orthodoxy did not exist in the first two centuries of the Christian era but was a later development. Bauer argued that often what is later called heresy actually precedes orthodoxy in a given setting. Lüdemann takes up Bauer's project with affirmation and argues that 'heresy' is – for the first two Christian centuries – descriptive of and an essential part of the reception history of Jesus traditions. The first two centuries were defined by struggle by various groups for doctrinal authority (and thus far from a pure, harmonious beginning), a process in which some early tradition formations, later labeled heretic, actually represented a more authentic and original form of Christian tradition. Lüdemann argues that second century heresiologists like Irenaeus and Tertullian helped to effect the inversion. Ehrman and Riley present the case for wide-ranging early diversity in early Christianity with a resulting multiplicity of Christianities in a more popular manner. Riley answers the question on the origins of Christianity (*One Jesus, Many Christs*) with reference to the early Christian focus on the figure of Jesus Christ stressing the multiple kinds of Christianities arising from diverse religious and interactional contexts. Ehrman portrays in broad swaths the Christianities that got lost in the process of making orthodoxy and presents the period as an environment rich in invention of tradition and scripture-making of many kinds. He then traces the process of construction of orthodoxy through contention, authorization, and establishing a scriptural canon, and finally, considers the significance of the outcome of this process. By contrast, Dunn is the classic statement of a more nuanced view, namely of unity in diversity, or diversity in essential unity in the development of early Christian discourse and praxis. Whereas other writers stress irreducible multiplicity and diversity – and from these conclude to diverse Christianities – Dunn, taking up the challenge of Bauer (for the second century) and F. C. Baur (for the first century), instead asks whether there was a unifying strand in earliest Christianity which identifies it as Christianity and of which nature this 'unifying strand' was. He investigates several topical areas for exemplifying some kind of unity, and also devotes a significant section of the book to discussion of the nature of the various kinds of Christianity.

Bauer, Walter. *Orthodoxy and Heresy in Earliest Christianity*. Edited by Robert A. Kraft and Gerhard Krodel. Philadelphia, Pa.: Fortress Press, 1971.

Bauer characterizes the diverse Christianities in Syria, Egypt, Macedonia, and Asia Minor in relation to the growing importance of the church of Rome. His thesis then takes in the polemics governing the definition of Christianity and the beginning of canon formation, ending with his classic statement on the beginnings of orthodoxy and heresy. The appendix on the reception history of Bauer's book and thesis is valuable.

Lüdemann, Gerd. *Heretics: The Other Side of Early Christianity*. Louisville, Ky: Westminster John Knox Press, 1996.

Lüdemann approaches the topic from the perspective of Irenaeus and Tertullian and their heresiological rhetoric. He investigates a number of inversions of orthodox status such as the earliest Jewish-Christian communities, Paul as the 'first heretic,' Marcion, and other indications of schisms. This is set in the context of the growth of the Apostle's Creed and the canon of the New Testament.

Ehrman, Bart D. *Lost Christianities: The Battles for Scripture and the Faiths We Never Knew*. New York, N.Y.: Oxford University Press, 2003.



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Ehrman argues that it is essential to study non-canonical literature and the groups who produced and valued them. Literature and groups to study include books with forged authorship disclosing alternative forms of Christianity that are now lost, and groups that demonstrated variant beliefs and practices from the emerging orthodox mainstream (Ebionites, Marcionites, and Gnostics). This is placed in context against the development of orthodoxy and the biblical canon.

Riley, Gregory J. *One Jesus, Many Christs: How Jesus Inspired Not One True Christianity, but Many: The Truth About Christian Origins*. Minneapolis, Minn.: Augsburg Fortress Press, 2000.

Riley argues for varieties of early Christianities and shows how the model of the hero in antiquity is key to understanding early constructions of the meaning of Christ, including martyrdom as hero-imitation. He offers various representations of the figure of Jesus and the multiple conceptions of Jesus as Christ.

Dunn, James D. G. *Unity and Diversity in the New Testament: An Inquiry into the Character of Earliest Christianity*. 3rd edition. London: SCM Press, 2006.

Dunn interacts with the debates on orthodoxy initiated by the work of Walter Bauer and its reception. His solution focuses on a number of features that define the essence of early Christianity, and analyses four types of Christianity (Jewish, Hellenistic, apocalyptic Christianity, and early Catholicism) for common traits. For Dunn the unifying strand throughout all versions of early Christianity is the unity between the historical Jesus and the exalted Christ.

### Specific 'heterodox' early Christian traditions, figures, and movements

Alongside studies of a more general nature that argue the case for diversity in early Christianity and its significance it is important to pay attention to detailed studies of some alternative traditions in early Christianity.

### Overview of second century figures and movements

The first is the volume of Marjanen and Luomanen, eds. which provides detailed descriptions of a number of second century Christian writers, group founders, and religious authorities from Gnostics through Marcion and Tatian to Jewish-Christian groups. It is a valuable resource for reconstructing and understanding the Other to emerging mainstream traditions in the second century.

Marjanen, Antti, and Petri Luomanen, eds. *A Companion to Second-century Christian "Heretics."* Vol. 76. Supplements to Vigiliae Christianae. Leiden; Boston, Mass.: Brill, 2005.

Contains detailed descriptions of founding figures, writers, and groups from the second century who understood themselves as Christian but were subsequently labeled heretics: Basilides the Gnostic, the Sethians, Valentinians, Marcion, Tatian, Bardaisan, Montanists, Cerinthus, Ebionites, Nazarenes, Ps.-Clementine Jewish Christianity, and the Elchesaites.



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### Jewish Christianity

Luomanen is an important survey of Jewish-Christian groups and traditions. Interacting with the history of scholarship on the topic he posits a polythetic definition of Jewish Christianity that identifies a wide number of features that in some combination and ratio would allow an identification of a group or writing as Jewish Christian. This is applied in an in-depth analysis of Jewish Christian groups and writings.

Luomanen, Petri. *Recovering Jewish-Christian Sects and Gospels*. Vol. 110. Supplements to Vigiliae Christianae. Leiden; Boston, Mass.: Brill, 2012.

Luomanen offers a new, polythetic definition of Jewish Christianity leading to a reconsideration of the patristic testimonies on the Ebionites and Nazarenes. He reconstructs Jewish Christian gospels; passion traditions in Jewish Christian gospels; the relationship between Jewish Christian gospels and Syriac gospel traditions and concludes with a synthesis on the history of Jewish Christianity and Jewish Christian gospels.

### Gnosticism

Another very important tradition, in historical and scholarly perspective, is Gnosticism, variously conceived in the history of scholarship either as a full-blown Hellenised version of Christianity or as separate religion in itself with significant influences on formative Christianity, as an early phenomenon or as a late development. It is particularly since the discovery of the Nag Hammadi literature that Gnosticism has been much studied for what light it shines on the character of some strands of early Christian tradition and on some of the controversies raging in the second to third centuries. The heyday of post-discovery enthusiasm in which Gnosticism was identified almost everywhere in early Christian writings has now passed and given way to more sober evaluations of the phenomenon. The work by Rudolph is still a classic in its comprehensiveness but is now somewhat dated in light of more recent evaluations of diversity in Gnosticism. Rudolph shared with other contemporary understandings of Gnosticism the tendency to construct the category too wide, as a catch-all for too many divergent texts, groups, and ideas into which texts and traditions labelled Gnostic were forced to fit. Brakke provides a more concise overview of Gnosticism, starting with an introduction setting out the definitional problems relating to the term 'Gnostic/Gnosticism', after which he uses the attributions of Gnostic-ness by the groups themselves or by others to describe the nature of these groups, their literature, myth and ritual, and their traces in history. King and Williams offer significant critiques of the category 'Gnostic/Gnosticism' by revisiting the scholarly use of the term 'Gnosticism' in the history of scholarship as well as its use in early Christian writings. Williams offers as replacement for 'Gnosticism' the term 'biblical demiurgical traditions' or, as alternative, smaller distinctive socio-historical formations, like Valentinianism. King's critique of the category 'Gnosticism' is based on its use to construct an 'other' for 'normative/proto-/orthodox' Christianity, and thus serves as a device for defining Christianity instead of interpreting texts and traditions labelled as Gnostic in their own right. A particular problem highlighted by all critiques of the use of the category 'Gnosticism' in scholarship is how to steer between essentialism and nominalism. For a more accessible introduction to Gnosticism and its literature, written for a more popular market, the book by Pagels is very useful for its short description of the Nag Hammadi finds and history of modern study of Gnosticism, as well as introduction to key features of Gnosticism as



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well as the history of Gnostic tradition in the context of the growing proto-orthodox Christian tradition.

Rudolph, Kurt. *Gnosis: The Nature and History of Gnosticism*. Translated by R. McL Wilson, P. W. Coxon, and H.W. Kuhn. San Francisco, Calif.: HarperSanFrancisco, 1987.

Opens with a section on the sources for knowledge of Gnosticism together with the history of research then discusses the character and main features of Gnosticism as system. Rudolph also traces the history of Gnosticism from its origins through the main schools up to Manichaeism and the Mandaeans and concludes with a historical survey of the changes Gnosticism underwent and its legacy.

Brakke, David. *The Gnostics. Myth, Ritual, and Diversity in Early Christianity*. Cambridge, Mass.; London: Harvard University Press, 2010.

Brakke opens with an overview of the study of Gnosticism and ways of constructing the category then goes on to “recover” the Gnostics from both insider and outsider literary traditions. The definitive myths and rituals, and the place of Gnostic schools within the fractious diversity of Christian groups in second century Rome are set out. He concludes by showing how Gnostic groups were relegated to the “heterodox” margins.

King, Karen L. *What Is Gnosticism?* Cambridge, Mass. ; London: Harvard University Press, 2005.

King argues that Christian discourse distorted what should be understood as Gnosticism. The point is argued through historical overview of Gnosticism as perceived heresy in ecclesiastical writers and the representation of Gnosticism in scholarship. The importance of the Nag Hammadi finds is highlighted. King concludes with the question if the category “Gnosticism” is a meaningful one in light of the diversity of texts and traditions.

Williams, Michael A. *Rethinking “Gnosticism”: An Argument for Dismantling a Dubious Category*. Princeton, N.J.; Chichester: Princeton University Press, 1999.

Williams uses four test cases to argue that we should take leave of the category “Gnosticism”. He offers different ways of constructing the category “Gnosticism” and evaluates different views on the nature of Gnosticism, finally reconsidering the origins of Gnosticism and the legacy of Gnosticism as a religious “movement”.

Pagels, Elaine H. *The Gnostic Gospels*. New York, N.Y.: Vintage Books, 1989.

Pagels is a classic introduction on the history of the Nag Hammadi finds and the scholarly understanding of Gnosticism since the 19<sup>th</sup> century. She presents Gnostic representations of Jesus Christ and Gnostic images of God as well as various gnostic positions on theological matters. Conclusion on the significance of the Nag Hammadi finds for understanding the history of Christianity.

### Manichaeism

Related to Gnosticism, as one later development of the wider phenomenon of Gnostic religions, is Manichaeism. It had its origins in the mid-third century in Persia in the preaching of Mani, who grew up in a Jewish-Christian baptist sect, the Elkesaites, and who integrated in his thinking many diverse religious traditions, among which Jewish apocalypticism and Gnostic ideas. As such Manichaeism is not so much a Christian movement, but belongs to the effective history of



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Christianity, especially Jewish-Christianity, in the border regions of the eastern Roman Empire and Persia. The movement quickly spread very widely over the late ancient Near East to as far east as China and as far west as the Roman Empire. At its peak it constituted the most widely spread religion in the late ancient world. Although much persecuted it endured in various forms into the European Middle Ages as well as in the Far East, and exerted some influence on mediaeval Christianity. Important Christian figures like Augustine of Hippo once were adherents of Manichaeism. The work by Lieu provides a comprehensive introduction to Manichaeism, its origins and spread, aspects of its 'theology' and practices, its confrontation with political authorities and its transformation in the Far East through interactions with Buddhism and Chinese religions.

Lieu, Samuel N. C. *Manichaeism in the Later Roman Empire and Medieval China*. Vol. 63. Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen Zum Neuen Testament. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1992.

Lieu provides analyses of the historical context of the figure of Mani, his teachings and Manichaeism as a movement in its religio-historical setting. He describes Mani's mission and the expansion of Manichaeism as well as reactions to it both positive and negative. The spread of Manichaeism to Central Asia and syncretism with Buddhism is also described.

### Montanism

The last significant Christian movement included here is Montanism (so called after its founder, Montanus), or the New Prophecy, as it was called in late antiquity. It originated in the late second century in Phrygia with the ecstatic prophetism of Montanus and his two female prophetic colleagues, Prisca and Maximilla. The movement as such espoused strict ethical standards and held to large extent proto-orthodox beliefs. It is their claim to receive direct inspiration from the Holy Spirit and so embody the Paraclete from the Gospel of John that caused tensions with other early Christian formations, and although excommunicated in places and denounced as heretical, in many contexts they were held to be orthodox. Montanism spread widely from central Western Asia Minor to Gaul and Africa, and the church father Tertullian was a famous adherent of Montanism, defending its orthodoxy. Tabbernee presents a narrative history of the movement and its vicissitudes richly documented with footnotes to scholarly literature and references to archaeology, especially the expedition Tabbernee led which discovered the ancient site of the Montanist holy city, Pepuza, the "New Jerusalem." Trevett also provides an overview of the history of Montanism, but then surveys in much detail the teachings of the "New Prophecy" to conclude with a section on how prophetic authority was gendered in the context of the movement (with female leaders playing a leading role in prophecy and church authority) but also how the emerging male-centred authority of proto-orthodoxy helped marginalise the movement as heretic.

Tabbernee, William. *Prophets and Gravestones. An Imaginative History of Montanists and Other Early Christians*. Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 2009.

Short chapters in narrative form cover the vision of Montanus, his first prophecies and the founding of the holy city of Pepouza, the "New Jerusalem"; the spread of the New Prophecy and its encounters with ecclesiastical authorities and writers, polemics, debates on revelation and true prophecy, resistance, persecution and martyrdom, and its eventual disappearance.

Trevett, Christine. *Montanism: Gender, Authority and the New Prophecy*. Cambridge ; New York, N.Y.: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1996.



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Trevett describes the beginnings of Montanism, its geographical and historical setting as well as the spread of the New Prophecy in Asia Minor, to Rome and North Africa up to the middle third century. She sets out the teachings of the New Prophecy, the central role of women in the New Prophecy and the later fate of Montanism, its marginalization as heresy, persecution, and destruction.

### Early Christian literature and Canon

Early Christian literature forms, arguably, the core of any study of early Christianity. Every historical overview, area study, or particular theme or topic depends on a reading of early Christian writings for its data for historical reconstruction. Read from a cultural studies point of view, early Christian literature provides rich data for understanding early Christian mythmaking, social formation, and invention of tradition. The literature not only encodes projections of its imagined social locations, its encoded imaginings of the history of Christianity and tradition formation open a window on to early Christian mythmaking.

#### Overviews

Regardless of the perspective from which early Christian literature is studied, it remains essential to consult broad overviews of early Christian writers and their work for a historical framework. First and foremost, the multivolume work of Quasten is an enduring classic as overview/synthesis and reference work. His work was completed by the work edited by De Bernardino, which took the overview up to the late fifth century. For a more up to date and more accessible overview of early Christian literature, the volume by Moreschini and Norelli is useful as it extends the survey of Christian literature into the 7<sup>th</sup> century. Young, Ayres, and Louth, eds., treats early Christian literature by epoch from the beginnings in apostolic literature to roughly the end of the fourth century, organized around epochs, figures, movements, corpuses, with special thematic studies on context and interpretation at the end of each epoch demarcation.

Quasten, Johannes. *Patrology*. 3 vols. Westminster, Md.: Christian Classics, 1986 [1950].

Covers the history of early Christian literature by epoch and corpus of writings. Volume one covers second century Christian literature, volume two the third and fourth century, and volume three fourth and fifth century Greek Christian literature.

De Bernardino, Angelo, ed. Translated by Placid Solari. Introduction by Johannes Quasten. *Patrology. Volume 4. The Golden Age of Latin Patristic Literature. From the Council of Nicaea to the Council of Chalcedon*. Allen, Tex.: Christian Classics, 1995 [1986].

De Bernardino treats the socio-political context of the fourth century; Hilary of Poitiers and Arianism in the West; Ambrose, Ambrosiaster, and Nicetas; Christian poetry; Augustine; Controversies surrounding Augustine; Writers of Gaul; Italian writers up to Leo the Great.

Moreschini, Claudio, and Enrico Norelli. *Early Christian Greek and Latin Literature: a Literary History*. Translated by Matthew O'Connell. 2 vols. Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson Publishers, 2005.



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They present individuals (or works), a short biography (or background sketch), written corpus with brief descriptions of individual contents, bibliography and special studies.

Young, Frances, Margaret, Lewis Ayres, and Andrew Louth, eds. *The Cambridge History of Early Christian Literature*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004.

Part one ("New Testament to Irenaeus") traces the development of the literary culture of earliest Christianity. Part two ("The Third Century") describes the rise of 'ethnic' Christian literatures (Alexandrian, Latin, Syriac) and the first formulations of Christian identity. Part three ("Foundation of a New Culture: From Diocletian to Cyril") treats the variety of Christian literatures and their various geographical and institutional settings, including conciliar records and canons.

### The Cultural and Material History of Early Christian Tradition Making

It is now generally accepted that the form of the written record of early Christianity provides testimony to historical data like social setting, social class, and proselytizing activities of early Christian groups. Gamble is a standard work on the cultural history and cultural significance of Christian text production (issues of literacy, the predilection for the codex format, and the appropriation of Graeco-Roman genres from the beginning), and for information on how texts functioned and were valued in early Christian contexts (issues of production, circulation, and collection). Hurtado is significant for his argument that for understanding early Christian history and culture attention should be paid to the physical and visual characteristics of the earliest Christian artifacts, namely early Christian manuscripts. In addition, the bound codex form of early Christian manuscripts (in contrast to papyrus scrolls) was a conscious choice which signified a sense from the beginning that its message was to be circulated widely. The work of Kelber, now a classic, applied studies of oral communication to the interpretation of biblical texts, arguing that early Christian texts and manuscripts continued to function in a culture and environment of oral communication, and that orality significantly determines the rhetoric, the contents and organization of early Christian texts as well as the way themes, topics and motifs are presented. Kirk and Thatcher, eds., and Thatcher, ed., not only survey the impact of Kelber on the study of early Christian communication but also apply the insights in orality, the character of oral communication, and the oral-scribal interface to analyses of early Christian tradition formation and the making of Christian social and collective memory.

Gamble, Harry Y. *Books and Readers in the Early Church. A History of Early Christian Texts*. New Haven, Conn.; London: Yale University Press, 1995.

Early Christian literacy and the character of early Christian literature; early Christian book production (codex form and size); early Christian book publication and circulation in the light of contemporary Graeco-Roman practices; early Christian book collections, libraries from congregations to monasteries, compared to Greek, Roman, and Jewish libraries.

Hurtado, Larry W. *The Earliest Christian Artifacts: Manuscripts and Christian Origins*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2006.

Hurtado argues that the Old Testament, New Testament, and other early Christian texts witnessed to in early manuscripts demonstrate the broad range of writings used by early Christians and the relative popularity of certain writings; that the use of the codex as preferred form for writings considered scripture was a specific Christian invention.



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Kelber, Werner H. *The Oral and the Written Gospel. The Hermeneutics of Speaking and Writing in the Synoptic Tradition, Mark, Paul, and Q.* Revised edition with new introduction. Bloomington, Ind.: Indiana University Press, 1997.

The book contains a new introduction surveying and responding to early reception and critique of his thesis. Kelber surveys pre-canonical gospel transmission considering some modern transmission theories. He then discusses oral features and textuality in the Gospel of Mark; the interplay of orality and textuality in Pauline discourse; ending with the thesis of the written Markan passion narrative as repudiation of oral Jesus transmissions.

Kirk, Alan, and Tom Thatcher, eds. *Memory, Tradition, and Text. Uses of the Past in Early Christianity.* Vol. 52. Semeia Studies. Atlanta, Ga.: Society of Biblical Literature, 2005.

The volume focuses on social and cultural memory with various essays applying memory theory to Jesus traditions and their transmission, Christian origins, individual Gospels or aspects of Gospels, Pauline and later first century Christian literature, Jewish birth narratives and women's social memory, Gospel of Thomas.

Thatcher, Tom, ed. *Jesus, the Voice, and the Text: Beyond the Oral and Written Gospel.* Waco, Tex.: Baylor University Press, 2008.

The authors interact with Kelber's media history of early Christianity and apply oral hermeneutics and memory studies applied to Jesus traditions, Gospel of Mark, the Didache. The volume also investigates various aspects of orality, memory, and scribal communication in the ancient Mediterranean world and early Christianity.

### The Canon of the New Testament and its Formation

As in the case of other rubrics, there is also in the consideration of the formation and status of the canon of the New Testament two broad streams of opinion discernible. One is a more conventional, theological, perspective in which the existence and shaping of the canon is seen as the result of a linear development of tradition from Jesus traditions over the corpus of apostolic and post-apostolic writings to growing recognition of authoritative writings that encompass what we now know as the New Testament to later canon lists in a seemingly univocal manner. Over against that is the perspective that emphasizes diversity, with a widely diverse body of literature produced in the course of the first four or so Christian centuries, many of which were at some point regarded as scripture. In this view the canonization process is an essentially imperial process of drawing boundaries and constructing orthodox Christianity with the exclusion and marginalization of some groups and the writings associated with "deviant" groups and figures.

Trebolle Barrera is a comprehensive introduction to methods of tradition and book production in the ancient world, with histories of canons and canon formation, the various versions of the Old and New Testaments, textual criticism, ending with a section on reception history and interpretation encoded in the ongoing textual traditions and hermeneutics. Metzger is the classic book on the New Testament canon, its history and factors influencing its formation, the geographical specifics of canonicity, and historical and theological problems relating to the concept of the canon. McDonald is an accessible, though scholarly, book situated somewhere between Trebolle Barrera and Metzger. An introduction on scriptural canons in the ancient world is followed by sections on the evidences for gradual canon formation of Hebrew scriptures and their reception into early Christianity and rabbinic Judaism; as well as the growth of scriptural tradition in the early church and canon formation.



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McDonald and Sanders, eds., investigate questions raised in debates on the early closures and forms of Old Testament and New Testament canons, as well as the status and changeability of the Christian canon. It contains extensive historical overviews of canon-making, of various canons, as well as the significance of these varied historical processes for scholarship and Christianity. For a more popular introduction to the collection of early Christian writings that “became apocryphal” see the work of Ehrman (which is a companion volume to *Lost Christianities*, which discusses these early Christian books). Ehrman contends that early Christianity comprised not only a greater variety of viewpoints than later stabilized into orthodoxy, but also a greater variety of variously accepted literature than later canonized.

Trebolle Barrera, Julio. *The Jewish Bible and the Christian Bible. An Introduction to the History of the Bible*. Translated by Wifred G. E. Watson. Leiden; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Brill; Eerdmans, 1998.

This volume starts ‘before the book’, with ancient biblical languages, book production in antiquity, translations, scribal activities, sacred books, and then goes to the literary and social history of the biblical canon, and collections of early Christian canonical and non-canonical writings. This leads to the textual history and criticism of the Bible ending with comprehensive overview of hermeneutics and text interpretation through history.

Metzger, Bruce Manning. *The Canon of the New Testament. Its Origin, Development, and Significance*. New York, N.Y.: Oxford University Press, 1987.

Metzger provides a survey of the literature on the canon, then proceeds to an exposition of the formation history of the New Testament canon and the historical influences bearing on the formation of the canon. Then he deals with the historical shapes of various canons and evidence for them, as well as later debates on the canon. A last section deals with contemporary evaluations of canonicity.

McDonald, Lee Martin. *The Biblical Canon: Its Origin, Transmission, and Authority*. Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 2007.

McDonald opens the volume with concepts of scripture and canon in antiquity and in the biblical world and then describes the long and complex history of canon formation from the first literary traditions to a fully recognized set of canonical writings for both Old and New Testament. Various appendices provide data and resources for further study.

McDonald, Lee Martin, and James A. Sanders, eds. *The Canon Debate*. Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 2002.

Essays reflect the state of contemporary research on aspects of canonicity, revisit and reconsider important facets of conventional scholarship on the biblical canon. The volume sets out the issues and key terms of the debate and then reviews the complex formation history of both biblical canons, also reconsidering accepted views on textual criticism, and significance of the canon for the church.

Ehrman, Bart D. *Lost Scriptures: Books That Did Not Make It into the New Testament*. New York, N.Y.: Oxford University Press, 2003.

Introductions to and translations of apocryphal Christian writings arranged in various categories: non-canonical gospels; non-canonical acts of apostles; non-canonical epistles and related writings; non-canonical apocalypses and revelatory treatises; concluding with introductions and translations of canon lists.



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### Texts, Translations, and Critical Editions

There is no shortage of published sources for the study of early Christian literature. Below is listed some accessible translations of source material, but mostly scholarly editions (both critical and in the original language, and in translation) of early Christian literature. Most collections are supplied with introductions to the literature and other relevant aspects; scholarly thematic articles and indices make these resources also good research tools. At the end a selection of a few more popular online resources are also given (please note that the URL's were correct and working at the time of writing, and that the quality of the translations have not been extensively checked).

#### General collections of translated texts

The literature noted here are available in easily accessible translations, some also available online. Ehrman and Jacobs, and Ehrman 1999, are readers presenting selections of texts illustrating particular aspects of the formation history of early Christianity – not only 'religious' or devotional texts but also instructional, creedal, historical texts. The two series *Ante-Nicene Fathers* and *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers* are comprehensive and voluminous resources on a wide variety of Christian literature from the late first to seventh centuries C.E. They are easy to consult but one should be aware that they reflect a state of the literary finds as it obtained in the late nineteenth century and are now dated translations that do not reflect more recent critical work in text editions.

Ehrman, Bart D, and Andrew S. Jacobs. *Christianity in Late Antiquity, 300-450 C.E.: a Reader*. New York, N.Y.: Oxford University Press, 2004.

Selected texts, translated and introduced, illustrating a wide range of aspects of early Christian history; with an introduction to Late Antiquity as the context for Christianity in the newly Christianized Empire; selections arranged in topical sections relating to persecution, the relation to the imperial house, becoming a Christian, heresy and orthodoxy, canons and creeds, asceticism, pilgrimages and saints, the Christian Bible, and Christianity outside the Roman Empire.

Ehrman, Bart D. *After the New Testament: A Reader in Early Christianity*. New York, N.Y.: Oxford University Press, 1999.

A sourcebook of selected primary texts spanning the second and third centuries illustrating the rich diversity of Christian beliefs, practices, ethics, experiences, confrontations, and self-understandings. Included are texts drawn from the Apostolic Fathers, the writings of Nag Hammadi, early pseudepigrapha, martyrologies, anti-Jewish tractates, heresiologies, canon lists, church orders, liturgical texts, and theological treatises. Texts organized under social and historical rubrics.

Roberts, Alexander, James Donaldson, Philip Schaff, Henry Wace, and A. Cleveland Cox, eds. *The Ante-Nicene Fathers: The Writings of the Fathers down to A.D. 325*. 10 vols. Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson Publishers, 1994.

A very widely used English translation of early Christian literature, published from 1867 onwards to the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Now outdated, but still useful because of easy access and searchability. Also available online at <http://www.ccel.org/fathers.html>. From the Apostolic Fathers, through apocryphal literature and apologists, early heresiologies.



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Roberts, Alexander, James Donaldson, Philip Schaff, and Henry Wace, eds. *Nicene and Post-nicene Fathers. First Series*. 14 vols. Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 1994.

———, eds. *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers: Second Series*. 14 vols. Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 1996.

A very widely used English translation of early Christian literature, published from 1867 onwards to the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Series one is devoted to Augustine and John Chrysostom, while series two covers the church histories, the fathers of the fourth to seventh centuries plus the seven ecumenical councils. Now outdated, but still useful because of ease of access and easy searchability. Also available online at <http://www.ccel.org/fathers.html>.

### Translations of Old Testament Pseudepigrapha based on critical editions

Old Testament Pseudepigrapha concerns those writings originating in Jewish circles in the late Hellenistic period through the later Roman Empire. They are rewritings, reinterpretations, and reappropriations of Old Testament traditions (Genesis features prominently), but are almost exclusively preserved by Christians in various (often far-flung contexts), for whom many continued to function as scripture and often were edited and embellished with Christian interpolations.

Charlesworth, James H., ed. *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha. Volume 1: Apocalyptic Literature and Testaments*. Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson Publishers, 2009.

The volume contains introductions to and translations of all known apocalypses and testaments of Jewish origins (but preserved in other, mostly Christian, contexts). Contains a general introduction to the Pseudepigrapha as corpus; introductions to the two volumes; each text is separately introduced, with translation, supplied with explanatory footnotes; comprehensive indices enable thematic research.

Charlesworth, James H., ed. *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha. Volume 2: Expansion of the “Old Testament” and Legends*. Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson Publishers, 2009.

The volume contains the large variety of texts relating to Old Testament material and legendary traditions in Second Temple Judaism. Contains a general introduction to the Pseudepigrapha as corpus; introductions to the two volumes; each text is separately introduced, with translation, supplied with explanatory footnotes; comprehensive indices enable thematic research.

### Translations of New Testament Apocrypha based on critical editions

New Testament Apocrypha encompasses the corpus of early Christian literature that in some way aspired to scriptural status (and often functioned as such) but marginalized as spurious or non-canonical in the process of canon formation, as gospels of a variety of styles, pseudo-apostolic writings, or other writings purportedly manifesting revelatory insights. While some are clearly borderline fiction, they have great value as evidence for the development of the many divergent trajectories of Christian discourses and identity projects, as well as for popular religion in the early formative centuries of Christianity. Often they lie at the basis of what later became official doctrines in the mainstream church (e.g., Mariology). Apocryphal literature has played a significant role in recent studies of Christian origins in drawing attention to the diversity inherent in early Christian discourse formation, and as such, are important for completing the picture of the formation of early Christianity as a historical phenomenon. Schneemelcher 1991 and 1992 represent the last phase of the various revisions of the authoritative Hennecke-Schneemelcher editions of the New Testament Apocrypha in German (here the English translations are referenced) representing the state of the



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discipline up to 1990. The new edition of Marksches et al, eds., continue the project but with completely new reworkings of the translations of the apocrypha in light of the research of the last two decades. For now it is available only in German.

Schneemelcher, Wilhelm, ed. *New Testament Apocrypha. Volume One: Gospels and Related Writings*. Louisville, Ky: Westminster John Knox Press, 1991.

Schneemelcher, Wilhelm, ed. *New Testament Apocrypha: Writings Relating to the Apostles, Apocalypses and Related Subjects*. Louisville, Ky: Westminster John Knox Press, 1992.

Since its first edition in German remained a standard source for translations based on critical text editions, with introductions and some thematic essays on early Christian apocryphal literature.

Markschiess, Christoph, Jens Schröter, and Andreas Heiser, eds. *Antike Christliche Apokryphen in deutscher Übersetzung. I. Band in Zwei Teilbänden: Evangelien und Verwandtes. 7. Auflage der von Edgar Hennecke begründeten und von Wilhelm Schneemelcher fortgeführten Sammlung der Neutestamentlichen Apokryphen*. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2012.

Continues on from Hennecke-Schneemelcher but is a completely reworked edition of the standard German edition and translation of the New Testament Apocrypha. The first volume in two parts contains newly introduced and translated version of all apocryphal gospels and related material.

### Gnostic and Manichaean literature: translations and critical editions

Gnostic literature, especially, received much attention in recent scholarship on alternative Christianities in the formative centuries of the Christian era as evidence of Christian discourse in opposition to or alternative to emerging dominant discourses of authority in early Christianity. These resources should be used in conjunction with the texts on Gnosticism and Manichaeism under the rubric 'Diversity in Early Christianity.'

Robinson is an edition of the original texts themselves in facsimile, while Robinson, ed., is a well-known authoritative translation of the so-called Coptic Gnostic library.

The series Nag Hammadi and Manichaean Studies contains critical editions of both Gnostic and Manichaean texts.

the series Corpus Fontium Manichaeorum spans a very wide range of Manichaean texts across many language traditions, showing the very wide dissemination of this early 'world religion' that continued to exert its influence deep into Europe through the Middle Ages into the early modern era, as well as influencing Buddhism in deep Central Asia.

Robinson, James M. "The Coptic Gnostic Library Online — A Complete Edition of the Nag Hammadi Codices," n.d. <http://referenceworks.brillonline.com/browse/coptic-gnostic-library>.

The new online version of the complete Nag Hammadi collection, previously published in hard cover. Contains the Coptic texts, plus some texts from other Christian writers; with scholarly introductions and commentaries.

Robinson, James M., ed. *The Nag Hammadi Library in English*. 4<sup>th</sup> rev. ed. with an Afterword by Richard Smith. Leiden; Boston, Mass.: Brill, 2002.



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General introduction to the corpus. Authoritative translation into English of the whole Nag Hammadi corpus of Coptic Gnostic texts, with a closing Afterword on the relevance of the literature and Gnosticism for contemporary literature from Voltaire and Blake to Jack Kerouac and science fiction writer Philip K. Dick.

Nag Hammadi and Manichaean Studies, series editors Johannes van Oort and Einar Thomassen, multiple volumes. Leiden; Boston, Mass.: Brill, 1993-- [includes the previous Nag Hammadi Studies, multiple volumes. Leiden; Boston, Mass.: Brill, 1971–1995]

Among scholarly studies on aspects of Gnostic and Manichaean literature, the series also features some critical editions and translations of Gnostic and Manichaean texts. The original facsimile editions of the Coptic Gnostic codices of Nag Hammadi appeared in this series.

Corpus Fontium Manichaeorum (CFM). Series editors: M. Krause, S.N.C. Lieu, J. van Oort, A. van Tongerloo. Multiple volumes. Turnhout: Brepols, 1979--.

Critical editions of Manichaean texts in various source language subseries (Coptic, Latin, Syriac, Turkish), dictionaries, and bibliographies.

### **Christian writings in critical editions**

Here are listed those collections of critical editions of primary texts written by ecclesiastical writers over a very long span of Christian history and over a wide range of geographical localities. The Loeb Classical Library contains texts in Latin and Greek with English translations, some of the older volumes being outdated but a substantial number of new text-plus-translations have appeared recently. Sources Chrétiennes is a French series with critical text editions, claiming to eventually encompass all Christian literature from the early centuries, the critical text in the original language with introduction and commentary in French. The Corpus Scriptorum Christianorum Orientalium series focuses on the Christian writers from the eastern provinces of the Roman Empire and further east to Persia. The series Corpus Christianorum encompasses a wide range of writings, mostly Greek and Latin Christian writings (but not only) from the early centuries into the Middle Ages with some lexicographical resources included. Die griechischen christlichen Schriftsteller der ersten Jahrhunderte is a series containing all the early Christian writings in Greek from the first through fourth centuries, the critical text in original language but introduction and commentary in German. The series Fontes Christiani (series 1, 2, and 4 published by Herder; series 3 by Brepols) contain texts from the early centuries through the Middle Ages with bilingual editions (Greek or Latin if that is the original language; and German introduction and commentary, or German translation of any other original language). Fontes Christiani is not a comprehensive text series, but the early Christian literature it does comprise are valuable editions with good introductions and translations.

The Loeb Classical Library, general series editor: Jeffrey Henderson, multiple volumes. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1912--.

The series contains works in Latin and Greek, early Christian writers among the texts included. Individual volumes have critical Greek or Latin texts, introductions and English translations. Still one of the most widely used and cited sources in early Christian literature. Now available online at <http://www.loebclassics.com/>

Sources Chrétiennes, edited by the Institut des Sources Chrétiennes. Multiple volumes. Les Éditions du Cerf, Paris, 1941--.



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A very comprehensive collection of critical text editions (“the largest library in the world”) of patristic literature, with introductions, commentary, and translations. Aiming to encompass the complete works of the Fathers of the Church.

Corpus Scriptorum Christianorum Orientalium, multiple volumes. Leuven: Peeters, 1950--.

A very extensive multilingual collection of Eastern Christian texts with subseries on Ethiopian, Arabic, Armenian, Coptic, Iberian, Syrian authors and texts.

Corpus Christianorum, multiple volumes and subseries. Turnhout: Brepols, 1972--.

A truly massive project with critical editions of texts by Christian authors from Late Antiquity till the end of the Middle Ages, with various subseries: Patristic Greek authors, Patristic Latin authors, a mediaeval text series and the Apocryphal Text Series. Also includes lexicographic tools, and reference works. A newly started project of translating all editions of Greek and Latin patristic and medieval texts that have appeared in the *Corpus Christianorum* series into modern languages, particularly useful for reference purposes and as research aid.

Die griechischen christlichen Schriftsteller der ersten Jahrhunderte. Edited by Christoph Markschies. On behalf of the Berlin-Brandenburgische Akademie der Wissenschaften. Multiple volumes. Berlin; New York, N.Y.: De Gruyter, 1899 –

Greek Christian writers of the first three/four centuries (the official description of the series states it to “provide complete coverage of the first three centuries”, but works from the fourth century are also featured). Some old volumes still in print, but most volumes newly reworked since 1990.

Fontes Christiani, series 1, 2, 4, series editors Marc-Aeilko Aris, Franz Dünzl, Winfried Haunerland, Roland Kany, Isabelle Mandrella und Rudolf Schieffer; multiple volumes. Freiburg: Herder, 1990--.

Bilingual editions of Christian source-texts from Antiquity and the Middle Ages. Volumes provide the text in its original language (when this is Greek or Latin), with German translation; with introductions, notes and indices.

Fontes Christiani, series 3, multiple volumes. Turnhout: Brepols Publishers, 2002--.

Bilingual editions of Christian source-texts from Antiquity and the Middle Ages. Volumes provide the text in its original language (when this is Greek or Latin), with German translation; with introductions, notes and indices.

### Popular resources for early Christian literature

These sources of texts in translation (all translations in the public domain) are freely accessible, and the links were active at the time of writing. However, users should be aware of big differences in quality of text and translation. Early Christian Writings is a comprehensive web resource on Christian writings from the New Testament up to the fourth century with not only the translated texts themselves but also introductory material, scholarly articles and commentary, a discussion forum, plus secondary scholarly literature (in the public domain, thus somewhat dated), and so on. Monachos. The Patristic Source Texts is part of a web site devoted to the study of Orthodox Christianity



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which explains its focus and selection of texts, but it also encompasses other resources such as studies of individual ecclesiastical figures and writers, and patristic themes.

Early Christian Writings, edited by Peter Kirby.

An online resource in English translation with all the Christian writings from the first and second centuries, as well as a few selected from the early third. It also includes non-Christian documents bearing on the study of early Christianity. Some are available in the original language. It includes scholarly introductions to these texts. Literature arranged according to plausible chronology of origins. Available online at <http://www.earlychristianwritings.com/>

Monachos. The Patristic Source Texts – Master List.

Part of a web site dedicated to the study of Orthodox Christianity through its patristic, monastic and liturgical heritage, the Master List contains a selection over three hundred individual texts from both western and eastern patristic writers in English translation. Available online at <http://www.monachos.net/content/patristics/texts>

### Social aspects of Early Christianity

For the purposes of this bibliographic article this category is conceived of as encompassing of a number of widely divergent rubrics that are, arguably, theoretically related and mutually implicating. From a cultural studies perspective, social formation; identity making; invention, maintenance, and performance of culture; cultural memory making; sacralization of persons, times and places; body and gender discourse as a way to instill a new kind of habitus, are all ways into early Christianity as a cultural formation. “Culture” is understood here as a site of social and political positioning, a site of contention, in other words: the political toil of imagining ourselves as positioned in a specific manner *vis-à-vis* all other imagined communities, and doing so drawing on a multitude of symbolic interventions in order to effect and maintain this positioning and identity. With regard to early Christian practices a special focus falls on meals/eucharist, baptism as initiation rite, pilgrimages and cults of holy men, and martyrdom and its memorialisation. Body, gender, and ethnicity have recently been foregrounded as important discourse sites for interpreting early Christian discourse, while issues of empire (especially of Christianity as itself an imperial formation) have equally come to dominate scholarship on the formation of Christianity. Media studies on the formation and transmission of Christian traditions (see above “Early Christian Literature”) can also be profitably considered in this context.

### Early Christian Social Formations

Using voluntary associations as a type, Kloppenborg and Wilson, eds., analyse a key feature of the social reality of ancient religions, namely how they were woven into the social fabric of ancient urban life. Various kinds of associations come in purview: philosophical schools, clubs, mystery cult groups, as well as the way in which Jewish synagogues and Christian churches adapted to these social realities, in fact appeared as one kind of associations among many others.



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Ascough and Kloppenborg, eds., is the first part of a multi-volumed collection of inscriptions with commentary illustrating aspects of ancient voluntary associations, including Christian cult groups. Ascough, Harland, and Kloppenborg is an extensive sourcebook with translated inscriptions, descriptions of buildings and meeting places, and literary references to religious associations.

Harland (AGRW) is an Internet companion to the *Sourcebook* browseable by inscription, exhibit, topics, with links to other sites among which online publications of inscriptions. Harland (*Associations*) focuses on the Roman province of Asia Minor and is a comparison of associations, synagogues, and Christian churches, arguing that Graeco-Roman cult assemblies, Jewish synagogues, and Christian house churches looked and functioned very similarly and thus constitute an ideal entry point for religio-historical comparison with a view to understanding the place of Jews and Christians in the social realities of urban life in Graeco-Roman antiquity (a “sociology of early Christianity”).

Hanges compares the apostle Paul as cult founder to similar cases of cult foundations in antiquity, redescribing his multiple cult group foundings as embedded in a widely known, recognized, and widespread convention in the Hellenistic-Roman world. The implication of this being that the social formation of Christian cult groups is not a singular and unique (incomparable) phenomenon in the Graeco-Roman world.

Kloppenborg, John S., and Stephen G. Wilson, eds. *Voluntary Associations in the Graeco-Roman World*. 2nd edition. London; New York, N.Y.: Routledge, 2012.

Introduction on voluntary associations as phenomenon; analysis of function, taxonomy, and membership of collegia and thiasoi; studies on various manifestations of voluntary associations: philosophical schools, churches, synagogues, Dead Sea community, Graeco-Roman cult foundations, Mithraic mysteries, cult in Christian churches and voluntary associations, the role of women in synagogues, Dead Sea community.

Kloppenborg, John S., and Richard S. Ascough, eds. *Graeco-Roman Associations. Texts, Translations, and Commentary. Volume 1. Attica, Central Greece, Macedonia, Thrace*. Vol. 181. Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft. Berlin; New York, N.Y.: de Gruyter, 2011.

Translated inscriptions with notes and commentary. Extensive indexes provided (Athenian archons, Roman emperors and governors, deities and heroes, ethnic designations, types of associations, association names, and officers).

Ascough, Richard S., Philip A. Harland, and John S. Kloppenborg. *Associations in the Greco-Roman World: a Sourcebook*. Waco, Tex.: Baylor University Press, 2012.

Organized in three main sections: inscriptions and papyri, buildings and meeting places, literary references, spanning a vast swath of the Graeco-Roman world; concluding with an extensive annotated bibliography.

Harland, Philip A. “Associations in the Greco-Roman World (AGRW): A Companion to the Sourcebook (Ascough, Harland, and Kloppenborg).” Accessed July 23, 2013. <http://philipharland.com/greco-roman-associations/>.

Online resource with links to all inscriptions and documents featured in Ascough, Harland and Kloppenborg (including inscriptions not included in the book); an updated and expanded bibliography (including works not in the book); links to external sites (“Sister Sites on Associations” – the other books by Harland, “Inscriptions and Papyri Online” – a portal to other online resources on inscriptions and papyri); browse and search functions.



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Harland, Philip A. *Associations, Synagogues, and Congregations: Claiming a Place in Ancient Mediterranean Society*. Minneapolis, Minn.: Augsburg Fortress Press, 2003.

Harland describes associations in Asia Minor, membership and social networks, the purposes they served – as religious cult groups or as social clubs. A further section is on imperial cults and how these interacted with associations and continues to analyze synagogues and Christian congregations in the context of Graeco-Roman cities, how they existed in the context of and interacted with an imperial environment.

Hanges, James Constantine. *Paul, Founder of Churches: A Study in Light of the Evidence for the Role of "Founder-Figures" in the Hellenistic-Roman Period*. Vol. 292. Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2012.

Hanges argues that the work of the apostle Paul should be understood in comparison to general paradigm of cult founder in the Hellenistic-Roman world with case studies in the two transferrals of the cult of Sarapis; the founder figure as cult authority and organizer; the founding of the mysteries of Andania; and Paul as founder of churches, compared to Hellenistic-Roman cult practices.

### Early Christian Identity Formation

Processes of identity making receive much attention across the human sciences, also in studies of early Christian identity. Various theories of identity are drawn on to argue for constructedness of identity and emphasize processes, rhetoric, and position-taking. Holmberg, ed., argue that Christian identity is formed through participation in cult, ritual, ethical instruction and relationship norms that are shaped by and in social relationships and institutions. It is a dynamic process fraught with conflict. A companion volume is Holmberg and Winnige, eds., which focuses mainly on the New Testament itself. Harland (*Dynamics*) is a study on sociological dimension of early Christian identities, as Christians formed cult groups that operate much like other associations in the Graeco-Roman world. He then explores typical features of group consciousness construction, identity formation in immigrant and diaspora settings, and intergroup interactions and rivalries. Harland ("Companion") is a companion website to the book that contains commentary on the book plus links to the relevant ancient sources and photographic material. In contrast to the conventional view that Christians, Jews, and "pagans" in the later Roman Empire formed discrete groups differentiated by clear identity markers like body of belief, ritual, and social practice, Rébillard argues that identities in the late Roman world were actually blurred by social, ethnic, and gender differences, focusing his study on North Africa from the second to fifth century, paying particular attention to theories of identity formation that conceptualize the complex and disjunctive manner in which identity is constructed in real-life contexts. Buell analyzes the use and function of ethnicity and race identity arguments in antiquity to show how race/ethnicity was a core category of early Christian thinking about identity and how the category was employed in constructing both Jewishness and Christianness. Ethnicity and race were used both to differentiate (true) Christianness, but also to construct a universal, inclusive, Christian identity. Buell's study intends to place race and ethnicity at the centre of early Christian identity formation in order to question contemporary assumptions about race, ethnicity, and religion, especially with regard to Christian anti-Judaism. A completely different approach to Christian identity formation is taken by Nasrallah, who analyzes it through the lens of spatiality, setting early Christian literature addressed to the Greeks and Romans in relation to the material culture of Roman antiquity. She shows how Christian discourses on justice, piety, and gods



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and deified humans were shaped by material representations of gods and Roman imperial figures as well as geographical representations of Greek and Roman ethnicity as center of the known world.

Holmberg, Bengt, ed. *Exploring Early Christian Identity*. Vol. 226. Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament 1. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2008.

Provides an overview of models of understanding early Christian identity formation with essays on identity discourse in Paul, Ignatius, and Theodosius; cognitive aspects of identity formation and behaviour; Ephesian and Roman Christianity; gender and true masculinity as ideal.

Holmberg, Bengt, and Mikael Winnige, eds. *Identity Formation in the New Testament*. Vol. 227. Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2008.

Investigate the role of biblical traditions in identity formation; identity construction in texts; gender-analytical perspectives; postcolonial analyses; all applied to analyses of particular texts in the New Testament.

Harland, Philip A. *Dynamics of Identity in the World of the Early Christians. Associations, Judeans, and Cultural Minorities*. New York, N.Y.: T & T Clark, 2009.

Harland places Jewish and Christian identities in the context of Graeco-Roman associations and draws out the familial dimensions of group identity. He compares constructions of identity in diaspora and immigrant settings relating to integration and acculturation of Jewish and other immigrant groups in the Graeco-Roman world showing intergroup relations, interactions and rivalries, and perceptions of minorities.

Harland, Philip A. "Companion to Dynamics of Identity in the World of the Early Christians (by Philip A. Harland)." Accessed July 23, 2013. Online at <http://www.philipharland.com/Dynamicsofidentity/>.

Contains commentary on the sections of the book; links to ancient sources pertaining to each book section and photo galleries; links to other websites on the Graeco-Roman world as well to Harland's publications.

Rebillard, Éric. *Christians and Their Many Identities in Late Antiquity, North Africa, 200-450 CE*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2013.

In a theoretical introduction on identity theory and methodology Rebillard argues for multiple identities in early Christians in their world and especially investigates Tertullian, Cyprian, and Carthage in the second and third century, with reference to the interplay between identity maintenance and persecution; Augustine and the multiplicity of Christian identities in North Africa.

Buell, Denise Kimber. *Why This New Race: Ethnic Reasoning in Early Christianity*. New York, N.Y.: Columbia University Press, 2008.

Buell argues for the contemporary significance of the study, showing the fixity and fluidity of the category 'identity' in ethnic/race identity reasoning in antiquity. Identity is constructed through invention and appropriation of a past, the kind of reasoning used to construct both Jewishness and Christianness. She shows how ethnic reasoning was exploited in intra-Christian polemics to construct discourses of universalism versus ethnic "sectarian" heterodoxy.

Nasrallah, Laura Salah. *Christian Responses to Roman Art and Architecture: The Second-century Church amid the Spaces of Empire*. Cambridge; New York, N.Y.: Cambridge University Press, 2010.



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Nasrallah frames early Christian literary discourse with archaeology, showing how Christian apologetics interacted with the Second Sophistic, drawing out the influence of spatiality of the Roman world on experiences of self and world. She highlights Christian experience of Roman urban spaces, cultural and moral discourses and the way Christian apologists interacted with these; Part three considers the representations of gods and Christian responses.

### Early Christian Culture and Practices

Studying culture is so encompassing that it is necessary to delimit the areas covered. In addition, Christian culture in the context of the Roman Empire is also invisible for the most part, and only becomes describable once a specific Christian practice becomes sufficiently noticeable and distinct from its surrounding context. For the same reason it is impossible to say anything about Christian popular culture for our period. While early Christian culture was dealt with implicitly in other rubrics the emphasis here is therefore on those practices that have been visible as distinctively (even if not uniquely) Christian in its context of origin.

Blasi, Duhaime, and Turcotte, eds., offers a methodological framework for understanding early Christian social and cultural practices across a broad range of phenomena, mostly concentrated on group behaviour and group formation.

Horsley, ed., Burrus, ed., and Krueger, ed., are all examples of a “history from below”, a “people’s history”, in that they focus not so much on elite representations, and not primarily reconstructions based on texts, but – informed by archaeology and the study of social realia in a cross-cultural comparative manner – on reconstructions of Christian group formation and identity practices as they would have been valid and appropriate for a majority cross-section of Christian groups.

Bradshaw offers an overview of the development of Christian cult from the earliest beginnings up to the fourth century, demonstrating the essentially variegated character of ancient Christian worship. Of the distinct Christian practices, emphasis falls here on baptism as initiation rite and the eucharist as cult meal tradition. The compendious work of Ferguson covers the originary matrices of Christian initiation washing rites and their manifold manifestations in the course of the first few Christian centuries.

For Christian cult meals and their social significance as sites of social interaction and identity propagation, Smith, Taussig, and Smith and Taussig, eds., provide extensive interpretation of the cult rite in the context of Graeco-Roman culture. Christian celebratory cult meals were practiced in ways very similar to Graeco-Roman banquets, and in fact, can be said to be manifestations of the same cultural practices known in the wider world, with the obvious implication that because of this practice Christian gatherings would have caused Christian meetings to look like those of associations, philosophical schools, clubs, or friendship banquets. That they were also sites of social interaction and disintegration or conflict, is demonstrated in the study by Smith and Taussig, eds.

Blasi, Anthony J., Jean Duhaime, and Paul-André Turcotte, eds. *Handbook of Early Christianity: Social Science Approaches*. Walnut Creek, Calif.: AltaMira Press, 2002.

The volume sets out social-scientific theories and their value for interpreting and explaining Christian origins, focusing on specific methods of social-scientific analysis: from archaeology



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to interpretations of symbolic universes. They describe the various contexts for the emergence of the Jesus movement and early Christianity and delineate the influence of power, stratification, and difference. Another section deals with economic issues and psycho-sociological matters relating to identity and conversion.

Horsley, Richard A., ed. *A People's History of Christianity. Volume 1. Christian Origins*. Minneapolis, Minn.: Fortress Press, 2005.

Introduces the concept of "people's history" with a focus on renewal and peasant movements in first century Judaism as original context of the Christian movement, women's responses, and Mandaean views of Jesus as baptist ascetic. The volume highlights the shaping of Christian textual traditions in urban environments with further explication of social patterns and practices on families, slaves, poverty, and women and prophecy.

Burrus, Virginia, ed. *A People's History of Christianity. Volume 2. Late Ancient Christianity*. Minneapolis, Minn.: Fortress Press, 2005.

Introduces discourse theory of history highlighting the various arenas for the construction and subversion of hierarchy. Various domains of local practices in which identity projects play out are described. A last section concerns the continuum of diversity into heresy and the differentiations of identity and popular religion.

Krueger, Derek, ed. *A People's History of Christianity. Volume 3. Byzantine Christianity*. Minneapolis, Minn.: Fortress Press, 2006.

Introduces the character of Byzantine Christianity focusing on the construction of religious practices like lay piety, cult of martyrs, and night vigil from the perspective of church fathers. The spatial dimensions of cult practices are highlighted. A last section deals with the intersection of material religious culture and practices as well as some social aspects of religious life.

Bradshaw, Paul F. *The Search for the Origins of Christian Worship: Sources and Methods for the Study of Early Liturgy*. New York, N.Y.: Oxford University Press, 2002.

Studies changes in scholarly perspectives on the origins and character of early Christian worship and delineates the formative matrix for early Christian worship tracing its development from the New Testament through early church orders and liturgies with emphasis on Eucharistic rites and initiation rites and baptisms. Also focuses on attendant issues like sacred time, the structure of ministry and the effects of the Constantinian revolution.

Ferguson, Everett. *Baptism in the Early Church: History, Theology, and Liturgy in the First Five Centuries*. Grand Rapids, Mich.; Cambridge, UK: Eerdmans, 2009.

Ferguson surveys scholarship on baptism before dealing with antecedents to Christian baptism in the Graeco-Roman and Jewish world. He then outlines the development of baptism discourse in early Christian literature from the New Testament up to the fifth century in all geographical areas, as well as material remains. Conclusion on origins, doctrine, liturgy of baptism; origins and development of infant baptism; mode of baptism.

Smith, Dennis E. *From Symposium to Eucharist: The Banquet in the Early Christian World*. Minneapolis, Minn.: Augsburg Fortress Press, 2009.

Outlines methodological issues before analyzing the form and organization of the Graeco-Roman banquet. Smith provides detailed descriptions of the various types of meal occasions in the ancient world (philosophical, sacrificial/religious, club banquets before turning to Jewish



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banquets covering Ben Sira, rabbinic literature, separatist groups, and the messianic banquet), looking also at their representation in early Christian literature.

Taussig, Hal. *In the Beginning Was the Meal: Social Experimentation & Early Christian Identity*. Minneapolis, Minn.: Fortress Press, 2009.

Taussig uses social theory, especially ritual and performance theory, to interpret early Christian meals socially and to relate them to theories of Christian origins and identity formation. He explores the social innovation represented by early Christian meals and their function in the rapid spread of Christianity as well as sites of resistance to the Roman Empire. He considers the intersections between early Christian literature and Graeco-Roman meal celebrations.

Smith, Dennis Edwin, and Hal Taussig, eds. *Meals in the Early Christian World: Social Formation, Experimentation, and Conflict at the Table*. New York, N.Y.: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012.

Contains critical essays on social aspects of Graeco-Roman meals focusing on the typology of the Graeco-Roman banquet as social institution and its archaeology. Also highlighted are the social make-up, social values, and attendance with respect to banquets, female attendance, slaves at meals, Saturnalia and social role inversions, as well as issues regarding the culture of reclining.

### Early Christian Cult of Saints, Pilgrimages and Holy Places

Brown (*Through the Eye of a Needle*) treats the important feature of Christian attitudes to wealth in the later Roman Empire. He shows how the dominant ideology of negative valuation of wealth gives way to positive valuations as the empire becomes Christian, yet some critique of wealth and positive valuation of poverty and renunciation remained.

Brown (*Society and the Holy*) and Brown (*Cult of Saints*) are classic works on alternative systems of divine mediation alongside official Christian theology and practice. Treating wide-ranging case studies Brown shows how the holy was redefined in later Antiquity and focused on the proximity with humans who embodied the divine and exerted influence on human societies and individuals, in effect, often in place of gods/God.

Elsner and Rutherford provides a comprehensive analysis of “sacred mobility” or pilgrimage from the classical to the late Roman world. While the category of pilgrimage is a wide category, the focus is here on religious travel to sites of interaction with the divine, which interaction is also of varied character, and can profitably read in conjunction with some aspects of the cult of saints.

Brown, Peter. *Through the Eye of a Needle: Wealth, the Fall of Rome, and the Making of Christianity in the West, 350-550 AD*. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2012.

The volume concerns the social function of wealth in the ancient world and early Christian responses to it, particularly in Latin Christendom up to the end of the Roman Empire, with an attendant focus on the affluent nobility in fourth-century Rome and the interaction of Christian writers with wealth and how it was inscribed in new patterns of patronage, as well as traditions of renunciation of wealth.

Brown, Peter Robert Lamont. *Society and the Holy in Late Antiquity*. Berkeley and Los Angeles, Calif: University of California Press, 1982.



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Collection of essays of which Part one (“Approaches”) deals with scholarship on the holy, culture, and society; Part two (“Society and the Holy”) contains a number of well-known, acclaimed, and now classical studies on the holy, holy men and saints, their cults in various settings and geographic locales, and contestations surrounding the material attestations of the cult of saints.

Brown, Peter Robert Lamont. *The Cult of the Saints: Its Rise and Function in Latin Christianity*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981.

A classic book that deals with the cult shrines of saints; the cults and practices relating to the veneration of saints; their place and function in the Christian imagination and religious conceptuality; the experiences of their presence in relics and miracles and power exercised through their agency.

Elsner, Jaś, and Ian Rutherford, eds. *Pilgrimage in Graeco-Roman & Early Christian Antiquity: Seeing the Gods*. Oxford; New York, N.Y.: Oxford University Press, 2005.

Introduction on problems of definition, categorization and description of pilgrimage and sacred mobility; Part one is on various instances of pilgrimage in the classical and Hellenistic world; Part two deals with sacred mobility in the Roman Empire; Part three treats manifestations of Jewish and Christian pilgrimages.

### Early Christian Families

Early Christian households and families are also treated in other sections, as are issues relating to women in early Christianity. Balch and Osiek, eds., is a more concrete and material construction of the situation of early Christian families and the dynamics of complex interrelations playing out in the context of their situatedness in Roman society.

Balch, David L., and Carolyn A. Osiek, eds. *Early Christian Families in Context: An Interdisciplinary Dialogue*. Grand Rapids, Mich.; Cambridge, UK: Eerdmans, 2003.

The book deals with the physical contexts of early Christian families, also as gendered spaces in the light of archaeology. The book explores domestic values of gender equality and suffering as well as aspects of women’s, children’s and slaves’ lives and family dynamics in the household context. The authors reflect on the significance of study of early Christian families for Christian theology and practice today.

### Martyrdom

In history and historiography of early Christianity martyrdom has been emphasized as an important facet of the promotion and growth of Christianity (although recently Candida Moss downplayed the extent of Christian martyrdom as exaggerated). Martyrdom is not only a historical phenomenon, but as topic also intersects with body and gender discourses, so these works should be read in conjunction with other rubrics.

Bowersock is a descriptive overview of the history and effect of early Christian martyrdom, explaining why it is for the most part an urban phenomenon.



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Boyarin uses martyrdom and martyr discourse as a key to reconceptualize the formation of Judaism and Christianity, touching on the “parting of the ways” debate, arguing that both (Christianity being the elder born) arose from the complex interactions of Second Temple Judaism with their Roman contexts.

Castelli shows how martyrdom served Christian collective memory and identity making, and how the lasting legacy of the idea of redemptive death carries on to this day in interpretation of violent deaths.

Cobb demonstrates the gendered nature of martyr discourse, it being a discourse predicated on masculine values, but with the prevalence of many exemplary female martyrs they are both masculinized and feminized so as to keep “them in their place”.

Moss (*Ancient Christian Martyrdom*) provides an overview of the distinctive shape of early Christian martyr discourses in five different contexts. In *The Other Christs* Moss argues that martyrs functioned in a similar manner to holy men and saints in antiquity representing the proximity of the divine and its power, and by incorporation into Christ being extensions of Christ’s presence.

Perkins does not deal with martyrdom as such but analyzes the discourse of pain and suffering in the Graeco-Roman world and how this is recalibrated in early Christianity and provided a positive valorizing.

Van Henten and Avemarie is a sourcebook with selections of texts in translation on the noble death in Greek and Roman antiquity, Second Temple Judaism, early Christianity, and later rabbinic Judaism.

Bowersock, Glen W. *Martyrdom and Rome*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995.

Four lectures on the origins and development of the phenomenon, from Hellenistic Judaism to early Christianity; the formation and function of the genre of martyrologies; the civic scenario of martyrdom, spectacles, urban settings and effect; voluntary martyrdoms as suicides. Four appendices on Protomartyr, Ignatius and 4 Maccabees, Great Sabbath, and Asia, Aphrodisias, and the Lyon *Martyrium*.

Boyarin, Daniel. *Dying for God: Martyrdom and the Making of Christianity and Judaism*. Figueras: Reading Medieval Culture. Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1999.

Boyarin questions the conventional picture of the relation of Judaism and Christianity along the Stammbaum model, instead working out the “wave model” of complex intersections. This is illuminated by case studies of martyr narratives showing the continued entanglements of nascent Judaism and Christianity and the role of martyrdom discourse in shaping both Judaism and Christianity as distinctive traditions but with permeability of the boundaries.

Castelli, Elizabeth A. *Martyrdom and Memory: Early Christian Culture Making*. Gender, Theory, and Religion. New York, N.Y.; Chichester: Columbia University Press, 2004.

Castelli highlights collective memory and the making of the past as frame for understanding techniques and concepts employed to manufacture Christian martyrdom as the mirror of Roman imperial domination. Case studies demonstrate the culturally productive and socially formative nature of martyr narratives. She concludes with a study of the massacre at Columbine High and the making of a redemptive narrative.



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- Cobb, L. Stephanie. *Dying to Be Men. Gender and Language in Early Christian Martyr Texts*. Gender, Theory, and Religion. New York, N.Y.; Chichester: Columbia University Press, 2008.  
Introduces identity construction, the making of Christian identities in the Roman world, and cultural appropriation of masculine ideals. In the construction of Christian social identities gladiatorial, athletic, and martial imagery in martyr acts were appropriated. She shows the masculinization of martyrdom as demonstration of virtue and the simultaneous masculinization and feminization of female martyrs. Conclusion on gender and language in the martyr texts.
- Moss, Candida R. *Ancient Christian Martyrdom: Diverse Practices, Theologies, and Traditions*. Anchor Yale Bible Reference Library. New Haven, Conn.; London: Yale University Press, 2012.  
Introduction on the difficulties of defining and understanding martyrdom; overview of the cultural contexts of martyrdom, perceptions of death in the Graeco-Roman world; five studies on different interpretations of martyrdom in Asia Minor (imitating Christ), North Africa (apocalyptic ascent), Rome (contesting philosophy), Gaul (victory), and Alexandria (true martyrdom).
- Moss, Candida R. *The Other Christs: Imitating Jesus in Ancient Christian Ideologies of Martyrdom*. Oxford; New York, N.Y.: Oxford University Press, 2012.  
Moss argues for the isotypy of martyrdom as imitation of Christ; participation in Christ's suffering; the martyr as a kind of Christ; martyr as a saviour figure; the heaven of the martyrs; martyr as divine heir.
- Perkins, Judith. *The Suffering Self: Pain and Narrative Representation in the Early Christian Era*. London; New York, N.Y.: Routledge, 1995.  
Perkins surveys various perceptions of death and suffering in the Graeco-Roman world: the perceptions of death as happy ending; on marriage as happy ending; the Stoic interpretation of pain and suffering; the martyr acts as subversive texts. She argues that Christian apocryphal literature witnesses to new social consciousness and constructions of new sites of power. Argues for the body as site of new social ideologies.
- Van Henten, Jan Willem, and Friedrich Avemarie. *Martyrdom and Noble Death: Selected Texts from Graeco-Roman, Jewish, and Christian Antiquity*. London; New York, N.Y.: Routledge, 2002.  
Sourcebook of noble death traditions: introduction on the concept of noble death in antiquity as model for Christian and rabbinic understandings of martyrdom; selected texts on noble death in Greek and Roman antiquity, in early Jewish sources, Christian literature on martyrdom from the first to third century C.E., martyrdom and noble death in rabbinic literature.

### Early Christian Body and Gender Discourse

One of the most prominent focuses of recent theory is the role of body and gender discourse as sites of construction of knowledge and power. The pervasiveness of body and gender in early Christian discourses is now a productive key to analyzing and understanding the cultural history of Christian origins. A core assumption is the social location is known in the body. The cultural turn in Late Ancient Studies implies the study of historiography as rhetorical and social discourse, gender and body languages as important arenas for the contest of power and authority, such is the argument of Martin and Cox Miller, eds. Brown is perhaps the classical work on the body as central focus in the mak-



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ing of Christian discourse, showing how early Christian discourse was essentially a body discourse and how the body is a socially productive agency. Glancy (*Corporal Knowledge*) argues that cultural habituation of bodies caused Christians of the first centuries to replicate hierarchical patterns of social relations prevalent in the Roman Empire. By framing questions about the function of corporal epistemology, Glancy offers new insights into bodies, identities, and early Christian understandings of what it means to be human. Leyerle argues that early Christian attitudes to sexuality were shaped by reacting to those cultural institutions that transmitted social values and discourses like ancient theatres and performances. Glancy (*Slavery*) focuses on dominated and controlled bodies as key characteristic of both the ancient world and as core metaphor for Christian discourse making. Not only did slavery persist inside Christian communities but it also functioned as a model in Christian thinking and practice of disciplining bodies. Harrill is a detailed study of the phenomenon of slavery in the ancient world and early Christian attitudes to it, as well as the pervasive practice of manumission, and practices of freeing slaves in early Christianity. An important facet of body discourse was that of bodily renunciation. Elm shows the development of ascetic discourse and practice with reference to two important settings, namely Asia Minor and Egypt. Schüssler Fiorenza and Nasrallah, eds., reflect on how race, gender, status, and ethnicity continue to constitute key categories for theorizing early Christian origins but also how they shaped, inflected, and informed scholarship on early Christianity.

Martin, Dale B., and Patricia Cox Miller, eds. *The Cultural Turn in Late Ancient Studies: Gender, Asceticism, and Historiography*. Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2005.

Collection of essays arranged in three parts ("Gender", "Asceticism", and "Historiography"). First part focuses on women and gendered language in various corpora of early Christian literature; Part two deals with aspects of asceticism, authority and power; Part three concerns historiography, the rhetoric of heresiology, the creation of a Christian epic, and the construction of Rome in early Christian tradition.

Brown, Peter Robert Lamont. *The Body and Society, Twentieth Anniversary Edition with a New Introduction*. Vol. 13, Lectures on the History of Religions, New Series (New York, N.Y.; Chichester: Columbia University Press, 1988).

Brown treats general topics in body discourses in early Christianity in an introductory section on the body in the city, sexual renunciation, martyrdom, Gnostic spirituality, perceptions of gender relations in Christianity, church and body. Then he deals with various aspects of desert traditions in Egypt and Syria, and the three big Latin church fathers, Ambrose, Jerome, and Augustine and their contribution to thinking about sexuality.

Glancy, Jennifer A. *Corporal Knowledge: Early Christian Bodies*. New York, N.Y.: Oxford University Press, 2010.

Argues for the nature of embodied knowledge drawing on the work of Maurice Merleau-Ponty, Pierre Bourdieu, and Linda Martín Alcoff, constructing the contours of a cultural history of early Christianity, illuminating Paul's use of the marked body as source of knowledge and power as well as the use of slavery metaphors in Christian discourse and the construction of sexual ethics.

Leyerle, Blake. *Theatrical Shows and Ascetic Lives: John Chrysostom's Attack on Spiritual Marriage*. Berkeley, Calif.; London: University of California Press, 2001.

A study of the late Antique theatre of Antioch and its role as transmitter of social values of pride, vainglory, and show as the context for the vehement discourse of John Chrysostom against this culture; drawing on the language and imagery of the theatre, Chrysostom argued



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against spiritual marriages, and Leyerle highlights Chrysostom's role in shaping early Christian attitudes to sexuality.

Glancy, Jennifer A. *Slavery in Early Christianity*. New York, N.Y.: Oxford University Press, 2002.

Glancy presents studies on aspects of slavery in early Christianity in the context of slaveholding and slavery discourse in Graeco-Roman antiquity, as a practice of dominated and exploited bodies. She describes the concrete lives of slaves in Christian households as well as the use metaphors of enslavement and setting free in Christian discourse. Glancy shows how slaveholder culture endured and shaped morality in early Christian discourse.

Harrill, James Albert. *The Manumission of Slaves in Early Christianity*. 2nd ed. Vol. 32. Hermeneutische Untersuchungen zur Theologie. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1998.

Introduction on social history and exegesis with a detailed overview of slavery in antiquity; exegesis of 1 Cor 7:21 on acquiring freedom, history of scholarship on the issue; the common chest in the ancient world to provide for manumission, associations and slave membership; Ignatius and the corporate manumission of slaves in early Christianity; conclusion on freedom from slavery.

Elm, Susanna. *Virgins of God: The Making of Asceticism in Late Antiquity*. Oxford Classical Monographs. New York, N.Y.: Oxford University Press, 1994.

Various studies arranged in two sections: Part one on Asia Minor deals with female ascetic life, the classical model for asceticism, variety of male and female ascetics, the demise of the homoiousian model; Part two deals with Egypt and treats desert mothers and virgins, the classical monastic model, asceticism as an urban phenomenon.

Schüssler Fiorenza, Elisabeth, and Laura Salah Nasrallah, eds. *Prejudice and Christian Beginnings: Investigating Race, Gender, and Ethnicity in Early Christian Studies*. Minneapolis, Minn.: Fortress Press, 2010.

The volume sets out the intersections of race, gender, status, and ethnicity in early Christianity in light of contemporary theory. The book then considers issues of race and ethnicity discourse in Early Christian Studies and gospel scholarship. In a rhetoric of inquiry investigates the traces of race theory, ethnicity and ethnoreligion in German Historical-Jesus scholarship and relates these issues to national ideologies, scripture, and race.

### Constructions of Authority/Imperial Christianity

It is now accepted that issues of authority construction in the formation of early Christianity are deeply embedded in the imperial discursive context that formed the matrix for the origins, development, and growth of Christian groups in the Roman Empire. Authority construction not only implied a rhetorical contest with respect to the exercise of power and influence in the making and definition of early Christian identities, but also manifests in the hierarchical stratification of early Christianity. Both phenomena are now understood as epiphenomena or discursive effects of the Roman imperial context in which Christianity took root. In fact, a number of studies on Christian origins, especially those listed under the last rubric in this entry ("Christian Origins") but also others, now argue that Christianity is an imperial product.



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Nasrallah shows how the rhetoric of madness and possession was a discourse on knowing the divine, the effort to control it and to establish authority and define Christian identity in the midst of many competing forms of Christianity.

In light of the rise of the papacy as emblematic of Christianity in late Antiquity, Sessa examines the cultural history of papal authority in late antiquity, arguing that Rome's bishops adopted the ancient elite household as a model of good government for leading the church. Central to this phenomenon was the classical and biblical figure of the steward, the householder's appointed agent who oversaw his property and people. As stewards of God, Roman bishops endeavored to exercise moral and material influence within both the pope's own administration and the households of Italy's clergy and lay elites.

Closer to the topic of the intersection of the Roman Empire and Christianity, Salzman investigates the conversion of Roman aristocratic elites and the effect this had on Christianity. Later Christian leaders came from the same social circles as the senatorial aristocracy and by virtue of social location and *paideia*, imported the same imperial discourse into their practice of Christian formation.

This issue is further explored by Elm, who compares the Roman emperor Julian (the Apostate) with Gregory of Nazianzus in the context of the Eastern Roman Empire. She shows how both subsist in the same political philosophy, namely Roman universalism, its divine legitimation and the authority to represent it.

Nasrallah, Laura Salah. *An Ecstasy of Folly: Prophecy and Authority in Early Christianity*. Vol. 52. Harvard Theological Studies. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2003.

Nasrallah describes the phenomenon of madness and ecstasy in antiquity, showing also Paul's rhetorical employment of the concept of ecstasy in arguments regarding revealed knowledge. She deals with Tertullian's anthropology and his positive evaluation of the "New Prophecy" as well as the negative labelling of "New Prophecy" in heresiologies. She argues that this study is significant for the wider conceptualization of Christian origins.

Sessa, Kristina. *The Formation of Papal Authority in Late Antique Italy: Roman Bishops and the Domestic Sphere*. New York, N.Y.: Cambridge University Press, 2012.

Sessa investigates the use of the model of the late Roman household to construct the authority of the bishop of Rome; studies the ideology of stewardship as ideal, episcopal householding in theory and practice, the impact of family lives on clerical offices, demarcation of episcopal authority in converted aristocratic households.

Salzman, Michele Renee. *The Making of a Christian Aristocracy: Social and Religious Change in the Western Roman Empire*. Cambridge, Mass.; London: Harvard University Press, 2004.

The paradox of Roman aristocratic elites adopting the "lowly" religion of the masses, Christianity, is described by Salzman, highlighted by a study of the senatorial aristocracy around the fourth century, the social origins and careers of senatorial aristocrats, including the role of aristocratic women, and the impact of the interaction between Christian emperor and aristocratic elites on Christianity.

Elm, Susanna. *Sons of Hellenism, Fathers of the Church: Emperor Julian, Gregory of Nazianzus, and the Vision of Rome*. Vol. 49. Transformation of the Classical Heritage. Berkeley, Calif.; London: University of California Press, 2012.



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Elm sets the interaction between Julian and Gregory in context, dealing with the formation of Julian as emperor, contrasting that to the political philosophy and rhetoric of Gregory. Elm describes the religious and ideological conflict between these two, and concludes with the “vision of Rome”, the divine legitimization of Rome’s universalism and the authority to represent it, representing the perspective of elite men.

### Women and / in Early Christianity

A strong focus on women in early Christianity, especially their role in the formation of Christian discourse and other leadership roles, is related to the prominence accorded to gender in the study of early Christianity. Not only is the ‘women/gender project’ a restorationist project – rediscovering and restoring women’s place in the making of Christianity as religious leaders, as significant agents in the formation of Christianity, and as tradents – but female scholarship tends to dominate the area of recent reflection on heterodox traditions like the Gospel of Mary (and Mary traditions in general) and the Gospel of Judas as well as in the use of discourse theory in theorizing early Christian tradition making and authority construction.

Schüssler Fiorenza is a classic work that in many respects set the agenda for the study of women in early Christianity. It offers a feminist-critical hermeneutics as theoretical framework to recover female agency in the New Testament writings and early Christianity.

Kraemer and D’Angelo, eds., is a collection of scholarly essays highlighting women and female agency in the ancient world and in early Christianity.

Torjesen analyzes the evidence for female leadership in the church as well as the process through which such roles were later inverted and made invisible. Streeter takes up the issue of female martyrs as the equivalent, and counterpart to, male divine men, showing how the narratives of female martyrs evince equal wonderworking qualities assigned to these women, showing how narratives of female martyrs encode developing social values and Christian discourse.

Osiek and MacDonald study the gendered nature of space in antiquity with regard to women in the household context, and how this spatiality shaped women’s lives in Christian household contexts, changing in the course of the first three centuries as the church gradually became a public institution. Women’s leadership roles became gradually occluded towards the fourth century.

Schüssler Fiorenza, Elisabeth. *In Memory of Her: a Feminist Theological Reconstruction of Christian Origins*. 2nd edition with new introduction. New York, N.Y.: Crossroad, 1983.

Argues for the need to recover the legacy of women and sets out a relevant methodology. Unearthing traces of gender equality in the earliest movements of Jesus followers and into the apostolic era, she shows how women were steadily subordinated in patriarchal households and the emerging church. Closes with reflection on a biblical-feminist spirituality.

Kraemer, Ross Shepard, and Mary Rose D’Angelo, eds. *Women and Christian Origins. A Reader*. New York, N.Y.: Oxford University Press, 1999.



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Selection of scholarly essays recovering women in antiquity and in early Christianity, arranged in five thematic sections: on women in the ancient Mediterranean world, on Mary Magdalene, and the representations of women in the various Gospels and gospel layers; on women in Pauline literature, and issues of gender; and on women in Gnostic traditions, women in ministry, and women as sources of religious knowledge.

Torjesen, Karen Jo. *When Women Were Priests: Women's Leadership in the Early Church and the Scandal of Their Subordination in the Rise of Christianity*. San Francisco, Calif.: HarperSanFrancisco, 1993. Torjesen investigates various aspects of – and evidence for – female leadership in early Christianity mapping the various functions and roles of women in early Christian groups. Shows how women were relegated to the private sphere of the household when the church became public in the context of exclusive male leadership via new gender valorization and cultured sexuality. Even images of god encoded cultural values of gender and sexuality.

Streete, Gail Corrington. *Redeemed Bodies: Women Martyrs in Early Christianity*. Louisville, Ky: Westminster John Knox Press, 2009.

Streete examines the character of female martyr narratives in early Christianity and their transmission in tradition. Considers the effect of martyr narratives with a close analysis of the traditions of Perpetua, Felicitas, and Thecla. Concluding chapter answers the question why these martyr narratives matter to contemporary Christianity.

Osiek, Carolyn, and Margaret Y. MacDonald. *A Woman's Place: House Churches in Earliest Christianity*. Minneapolis, Minn.: Fortress Press, 2006.

Argues for the contemporary significance of a revision of women's role in the making of early Christianity. Examines the spatiality of the lives of early Christian women in the context of Graeco-Roman households, how it shaped their lives. Special foci are the various domains in which women's lives played out, with a special focus on the neglected but important agency of women in the expansion of Christianity.

## Christian Origins

Most of the works listed under various rubrics in this bibliographic essay attempt to answer the question as to how Christianity originated and spread through the Roman Empire. However, under the rubric of Christian Origins are listed those works that explicitly theorize Christian origins by means of contemporary theories of religion, particularly social theories of religion, which include significant emphases on method and redescriptive scholarship, mythmaking, invention of tradition, and cultural identity making. The nature of the contents, theories, and conclusions expressed in some of the studies listed here, because of the unapologetic naturalistic explanations of Christian origins, led mostly to a contentious reception but they are nevertheless important resources on re-thinking Christian origins.

Riley, Macmullen and Cameron are somewhat independent of the other works listed here. Riley broadens the conception of Christian origins as linear development from a "Jewish background" to argue, in addition, for the productive contributions of the wider Graeco-Roman/Mediterranean world to the construction of Christian discourse. For this purpose he distinguishes between "his-



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tory” (self-narration or mythography) and “genealogy” (account of the factors contributing to the making of early Christianity).

Macmullen wrote a history of the making of Christianity from the viewpoint of popular religion and what conversion meant in that context. Cameron argued, in what has since become a classic and much-cited work, that there was from the early stages a reciprocal relation of influence between Christian discourse and imperial discourse. The representation of Christian truth was embedded in the general culture of the Roman Empire. In pursuing her argument she draws on a variety of contemporary theory – discourse theory, modern rhetoric, cultural studies, and so on.

Stark published a number of works explaining Christian origins from a sociological perspective. The work listed here received substantial attention for his quantifying of the growth of Christianity and the material conditions for that growth.

Mack is an influential figure among scholars predisposed to redescriptive theorizing of early Christianity. The work here exemplifies his use of a social theory of religion and reflections on mythmaking and social formation in explaining the making of Christianity as a natural human process.

The two works by Cameron and Miller, eds., are the culmination of multiyear projects that ran in the context of the Society of Biblical Literature. They are included here because of the strong emphasis on theory in service of redescription of Christian origins. While focusing on the earliest phases of the making of Christian tradition, they also significantly reflect on metatheoretical issues of historiography.

Riley, Gregory J. *The River of God: A New History of Christian Origins*. San Francisco, Calif.: HarperSan-Francisco, 2001.

Introduction on the difference between history and genealogy, history as self-narrative and genealogy as account of factors determining origins (the latter the stance of the book); Graeco-Roman/Mediterranean contributions to Christian discourse – monotheism, divine trinitities, demonology and apocalypticism, body discourses and practices, conceptions of saviours and salvation. Conclusion on the contemporary significance of multiple and varied “roots” of Christianity.

Macmullen, Ramsay. *Christianizing the Roman Empire: A.D. 100-400*. New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1984.

Focuses most prominently on popular and folk religion and the intersection between these and early Christianity; exposé of the multileveled process of Christianization with some discussion of the role of intellectuals, the newly Christianized Roman emperor, and ways of conversion.

Cameron, A. *Christianity and the Rhetoric of Empire: The Development of Christian Discourse*. Sather Classical Lectures, 55. Berkeley, Calif.; London: University of California Press, 1991.

Cameron focuses on Christian rhetoric as sets of representations of Christian beliefs and their relation the general cultural context as well as on its effective force and how its narrative world constructed the Christian world. In the way Christian discourse portrayed divinity and appropriated the Jewish and Graeco-Roman past, themes and styles it embraced imperial ideology, created new kinds of Christian cultural representations helped create a Christian worldview.



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Stark, Rodney. *The Rise of Christianity: A Sociologist Reconsiders History*. Princeton, N.J.; Chichester: Princeton Univ. Press, 1996.

Based on sociological theory and quantitative analysis, surveys the role of social networks, class growth, and women in the growth of Christianity and to explain the success of conversion. Concludes that central doctrines enabled better social relations and organizations.