

The First Urban Christians The Social World Of The Apostle Paul

By the time Christianity became a political and cultural force in the Roman Empire, it had come to embody a new moral vision. This wise and eloquent book describes the formative years--from the crucifixion of Jesus to the end of the second century of the common era--when Christian beliefs and practices shaped their unique moral order. Wayne A. Meeks examines the surviving documents from Christianity's beginnings (some of which became the New Testament) and shows that they are largely concerned with the way converts to the movement should behave. Meeks finds that for these Christians, the formation of morals means the formation of community; the documents are addressed not to individuals but to groups, and they have among their primary aims the maintenance and growth of these groups. Meeks paints a picture of the process of socialization that produced the early forms of Christian morality, discussing many factors that made the Christians feel that they were a single and "chosen" people. He describes, for example, the impact of conversion; the rapid spread of Christian household cult-associations in the cities of the Roman Empire; the language of Christian moral discourse as revealed in letters, testaments, and "moral stories"; the rituals, meetings, and institutionalization of charity; the Christians' feelings about celibacy, sex, and gender roles; and their sense of the end-time and final judgment. In each of these areas Meeks seeks to determine what is distinctive about the Christian viewpoint and what is similar to the moral components of Greco-Roman or Jewish thought.

This text analyses the earliest extant documents of Christianity, the letters of Paul, which illuminate the tensions & the texture of life of the first urban Christians. In a new introduction, the author describes the field of New Testament scholarship over the past two decades.

'A nuanced and sophisticated analysis... Exhilarating' Sunday Telegraph
Nine hundred years ago, one of the most controversial episodes in Christian history was initiated. The Pope stated that, in spite of the apparently pacifist message of the New Testament, God actually wanted European knights to wage a fierce and bloody war against Islam and recapture Jerusalem. Thus was the First Crusade born. Focusing on the characters that drove this extraordinary campaign, this fascinating period of history is recreated through awe-inspiring and often barbaric tales of bold adventure while at the same time providing significant insights into early medieval society, morality and mentality. The First Crusade marked a watershed in relations between Islam and the West, a conflict that set these two world religions on a course towards deep-seated animosity and enduring enmity. The chilling reverberations of this earth-shattering clash still echo in the world today. '[Asbridge] balances persuasive analysis with a flair for conveying with dramatic power the crusaders' plight' Financial Times

""Is it Hanukkah yet?"" ""Not yet. We have to wait for the sun to set!"" Families who celebrate Hanukkah will recognize this familiar refrain. And what better way to make the wait go faster than to read this sweet family story about how one very enthusiastic little girl awaits the holiday? Kids will find their favorite songs, games, and traditions in this early reader that captures the joy and warmth of the Festival of Lights.

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"Magisterial. . . . A learned, brilliant and enjoyable study."—Géza Vermès, Times Literary Supplement In this exciting book, Paula Fredriksen explains the variety of New Testament images of Jesus by exploring the ways that the new Christian communities interpreted his mission and message in light of the delay of the Kingdom he had preached. This edition includes an introduction reviews the most recent scholarship on Jesus and its implications for both history and theology. "Brilliant and lucidly written, full of original and fascinating insights."—Reginald H. Fuller, Journal of the American Academy of Religion "This is a first-rate work of a first-rate historian."—James D. Tabor, Journal of Religion "Fredriksen confronts her documents—principally the writings of the New Testament—as an archaeologist would an especially rich complex site. With great care she distinguishes the literary images from historical fact. As she does so, she explains the images of Jesus in terms of the strategies and purposes of the writers Paul, Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John."—Thomas D'Evelyn, Christian Science Monitor

A central figure in the reconception of early Christian history over the last three decades, Wayne A. Meeks offers here a selection of his most influential writings on the New Testament and early Christianity. His essays illustrate recent changes in our thinking about the early Christian movement and pose provocative questions regarding the history of this period. Meeks explores a fascinating range of topics, from the figure of the androgyne in antiquity to the timeless matter of God's reliability, from Paul's ethical rhetoric to New Testament pictures of Christianity's separation from Jewish communities. Meeks' introduction offers a retrospective on New Testament studies of the past thirty years and explains the intersection of these studies with a variety of exploratory and revisionist movements in the humanities, embracing social theory, history, anthropology, and literature. In an epilogue the author reflects on future directions for New Testament scholarship.

Analyzes the letters of the disciple Paul in order to discover what life was like for the early Christians in Antioch, Corinth, Ephesus, and Thessalonica

For many years now, the topic of the New Testament canon has been the main focus of my research and writing. It is an exciting field of study that probes into questions that have long fascinated both scholars and laymen alike, namely when and how these 27 books came to be regarded as a new scriptural deposit. But, the story of the New Testament canon is bigger than just the 'when' and the 'how'. It is also, and perhaps most fundamentally, about the 'why'. Why did Christians have a canon at all? Does the canon exist because of some later decision or action of the second- or third-century church? Or did it arise more naturally from within the early Christian faith itself? Was the canon an extrinsic phenomenon, or an intrinsic one? These are the questions this book is designed to address. And these are not micro questions, but macro ones. They address foundational and paradigmatic issues about the way we view the canon. They force us to consider the larger framework through which we conduct our research - whether we realized we had such a framework or not. Of course, we are not the first to ask such questions about why we have a canon. Indeed, for many scholars this question has already been settled. The dominant view today, as we shall see below, is that the New Testament is an extrinsic phenomenon; a later ecclesiastical development imposed on books originally written for another purpose. This is the framework through which much of modern scholarship operates. And it is the goal of this volume to ask

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whether it is a compelling one. To be sure, it is no easy task challenging the status quo in any academic field. But, we should not be afraid to ask tough questions. Likewise, the consensus position should not be afraid for them to be asked.

A fresh examination of early Christianity by an international team of New Testament and classical scholars Volume 5 of *The First Urban Churches* investigates the urban context of Christian churches in first-century Roman Colossae, Hierapolis, and Laodicea. Building on the methodologies introduced in the first volume and supplementing the in-depth studies of Corinth, Ephesus, and Philippi (vols. 2-4), essays in this volume challenge readers to reexamine preconceived understandings of the early church and to grapple with the meaning and context of Christianity in its first-century Roman colonial context. Features: Analysis of urban evidence found in inscriptions, papyri, archaeological remains, coins, and iconography Proposed reconstructions of the past and its social, religious, and political significance A nuanced, informed portrait of ancient urban life in the cities of the Lycus Valley

Meeks analyzes the letters of Paul to see what kind of people joined the Christian groups in the urban centers and what it was like to be a Christian then.

Beginning with Walter Bauer in 1934, the denial of clear orthodoxy in early Christianity has shaped and largely defined modern New Testament criticism, recently given new life through the work of spokesmen like Bart Ehrman. Spreading from academia into mainstream media, the suggestion that diversity of doctrine in the early church led to many competing orthodoxies is indicative of today's postmodern relativism. Authors Köstenberger and Kruger engage Ehrman and others in this polemic against a dogged adherence to popular ideals of diversity. Köstenberger and Kruger's accessible and careful scholarship not only counters the "Bauer Thesis" using its own terms, but also engages overlooked evidence from the New Testament. Their conclusions are drawn from analysis of the evidence of unity in the New Testament, the formation and closing of the canon, and the methodology and integrity of the recording and distribution of religious texts within the early church.

'After the First Urban Christians' introduces the groundbreaking volume 'The First Urban Christians' to a new generation of students, scholars, and even general readers.

A compelling account of Christianity's Jewish beginnings, from one of the world's leading scholars of ancient religion How did a group of charismatic, apocalyptic Jewish missionaries, working to prepare their world for the impending realization of God's promises to Israel, end up inaugurating a movement that would grow into the gentile church? Committed to Jesus's prophecy—"The Kingdom of God is at hand!"—they were, in their own eyes, history's last generation. But in history's eyes, they became the first Christians. In this electrifying social and intellectual history, Paula Fredriksen answers this question by reconstructing the life of the earliest Jerusalem community. As her account arcs

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from this group's hopeful celebration of Passover with Jesus, through their bitter controversies that fragmented the movement's midcentury missions, to the city's fiery end in the Roman destruction of Jerusalem, she brings this vibrant apostolic community to life. Fredriksen offers a vivid portrait both of this temple-centered messianic movement and of the bedrock convictions that animated and sustained it.

In the tradition of *The First Urban Christians* by Wayne Meeks, this book explores the relationship between the earliest Christians and the city environment. Experts in classics, early Christianity, and human geography analyze the growth, development, and self-understanding of the early Christian movement in urban settings. The book's contributors first look at how the urban physical, cultural, and social environments of the ancient Mediterranean basin affected the ways in which early Christianity progressed. They then turn to how the earliest Christians thought and theologized in their engagement with cities. With a rich variety of expertise and scholarship, *The Urban World and the First Christians* is an important contribution to the understanding of early Christianity.

Acts is the sequel to Luke's gospel and tells the story of Jesus's followers during the 30 years after his death. It describes how the 12 apostles, formerly Jesus's disciples, spread the message of Christianity throughout the Mediterranean against a background of persecution. With an introduction by P.D. James

Drawing on New Testament studies and recent scholarship on the expansion of the Christian church, Gary B. Ferngren presents a comprehensive historical account of medicine and medical philanthropy in the first five centuries of the Christian era. Ferngren first describes how early Christians understood disease. He examines the relationship of early Christian medicine to the natural and supernatural modes of healing found in the Bible. Despite biblical accounts of demonic possession and miraculous healing, Ferngren argues that early Christians generally accepted naturalistic assumptions about disease and cared for the sick with medical knowledge gleaned from the Greeks and Romans. Ferngren also explores the origins of medical philanthropy in the early Christian church. Rather than viewing illness as punishment for sins, early Christians believed that the sick deserved both medical assistance and compassion. Even as they were being persecuted, Christians cared for the sick within and outside of their community. Their long experience in medical charity led to the creation of the first hospitals, a singular Christian contribution to health care. "A succinct, thoughtful, well-written, and carefully argued assessment of Christian involvement with medical matters in the first five centuries of the common era... It is to Ferngren's credit that he has opened questions and explored them so astutely. This fine work looks forward as well as backward; it invites fuller reflection of the many senses in which medicine and religion intersect and merits wide readership."— *Journal of the American Medical Association* "In this superb work of historical and conceptual scholarship, Ferngren unfolds for the reader a cultural milieu of healing practices during the

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early centuries of Christianity."— Perspectives on Science and Christian Faith "Readable and widely researched... an important book for mission studies and American Catholic movements, the book posits the question of what can take its place in today's challenging religious culture."— Missiology: An International Review Gary B. Ferngren is a professor of history at Oregon State University and a professor of the history of medicine at First Moscow State Medical University. He is the author of *Medicine and Religion: A Historical Introduction* and the editor of *Science and Religion: A Historical Introduction*.

For nearly three hundred years, early Christians met almost exclusively in private homes initially built only for domestic use. In this study, Roger Gehring investigates the missional significance of house churches from the time of Jesus through Paul in light of both theological and socio-historical considerations. All church structures take shape in the tension between preestablished theological requirements and the concrete social situation. Even in the New Testament, the emergence of separate house churches involved the potential danger of splintering the Christian movement. Nevertheless their essential family-based foundation has proven to be the life-generating cell and fundamental core of the missional church. The development of early Christian ethics, the emergence of leadership structures, and the growth of ecclesiological concepts were all noticeably influenced by the households in which believers lived and gathered. In the last twenty-five years the house church phenomenon has generated a great deal of interest among New Testament scholars and church practitioners. Research has focused primarily on the architecture of these homes and on its corresponding social and theological implications. *House Church and Mission* offers scholars the first comprehensive summary of evidence concerning home churches in the New Testament and supplies pastors and lay leaders with a well-crafted discussion of the nature of "church" that explores the practical implications of house churches on outreach.

China's Urban Christians: A Light at Cannot Be Hidden looks at how massive urbanization is redrawing not only the geographic and social landscape of China, but in the process is transforming China's growing church as well. The purpose of this book is to explore how Christians in China perceive the challenges posed by their new urban context and to examine their proposed means of responding to these challenges. Although not primarily political in nature, these challenges nonetheless illustrate the complex interplay between China's Christian community and the Chinese party-state as it comes to terms with the continued growth and increasing prominence of Christianity in modern China.

This small book, the last work of a world-renowned scholar, has established itself as a classic. It provides a superb overview of the vast historical process by which Christianity was Hellenized and Hellenic civilization became Christianized. Werner Jaeger shows that without the large postclassical expansion of Greek culture the rise of a Christian world religion would have been impossible. He explains why the Hellenization of Christianity was necessary in apostolic and postapostolic times; points out similarities between Greek philosophy and Christian belief; discuss such key figures as Clement, Origen, and Gregory of Nyssa; and touches on the controversies that led to the ultimate complex synthesis of Greek and Christian thought.

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Christian's Quest is a fresh retelling of the classic allegory, Little Pilgrim's Progress. Christian is on an epic quest from the City of Destruction to the Celestial City. The road is long and difficult, and many interesting characters show up along the way. Some of his companions help Christian and encourage him in his quest, while others try to point him back to the City of Destruction. Will Christian make it to the Celestial City? Join Christian in this adventure-filled quest to find out... Christian's Quest comes loaded with helpful features: discussion questions, an appendix of unfamiliar words, an allegorical key, and realistic black and white ink illustrations throughout. These tools ensure that each person joining Christian in his quest will have all he or she needs to understand the story behind the story—the Gospel message in all of its relevance to our everyday lives.

Describes the social setting of the early Christians, looks at the Greek and Roman ethical traditions, and explains the moral formation of the beginning Christian movement

Social historian and pastor Joe Hellerman addresses issues of power and authority in the church—in the New Testament and in the church today—in a fresh, culturally nuanced way. The local church, Hellerman maintains, should be led and taught by a community of leaders who relate to one another first as brothers and sisters in Christ, and who function only secondarily—and only within the parameters of that primary relational context—as vision-casting, decision-making leaders for the broader church family. Unique among contemporary treatments of servant leadership, Hellerman interprets the biblical materials against the background of ancient Roman cultural values, in order to demonstrate a social context for ministry that will provide healthy checks and balances on the use of pastoral power and authority in our congregations.

This "fresh, blunt, and highly persuasive account of how the West was won—for Jesus" (Newsweek) is now available in paperback. Stark's provocative report challenges conventional wisdom and finds that Christianity's astounding dominance of the Western world arose from its offer of a better, more secure way of life. "Compelling reading" (Library Journal) that is sure to "generate spirited argument" (Publishers Weekly), this account of Christianity's remarkable growth within the Roman Empire is the subject of much fanfare. "Anyone who has puzzled over Christianity's rise to dominance...must read it." says Yale University's Wayne A. Meeks, for *The Rise of Christianity* makes a compelling case for startling conclusions. Combining his expertise in social science with historical evidence, and his insight into contemporary religion's appeal, Stark finds that early Christianity attracted the privileged rather than the poor, that most early converts were women or marginalized Jews—and ultimately "that Christianity was a success because it proved those who joined it with a more appealing, more assuring, happier, and perhaps longer life" (Andrew M. Greeley, University of Chicago).

A lively and accessible guide to the rich literary, philosophical and artistic achievements of the notorious age of Nero.

Scholars of early Christianity are awakening to the potential of Pompeii's treasures for casting light on the settings and situations that were commonplace and conventional for the first urban Christians. The uncovered world of Pompeii, destroyed by the eruption of Mount Vesuvius in 79 C.E., allows us to peer back in time, capturing a heightened sense of what life was like on the ground in the first century – the very time when the early Jesus-movement was beginning to find its feet. In light of the Vesuvian material remains, historians are beginning to ask fresh

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questions of early Christian texts and perceive new contours, nuances, and subtleties within the situations those texts address. The essays of this book explore different dimensions of Pompeii's potential to refine our lenses for interpreting the texts and situations of early Christianity. The contributors to this book (including Carolyn Osiek, David Balch, Peter Oakes, Bruce Longenecker, and others) demonstrate that it is an exciting time to explore the interface between the Vesuvian contexts and the early Jesus-movement.

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First Corinthians provides a unique glimpse into the life of a young Christian community in a Greco-Roman environment during the early decades of emerging Christianity. It supplies a range and richness of information about the early church that is unparalleled by any other New Testament document. Much effort has gone into reconstructing Christianity at Corinth; more recently, attention has focused on the Corinthian community itself. The scholarly picture of the Corinthian Christians throughout the period of modern interpretation has been far from constant, and their profile has altered as interpretive fashions have shifted. This collection of classic and new essays charts the history of the scholarly quest for the Corinthian church from F. C. Baur to the present day, and offers the reflections of leading scholars on where the quest has taken us and its future direction.

The First Urban Christians The Social World of the Apostle Paul Yale University Press

No. 3 in the 2002 Academy of Parish Clergy Top Ten Books of the Year! Cities--the anvil of civilization, the center of power, the metaphor for society itself--have been with us for thousands of years. Here converge piety and trade, security and politics. Yet just two hundred years ago only 3 percent of the world's population lived in cities. Today half does. Despite this tremendous explosion of urban growth, the work of the church has generally lagged behind. The city presents serious challenges that cry out for answers: poverty, racism, human exploitation and government corruption. How can the church move ahead in the midst of these demands with the gospel of hope? Here, in one comprehensive volume, Harvie Conn and Manuel Ortiz, two noted scholars and proven practitioners of urban ministry, address the vital work of the church in the city. Their dual goal: to understand the city and God's work in it. Through four great waves of development, Conn and Ortiz trace the history of the city around the world. Then they tackle the critical issue of a biblical basis for urban mission. How does the Bible view the city? Are we closer to God in the country than the city? Does the Bible have an anti-urban bias? These questions are given a thorough analysis that unveils God's urban mandate as reflected in both Old and New Testaments. From this foundation the authors unpack the multifaceted nature of the city as place, as process, as center, as power, and as a place of change and stability. They move us beyond fragmented stereotypes to a new way of seeing that is holistic enough for a fully biblical ministry to develop. In addition, Conn and Ortiz lay out what the social sciences have to offer urban mission, including ethnographic and demographic studies. While showing how such studies have identified unreached cities and unreached groups within cities, they do not become captive to research but demonstrate how to keep kingdom priorities in view. Finally, Urban Ministry focuses on the essential element of leadership. While there are many books on the topic, little has been said about the particular issues and needs of urban leadership. Therefore, the authors give significant attention to developing and mentoring leaders while equipping the laity for ministry in the city. This is the essential text for bringing God's kingdom to the city through the people of God.

"Jennifer A. Glancy brings a multilayered approach to these and many other issues, offering a comprehensive reexamination of the evidence pertaining to slavery in early Christianity."--Jacket.

This book explores the relationship between the earliest Christians and the city environment, analyzing the growth, development, and self-

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understanding of the early Christian movement in urban settings. It looks at how the urban physical, cultural, and social environments of the ancient Mediterranean basin affected the ways in which early Christianity progressed, and then turns to how the earliest Christians thought and theologized in their engagement with cities.

Early Christian World presents an exhaustive, erudite and lavishly illustrated treatment of how the small movement which formed around Jesus in Galilee became the pre-eminent religion of the ancient world. The work begins by firmly situating early Christianity within its Mediterranean social, political and religious contexts, before charting the history of the first Christian centuries. The creation and perpetuation of Christian communities through various means, including mission and monasticism, is explored, as is the everyday experience of early Christians, through discussion of gender and sexuality, religious practice, communication and social structures. The intellectual (particularly theological) and artistic heritage of the period is fully considered, and a vivid picture painted of the internal and external challenges faced by early Christianity. The book concludes with profiles of the most notable figures of the age. Comprehensive and accessible, Early Christian World provides up-to-date coverage of the most important topics in the study of early Christianity, together with an invaluable collection of visual material. It will be an indispensable resource for anyone studying this period

This book adopts an inter-disciplinary approach to the study of the theology, symbolism and argument of Hebrews. Employing sociological models, the book examines Hebrews in the context of the early Christians' construction and maintenance of a social world. In that respect, the book elaborates the thesis that Hebrews was designed to serve a legitimating function in the realm of social interaction, that its theology, symbolism and argument were designed to construct and maintain the symbolic universe of the community of the readers. It is argued that we cannot properly understand the theology, symbolism and argument of Hebrews apart from its first-century context.

A comparative examination and interpretation of religious violence in the Graeco-Roman world and Late Antiquity.

Lynn Cohick provides an accurate and fulsome picture of the earliest Christian women by examining a wide variety of first-century Jewish and Greco-Roman documents that illuminate their lives. She organizes the book around three major spheres of life: family, religious community, and society in general. Cohick shows that although women during this period were active at all levels within their religious communities, their influence was not always identified by leadership titles nor did their gender always determine their level of participation. The book corrects our understanding of early Christian women by offering an authentic and descriptive historical picture of their lives. Includes black-and-white illustrations from the ancient world.

This book sheds new light on the religious and consequently social changes taking place in late antique Rome. The essays in this volume argue that the once-dominant notion of pagan-Christian religious conflict cannot fully explain the texts and artifacts, as well as the social, religious, and political realities of late antique Rome. Together, the essays demonstrate that the fourth-century city was a more fluid, vibrant, and complex place than was previously thought. Competition between diverse groups in Roman society - be it pagans with Christians, Christians with Christians, or pagans with pagans - did create tensions and hostility, but it also allowed for coexistence and reduced the likelihood of overt violent, physical conflict. Competition and coexistence, along with conflict, emerge as still central paradigms for those who seek to understand the transformations of Rome from the age of

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Constantine through the early fifth century.

It has been widely assumed that there were 6 million Christians (or 10% of the population of the Roman Empire) by around the year 300. The largely-unexamined consensus view is also that Christianity was an urban movement until the conversion of Emperor Constantine. On close examination, it appears that these two popular views would nearly saturate every urban area of the entire Roman Empire with Christians, leaving no room for Jews or pagans. In *Who Were the First Christians?*, Thomas Robinson shows that scenario simply does not work. But where does the solution lie? Were there many fewer Christians in the Roman world than we have thought? Was the Roman world much more urbanized? Or, is the urban thesis defective, so that the neglected countryside must now be considered in any reconstruction of early Christian growth? Further, what was the makeup of the typical Christian congregation? Was it a lower-class movement? Or was it a movement of the upwardly mobile middle-class? Arguing that more attention needs to be given to the countryside and to the considerable contingent of the marginal and the rustic within urban populations, this revisionist work argues persuasively that the urban thesis should be dismantled or profoundly revised and the growth and the complexion of the early Christian movement seen in a substantially different light.

In the past twenty-five years, New Testament scholars have drawn on the social sciences, especially anthropology and sociology, to develop a variety of new perspectives on early Christianity. David Horrell here gathers together the classic works in this field, including essays by, for example, John Barclay, Philip Esler, Wayne Meeks, Luise Schottroff and Gerd Theissen. For each selection, David Horrell provides a short introduction and suggestions for further reading. He also provides an introduction outlining the development and future prospects of the discipline. An excellent reference and textbook for scholars and students.

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