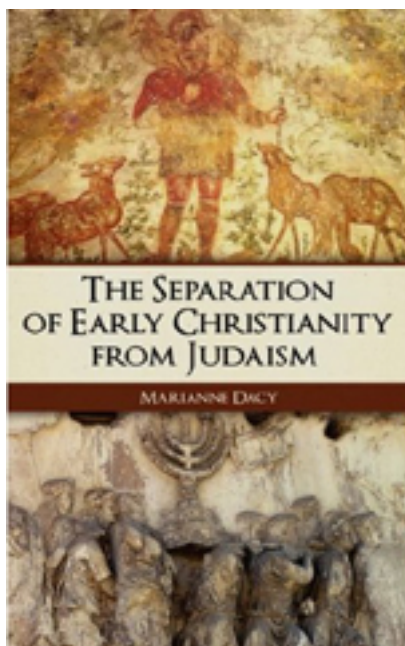


The Separation of Early Christianity from Judaism

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Book review: Marianne Dacy: The Separation of Early Christianity from Judaism.



There exists a plethora of literature on the relationship between early Christianity and Judaism, but these studies focus on one or two issues. In the tradition of James Parkes, whose 1930 study of the break between the Church and the Synagogue remains a classic, this book takes on the larger relationship and shows how the separation evolved over time. Rather than pinpointing a specific date for the break, the study broadens the context and looks at the wider issues, showing that separation took several centuries.

In the wake of the Holocaust and in seeking to understand how the relationship between Judaism and Christianity deteriorated over the course of two millennia, this book examines the origins of the conflict. In seeking to cast new light on the separation of early Christianity from Judaism, a number of documented areas that are often treated separately by authors have been examined in order to uncover evidence for the separation.

The book covers an enormous amount of material on the relationship between early Christianity and Judaism, but presents this in a highly accessible manner, clearly showing how the separation between the two emerged over time. It also reveals the ways they continued to be related. The author pinpoints two pervasive issues that impelled the separation: the relationship of the early church to Jewish law and the increasing divinization of Jesus.

The work has been organized into nine areas of separation. The introduction sets the scene by pointing out the difficulty presented by the source material and leads into chapter 1, which looks at the geographical evidence, early Christian organization, and the development of centralization with the rise of the papacy. A map and tables have been helpfully constructed to show the relationships between Christian and Jewish populations. The reasons for the failure of the Jewish-Christian movement are studied in chapter 2, and these reveal the

ambiguities within the relationship. In seeking to be both Christian and Jewish, to follow Jewish law, and believe in the divinity of Jesus, the Jewish Christians found themselves isolated and accepted by neither group. Chapter 3 examines statements about Jews in the early church council documents. The fourth chapter studies the Theodosian Code and the laws concerning Jews, pointing out the gradual erosion of Jewish privileges with the rise of Christianity as well as the attempts to separate Christians from Jewish practices. Chapter 5 treats the church's efforts to separate the Sabbath from Sunday and the question of imperial motives behind the move to make Sunday a day of rest. The sixth chapter examines the Jewish roots of Christian liturgy and notes the developing christological focus. The seventh chapter provides a close study of the struggle to separate the date of Passover from Easter, the latter replacing Passover as the most important feast in Christianity. The question as to whether the Eucharist can be described as Passover meal is raised by an examination of the New Testament sources. Chapter 8 looks at what can be revealed from archaeology about separation, looking at material from Syracuse, Sicily, and Rome. Chapter 9 notes the few remarks that appear to be about Christianity in the rabbinic sources and their significance. An extensive bibliography is also helpfully provided.

The Separation of Early Christianity from Judaism is essential for the shelves of academic institutions and public libraries, and it will also be a helpful supplement to the libraries both of scholars and Christian and Jewish religious leaders.

About the Author

Marianne Dacy is a Sister of Sion and secretary of the Australian Council of Christians and Jews. She also runs the Archive of Australian Judaica at the University of Sydney. She is editor of Pathways to Understanding, coeditor of Feasts and Fasts: A Festschrift in Honour of Alan David Crown, and author of Feasts and Fasts: The Jewish Roots of Christian Feasts in addition to numerous published articles. Dr. Dacy studied at Melbourne University and the Hebrew University and holds an MPhil and PhD from Sydney University, in addition to a post-graduate diploma of librarianship from the North London Polytechnic.

Marianne Dacy: The Separation of Early Christianity from Judaism.

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