

STUDIES OF THE NEW TESTAMENT AND ITS WORLD

# THE RELIGIOUS CONTEXT OF EARLY CHRISTIANITY



A GUIDE TO GRAECO-ROMAN RELIGIONS

HANS-JOSEF KLAUCK

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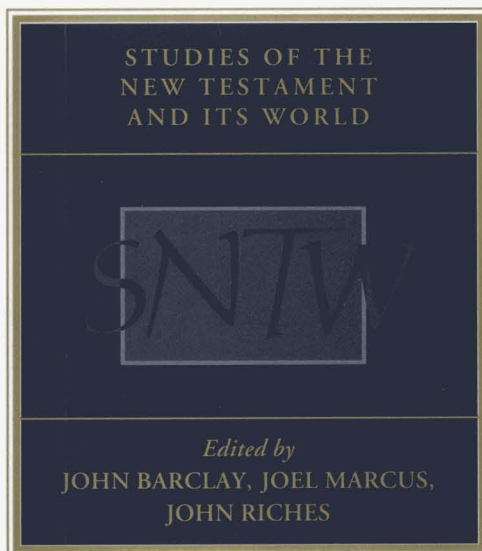
HANS-JOSEF KLAUCK

*Translated by Brian McNeil*

**T**his is a uniquely well-informed and comprehensive guide to the world of religion in the Graeco-Roman environment of early Christianity.

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A valuable textbook for advanced students, as well as an authoritative reference work for scholars.



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*Studies of the New Testament  
and Its World*

*Edited by*  
JOHN BARCLAY  
JOEL MARCUS  
*and*  
JOHN RICHES



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## Preface

Let us for a moment suppose that modern Europe were to witness the believers abandoning the Christian churches in order to venerate Allah or Brahma, to observe the commandments of Confucius or Buddha, to accept the fundamental principles of Shintoism; let us imagine a great congeries of all the races of the world, with Arabic mullahs, Chinese literary scholars, Japanese bonzes, Tibetan lamas, Hindu pandits preaching at one and the same time fatalism and predestination, the cult of ancestors and the adoration of the divinised ruler, pessimism and redemption through self-annihilation, while all these priests built temples in foreign styles in our cities and celebrated their various rites in them – this dream (which the future may perhaps one day see realised) would give us a rather accurate picture of the religious confusion which characterised the ancient world of Constantine.

(F. Cumont, *Die orientalischen Religionen im römischen Heidentum*, reprint Darmstadt 1975, 178f.)

It almost seems as if Franz Cumont, the great Belgian historian of Hellenistic-Roman religion, had developed prophetic gifts alongside all his other talents, when he wrote these lines at the beginning of our century. Now that we have reached the end of the century, we find ourselves confronted by the slogan of the 'multicultural' society, which will always be a multireligious society too. Against this background, it is even easier to draw the analogy which Cumont drew: early Christianity too sought its path in a multireligious world, and if we are to achieve a correct understanding of the literary bequest of early Christianity, it is absolutely necessary to know the outlines of that world.

The following presentation has a modest goal, namely to give students of theology the necessary information in this field. It concentrates on the Graeco-Roman sphere; it does not deal with Judaism, with which Christianity has a quite different (because much closer) relationship. The Introduction gives more detailed orientation about the goal, the criteria of selection and methodological questions. Here I should like only to observe that I have taken a conscious decision in favour of an illustrative style of work that is problem- and text-oriented. This means that in dubious cases, I have preferred not to discuss a possible theme, but rather to present and discuss in detail individual instructive texts. For this reason, I consistently refer to bilingual editions that are readily accessible, and to collections of texts and anthologies which provide the stimulus to the student's own further work along these paths.

One of my main problems has been how to deal with the voluminous secondary literature. My guiding principle has been to cite the older and important works, including many 'classics', and modern works which indicate the present state of scholarship. I myself am more painfully aware than anyone else of how fragmentary all this remains in the face of an immeasurable field of possibilities.

This book was written in German, when I was professor of New Testament exegesis at the University of Würzburg. It appeared in two volumes in 1995 and 1996 as part of a series of theological textbooks, and students and colleagues alike soon (to my surprise) acclaimed it as very helpful. In his kind review, Hans Dieter Betz wrote: 'Translated, revised and adapted for the English-speaking readership, this work would make an enormously valuable tool for all those who are fascinated by the study of early Christianity in the context of the Graeco-Roman culture but who presently lack a comprehensive and detailed summary of the current state of research' (*JBL* 116 [1997] 359). At that time, the planning of the English edition was already under way, but considerable time and effort were required before this could appear. The present book is in effect not only a translation, but a revised and updated edition of the original work.

The main bulk of the task was of course the translation itself (see below), but besides that, copious new references were added to editions of classical texts indicating translations into English, which it is hoped will considerably enhance the usefulness of the book to English-speaking readers. The secondary literature has been brought up to date, including new titles from 1995–8 and some from 1999. Mistakes noted by readers and reviewers of the German edition had to be corrected, and the original two volumes have been combined into a single volume, necessitating a reorganisation of the bibliographies and the index. Another factor was my own move from Würzburg to Munich, where I succeeded my teacher Joachim Gnllka as professor. Living for some time surrounded by boxes of books does not facilitate work like this!

I am grateful to all those who helped launch this work in the English language, above all to the editors of 'Studies of the New Testament and Its World' for accepting my book for their distinguished series. Especial thanks are due to John Barclay, who gave the decisive impetus and helped with the adaptation of the bibliography, and to the staff of the renowned Scottish publisher T&T Clark for taking the risk involved in the publication of a long academic book. But above all, my biggest thanks are due to my translator, Brian McNeil (who incidentally lives in the same German town as I do). He has done a marvellous job in putting into perfectly readable English a German text which is very compressed, and therefore sometimes complicated. Once again he has fulfilled the task of bridge-builder between the German-speaking and the English-speaking theological worlds.

*Munich, May 1999*

H.-J.K.



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## Abbreviations

### 1. Primary Sources

Aeschylus,	<i>Ag.</i> <i>Prom.</i>	<i>Agamemnon</i> <i>Prometheus Bound</i>
Ambrosiaster,	<i>Quaest. VNT</i>	<i>Quaestiones Veteris et Novi Testamenti</i>
Apollodorus,	<i>Bibl.</i>	<i>Bibliotheca</i>
Appian,	<i>Bell. Civ.</i>	<i>Bellum Civile</i>
Apuleius,	<i>Apol.</i> <i>Flor.</i> <i>Met.</i>	<i>Apologia</i> <i>Florida</i> <i>Metamorphoses</i>
Aelius Aristides,	<i>Or.</i>	<i>Orationes</i>
Aristophanes,	<i>Ach.</i> <i>Pl.</i> <i>Ra.</i>	<i>Acharnians</i> <i>Plutus</i> <i>Ranae (Frogs)</i>
Aristotle,	<i>Eth. Nic.</i> <i>Pol.</i>	<i>Nicomachean Ethics</i> <i>Politics</i>
Arnobius,	<i>Adv. Nat.</i>	<i>Adversus Nationes</i>
Artemidorus,	<i>Oneirocr.</i>	<i>Oneirocriticon (Interpretation of Dreams)</i>
Athenaeus,	<i>Deipnosoph.</i>	<i>Deipnosophistae</i>
Catullus,	<i>Carm.</i>	<i>Carmina</i>
Cicero,	<i>Att.</i> <i>Divin.</i> <i>Dom.</i> <i>Fam.</i> <i>Nat. Deor.</i> <i>Phil.</i> <i>Quint. Fratr.</i> <i>Rep.</i> <i>Tusc.</i>	<i>Ad Atticum</i> <i>De Divinatione</i> <i>De Domo Sua</i> <i>Ad Familiares</i> <i>De Natura Deorum</i> <i>Philippics</i> <i>Ad Quintum Fratrem</i> <i>De Re Publica</i> <i>Tusculan Disputations</i>
Clement,	<i>Exc. Theod.</i>	<i>Excerpta ex Theodoto</i>

	<i>Protr.</i>	<i>Protrepticus</i>
Demosthenes,	<i>Or.</i>	<i>Orationes</i>
Dio Chrysostom,	<i>Or.</i>	<i>Orationes</i>
Diogenes Laertius,	<i>Vit. Phil.</i>	<i>Lives of the Philosophers</i>
Dionysius,	<i>Ant. Rom.</i>	<i>Antiquitates Romanae</i>
Epictetus,	<i>Diss.</i>	<i>Dissertationes</i>
	<i>Ench.</i>	<i>Encheiridion</i>
Euripides,	<i>Alc.</i>	<i>Alcestis</i>
	<i>Ba.</i>	<i>Bacchae</i>
	<i>Hel.</i>	<i>Helen</i>
	<i>Hipp.</i>	<i>Hippolytus</i>
	<i>Iph. Taur.</i>	<i>Iphigeneia in Tauris</i>
Eusebius,	<i>Hist. Eccl.</i>	<i>Historia Ecclesiastica</i>
Firminus	<i>Err. Prof. Rel.</i>	<i>Errores Profanarum Religionum</i>
Maternus,		
Gen		Genesis
Herodotus,	<i>Hist.</i>	<i>Histories</i>
Hesiod,	<i>Op.</i>	<i>Opera et Dies</i>
	<i>Theog.</i>	<i>Theogonia</i>
Hippolytus,	<i>Ref.</i>	<i>Refutation of All Heresies</i>
Homer,	<i>Il.</i>	<i>Iliad</i>
	<i>Od.</i>	<i>Odyssey</i>
Hom. Hymn Dem.		Homeric Hymn to Demeter
Horace,	<i>Ars Poet.</i>	<i>Ars Poetica</i>
	<i>Ep.</i>	<i>Epistulae</i>
	<i>Sat.</i>	<i>Satires</i>
Ignatius,	<i>Eph.</i>	<i>To the Ephesians</i>
Irenaeus,	<i>Adv. Haer.</i>	<i>Adversus Haereses</i>
Jerome,	<i>Ep.</i>	<i>Epistulae</i>
Josephus,	<i>Ant.</i>	<i>Antiquitates Judaicae</i>
	<i>Ap.</i>	<i>Contra Apionem</i>
	<i>Bell.</i>	<i>Bellum Judaicum</i>
	<i>Vit.</i>	<i>Vita</i>
Juvenal,	<i>Sat.</i>	<i>Satires</i>
Livy,	<i>Urb. Cond.</i>	<i>Ab Urbe Condita</i>
Lucian,	<i>Alex.</i>	<i>Alexander</i>
	<i>Philops.</i>	<i>Philopseudes (Lover of Lies)</i>
Lucretius,	<i>Rer. Nat.</i>	<i>De Rerum Natura</i>
Macc (1, 2, 3, 4)		Maccabees (1, 2, 3, 4)

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ABBREVIATIONS

Origen,	<i>C. Cels.</i>	<i>Contra Celsum</i>
Ovid,	<i>Met.</i>	<i>Metamorphoses</i>
Pausanias,	<i>Graec. Descr.</i>	<i>Graeciae Descriptio</i>
Petronius,	<i>Sat.</i>	<i>Satyricon</i>
Philo,	<i>Abr.</i>	<i>De Abrahamo</i>
	<i>Decal.</i>	<i>De Decalogo</i>
	<i>Flacc.</i>	<i>In Flaccum</i>
	<i>Leg. Gai.</i>	<i>Legatio ad Gaium</i>
	<i>Spec. Leg.</i>	<i>De Specialibus Legibus</i>
Philostratus,	<i>Vit. Ap.</i>	<i>Vita Apollonii</i>
Pindar,	<i>Pyth.</i>	<i>Pythia</i>
Plato,	<i>Alcib.</i>	<i>Alcibiades</i>
	<i>Apol.</i>	<i>Apologia</i>
	<i>Charmid.</i>	<i>Charmides</i>
	<i>Euthyphr.</i>	<i>Euthyphro</i>
	<i>Leg.</i>	<i>Leges</i>
	<i>Phaed.</i>	<i>Phaedo</i>
	<i>Phaedr.</i>	<i>Phaedrus</i>
	<i>Polit.</i>	<i>Politicus</i>
	<i>Resp.</i>	<i>Respublica (The Republic)</i>
	<i>Symp.</i>	<i>Symposion</i>
Pliny (elder),	<i>Hist. Nat.</i>	<i>Naturalis Historia</i>
Pliny (younger),	<i>Ep.</i>	<i>Epistulae</i>
Plotinus,	<i>Enn.</i>	<i>Enneads</i>
Plutarch,	<i>Alc.</i>	<i>Alcibiades</i>
	<i>Alex.</i>	<i>Alexander</i>
	<i>Amat.</i>	<i>Amatorius Liber</i>
	<i>Aristid.</i>	<i>Aristides</i>
	<i>Cons. Uxor.</i>	<i>Consolatio ad Uxorem</i>
	<i>Def. Orac.</i>	<i>De Defectu Oraculorum</i>
	<i>E ap. Delph.</i>	<i>De E apud Delphos</i>
	<i>Fac. Orb. Lun.</i>	<i>De Facie in Orbe Lunae</i>
	<i>Gen. Socr.</i>	<i>De Genio Socratis</i>
	<i>Is. et Os.</i>	<i>De Iside et Osiride</i>
	<i>Lys.</i>	<i>Lysias</i>
	<i>Pomp.</i>	<i>Pompeius</i>
	<i>Pyth. Or.</i>	<i>De Pythiae Oraculis</i>
	<i>Quaest. Conv.</i>	<i>Quaestiones Conviviales</i>
	<i>Sept. Sap. Conv.</i>	<i>Septem Sapientium Convivium</i>

	<i>Ser. Num. Vind.</i>	<i>De Sera Numinis Vindicta</i>
	<i>Suav. Viv. Epic.</i>	<i>Non Posse Suaviter Vivi secundum Epicurum</i>
	<i>Thes.</i>	<i>Theseus</i>
	<i>Tit.</i>	<i>Titus</i>
Porphry,	<i>Abst.</i>	<i>De Abstinencia</i>
	<i>Ant. Nymph.</i>	<i>De Antro Nympharum</i>
Ps		Psalm(s)
Ps.-Lucian	<i>Astrol.</i>	<i>De Astrologia</i>
Ps Sol		Psalms of Solomon
Seneca,	<i>Ben.</i>	<i>De Beneficiis</i>
	<i>Brev. Vit.</i>	<i>De Brevitate Vitae</i>
	<i>Cons. Marc.</i>	<i>Consolatio ad Marciam</i>
	<i>Ep.</i>	<i>Epistulae</i>
	<i>Oed.</i>	<i>Oedipus</i>
	<i>Tranq. An.</i>	<i>De Tranquillitate Animi</i>
	<i>Vit. Beat.</i>	<i>De Vita Beata</i>
Sib		Sibylline Oracles
Sir		(Jesus ben) Sirach
Stobaeus,	<i>Ecl.</i>	<i>Eclogae</i>
Suetonius,	<i>Aug.</i>	<i>Augustus</i>
	<i>Calig.</i>	<i>Caligula</i>
	<i>Claud.</i>	<i>Claudius</i>
	<i>Div. Jul.</i>	<i>Divus Julius</i>
	<i>Dom.</i>	<i>Domitian</i>
	<i>Tib.</i>	<i>Tiberius</i>
	<i>Vesp.</i>	<i>Vespasian</i>
	<i>Vitell.</i>	<i>Vitellius</i>
Tacitus,	<i>Ann.</i>	<i>Annales</i>
	<i>Hist.</i>	<i>Historiae</i>
Tertullian,	<i>Apol.</i>	<i>Apologeticus</i>
	<i>Bapt.</i>	<i>De Baptismo</i>
	<i>Praesc. Haer.</i>	<i>De Praescriptione Haereticorum</i>
Ps.-Tertullian,	<i>Adv. Omn.</i>	<i>Adversus Omnes Haereses</i>
	<i>Haer.</i>	
Theophrastus,	<i>Char.</i>	<i>Characteres</i>
Tob		Tobit
Vergil,	<i>Aen.</i>	<i>Aeneid</i>
	<i>Ecl.</i>	<i>Eclogues</i>

Wis	<i>Georg.</i>	<i>Georgics</i> Wisdom of Solomon
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For Abbreviations of Nag Hammadi texts see p. 446f.

### 2. Collections of Sources

BGU	Aegyptische Urkunden aus den Staatlichen Museen zu Berlin: Griechische Urkunden
CIL	Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum
CIMRM	M. J. Vermaseren, <i>Corpus inscriptionum et monumentorum religionis Mithriacae</i>
FGH	F. Jacoby, <i>Die Fragmente der griechischen Historiker</i>
FVS	H. A. Diels, <i>Die Fragmente der Vorsokratiker</i>
IG	Inscriptiones Graecae
IGRR	R. Cagnat et al., <i>Inscriptiones Graecae ad Res Romanas</i>
ILS	H. Dessau, <i>Inscriptiones Latinae Selectae</i>
LSAM	F. Sokolowski, <i>Lois sacrées de l'Asie Mineure</i>
LSCG	F. Sokolowski, <i>Lois sacrées des cités grecques</i>
LSCS	F. Sokolowski, <i>Lois sacrées des cités grecques. Supplément</i>
NHC	Nag Hammadi Codex
OGIS	W. Dittenberger, <i>Orientalis Graeci Inscriptiones Selectae</i>
PGrM	K. Preisendanz, <i>Papyri Graecae Magicae</i>
POxy	Oxyrhynchus Papyri
PTebt	Tebtunis Papyri
RecUB	Reclams Universal-Bibliothek, Stuttgart
SEG	Supplementum Epigraphicum Graecum
SIG	W. Dittenberger, <i>Sylloge Inscriptionum Graecarum</i>
SVF	J. von Arnim, <i>Stoicorum Veterum Fragmenta</i>

### 3. Periodicals, Series, Collective Works

These follow S. Schwertner, *Internationales Abkürzungsverzeichnis für Theologie und Grenzgebiete*, Berlin 2nd edn. 1992.



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## General Bibliography

Secondary literature is cited in the text only with the name of the author (in unclear cases, also with a shortened form of the title). The reader should first consult the bibliographical list at the beginning of the section in question, where one will find either full details or else a reference back to a previous list (cited as L1 etc); the same method is used in the footnotes.

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