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Christus: The Messiah of Israel: The History of Early Christianity

Fernando Klein

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Looking at the diverse source materials available, from the earliest New Testament texts and the complex treaties of third century authors such as Lactantius, to archaeology, epigraphy and papyrology, the book examines what is needed to study the subject, what materials were available, how useful they were, and how the study of the subject may be approached. The imposition of "correct belief," religious uniformity, and an institutional framework that enforced orthodoxy were both consolidating and stifling. Uncovering the difficulties in establishing the Christian church, the relationship with Judaism, Gnosticism, Greek philosophy and Greco-Roman society would be examined. Christianity not only made history but was modified and shaped by history. No genetic study of Christianity will ever explain Christianity, yet ignorance of its antecedents and of the contemporary spiritual forces and mentality renders a true appreciation impossible. There is a more excellent way of magnifying Christianity than by ignoring or decrying Paganism, or disparaging the rival systems which Christianity overcame and laid under tribute. Hellenistic-Oriental syncretism cannot be overlooked by students of the history and evolution of Christianity. The Christian Ecclesia is best appreciated when observed at work in an intensely religious world in competition with the Synagogues of the Dispersion, the Guilds of the Mystery-Religions, and the Schools of Greek philosophy.

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