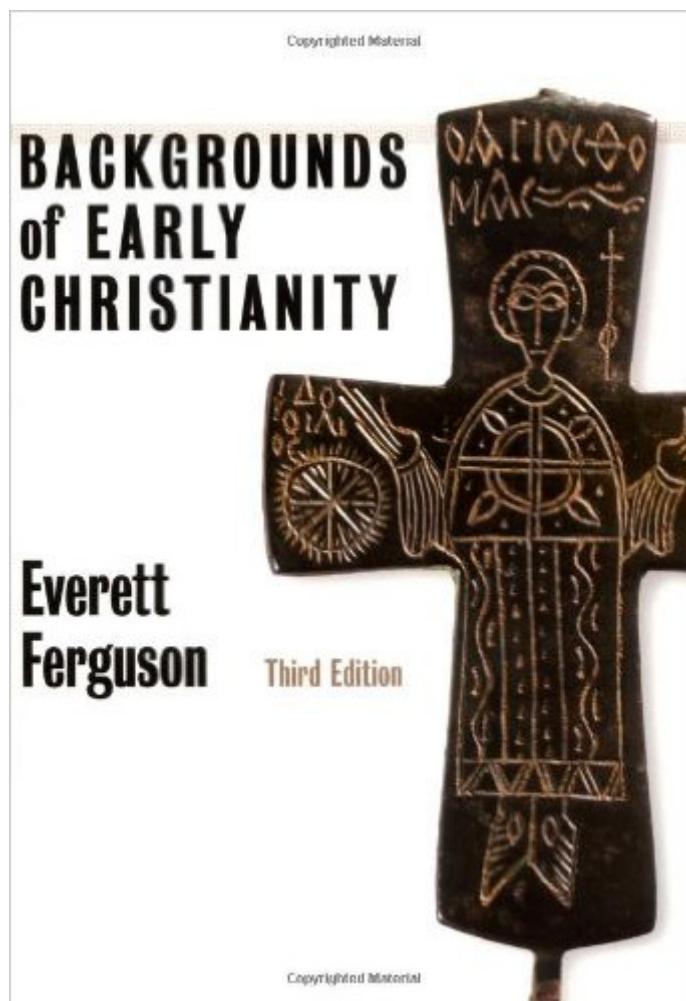


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# Backgrounds Of Early Christianity



## **Synopsis**

Having long served as a standard introduction to the world of the early church, Everett Ferguson's *Backgrounds of Early Christianity* has been expanded and updated in this third edition. The book explores and unpacks the Roman, Greek, and Jewish political, social, religious, and philosophical backgrounds necessary for a good historical understanding of the New Testament and the early church. New to this edition are revisions of Ferguson's original material, updated bibliographies, and fresh discussions of first-century social life, of Gnosticism, and of the Dead Sea Scrolls and other Jewish literature.

## **Book Information**

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## **Customer Reviews**

Ferguson's intent in writing *Backgrounds of Early Christianity* was neither to produce a history of the ancient world nor to synthesize ancient culture, philosophy, and religion in accordance with some interpretive scheme. Instead, his desire was to craft an introductory textbook as a guide for beginning students. In the preface, he notes that limitations of writing and analysis have forced a compartmentalization (e.g., philosophy versus politics) and viewpoint (e.g., politics, religion, marriage) within his book that did not exist in the ancient world. Ferguson ensures relevance to the New Testament with frequent references. General bibliographies for broader research are included at the beginning of each chapter. Specialized bibliographies for investigation into more narrow issues are provided at the end of each chapter. All bibliographic references are to works in English except where special circumstances apply. Footnotes are ample and well-chosen. Numerous photographs and tables enliven and clarify content. In the preface, Ferguson deals with the issue of

parallels between Christianity and ancient beliefs and practices. He denies that such similarities demand a naturalistic explanation for the rise of Christianity. This writer agrees and would go further to say that early apologists like Justin Martyr took a similar stance. Moreover, the popular Christian impulse to claim an utterly unique origin for Christianity is a self-inflicted handicap in dealing with the historical evidence. Furthermore, if Christianity were totally unique, it would likely be incomprehensible.

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