

Christianity in Ancient Rome: The First Three Centuries

By Bernard Green

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The reader is taken from the very first generation of Christians in Rome, a tiny group of Jews who acknowledged Jesus as the Messiah, down to the point when Christianity had triumphed over savage persecution and was on the verge of becoming the religion of the Roman Empire.

Rome was by far the biggest city in the Roman world and this had a profound effect on the way Christianity developed there. It became separate from Judaism at a very early date. The Roman Christians were the first to suffer savage persecution at the hands of Nero. Rome saw the greatest theological movements of the second century thrashing out the core doctrines of the Christian faith.

The emergence of the papacy and the building of the catacombs gave the Roman Church extraordinary influence and prestige in the third century, another time of cruel persecution. And it was in Rome that Constantine's patronage of the Christian faith was most evident as he built great basilicas and elevated the personal status of the Pope.

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Editorial Review

Review

'This admirably clear and forthright account presents the development of Christianity in Rome as a series of interactions with the city's political, social and cultural environment. Green is a wise and urbane guide through fiendishly difficult territory; his commentary upon emperors, popes, and the succession of turbulent priests and disputatious theologians who helped give Christian Rome its distinctive cast is at once thoughtfully balanced and wryly opinionated.' — Neil McLynn, Faculty of Classics, Oxford University, Oxford, UK
(Neil McLynn)

'The history of Christianity in Rome before Constantine is notoriously obscure. Bernard Green threads a learned, careful and surefooted path through a long series of scholarly minefields. He presents the evidence in an exemplary fashion and he sets out the problems of interpreting it sensibly and with good judgement: I only wish that such a sensible guide to a difficult subject had been available for me to use as a textbook while I was still teaching undergraduates!' - Timothy D. Barnes, Professor Emeritus, University of Toronto, Honorary Fellow, School of Divinity, University of Edinburgh.
(Timothy D. Barnes)

'In this scholarly and readable account, Bernard Green provides an excellent analysis of early Christianity in its capital city in the West. Literary and visual sources are presented alongside modern scholarship in five chapters succinctly entitled "Origins", "Community", "Persecution", "Catacombs" and "<?xml:namespace prefix = st1 ns = "urn:schemas-microsoft-com:office:smarttags" />Constantine". Christians in their inner lives are probed alongside the political and social frameworks within which they lived. As a result, readers can appreciate better the fascinating story of how divine assistance and human endeavour blended together during an epoch that proved formative for the Christian church and, thereby, for world history.' — Norman Tanner, SJ, Pontificia Universita Gregoriana, Rome, Italy<?xml:namespace prefix = o ns = "urn:schemas-microsoft-com:office:office" />
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Reviewed in Church Times, 1st October 2010 (<?xml:namespace prefix = st1 ns = "urn:schemas-microsoft-com:office:smarttags" />UK)<?xml:namespace prefix = o ns = "urn:schemas-microsoft-com:office:office" />
'A fascinating study of the origins of the church of Rome'

[Green's] readings of the characters that populate his history, and the literature they created, are subtle; his writing is precise and elegant. In all, this is a fascinating and compelling study of the origins of the church in Rome. (Dr Paul Cavill *Church Times*)

'Bernard Green provides a wonderful introduction to the life and circumstances of the earliest Christians in Rome.'
(*Theological Book Review*)

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Green's book, which grew out of his Oxford lectures, gives us an exemplary model of the genre: clear and

cogent presentation, marked none the less by the lecturer's own original and critical perspective... Bernard Green has produced an interesting and important account of his subject. (Sanford Lakoff)

Reviewed in Augustinianum 51

About the Author

Dom Bernard Green is a monk of Ampleforth and Fellow and Tutor in Theology at St Benet's Hall, Oxford, UK.

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