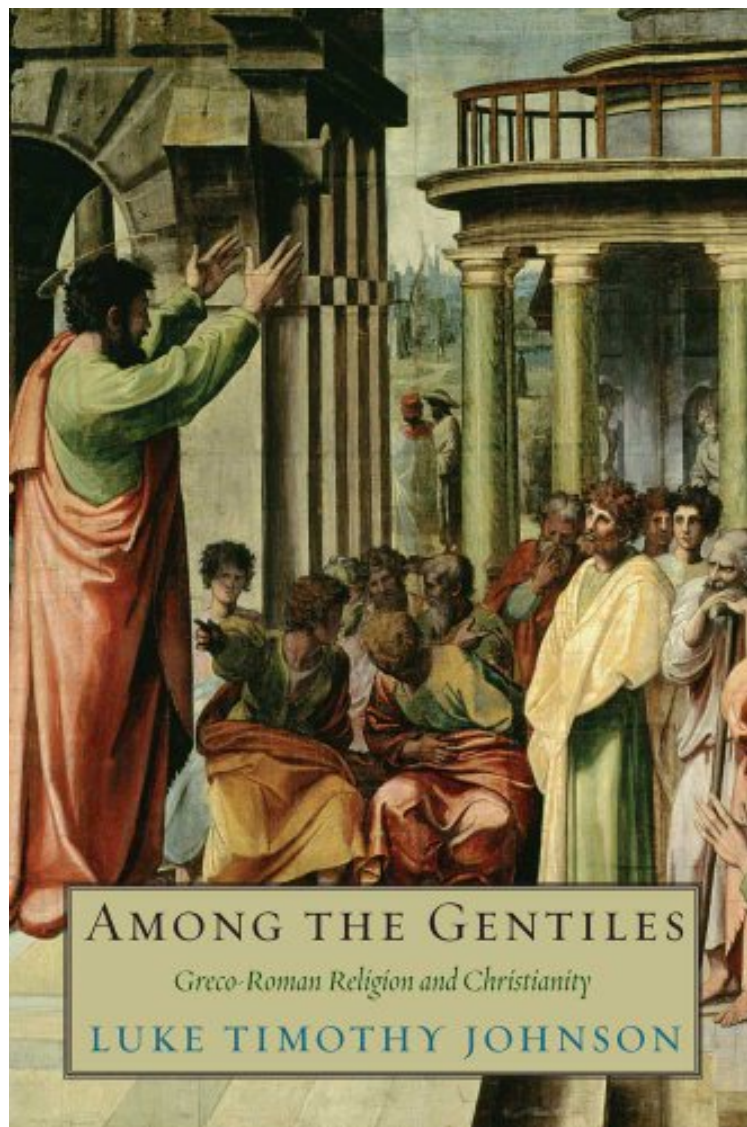


[Mobile pdf] Among the Gentiles: Greco-Roman Religion and Christianity (The Anchor Yale Bible Reference Library)

## Among the Gentiles: Greco-Roman Religion and Christianity (The Anchor Yale Bible Reference Library)

*Luke Timothy Johnson*

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**Luke Timothy Johnson : Among the Gentiles: Greco-Roman Religion and Christianity (The Anchor Yale Bible Reference Library)** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Among the Gentiles: Greco-Roman Religion and Christianity (The Anchor Yale Bible Reference Library):

2 of 2 people found the following review helpful. Four Centuries of Christian interaction with Roman and Greek

religious persuasions. By John Hudson I was interested in filling in the context for the growth of Christianity over the first four centuries, especially in connection with the Roman and Greek culture at the time. The book shows the many interactions in four areas, receiving the gifts and power of the divine, moral transformation, flight from the world, and stabilization of life through the respective cultic activities. Aside from reading the original texts this provides a good summary and understanding of the material. It also as the author says is very relevant to understand how persons of the Christian persuasion have overly demonized other religious persuasions in a way that is not helpful in a time of interfaith diversity. 1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Good comparative analysis By Patrick J. Goggins Johnson's four ways of being religious do apply, as he says, to almost all authentic religious experiences. What I hoped for was a more thorough analysis of the Greco-Roman religious experience, and how the early Christian evangelists interacted with it. 3 of 7 people found the following review helpful. Impressive and profitable effort By Chicago reader It seems Luke Johnson always has something interesting to say. And, what he has to say is founded on his extensive research. Therefore, if someone desires to disagree with Johnson's interpretation it requires an extensive moment of silence before his evidence prior to opening one's mouth. Yes, the 100+ pages of footnotes is daunting but one has to appreciate that someone is doing the study for which others (me!) don't have the time or the inclination to do. I would have enjoyed a longer section on "implications" and I would hope that Johnson would consider such in a later book. Nonetheless, his "implications" are instructive. Arguing that the structure of my religiousness is right does not make the structure of religious expression of someone else, wrong. That premise appears sadly lacking in many debates. To reflect on Christianity in light of the structure of "pagan" religions simply confirms to me that much of human religiousness finds common human structure allowing us to investigate content a bit more intentionally. I have profited by reading this book.

The question of Christianity's relation to the other religions of the world is more pertinent and difficult today than ever before. While Christianity's historical failure to appreciate or actively engage Judaism is notorious, Christianity's even more shoddy record with respect to pagan religions is less understood. Christians have inherited a virtually unanimous theological tradition that thinks of paganism in terms of demonic possession, and of Christian missions as a rescue operation that saves pagans from inherently evil practices. In undertaking this fresh inquiry into early Christianity and Greco-Roman paganism, Luke Timothy Johnson begins with a broad definition of religion as a way of life organized around convictions and experiences concerning ultimate power. In the tradition of William James's *Variety of Religious Experience*, he identifies four distinct ways of being religious: religion as participation in benefits, as moral transformation, as transcending the world, and as stabilizing the world. Using these criteria as the basis for his exploration of Christianity and paganism, Johnson finds multiple points of similarity in religious sensibility. Christianity's failure to adequately come to grips with its first pagan neighbors, Johnson asserts, inhibits any effort to engage positively with adherents of various world religions. This thoughtful and passionate study should help break down the walls between Christianity and other religious traditions.

From *Publishers Weekly* Defending the Christian religion against Greco-Roman paganism, the early Christian writer Tertullian once famously asked, What indeed does Athens have to do with Jerusalem? In his thoughtful, judicious and provocative new book, *New Testament scholar Johnson answers, Plenty*. Drawing deeply upon Greco-Roman literature, Johnson isolates four ways of being religious in the Greco-Roman world: the way of participation in divine benefits, the way of moral transformation, the way of transcending the world and the way of stabilizing the world. He illustrates each type of religiosity with a sketch of a Greco-Roman writer or text. Johnson then places this template of religiosity on the Christianity of the first through fourth centuries to illustrate how deeply embedded Greco-Roman patterns of religion influenced and contributed to the growth of Christianity. Johnson's careful and compelling approach avoids both the apologetic and the antagonistic tones that such conversations about early Christianity and Hellenistic religions often take. (Nov.) Copyright Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved. Luke Johnson, a contrarian of the most constructive kind, defying all the usual categories, looks at the age-old story of Christianity's triumph over paganism and turns it topsy turvy. A provocative and deeply humane book, to be savored and argued with. Wayne A. Meeks, author of *First Urban Christians* (Wayne A. Meeks) Seeking to overturn an attitude towards Greco-Roman religion epitomized in Tertullian's famous rejection of Athens, Johnson demonstrates four ways of being religious that were common to Greeks, Romans, Jews, and early Christians. The work is important not only for the study of ancient religion, but for inter-faith dialogue today. Gregory E. Sterling, University of Notre Dame (Gregory E. Sterling) A remarkable synthesis that challenges reigning assumptions about early Christianity's relationship to the Graeco-Roman world, this book proposes new analytical categories to advance and enliven the ongoing Christ and culture debate. Carl R. Holladay, Emory University