

**INTRODUCTION
TO THE
NEW TESTAMENT**

VOLUME 2

**HISTORY AND
LITERATURE
OF EARLY
CHRISTIANITY**

HELMUT KOESTER



Volume Two

INTRODUCTION TO
THE NEW TESTAMENT

HISTORY AND LITERATURE
OF EARLY CHRISTIANITY

HELMUT KOESTER



WALTER DE GRUYTER
NEW YORK • BERLIN

Translated from the German, *Einführung in das Neue Testament*, Chapters 7–12, by Helmut Köster, copyright © 1980, by Walter de Gruyter & Co., Berlin, Federal Republic of Germany, and New York.

Copyright © 1982 by Walter de Gruyter & Co., Berlin
Paperback Edition, 1987

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording, or otherwise, without prior permission of the publisher.

Library of Congress Cataloging in Publication Data

Koester, Helmut, 1926–
Introduction to the New Testament.

Translation of: *Einführung in das Neue Testament*.
Includes bibliographies and indexes.

Contents: v. 1. History, culture, and religion of the Hellenistic Age—v. 2. History and literature of early Christianity.

1. Bible. N. T.—History of contemporary events.

I. Title. II. Series.

BS2410.K613 1982 225.9'5 82-71828

ISBN 0-89925-351-2, v. 1 (New York)

0-89925-352-0, v. 2 (New York)

3-11-011292-2, v. 1 (Berlin)

3-11-011293-0, v. 2 (Berlin)

Printed in the United States of America

10 9 8 7 6









ANCIENT MEDITERRANEAN
EAST

The concept of an "Introduction to the New Testament" in the form of a history of early Christianity in its contemporary setting, including a survey of the political, cultural, and religious history of the Hellenistic and Roman imperial period, stems from the predecessor of this book, the *Einführung in das Neue Testament* by Rudolf Knopf (revised edition by Hans Lietzmann and Heinrich Weinel) in the series "Sammlung Töpelmann" (now succeeded by "De Gruyter Lehrbücher"). Thus, the *Introduction* presented here in its English version does not aspire to be an "Introduction" in the technical sense nor a "History of Early Christian Literature" which treats the scholarship, date, integrity, and literary structure of each of the New Testament writings. To be sure, these questions are encompassed in the present work, but they are discussed within the context of a reconstruction of the historical development of early Christianity. My primary concern is to present the history of the early Christian churches, since it seems to me that the student of the New Testament must learn from the outset to understand the writings of the earliest period within their proper historical context.

It is obvious that this attempt to reconstruct the history of early Christianity requires one to relinquish some strictures of traditional introductions. I do not limit the discussion to the twenty-seven canonical books, but treat also sixty other early Christian writings from the first 150 years of Christian history, whether or not these writings are preserved fully or only in fragments. These non-canonical works are witnesses to early Christian history no less valuable than the New Testament. A historical presentation of these materials requires that clear decisions be made about authorship, date, and place of each writing; in other words, the results of historical-critical inquiry have to be consulted fully in each instance. I have also made an effort to discuss the problems in making such decisions. If these issues remain controversial with respect to some parts of the New Testament, they are even more difficult for non-canonical literature: traditionally scholarly debate has focused on the canonical literature, whereas the so-called "apocrypha" and other non-canonical writings have received only scant attention. Furthermore, quite a few of the latter have been discovered only recently, and their critical evaluation has just begun.

Nevertheless, it is much better to advance scholarship, and thus our understanding, through hypothetical reconstruction than to ignore new and apparently problematic materials.

In view of the present situation of New Testament scholarship, it would be misleading to suggest to the students of early Christian history that they can expect largely secure results. The New Testament itself furnishes evidence that the history of early Christian communities was a complex process, full of controversies and difficult decisions. Understanding this process requires critical judgment as well as the construction of trajectories through the history of early Christianity. The recent discovery of even more early writings not only demands a basic reorientation of our views, but will also enable the student to appreciate more fully the depths and riches of this formative period, especially as it is seen in the context of the general history of the culture in which Christianity began.

The scope of this book does not permit me to base my entire presentation upon the results of my own research. There are many topics in my survey of the Hellenistic and Roman world on which the specialist will have better insights and judgment. I am not only indebted to the published works of many scholars, but also owe much to my students at Harvard University, who have enriched this book in its various stages of writing and re-writing with their suggestions and criticisms, and equally to my colleagues, from whom I have learned a great deal during the last two decades in seminars and in discussions. I wish to express my special thanks to colleagues and friends: to Klaus Baltzer, of the University of Munich, and to Frank M. Cross, Dieter Georgi, George MacRae, Krister Stendahl, John Strugnell, and Zeph Stewart, all of Harvard University.

This book is the author's own translation of the German *Einführung in das Neue Testament*, published 1980 by Walter De Gruyter, Berlin and New York. Only in a few instances has the text been changed; one chapter was added (§6.3d). However, a number of minor errors and a few major mistakes were corrected. For this, I am particularly indebted to Eckhard Plümacher's review of this book (*Göttingische Gelehrte Anzeigen* 233 [1981] 1–22) and to the extensive notes which he kindly made available to me.

The bibliography has been redesigned so that editions and translations of texts are quoted first in order to encourage the student to read further in primary materials. English translations of texts are cited in the bibliographies wherever available. I am grateful to my colleague Albert Henrichs of Harvard University for suggestions regarding the revision of the bibliography. The bibliography is not meant to be exhaustive, but is designed to emphasize what is, in my opinion, the most valuable and more recent material, and what will best lead to further study. I have, however,

included the most important "classics" which are still basic guides for scholarship today. For further reference, the reader should consult the standard reference works: *The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible* (especially its recently published supplement), *Reallexikon für Antike und Christentum*, *Der Kleine Pauly*, *Die Religion in Geschichte und Gegenwart*, and *The Oxford Classical Dictionary* (specific references to these works are normally not given in the bibliographies).

The English edition (as already the German work) would scarcely have been finished in such a brief time without the patience and interest of my wife and my children. Numerous persons have given their help in the various stages of translation and production of this work: Philip H. Sellew (editing, bibliography), Jonathan C. Guest (editing, copyediting, and proofreading), Gary A. Bisbee (maps), Pamela Chance (typing), Robert Stoops and Douglas Olson (bibliography). I am very grateful for their expert and untiring help. Rarely does an author enjoy such experienced and congenial production assistance as I had from my friends Charlene Matejovsky and Robert W. Funk of Polebridge Press at Missoula, Montana. Their dedication, care, competence, and advice accompanied every step of the book's production.

Inter Nationes, an agency of the government of the Federal Republic of Germany in Bonn, made a major grant to offset the cost of assistance for this translation. Thanks are due for this generous help.

This book is dedicated to the memory of my teacher Rudolf Bultmann. He encouraged me more than thirty years ago to deal more intensively with the extra-canonical writings from the early Christian period. His unwavering insistence upon the consistent application of the historical-critical method and his emphasis upon the investigation of early Christian literature in the context of the history of religions must remain basic commitments of New Testament scholarship.

Harvard University
Cambridge, Massachusetts
May 1982

Helmut Koester

SERIAL AND JOURNAL TITLES

AAWG.PH	Abhandlungen der Akademie der Wissenschaften zu Göttingen. Philologisch-historische Klasse
AB	Anchor Bible
ADAL.K	Abhandlungen des deutschen archäologischen Instituts, Kairo, Koptische Reihe
AHR	<i>American Historical Review</i>
AGSU	Arbeiten zur Geschichte des Spätjudentums und Urchristentums
AJP	<i>American Journal of Philology</i>
AKG	Arbeiten zur Kirchengeschichte
AnBib	Analecta biblica
ANRW	<i>Aufstieg und Niedergang der Römischen Welt</i>
ANTT	Arbeiten zur neutestamentlichen Textforschung
ASNU	Acta seminarii neotestamentici upsaliensis
AThANT	Abhandlungen zur Theologie des Alten und Neuen Testaments
AVTRW	Aufsätze und Vorträge zur Theologie und Religionswissenschaft
BAC	Biblioteca de autores cristianos
BETHL	Bibliotheca ephemeridum theologicarum Lovaniensium
BEvTh	Beiträge zur evangelischen Theologie
BFCbTh	Beiträge zur Förderung christlicher Theologie
BHTh	Beiträge zur historischen Theologie
BibOr	Biblica et orientalia
BJRL	<i>Bulletin of the John Rylands Library</i>
BKP	Beiträge zur klassischen Philologie
BT.B	Bibliothèque de théologie, 3. Ser.: Théologie biblique
BWAT	Beiträge zur Wissenschaft vom Alten Testament
BZNW	Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft
CBQ	<i>Catholic Biblical Quarterly</i>
CGTC	Cambridge Greek Testament Commentary
ConB	Coniectanea biblica
CRI	Compendia Rerum Judaicarum ad Novum Testamentum
EHS.T	Europäische Hochschulschriften. Reihe 23: Theologie
EKKNT	Evangelisch-katholischer Kommentar zum Neuen Testament
EPhM	Etudes de philosophie médiévale
EPRO	Etudes préliminaires aux religions orientales dans l'empire romain
ErJb	Eranos-Jahrbuch
EtBib	Etudes Bibliques

EtJ	Etudes Juives
EvTh	<i>Evangelische Theologie</i>
FKDG	Forschungen zur Kirchen- und Dogmengeschichte
FRLANT	Forschungen zur Religion und Literatur des Alten und Neuen Testaments
GBSNTS	Guides to Biblical Scholarship, New Testament Series
GCS	Die griechischen christlichen Schriftsteller der ersten drei Jahrhunderte
GLB	De Gruyter Lehrbuch
GRBS	<i>Greek, Roman, and Byzantine Studies</i>
GTB	Van Gorcum's theologische bibliotheek
GWU	<i>Geschichte in Wissenschaft und Unterricht</i>
HAW	Handbuch der Altertumswissenschaft
HDR	Harvard Dissertations in Religion
Hesp.S	Hesperia. Supplements
HeyJ	<i>Heythrop Journal</i>
Hist	<i>Historia. Zeitschrift für alte Geschichte</i>
HNT	Handbuch zum Neuen Testament
HNT.E	Handbuch zum Neuen Testament. Ergänzungsband
HSM	Harvard Semitic Monographs
HSS	Harvard Semitic Series
HThK	Herders Theologischer Kommentar zum Neuen Testament
HTR	<i>Harvard Theological Review</i>
HTS	Harvard Theological Studies
Hyp.	Hypomnemata. Untersuchungen zur Antike und zu ihrem Nachleben
ICC	International Critical Commentary
IDBSup	<i>Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible. Supplement</i>
Int	<i>Interpretation</i>
JAC	<i>Jahrbuch für Antike und Christentum</i>
JAC.E	Jahrbuch für Antike und Christentum. Ergänzungsband
JAL	Jewish Apocryphal Literature
JBL	<i>Journal of Biblical Literature</i>
JEA	<i>Journal of Egyptian Archaeology</i>
JHS	<i>Journal of Hellenic Studies</i>
JQR.MS	Jewish Quarterly Review. Monograph Series
JR	<i>Journal of Religion</i>
JRomS	<i>Journal of Roman Studies</i>
JSHRZ	Jüdische Schriften aus hellenistisch-römischer Zeit
JTC	<i>Journal for Theology and the Church</i>
JTS	<i>Journal of Theological Studies</i>
KIT	Kleine Texte für (theologische und philologische) Vorlesungen und Übungen
LBS	Library of Biblical Studies
LCL	Loeb Classical Library
LHR	Lectures on the History of Religions, Sponsored by the American Council of Learned Societies
MAPS	Memoirs of the American Philosophical Society
MBPF	Münchener Beiträge zur Papyrusforschung und antiken Rechtsgeschichte
MH	<i>Museum Helveticum</i>
Mn.Suppl.	Mnemosyne. Bibliotheca classica/philologica Batava. Supplements
MThSt	Marburger theologische Studien

<i>MThZ</i>	<i>Münchener theologische Zeitschrift</i>
NAWG.PH	Nachrichten der Akademie der Wissenschaft in Göttingen. Philologisch-historische Klasse
NHS	Nag Hammadi Studies
<i>NovT</i>	<i>Novum Testamentum</i>
NovTSup	Novum Testamentum. Supplements
NTDSup	Das Neue Testament Deutsch. Supplementband
<i>NTS</i>	<i>New Testament Studies</i>
NTTS	New Testament Tools and Studies
NumenSup	Numen. International Review for the History of Religions. Supplements
OBO	Orbis Biblicus et Orientalis
<i>OTS</i>	<i>Oudtestamentische Studien</i>
<i>PBA</i>	<i>Proceedings of the British Academy</i>
Ph.S	Philologus. Supplement
PTS	Patristische Texte und Studien
PVTG	Pseudepigrapha Veteris Testamentis graece
<i>RAC</i>	<i>Reallexikon für Antike und Christentum</i>
<i>RB</i>	<i>Revue biblique</i>
<i>RechSR</i>	<i>Recherches de science religieuse</i>
<i>RGG</i>	<i>Die Religion in Geschichte und Gegenwart</i>
RechBib	Recherches bibliques
RPS	Religious Perspectives (series)
RVV	Religionsgeschichtliche Versuche und Vorarbeiten
SBLDS	Society of Biblical Literature Dissertation Series
SBLMS	Society of Biblical Literature Monograph Series
SBLBS	Society of Biblical Literature Sources for Biblical Study
SBLSCS	Society of Biblical Literature Septuagint and Cognate Studies
SBLSS	Society of Biblical Literature. Semeia Supplements
SBLTT	Society of Biblical Literature. Texts and Translations
SBS	Stuttgarter Bibelstudien
SBT	Studies in Biblical Theology
SC	Sources chrétiennes
SCHNT	Studia ad Corpus Hellenisticum Novi Testamenti
<i>SEÅ</i>	<i>Svensk Exegetisk Årsbok</i>
SG	Sammlung Götschen
SHCT	Studies in the History of Christian Thought
SJ	Studia Judaica
SJLA	Studies in Judaism in Late Antiquity
SNTSMS	Society of New Testament Studies Monograph Series
SÖAW.PH	Sitzungsberichte der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften. Philosophisch-historische Klasse
SPB	Studia Post-Biblica
SQAW	Schriften und Quellen der Alten Welt
SQS	Sammlung ausgewählter kirchen- und dogmengeschichtlicher Quellenschriften
StANT	Studien zum Alten und Neuen Testament
STL	Studia Theologica Lundensia
StNT	Studien zum Neuen Testament
STRT	Studia Theologica Rheno-Trajectina

SUNT	Studien zur Umwelt des Neuen Testaments
SVTP	Studia in veteris testamenti pseudepigrapha
TEH	Theologische Existenz heute
TF	Texte zur Forschung
ThBü	Theologische Bücherei
ThF	Theologische Forschung
ThHK	Theologischer Hand-Kommentar
ThLZ	<i>Theologische Literaturzeitung</i>
ThR	<i>Theologische Rundschau</i>
ThZ	<i>Theologische Zeitschrift</i>
TSJTSA	Texts and Studies of the Jewish Theological Seminary of America
TU	Texte und Untersuchungen zur Geschichte der altchristlichen Literatur
UB	Urban-Bücher
VC	<i>Vigiliae Christianae</i>
VTSup	Vetus Testamentum. Supplements
WdF	Wege der Forschung
WMANT	Wissenschaftliche Monographien zum Alten und Neuen Testament
WUNT	Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament
WZ (J)	<i>Wissenschaftliche Zeitschrift der Friedrich-Schiller-Universität Jena</i>
YCS	Yale Classical Studies
YPR	Yale Publications in Religion
Zet.	Zetemata
ZNW	<i>Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft</i>
ZThK	<i>Zeitschrift für Theologie und Kirche</i>

Acknowledgments

Grateful acknowledgment is made for permissions to use a number of photographs in these volumes: to the Agora Excavations, Athens, Greece, for the photograph of the Library of Pantaenus Inscription (vol. I, p. 92); to the Fogg Art Museum, courtesy of the Sardis Excavation Office of Harvard University, for the photograph of the Synagogue of Sardis (vol. I, p. 221); to the Freer Gallery of the Smithsonian Institute, Washington, D. C., for the photograph of a page from *Washingtonianus* (vol. II, p. 28); to the Houghton Library and Semitic Museum of Harvard University for the photograph of *Oxyrhynchus Papyrus 655* (vol. II, p. 151); and to the Institute for Antiquity and Christianity of the Claremont Graduate School for photographs of a page from *Codex II* of the Nag Hammadi Library and of the site of the discovery of that Library (vol. II, pp. 210 and 227).

Additionally, the author wishes to express his thanks for permission granted him to take photographs, also used in these volumes, at the following institutions: the Archaeological Museum, Thessaloniki, Greece (vol. I, pp. 163, 204, 305); the Byzantine Archaeological Administration, Thessaloniki, Greece (vol. II, p. 85); the National Museum, Athens, Greece (vol. I, p. 175); the Archaeological Museum, Verria, Greece (vol. I, p. 330); the Louvre, Paris, France (vol. I, p. 125); the Staatliche Museen Charlottenburg, Berlin, German Federal Republic (vol. I, p. 37; II, pp. 243, 289); the Pergamon Museum, Berlin, German Democratic Republic (vol. I, p. 83; II, pp. 115, 339); the Museum für Kunst und Gewerbe, Hamburg, German Federal Republic (vol. I, p. 185); the National Archaeological Museum, Copenhagen, Denmark (vol. I, p. 7); the National Museum Numismatic Collection, Athens, Greece (vol. II, p. 75); Archaeological Museum Izmir, Turkey (vol. II, p. 249); Corinth Excavations of the American School of Classical Studies (vol. II, p. 123).

A final work of thanks is due the research team for Religion and Culture of the Lands of the New Testament (ASOR) who supplied the remaining photographs used in this volume.

HISTORY AND LITERATURE OF EARLY CHRISTIANITY

The writings which are now included in the twenty-seven books of the New Testament are the product of the early history of the Christian churches in the eastern countries of the ancient Mediterranean world and, eventually, in Rome. In addition, numerous other writings from this early Christian period belong to the same historical developments. This book endeavors to introduce the student of the New Testament to all of these writings in the context of a reconstruction of the expansion and growth of the Christian communities from their beginnings to the middle of the second century CE.

The political, cultural, religious, and economic factors that constituted the setting for early Christian history have been discussed extensively in the first volume, including the history of Judaism of the Hellenistic and Roman imperial periods. What has been said in that volume is essential for the understanding of the development of early Christianity. The importance of this is indicated by the cross references in this volume, for it is difficult to understand Christian history without studying its environment.

The sources for early Christianity, which are almost exclusively Christian writings, present significant problems that have been the subject of the specialized works of many scholars. Some acquaintance with the scholarly approaches to these ancient writings and with the present status of their learned investigation is prerequisite to the study of this literature in its historical context. Therefore, the first chapter of this volume (§7) is devoted to the various problems of the investigation of the New Testament and other early Christian literature.

Although Christianity emerged from the ministry of Jesus and in the first communities in Palestine, soon spreading to other parts of Syria and to Egypt, its most significant literature, which was to determine the future of this religious movement, developed in the urban culture of the eastern Mediterranean, particularly the cities around the Aegean Sea. Thus, the history of the Christian churches will be treated not only in chronological sequence, but also with respect to the different regions in which the

establishment of the churches in the major economic centers of the Hellenistic world (Antioch, Ephesus, Corinth, and even Rome) marks the end of the formative period of early Christianity and thus concludes the production of most of the New Testament writings.