

EARLY CHRISTIANITY IN THE ROMAN WORLD



Edited by Outi Lehtipuu and Michael Labahn

Tolerance, Intolerance, and Recognition in Early Christianity and Early Judaism

Amsterdam
University
Press

A
X
U
X
P
X

Amsterdam
University
Press

Tolerance, Intolerance, and Recognition
in Early Christianity and Early Judaism



Amsterdam
University
Press

Early Christianity in the Roman World

This series offers a new forum for studies on the formation and development of Christian beliefs and practices in the first centuries of Common Era. The constitutive idea is to treat Early Christianity as a multivalent phenomenon, characterized by a fundamental diversity. The focus is on interchanges and interactions between various groups in the ancient Mediterranean world that had an impact on developing Christianity, including the interrelations between various Christian groups. The series wants to foster studies that seek to place the diverse manifestations of the Christian movement on the Hellenistic-Roman cultural and religious maps.

Editorial Board

Michael Labahn, Martin-Luther Universität Halle-Wittenberg

Outi Lehtipuu, University of Helsinki

Bert Jan Lietaert Peerbolte, VU University Amsterdam

Gert J. Steyn, Theologische Hochschule Ewersbach



Amsterdam
University
Press

Tolerance, Intolerance, and Recognition in Early Christianity and Early Judaism

*Edited by
Outi Lehtipuu and
Michael Labahn*

Amsterdam University Press



Amsterdam
University
Press

Cover illustration: Anna-Liisa Rafael

Cover design: Coördesign, Leiden

Lay-out: Crius Group, Hulshout

ISBN 978 94 6298 446 2

e-ISBN 978 90 4853 512 5

DOI 10.5117/9789462984462

NUR 704

© The authors / Amsterdam University Press B.V., Amsterdam 2021

All rights reserved. Without limiting the rights under copyright reserved above, no part of this book may be reproduced, stored in or introduced into a retrieval system, or transmitted, in any form or by any means (electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise) without the written permission of both the copyright owner and the author of the book.



Amsterdam
University
Press

Table of Contents

Abbreviations	7
Introduction	9
<i>Outi Lehtipuu and Michael Labahn</i>	
I Conditions of Tolerance	
1. From Conflict to Recognition	19
Rethinking a Scholarly Paradigm in the Study of Christian Origins	
<i>Ismo Dunderberg</i>	
2. Mutable Ethnicity in the Dead Sea Scrolls	47
Intertwined Acts of Tolerance and Intolerance	
<i>Carmen Palmer</i>	
3. Der geliebte „Feind“	73
Wahrnehmung des Anderen in Jesu Gebot der Feindesliebe und ihre Rezeption im Dokument Q – ein Beispiel antiker „Toleranz“ und „Anerkennung“?	
<i>Michael Labahn</i>	
II Jewish–Christian Relations between Tolerance and Intolerance	
4. Was Paul Tolerant?	113
An Assessment of William S. Campbell's and J. Brian Tucker's “Particularistic” Paul	
<i>Nina Nikki</i>	
5. Since When Were Martyrs Jewish?	139
Apologies for the Maccabees' Martyrdom and Making of Religious Difference	
<i>Anna-Liisa Rafael</i>	



6. Hiding One's Tolerance	169
Cyril of Alexandria's Use of Philo	
<i>Sami Yli-Karjanmaa</i>	
7. Rabbinic Reflections on Divine–Human Interactions	195
Speaking in Parables on the Miracle of Pregnancy and Birth	
<i>Galit Hasan-Rokem and Israel J. Yuval</i>	
III Tolerance and Questions of Persecution, Gender, and Ecology	
8. Were the Early Christians Really Persecuted?	229
<i>Paul Middleton</i>	
9. “No Male and Female”	251
Women and the Rhetoric of Recognition in Early Christianity	
<i>Outi Lehtipuu</i>	
10. Learning from “Others”	273
Reading Two Samaritan Stories in the Gospel of Luke from an Ecological Perspective	
<i>Elizabeth V. Dowling</i>	
Epilogue	291
Sites of Toleration	
<i>Amy-Jill Levine</i>	
Index of Ancient Sources	305

Abbreviations

Note – Abbreviations not listed below are found or follow the pattern of those found in the *SBL Handbook of Style: For Ancient Near Eastern, Biblical, and Early Christian Studies*, edited by Patrick H. Alexander et al. (Peabody, MA, 1999). The following, not in SBL, are abbreviations of works by Cyril of Alexandria and other writers cited in Yli-Karjanmaa: *Ador.* = *De adoratione*; *Comm. Matt.* = *Commentarii in Matthaëum*; *Comm. min. pr.* = *Commentarius in xii prophetas minores*; *C. Jul.* = *Contra Julianum*; *Ep.* = *Epistulae*; *Ep. pasch.* = *Epistula paschalis*; *Exp. Ps.* = *Expositio in Psalmos*; *Fr. Ps.* = *Fragmenta in Psalmos*; *Isa.* = *In Isaiam*; *Jo.* = *In Joannem*; *Luc.* = *In Lucam*; *Trin. dial.* = *De sancta trinitate dialogi i–vii*

1QM	<i>War Scroll</i>
1QS	<i>Rule of the Community</i>
4Q117	<i>Ezra</i>
4Q169	<i>Pesher Nahum</i>
4Q174	<i>Florilegium</i>
4Q279	<i>Four Lots</i>
4Q307	<i>Text Mentioning Temple</i>
4QMMT	<i>Miqṣat Maʿaśê ha-Torah^a</i>
11Q19	<i>Temple Scroll^a</i>
11QApPs ^a	<i>Apocryphal Psalms^a</i>
ANF	<i>The Ante-Nicene Fathers</i> , edited by Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson, 1885–87, 10 vols. (repr., Peabody, MA, 1994)
BAGD	Bauer, Walter, William F. Arndt, F. Wilbur Gingrich and Frederick W. Danker. <i>A Greek–English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature</i> , 3rd ed. (Chicago, 2000)
BDR	F. Blass, A. Debrunner and F. Rehkopf, <i>Grammatik des neutestamentlichen Griechisch</i> (18th ed.; Göttingen 2001).
BHS	<i>Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia</i> , edited by K. Elliger and W. Rudolph (Stuttgart, 1983)
CD	Cairo Genizah copy of the <i>Damascus Document</i>
DJD	<i>Discoveries in the Judaean Desert</i> series
DSS	Dead Sea scrolls
JPL	Jewish Publication Society
KJV	<i>King James Version</i>



Amsterdam
University
Press

LXX	Septuagint
MT	Masoretic Text
NHC	<i>Nag Hammadi Codices</i>
NHL	<i>Nag Hammadi Library in English</i> , edited by James M. Robinson, 3rd ed. (San Francisco, CA, 1988)
NPNF	<i>The Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers</i> , edited by Philip Schaff, 1886–89, 14 vols. (repr., Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1994)
NRSV	<i>New Revised Standard Version</i>
PL	Patrologia Latina, series edited by J.-P. Migne (Paris, 1844–64)
SGG	H.W. Smyth, <i>Greek Grammar</i> . (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1956)
SIA	social identity approach
TLG	<i>Thesaurus linguae graecae</i> , http://stephanus.tlg.uci.edu/
cap.	<i>caput</i> (chapter)
frag(s).	fragment(s)
lit.	literally
v(v).	verse(s)

Introduction

Outi Lehtipuu and Michael Labahn

One of the best-known landmarks in the city of Córdoba in Andalusia is the Mezquita, the Mosque–Cathedral, a remarkable monument with two identities. Formerly a mosque that could hold up to 40,000 persons, in the thirteenth century it was converted to a Catholic church, with a Renaissance nave later added to the building. Today, the Mosque–Cathedral serves as the main church of Córdoba, where Christians regularly gather to celebrate the Mass.

The Mosque–Cathedral symbolizes the diversity of religions characteristic of the history of all Andalusia. In the twelfth century, both the Jewish scholar Maimonides and the Muslim philosopher Ibn Rushd (also known as Averroes) lived and worked in Córdoba, where one of the world's largest libraries at the time was located. Indeed, this period of the city's history is often represented as one of peaceful *convivencia* (coexistence), where those belonging to different religious traditions could live together peacefully.

When the European Association of Biblical Studies (EABS) announced that it would gather in Córdoba in 2015, as chairs of the Early Christianity research group we decided to devote the topic of our discussion to religious tolerance and mutual recognition. Despite several early Christian texts reflecting suspicion of and open hostility toward “others,” we encouraged participating scholars to focus on other modes of interaction found in early Christianity. We challenged them to look for examples of constructive dialogue in ancient sources and seek out the signs of peaceful coexistence among different religious traditions. Some of this research has resulted in the contributions published within the core of this volume.

Another important source of inspiration for this volume is the work conducted in the Centre of Excellence on Reason and Religious Recognition, funded by the Academy of Finland and hosted by the Faculty of Theology at the University of Helsinki between 2014 and 2019. One of its research teams set its focus on the interaction between religious traditions in antiquity,

Lehtipuu, O. and M. Labahn (eds.), *Tolerance, Intolerance, and Recognition in Early Christianity and Early Judaism*, 2021. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press

DOI 10.5117/9789462984462_INTRO



Amsterdam
University
Press

including Judaism, Christianity, and Greco-Roman religions. One of the crucial starting points of this multidisciplinary team was to avoid studying any of these religious traditions in isolation. This prompted us to extend the focus of this volume to include encounters with others in early Jewish sources. In addition, Jewish–Christian relations figure prominently in the following essays.

For a historian, conflict is often more easily accessible than peaceful coexistence, for disagreement and controversy are more likely taken into historical records and serve often as prerequisites for change. The history of religious traditions is no different in this respect. Much of the study of the history of early Judaism and early Christianity has focused on rivalry, either between these two religious traditions or within one of them. Questions concerning encounters with others are closely linked with questions of identity, and religious concerns, ethnicity, gender, and other factors central to identity formation are often intertwined in complicated ways. Within these complex networks, the boundaries of tolerance are drawn and negotiated in multitudinous ways.

Several challenges face the study of tolerance and recognition in ancient religious traditions. First is the question of language. Ancient sources attest to a wide variety of encounters with others and signs of demarcation lines between both groups and ideas, but the language found therein differs from the modern concepts of “tolerance,” “intolerance,” and “recognition.” While it is natural for scholars to use concepts familiar to them, it is important to try to distinguish them from their later meanings and associations heavily indebted to post-Enlightenment ideas. Categories of tolerance and recognition can serve as valuable comparative tools, but it would be a mistake to try to fit the observations made from ancient evidence into modern theories.

Second is the question of perspective. Tolerance is not absolute or something that can be univocally defined. It is always context-specific, dependent on perspective. This also means that generalizations about religious tolerance can easily become oversimplified. For example, there has been a strong scholarly tradition of pre-Christian polytheistic traditions having been tolerant, whereas Christian monotheism, particularly after the conversion of Constantine, was increasingly intolerant. This view can be partly explained as a reaction to the older, often religiously inspired discourse that saw early Christians as victims of intolerant, ruthless Roman emperors and their officials. Recent scholarship has demonstrated the one-sidedness of both positions, with calls now for a more nuanced study of the past. Early Christianity, early Judaism, and different polytheistic

traditions entailed both tolerant and intolerant elements. Power relations are also essential to this analysis.

The third challenge is the question of source materials. As with all ancient sources, the picture they offer is fragmentary and usually reveals only one side of multidimensional relations. While the tone of many textual sources is polemical, even hostile, it is unclear to what extent such texts reflect the world in which they were composed. Polemic need not be read as underlying real-life conflict, especially if the polemicist is relatively powerless. In some cases, intolerance directed against outsiders may in fact be aimed at dissidents in one's own ingroup, with an outside group used only as a rhetorical tool to demarcate the group's inner boundaries. Sometimes the opposite may be true, with an assertion of good will and harmony obfuscating underlying tensions. The beauty and tranquility of the Córdoba Mezquita, for example, may also evoke critical questions: Are Christianity and Islam here truly at peace with one another, or is one suppressing the other? What about Jewish tradition, which is also important to the city's history?

One way or another, historical scholarship always reflects present-day concerns. Questions about religious intolerance and conflict came sharply into focus especially in the aftermath of 9/11. It is hardly coincidence then that recent decades have seen a growing interest in the study of religious tolerance and the peaceful cohabitation of various traditions – values which present-day multicultural societies aspire to embody. The study of historical encounters between different religions does not lead into simple either/or conclusions; rather, it challenges us to better understand history – and ourselves. While it would be irresponsible to deny or belittle conflicts, a critical analysis of coexistence should account for other modes of interaction to gain a fuller view of history.

While this volume approaches questions of tolerance and intolerance as historical phenomena, some contributions also deal with the history of research and present-day challenges. The quest for religious tolerance, respect, and recognition – albeit characteristic of modern and postmodern thought – is a human concern that runs throughout history, for coexistence and diversity are at the core of human culture. It is crucial to inquire, among other things, whether patterns suggesting a promotion of tolerance and recognition can be found in ancient Jewish and Christian sources and how modern readers should deal with expressions of intolerance and misrecognition in ancient religious traditions.



Amsterdam
University
Press

The collection starts with essays on various conditions of tolerance. Ismo Dunderberg analyzes how conflict has become a major interpretative framework for imagining the historical context behind early Christian texts. Dunderberg points out that the relationship between texts and the historical circumstances in which they were written is not straightforward. It is methodologically dubious to presume that texts articulate the social reality experienced by their ancient audience. Rather, the language of conflict in texts may be nothing more than a bellicose move to establish a certain form of religious identity and demarcate its boundaries. Such boundaries were often less clearly visible in the lived religion of common people. While Dunderberg does not deny the existence of conflicts between early Christ-believers, he maintains that focusing on conflicts may distort our understanding of the past. Ancient texts also offer examples of respectful dialogue with those suspected of heresy. Dunderberg discusses two such cases in the works of Clement of Alexandria and Origen, who were willing to give some credit to Valentinian teachers who they otherwise opposed. These examples show that conflict is not – and should not be – the only option in religious dialogue.

In the second essay, Carmen Palmer addresses the question of tolerance and intolerance toward outsiders in the Dead Sea scrolls, particularly in relation to conversion. Because conversion in ancient Judaism was regarded as a change of ethnic identity and the scrolls attest to a high value placed on purity, scholars have assumed that the movement would have been opposed to any manner of including converts. By analyzing how the term *ger* is used in the scrolls, specifically in the scriptural rewritings, Palmer demonstrates how varying references to *gerim* (plur.) as converts betray the variety of attitudes that existed in the community toward outsiders. One tradition within this corpus reflects tolerance by means of a notion of mutable ethnicity. In other words, Gentiles who convert are regarded as Gentiles no longer; taking on Jewish kinship and connection to land, they are able to become full members as *ger*. This sort of tolerance is not without its limits, for it requires the converts to overcome their Gentile nature and transform themselves into Jews. Moreover, the scrolls also reflect another, more intolerant tradition that regards ethnicity as immutable. According to this understanding, the *gerim* are inauthentic converts, unable to overcome their Gentileness, and ought therefore to be excluded from the community for reasons of kinship and religious practice.

In the next chapter, Michael Labahn examines the commandment to love one's enemies from the point of view of tolerance. The formulation of the commandment presupposes that some people are perceived as



an enemy, which corresponds to the widespread need to create identity through constructing enemy-images. On the other hand, the commandment implies that the other ought neither to be excluded nor passively endured. To meet the enemy with love means abandoning one's comfort zone and thus presents the challenge of reaching beyond tolerance by exceeding social expectations. This kind of love can be taken as an unconditional concern for the well-being of others both in the context of Jesus's proclamation of the kingdom of God and in the early reception of this memory in document Q. The commandment implies a theological conception of enemies as, on the one hand, forming part of the object of God's love for human beings and the whole created world, while, on the other hand, being perceived as adversaries responsible for their actions before God, the ultimate judge. The commandment to love one's enemies speaks against any escalation of enmity, calling for an act that can be described, at least partly, as one of unrestricted recognition, one that exists outside any demand to be inscribed in a grammar of the theory of recognition.

Nina Nikki's contribution is a critical examination of whether Paul's attitudes toward Jews and Gentiles deserves the identification of "tolerance." Her point of departure is the "particularistic approach" to Paul taken by William Campbell and J. Brian Tucker, according to which Paul allows Jewish and pagan followers of Christ to live "in Christ" without abandoning their former identities as Jew or Gentile. After a critical investigation of the identity models used by Tucker and Campbell, Nikki turns instead to the "mutual intergroup differentiation model," which emphasizes the importance of using vague prototypes to foster acceptance within a group. Using this model, she identifies both tolerating and discriminatory aspects in Paul's letters. Nikki concludes that modern interests and theological tendencies should not overly direct historical analysis. Paul's discourse must be understood as reflecting his historical context, not as foundations for modern values.

The next three contributions discuss Jewish and Christian relations in subsequent centuries. Anna-Liisa Rafael examines three fourth-century homilies – by Gregory Nazianzen, John Chrysostom, and Augustine of Hippo – on the so-called Maccabean martyrs. She calls into question the scholarly commonplace that these homilies offer a case of Christian appropriation of Jewish martyrs. She argues instead that the Jewishness of the "Maccabees" was reinforced as part of the process in which they were recognized as martyrs (of Christ). In other words, the homilies do not reflect intolerance of Jews or Judaism, nor do they convert the Maccabees from Jews into Christians; in late antiquity, distinctions between Jews and Christians were much more complex than previous scholarship on this topic maintains.



Contextualizing the homilies of Nazianzen, Chrysostom, and Augustine in the ways their contemporary Christian discourse differentiated between being Christian and being Jewish, Rafael suggests that a positive notion of Jewish martyrdom – that is, martyrdom for Christ before Christ – develops within the early Christian martyrological discourse expressly with the help of the Maccabean martyr figures.

Cyril, the fifth-century bishop of Alexandria, is infamous for his intolerance of all he deemed unorthodox, be that Judaism, paganism, or heresy. Sami Yli-Karjanmaa focuses on Cyril's anti-Judaism. The starting point of his essay is the paradox that, while Cyril was hostile toward contemporary Jews, his Platonizing theology and allegorical interpretation were deeply indebted to Philo the Jew. Even though Cyril, in his voluminous writing, never explicitly mentions Philo, Yli-Karjanmaa maintains that Cyril not only used Philo's work but was also aware of Philo's Jewishness. Because of his antipathy toward contemporary Jews, Cyril, in Yli-Karjanmaa's view, did his best to conceal his theological debt to Philo, to hide his tolerance. Because of Philo's prominent place in the Alexandrian exegetical tradition, Cyril could not simply dismiss him, but instead used Philo without acknowledging his dependence on him.

Galit Hasan-Rokem and Israel J. Yuval approach the question of tolerance by focusing on the notion of miraculous birth, a topic shared by both Jews and Christians. Because of its centrality in Christianity, the topic featured in polemics between Jews and Christians. Hasan-Rokem and Yuval propose that in some rabbinic texts the topic may signal intergroup dialogue. In their analysis of chapter 14 of *Leviticus Rabbah*, dated to the first half of the fifth century, they reveal contacts between the rabbinic text and Origen's homilies on Leviticus, which elaborate on the same biblical texts. Both sets of texts are based on performative situations and echo oral contexts despite having been rewritten many times over and, in Origen's case, having been translated from Greek into Latin. While the narrative techniques in *Leviticus Rabbah* differ from Origen's allegorical style, both texts show how everyday life and experience are linked to theological questions. Jews and Christians shared the idea of God's unquestionable power to perform miracles, but whereas the Christian discourse on miraculous birth in general addresses the birth of Jesus, the rabbis diverted the discourse to all human births.

In the last section of the volume, the questions of tolerance and recognition are discussed in relation to persecution, gender, and ecology. Paul Middleton focuses on various ancient testimonies that saw early Christians as a group persecuted by Jews and non-Jews alike. These testimonies correspond to the long-held image according to which early Christ-believers were persecuted



by an intolerant state. This interpretation has been called into question by a “minimalist” view, which in contrast understands Christian obstinacy as intolerance of a largely tolerant Roman state. Middleton seeks to balance these two extremes by offering a new model of “modified minimalism,” which accounts for both Christian and Roman viewpoints. Key here is to assess the extent and limits of acceptance. The Roman state’s tolerance ended if the required loyalty, shown by sacrificing to the gods and before the emperor, was refused. Christian acceptance of and commitment to the Roman state likewise had its limits, as they were not willing to compromise their monotheistic belief in God.

The key concept in Outi Lehtipuu’s essay is recognition. While tolerance is essentially based on disagreement, recognition of others means granting them a positive status despite disagreement or different values. Recognition has become an important tool in critical social theory, vital in present-day multicultural societies where different groups seek ways to express their identities. Noting that the slogan of “no male and female” in Galatians 3:28 is often interpreted as reflecting universal recognition of human beings despite their gender, Lehtipuu analyzes how ancient authors have used Paul’s statement. She criticizes recognition theories for downplaying the power structures inherent in acts of recognition: it is the one who recognizes who gets to define the criteria for recognition and thus to create the identity that is recognized. This structure is also evident in the ancient discourses on Galatians 3:28. While authors such as Clement of Alexandria seem to accept a common humanity and a universal capacity for virtue, he reserves the abolition of gender difference to the ideal world to come. Until then, Clement maintains, virtues manifest differently for different genders, and conventional social distinctions will prevail.

In the last contribution to this volume, Elizabeth V. Dowling asks what the Lukan stories of the Samaritan “others” might teach us from an ecological perspective. In her reading, the parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:25–37) and the narrative of the Healing of Ten Lepers (Luke 17:11–19) use the dynamic of division between Jews and Samaritans to create a category of the “other.” At the same time, these stories invite their audience to think differently about these “others” who, at the narrative level, present a positive model for virtue. This dynamic challenges the readers and hearers of these stories to strive beyond mere tolerance, as they invite them to learn from such “others.” For first-century audiences, the challenge of these stories is to look beyond stereotypes and to recognize the positive model for virtue offered in those whom they otherwise scorned. In Dowling’s ecological reading, the challenge for present-day readers – amidst the global crisis

posed by climate change and refugees and internally displaced persons – is to recognize alternative “others” in these stories, including both human and other-than-human members of the Earth community.

The volume closes with an epilogue by Amy-Jill Levine, who discusses what kinds of strategies of tolerance and examples of intolerance we can find in the ancient sources and what lessons we can learn from them.

An edited volume is a collaborative project that would not be finished without the work and commitment of several people. We would like to express our heartfelt thank you to all our contributors for their fine essays. We are also grateful to the anonymous reviewer for many helpful comments. The staff of Amsterdam University Press has offered their help at all stages of the project – a special thank you to Erin Thomas Dailey, Chantal Nicolaes, and James Thomas.

About the Authors

Outi Lehtipuu is Senior Lecturer at the Department of Biblical Studies at the University of Helsinki.

Michael Labahn is extracurricular (außerplanmäßiger) Professor at Martin Luther University of Halle-Wittenberg and at North-West University (Potchefstroom Campus), South Africa.

