

The Rise and Spread of Earliest Christianity: Narratives and Models

February 23, 2006

EXAM NEXT TUESDAY 2/28

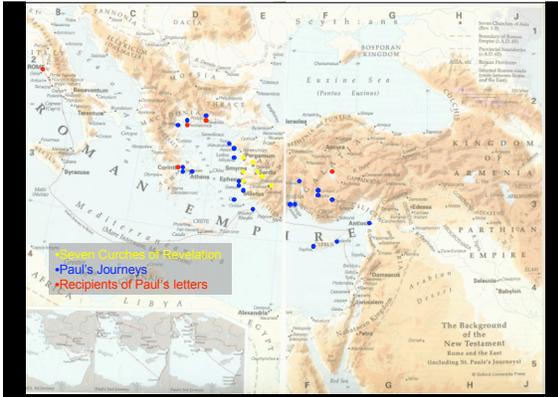
- Narratives of conversion and distribution
- Models of conversion and distribution
- Narratives of social critique

Housekeeping

- Midterm exam delayed until **Tuesday, February 28**
- Study sessions:
 - Thursday 3:30–5:00
 - Monday: 3:30–4:30*In this room*
- Format for the exam (percentages approximate):
 - "Objective": multiple choice, matching: 40%
 - Identification: 40%
 - Micro-essays (probably in conjunction with IDs): 20%

Narratives of conversion and distribution

- Acts of the Apostles
- Revelation 1-3
- Apocryphal acts



Contacts and communities in Acts, Paul's Letters, and Revelation



Acts of the Apostles

- Probably early second century; a continuation of Gospel of Luke (**Note:** Gospel attributions are traditional rather than historical)
- Structure:
 - From Jerusalem outwards; from the Jews outwards
 - Peter: Chs 1–12; Saul/Paul Chs 9:1–19; 13–28
- Beginnings of rhetoric of rejection and supersession (13:46; 18:6; 28:28)
- Paul's preaching: begin in the synagogues, then outward
- "Conversion" and growth:
 - At least in Jerusalem, miraculous explosions of faith
 - Elsewhere, conversion by individual **and household**: Cornelius (Ch. 10); Lydia (Ch. 16); Crispus (Ch. 18), etc.



Revelation 1-3

- Possibly from the 50s-60s (roughly contemporary with Paul's letters)
- "The Seven Churches": a cluster or league that are somehow associated with either John or with one another.
 - No indication of how they got there
 - Note only partial overlap (Ephesus) with Paul
- Prophecy as a mode of proclamation (John of Patmos **and** "Jezebel")
- Divisions/factions, competing views: Nicolaitians; "those who say they are Jews but are not"; testing "those who say they are apostles but are not."



Apocryphal acts

- Wandering apostles and preachers
- Conversions of individuals and households
- Trials and conflicts and imprisonments (cf. Greek novels)

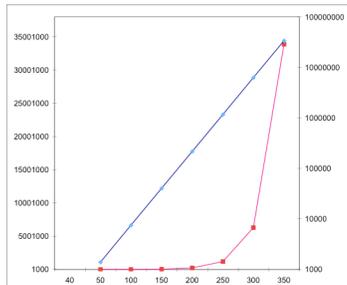


Models of conversion and distribution

- Stark: Christianity a "New Religious Movement"
- Stark and Hopkins: general social structures (limits of fertility, social networks, etc.) more persuasive than anecdotes
- Hopkins: distribution of literacy means that a very few people composed texts and that a somewhat larger minority mediated. Growth of size of communities facilitated certain kinds of institutionalization where literacy was important (e.g., bishops)
- Stark and Hopkins: Numbers, fertility, networks imply a longish period of embeddedness in Jewish communities
- Stark and Hopkins: Radical growth from within (40%/decade) while small, nearly invisible from outside until mid third century.



Projecting Growth of Christian Numbers (Stark and Hopkins)





Narratives of social critique

- Challenging sexuality with chastity
- Challenge of *marriage* (a social role) with non-marriage (Inversion of Greek novels?)
- Apostles (and followers) reject marks of high status, but can bring down civic institutions (Temple of Artemis in Act of Jn)
- Differences over internal Christian hierarchy (Perkins: Acts of Jn vs. Acts of Pt)

