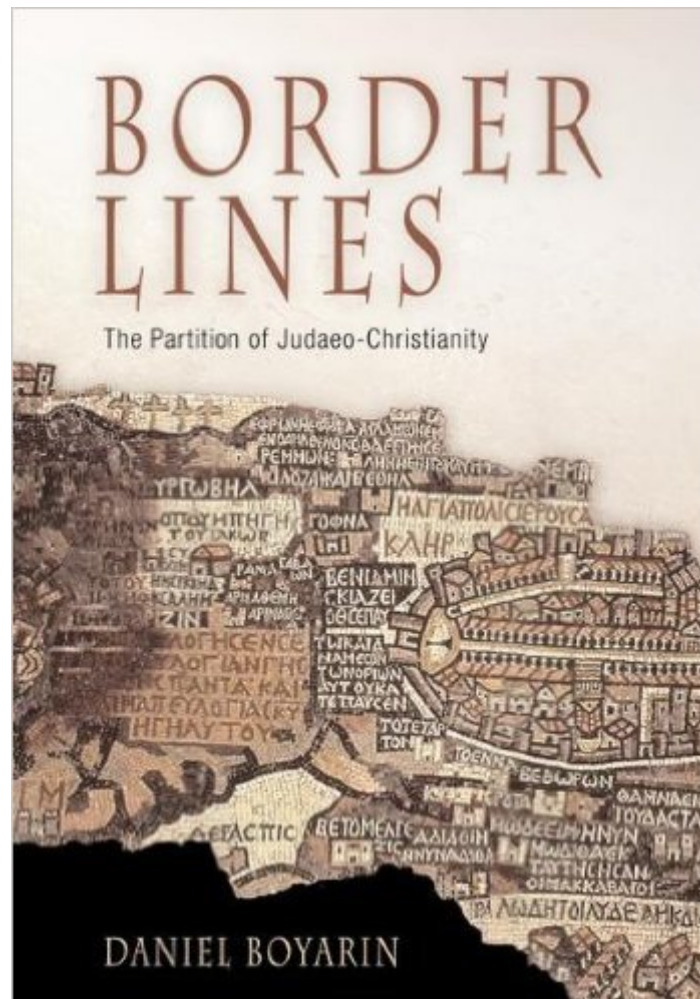


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Border Lines: The Partition Of Judaeo-Christianity (Divinations: Rereading Late Ancient Religion)



Synopsis

The historical separation between Judaism and Christianity is often figured as a clearly defined break of a single entity into two separate religions. Following this model, there would have been one religion known as Judaism before the birth of Christ, which then took on a hybrid identity. Even before its subsequent division, certain beliefs and practices of this composite would have been identifiable as Christian or Jewish. In *Border Lines*, however, Daniel Boyarin makes a striking case for a very different way of thinking about the historical development that is the partition of Judaeo-Christianity. There were no characteristics or features that could be described as uniquely Jewish or Christian in late antiquity, Boyarin argues. Rather, Jesus-following Jews and Jews who did not follow Jesus lived on a cultural map in which beliefs, such as that in a second divine being, and practices, such as keeping kosher or maintaining the Sabbath, were widely and variably distributed. The ultimate distinctions between Judaism and Christianity were imposed from above by "border-makers," heresiologists anxious to construct a discrete identity for Christianity. By defining some beliefs and practices as Christian and others as Jewish or heretical, they moved ideas, behaviors, and people to one side or another of an artificial border—and, Boyarin significantly contends, invented the very notion of religion.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Anyone interested in the origins of Christianity and its development into the Patristic era will, at some point, have to account for the parting of ways between Christianity and Judaism. It is this

popular notion of "parting ways" that Daniel Boyarin contests in his book, *Border Lines: The Partition of Judaeo-Christianity*. As the subtitle makes clear enough, Boyarin detects, not a peaceful, inevitable split between these two "religions", but a partition - an enforced dissolution. Readers be warned, this is a rather complex work. Boyarin approaches the phenomena as a post-colonial historian. Which, if I were to summarize, means that he walks into the past holding everyone suspect. Any historical event is an opportunity to dig up an underlying conspiracy. And not the kind of conspiracy that consists of bizarre, extraordinary events. But the kind that lurks within seemingly mundane actions. No one is innocent - all are participating within the power structures of the day and often unknowingly marginalizing the weak and uneducated. The sociological theories that contribute to the post-colonial project are quite sophisticated. The terminology will likely be new for those who are unfamiliar with PC thought; it certainly was for me. In an attempt to present clearly and briefly Boyarin's central thesis, I will have to limit the comprehensiveness of this review. Many of the smaller arguments and sub-points will regretfully be unstated. Boyarin's reconstruction of the interaction between Christianity and Judaism is as follows. Christianity began as a sect within Judaism - and continued so throughout the New Testament period. It was not until the time of Justin Martyr, the mid 2nd century, that Christianity began to truly become "other" than Judaism.

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