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He emphasizes monotheism and sacred Scripture as the key elements, inherited from Judaism, that gave Christianity the capacity to triumph as the new state religion in the fourth century, this in the face of its new need to accommodate aspects of civic imperial rituals that it had long opposed and "to promulgate that [Christian] identity through the active process of conversion" throughout the empire (225).

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Imperial Rome and Christian Triumph: The Art of the Roman Empire, AD 100-450. By Jas Elsner. Oxford History of Art. New York: Oxford University Press, 1998. xvii + 297 pp. \$39.95 cloth \$16.99; 5 paper. It is Elsner's thesis in this deeply knowledgeable, readable text that "the dynamics that motivated the great cultural changes of late antiquity ...

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Indeed, when pagans blamed Christian impiety (meaning negligence of the old gods) for the barbarian sack of Rome in 410 AD, one of the foremost Christian intellectuals of the time, Augustine,...

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Beginning in the second century, with its rich revival of ancient learning and artistic practices, and ending in the fifth with Christian narrative and liturgical cycles and the pilgrimage arts, this book explores the art of the Roman Empire by tackling two inter-related periods of internal transformation:

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the 'Second Sophistic' (c. ad 100-300), and the era of late antiquity (c. ad 250-450). For the first time, these two themes are treated together, throwing a more penetrating light on the ...

Western culture saw some of the most significant and innovative developments take place during the passage from antiquity to the middle ages. This stimulating new book investigates the role of the visual arts as both reflections and agents of those changes. It tackles two inter-related periods of internal transformation within the Roman Empire: the phenomenon known as the 'Second Sophistic' (c. ad 100-300) two centuries of self-conscious and enthusiastic hellenism, and the era of late antiquity (c. ad 250-450) when the empire underwent a religious conversion to Christianity. Vases, murals, statues, and masonry are explored in relation to such issues as power, death, society, acculturation, and religion. By examining questions of reception, viewing, and the culture of spectacle alongside the more traditional art-historical themes of imperial patronage and stylistic change, Jas Elsner presents a fresh and challenging account of an extraordinarily rich cultural crucible in which many fundamental developments of later European art had their origins. 'a highly individual work . . . wonderful visual and comparative analysis . . . I can think of no other general book on Roman art that deals so elegantly and informatively with the theme of visibility and visual desire.' Professor Natalie Boymel Kampen, Barnard College, New York 'exciting and original . . . a vibrant impression of creative energy and innovation held in constant tension by the persistence of more traditional motifs and techniques. Elsner constantly surprises and intrigues the reader by approaching familiar material in new ways.' Professor Averil Cameron, Keble College, Oxford

First edition published 1998 by Oxford University Press with the title: Imperial Rome and Christian triumph: the art of the Roman Empire AD 100-450.

In *Roman Eyes*, Jas Elsner seeks to understand the multiple ways that art in ancient Rome formulated the very conditions for its own viewing, and as a result was complicit in the construction of subjectivity in the Roman Empire. Elsner draws upon a wide variety of visual material, from sculpture and wall paintings to coins and terra-cotta statuettes. He examines the different contexts in which images were used, from the religious to the voyeuristic, from the domestic to the subversive. He reads images alongside and against the rich literary tradition of the Greco-Roman world, including travel writing,

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prose fiction, satire, poetry, mythology, and pilgrimage accounts. The astonishing picture that emerges reveals the mindsets Romans had when they viewed art--their preoccupations and theories, their cultural biases and loosely held beliefs. *Roman Eyes* is not a history of official public art--the monumental sculptures, arches, and buildings we typically associate with ancient Rome, and that tend to dominate the field. Rather, Elsner looks at smaller objects used or displayed in private settings and closed religious rituals, including tapestries, ivories, altars, jewelry, and even silverware. In many cases, he focuses on works of art that no longer exist, providing a rare window into the aesthetic and religious lives of the ancient Romans.

Rhetoric was fundamental to education and to cultural aspiration in the Greek and Roman worlds. It was one of the key aspects of antiquity that slipped under the line between the ancient world and Christianity erected by the early Church in late antiquity. Ancient rhetorical theory is obsessed with examples and discussions drawn from visual material. This book mines this rich seam of theoretical analysis from within Roman culture to present an internalist model for some aspects of how the Romans understood, made and appreciated their art. The understanding of public monuments like the Arch of Titus or Trajan's Column or of imperial statuary, domestic wall painting, funerary altars and sarcophagi, as well as of intimate items like children's dolls, is greatly enriched by being placed in relevant rhetorical contexts created by the Roman world.

Religious Dissent in Late Antiquity reconsiders the religious history of the late Roman Empire, focusing on the shifting position of dissenting religious groups - conventionally called 'pagans' and 'heretics'. The period from the mid-fourth century until the mid-fifth century CE witnessed a significant transformation of late Roman society and a gradual shift from the world of polytheistic religions into the Christian Empire. This book challenges the many straightforward melodramatic narratives of the Christianisation of the Roman Empire, still prevalent both in academic research and in popular non-fiction works. *Religious Dissent in Late Antiquity* demonstrates that the narrative is much more nuanced than the simple Christian triumph over the classical world. It looks at everyday life, economic aspects, day-to-day practices, and conflicts of interest in the relations of religious groups. *Religious Dissent in Late Antiquity* addresses two aspects: rhetoric and realities, and consequently, delves into the interplay between the manifest ideologies and daily life found in late antique sources. It is a detailed analysis of selected themes and a close reading of selected texts, tracing key elements and developments in the treatment of dissident religious groups. The book focuses on specific themes, such as the limits

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of imperial legislation and ecclesiastical control, the end of sacrifices, and the label of magic. *Religious Dissent in Late Antiquity* examines the ways in which dissident religious groups were construed as religious outsiders, but also explores local rituals and beliefs in late Roman society as creative applications and expressions of the infinite range of human inventiveness.

A distinct perspective on the momentous religious change in the region Diocletian (284–305) and his principal successor, Constantine (306–337), would rule the Roman world for over half a century and Constantine's sons would build on their legacy. Administrative reform encouraged the rise of a bureaucratic culture, provincial government was reshaped and became more hierarchical and the court became more structured. The period was also one of momentous religious change. With Constantine's adoption of Christianity as the favoured recipient of imperial patronage, the religious landscape would, over time, be radically reshaped. Jill Harries combines the administrative reform and religious change with accounts of war, women and imperial cities to offer a new and revealing view of the region. Key features: Focuses on the Emperor Constantine as a major figure and offers a context to his achievement Addresses the role of imperial women, often ignored for this period Studies the control of empires and how rulers fashion their claims to legitimacy Keywords: Roman history; Late Antiquity; Later Roman Empire; History of Christianity; Diocletian; Constantine; Emperor Julian.

The “marvelous” (Reza Aslan, bestselling author of *Zealot*), New York Times bestselling story of how Christianity became the dominant religion in the West. How did a religion whose first believers were twenty or so illiterate day laborers in a remote part of the empire become the official religion of Rome, converting some thirty million people in just four centuries? In *The Triumph of Christianity*, early Christian historian Bart D. Ehrman weaves the rigorously-researched answer to this question “into a vivid, nuanced, and enormously readable narrative” (Elaine Pagels, National Book Award-winning author of *The Gnostic Gospels*), showing how a handful of charismatic characters used a brilliant social strategy and an irresistible message to win over hearts and minds one at a time. This “humane, thoughtful and intelligent” book (The New York Times Book Review) upends the way we think about the single most important cultural transformation our world has ever seen—one that revolutionized art, music, literature, philosophy, ethics, economics, and law.

Michael Kulikowski traces two hundred years of Roman history during which the Empire became ungovernable and succumbed to turbulence and change. A sweeping political narrative, *The Tragedy of Empire* tells the story of the Western Roman Empire's downfall, even as the Eastern Empire remained politically strong and culturally vibrant.

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