Definition of religion. Annotated bibliography. Studies in English on Judaism, Christianity, Roman and Greek religion

The Problem of defining Religion

First Part: General studies in English:

A - Cas

Cav - Fuj

Gar -Kim

Kin - Owe

Pai - Sma

Smi - Z

Second Part: Studies in English on various religions:

Judaism, Christianity, Roman, Greek (Current page)

Buddhism, Chinese, Hinduism

Islam, Shinto, Asian, African, Australian, Manichaeism, Zoroastrianism

Third Part: Studies in English on various disciplines:

History of religions, Comparative religions

Anthropology, Sociology

Psychology, philosophy, phenomenology, law, politics

Judaism

1. Boyarin, Daniel. 2008. "The Christian Invention of Judaism: The Theodosian Empire and the Rabbinic Refusal of Religion." In *Religion: Beyond a Concept*, edited by de Vries, Hent, 150–177. New York: Fordham University Press.

Note: This essay was originally published as Daniel Boyarin, ‘‘The Christian Invention of Judaism: The Theodosian Empire and the Rabbinic Refusal of Religion,’’ *Representations* 85 (Spring 2004): 21–57.
"It seems highly significant that there is no word in premodern Jewish parlance that means ‘‘Judaism.’’ When the term *Ioudaismos* appears in non-Christian Jewish writing, to my knowledge only in *II Maccabees*, it doesn't mean Judaism, the religion, but the entire complex of loyalties and practices that mark off the people of Israel; after that, it is used as the name of the Jewish religion only by writers who do not identify themselves with and by that name at all, until, it would seem, well into the nineteenth century.(1) It might seem, then, that Judaism has not, until some time in modernity, existed at all, that whatever moderns might be tempted to abstract out, to disembed from the culture of Jews and call their religion, was not so disembedded or ascribed particular status by Jews until very recently.
Until our present moment, it could be defensibly argued, Judaism both is and is not a ‘‘religion.’’ On the one hand, for many purposes it, like Hinduism, operates as a religion within multi-religious societies.
Jews claim for their religion a semantic, cultural status parallel to that of Christianity in the West." (p. 150)
(...)
"Something about the difference between Judaism and Christianity is captured by insisting on the ways that Judaism is not a religion.(2) This ambivalence has deep historical roots." (p- 151)
(1) John J. Collins, ‘‘Cult and Culture: The Limits of Hellenization in Judea,’’ in *Hellenism in the Land of Israel*, ed. John J. Collins and Gregory Sterling (Notre Dame, Ind.: Notre Dame University Press, 2000), 39.
(2) For this, if for no other reason, referring to the history of modern Hinduism as its Semiticization is both inaccurate and disturbing (Daniel Boyarin, ‘‘Jewish Cricket,’’ PMLA 113, no. 1 [January 1998]: 40-45).

2. ———. 2017. "Nominalist “Judaism” and the Late-Ancient Invention of Religion." In *Religion, Theory, Critique: Classic and Contemporary Approaches and Methodologies*, edited by King, Richard, 23–39. New York: Columbia University Press.
;"In the scholarly literature as it stands today, there are two almost directly opposed stances to the category “religion,” especially religion as a form of identity. On the one hand, we find still many—if not most—writers writing as if “religion” were an essential category, something as essentially human as language or walking, and the only relevant question being what kind of religion any given human group or human individual “had” or adhered to, usually expressed in terms of his (sic) beliefs or faith (or, occasionally, whether it is possible for human beings to survive without any religion at all). On the other hand, we fi nd too, although not quite as frequently, a recognition that religion is a historical and thus historicizable category,not an essence but a particular kind of institution, something like literature or science and thus no more universally applicable to all human societies than they are. Typically, for scholars holding this view, religion is not found before the Enlightenment.
(:::)
"My own researches and reflections have led me to a third position, one like the Smiths [Wilfred Cantwell and Jonathan Z.] and Asad in that I, too, regard “religion” as a culturally specific, nonuniversal, historicizable category, but unlike them in that I consider “religion” to be an essential category of Christian self-understanding and of the constitution of Christianity itself and thus a product of late antiquity and not of modernity or the Enlightenment. I wish to propose here that while, indeed, “religion” may be the product of the scholar’s study, it was a late-ancient scholar (or rather group of scholars) who created it and that consequently studying the genealogy of the historical product that is the def nition of “religion” is, contra Asad, a study of late-antique (and not only modern) discursive processes. That episcopal scholar’s study, then, had enormous impact on discursive processes that

made a significant difference (for good or ill) in the lives of millions of human beings." (pp. 23-24)

3. ———. 2019. *Judaism: The Genealogy of a Modern Notion*. New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press.
;Chapter 1. *The Debate of the Terms,* pp. 3-30.
"When the term *Ioudaismos* appears in non-Christian Jewish writing—to my knowledge only in 2 Maccabees—it doesn't mean "Judaism," the "religion," but the entire complex of loyalties and practices, including dress, speech, and also sacrifice, that mark off the people of Judea (what we call now "Jewishness"); after that, it is used as the name of the Jewish "religion"—itself a highly problematic term—only by writers who do not identify themselves with and by that name at all, until, it would seem, the nineteenth century(1)." (*Preface*, p. XI)
(1) John J. Collins, "Cult and Culture: The Limits of Hellenization in Judea," in *Hellenism in the Land of Israel*, ed. John J. Collins and Gregory Sterling, Christianity and Judaism in Antiquity (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame, 2000), 39.
(...)
"There is no word in any premodern Jewish text or in any Jewish language that matches in meanings and offered definitions to the usage and definitions of "religion" as just sampled in English." (p. 11)
(...)
"We should be neither ascribing nor implying the personal soteriological aspects of Christianities to a putative "Judaism," even though many Jews may have been involved in such doings as well, nor should we be implying the separation of spheres that a word meaning "Jewish religion" would insinuate before Jews en masse—or for that matter, nearly anyone else—made such distinctions and separations between law, politics, religion. Our attempts to translate in this fashion only produce more bank checks without cashing them." (p. 30)

4. Fischer, Yochi. 2013. "The Concepts of 'Religion' and 'Secularism' in the Hebrew Language and Their Manifestations in Israel's Socio-Political Dynamics." In *Religion and Secularity: Transformations and Transfers of Religious Discourses in Europe and Asia*, edited by Eggert, Marion and Hölscher, Lucian, 109–129. Leiden: Brill.
;"The objective of this chapter is to analyze the complexities and dialectics of the concepts of religion and secularism in Israel and in the Hebrew language, as well as the manifestations of these complexities in Israel's socio-political dynamics. I examine some of the theological and practical aspects of religion and secularism in Israel, as well as the tensions and contradictions between religion and secularism and their various manifestations in contemporary processes.
The first part of the chapter analyzes the apparatus of Jewish-Israeli religion and secularism. This analysis focuses on parts of the linguistic and theological background of Israel's definition of religion, and on secularization processes and their impact on the formation of Israel's political identity.
This contextualized analysis illustrates the complex nature of religion and secularism that is peculiar to Israel. The second part of the chapter addresses few manifestations of the religious and secular formations in various spheres of Israeli socio-political life. The chapter concludes by pointing to current changes in the formation of the religious and the secular in Israel, changes that may be labeled "post-secularism"." (p. 110)
(...)
"There is no Hebrew equivalent for the word 'religion' and its variants in Latin. Discussion of religion in its Christian sense usually focuses on the configuration of faith, institutions, theology, and practices. It is a category that stems from the peculiarities of Western Christian history. In late antiquity it developed within the broader context of Roman culture and the Church, to distinguish between the corpus of a person's civil pursuits and the worship of God."
(...)

"Translating the Christian notion of ‘religion’ into the Jewish-Hebrew semantic field is problematic, above all because, according to Jewish epistemology, religious existence and experience is all-inclusive and cannot distinguish between the spiritual and the temporal, or the sacred and the secular, as far as human activity is concerned. Judaism lacks a “secular” law and as such it does not recognize sacred as opposed to profane areas of occupation.(2) Jewish religion, in essence, contains secular, that is, worldly, elements. Its aims are precisely to sanctify the secular, not in the sense of making the secular mystical, but by giving religious meaning to every aspect of daily life. In trying to convert ‘religion’ into the sacred language of Judaism, namely, Hebrew, we thus have to perform semantic and theological transformative acts." (p. 111)
(2) Dan, *On Sanctity*
References
Dan, Joseph. O*n Sanctity: Religion, Morality and Mysticism in Judaism and Other Religions*. Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1998. [In Hebrew]

5. Mitchell, Christine. 2025. "Inventing Religion in Elephantine: Judeans and Egyptians under Persian Hegemony." In *Religious Inventions: Ancient Mediterranean Practice and the Study of Religion*, edited by Arnal, William and Vearncombe, Erin K., 21–35. Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press.
;"The veneration of Yaho at Yeb (Elephantine) provides one of two examples of the construction of religion in the Achaemenid Empire that I discuss in this chapter. The other is the veneration of the Egyptian ram-god Khnum, also at Elephantine. Taking my lead from David Chidester’s recent work on imperialism and religion,(9) and Bruce Lincoln’s careful attention to religious discourses,(10) I argue that what we have in the so-called “Passover Letter” of Hananiah is a pursuit of a definition of Judean religion through an imperial discourse. Since the Persians are widely viewed as having been tolerant of the religious practices of their subjects and as having been laissez-faire in their government, my argument runs counter to much established biblical scholarship. The evidence of Achaemenid bureaucracy that we have does not support this scholarly rhetoric, which is based largely on the biblical texts of Isaiah and Ezra-Nehemiah. In fact, as Christopher Tuplin notes, the evidence from Egypt, Persepolis, and Bactria shows the tendency of Persian administrators to obsessively micro-manage the affairs under their charge.(11) Even given our meagre evidence – a few texts, most fragmentary, and some archaeological evidence of the floor-plan of the Yaho temple(12) – it is startling how much the Achaemenid administration was involved in the definition of Yaho-veneration at Yeb." (p. 21)
(9) David Chidester, *Empire of Religion: Imperialism and Comparative Religion* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2014).
(10) Bruce Lincoln, *Theorizing Myth: Narrative, Ideology, and Scholarship* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999); Lincoln, *Holy Terrors: Thinking about Religion after September 11* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003); Lincoln, *Discourse and the Construction of Society: Comparative Studies of Myth, Ritual, and Classification*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014).
(11) Christopher J. Tuplin, “The Fall and Rise of the Elephantine Temple,” in A*ršāma and His World*, vol. 3, Aršāma’s World, ed. Christopher J. Tuplin and John Ma (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020), 350.

6. Reed, Annette Yoshiko. 2019. "Partitioning "Religion" and its Prehistories: Reflections on Categories, Narratives, and the Practice of Religious Studies." In *Constructing "Data" in Religious Studies: Examining the Architecture of the Academy*, edited by Smith, Leslie Dorrough, 9–26. Sheffield: Equinox.
;"Perhaps nothing has more unified the discipline of religious studies in the past fifty years than the practice ofhistoricizing, interrogating, de-bunking, de-naturalizing, relativizing, and otherwise unsettling its very subject." (p. 9)
(...)
!Yet the repetition remains notable nonetheles s- seemingly akin, at times, to an act of necromancy, whereby the much-vanquished assumption of a neutral, natural, or

universal notion of "religion" becomes a specter raised again and again, in part for the sake of being slain again. In this exploratory essay, I take this repetition as an invitation to look more closely at what studies assume and occlude.
I am not concerned here with the accuracy or even efficacy of such arguments, nor even with the questions of where the explanatory power of the second-order category "religion" ends and when scholars should turn instead to "native terminology."(3)
My concern, rather, is with "religion" as a particularly potent example of what categories can *do*." (p. 9)
(...)
"In attending to the practice of creating and contesting categories as practice, my interest is ultimately in opening the way for exploring what is "before religion" from a somewhat less teleological perspective. Accordingly, the first part of this essay will reflect on the creation and contestation of "religion" in relation to the power and limits of practices of categorization, and the second part will then turn to consider these same issues through the lens of two specific premodern examples of other practices for organizing those varied types of knowledge that we now study in terms of "religious identity;' "religious change;' and "religious difference"; for the latter, I shall focus in particular on the practice of creating narratives that remap synchronic diversity onto chronological time, thinking with the contrast between the Pseudo-Clementine *Homilies* and Epiphanius's Panarion.
Even as I look to specific examples that speak to "Judaism;• "Christianity," and "Jewish Christianity," my broader aim will be to draw attention to the current overdependence on word-studies and to signal some of the problems in pursuing such studies in atomized isolation, including but not limited to a myopic focus on those words and approaches that seem most to presage our own understanding of "religion" and the dominant practices in scholarship on it. It may be tempting to look to the past to answer the question of when notions familiar to us today came to arise and become prominent; to do so, however, may skew our understanding of past and present alike (Reed 2018: 389- 438). Although this essay is preliminary and experimental, I hope at the very least to make a case for attending to the diversity of premodern modes of theorizing, not least as a reminder of the limits of words and practices of categorization to produce "religion(s)"." (p. 11, a note omitted)
(3) On "native terminology" and its limits see Smith (2004: 134). For some interesting examples in practice, however, see also Campany (2003); Becker (2009).
(7)

7. Satlow, Michael L. 2006. "Defining Judaism: Accounting for "Religions" in the Study of Religion." *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* no. 74:837–860.
;Abstract: "Despite the wide scholarly recognition of and dissatisfaction with the first-order essentialism inherent in the academic study of individual "religions" or "traditions," scholars have been far slower to develop nonessentialist models that take seriously both the plurality of religious communities that all identify as part of the same religion and the characteristics that allow these communities to see themselves as members of a single "religion." This article, building on earlier work by Jacob Neusner and Jonathan Z. Smith, attempts to develop a polythetic model for Judaism that has implications not only for the study and teaching of "Judaism" but more broadly also for how scholars might develop individual "traditions" as useful second-order categories of analysis."

Christianity

1. Anidjar, Giri. 2015. "Christianity, Christianities, Christian." *Journal of Religious and Political Practice* no. 1:39–46.

;Abstract: "The relation between the concept of religion and its Christian determinations has surely become increasingly visible. In the study of religion, Christianity (*vera religio*, western Christendom) has served as a paradigmatic occasion, a prime focus, of constant research and investigation. Its history and transformations have rightly been studied in a plethora of ways and approaches. Throughout, the question of Christianity – if there is one – lingers as a question of religion. Everything is therefore as though the interrogation of the concept of religion does not unsettle our understanding of Christianity as a religion. A strange essentialism. For what if Christianity were not a religion? Not exclusively so? What if, for two thousand years, it had been more than a religion? Or something else altogether? What if it became a religion (in the restricted, modern sense) only latterly? Having learned what we can from and about the concept of religion – its novelty, its questionable disappearance, its containment – should we not reconsider what we mean by Christianity?"

2. Betz, Hans Dieter. 1994. "Christianity as Religion: Paul' Attempt at Definition in Romans." In *The Notion of "Religion" in Comparative Research: Selected Proceedings of the XVI Congress of the International Association for the History of Religions (I.A.H.R.), Rome, 3rd–8th September, 1990*, edited by Bianchi, Ugo, 3–10. Rome: L'Erma di Bretschneider.
"The thesis of the following paper is that the apostle Paul makes a serious attempt at defining Christianity as religion only in his last letter, that to the Romans. In his earlier letters the problem of Christian self-definition gradually becomes urgent; Paul is increasingly preoccupied with the separation of his churches from Judaism (Galatians, Philippians 3), and with regulating Christian conduct toward paganism (1 Corinthians).
The letter to the Romans, however, is different in that here Paul presents an intricate argument defining how he sees Christianity as "religion" in terms his Roman addressees still understand. This argument is carried through in the entire letter of Romans (except chapter 16). Our presentation here at the Congress can be no more than an abbreviated version of a longer essay that will later appear in the *Journal of Religion*.
The paper has the following parts: after considering (I) The *Presuppositions* for the thesis, we shall discuss (II) *The Emergence of the Key Term* (λατρεία, λατρεύειν), Paul's equivalent of the Latin *religio*. The thematic statement in Romans 1: 16-17 has to do with (III) *The Definition of the Gospel* as "power of God" working itself out in history. (IV) then turns to *The Origins of Religion*, and (V) to Paul's assessment of *The Present Condition of Religion*, that is, of paganism (Rom 1: 18-32) and Judaism (2: 1-3:8). This is followed by (VI) *Christianily as Religion*." (p. 3)

3. Bossy, John. 1985. *Christianity in the West 1400-1700*. New York: Oxford University Press.
;"Shortly after 1400 the word 'religion', which had for centuries usually meant a 'religious' rule or order and those who followed or belonged to it, was revived by humanists to mean hat it had meant in classical Latin, a worshipful attitude to God or a respect for holy things. 'Christian religion', as for Calvin, meant the primary posture of the Christian community, or of the individuals who composed it, towards God. There was argument about whether this posture did or did not entail an obligatory set of ritual observances and also, among cynics, about whether it was a profitable posture to be in at all. But nobody disputed that religion was an attribute of individuals or communities, or thought it something which existed apart from those who felt it or acted in accordance with it.
By 1700 the Christian world was full of religions, objective social and moral entities characterised by system, principles and hard edges, which could be envisaged by Voltaire as cutting one another's throats. Above their multiplicity planed a shadowy abstraction, the Christian Religion, and somewhere above that, in an upper region of the classifying system, religion with a capital 'R', planted in its new domain by people who did not usually feel or believe in it. The transition between the first universe of meaning and the second, though under way by 1600, took most of the

seventeenth century to achieve: the *De veritate religionis Christianae* of the Dutch Arminian Hugo Grotius (1622) and in England William Chillingworth's *The Religion of Protestants* (1637) seem milestones along the road. Locke's usage exemplified it perfectly, Hobbes's did not. It looks a classic example of Foucault's linguistic shift, though it was in the first place a consequence of the multiplication of versions of the Christian faith." (p. 170)

4. Chukwuma-Offor, Amara Mary. 2024. "The Christian understanding of religion and the religious understanding of Christianity: A hermeneutical trajectory." *Social Science and Humanities Research* no. 7:74–82.
;Abstract: "This study focuses on examining the divergence between the Christian understanding of religion and the religious understanding of Christianity. The hristian understanding of religion is characterised by internal theological principles and beliefs specific to the faith, which includes but not limited to the divinity of Jesus Christ, the authority of the Bible, and the concept of salvation through faith. This perspective emphasizes practices and rituals central to Christian life, including worship, moral teachings, and community activities. It also encompasses doctrinal frameworks and eschatological views that shape how Christians live out their faith. Conversely, the religious understanding of Christianity involves a broader, external analysis of Christianity as it fits within the global context of world religions. This perspective includes the historical development of Christianity, from its origins in the early Church to its contemporary manifestations. It also involves a comparative study of Christianity's beliefs and practices relative to other major religions, examining similarities and differences in theology, ritual, and social impact. Employing the methods of critical analysis and hermeneutics approach, this paper also considers the cultural and societal influence of Christianity, including its role in shaping societal norms and its interactions with other religious traditions. Reflecting on these two perspectives, the research aims to provide a view of how Christianity is understood both from within the faith itself and from academic and interreligious perspectives. This dual approach showcases the complexities of religious identity and interfaith dialogue in a nuanced global context."

5. Gaitanos, Georgios. 2021. "The concept of religion in the Early Christian Literature." *Theology & Culture* no. 3:35–80.
;Abstract: "The paper seeks to highlight how to understand and interpret the term "religion" during a period when "religion" was not a clear and distinct conceptual category, as it is now understood in the western world from the Enlightenment onwards.
Through the study of the sources of Early Christian literature I seek to present more data that will help to understand the mentality of the people of the first three centuries AD to highlight the evolution of thought on the subject of "religion". Analytical statistics will be presented on the different meanings of the term and how often it was used by the Christian authors. Another goal is to point out what practices or concepts are associated with "religion", to decipher when the meaning of the term differs and for what purpose, to find out if in some texts or if any Church Father tried to study religion or religious interactions with any scientific approach."

6. Judge, Edwin A. 2006. "Was Christianity a Religion?" *Society for the Study of Early Christianity, Newsletter* no. 56:4–7.
;Reprinted as Chapter 25 in E. A. Judge, *The First Christians in the Roman World: Augustan and New Testament Essays*, edited by James R. Harrison, Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck 2008, pp. 404-409.
"Talking of Christianity as an ancient 'religion' implies also a second historical muddle, a terminological rather than a chronological one. There was in Graeco-Roman antiquity no generic word for 'religion', whether in the 'obsolete' or the modern sense.
The Latin word *religio* means 'scruple', not only in the face of the gods.
The many facets of this constraint are carefully set out in the Oxford Latin Dictionary ending (sense 9) with something like our now 'obsolete' sense of a

'religion' in antiquity, "a particular system of religious observances, cult". The OLD stops at AD 200, before the Christians began to take over this sense as they came to dress up their quest in the rituals of a cult, and before others responded to the distinctiveness of Christianity as a questing option in life by applying the same motivation to the established cultural values ('Hellenism').(2)" (p. 405)
(...)
"So was Christianity a religion? Not at all, in the sense we give to that term with regard to ancient cultic practice. Yet it is of the essence of the idea as we now hold it, and which Christianity itself has created. It would be historically clearer, however, in either case to analyse other cultural traditions first on their own terms." (pp. 408-409)
(2) In E.A. Judge, The Conversion of Rome: Ancient Sources of Modern Social Tensions (Sydney 1980), I said that Ammianus might have observed "a change of religion" (6), that Julian sought "a revival of classical religion" (7) and that Claudian was at home with "the new religion" (12). Each phrase imposes formulae that writers were still incapable of using in the fourth century. See now E.A. Judge, 'The Absence of Religion, Even in Ammianus?', in G.R. Treloar and R.D. Linder (eds), *Making History for God* (Sydney 2004) 295-308. The Roman government used *religio* (in its cultic sense) to demarcate Roman practice from that of innovators: *Acta Cypriani* (citing Valerian's ruling of AD 257) 1.1 (Musurillo) *Romanam religionem*, cf. 4.1 *inimicum diis Romanis et sacris religionibus*; *Mos. et Rom. legum collatio* (citing Diocletian against the Manichees, AD 302), *FIRA*^{2} [*Fontes Iuris Romani Antejustiniani*] 2.15.3.2 (Baviera) *neque reprehendi a nova vetus religio deberet*. Readers of Livy and Tacitus, however, would not have found the sense of 'practice' strange.

7. ———. 2020. "Rethinking Religion from Hellenistic Times." In *On This Rock: When Culture Disrupted the Roman Community*, edited by Macdonald, A. D., 52–55. Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers.
;Chapter 5. "First published in *The Journal of Religious History* in 1989, this chapter is a review of J. Podemann Sørensen, ed. *Rethinking Religion: Studies in the Hellenistic Process,* a volume of papers from a 1984 symposium of the Institute for the History of Religions in Copenhagen. In addition to specific points of critique or appreciation for each paper, the review articulates a working definition of "religion," noting some of the problems inherent in applying that category to ancient phenomena. The text of the review has undergone minor revision and a new title has been provided for the present reproduction." (p. 52)

8. ———. 2020. "The Absence of Religion, Even in Ammianus?" In *On This Rock: When Culture Disrupted the Roman Community*, edited by Macdonald, A. D., 149–162. Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers.
;Chapter 9. "The basic argument of this chapter was first articulated when Judge was Visiting Professor of Classics and History at Berkeley in 1984.(425) The written version was not published until two decades later, appearing in 2004 under the present title in Treloar et al., *Making History for God*[*: Essays on Evangelicalism, Revival and Mission: in Honour of Stuart Piggin, Master of Robert Menzies College, 1990-2004*, Sidney; Robert Menzies College, 2004], 295–308. It was published again in Judge, *Jerusalem and Athens* [*Cultural Transformation in Late Antiquity. Essays Selected and Edited by Alanna Nobbs*, Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck 2010] 264–75, and is reproduced here with minimal adaptation. The study attends to the way the fourth-century historian Ammianus Marcellinus perceived and described Christian practice from the outside. Reviewing the terminology Ammianus used, it seeks to illuminate what kind of movement Ammianus understood Christianity to be, given the Christian distinctives he observed (but failed to comprehend!) and the absence of our "religion" as a category in ancient thought.
(425) Since then several other relevant treatments have appeared: Hunt, "Christians and Christianity"; Neri, *Ammiano e il cristianesimo*; Rike, *Apex Omnium*. Alonso-Núñez, reviewing Neri, says: "it would have been worthwhile to have studied

systematically Ammianus' attitude towards Christianity." Subsequent treatments include Matthews, *Roman Empire of Ammianus*, 424–51; Neri, "Ammianus' Definition of Christianity"; Barnes, *Ammianus Marcellinus,* 79–94 (...); Harrison, "Templum mundi totius."

References

M. Alonso-Núñez, review of Neri in *The Classical Review* 37 (1987) 103–104

T. D. Barnes, *Ammianus Marcellinus and the Representation of Historical Reality* (Ithaca 1998) 79–94

Thomas Harrison, 'Templum mundi totius: Ammianus and a Religious Ideal of Rome', in J. W. Drijvers et al. (eds), *The Late Roman World and its Historian* (London 1999) 178–190

E. D. Hunt, 'Christians and Christianity in Ammianus Marcellinus', *Classical Quarterly* 35 (1985) 186–200

John Matthews, 'Religion and Philosophy', in *The Roman Empire of Ammianus* (London 1989) 424–451

V. Neri, *Ammiano e il cristianesimo* (Bologna 1985)

V. Neri, 'Ammianus' Definition of Christianity as absoluta et simplex religio', in J. den Boeft et al. (eds), *Cognitio gestorum: The Historiographic Art of Ammianus Marcellinu*s (Amsterdam 1992) 59–65

R. L. Rike, *Apex Omnium: Religion in the Res Gestae of Ammianus* (Berkeley 1987)

9. Kloppenborg, John S. 2025. "Second-Century Constructions of Christianity." In *Religious Inventions: Ancient Mediterranean Practice and the Study of Religion*, edited by Arnal, William and Vearncombe, Erin K., 36–68. Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press.

;"In a provocative 2006 essay, Edwin Judge asked, "was Christianity a religion?"(1). His point was that when one sets the documentary records of Christianity in the first century beside what is known of the ancient cults of Jupiter, Athena, Isis, Sarapis, and Mithras, Christianity did not look much like a "religion."

(...)

Religio and *religiosi* in antiquity referred, respectively, to rituals and to scrupulous persons. The opposite of *religio* was not secularism but *superstitio*, the excessive or immoderate performance of a rite.(3) In the plural *religiones* meant "rituals" and not, as it has come to mean, the array of constellations of beliefs, creeds, ritual practices, and ethical postures that we now call "world religions." The latter notion was likely the result of the colonial encounter of Europeans with non-Western cultures, when colonizers found it useful to categorize the people they encountered by synthetic constructions of "religion" analogous to the European construction. Needless to say, these other "religions" were inevitably judged to be inferior to Christianity." (p. 36)

(..)

"The second comment is by William E. Arnal in an essay on the "invention" of Christianity in the second century.(8) Arnal was concerned with the category "Christian origins" and how it has functioned to collect the "scattered, distinct, and theologically unrelated documents that happen to appear in the New Testament" into a single discursive unity, and then to posit a strong continuity between the first century and the second.(9)" (p. 37)

(1) E. A. Judge, "Was Christianity a Religion?," in *The First Christians in the Roman World: Augustan and New Testament Essays*, ed.James R. Harrison, WUNT 229 (Tubingen: Mhr Siebeck , 2008), 404-9.

(3) See Cicero, *Nat. d.* 2.71-2.

(8) William E. Arnal, "The Collection and Synthesis of 'Tradition' and the Second-Century Invention of Christianity," Method and Theory in the Study of Religion 23, no. 3 (2011): 193–215.

10. Malina, Bruce J. 1986. ""Religion" in the world of Paul." *Biblical Theology Bulletin: Journal of Bible and Culture* no. 16:92–101.

;"To put it another way, to read and interpret the meaning of any sort of writing, whether a road sign or a restaurant check or a biblical book, the reader must share

with the writer a scenario of how the world works.
People who read the New Testament authors today most often presume that they fully share the same "religious" world view as those authors. This fundamentalism is often avoided by the historically minded. Yet even those persons with a sense of history often believe that the ancient world in general and Israel in particular had dominant beliefs and institutions which were explicitly religious. For example, the noted historian, John Collins, writes: "In the ancient world in general, and in Israel in particular, the dominant beliefs and institutions were explicitly religious and were embodied in traditions passed on from generation to generation" (1983: 2). For such people, Paul of Tarsus and Jesus of Nazareth would have picked up and elaborated explicitly religious themes in the course of launching their respective forms of Christianity. What largely differentiated the two was that Jesus set a rural movement under way, while Paul had to deal with the first urban Christians.
The purpose of this essay is to question the accuracy and adequacy of the received historical view in this regard. In the process of such questioning, an alternate way of imagining religion in the first-century Mediterranean world will be described. For if people today see first-century Mediterranean religion as though it were just like religion in our society, it is possible they may be suffering from an optical illusion. On the other hand, it is obvious that there is not much evidence at present for considering religion in the world of Jesus and Paul in any other way than we do. The reason for this perhaps is that the theories that produce such evidence, that make evidence evident, are simply not in place and have not been utilized up until now. The theoretical model presented in this essay is based on a historically more accurate way of describing society and its institutions and values in a first-century Mediterranean setting. The attentive reader is invited to test the model, to see whether adequate evidence might be produced that would situate the groups of Jesus and Paul within the eastern Mediterranean of two thousand years ago." (p. 92)
References
Collins, John J. 1983 *Between Athens and Jerusalem: jewish Identity in the Hellenistic Diaspora*. New York: Crossroad.

11. Nongbri, Brent. 2008. *Paul Without Religion: The Creation of a Category and the Search for an Apostle Beyond the New Perspective*, Yale.
;Unpublished Ph. D. dissertation available at ProQuest Dissertations ref. number 3317187.
Abstract: "*Paul Without Religion* explores the tension between recent developments in the study of the category of religion and the dominant approach to reading the letters of the apostle Paul. While some historians, anthropologists, philosophers, and even critics in the field of religious studies have begun to question the validity of the category of religion, scholars of the New Testament have not subjected the idea of religion to much scrutiny. Recent study of Paul's letters has come to focus with increased urgency upon the relationship of Paul with "Judaism," and an unhistoricized, essentialized notion of religion has operated unnoticed in these debates; the modern category of religion and the contemporary framework of so-called World Religions have set the agenda for the discussion of Paul's letters and other ancient Jewish texts.
I attempt to read Paul outside these structures, and I justify doing so by further historicizing the category of religion. The first portion of the dissertation thus traces out a history of the modern category of religion, highlighting several different episodes of divine-human interaction from antiquity to the English Enlightenment in the eighteenth century. The second part of the dissertation then generates a different framework for interpreting Paul's letters by examining recent works by classicists and scholars of the ancient near east in order to isolate the typical ways ancient Mediterranean peoples interacted with the gods. The final chapters provide a re-reading of Paul's letters grounded in these concerns. Using more traditional philological tools (such as comparisons of Paul's letters and the Dead Sea Scrolls and close attention to the intertextual relationships between Paul's letters and prophetic literature such as the book of Isaiah), I provide a reading of Paul

(especially his letter to the Galatians) that focuses the apostle's concern for non-Jews and his positive valuation of purity and the temple in Jerusalem, some of the very issues that scholars have claimed separated Paul from other Jews. Thus, rather than solving the problem of Paul and Judaism, I try to show how and why "Paul and Judaism" came to be perceived as a problem in the first place."

12. ———. 2015. "The Concept of Religion and the Study of the Apostle Paul." *Journal of The Jesus Movement in Its Jewish Setting* no. 2:1–26.
;"In what follows, I will trace out a brief history of the question of the concept of religion in the study of Paul's letters, focusing primarily on two exchanges, one involving the work of Edwin Judge and Wayne Meeks, the other involving the work of E. P. Sanders and Jonathan Z. Smith. Framing the history of scholarship in this way will serve as a springboard for reflecting on the current state of the question among Pauline interpreters. While the arguments of E. P. Sanders have had tremendous influence on North American and British Pauline scholarship, I find that scholars working in Sanders's wake, including many socalled "radical" interpreters of Paul, have not sufficiently accounted for J. Z. Smith's critique and remain locked into reading Paul's letters in ways that have been decisively shaped by Sanders's notion of religion as soteriology. Even Pauline scholars who have explicitly criticized Sanders's use of religion tend to replicate the structure of Sanders's argumentation, continuing to compare Paul on the one hand and "Judaism" on the other, with a focus on questions of belief.
To illustrate this phenomenon in contemporary Pauline scholarship, I place N. T. Wright's recent criticism of Sanders in conversation with the work of Russell McCutcheon and William Arnal, who have especially highlighted the problematic status of religion and belief in New Testament studies. My conclusion from surveying all these debates is that, despite the wide influence of Sanders, the exchange between Judge and Meeks offers approaches to the concept of religion that provide more fruitful paths for the study of Paul's letters.
I therefore close with a look at how either setting aside the concept of religion in Pauline studies (as Judge suggested) or using the concept in a more self-conscious and sophisticated way (as Meeks modeled) might open new avenues of exploration. Throughout, I try to demonstrate the contact points of the study of Paul's letters and the wider field of the academic study of religion." (p. 2, a note omitted)
References
Edwin A. Judge, "The Early Christians as a Scholastic Community," *Journal of Religious History* 1 (1960): 5–15; (1961): 125–37, now reprinted in *The First Christians in the Roman World: Augustan and New Testament Essays,* ed. James R. Harrison (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2008), 526–52, esp. 539–40.
Edwin A. Judge, "The Social Identity of the First Christians: A Question of Method in Religious History," *Journal of Religious History* 11 (1980): 201–17, reprinted in *Social Distinctives of the Christians in the First Century: Pivotal Essays by E. A. Judge*, ed. David M. Scholer (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2008), 117–35.
Wayne A. Meeks, *The First Urban Christians: The Social World of the Apostle Paul* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1983).
Wayne A. Meeks, "Taking Stock and Moving On," in *After the First Urban Christians: The Social-Scientific Study of Pauline Christianity Twenty-Five Years Later*, ed. Todd D. Still and David G. Horrell (London: T&T Clark, 2009), 134–46.
E. P. Sanders, "Comparing Judaism and Christianity: An Academic Autobiography," in *Redefining First-Century Jewish and Christian Identities: Essays in Honor of Ed Parish Sanders*, ed. Fabian E. Udoh et al. (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2008), 11–41.
Jonathan Z. Smith, "The Social Description of Early Christianity," Religious Studies Review 1 (1975): 19–25.

13. Schott, Jeremy M. 2008. *Christianity, Empire, and the Making of Religion in Late Antiquity*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.
;Chapter 3: *Vera Religio* and *Falsae Religiones:* Lactantius's *Divine Institutes,* pp. 79-109.

"The *Divine Institutes* marks a watershed in Latin apologetic literature.
Not only does Lactantius respond to pagan critics, he also provides the first attempt at a systematic presentation of Christian theology in Latin patristic literature. In length the *Divine Institutes* equals Origen 's *Against Celsus* of a half century earlier. In more than one respect the *Divine Institutes* is the forerunner of Augustine's massive apologetic project in the C*ity of God*. Like Augustine, Lactantius writes for an educated audience familiar with all that is best in arts and letters and combines a skillful critique of traditional religion and philosophy with an apologetic presentation of central Christian doctrines. Books 1 and 2 constitute an attack on traditional religion, or *falsae religiones*, while Book 3 offers a critique of philosophy, or *falsa sapientia*. In Books 4 through 7 Lactantius shifts his emphasis from polemic to an elaboration of Christian doctrines for his pagan audience. Book 4 offers a defense of Christianity as the one true religion and philosophy. Book 5 reacts directly to the events surrounding the persecution. Book 6 concerns "true worship" and is an apologetic presentation of the Christian life. In the final, seventh book, Lactantius presents his eschatological vision: the final judgment will take place after a cosmic battle between good and evil that will ensue following the dissolution of the Roman Empire." (p. 80)

14. Stowers, Stanley. 2025. "Theorizing Historical Moments of Religion: Paul and His Followers." In *Religious Inventions: Ancient Mediterranean Practice and the Study of Religion*, edited by Arnal, William and Vearncombe, Erin K., 69–87. Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press.
;"I argue that religion forms a robust social kind. “Social kind” refers to a way of theorizing social entities in the mainstream philosophy of the sciences, the social sciences, and other areas. Two complementary approaches to social kinds have dominated: epistemic and ontological or constitutive. I do not elaborate on these here but only note that I presuppose that religion can be justified and theorized as a real entity in the world through both approaches. In my own theorization of these as applied to ancient Mediterranean religion, I argue that four interactive sub-kinds exist.(2) On this view, religion consists of patterns of imagined human exchange with gods and non-evident beings given relative stability by human cognitive propensities and other material conditions. Historically, the most important material condition has been cognition situated in an agricultural environment. The question I raise here asks how the instances of religiosity evidenced in the letters of Paul can be theorized. Can study of the letters be a contribution to the study of religion? I can only offer the briefest outline of an answer, providing selected aspects of the theory and limited discussion of some evidence." (pp. 69-70)
(2) Stanley Stowers, “The Religion of Plant and Animal Offerings versus the Religion of Meanings, Essences and Textual Mysteries,” in *Ancient Mediterranean Sacrifice: Images, Acts, Meanings,* ed. Jennifer Knust and Zsuzsanna Varhelyi (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 35–56; Stowers, “Why Expert versus Non-Expert Is Not Elite versus Popular Religion: The Case of the Third Century,” in *Religious Competition in Late Antiquity*, ed. Nathaniel DesRosiers and Lilly C. Vuong (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2016), 139–53; Stowers, “Why ‘Common Judaism’ Does Not Look like Mediterranean Religion,” in *Strength to Strength: Essays in Honor of Shaye J. D. Cohen.* ed. Michael L. Satlow (Providence: Brown Judaic Studies, 2018), 235–55; Stowers, “Locating the Religion of Associations,” in *Re-Making the World: Christianity and Categories – Essays in Honor of Karen L. King*, ed. Taylor G. Petrey (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2019), 301–24.

Greek

1. Roubekas, Nickolas P. 2019. "Thrēskeia. From Etymology to Ideology and the Academic Study of Ancient Greek Religion." *Journal of Hellenic Religion* no. 12:39–59.
;Abstract: "Within the last five years, two influential books on the utilization, adoption, or dismissal of the term ‘religion’ when one studies the ancient world have brought about serious questions for the overall study of ancient Mediterranean religiosity. Brent Nongbri’s *Before Religion: A History of a Modern Concept* (2013) and Carlin A. Barton and Daniel Boyarin’s *Imagine No Religion: How Modern Abstractions Hide Ancient Realities* (2016) deal with the quintessential terms that are translated as ‘religion’ from the Graeco-Roman world, that is, *religio* (Latin) and *thrēskeia* (Greek). Although the former term has been extensively discussed in various publications, the latter is hardly the topic of research. The article offers a comprehensive etymological discussion of the term *thrēskeia* (θρησκεία) as encountered in very few ancient sources (primarily in Plutarch) while then proceeding to a theoretical discussion of the perceived ‘problem’ that is identified as an issue of an ideological chasm among scholars rather than an actual existing ‘problem’ to be resolved. The article concludes with a proposal to overcome such perceived issues that will allow scholars to study the Hellenic religious practices and ideas without being obliged to also ‘justify’ their field of inquiry and research."

2. ———. 2022. *The Study of Greek and Roman Religions: Insularity and Assimilation*. New York: Bloomsbury Academic.
;"Some scholars have argued that defining religion is not that much of a Sisyphean task if the definition itself will be a stipulative one, whereas others have insisted that only by defining religion substantively can scholars then proceed to the explanatory quest.(9) Below I cite three appealing, in my view, definitions that correspond to such a perspective and may function as examples to define our subject matter—religion—in a way that is applicable mutatis mutandis across time and space, allowing for the subsequent theorization of the phenomenon, including its place within the Greek and Roman cultural milieus:
1. Religion is “an institution consisting of culturally patterned interaction with culturally postulated superhuman beings” (Spiro 1966: 96).(10)
2. “Religion, then, consists of *beliefs, actions and institutions which assume the existence of supernatural entities with powers of action, or impersonal powers or processes possessed of moral purpose*” (Bruce 2011: 112, emphasis in original).
3. “Religion is a cultural system and a social institution that governs and promotes ideal interpretations of existence and ideal praxis with reference to transempirical powers or beings” (Geertz 1997: 39).
(...)
Other scholars, of course, may adopt another or promote their own definition of religion and proceed with it in examining Greek and Roman religious ideas and practices. But rejecting, avoiding, or even scorning the need to define the very category that shapes the subfield of Greek and Roman “religion(s)” generates serious problems in deciding what is and what is not “religious” within any given cultural context—including, of course, that of the Greeks and the Romans." (p. 59)
(9) E.g., see Bruce (2011) and Jensen (2020: 6–7).
(10) This definition was also endorsed by the always skeptical Jonathan Z. Smith. See Braun and McCutcheon (2018: 52), although not without some reservations (e.g., see p. 31 in the same work).
References
Braun, Willi, and Russell T. McCutcheon, eds. 2018. *Reading J. Z. Smith: Interviews & Essay.* New York: Oxford University Press.
Bruce, Steve. 2011. “Defining Religion: A Practical Response.” *International Review of Sociology* 21 (1): 107–20.
Geertz, Armin W. 1997. “Theory, Definition, and Typology: Reflections on Generalities and Underrepresentative Realism.” *Tememos* 33: 29–47.
Jensen, Jeppe Sinding. 2020. *What Is Religion?* 2nd ed. London: Routledge.

Spiro, Melford E. 1966. “Religion: Problems of Definition and Explanation.” In Michael Banton (ed.), *Anthropological Approaches to the Study of Religion*, 85–126. London: Routledge.

3. Schmidt, Karl Ludwig. 1966. "*thréskeia, thréskos, ethelothréskeia*." In *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament: Volume 3*, edited by Kittel, Gerhard, 155–159. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans.
;"The data are as follows. There is only sparse attestation in the New Testament, θρησκεία 4 times (2 in the same passage), θρησκος once, and εθελοθρησκια once. This paucity is quite striking in relation to the whole sphere of Greek literature. For elsewhere words with the stem θρησκ are fairly common. Thus we never find the verb θρησκεον in the NT, though it comes twice in rapid succession in the LXX. The LXX does not have θρησκος, but θρησκος occurs 4 times, twice in the same passage." (p. 155)
(...)
"We noted at the outset that the rare occurrence of θρησκεία in the NT is at a first glance surprising. It is particularly surprising for those who try to understand early Christianity as a cult. No matter what term we might prefer for “cult,” it can and must be stated that none of the possible alternatives is particularly emphasised in the NT or the Bible generally." (p. 158)

Roman

1. Rives, James B. 2007. *Religion in the Roman Empire*. Malden: Blackwell.
;Chapter 1: *Identifying “Religion” in the Graeco-Roman World*, pp. 13-53.
"Conclusion
In this chapter I have sketched out some of the key elements of the mainstream Graeco-Roman religious tradition, the tradition of the Roman Empire’s social, economic, and political elite. I have tried in particular to illustrate the ways that it did not conform to the expectations that many people would have of “a religion”: there was no one unified and coherent set of beliefs and principles, no sacred scriptures, no priestly class, and no associated moral code. Instead of "a religion,” we can more usefully think of it as a group of loosely related but largely distinct ways of thinking about and interacting with the divine world. This fluid and open organization allowed people to maintain simultaneous beliefs and practices that we might regard as inconsistent with one another and even mutually contradictory. There were indeed some impulses, particularly among the philosophically inclined, to work out a more coherent system, in which a few philosophical principles would serve as the basis for a correct approach to cult and myth. Yet these impulses were effectively limited to die philosophical sphere, what Varro called “physical” theology, and did not until relatively late have much impact on the religious tradition as a whole.
(...)
On the one hand, members of the Graeco-Roman elite encountered some religious traditions that in one or more ways did not conform to their religious norms; in some cases, imperial officials took active and formal measures to restrict or prevent deviant behavior, but they more often exerted informal pressures to promote greater conformity.
More importantly, many aspects of the mainstream Graeco-Roman religious tradition were shared by the various regional traditions within the empire, a fact that allowed for their smooth integration. It is these fundamental points of agreement that allow us to consider religion in the Roman Empire as a whole, and it is to that topic that we turn in the next chapter."

2. Rüpke, Jörg. 2007. "*Religio* and *religiones* in Roman thinking." *Les Études Classiques* no. 75:67–78.

;"Despite the continuity of the term, the concept of “religion” as used in the history of religion and contemporary political discussion, is not identical with the concept implied in the Latin word *religio*(1). To explore the conceptual differences, I will analyse the meaning and maybe the history of the meaning of different terms that might pertain to our concept of “religion” as far as the Roman empire is concerned. The body of texts thus analysed is limited and restricted to Latin texts, as I am interested in the main lines of thought that determined political and juridical and religious action on a larger scale." (p. 67)
(...)
"All of this does not reflect anything like a theory of religious plurality, neither does the widespread phenomenon of *interpretatio Romana*, Roman names given to “foreign” deities. Yet it attests to a growing complexity of religion. Cult is more than the natural consequence of a religious disposition towards a contingent deity. It is subject to rational explanation. It is subject to universal standards of humanity. It is a necessary part of one’s way of life, to which the division between public and private cannot be applied. It is an economic and political factor. It is a medium of a nonreligious discourse. These elements are neither new nor consistent. They fit together with terminological changes, with *ratio* and *fides* controlling *religio*(13), with an insistence on *uera religio,* with *disciplina*, lifestyle and morality, and *secta*, which is neither public nor private." (p. 76)
(1) E. Feil (1986), p. 16-82; J. Z. Smith (1998).
(13) 13. Isidor, *De differentiis* 2.139: *fides est diuinitatis confessio et religionis solidum fundamentum*.
References
Ernst Feil (1986): *Religio: Die Geschichte eines neuzeitlichen Grundbegriffs vomFrühchristentum bis zur Reformation* (Forschungen zur Kirchen- und Dogmengeschichte, 36), Göttingen, Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1986.
Jonathan Z. Smith (1998): “Religion, Religions, Religious”, in Mark C. Taylor, *Critical Terms for Religious Studies*, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1998, p. 269-284.

3. Springer, Lawrence A. 1977. "The Role of *Religio, Solvo* and *Ratio* in Lucretius." *The Classical World* no. 71:55–61.
;Abstract: "The purpose of this paper is to examine each of the fourteen references to *religio* in the *De Rerum Natura* with the hope of finding a more precise interpretation of the word as Lucretius uses it.
The key to the interpretation appears to be in the interplay of *religio, solvo*, and *ratio*. In the poem *ratio* appears 222 times. Bailey distinguishes five major meanings of the 51 occurrences of *ratio* in Book 1.(1) Of these 51 occurrences, the general sense of "way" or "means" occurs 25 times.
Of the other 26 occurrences the four meanings are: (I) reasoning, understanding, thinking (II) system, philosophy (III) account, theory (IV) workings (of nature). *Solvo* or compounds appear 71 times. It is evident that Lucretius had in his mind some such basic conclusion as this: *religio* freed of "somethings" through philosophy or reasoning will lead to peace of mind and happiness. It is the "somethings" which should be analyzed, for certainly Lucretius was not attacking religion as a whole.(2)"
(1) C. Bailey, *Titi Lucreti Cari De Rerum Natura Libri Sex* (London 1950) vol. 2, 605-606.
(2) Cf. G. D. Hadzsits, *Lucretius and His Influence* (New York 1935) 103-23 and bibliography 123. n. 31.

4. Wilson, Brian C. 1998. "From the Lexical to the Polythetic: A Brief History of the Definition of Religion." In *What is Religion? Origins, Definitions and Explanations*, edited by Idinopulos, Thomas A. and Wilson, Brian C., 141–162. Leiden: Brill.
;"In this chapter, therefore, what I wish to do is to provide a brief historical overview of the definitional enterprise in the academic study of religion. Obviously an exhaustive history would require book-length treatment, and what follows is perhaps elliptical in the extreme. However, it is, I feel, a necessary prolegomena to

such a future study. Perhaps one of the reasons why the history of the definitional enterprise remains relatively neglected within the academic study of religion is because the field has failed to develop any kind of uniform formal categories for dealing with definitions of religion. In the following pages, therefore, I present a brief historical overview organized with an eye towards highlighting and labeling formal developments in the definition of religion. I hope this overview will serve not only as an introduction to the range of definitional possibilities for religion, but that it will also facilitate further attention to the history of the definitional enterprise in general." (p. 142, a note omitted).

5. Wilt, Henry Toomey. 1954. *Religio: A Semantic Study or the Pre-Christian Use of the Terms Religio and Religiosus*, Columbia.
;Unpublished Ph.D. dissertation available at ProQuest Dissertation Express ref. number 0008864.
Abstract: "Since the time ot Cicero the semantics of *religio* has recurrently been a matter tor study and discussion among scholars in the field or philology and of religion. The reason tor this recurrent interest down through the centuries is to be found in the obscure etymology or the word rather than in the immediate field of semantics. From antiquity to modern times two different etymologies have been current; the earlier is that proposed by Cicero, who suggested *relegere* as the parent word to *religio*, the second was that or the Christian theologian Lactantius who believed that the verb *religare* with its meaning ot "binding" must be its source. Scholars accepted one or the other of these derivative explanations, depending on the philosophical view that each held of the term religion. Until quite recent times, little attempt was made to explain the word *religio* linguistically.
In the nineteenth century, however, a new etymological possibility was suggested -- namely, the Greek verb *alego*.
The problem undertaken and studied in the present dissertation was first of all to test each of the three proposed etymologies against Greek and Latin passages containing *alego* and *religio* respectively to see which etymology is most probably the true ancestor of the term *religio* and then to determine the original meaning and subsequent changes in the meaning of the word.
A survey of the earlier studies showed that all authors started from a preconceived meaning of the word which they had either derived from an etymology or from a usage of the word religion current in modem times. They then interpreted every passage in ancient authors so as to make it agree with their preconceived notion.
In the present study I have tried to follow a more objective method. I followed two lines of investigation independently from one another: first to find out which etymology was most likely to be correct on the basis of a comparison of similar roots in a parent Indo-European language; secondly, I tried to interpret the passages in early Latin in which the word *religio* or its derivative was found exciusively from the context without introducing any preconceived notion.
I did this in the conviction that if both lines of investigations should lead to the same original meaning of *religio* the results wuld support each other. In actual fact it turned out that the results were the same in both cases. They support the etymology from *alego*. The secondpart of the investigation shows furthermore that in very early Latin the words *religio* and *religiosus* have not yet the meaning of 'religion' and 'religious' respectively, but a much broader meaning. It is further shown how this broader meaning was gradually narrowed down to the modern meaning of 'religion' and 'religious'." (pp. 1-3)