

Several people have asked me what I'm working on these days. Answer: I'm doing a new, second edition of my college-level text-book/reader/anthology of ancient texts, [After the New Testament](#). It is meant to be a topically-arranged collection of primary readings from after the New Testament period up to the time of the Emperor Constantine.

Before explaining what I am doing to make the second edition different from the first (I am revising it seriously), I should say something about what the first edition, published in 1999, was all about. To do that I give here the first part of the Introduction to the text. I'll give the second part anon.

Over the past century and a half, archaeological discoveries have played a significant role in our understanding of early Christianity. These include (a) the serendipitous discovery of entire libraries of ancient texts, such as the Dead Sea Scrolls, found in the wilderness of Judea, and the library of Gnostic writings uncovered near Nag Hammadi, Egypt; (b) the equally fortuitous unearthing of individual documents, such as a non-canonical Gospel and an Apocalypse, both attributed to the apostle Peter, the newly discovered Gospel of Judas, and an early church manual called the Didache (the latter of which was “found,” actually, in a monastic library); and (c) the uncovering and excavation of buried sites, such as Dura Europas in Syria on the Euphrates, a city that housed the earliest surviving structure known to have served as a Christian church. These findings have enriched our understanding of early Christianity; but more than that, they have forced scholars to reconceptualize major aspects of the religion, leading to what is perhaps the most significant “discovery” of them all, made not in the sands of Egypt or the dirt of Mesopotamia, but in the private libraries of historians — the discovery that Christianity during the first three centuries of the Common Era was remarkably diverse.

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