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Robert Knapp taught classics and ancient history for over thirty years at the University of California, Berkeley, where he is now Professor Emeritus. He has published extensively on the world of the Roman Empire, including most recently *Invisible Romans* (2011)

The Dawn of Christianity *People and Gods in a Time of Magic and Miracles*

Robert Knapp

"Knapp's *The Dawn of Christianity* is easily the best account of the subject available that I have come across. Written by a superb historian in an accessible and lively style, it will attract general readers and specialists alike."

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Ordinary people of antiquity interacted with the supernatural through a mosaic of beliefs and rituals. Exploring everyday life from 200 BCE to the end of the first century CE, Robert Knapp shows that Jews and polytheists lived with the gods in very similar ways. Traditional interactions provided stability even in times of crisis, while changing a relationship risked catastrophe for the individual, his family, and his community. However, people in both traditions did at times leave behind their long-honored rites to try something new. *The Dawn of Christianity* reveals why some people in Judea and then in the Roman and Greek worlds embraced a new approach to the forces and powers in their daily lives.

Knapp traces the emergence of Christianity from its stirrings in the eastern Mediterranean, where Jewish monotheism coexisted with polytheism and prayer mixed with magic. In a time receptive to prophetic messages and supernatural interventions, Jesus of Nazareth convinced people to change their beliefs by showing, through miracles, his direct connection to god-like power. The miracle of the Resurrection solidified Jesus's supernatural credentials. After his death, followers continued to use miracles and magic to spread Jesus's message of reward for the righteous in this life and immortality in the next.

Many Jews and polytheists strongly opposed the budding movement but despite major setbacks Christianity proved resilient and adaptable. It survived long enough to be saved by a second miracle, the conversion of Emperor Constantine. Hand in hand with empire, Christianity began its long march through history.

Praise for *The Dawn of Christianity:*

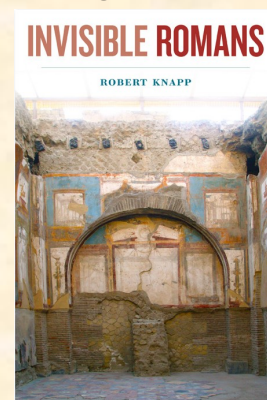
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