



# The Ancient Church As Family

*Joseph H. Hellerman*

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## **The Ancient Church As Family** Joseph H. Hellerman

The author explores the literature of the first three centuries of the church in terms of group identity and formation as surrogate kinship. Why did this become the organizing model in the earliest churches? How did historical developments intervene to shift the paradigm? How do ancient Mediterranean kinship structures correlate with church formation? Hellerman traces the fascinating story of these developments over three centuries and what brought them about. His focus is the New Testament documents (especially Paul's letters), second-century authors, and concluding with Cyprian in the third century. Kinship terminology in these writings, behaviors of group solidarity, and the symbolic power of kinship language in these groups are examined.

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