Contents

Introduction    7

1 Jesus and the First Christians   8
    Judaism   8
    Jesus’ Palestine 10
    Jesus   12
        The sources for Jesus   12
        The ministry of Jesus   14
        The titles of Jesus   14
        Opposition and death   15
    The first Christians   17
        The followers of Jesus   17
        The resurrection   18
        The Acts of the Apostles   19
        Pentecost   20
    The first days of the church   21
        The faith of the first Christians   22
        The first persecutions   24
        The spread of the church   25
    Paul   26
        Paul’s letters   30
        Paul’s Christian message   31

2 From One Generation to the Next   36
    The Christian communities   36
    From oral traditions to the written word   38
    Living as a Christian   40
        Christian morality   41
    The first liturgies   43
        Baptism   43
        The Eucharist   44
        Other services   48
    Leading the community   48
        The ‘pillars’ of the church   48
        Prophets and apostles   49
        The emergence of hierarchy   50
    Unity and division   52

3 Opposition and Persecution   56
    Christianity and Judaism   57
        Judaism in the first century AD   57
        The Jewishness of Christianity   61
        The Ebionites   62
        A religious spectrum   65
    Church and synagogue: before AD 70   66
    Church and synagogue: after AD 70   69
    Christian attitudes to Judaism   71
    The imperial persecutions   72
        Ignatius of Antioch   74
    The book of Revelation   75
    Changing beliefs   77
    The return of Christ   77
    The cosmic Christ   78

4 The Church in the Empire   80
    Alexandria   83
    Christianity in the east   85
        Edessa   85
        The Persian church   87
    Living as a Christian   88
        Life and death   88
        Christians and class   89
    Women in the church   92
    Sexual morality and asceticism   94
        A Christian moralist   97
    Liturgy   98
    The mystery religions   100
        Mithraism   103
    Christian art   105

5 Christians in a Hostile World   108
    Roman religion   108
    Attitudes to the Christians   110
        Popular attitudes   110
        The philosophers and the Christians   111
    The persecutions   115
        Christians on trial   117
    The church and the mob   118
    Co-ordinated persecutions   119
        Executing the Christians   122
    A theology of martyrdom   125
        The relics   128

6 Christian Philosophy   130
    Justin Martyr   131
        Later apologists   134
    Clement of Alexandria   136
    Origen   137
        Origen’s life   138
        Origen’s philosophy   140
        The spiritual life   142

7 Heresy and Orthodoxy   144
    The emergence of orthodoxy   145
    Variant Christianities   146
        Modalism   146
        Marcionism   147
        Montanism   148
    Gnosticism   150
        Gnostic movements   152
    The rule of faith   154
        Irenaeus and the gnostics   154
        Tertullian   157