perial religion. As John North and others have shown, a "marketplace of religions" made individual religious choice possible in this period, and, as Gregory Woolf has suggested, religious variety limited the extent to which the polis religion of Rome could be exported outside the city walls.[99] Yet, the widespread presence of the Roman emperor as the model sacrificer shaped the understanding and practice of sacrifice by Romans, Jews, and Christians alike.

Christian Sacrifice

Christianity developed within this complex mix of Roman, Greek, and Jewish sacrificial practices and concepts; and, as a number of studies have shown, Christians were just as invested in sacrifice as their neighbors. For example, we can no longer presume that the Jesus movement hoped to replace sacrificial practice with sacrificial theology, especially while the Jerusalem Temple was still standing. As Paula Fredriksen has pointed out, the Gospel authors depict Jesus visiting the Temple, attending Jewish cult festivals, and recommending sacrifice both to his followers and to those whom he heals. Writing before the destruction of the Temple, the apostle Paul simply assumed the basic validity of the Jerusalem cult.[100] Reinterpreting the Gospels' Last Supper narratives, Jonathan Klawans has also revised earlier thinking regarding Jesus' relationship to the Jerusalem cult. These and other Gospel stories do not prove that Jesus positioned himself against the Temple's institutions and practices, despite the views of later Christians, but present Jesus and his disciples as visiting the Temple regularly, both before and after Jesus' death; moreover, the earliest description of the Last Supper, found in a letter of Paul to the Corinthian *ekklesia*, emphasizes the seriousness and efficacy of Israel's sacrificial practice, not its irrelevance in light of Christ.[101] In fact, Paul reserves his critique of sacrifice for gentile practices alone. Having shared the "cup of the Lord," gentile followers of Jesus must not share in a "cup of demons" (1 Cor 10:21), a reference to the widespread practice of eating a common meal in the presence of a patron god. According to Paul, participating in a communal meal that memorializes Christ, then, Jesus' gentile followers became the children of a different patron god and were sealed with the blood of this God's Messiah, a conviction that grants sacrificial and memorial meaning to their activities.[102] Prior to its destruction, the Temple cult appears to have been prized as efficacious by Jesus, Paul, and other Messianic Jews, even among those who viewed Jesus' death as sacrificial.[103]

As Lawrence Wills has shown, by claiming that Jesus' death was both sacrificial and noble, Christian writers participated in a wider discourse of heroic self-sacrifice familiar to the pagan texts of the Roman era.[104] Shaping their portraits of Jesus on the basis of shared traditions regarding endurance during suffering, Christians also adapted a discursive model already developed among Greek-speaking Jews: that of the martyr who dies for the law.[105] As Jan Willem van Henten, Tessa Rajak, and Daniel Boyarin have demonstrated, stories about righteous Jews who died as a result of persecution were popular among Jews long before Christians began to write their own martyrologies.[106] Refusing to compromise with unjust rulers, Jewish martyrs were depicted as gladly welcoming death over the violation of God's covenantal provisions. So, for example, in 2 Maccabees, the death of the martyr Eleazar was presented as "an example of nobility and a memorial of courage, not only to the young but to the great body of his nation" (2 Macc 6:31). Pre-Christian Jewish martyrs "served to encapsulate statements about national identity, to define the nation's relation to outsiders and to explore potential political crises,"[107] a strategy that Christian writers shared. The Gospel of John, for example, emphasized Jesus' exceptional courage throughout his ordeal in such a way that Christian identity and the nobility of Jesus could be defended, as Jennifer Glancy has argued. Rethinking sacrifice, this Gospel works to shift blame away from the tortured victim, Jesus, and toward the torturer, Pilate, interpreting Jesus' marked flesh as a sign of the dominion of God and therefore of Jesus himself.[108]

With the destruction of the Temple, new ways of theorizing martyrdom emerged among Christians and Jews alike. As Stroumsa suggests, the full identification of the martyr with sacrifice could emerge only after sacrifice in the Temple could no longer take place; only then could "such a metaphoric acceptance" be developed.[109] Following the Temple's violent demise, the notion that Jesus' death was a once-and-for-all sacrifice received ever-greater elaboration: Jesus became the Passover lamb, or the immolated goat of Yom Kippur, or a high priest who paradoxically sacrifices himself to establish a new covenant.[110] Still, all of these images of Jesus' death operate within a sacrificial logic, in which the spilling of blood seals the divine-human relationship. In this way, sacrifice was not overturned so much as transformed to a different purpose. As George Heyman suggests, Christians "did not abandon the concept [of sacrifice] or its ritual interpretation"; instead, they "fashioned their discourse of sacrifice . . . in order to oppose the religious and political hegemony of the Roman state."[111] Transferring notions of Jesus as sacrifice, martyr, and innocent victim to representations of Christian martyrs, sacrifice became both the central provocation for martyrdom and also as the central purpose of the martyr's death. Elizabeth Castelli explains: "In refusing to perform sacrifice, Christians removed themselves from the position of agent (sacrificer) to the position of victim (sacrificed)."[112] In this way, the blood of the martyrs was given cultic significance, likened to the animal blood sprinkled on the altar of the Jerusalem Temple by the priests prior to the fulfillment—and replacement—of these sacrifices by Jesus. The martyrs, then, imitate their hero by spilling their blood for the sake of the continuing forgiveness of Christian sin.[113]

Arguably, then, it is the Christians who bequeathed to future generations the metonymic equivalence of sacrifice and violence: envisioning the deaths of Jesus and the martyrs as the only truly efficacious sacrifices, second-century Christians demoted Israelite animal sacrifice to the role of either allegorical precursor or divine concession. Pagan sacrifice, however, was interpreted as demon-inspired violence.