

Cambridge University Press
978-0-521-68154-4 - Asceticism in the Graeco-Roman World
Richard Finn
Frontmatter
[More information](#)

ASCETICISM IN THE GRAECO-ROMAN WORLD

Asceticism deploys abstention, self-control and self-denial, to order oneself or a community in relation to the divine. Both its practices and the cultural ideals they expressed were important to pagans, Jews, Christians of different kinds, and Manichees. Richard Finn presents for the first time a combined study of the major ascetic traditions, which have previously been misunderstood by being studied separately. He examines how people abstained from food, drink, sexual relations, sleep and wealth; what they meant by their behaviour; and how they influenced others in the Graeco-Roman world. Against this background, the book charts the rise of monasticism in Egypt, Asia Minor, Syria and North Africa, assessing the crucial role played by the third-century exegete, Origen, and asks why monasticism developed so variously in different regions.

RICHARD FINN OP is a Dominican friar and currently Regent of Blackfriars Hall at Oxford University, where he is a member of the Theology Faculty and of the Classics Faculty. He most recently published *Almsgiving in the Later Roman Empire* in 2006.

KEY THEMES IN ANCIENT HISTORY

EDITORS

P. A. Cartledge
Clare College, Cambridge
 P. D. A. Garnsey
Jesus College, Cambridge

Key Themes in Ancient History aims to provide readable, informed and original studies of various basic topics, designed in the first instance for students and teachers of Classics and Ancient History, but also for those engaged in related disciplines. Each volume is devoted to a general theme in Greek, Roman, or where appropriate, Graeco-Roman history, or to some salient aspect or aspects of it. Besides indicating the state of current research in the relevant area, authors seek to show how the theme is significant for our own as well as ancient culture and society. By providing books for courses that are oriented around themes it is hoped to encourage and stimulate promising new developments in teaching and research in ancient history.

Other books in the series

Death-ritual and social structure in classical antiquity, by Ian Morris
 978 0 521 37465 1 (hardback) 978 0 521 37611 2 (paperback)

Literacy and orality in ancient Greece, by Rosalind Thomas
 978 0 521 37346 3 (hardback) 978 0 521 37742 3 (paperback)

Slavery and society at Rome, by Keith Bradley
 978 0 521 37287 9 (hardback) 978 0 521 37887 1 (paperback)

Law, violence, and community in classical Athens, by David Cohen
 978 0 521 38167 3 (hardback) 978 0 521 38837 5 (paperback)

Public order in ancient Rome, by Wilfried Nippel
 978 0 521 38327 1 (hardback) 978 0 521 38749 1 (paperback)

Friendship in the classical world, by David Konstan
 978 0 521 45402 5 (hardback) 978 0 521 45998 3 (paperback)

Sport and society in ancient Greece, by Mark Golden
 978 0 521 49698 8 (hardback) 978 0 521 49790 9 (paperback)

Food and society in classical antiquity, by Peter Garnsey
 978 0 521 64182 1 (hardback) 978 0 521 64588 1 (paperback)

Cambridge University Press
978-0-521-68154-4 - Asceticism in the Graeco-Roman World
Richard Finn
Frontmatter
[More information](#)

Banking and business in the Roman world, by Jean Andreau
978 0 521 38031 7 (hardback) 978 0 521 38932 7 (paperback)

Roman law in context, by David Johnston
978 0 521 63046 7 (hardback) 978 0 521 63961 3 (paperback)

Religions of the ancient Greeks, by Simon Price
978 0 521 38201 4 (hardback) 978 0 521 38867 2 (paperback)

Christianity and Roman society, by Gillian Clark
978 0 521 63310 9 (hardback) 978 0 521 63386 4 (paperback)

Trade in classical antiquity, by Neville Morley
978 0 521 63279 9 (hardback) 978 0 521 63416 8 (paperback)

Technology and culture in Greek and Roman antiquity, by Serafina Cuomo
978 0 521 81073 9 (hardback) 978 0 521 00903 4 (paperback)

Law and crime in the Roman world, by Jill Harries
978 0 521 82820 8 (hardback) 978 0 521 53532 8 (paperback)

The social history of Roman art, by Peter Stewart
978 0 521 81632 8 (hardback) 978 0 521 01659 9 (paperback)

Asceticism in the Graeco-Roman world, by Richard Finn OP
978 0 521 86281 3 (hardback) 978 0 521 68154 4 (paperback)

Cambridge University Press
978-0-521-68154-4 - Asceticism in the Graeco-Roman World
Richard Finn
Frontmatter
[More information](#)

ASCETICISM IN THE GRAECO-ROMAN WORLD

RICHARD FINN OP



CAMBRIDGE
UNIVERSITY PRESS

Cambridge University Press
 978-0-521-68154-4 - Asceticism in the Graeco-Roman World
 Richard Finn
 Frontmatter
[More information](#)

CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS
 Cambridge, New York, Melbourne, Madrid, Cape Town, Singapore, São Paulo, Delhi

Cambridge University Press
 The Edinburgh Building, Cambridge CB2 8RU, UK
 Published in the United States of America by Cambridge University Press, New York

www.cambridge.org
 Information on this title: www.cambridge.org/9780521681544

© Richard Finn 2009

This publication is in copyright. Subject to statutory exception
 and to the provisions of relevant collective licensing agreements,
 no reproduction of any part may take place without
 the written permission of Cambridge University Press.

First published 2009

Printed in the United Kingdom at the University Press, Cambridge

A catalogue record for this publication is available from the British Library

Library of Congress Cataloguing in Publication data

Finn, R. D. (Richard Damian), 1963–

Asceticism in the Graeco-Roman world / Richard Finn.

p. cm. — (Key themes in ancient history)

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 978-0-521-86281-3 (hardback)

1. Asceticism — History — Early church, ca. 30–600. 2. Ascetics — Rome.

3. Origen. I. Title. II. Series.

BV5023.F56 2009

204'.470937 — dc22 2009009367

ISBN 978-0-521-86281-3 hardback

ISBN 978-0-521-68154-4 paperback

Cambridge University Press has no responsibility for the persistence or
 accuracy of URLs for external or third-party Internet websites referred to
 in this publication, and does not guarantee that any content on such
 websites is, or will remain, accurate or appropriate.

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-68154-4 - Asceticism in the Graeco-Roman World

Richard Finn

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

For Anthony

Contents

<i>Acknowledgements</i>	page x
<i>Abbreviations</i>	xi
Introduction	i
1 Pagan asceticism: cultic and contemplative purity	9
2 Asceticism in Hellenistic and Rabbinic Judaism	34
3 Christian asceticism before Origen	58
4 Origen and his ascetic legacy	100
5 Cavemen, cenobites, and clerics	131
Final Thoughts	156
<i>Bibliography</i>	158
<i>Index</i>	177

Acknowledgements

My academic debts are many. It will be evident to the reader how far I have relied as a jack-of-all-trades upon the scholarship of others whose particular expertise exceeds my knowledge of their specialist field. They are, I hope, appropriately identified in the footnotes. Three people have generously commented on drafts of individual chapters and thereby much improved them: Jaś Elsner, Sr Margaret Atkins OSA, and, above all, Peter Garnsey. I am immensely grateful to them for their work and encouragement. I should also thank Timothy Radcliffe OP and Ros Hunt for their patience with me in a project that has meant taking the laptop on holiday with us more times than I care to remember. However, even their patience has been exceeded by that of Michael Sharp at Cambridge University Press who allowed me the necessary time to complete the work. I thank him and his colleagues at the Press for their work in its production.

Abbreviations

ANRW	<i>Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt</i> (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1972–)
CA	<i>Clemens Alexandrinus</i> , ed. O. Stählin, L. Früchtel, and U. Treu, 4 vols., GCS (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1970–85)
CHC2	<i>Cambridge History of Christianity</i> , vol. II, <i>Constantine to c. 600</i> , ed. A. Casiday and F. W. Norris (Cambridge University Press, 2007)
CHJ4	<i>Cambridge History of Judaism</i> , vol. IV, <i>The Late Roman-Rabbinic Period</i> , ed. S. T. Katz (Cambridge University Press, 2006)
CCSL	<i>Corpus Christianorum Series Latina</i> (Turnhout: Brepols, 1953–)
CSCO	<i>Corpus Scriptorum Christianorum Orientalium</i> (Paris: Secretariat du CSCO, 1903–)
CSEL	<i>Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum</i> (Vienna: Tempsky, 1865–)
DL	Diogenes Laertius, <i>Lives of Eminent Philosophers</i> , ed. M. Marcovitch, <i>Diogenes Laertius, Vitae Philosophorum</i> , 2 vols. (Stuttgart and Leipzig: Teubner, 1999)
DSS	<i>The Dead Sea Scrolls, A New Translation</i> , ed. M. Wise, M. Abegg, and E. Cook (London: Harper Collins, 1996)
<i>En. in Ps.</i>	<i>Enarrationes in Psalmos</i>
FC	Fathers of the Church
GCS	Die griechischen christlichen Schriftsteller (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1897–)
HTR	<i>Harvard Theological Review</i>
JAAR	<i>Journal of the American Academy of Religion</i>
JAOS	<i>Journal of the American Oriental Society</i>
JECS	<i>Journal of Early Christian Studies</i>
JEH	<i>Journal of Ecclesiastical History</i>

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-68154-4 - Asceticism in the Graeco-Roman World

Richard Finn

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

xii

Abbreviations

<i>JHS</i>	<i>Journal of Hellenic Studies</i>
<i>JRS</i>	<i>Journal of Roman Studies</i>
<i>JThS</i>	<i>Journal of Theological Studies</i>
<i>NHL</i>	<i>The Nag Hammadi Library in English</i> , ed. J. M. Robinson, 4th revised edition (Leiden, New York, and Cologne: Brill, 1996)
<i>NTA</i>	<i>New Testament Apocrypha</i> , ed. W. Schneemelcher and R. McL. Wilson, 2 vols. (Cambridge and Louisville: James Clarke and Westminster Press, 1991–2)
<i>Or.</i>	<i>Oration</i>
<i>OSA</i>	Oeuvres de saint Augustin
<i>OTP</i>	<i>The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha</i> , ed. J. H. Charlesworth, 2 vols. (London: DLT, 1983–5)
<i>PG</i>	Patrologia Graeca, ed. J.-P. Migne (Paris, 1857–66)
<i>PhDVM</i>	Philo, <i>De vita Mosis</i> , ed. R. Arnaldez, C. Mondésert, J. Pouilloux, and P. Savinel (Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 1967)
<i>PhDVC</i>	Philo, <i>De vita contemplativa</i> , ed. F. Daumas and P. Miquel (Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 1963)
<i>PL</i>	Patrologia Latina, ed. J.-P. Migne
<i>PO</i>	Patrologia Orientalis (Paris: Firmin-Didot, 1903–)
<i>RB</i>	<i>Revue Bénédictine</i>
<i>SBLSP</i>	<i>Society of Biblical Literature Seminar Papers</i>
<i>SC</i>	Sources chrétiennes (Paris: Cerf, 1942–)
<i>Serm.</i>	<i>Sermon</i>
<i>Sev</i>	<i>Severan Culture</i> , ed S. Swain, S. Harrison, and J. Elsner (Cambridge University Press, 2007)
<i>SP</i>	<i>Studia Patristica</i> , ed. E. A. Livingstone (Louvain: Peeters Press)
<i>TBS</i>	<i>The Book of Steps: The Syriac Liber Graduum</i> , tr. Robert A. Kitchen and Martien Parmentier (Kalamazoo: Cistercian Publications, 2004)
<i>TS</i>	<i>Theological Studies</i>
<i>VC</i>	<i>Vigiliae Christianae</i>
<i>ZAC</i>	<i>Zeitschrift für antikes Christentum</i>
<i>ZNW</i>	<i>Zeitschrift für die Neutestamentliche Wissenschaft</i>