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Elements in Religion in Late Antiquity

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EDUCATION IN RELIGIOUS CONTEXTS OF LATE ANTIQUITY

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Cambridge University Press & Assessment
978-1-009-53930-2 — Education in Religious Contexts of Late Antiquity
Monika Amsler
Frontmatter
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Shaftesbury Road, Cambridge CB2 8EA, United Kingdom

One Liberty Plaza, 20th Floor, New York, NY 10006, USA

477 Williamstown Road, Port Melbourne, VIC 3207, Australia

314–321, 3rd Floor, Plot 3, Splendor Forum, Jasola District Centre,
New Delhi – 110025, India

Cambridge University Press is part of Cambridge University Press & Assessment,
a department of the University of Cambridge.

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www.cambridge.org

Information on this title: www.cambridge.org/9781009539302

DOI: 10.1017/9781009337632

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When citing this work, please include a reference to the DOI 10.1017/9781009337632

First published 2026

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

*A Cataloging-in-Publication data record for this Element is available from the
Library of Congress*

ISBN 978-1-009-53930-2 Hardback

ISBN 978-1-009-33765-6 Paperback

ISSN 2633-8602 (online)

ISSN 2633-8599 (print)

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Education in Religious Contexts of Late Antiquity

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DOI: 10.1017/9781009337632
First published online: March 2026

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Abstract: This Element describes the most common educational processes of religious communities in the late antique period. Through a combination of historical analysis and examples, it provides an overview of the methods used to teach the alphabet and basic rhetoric, which were central to Jewish and Christian – including Manichaean – knowledge production. It also explains how this knowledge was disseminated through liturgy. Rather than viewing the material remains of these communities in isolation, this Element examines them together, overcoming the usual scholarly focus on differences between religious communities and between religious and secular education. Instead, it highlights the dynamics created by mutual exchange and ambition. Since evidence of education is generally scarce, the synopsis demonstrates that, for example, while one religious community may have a surviving textbook with exercises, another community may only have the final products of those exercises.

Keywords: literacy, liturgy, materiality, Early Judaism, Manichaeans

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ISBNs: 9781009539302 (HB), 9781009337656 (PB), 9781009337632 (OC)
ISSNs: 2633-8602 (online), 2633-8599 (print)

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