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## Adams' "The earliest Christian meetings places: Almost exclusively houses?" (Book Review)

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As customary with the publisher Mohr Siebeck this work is highly academic and suitable for serious scholars. *Crucifixion in the Mediterranean World* is a unique and significant work that would make a valuable addition to an academic theological collection.

### Reviewer

Jill Botticelli, Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary

Adams, E. (2016). *The earliest Christian meetings places: Almost exclusively houses?* London: Bloomsbury T&T Clark. 263 pp. \$29.95. ISBN 9780567663146

Adams proposes to disprove the common (and influential) assumption that early Christian congregations met “almost exclusively” in homes. The author tackles the literary evidence by New Testament corpus, arguing that the “house” evidence “is not as abundant as is usually thought” (p. 137). Adams also examines the archaeological testimony, concluding that Dura Europos remains “the only certain archaeological example of a house adapted into a church building, dating to the Pre-Constantinian era” (p. 111). Adams discusses various meeting-sites in addition to “conventional” houses, including *tabernae* (shop-houses), *insulae* (apartments), workshops, inns, restaurants, warehouses, schoolrooms, bathhouses, barns, gardens, tombs, riversides, and beaches. By applying a rubric to these different space-types (availability, analogous usage, adequacy, and advantageousness), Adams characterizes them all as “plausible” venues. Adams generally tends to downplay evidence for “house” meetings (often described as inconclusive or “subject to debate”), while accentuating evidence for other venues, even if the data is merely suggestive or “suitable.” Moreover, he uses literary evidence for open-air evangelism or debate as support for open-air congregational assembly, which does not necessarily follow. Nevertheless, Adams provides a needed corrective to the assumption that early Christian assemblies met almost *exclusively* in houses, thereby promoting “a wider and richer scholarly discourse on ecclesial space in early Christianity” (p. 202). One wonders how this study might affect future research into early Christianity, including organizational theory (polity and governance), liturgical development (agape meal, Eucharistic, and baptismal practices), and the sociological study of “sacred space.” Adams’ work demonstrates that early congregations were highly creative and flexible. This should not surprise contemporary missiologists, who study rented storefront assemblies in Manhattan and open-air prayer meetings in Mombasa. But Adams might surprise many New Testament scholars, who have overlooked Justin Martyr’s reported claim that early Christians assembled “Wherever is chosen and it is possible” (*Mart. Justin* 3).

### Reviewer

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