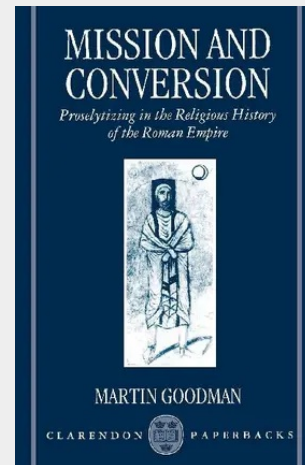


Mission and Conversion

Proselytizing in the Religious History of the Roman Empire

This book tackles a central problem of Jewish and comparative religious history: proselytization and the origins of mission in the Early Church. Why did some individuals in the first four centuries of the Christian era believe it desirable to persuade as many outsiders to join their religious group, while others did not? In this book, the author offers a radical new explanation of the origins of mission in this period, arguing that mission is not an inherent religious instinct, that in antiquity it was found only sporadically among Jews and pagans, and that even Christians rarely stressed its importance in the early centuries. In the first half of the book, Dr Goodman makes a detailed and radical re-evaluation of the evidence for Jewish missionary attitudes in the late Second Temple and Talmudic periods, overturning many commonly held assumptions about the history of Judaism, in particular the view that Jews proselytized energetically in the first century AD. This leads him on to take issue with the common notion that the early Christian mission to the gentiles imitated or competed with contemporary Jews. Finally, the author puts forward some novel suggestions as to how the Jewish background to Christianity may nonetheless have contributed to the enthusiastic adoption of universal proselytization by some followers of Jesus in the apostolic age.

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