

MISSION AND CONVERSION

*Proselytizing in the Religious History
of the Roman Empire*



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CLARENDON



PAPERBACKS

Resumo de Mission and Conversion: Proselytizing in the Religious History of the Roman Empire

This book tackles a central problem of comparative religious history: proselytizing by Jews and pagans in the ancient world, and the origins of missions in the early Church. Why did some individuals in the first four centuries of the Christian era believe it desirable to persuade outsiders to join their religious group, while others did not?

In this book, the author offers a new hypothesis about the origins of Christian proselytizing, 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.

Much of the book focusses on the history of Judaism in late antiquity. Dr Goodman makes a detailed and radical re-evaluation of the evidence for Jewish missionary attitudes in the late Second Temple and Talmudic periods, questioning many commonly held assumptions, in particular the view that Jews proselytized energetically in the first century CE.

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 proselytizing by some followers of Jesus in the apostolic age.

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