

Early Christians were bound and determined to convert others to their faith, as I indicated in my previous post. Or at least that's what their literature suggests; I very much doubt if *everyone* was! But they certainly did convert people - within four hundred years a tiny handful of the disciples of Jesus' uneducated and unimpressive disciples had become the official religion of the entire western world.

The interest in making converts made this religion unlike anything else in the Roman empire (or outside of it). Now *that's* interesting, and different from what we could expect. But what is also odd to modern eyes is that even though Christianity was evangelistic, there were almost no evangelists. That is to say, hardly anyone - so far as we know - went on a mission to other places to convert people, with one notable exception. So how did the Christians manage to convert millions of people? That's the subject of this post, again taken from my book Triumph of Christianity.

Christians then, starting at least with Paul, came to be missionary, convinced they had to convert the world. Goodman maintains it was Paul himself who came up with the idea. He was the innovator, "the single apostle who invented the whole idea of a systematic conversion of the world, area by geographical area."^[i] At the same time, this is what makes it so striking and unexpected that outside of Paul's work itself, we do not know of any organized Christian missionary work - not just for the first century, but for any century prior to the conversion of most of the Empire. As MacMullen has succinctly put it: "After Saint Paul, the Church had no mission."^[ii]

That may be hard to believe, but in fact, if you were to count every Christian missionary about whom even a single story is told, from the period after the New Testament up through the first four centuries, you would not ...

This is one of those weird facts about early Christianity. Wanna see how they spread then? Join the blog and you'll find out all about it. It won't cost much and the money all goes to charitable causes, so joining will make you and the entire universe better!

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