I begin this New Year by addressing a really interesting question I received recently from a reader. It’s a question that has rarely occurred to most people. Today, we tend to think that religions are by their very nature interested in converting others to their views, that they just inherently evangelistic, missionary, proselytizing. If you religion is “the right one,” wouldn’t you want everyone to agree with you, so they too could be right, instead of wrong? Wouldn’t their salvation depend on it?

That indeed has long been the view of both Christianity and (later) Islam and ... well surely all religions, right? Uh, as it turns out, the answer is No. In the world that Christianity came into, for example, in the Roman empire, there simply weren’t such things missionary/evangelistic religions. Huh? Then why was Christianity?

Here’s the question I received.

**QUESTION:**

Where/how/why did the new religion ‘about Jesus’ become – unlike most contemporary religions up to that point – a proselytizing one? That is, why did Paul and, presumably, others care whether others converted? Obviously, Jesus reportedly commanded them to do so, but do you think those ‘commissions’ really go back to Jesus?

**RESPONSE:**

This is one of the key questions I addressed in my book *Triumph of Christianity.* I did so only after explaining that all the Roman religions were polytheistic (‘pagan” more or less means polytheistic), with many gods, all of whom deserved to be worshiped, and none of whom insisted that they alone should be worshiped. So it was acceptable and everywhere practiced that people would worship all the gods they wanted, and none of the gods insisted that you worship them alone. So there was no incentive to try to win “converts.” Christianity was different. It had the only true God and it was missionary about it.

Here is what I said about the matter in my book. This will take two posts.

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**Christianity as a Missionary Religion**

Even if pagans who adhered to one cult or another may have liked others to join them in their rituals of worship and welcomed them when they chose to do so, we have no evidence of organized efforts to make it happen.

Wanna see the full answer to this question? Join the blog! Takes little time and little expense, and it pays enormous dividends. And all proceeds go to charity. So there is massive upside and zero downside. So why not?

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