

## 1: Conversion of Western Europe, by J.N. Hillgarth

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The existence of syncretism in Christian tradition has long been recognized by scholars, and in recent times many of the instances of syncretism have also been acknowledged by the Roman Catholic church. Early works of this type have tended to be downplayed and even dismissed as a form of Protestant apologetics aimed at "purification" of Christianity. Early Christianity Ante-Nicene [ edit ] Main articles: Rather, they instructed new believers to avoid "pollution of idols, fornication, things strangled, and blood" KJV , Acts These clarifications were put into writing, distributed KJV , Acts The Apostolic Decree thus helped to establish nascent Christianity as a unique alternative among the forms of Judaism for prospective Proselytes. The Twelve Apostles and the Apostolic Fathers initiated the process of transforming the originally Jewish sect into a diaspora of communities composed of both Jews and gentiles, united by their trust in Jesus. The Armenian , Georgian and Ethiopian churches are the only instances of imposition of Christianity by sovereign rulers predating the council of Nicaea. The initial conversion of the Roman Empire occurred mostly in urban areas of Europe, where the first conversions were sometimes among members of the Jewish population. Later conversions happened among the Grecian-Roman-Celtic populations over centuries, often initially among its urban population, with rural conversions taking place some time later. The term "pagan" is from Latin and means "villager, rustic, civilian. Late antiquity 4th-6th centuries [ edit ] Further information: The Christianization of the Roman Empire is typically divided into two phases, before and after the year , which marked the momentous conversion sincere or not debated for centuries of Constantine. By this date, Christianity had already converted a significant but unknown proportion of at least the urban population of the empire including a small number of the elite classes. Constantine ended the intermittent persecution of Christianity with the Edict of Milan , in fact a quote from a letter of the emperor Licinius by Eusebius, which granted tolerance to all religions, but specifically mentions Christianity. Although all state temples in all cities were ordered shut in , there is evidence that traditional sacrifices continued. Under Julian , the temples were reopened and state religious sacrifices performed once more. Again, however, this process ended state official practices but not private religious devotion. As Christianity spread, many of the ancient pagan temples were defiled, sacked, destroyed, or converted into Christian sites by such figures as Martin of Tours , and in the East often by militant monks. From to he issued a series of decrees which led to the banning of pagan religious rites, and the confiscation of their property and endowments. The Olympic Games were banned in because of their association with the old religion. Further laws were passed against remaining pagan practices over the course of the following years. The effectiveness of these laws empire-wide is debatable. Christianization of the central Balkans is documented at the end of the 4th century, where Nicetas the Bishop of Remesiana brought the gospel to "those mountain wolves", the Bessi. A turning point came after the Battle of the Frigidus of , ending the last serious attempt at a pagan revival in the now Christianized Roman Empire. After the defeat of Eugenius , the conservative pagan families of Rome gave up their resistance to Christianity and began to re-invent themselves to maintain their social leadership. By this time the Christian hierarchy had adopted classical education and culture as the marks of the civilized person, thus bringing the two social groups into alliance. Under the regency of Stilicho , some paganism was still tolerated, but later in the 5th century, legislation against pagan possessions, and other pagan practices, became increasingly strict. There appear to have been later attempts at a pagan revival, in in circles surrounding the general Marcellinus and under Anthemius r. Marcian in put the death penalty on the practice on pagan rites, and Leo I in reinforced this by penalizing anyone who was aware that pagan rites were performed on his property. The early Christianization of the various Germanic peoples was achieved by various means, and was partly facilitated by the prestige of the Christian Roman Empire amongst European pagans. The early rise of Germanic Christianity was, thus, mainly due to voluntary conversion on a small scale. Christianity at this time then constituted of a mix of Arian Christianity, Catholic Christianity, and Christianized Germanic paganism. The Lombards adopted

Catholicism as they entered Italy, also during the 6th century. Conversion of the West and East Germanic tribes sometimes took place "top to bottom", in the sense that missionaries sometimes aimed at converting Germanic nobility first, after which time their societies would begin a gradual process of Christianization that would generally take a matter of centuries, with some traces of earlier beliefs remaining. In or are also possible he let himself be baptized in Rheims. Anglo-Saxon Christianity and Hiberno-Scottish mission In most of Britain, the native Britons were already partly Christianized by the time of the Anglo-Saxon settlement of Britain ; it is not clear how thorough this process had been. However, ecclesiastics of the time such as the British Gildas and later Anglo-Saxon Bede , criticized them for generally refusing to work at all for the conversion of the Anglo-Saxons , in fact many were absorbed into the religion and culture of the new settlers. The conversion of the Anglo-Saxons was begun at about the same time at the far north and south of the Anglo-Saxon kingdoms in two unconnected initiatives. Irish missionaries led by Saint Columba based in Iona from and elsewhere, converted many Picts. The court of Anglo-Saxon Northumbria , and the Gregorian mission , who landed in , did the same to the Kingdom of Kent. In both cases, and in other kingdoms, the conversion was generally "top down", with the royal family and nobility adopting the new religion first. The Viking invasions of Britain and Ireland destroyed many monasteries and new Viking settlers restored paganismâ€™ though of a different variety to the Saxon or classical religionsâ€™ to areas such as Northumbria and Dublin for a time before their own conversion. Germanic Christianity 9th-century depiction of Christ as a heroic warrior Stuttgart Psalter, fol. The Eastern and Western tribes were the first to convert through various means. However, it would not be until the 12th century that the North Germanic peoples had Christianized. In the polytheistic Germanic tradition, it was possible to worship Jesus next to the native gods like Woden and Thor. Before a battle, a pagan military leader might pray to Jesus for victory, instead of Odin, if he expected more help from the Christian God. According to legend, Clovis had prayed thus before a battle against one of the kings of the Alemanni , and had consequently attributed his victory to Jesus. The next impulse came from the edge of Europe. Although Ireland had never been part of the Roman Empire, Christianity had come there and developed, largely independently, into Celtic Christianity. The Irish monks had developed a concept of peregrinatio. The territory of Great Moravia was originally evangelized by missionaries coming from the Frankish Empire or Byzantine enclaves in Italy and Dalmatia since the early 8th century and sporadically earlier. Christianization of Bulgaria Baptism of the Preslav Court by Nikolai Pavlovich date of completion unknown After its establishment under Khan Asparukh in , Bulgaria retained the traditional Bulgar religion Tengriism and the pagan beliefs of the local Slavic population. In the mid-9th century, Boris I decided to establish Christianity as a state religion in Bulgaria. In , he was baptized in the capital Pliska by Byzantine priests. After prolonged negotiations with both Rome and Constantinople, he managed to create an autocephalous Bulgarian Orthodox Church and used the newly created Cyrillic script to make the Bulgarian language the language of the Church. Christianity was challenged during the rule of his first-born son, Vladimir-Rasate , who decided to return to the old Bulgarian religion. Boris I, who had previously retired to a monastery, led a rebellion against his son and defeated him. At the counsel of Preslav in , his third son, Simeon I who was born after the Christianization, was installed on the throne and the capital was moved from Pliska to Preslav as a symbol of the abolition of the old religion. Simeon I led a series of wars against the Byzantines to gain official recognition of his Imperial title and the full independence of the Bulgarian Church. As a result of his victories in , the Byzantines finally recognized the Bulgarian Patriarchate. Serbia[ edit ] Seal of prince Strojimir of Serbia , from the late 9th century - one of the oldest artifacts on the Christianization of the Serbs Basil I with delegation of Serbs The Serbs were baptised during the reign of Heraclius â€™ by "elders of Rome " according to Constantine Porphyrogenitus in his annals r. The fleets and land forces of Zahumlje , Travunia and Konavli Serbian Pomorje were sent to fight the Saracens who attacked the town of Ragusa Dubrovnik in , on the immediate request of Basil I , who was asked by the Ragusians for help. The Serbs adopt the Old Slavonic liturgy instead of the Greek.

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