



The Germanization of Early Medieval Christianity: A Sociohistorical Approach to Religious Transformation

James C. Russell

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While historians of Christianity have generally acknowledged some degree of Germanic influence in the development of early medieval Christianity, Russell goes further, arguing for a fundamental Germanic reinterpretation of Christianity. This first full-scale treatment of the subject follows a truly interdisciplinary approach, applying to the early medieval period a sociohistorical method similar to that which has already proven fruitful in explicating the history of Early Christianity and Late Antiquity. The encounter of the Germanic peoples with Christianity is studied from within the larger context of the encounter of a predominantly "world-accepting" Indo-European folk-religiosity with predominantly "world-rejecting" religious movements. While the first part of the book develops a general model of religious transformation for such encounters, the second part applies this model to the Germano-Christian scenario. Russell shows how a Christian missionary policy of temporary accommodation inadvertently contributed to a reciprocal Germanization of Christianity.

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