

tions from Greek Tragedy as well as fragments of Vergil, Tibullus and Tiberianus (though, again, with only a reference to at least three more long pieces in the Beauvais anthology). Bl. does include, albeit from the *AL*, the twenty-two verses from a *Pontica* (by Solinus?), and the independently transmitted *Historia Apollini Regis Tyri* (both not in C.), and admits the fragments from the *Epigrammata Bobiensia* among those of Domitius Marsus and from the *Priapea* among Ovid's. To the papyrological fragments of Gallus already included in Bü. are now added those from the *de Bello Actiaco*, but the Barcelona *Alcestis* is excluded *integritatis causa* (p. ix; wouldn't this criterion also exclude the epigrams cited from Gell. 19.9, for instance?).

In keeping to the familiar numeration of M.'s *FPL*, Bl.'s edition might furnish a more convenient standard reference to the fragments of Latin poets than C., which is confessedly selective in other respects. But for a convenient and comprehensive view of the poetic remains of a Pliny, Hadrian or Apuleius one has still to look elsewhere.

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Martin Goodman, *Mission and Conversion. Proselytising in the Religious History of the Roman Empire*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994, 194 pp.

In recent years the issue of mission and conversion has become very popular in scientific circles. Studies about it have been published by McKnight, Feldman, Will-Orrieux and others.¹ In eight chapters, Goodman again goes over the evidence in pagan, Jewish and Christian literature. His hypothesis is that mission was not inherent in religions of antiquity, and that only few Christians and Jews were active in mission. This hypothesis leads him to some far reaching conclusions. Let me mention some of his points.

Goodman starts with a thorough discussion (chapter 1) about the nature of mission in antiquity, and concludes that there were four types of mission: educational, apologetic, informative and proselytizing. A missionary religion "had to be universal and therefore outward-looking in its scope and inclusive in its intent" (p. 6). He strengthens this point by saying that "the crucial issue will be to discover whether missionaries who sought to convert others to their beliefs or groups saw themselves at the time of their missionary activity as members along with their auditors of such a universal society". Now, the question is whether these statements are valid, and whether people in antiquity (or missionaries for that matter), were aware of these distinctions. One can claim for instance that a mission which had any bearing on a religious cause was by its nature educational and/or informative. The fact that Goodman is greatly impressed by the direct results of mission, namely the number of converts that one can find at the end of the process of mission, affects his whole argument. (This matter, which is debated throughout his book, remains very problematic precisely because of our lack of evidence concerning numbers of proselytes.) To put it more bluntly, the fact that there are no proselytes at the end of the process of mission does not necessarily mean that the educators' intention was not to convince people to change their beliefs and affiliations. The use of a different "discourse"

¹ S.McKnight, *A Light among the Gentiles. Jewish Missionary Activity in the Second Temple Period*, Min. 1991. L.H.Feldman, *Jew and Gentile in the Ancient World*, 1993. E.Will, C.Orrieux, *Prosélytisme juif? histoire d'une erreur*, Paris, 1992.

by people representing an idea or cult can in itself point to active mission. Moreover, since Goodman discusses at length certain aspects of other types of mission (philosophic schools), it is surprising that he ignores some others which can be discerned in the gray area lying between the different types that he mentions. For instance, some common ground between a political mission (or message) and a religious one can be found. Cleomenes III of Sparta “converted” many from the Peloponnesus to his socio-economic cause, but these “converts” turned their backs on him when he refused to implement his revolution outside Sparta. Thus the classification of different types of mission — very nicely explained by Goodman — seems to me somewhat artificial. More problematic is, I believe, the notion that the aim of mission is (always?) universal. Few examples are brought forward by Goodman to verify this claim, and moreover his use of the term “universal” is not sufficiently clear. Is it the *oecumene*, which was understood differently in various societies in antiquity? Jesus’ universe is different from Paul’s. The “universe” of Osiris in the Hellenistic era is totally different from that of Heracles (according to Matris of Thebes), etc. In paganism there were indeed universal gods like Ammon, but also many local gods who had no universal aspirations whatsoever. These gods were quite “happy” when more people joined in their cults. In this respect worshippers of pagan gods were perhaps “proselytes” when they changed affiliations from one god and preferred another. For example, the presentation of Demetrius in Athens by a famous hymn shows precisely why the Athenians at the time preferred Demetrius (who is presented as a god) to the other gods (Athenaeus, *Deipnosophistai* 6.253). This is a fascinating description of pagans who were convinced that Demetrius is a real god just because of his deeds (which in this case can be seen as an aspect of successful mission of Demetrius).

Moreover, it seems that Goodman does not take into account the history “from below”, or to put it in more simple terms, daily life. The micro is not less important than the macro. Daily efforts to educate or to grant information in order to convince one person or his family to change their affiliation or beliefs also had a great significance. These individual efforts were probably seen as a great success by missionaries. This very notion is expressed by the much debated passage in Mt 23:15: “Woe to thee, scribes and Pharisees, that you cross land and sea to make one proselyte”. Goodman attempts to refute this evidence by changing the meaning of *proselytos* in this text (“what I suggest, therefore, is that *proselytos* in the first century had both a technical and a non-technical sense...”, p. 73); but if we ignore this kind of linguistic acrobatics, then Mt 23:15 reflects just what I claim: that mission was seen as effective even when it was performed outside a “universal” context. Thus the basic purpose of the book, namely to concentrate on “the investigation ... of explicit or very strongly implied evidence of a universal mission to bring people perceived as outsiders into a particular community and to convert them to the views held by that community” (p. 14), seems to me problematic.

In chapter two Goodman discusses the diffusion of cults and philosophies in the pagan Roman empire. He asks a “simple” question: “Did (pagans) ever feel themselves to be part of a defined group of worshippers into which all humans should be drawn?” The answer to this last question, says Goodman (p. 21), will in the end be “probably not”. The group definition of “all humans” seems to me a very ambitious use of the term, especially when we refer to paganism (or henotheism for that matter). Pagans were less ambitious in this respect than Goodman would like them to be. Moreover, if the classification described above is problematic and the borders between educational and infor-

mative do not hold, then Goodman's thesis that mission was not inherent in paganism must be seriously questioned. He does not take into account some of the Hellenistic literature which is full of ideas which deal with mission in its broader sense. Hecataeus of Abdera, Matris of Thebes, Dionysius Scytobrachion, Diodorus Siculus, as well as others, reveal how mission was inherent in wandering gods (Osiris, Sesostris, Heracles and Myrina). These heroes and deities wish to incorporate parts of the *oecumene*, every one in his own geographical universal world — into their sphere of religio-political "influence" (cf. my forthcoming article in *Fest. Hengel*). This so-called educational vocation of the Hellenistic heroes and gods cannot be separated from their wish to be "acknowledged" as gods. It is quite clear that the authors of such documents from the Hellenistic period in fact helped to "promote" the cults of the heroes and gods they were describing. This evidence, I believe, changes the whole picture Goodman attempts to give of mission in the pagan world. It should also be said that the spread of a cult, although it may have taken place in a natural manner, cannot be entirely dissociated from the notion of mission. The spread itself (like that of the Isis cult) was a very effective method of mission and proselytizing (and here one has to rely on the results). Thus I cannot accept Goodman's conclusion that "of all the pagan cults known to have widely disseminated in the early Roman empire, perhaps only one was, at least potentially, a proselytizing religion, and that was the imperial cult, the worship of the emperors" (p. 30).

In chapters 3-4 Goodman tackles Jewish attitudes to gentile paganism and its stance towards proselytizing. In a fascinating manner, Goodman shows that around 96 CE the attitude towards pagans changed. Jews had been tolerant before that date, whereas they became more aggressive thereafter. The year 100 CE is important since the combination of the imposition of the *fiscus Judaicus* in 70 CE and the awareness that the Temple would soon be rebuilt, changed the Jewish sense of defining themselves *vis-à-vis* their fellow gentiles. "Real historical change produced novel theological concepts after the destruction of the Temple and engendered recognition by Jews of a need to define more precisely who was a Jew and who was a gentile". (pp. 48-49). Goodman goes over part of the Jewish literature of post-biblical times and finds that some of it shows tolerance towards gentile paganism outside the Land. This in itself is not new. But he goes further and argues that one of the implications of this tolerance is that Jews before 100 CE did not search for proselytes, and that the whole notion of mission was alien to them. Here he brings forward (chapter 4) the evidence that has been discussed *ad nauseam* in the scholarship of recent years, and rejects most of it in order to prove that in first-century Judaism a proselytizing attitude was absent. The only kind of mission one can find in the first century is thus a sporadic Christian mission. Goodman ends these two extensive chapters by stating (p. 90): "The missionary hero in search for converts to Judaism is a phenomenon first approved by Jews well after the start of the Christian mission, not before it". Thus, he adds "the origins of the proselytizing impulse within the Church should be sought elsewhere". Some of the evidence Goodman uses for this conclusion is admittedly very dubious. Some years before him McKnight had discussed much of the evidence and in fact Goodman reaches the same conclusion as McKnight's. It would be superfluous to enter here once more into a discussion of these pieces of evidence. However, what an outsider can say about this fervent discussion is that the texts themselves were intended in certain instances as vehicles of mission (cf. much of the Jewish Hellenistic literature which entered the writings of the Greek Christian fathers).

In chapter 5, Goodman, as a result of his conclusion mentioned above, discusses mission in the early Church. Goodman first defines (as he did in the case of pagans and Jews) who was actually considered a Christian. He says that “anyone who thought of himself or herself as within the community of those who worshipped Christ” was a Christian. He agrees that Paul (sometimes St. Paul and sometimes just Paul) was a missionary, and so were some of his fellow Christians at the time (“At least some Christians at some times took a very different attitude”, namely proselytizing, p. 92). He argues, however, that in patristic texts there are very few explicit references to the “desirability of universal proselytizing” (p. 159 where he refers back to chapter 5), and in some instances the hostility of Christians to paganism brought about “an essential element in the proselytizing approach” (p. 128). Also he adds that “There was no mechanism within the Church for organizing mission, nor even any explicit policy to convert those individuals such as slaves ... The Church in the second and third centuries was often too involved with its own internal organization and survival to be concerned with a mission to the outside world ...”. Does Goodman really believe this? First, here it becomes so obvious that a distinction between educational mission and mission seeking for proselytes is implausible (p. 95-96). I am not alone in my opinion that Luke in Acts had very strong feelings about mission, and one cannot live with Goodman’s notion that “such apologetic and educational mission will not have presupposed that the audience to whom the missionaries preached should join any new community” (p. 96). That the Ethiopian eunuch baptized Philip and then “went on his way rejoicing” shows exactly what I claimed beforehand: even one proselyte is crucial and brings happiness to the church (if one does not see this story metaphorically. If one sees it as a metaphor then it may signify a breakthrough and a revolution in the concept of mission!). Second, Goodman presents some evidence which does show that “some Christians were ... strikingly clear that all humans must convert. But it is less clear to what they thought people should convert, or more precisely, into what group”. This is very unclear! Unless I have misunderstood this, it is quite obvious that Christians wished people to become Christians and not Buddhists. Thirdly, Goodman has unfortunately based most of his argument that the Church Fathers were not concerned with mission on an *argumentum e silentio*. One can argue differently from this very silence, namely that this issue was for the Church Fathers a daily task one should not even bother about. However, I am not so sure that Goodman is right about his basic concept that “Christians did not deny the desirability of mission, but nor did they generally affirm, seems to reflect the general attitude of patristic authors” (p. 107). He himself has some examples to the contrary although he usually dismisses them. But let us, for example, examine Eusebius’ *Church History*. Eusebius wrote extensive parts of the history during a very difficult time for the Church, but edited it after 313 CE. This in itself does not affect what I am going to say. Eusebius wrote his church history *inter alia* because he wanted to show the importance of mission to the history of the church in its first three centuries. One can even say that for him mission was perhaps the most important factor in church politics. To say that Church Fathers (including Clement of Alexandria and Origen) were implicit about this aspect is, I believe, not very accurate. Also Goodman’s remark on page 108 is not very useful: “What is crucial is not that the notion of universal proselytizing was often adduced by Christians after the apostolic age (which is dubious), but that it could be, as it was (polemically) by Origen ...” (this is reminiscent of the phrases used by Sir Humphrey in the series “Yes, Prime Minister”). Fourthly, to claim that the church lacked a mechanism for organized mission goes against the evidence. Let-

ters, church hierarchy, church synods, and even martyrdom had their missionary overtones. I wish to give here only one example of a mechanism, namely, aggressive mission in pagan areas. Dionysus the Great, according to Eusebius' *HE* 7.12 ff, says himself that in Cephro to where he was banished: "God opened unto us a door for the word. And at first we were pursued, we were stoned, but afterwards not a few of the heathen left their idols and turned to God. Then for the first time was the word sown through our agency among those who had not formerly received it. It was as it were for this that God took us away to them, and when we had fulfilled this ministration, took us away again". The not-so-hidden agenda of the church was to enhance its stature and strength (i.e. numbers) by proselytizing. Otherwise it is difficult to understand how it became so influential just before the Constantinian era. People surely became Christians not only because of the propaganda issued by the church but no doubt also as a result of the propaganda and counter propaganda of the Roman authorities themselves. People became more and more intrigued by this new phenomenon. I do not want to enter the debate over how strong Christianity was on the eve of 313 CE, but it seems that it had increased its power since the first century. In this I can only agree with Eusebius' presentation in the *HE*.

In chapters 6-7 Goodman deals with the attitudes of Judaism in the Talmudic period to gentile paganism and its views of proselytes and proselytizing. He claims (as said above) that after 100 CE when the Jews were redefining their Jewish identity, as did the Roman empire concerning Jews (in consequence of the *fiscus Judaicus*), Jewish attitude towards pagans changed to one of intolerance. The Polemus Quietus is the best evidence for such attitude (outside the Land of Israel, according to Goodman). As a result of the triumph of the Church, Goodman argues, the rabbis (in line with other religions in the Roman empire) became more aware of mission and proselytizing. My knowledge, or rather ignorance, of the rabbinic literature does not allow me to comment on this. But just two remarks on the Revolt of 115-117 CE. First, one should not ignore the evidence suggesting that the rebellion may also have taken place in the land of Israel (contra Goodman's distinction between Land of Israel and Diaspora). Secondly, let me add here a hypothesis to the many stimulating ones Goodman has brought forward. It is not a coincidence that the Polemus Quietus occurred at the time of Trajan since the Jews, perhaps influenced by the visions of a world empire (combining in fact the Roman empire with the eastern one of Alexander), thought their time had also come for a universal rule in the world (in line with the universalistic prophecies in the Bible, Abraham in the *Gen. Apoc.* etc.).

In sum, Goodman's book is a very learned attempt to examine once more the evidence of mission and conversion within a broader context. Personally I am not convinced by his arguments, however stimulating they are, not necessarily because they lack brilliance, but because the evidence adduced is at times dubious. I certainly believe that mission was one of the main concerns of Christianity and that it was inherent in the Christian religion. This was so obvious that people did not bother to write about it (how many writings from the Roman Empire do we possess about Roman imperialism?!). It is always fascinating to read Goodman's studies, and his provocative ideas will no doubt further stimulate the debate about mission.