

"Christianizing the Roman Empire (A.D. 100-400)" Ramsay MacMullen, Yale UP, 1984

Post by "Cassius" of July 20, 2025 at 8:35 PM

Here is another book I have had recommended to me as an authority on the methods used by the early Christians to take over the Roman empire. I'm starting a thread on it and several others for future reference.,

[Christianizing the Roman Empire: A.D. 100-400](#)

How did the early Christian church manage to win its dominant place in the Roman world? In his newest book, an eminent historian of ancient Rome examines this...

www.amazon.com

Post by "Kalosyni" of July 21, 2025 at 8:17 AM

This is just an aside, but an interesting read:

[Ramsay MacMullen, distinguished Roman historian and Yale citizen](#)

MacMullen, Dunham Professor Emeritus of History and Classics and one of the greatest Roman historians of his age, died on Nov. 27. He was 94.

news.yale.edu

An excerpt:

Quote

His wide learning (he was famous for his numerous and lengthy footnotes) enabled him to look beyond the historical parameters of other historians, and to use abundant unnoticed evidence concerning Romans in their individual and family rites and daily life to advance his views. His books, and the attention and acclaim they received, were influential in opening the now established field of social history.

John Matthews, the John M. Schiff Professor Emeritus of Classics and History, has stated that MacMullen added something "broader" to the usual scholarly writing on the subject by "posing open questions and addressing them with a far greater range of texts than most were accustomed to — inscriptions, papyri, archaeological reports,

literary texts from unfashionable periods of history, many of them texts whose relevance was, precisely, *not* agreed.”

Post by “Kalosyni” of July 21, 2025 at 8:35 AM

He also wrote: [Corruption and the Decline of Rome](#)

Post by “DaveT” of July 23, 2025 at 8:33 AM

I recently read that the Roman religious beliefs were accepting of other religious concepts. It was given that this was why the Greek religious (philosophical?) beliefs were followed as they were before and after the C.E. This adaptability then was posited as the reason that formerly pagan Romans eventually accepted Christian beliefs after they initially tried to stamp them out. Certainly the story is much more complicated than that, but perhaps it is a partial factor.

Post by “kochiekoch” of July 23, 2025 at 11:44 AM

I understand the Romans, were very tolerant, of religions. When they would conquer a territory, they would frequently just absorb the gods of the locals into their Pantheon.

The problem with Christians was that they wouldn't honor the emperor as a God. It's a little like refusing to remove your hat and stand for the Star-Spangled banner! Rude! ☐☐

Post by “Sam_Qwerty” of July 27, 2025 at 8:16 PM

I was watching a YouTube video on this topic. The Youtuber put it this way: Christianity didn't win because it had better answers. It won because it took control of power and outlawed the questions. The collapse of the Roman Empire was a political and military event. But the dark

ages were a result of Christian intolerance for intellectual debate.

Post by “kochiekoch” of July 29, 2025 at 9:50 AM

I had a professor in a classical civ class ask how it was Christianity won out in ancient Rome. I've thought about that question for years and I think I have a good answer.

It became the religion of the ruling elite, and they eventually repressed the old ways.

Now adays we talk about "crypto currencies" and the like. The origin of the meaning of the word "crypto", as being something hidden, comes from the time when Pagans had to practice their religion in cemeteries, among the crypts. It gives you an idea of the repression.

They were called "CryptoPagans".

Post by “Don” of July 29, 2025 at 11:12 AM

Bart Ehrman's book The Triumph of Christianity is a good one to read on this. He emphasizes that triumph is used literally and metaphorically in the title. Literal in that a Roman Triumph was the parade where a general was given permission to parade his conquered enemies that he had trodden underfoot through the streets of Rome to celebrate his victory and humiliate the vanquished.

Post by “Godfrey” of July 29, 2025 at 8:55 PM

This reminds me of the hymn "Onward Christian Soldiers".... marching as to war, with the cross of Jesus going on before (that's from memory, I may have misquoted).

Post by “Don” of July 29, 2025 at 9:14 PM

[Quote from Godfrey](#)

This reminds me of the hymn "Onward Christian Soldiers".... marching as to war, with the cross of Jesus going on before (that's from memory, I may have misquoted).

No, you got it right. That's the way I remember it, too.

Post by "TauPhi" of July 29, 2025 at 9:25 PM

[Quote from Godfrey](#)

This reminds me of the hymn "Onward Christian Soldiers".... marching as to war, with the cross of Jesus going on before (that's from memory, I may have misquoted).

And your comment [Godfrey](#) instantaneously reminded me of A Perfect Circle song called "Counting Bodies Like Sheep To The Rhythm Of The War Drums". A great song and a great warning against outsourcing one's thinking and putting one's life in the hands of another.