

Conversion in Late Antiquity: Christianity, Islam, and Beyond
Colloquium on 'Converting Identities'
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"Christians and others: the conversion ethos of late antiquity"

Abstract

Starting from the general principle that conversion is a process which applies to all aspects of belief from the Hellenistic period onwards, this talk will focus primarily on three cases of conversion to Hellenism, all occurring within a specific milieu — that of the fifth-century Platonic Academy in Athens. Analysis of the evidence relating to the origins and previous affiliations of these converts will demonstrate how each brings to late antique Hellenism — whether consciously or otherwise — elements from his own cultural and religious heritage. In addition the talk will examine some of the parameters of conversion as revealed by sources relating to the experiences and dilemmas faced by two bishops active in the mid-fourth and early fifth century respectively.