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Conversion in Late Antiquity: Christianity, Islam, and Beyond
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"Burning down the house: Anti-family feeling and the household as a space for Christian conversion in late antiquity"

Abstract

Scholars have long agreed that the early Christian view of the household and biological family is unambiguously ambivalent. Early Christian writers clearly saw the family and business relationships of the ancient household as the primary network of influence through which the new movement could spread. Already in Paul's First Letter to the Corinthians (ca. 54-55 C.E.) we see the idea that a Christian wife could save an unbelieving husband and vice versa (1 Cor 7:10-16). At the same time, later writers, such as the authors of the Gospels, remember Jesus as a bringer of conflict to families (e.g. Mt 10:34-36). This paper considers how the writers of later antiquity took up theme of Christianity's challenge to the established household, from the second-century Pastoral Epistles to fifth- and sixth-century hagiographical sources such as the Roman *Gesta martyrum*.