

Mellon Foundation Sawyer Seminar  
Conversion in Late Antiquity: Christianity, Islam, and Beyond  
Session on 'Converting States'  
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"From unholy madness to right-mindedness: or how to legislate for religious conformity from Decius to Justinian."

### Abstract

This paper seeks to show how imperial legislation promoting religious conformity, whether by preventing or imposing religious beliefs or practices, developed from the time of the Decian persecution down to the comprehensive anti-pagan enactments of Justinian. The main focus is on the relationship of Christians with pagans and Jews. In particular, attention is paid to the rapid changes of imperial perspective during the period of the Great Persecution, its relaxation, and Constantine's adoption of Christianity.