



# The Germanization of Early Medieval Christianity: A Sociohistorical Approach to Religious Transformation

By James C. Russell

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## **The Germanization of Early Medieval Christianity: A Sociohistorical Approach to Religious Transformation** By James C. Russell

While historians of Christianity have generally acknowledged some degree of Germanic influence in the development of early medieval Christianity, Russell goes further, arguing for a fundamental Germanic reinterpretation of Christianity. This first full-scale treatment of the subject follows a truly interdisciplinary approach, applying to the early medieval period a sociohistorical method similar to that which has already proven fruitful in explicating the history of Early Christianity and Late Antiquity. The encounter of the Germanic peoples with Christianity is studied from within the larger context of the encounter of a predominantly "world-accepting" Indo-European folk-religiosity with predominantly "world-rejecting" religious movements. While the first part of the book develops a general model of religious transformation for such encounters, the second part applies this model to the Germano-Christian scenario. Russell shows how a Christian missionary policy of temporary accommodation inadvertently contributed to a reciprocal Germanization of Christianity.

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### Editorial Review

#### Review

"An intelligent synthesis of observations from a wide range of anthropological, historical, and other literature."--*Catholic Historical Review*

"Highly interesting and challenging reading. An important contribution to research."--*Theological Studies*.

"Russell develops a general model of religious change that ought to be of interest to anyone concerned with the sociology (or anthropology) of belief systems per se, let alone the history of the Church."--C. Scott Littleton, *Occidental College*.

"Fascinating. It is a very important contribution to the growing awareness of the bright light of the 'Dark' Ages."--Ronald Murphy, *Georgetown University*

#### From the Back Cover

While historians of Christianity have generally acknowledged some degree of Germanic influence in the development of early medieval Christianity, Russell goes further, arguing for a fundamental Germanic reinterpretation of Christianity. He utilizes recent developments in sociobiology, anthropology, and psychology to help explain this pivotal transformation of the West. This book will interest all who wish to further their understanding of Christianity and Western civilization.

#### About the Author

**James C. Russell** received his doctorate in Historical Theology from Fordham University. He teaches at Saint Peter's College.

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