## Contents

Preface	xi
<ol> <li>Introduction: Must Historians Count?         The Need for Numbers 1         Counting Romans, Jews, and Christians 4         Religion as an Aspect of Identity 6         The Rural Factor 12     </li> </ol>	1
2. The "Urban" Thesis  The Current Consensus 14  The Problem with the Urban Thesis 18  Dissenting Voices 20	14
3. Counting Romans and Christians The Accepted Numbers 24 The Population of the Roman Empire 27 The Problem of the Christian Numbers 31 The Rural Christianity Factor 35	24
4. Counting the Jewish Population  Jews in the Roman Empire 41  Jews in the Eastern Empire 50  The Urban Character of Diaspora Judaism 52  A Rural Jewish Diaspora? 56  A Proposed Solution 60	41
5. Urban and Rural Relationships General Views 65	65

viii Contents

The Problem of Definition 70	
Status 71	
Size 72	
Structure 73	
Arbitrary Boundaries 74	
Rural/Urban Contacts 75	
Supplying the Cities with Food 79	
Supplying the Cities with Clothing and Manufactured Goods 8	0
Supplying the Cities with People 80	
Supplying the Cities with Religion 86	
Soldiers, Slaves, Convicts, and Exiles 88	
Conclusion 90	
6. Supposed Barriers to Christian Success in the Countryside The Urban Character of Paul's Mission 91 The Conservative Nature of the Countryside 100	91
The Case of Alexander, the "Oracle Monger" 102	
Urban and Rural Conservatism 104	
Linguistic Barriers 107 Evidence for Christian Worship in the Rural Vernacular 107 Bilingualism 115 Urban Dislocation and Religious Conversion 121 Urban Views of Rural Inhabitants 123	
Conclusion 130	
7. The Pre-Constantinian Evidence	131
Finding Evidence 131	
A Great Divide: 250 C.E. 135	
Theories of the Origins of a Rural Christianity 136	
Imperial Crises and the Weakening of Paganism 136	
Persecution 139	
Imperial Toleration 141	
Increasing Social Status of Bishops 142	
Making Romans out of Rurals 142	
Failed Explanations 144	
Evidence for a Rural Church (50 c.e250 c.e.) 144	
Early General Evidence 145	

Contents ix

Specific Statements Regarding the Rural Situation 146 Asia Minor 152 Egypt 156 North Africa 168	
Syria 174 Other Areas within the Empire 175 Beyond the Empire 176 Problems for the Urban Thesis 177	
8. Dismissing the Evidence of Christianity in the Countryside Restricting Rural Christianity to the Late Third Century 182 Treating Rural Christianity as Abnormal 182 Treating Christianity in Rural Areas as Urban 189 The Pagan Countryside 191 The Term "Pagan" 193 Conclusion 197	181
9. The Country Bishop The Chorepiscopos 198 First Mention and Earliest Evidence 199 Chorepiscopoi and the Early Councils 200 The Spread and the Range of the Office 203 Determining the Origins 206	198
10. Conclusion  The Numbers 209  The Rural Element 210  The Rustic Element 214  Back to the Countryside 222	208
Appendix A. The Numbers According to Ramsay MacMullen Multiple Places of Assembly 227 Calculating Space 232 The Complexion of the Membership 233 The Synagogue: A Test Case 235 Diaspora Synagogues 235 Palestinian Synagogues 240	225
The Mosque: A Modern Parallel? 242	

x Contents

Appendix B. The Numbers According to Rodney Stark	243
Jews in the Roman Empire 245	
The Problem of Rural Christianity 246	
The Mormonism Parallel 249	
Jewish Conversion to Christianity 251	
Conclusion 252	
Bibliography of Works Cited	253
Index	283