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Religious Identity in Late Antiquity: Greeks, Jews and Christians in Antioch. By **Isabella Sandwell**. Greek Culture and the Roman World. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007. xiv + 314 pp. $99.00 cloth.

Isabella Sandwell's book is a valuable contribution to the study of Libanius, John Chrysostom, fourth-century Antioch, and the period of late antiquity. Her work deftly integrates modern theorists such as Pierre Bourdieu and Talal Asad with the most recent scholarship on Antioch in order to rewrite scholarly assumptions about religious identity in late antiquity. Sandwell's book consists of five sections, with two chapters in each section. This format reflects her focus on comparing and contrasting Libanius and Chrysostom, allowing her to examine each author on the same topic in paired chapters. The result is an informative and readable book that challenges scholars to reconsider the role that we assign to religious identity, and thus to religious differences and interactions, in the late Roman Empire.

The first chapter introduces the book's subject and method, and the second surveys recent scholarship on Antioch. Sandwell claims that Chrysostom and Libanius had different assumptions about the appropriate role of religious identity: Chrysostom pressed for an all-encompassing Christian identity, while Libanius understood religious identity more loosely in relation to other social and civic identities. She argues that Libanius's writings offer an important corrective and "decentre" Chrysostom's attempts to construct clear groups that did not yet exist (30). She understands one significant change of the fourth century to be Christian leaders' widespread insistence that Romans begin to understand religious allegiance as a strictly bounded and primary identity. To discuss this change and its impact, she uses Bourdieu's concept of *habitus* to argue that Libanius's writings reflect "a natural and habitual sense of how to deal with issues of religious difference and of religious allegiance" (18) while Chrysostom's novel Christian demands did not and therefore met with resistance from his audience.

Chapters 3 and 4 explore "Libanius' and Chrysostom's different uses of rhetoric and writing in relation to religion" in an effort to "gain an understanding of religious interaction in fourth-century Antioch" (59). Chapter 3 demonstrates that "clear-cut religious identities and labels were central" to Chrysostom in his preaching (61). By constructing clear definitions of "Greek" and "Jew," Chrysostom also constructed what it meant to be Christian. Having distinguished "Christian" from "Greeks, Jews and heretics," Chrysostom then labeled the latter as demonic in order to persuade his audience to be Christian as he understood that identity (88). As Sandwell

describes in chapter 4, Libanius contrasts sharply with Chrysostom when he describes religious allegiance as "something that could be adjusted as was suitable" (62). Libanius, she argues, was less interested "in marking out permanent religious identities" (121). Rather, he tactfully shifted his use of religious allegiance depending on the rhetorical and political needs of his context, just as the traditions of his society dictated, expressing distaste for overzealous public displays of religious allegiance and "an emphasis on the inner sphere as the place of true religious opinion" (119).

Chapters 5 and 6 investigate "how Chrysostom and Libanius conceived of religious identity/allegiance" in relation to "political, civic and ethnic identity and allegiance" (123). Sandwell concludes that, for Chrysostom, "Christianity was supposed to become the political, civic and ethnic identity of Christians as well as their religious identity" (153). Chapter 6 reveals that Libanius again provides a sharp contrast, in that he was "willing to disengage loyalty to particular gods from political, civic and cultural loyalties and identifications," which he did by emphasizing that religion should be private rather than public (180). Sandwell highlights that Libanius's stance allowed for religious tolerance along with coexistence.

Chapters 7 and 8 use social theorists' definitions to demonstrate that the concept of social "networks" should replace claims about coherent religious "groups" or "communities" in Roman Antioch. Chrysostom's audiences varied, as did the levels of commitment among those who attended, so that there was "not a unified Christian community" in his audiences (204). Sandwell argues that "most who called themselves Christians probably practiced much looser forms of social organization . . . [that] undermine the impact of Chrysostom's preaching about clear-cut identities" (212). Sandwell similarly counters arguments that there was a "pagan party" in Antioch focused on the emperor Julian. She concludes that "the model of the network rather than the social group is better able to describe Libanius' social relations," and religion itself was "a relatively unimportant factor in these social relations" (215).

Chapters 9 and 10 "ascertain how far people in Antioch generally were adopting [Chrysostom's] guidelines for religious identity" (32). Examining asceticism, prayer, divination, and the use of amulets, Sandwell demonstrates that while Chrysostom presented a Christian ideal that promoted ascetic behavior and forbade divination, many in his audience followed Libanius in understanding divination and amulets to represent acceptable forms of interaction with the divine that did not indicate (or compromise) a particular religious identity. She concludes that while Chrysostom's rhetoric clearly demarcated Christian and non-Christian religious identities, and encouraged his audience to "display their Christianity in visible and recognizable ways and in every aspect of their lives" (277), members of his audience shared

Libanius's more fluid view of religious identity. "Counterintuitively, Libanius, a worshipper of the gods who rarely wrote explicitly about religion, might be able to tell us more about the state of processes of Christianization in the fourth century than Chrysostom's preaching can" (29).

While Sandwell's arguments are largely persuasive, there are still opportunities for further discussion. Libanius's stance on the role of religion and its relation to the public sphere could usefully be compared to those of early Christian apologists, as they might reflect his minority status as much as the flexibility of "Greek" identity. Likewise, readers will need to maintain Sandwell's methodological sophistication in discussing the "private" and "internal life" of Libanius's religious identity, or risk re-creating outdated caricatures (in reverse) of Christian and "pagan" religion. Finally, I applaud Sandwell's successful efforts to decenter Christian categories, but in lauding Libanius's "feel for the game," she may too quickly dismiss Chrysostom's own sense for his society. Given Chrysostom's success, we must imagine that John the "golden mouth" also had a "feel for the game" that Sandwell does not acknowledge. Similarly, Sandwell stresses that Libanius, unlike Chrysostom, does the unexpected in making religion a private matter, and yet insists that Libanius consistently acted out of *habitus* while Chrysostom created novel expectations, leading his audience to stray from his ideals. As with any complex argument, Sandwell's claims will be further nuanced by those who follow her.

Sandwell's well-written book represents a significant and welcome contribution to scholarship. Drawing on the most recent work in the field and a variety of critical approaches, she weaves together a persuasive narrative that will productively challenge scholars to reshape and better nuance discussions of religious identity, allegiance, and interaction in late antiquity.

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Voting about God in Early Church Councils. By **Ramsay MacMullen**. New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 2006. xii + 175 pp. $30 cloth.

What happened in early church councils? From the second century into the sixth century and beyond, Christian leaders met in such assemblies throughout the Roman Empire, although the preponderance were held in the