PETER BROWN'S LATE ANTIQUITY

KREINER (J.), REIMITZ (H.) (edd.) *Motions of Late Antiquity. Essays on Religion, Politics, and Society in Honour of Peter Brown*. (Cultural Encounters in Late Antiquity and the Middle Ages 20.) Pp. x + 353, ills. Turnhout: Brepols, 2016. Cased, €90. ISBN: 978-2-503-54911-8.
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This volume in honour of Peter Brown sprang out of a valedictory conference at Princeton in 2011. The chronological, geographical and thematic range of its fifteen essays, many by Brown's former students, captures the astonishing breadth and depth of his influence over many decades. As K. and R. emphasise in their introduction, Brown's Late Antiquity roots 'variegated . . . experiences' within what was 'still a shared world' (p. 1). The diverse chapters that follow share an approach to Late Antiquity 'as worlds in motion, as comprising cultures that were both irreducibly variegated and conjoined' (p. 10). K. and R. ask more than once: can we really have it both ways? Multiple chapters suggest we can.

The volume is not the first collection dedicated to Brown nor is I. Wood's opening essay the first to recall his famous lectures at Oxford between 1969 and 1974. Part of what made Brown's approach so distinctive on and off the page, Wood recalls, was his engagement with anthropology and that (to use a nice Brownian adjective) shimmering style. The result was 'ancient communities being presented in Technicolor to the screen of the hearer's or reader's imagination' (p. 20). Readers of this volume may well expect and welcome this kind of *mise en scène*. But there are surprises too. Perhaps not all of Brown's oeuvre has had quite the impact it merits. Wood makes the case for Brown's *The Rise of Western Christendom* (1996) as *Totalgeschichte*, an innovative fusion of political and ecclesiastical history. The ripple effects of this fusion, Wood argues, have still not been fully felt in early medieval, especially Merovingian, historiography. His re-reading of the seventh-century Grimoald coup, often interpreted narrowly in terms of high politics, brings to light a political milieu deeply infused with biblical learning long before the Carolingians. W. Pohl's chapter also notes the curious absence of references to *The Rise of Western Christendom* (the second edition came out in 2003) in a spate of key publications on the transformation of the Roman world since the turn of the millennium. For Pohl, Brown's 'close-ups on troubling events and troubled individuals' deepen the big picture of structural change and continuity, and demonstrate that singularities of human agency can take 'centre stage' (p. 57) in reconstructions of deep-lying tectonic movements.

The complex interplay between the universal and the particular, between Late Antiquity in the singular and the plural, is prominent in S. Esders's rich chapter on seventh-century missionary activity. Esders refuses to keep forcible conversion of 'pagans' and Jews apart on separate narrative tracks and plausibly detects eastern imperial, rather than papal, inspiration behind what universal mission meant to Merovingian rulers and bishops. M. Maas's chapter, a case study of three stories of trans-imperial adoption and guardianship between the Roman, Persian and Hunnic empires in Procopius' *History of the Wars*, also emphasises trans-imperial connections.

Several contributors take Brown's work in interesting directions. Drawing avowedly on Mary Douglas's social anthropology, Brown's *The Body and Society* (1988) traced social meanings of the body in the later Roman world; following Douglas's approach, Manichaean metaphysical dualism ought to translate into dualistic social relations. But P. Townsend's chapter, a revisionist reading of the Manichaean body and society (and Douglas's *Natural Symbols* [1970, 1st ed.]), carefully demonstrates that Manichaean

dualism gave rise to a much more complex set of internal and external social interactions. J. Maxwell's study of Callinicus' fifth-century *Life* of Hypatius also thinks about social groups. Callinicus' depiction of Hypatius' interactions with a broad spectrum of visitors offers an unusual social perspective from 'the middle' (p. 103) that nuances our sense of how rigidly stratified late-antique societies were. Channelling insights from Brown's *Power and Persuasion* (1992) D. Fernández pays close attention to the political language of persuasion to re-examine dynamics of state power in later fifth-century Iberia. Breathing new life into fragmentary evidence, Fernández identifies conscious continuities in political communication at the same time as state structures were simplifying.

From Visigothic powerbrokers to Syrian churchmen, the geographical jump between some chapters captures the vast breadth of Brown's Late Antiquity. D. Schwartz analyses representations of religious violence in Jacob of Sarug's *memra* or homily, *On the Fall of the Idols*. While Jacob's rhetoric gained its resonance from the real menace of religious violence in late-antique societies, Schwartz argues that his *memra* was ultimately about Christianisation by persuasion. D. Michelson's essay problematises the othering of Miaphysite theology through a case study of the reception of Cappadocian thought by one of Jacob's contemporaries, Philoxenos of Mabbug. Far from being an outlier from the late-antique theological mainstream, Philoxenos saw himself as an interlocutor in a Nicene intellectual tradition alongside the likes of Basil of Caesarea. Inspired by Brown, both contributors firmly situate Syriac Christianity within a broader Late Antiquity.

This is not to lose sight of difference, as one of two essays at the coalface of Syriac scholarship demonstrates. V. Menze's chapter on the not yet published *Life* of Barsauma, opponent of Chalcedon in 451 and alleged murderer of the patriarch of Constantinople a few years earlier, traces how some Syrian Christians consciously cultivated a sense of difference. Re-dating the original composition to the decades after 451, Menze argues that it captures how the group identity of a religious minority was solidified by Chalcedon. The council's Christological formulations put Barsauma on the wrong side theologically while its monastic regulations also problematised the 'vagabond lifestyle' of his 'Beduiniz[ed]' monks (p. 242). J. Tannous's essay painstakingly uses interpolations in another unpublished Syriac text, the eighth-century *Life* of Simeon of the Olives, to trace the evolving challenges faced by Christian communities under Muslim rule.

The concreteness of religion in Brown's Late Antiquity is tangible in A. López's essay, which shows how ostensibly disparate details in Egyptian monastic writings were in fact attuned to the rhythms of agricultural and ecological cycles. Stories of miraculous feedings, for example, clustered around Easter, precisely when food reserves from the previous year's harvest would run dangerously low. Y. Papadogiannakis explores the intricacies of Christian identity in Anastasius of Sinai's seventh-century questions-and-answers book. An agony uncle of sorts, Anastasius' responses to questions on everything from carrying communion when travelling to the practicalities of inter-marriage with Muslims were all about negotiating religious identities in the messiness of everyday life. Close attention to texts also characterises P. Rousseau's chapter on Gregory of Tours's *Historiae*, which focuses on *Romanitas* as textual strategy in post-Roman Gaul.

In the final chapter J. Nelson revisits the Carolingian Renaissance in ways that go beyond simplistic top-down models. She argues forcefully for connecting '[r]eligious and legal renaissances' (p. 341) at the level of everyday practice through proprietary churches and local assemblies. Nelson's closing essay captures a key preoccupation of the volume: different scales of analysis but also connections between micro and macro.

Despite the geographical range of this volume, Islam is largely discernible only in silhouettes. The lack of an index, which might have allowed readers to trace connections across chapters, is a shame. Nonetheless, the volume is rich with fresh insights and angles

on the Late Antiquity dynamised by Brown. The closing thoughts in Nelson's chapter recall Brown's words at an inaugural lecture at Royal Holloway in 1977. He called on scholars and students 'to imagine with greater precision what it's like to be human in situations very different from our own'. In conveying the gravitational pull of this 'high-risk strategy' (p. 343), Nelson neatly concludes a volume that duly honours Peter Brown, above all, by daring to imagine with greater precision.

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LAY CHRISTIANITY IN GAUL

BAILEY (L.K.) *The Religious Worlds of the Laity in Late Antique Gaul*. Pp. viii + 247. London and New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2016. Cased, £70. ISBN: 978-1-4725-1903-0.
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One of the most striking features of the history of early Christianity is the rapid growth of a firm distinction, already well under way by the second century, between its priestly class, ranked in clerical orders, and its people or 'laity'. In the centuries to follow, a growing esteem for special members of the laity such as martyrs and, later, ascetics, consecrated religious and professed widows, led to the creation of a further distinction between the ordinary laity, the vast majority of the Christian population, and the extraordinary laity, small in numbers but high in status. The result can be seen in Isidore of Seville (*Etym*. 7.11–14), who divided members of the post-apostolic church into martyrs (11), clergy (12), monks (13) and 'the rest of the faithful' (14). It is in this last chapter that Isidore defines the word 'lay': 'Laicus popularis. Λαός enim Graece populus dicitur' (*Etym*. 7.14.9) (paraphrasing Eucherius, bishop of Lyon, *Instructiones* 2, line 447 [*CCSL* 66: 214]).

Difficult to study for a variety of reasons, the laity and lay Christianity have recently been the subject of increased attention within the fields of patristics, early Christian studies and medieval history. In this book B. focuses on the laity in Gaul (Roman and Merovingian) between 400 and 700. She is interested both in definitions of the laity, evident in the words and actions of clerics and non-clerics alike, and in the Christianity that lay people practised. Because they constituted so high a proportion of the population, B.'s description of their religious practice at times resembles a survey of lived Christianity itself in Gaul, despite not quite taking on this ambition.

The book is divided into an introduction and six chapters, with a brief conclusion. It features extensive endnotes and a bibliography that includes primary sources and much, but not all, of the most frequently cited secondary literature. In addition to surveying the main sources of evidence (pp. 8–18) and summarising the chapters (pp. 18–19), the introduction outlines the problems of definition that the concept of a laity raises (pp. 1–6) and argues against a set of assumptions about lay Christianity that B. terms 'the negative trajectory' (pp. 6–7). This is the view that 'the laity, like the Roman Empire, are always declining' (p. 7). What B. maintains instead is that lay Christianity in late-antique Gaul was marked not so much by a 'unidirectional' trend towards greater clerical control, as by widespread lay agency and diversity of practice and belief. The chapters that follow are meant to illustrate this view with a series of case studies rather than a comprehensive survey (p. 18). That they largely do so is a measure of the book's success.