

[PDF] Through The Eye Of A Needle: Wealth, The Fall Of Rome, And The Making Of Christianity In The West, 350-550 AD

Peter Brown - pdf download free book

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Description:

Review Winner of the 2012 R. R. Hawkins Award, PROSE Awards, Association of American Publishers Winner of the 2012 Award for Excellence in Humanities, Association of American Publishers Winner of the 2012 Gold Medal Book of the Year Award, History category, *ForeWord Reviews* Winner of the 2012 PROSE Award in Classics & Ancient History, Association of American Publishers

"To compare it with earlier surveys of this period is to move from the X-ray to the cinema. . . . Every page is full of information and argument, and savoring one's way through the book is an education. It is a privilege to live in an age that could produce such a masterpiece of the historical literature."--**Garry Wills, *New York Review of Books***

"Brown's goal in this book is patiently to reconstruct the debates on wealth among late Roman Christians: in other words, to set out the context for the tendentious claims of ascetic minorities, which have misled so many later interpreters."--**Conrad Leyser, *Times Literary Supplement***

"[O]utstanding. . . . Brown lays before us a vast panorama of the entire culture and society of the late Roman west."--**Peter Thornemann, *Times Literary Supplement***

"[M]agisterial. . . . The formidably learned historian challenges commonly accepted notions about the role of wealth in the decline of the Roman empire and examines the roots of charity, two subjects relevant to contemporary economics."--**Marcia Z. Nelson, *Publishers Weekly***

"It is exciting to watch a historian who has already written so extensively on Late Antiquity absorb so much new scholarship, revise his old reviews, and re-imagine the world we thought we knew from him. . . . *Through the Eye of a Needle* is a tremendous achievement, even for a scholar who has already achieved so much. Its range is as vast as its originality, and readers will find everywhere the kinds of memorable *aperçus* and turns of phrase for which its author is deservedly famous. . . . There can be no doubt that we are in the presence of a historian and teacher of genius."--**G. W. Bowersock, *New Republic***

"As Brown (Augustine of Hippo), the great dean of early church history, compellingly reminds us in his magisterial, lucid, and gracefully written study, the understanding of the role of wealth in the developing Christian communities of the late Roman Empire was much more complex. Combining brilliant close readings of the writings of Ambrose, Augustine, Jerome, and Paulinus of Nola with detailed examinations of the lives of average wealthy Christians and their responses to questions regarding wealth, he demonstrates that many bishops offered such Christians the compromises of almsgiving, church building, and testamentary bequests as alternatives to the renunciation of wealth. . . . Brown's immense, thorough, and powerful study offers rich rewards for readers."--***Publishers Weekly***

"Brown may be an emeritus professor of history at Princeton, but his research is resolutely up-to-date. . . . A hefty yet lucid contribution to the history of early Christianity."--***Kirkus Reviews***

"[A]n unprecedented resource. . . . Brown creates broad, deep landscapes in which the reader can watch the ancients moving. You can, in places, just crawl in and have a true dream about the ancient world. Moreover, the topic holds fascinating implications about the formation of modern Western culture. . . . It's a significant and suggestive story."--**Sarah Ruden, *American Scholar***

"This book should be daunting but it is not; for while the book is heavy to lift, it is even harder to put down. It makes utterly compelling reading."--**Eric Ormsby, *Standpoint***

"The sheer scope of this history is daunting, but scholars, theologians, and anyone interested in late Roman history or early Christianity will find this a fascinating view not only of the Church's development, but also of the changing concepts of wealth and poverty in the last centuries of the Roman empire."--**Kathleen McCallister, *Univ. of South Carolina Lib., Columbia, Library Journal***

"This is a masterpiece that more than justifies its length. Peter Brown is the greatest living historian of late antiquity, a periodization which he virtually invented, and *Through the Eye of a Needle* an achievement which stands to his earlier career as a great cathedral does to a pilgrimage route."--

Tom Holland, *History Today*

"[N]o other scholar could have produced Brown's characteristically intricate, spectacular and joyous synthesis. . . . One of the captivating qualities of Brown's new book is the sheer energy and intellectual excitement that sparkle through it. He might, in recent years, have rested of his laurels--perhaps, like his beloved Augustine, written his memoirs. Instead, he celebrates the continuing expansion of the field and demonstrates his continued mastery of it in a groundbreaking study of wealth in the late antique Church. . . . Towards the end of the book, Brown describes how a basilica might have looked around the year 600: glowing with candles, glittering with mosaics, gleaming with gold and silver vessels. 'The church itself', he says, 'had become a little heaven, filled with treasures.' It is a description irresistibly applicable to Peter Brown's own book: as rich a monument to the life of the mind as was any late Roman basilica to the life everlasting."--

Teresa Morgan, *Tablet*

"[A] predictably brilliant re-appraisal of the Roman world during the fourth to sixth centuries. . . . *Through the Eye of a Needle* is a vast book, but is remarkably readable. Brown's intimate knowledge of Augustine and his times is presented with human empathy and a sense of the relevance of these long-ago events. . . . [T]he latter chapters of *Through the Eye of a Needle* contain much essential information about the establishment of Christian influence throughout Europe following Rome's fall. . . . [A] wonderful book."--

Ed Voves, *California Literary Review*

"Peter Brown, professor emeritus at Princeton University and the leading historian of late antiquity, has written a masterful study. . . . His book is characterized by lively prose, mastery of the primary sources and original languages, comprehensive use of changes in the study of antiquities (especially the 'material culture' of archaeology), gorgeous plates, nearly 300 pages of bibliographic end material, and a number of important revisions to the standard historiography."--

Dan Clendenin, *JourneywithJesus.net*

"*Through the Eye of a Needle* (Princeton University Press) is the crowning masterpiece of Peter Brown, the great historian who virtually invented late antiquity as a periodisation. The book's theme might seem specialised: the evolution of attitudes towards wealth in the last century and a half of the Roman empire in the west, and the century that followed its collapse. In reality, like so many of Brown's books, it gives us a world vivid with colour and alive with a symphony of voices. It is not only the most compassionate study of late antiquity in the west ever written, but also a profoundly subtle meditation on our own tempestuous relationship with money."--

Tom Holland, *History Magazine*

"His sparkling prose, laced with humour and humanity, brings his subjects to life with an uncommon sympathy and feeling for their situation."--

Tim Whitmarsh, *Guardian*

"Brown, in this masterful history, makes the writings of Augustine, Ambrose and Jerome more accessible to the average reader, and scholars will welcome the voluminous notes and index."--

Ray Saadi, *Gumbo*

"[D]eliriously complicated. . . . As usual, Brown leaves no stone unturned in his search for insight and evidence. . . . He paints a colorful social setting for early church debates about theology and ethics without becoming reductively sociological, and often overturns accepted mytho-history in the process. He quietly draws on contemporary theory but typically lets ancients speak for themselves

because his aim is to introduce us to an exotic world. Through it all, he focuses on the masses of details by treating attitudes, beliefs, and practices about wealth as a 'stethoscope' to hear the heartbeat of late Roman and early Christian civilization. . . . Brown has captured the rough texture of real history. It is testimony to the success of Brown's subtle, provocative, and beautifully written book."--**Peter Leithart, *Christianity Today***

"A fascinating book by the great historian of late antiquity, Peter Brown, on the development of Christianity in Rome. . . . *Through the Eye of a Needle* is a serious work of scholarship and an important study about how Rome became Christian."--**John Roskam, Executive Director of the Institute of Public Affairs**

"Thoroughly researched, making use of the new materials that have emerged in the recent years, *The Eye of the Needle* is a scholarly work not just on early Christianity but relates its growth to the later developments and offers a new reading of the old sayings. It definitely is a source book for readers on religion and society."--**R. Balashankar, *Organiser***

"Its achievement is plain. It explores, with Brown's characteristically profound empathy, the great paradox of how a church with a world- and wealth-denying ideology came to acquire temporal riches and respectability. . . . [H]is approach is to offer the reader extraordinarily vivid portraits of individual Christian thinkers faced with the moral contradictions of worldly riches. . . . This much anticipated book, described by Brown as 'the most difficult book to write that I have ever undertaken,' fulfils expectations. Its success is grounded in its unerring moral balance. Perhaps for the first time, the problem of wealth in early Christianity is treated in full, with no righteous fury at blatant hypocrisy nor any apology for a church that rationalized its enrichment by feeding the poor. . . . It is the virtue of *Through the Eye of a Needle* that it prompts and enables one to think about the largest questions. It is a gift to have such a beautiful, authoritative, and humane study that cuts to the heart of all that is most challenging in the relationship between the spiritual and the material in late antiquity."--**Kyle Harper, *Bryn Mawr Classical Review***

"Brown . . . offers a masterful study on how converting to Christianity transformed the ways that economic elites in Europe and North Africa viewed their own wealth's source and purpose. A vivid storyteller, Brown transforms evidence from written, archaeological, and material sources into compelling portraits of early Christian leaders like Ambrose and Augustine. . . . [*Through the Eye of a Needle*] will quickly become required reading for students of early Christianity and late ancient history, but others interested in history and theological studies also will find it engaging."--**Choice**

"Compelling. . . . One can see in Brown's narrative that the disputes of the fourth century stand between the old civic generosity and a new concern for otherworldliness. Perhaps that transitory radicality could not be sustained. But it has bequeathed to the church a 'conglomerate of notions' that link the wealth of the church, the care of the poor and the fate of the soul."--**Walter Brueggemann, *Christian Century***

"Peter Brown's achievement is not least in having placed us all in his debt with so rich a work. Princeton University Press may also take its share of credit for the editing and production. Scholars will relish not only his insight and method, but 101 pages of footnotes and 76 pages of primary and secondary sources. Classical and church historians and theologians will relish the evaluations of individuals and communities and re-evaluations of the development of ideas. But please do not be put off by thinking that this is a book only for academics; all of us can enjoy what is, simply, accessible and well-written reading matter that does not require the possession of academic qualifications. It deserves to be enjoyed on the beach, as well as in the Bodleian!"--**John Scott, *Fairacres Chronicle***

From the Inside Flap

"*Through the Eye of a Needle* is a masterpiece of detailed historiography, brilliantly written. Peter Brown's long-awaited book surpasses even the high expectations set by his previous writings, and will engage general readers and specialists alike."--**Elaine Pagels, author of *Revelations: Visions, Prophecy, and Politics in the Book of Revelation***

"Here Peter Brown listens to the heartbeat of the late Roman world. His report is a masterpiece that introduces us to the wealth and poverty of an empire as it implodes, and the inspiring Christian concept of treasure in heaven. Excavating the roots of medieval charity, he illuminates the problems of rich and poor today, and delivers a triumph of history at its finest."--**Judith Herrin, author of *Byzantium: The Surprising Life of a Medieval Empire***

"The gap between rich and poor is one of the major issues of today, and who better than Peter Brown to probe the acute problems of conscience it presented to late antique Christians? In this important book, he brings to this vital subject his characteristic wit, wisdom, and humanity, as well as the mature reflection of a great historian. It is a magnificent achievement."--**Averil Cameron, author of *The Mediterranean World in Late Antiquity: AD 395-700***

"Like a master mosaicist, Brown brings together a huge assemblage of sources to produce a vibrant panorama bursting with vitality. His story of the transfer of great wealth from rich individuals and families to the coffers of the church is the story of the creation of the postimperial West and the European Middle Ages. This is a big, and big-hearted, beautiful book. *Tolle, lege*."--**Paula Fredriksen, author of *Sin: The Early History of an Idea***

"This is a book that only Peter Brown could write. It has his trademark stamped all over it, in the richness of its source material, its breadth of coverage and turn of phrase, its fondness for the middling folk and outsiders who usually fall by the wayside of academic scholarship, and its insistence on seeing pagans and Christians as part of a larger, shared world."--**H. A. Drake, author of *Constantine and the Bishops***

"Peter Brown has written a book for the ages, one that every specialist throughout the world in late antique history and the history of Christianity will read. *Through the Eye of a Needle* is a remarkable work of scholarship--interesting, informative, original, and stimulating. I recommend it warmly and confidently."--**Thomas F. X. Noble, author of *Images, Iconoclasm, and the Carolingians***

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