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J.H.W.G. Liebeschuetz, *Decline and Change in Late Antiquity: Religion, Barbarians and their Historiography*. Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing Co., 2006. Pp. 368. ISBN 0-86078-990-X. \$114.95.

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Ever since the publication of his *Antioch: City and Imperial Administration in the Later Roman Empire* (Oxford 1972) Wolfgang Liebeschuetz has been one of the leading scholars working on Roman cities and structures of administration in Late Antiquity. Several decades later, this specialization led to the publication of *Decline and Fall of the Roman City* (Oxford 2001) which was the sequel of the Antioch book. Apart from several other books dealing with barbarians, the Christian church and the army in the Later Roman Empire, Liebeschuetz also wrote many articles on these topics. The volume under review, *Decline and Change in Late Antiquity*, is a collection of seventeen articles, which, with the exception of the first article, were written in the period 1993-2004. The articles are presented by way of four themes that have played an important role throughout the entire career of Liebeschuetz: classical and late antique historiography, religion, barbarians, and the concept of Late Antiquity as a self-contained period of history.

The articles on the first theme, classical and late antique historiography (nos. I-V), illustrate the ways in which historical writing developed in Late Antiquity. The first article is somewhat of an exception in that it deals with the way Thucydides described the Sicilian expedition of the Athenians. The inclusion of this article on Greek history of the fifth century B.C. might seem strange at first sight. As Liebeschuetz himself explains in his introduction (p. x-xii), the main reason for including it is the notion that Thucydides' work should be regarded as a model for several historians of Late Antiquity such as Eunapius, Olympiodorus, Zosimus or Procopius.

As can be expected, changes in society had their impact on developments within historical writing. In the article (II) on ecclesiastical history which should be considered as a separate genre of historiography, Liebeschuetz attempts to explain why there was a gap in time between the writings of Eusebius in the early fourth century and the ecclesiastical historians such as Gelasius of Caesarea, Socrates, Sozomen or Theodoret at the end of the fourth and beginning of the fifth century. This latter group of ecclesiastical historians picked up ecclesiastical history where Eusebius had left off. Noticeably, with the newly acquired position of the church within society, it would take some time for historians of the church to find an appropriate place for the church within the writing of history. Eusebius was the first to demonstrate how the church 'could be made the subject matter of historical writing like a city, a nation, or an empire' (p. 151). With ecclesiastical history as a separate genre, the works of pagan historians often do not mention the church at all, or if they mention it, they do not do so in a positive light (III). They strongly held on to the paganism of their ancestors. Based on a case study of Eunapius, Liebeschuetz shows how this historian with a strong pagan point of

view was firmly embedded in a circle of pagan intellectuals and thus wrote his work within a strong pagan setting.

In his article (IV) on 'De Rebus Bellicis', a little pamphlet proposing reforms and presenting inventions in a time of apparent decline in the empire, Liebeschuetz argues that this work should not be appreciated on account of the contents of the proposed reforms, because these were 'either not new or impractical', but he maintains that its value lies 'in its intelligence and imaginative qualities' (p. 119). The article (V) on the Chronicle of John Malalas on Antioch shows how different Malalas' sixth century vision of Antioch was from that of Libanius in the fourth century. Even though full of anachronisms, Malalas' work is a fine illustration and model of how Byzantine chronicles were written in the centuries to come.

No modern historian of Late Antiquity can avoid dealing with Christianity in one way or another, as the rise of Christendom and the way in which the Christian church obtained her position within the Roman state had such a profound effect on the functioning of the Roman Empire. The articles of Liebeschuetz on religion, however, demonstrate that other religions and cults still played an important role in Roman society even after Theodosius I had officially acknowledged Christianity as the sole religion of the empire. The rituals of the Christian religion did not appear instantaneously, but developed and were influenced by already existing religious rituals. As Liebeschuetz shows, many elements that became important for Christianity previously were part of pagan cults (mystery cults, imperial cults) that already existed in the Roman Empire (VI). Within the great diversity of the empire, its regional differences and the numerous existing traditions and customs, Roman government allowed most of these traditions to continue their existence as long as their adherents did not cause social unrest or other disturbances. This policy lent itself well to an acceptance of different religious customs, and thus of Christianity as well, especially when people migrated from one area to another. One consequence of this policy was that it generated a familiarity among the inhabitants of the empire with many different cults even though they themselves were not necessarily their adherents. For instance, already in the Late Republic and Early Empire many inhabitants of the empire were familiar with Judaism and its customs even though the Jews did not display an active conversion mission (VII). In the case of Mithraism, most often associated with soldiers in the Roman army adhering to this cult, Liebeschuetz argues that the cult was so widespread that even more civilians than soldiers were followers of Mithras (VIII). Once Christianity was officially acknowledged, pagan cults were no longer allowed and temples were shut down, but ancient sources clearly show that for a long time pagan traditions continued to exist, as Liebeschuetz' discussion of the speech of Praetextatus in Saturnalia of Macrobius (ca. A.D. 430) demonstrates (IX). Tension existed between Praetextatus' theoretical vision of one supreme deity, the Sun, and the practice of the various polytheistic gods which were worshipped by the people. The speech can be considered as one of our principal sources for the last stages of Roman paganism and as an interpretation of their traditional religion by the last generation of pagan senators.

The settlement of barbarians, another major topic within modern studies of Late Antiquity, reveals the difficulties Roman emperors and their government faced as they were forced to deal with hordes of barbarians (Vandals, Visigoths, Ostrogoths etc.) swarming into the territories of the empire. Among modern scholars there is much discussion of the question to what extent credit should be given to the barbarians for influencing and eventually destroying the Roman Empire as it had functioned for so many centuries. Most recently this topic has been examined for instance by Bryan Ward-Perkins (*The Fall of Rome and the End of Civilization*, Oxford 2006) and Peter Heather (*The Fall of the Roman Empire*, London 2006).

The articles by Liebeschuetz (X-XIV) analyze vital aspects of the larger discussion on barbarian settlements. One of the important questions within this discussion is how the Romans dealt with the barbarians once they had defeated them or once they had entered a treaty with them. One solution was to incorporate the barbarians into the Roman army: have them fight for you instead of against you. This had been part of Rome's policy in earlier centuries and they continued this in Late Antiquity. However, as the conditions under which the empire operated had changed over time, in the fourth, fifth and sixth centuries incorporation of barbarians had dramatic consequences for the functioning of the empire. Liebeschuetz goes so far as to argue that the barbarian federates became much more important than the regular army forces (X). In this argument he stands firm against Hugh Elton (*Warfare in Roman Europe, AD 350-425*, Oxford 1996, see in particular p. 136-137). During the period of the Gothic wars (A.D. 536-552) of Justinian one notable difference between the Roman army and the barbarian opponents was that Roman generals were hardly able to reinforce their army with Italian recruits, whereas their Gothic opponents had no such manpower problems at all (XI).

In looking at the actual incorporation of barbarians into the empire, Liebeschuetz shows how the already existing multitude of status distinctions in the Later Roman Empire facilitated an easier admittance of barbarians into the Empire (XII). In addition, based on the example of the Vandals, Liebeschuetz argues that their structures and sense of cohesion helped them to contain some type of identity which made it easier for them to function as a group within the empire (XIV). In modern scholarship there is controversy about the accommodation of the Visigoths, Burgundians and Ostrogoths into the empire. Goffart believes that these barbaric peoples were settled not with the promise of land but with the payment of tax revenues (W. Goffart, *Caput and Colonate: Towards a History of Late Roman Taxation*, Toronto 1974). Durliat has followed the theory of Goffart and has built his model of Late Roman civic finance on this theory (J. Durliat, *Les finances publiques de Diocletien aux Carolingiens (284-889)*, Sigmaringen 1990). In this model cities would actually distribute to the barbarian peoples the tax revenues that earlier would have gone to the central authorities and the army. Liebeschuetz, however, strongly disagrees with both Goffart and Durliat. Based on the sources he claims that cities would never have been allowed to make those types of distributions (XIII).

The articles on the final theme in the collection, the concept of Late Antiquity, emphasize that the life of historians, the times they lived in and the way they viewed history all affected historians' works. Liebeschuetz' review of the process that led historians to treat Late Antiquity as a self-contained period of history illustrates for instance how art history and the history of religion, both popular fields of study among German scholars in the 1890s, strongly influenced the first steps of Late Antiquity as a field in its own right. Also, he argues that 'the collapse of so much of the pre 1914 world in the Great War proved a great stimulus to research on the Late Roman period, because the Great War and the fall of the Roman Empire were seen as parallel disasters' (XV, p. 8). In the twentieth century, A.H.M. Jones is without doubt among the greatest scholars of the Later Roman Empire. His monumental *The Later Roman Empire, 284-602* (Baltimore 1964) is still one of the standard works for those who want to familiarize themselves with the Late Roman world. Liebeschuetz has taken a closer look at Jones and at the reasons why he became the historian he was and argues that he was clearly also a man of his time (XVI). In the final article of the collection, Liebeschuetz discusses the concepts of continuity and change, decline, and multiculturalism and how in the last three decades scholars of Late Antiquity have dealt with these concepts (XVII). Especially in the case of multiculturalism Liebeschuetz connects the concentration on this

phenomenon with a general interest in the 'harmonious coexistence of different cultures' (p. 644).

Taken as a whole, this collection of Liebeschuetz' more recent work gives his articles a better accessibility and the prominence that they deserve, both for research and for teaching purposes. Even though the articles are very diverse as far as the topics are concerned, their organization around the four themes gives the volume a sense of cohesion that is not just artificial but that actually makes sense. The articles fit well into current discussions in the study of Late Antiquity. Anyone interested in the four larger themes as they have been presented should take note of this collection.