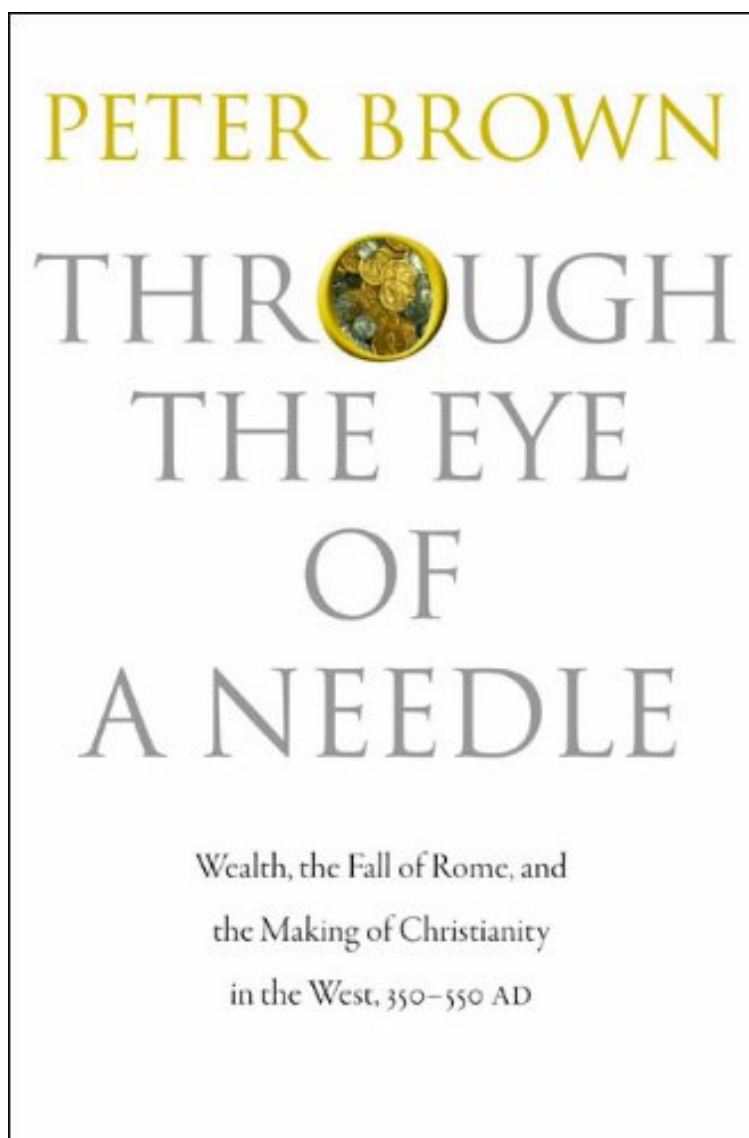


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Through the Eye of a Needle: Wealth, the Fall of Rome, and the Making of Christianity in the West, 350-550 AD



Par Peter Brown
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Description :

Prsentation de l'diteurJesus taught his followers that it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter heaven. Yet by the fall of Rome, the church was becoming rich beyond measure. Through the Eye of a Needle is a sweeping intellectual and social history of the vexing problem of wealth in Christianity in the waning days of the Roman Empire, written by the world's foremost scholar of late

antiquity. Peter Brown examines the rise of the church through the lens of money and the challenges it posed to an institution that espoused the virtue of poverty and called avarice the root of all evil. Drawing on the writings of major Christian thinkers such as Augustine, Ambrose, and Jerome, Brown examines the controversies and changing attitudes toward money caused by the influx of new wealth into church coffers, and describes the spectacular acts of divestment by rich donors and their growing influence in an empire beset with crisis. He shows how the use of wealth for the care of the poor competed with older forms of philanthropy deeply rooted in the Roman world, and sheds light on the ordinary people who gave away their money in hopes of treasure in heaven. *Through the Eye of a Needle* challenges the widely held notion that Christianity's growing wealth sapped Rome of its ability to resist the barbarian invasions, and offers a fresh perspective on the social history of the church in late antiquity. *Revue de presse*[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)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 s) --Publishers Weekly...[N]o one with an

interest in history, or indeed in our current economic travails, should fail to read it. 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*

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