Éric Rebillard’s short but dense work, *Christians and Their Many Identities in Late Antiquity, North Africa, 200-450 CE.*, argues for the reconsideration of late antique Christianity by shifting the focus from the group to the individual. Although the rigid division between Christians and non-Christians put forth by Christian authorities has long been understood as a rhetorical construct, Rebillard argues that scholars have yet to examine “beyond the discursive structures” (1). Rebillard combats this by employing sociological concepts such as identity theory to argue that “Christianness” was not an all-consuming identity; rather, Christians decided depending on the context when it was most “salient” to “activate” any particular identity. Individuals could hold more than one identity within a single group or within many different groups (4). Rebillard argues convincingly that the sources should be re-read concentrating on individuals as components of groups and that such “symptomatic reading” will allow for glimpses of individuals to be uncovered.

The text is divided into three chapters plus an introduction and a conclusion. The introduction serves primarily to introduce the terminology and methodological framework for the study. Although occasionally jargon-heavy, it provides a clear overview of the sociological theories for those who might be unfamiliar and concisely lays out the plan of the book. Rebillard’s straightforward writing style throughout makes his concepts accessible and his use of both ancient and contemporary examples immediately renders the theoretical more concrete.

The first chapter focuses on the writings of Tertullian and the Christian community in late-second-century Carthage. In contrast to Tertullian’s assertions of Christianity as a stable and consistent category (33), Rebillard finds very few external markers that might have identified an individual as a Christian to his fellow Carthaginians. Even potentially distinguishing features such as physical gestures, attending Christian gatherings, and visiting confessors in prison were not undertaken by all Christians (nor were they required for the maintenance of membership) and would not necessarily have been noticeable to the general population. For the most part, Christians in Tertullian’s time inhabited their society as they always had; as Rebillard has shown elsewhere (*The Care of the Dead in Late Antiquity*, 2009), there were no separate burial grounds and no distinct marriage or funerary rituals. Thus, Rebillard argues that while a common group identity among Christians did exist, “Christianness was only one of the many affiliations that mattered in everyday life” (33).

The various persecutions of Christians and their impact on the way individuals chose to either activate or ignore their Christianness is Rebillard’s focus in the second chapter. While many other discussions of persecution centre on the extraordinary martyrs, Rebillard’s concentration on the vast majority of Christians who opted out of their Christianness during times of persecution (by either compliance, compromise, flight, or confession) is an important departure (50-53). Rebillard concludes that the kind of popular anti-Christian hatred attested to in the writings of Tertullian and Cyprian seem to have been primarily a social construct intended to unite and mobilize members of their group.

The third chapter examines Christianity during the time of Augustine, principally
using Augustine’s letters and sermons. Acknowledging the large gap in evidence between the writings of Cyprian and Augustine, Rebillard notes that surprisingly little had changed by Augustine’s time in terms of external markers of Christianess. Augustine complains that Christians continued to visit temples and participate in banquets. For Rebillard, these are examples of instances in which other identities remained more salient than Christian ones. Christians might visit temples or attend banquets of their patrons because they saw it as a social obligation, not a religious conflict.

Rebillard concludes that, while Christianess was not always the most salient identity, this does necessarily contradict the existence of strong group identity. Rather, all category memberships were activated only intermittently (85, 93). In treating Christianess as any other form of identity, Rebillard removes some of the anachronistic privilege that this identity sometimes receives in scholarship and allows for the possibility of a more nuanced understanding of the role Christianity played in people’s lives. Although different in scope and style, Rebillard’s work serves as a good companion to Brent Shaw’s *Sacred Violence* (2011). Rebillard’s concentration on the individual can be applied to Shaw’s examination of the discrepancy between violent rhetoric and actual violence to help explain the reasons why individuals made the choices that they did, whether influenced by Christianity or not. Although it was not his focus here, Rebillard’s approach may also be profitably applied to those underrepresented in the sources such as women and the lower classes.

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**Pauline Communities as ‘Scholastic Communities’: A Study of the Vocabulary of ‘Teaching’ in 1 Corinthians, 1 and 2 Timothy and Titus. Written by Claire S. Smith. Mohr Siebeck: Tübingen, Germany, 2012. xiv + 555. ISBN978-3-16-151963-5. €94.**

In a slightly revised version of her doctoral thesis, Claire S. Smith sets out to identify the recipients and users of 1 Corinthians, 1 and 2 Timothy, and Titus as “learning communities.” To do this, Smith scours each letter for “teaching vocabulary” that points to a deep-rooted interested in learning in all of these groups. Smith’s word study is expansive, and in many ways impressive (55 words in 9 semantic fields), but Smith limits herself by refusing to subject her newly asserted “learning communities” to socio-historical or socio-scientific analysis and comparison. So while Smith’s description is vast, it is not thick, insofar as it isolates 1 Cor., 1 and 2 Tim., and Titus from the worlds in which they emerged. Smith’s book features a large amount of Greek, and her study of “learning words” requires that readers possess a relatively thorough familiarity with ancient Greek.

Smith begins with an introductory chapter stating her main purpose: to establish that the communities behind 1 Cor., 1 and 2 Tim., and Titus were “learning communities” in which educational activities fundamentally shaped individual and community life, and where the goals of, and relationships within the communities dialectically impacted educational activities” (1). Smith begins with a brief but thorough review of the scholastic community theory originally proposed by E. A. Judge (3-6). After her review of Judge, Smith moves on to address various responses, both complimentary and critical, to Judge’s thesis. Smith notes that many of the scholars who follow Judge take up a socio-historical, or social scientific methods. She isolates her