

délétère. Le chapitre 7, par le détour d'une discussion sur la valeur des dots dans la Nouvelle Comédie (fin du IV^e siècle), sert en réalité de conclusion en avançant prudemment l'idée que les conditions et les conceptions de l'enfance n'ont guère changé durant deux siècles, ce qui paraît plausible au moins dans les grandes lignes.

Voilà donc, malgré ses limites, un livre captivant, qui comble une lacune et mérite de rejoindre un large public.

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Malcolm Barber – *The Two Cities: Medieval Europe, 1050–1320*. London and New York: Routledge, 1992. Pp. xvi, 581, 14 plates, 32 maps, tables, figures in the text.

Malcolm Barber's avowed aim is "to introduce the fascinating world of the European Middle Ages to those who have not previously encountered it" (p. xiii). While I do not know what exactly is fascinating about the Middle Ages – after the same length of time teaching about it as Barber (25 years), it seems to me not more nor less exciting than any other period of the history of humankind – the project is an interesting and useful one. However, if I had never read about medieval Europe, I would soon be overwhelmed by the detailed ecclesiastical and political history (some 350 densely printed pages) and a bit frustrated by the all-too-short, though very interesting, chapters on the environment, social structure, and "world view", in which the author gives a taste of "fascinating" matters but sacrifices deeper discussion in favour of narrative.

The book consists of four parts: social and economic structures (including a chapter on the physical environment), the Church, political change, and perceptions of the world. It is augmented by a chronology, a bibliography of recommended readings, a list of references (use of the short type of notation, not footnotes, results in medieval authors appearing under the name of their modern editor), and indices of persons, places, and subjects. Black-and-white photos, maps, genealogies, and a few statistical tables are inserted in the text. The strength of the book is clearly its extensive use of primary – mainly narrative – sources.

Readers of *Histoire sociale/Social History* may be most interested in its coverage of medieval society, so let me first state that the story of lay and ecclesiastical politics is told in great detail. Use of the most recent literature makes these parts more up to date than many textbooks. The chapters on intellectual history and world view suffer somewhat from the "Augustinianism" of the author and his guide, Otto of Freising (whose *Two Cities* is cited in the title). Little use is made of perceptions of the world that did not reach the level of learned literature, but may be (partly) reconstructed from a new look at "popular" texts, such as exempla, sermons, and visions.

The chapter on the environment stands out among the parts of the book most interesting for social historians. The table on the medieval year (pp. 6–7) offers an overview of the ecclesiastical and agrarian year. More could have been said about

the “parallels” between socio-economic life and the church calendar, such as dates of tithing in the context of the liturgical cycle. Social structure is presented from above, beginning with the pope and ending with the Jews. *The Two Cities* is good on the clergy and the nobility, too sketchy on the peasantry, fair on urban society. The chapter on the medieval economy is best on towns, commerce, and crafts, including architecture, but falls short on the dynamic of development. The period under review was characterized by significant changes in the conditions of the rural population. True, the growth of towns (whose inhabitants I, for one, would not call “bourgeois”, for that misleadingly suggests that medieval townsmen were the forerunners of the modern entrepreneurial bourgeoisie) was a major change, but the novice reader is not clearly enough informed that these centres contained only a minute minority of the population. The author is a careful reader of contemporary scholarship; hence, a bow is made in the direction of women, children, heretics, and other marginal groups, but not much more than that. His net for narrative sources should have been cast wider to include more “fascinating” aspects of these hitherto less well-studied members of medieval society.

All in all, *The Two Cities* is a very good textbook for advanced survey courses, offering sufficient information for exams, interesting selections from medieval sources, hints at topics that students may wish to explore in greater depth, and a bibliography that provides them with a good start in doing so. Perhaps I expected more “fascinating” answers to the dust jacket’s questions: “How did men and women of Western Christendom see the world in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries? What determined their way of life and their imaginative horizons?” That slight disappointment, however, should not deter anyone from trying out this textbook in a course.

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Claire Dolan, éd. – *Travail et travailleurs en Europe au Moyen Âge et au début des temps modernes*, Toronto, Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1991, xiii, 357 p.

For the economic and social historian, the study of the Middle Ages is a constant swing between excitement and frustration. While new or previously unstudied documentation allows insights into the organization and functions of economic groups in particular communities, it is often incomplete. Thus, the historian can only provide fragments of truth, flashes of perception surrounded by areas of darkness where documentation never existed or has been lost.

Most of the historians whose papers form the volume edited by Claire Dolan have attempted to reconstruct a slice of medieval life in a particular time and place. The chapters are so varied that it is difficult to draw general conclusions, but the authors are evidently producing micro-historical studies in the tradition of the *Annales* School. Thus more solid findings await the time when many more of these have been done.