PAULINUS OF NOLA

C. CONYBEARE: *Paulinus Noster: Self and Symbols in the Letters of Paulinus of Nola*. Pp. xi + 187. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000. Cased, £35. ISBN: 0-19-924072-8.

Paulinus has been something of a lost man to moderns. For a man who was tutored by Ausonius, friend to Sulpicius Severus, one-time associate of Symmachus, admired by Jerome, and correspondent with, amongst others, Augustine and Ambrose, he has been curiously and unjustly marginalized in popular perception of the late fourth and early fifth centuries. One of C.'s OUP readers—Dennis Trout—began to address this deficiency with his 1999 work; in the book under review, C. has built on that biographical appraisal to identify an arresting nexus of themes and ideas across P.'s correspondence. This is termed 'Paulinus' spiritualization of experience' (p. 11). The extent of the influence of these ideas, and the means by which it was exerted in the later fifth century, are not pursued; C.'s achievement is to highlight in his letters P.'s attitudes to Christian friendship, interaction between the material and the spiritual realms, and constructions of the self. Throughout, C. points out the contours of her material—organized neatly into six thematic chapters, of similar length—with elegant clarity. Despite its range of discussion, therefore, the book enjoys an impressive economy of argument which serves well to reflect its central thesis of the coherence of P.'s own ideology of Christian epistolography.

In the introduction, C. emphasizes P.'s 'emblematic' status as an aristocrat who rejected the possibility of a successful public career to follow instead the path of ascetic Christianity. His letters—a neglected corpus—are to be read as commentary on P.'s geographical, social, and spiritual journeys. In outlining her approach, C. prefigures an impressive command of intellectual disciplines; as the chapters go on to bear out, historical, literary, and theological approaches are applied to good effect. The book deserves wide attention.

Chapter 1, '*ipsae litterae*', is an account of the machinery of personal exchange of which 'the actual letters' that survive formed part. C. stresses the other parts that have been lost to us—additional notes, gifts, verbal messages, and the company of the letter-carrier. C. helpfully draws on parallels and differences in the letters of Pliny and Symmachus; these references locate P. in the constellation of Latin epistolography, and even reclaim for P. some of the importance denied to him by regular study of late antique letters, which tends to focus on Symmachus. Chapter 2 considers the implications of the letters' reception by the addressees—and, significantly, their own social groups, including households and faith communities. Having sketched the rôle of epistolography in maintaining a wide Christian network, C. identifies a sacramental function in the letters; the texts are seen as the starting-point for personal and communal Christian meditation. This important reconstruction of a Christian, textual discourse reveals how the aristocratic élite could try to maintain its hold on the wider religious community.

Chapter 3, '*amicitia* and *caritas Christi*', reverts to a more intimate subject. C. discusses the rhetoric of personal friendship in P.'s letters. Well-versed in the traditional characteristics of classical (i.e. pagan) *amicitia*, P. is seen to have evolved a distinctively spiritualized conception of the relationship between Christians. Arguing for the central importance of *caritas Christi*, C. joins battle with other critics, notably Fabre and Konstan; the engagement is confident, stylish, and persuasive. There are some cracking footnotes, too.

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https://doi.org/10.1093/cr/52.2.305 Published online by Cambridge University Press

Chapters 4 and 5 are important contributions to our appreciation of the problematic relationship between textual and pictorial images in Late Antiquity. P.'s interpretation is seen to be spiritual, and from this observation C. makes interesting remarks about his employment of typically classical antithesis and Christian metaphor. C. invokes various examples of late antique relief sculpture before contriving a link to reflection on an elaborate *verbum*/*virum* metaphor. C.'s persuasive conclusions about P.'s 'rejection of linearity' (p. 126) in favour of an attempt to 'realize the mysteries' of Christianity (p. 130) force a significant reassessment of his qualities as a Christian author; but in the meantime, the provocative formulations of Roberts (pp. 117–8) and Elsner (p. 120) have not been swept aside as decisively as C. asserts.

The final chapter, '*homo interior*', is the most philosophical. C. considers the contribution of his letters to P.'s ideas about body and soul. His ideas (and Augustine's) about Christian ontology are reviewed through close textual reference; at the same time, the chapter serves well as a conclusion to the book as it brings together the themes of metaphor, image, and Christ. The opening chapter's interpretation of the exchange of letters as negotiation of distance is recapitulated as a foundation for the rôle of the self in the community of Christ. P.'s letters are again seen as an enactment of his faith.

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A LATE ANTIQUE LEAGUE TABLE: AUSONIUS' CITIES

L. Di Salvo: *Ausonius,* Ordo Urbium Nobilium. *Introduzione, testo critico, traduzione e note di commento*. Pp. 341. Naples: Loffredo Editore, 2000. Paper, L. 35,000. ISBN: 88-8096-721-5.

The last ten years have seen a remarkable pullulation of editions of single works of Ausonius, equipped with copious and informative commentaries. At least half of the varied works in his corpus have benefited, and there are more to come and at least one waiting to be reviewed. Most of them have duly appeared in this journal, but one of the best, Luca Mondin's edition of the *Epistole* (Venice, 1995), seems to have missed out.

Di S. has in effect a twofold introduction, with some thirty pages highlighting important aspects of the poem and twice as many carefully presenting the manuscript tradition. In the discussion of the purpose of the work, with which he begins, Di S. avers that it is typical of scholars to place things in *una scala di valori*, but that the illogicality of the order does not suggest the scholar; we must take account also of an appreciable degree of Gallic partisanship (the list includes Arelas, Tolosa, Narbo, and Burdigala, as well as Treveris [*sic*]). Indeed, he speaks as if the non-Gallic cities are only there to make it look respectable. Nowhere, if I am not mistaken, does he ask why Ausonius chose the cities he did: how many of us would include Capua, Narbo, and Catana in a list of the twenty most important or well-known cities in Greek and Roman history? Then a brief discussion of *modelli* (insufficiently independent of an article by Szelest) and one of the poem's date, dominated by the idea that Ausonius could not have praised Spain once Paulinus had retreated there and so ruined their friendship. In an interesting section on literary and ideological aspects, Ausonius is aligned with those who without being stridently 'pagan' quietly missed the passing of

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