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**The Oxford Handbook of Early Christian Studies**

# 1 From Patristics to Early Christian Studies [*]

[*]Older scholarship discussed in this essay will be cited in the main text with the original publication date; but the Bibliography gives the publication date for the English edition, generally the most recent (or most accessible) edition.

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**Abstract:** Creating Patristics – From Patristics to Early Christian Studies – Bridges between Old and New

**Keywords:** **Christ**, **Christian**

CHARLES Kannengiesser's presidential address to the North American Patristics Society in 1990 was a lament originally titled 'Bye, Bye Patristics'. Most of the classically-educated French scholars who had revitalized patristics as part of what Kannengiesser termed 'the spiritual and humanistic revival in Europe after World War II' were dead, and educational support for these studies in Europe was dwindling (Kannengiesser 1989: 655, 638, 642). Yet, as Kannengiesser conceded in a subsequent essay, these giants in the field had not engaged (as he put it) 'the new social dimension of patristics' (Kannengiesser 1991: 133)—the very characteristic that distinguishes 'early Christian studies'. The passage from 'patristics' to 'early Christian studies', however, is not the whole story that is sketched here: we must first ask, how did 'patristics' itself emerge as a discipline?[1]

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## 1.1 Creating Patristics

To be sure, medieval and early modern scholars, Protestant Reformers, and the Caroline divines studied Augustine, Jerome, John Chrysostom, and other church fathers—from the late fifteenth century onward, in printed editions. Yet patristics did not truly become a discipline in the modern sense of the word until the nineteenth century: the English word 'patristic' was allegedly coined by Isaac Taylor (1787–1865).[2] Moreover, even in the nineteenth century, apologetics and polemics often dominated the discussion. For patristics to achieve disciplinary status, institutional arrangements (universities, seminaries, conferences) and scholarly apparatuses (critical editions of texts and professional journals) needed to be established.

Different circumstances attended the development of patristics in various countries. In nineteenth-century Germany, the world-acclaimed, government-supported (and largely Protestant) university system was decisive. In Catholic

France, editions of patristic texts by the Benedictines of St Maur and J.-P. Migne's *Patrologia Latina* and *Patrologia Graeca* were central; while in later decades, the Modernist crisis and the disenchantment with Thomism revived interest in patristics. In England, the Oxford Movement and the reactions to it throughout the nineteenth century spurred scholarship on the fathers.

Scholars from many other European countries also contributed to the development of patristics. Belgium's Jean-Baptiste Malou was instrumental in the production of the *Patrologia Graeca* (Hamman 1985), while in the twentieth century, Belgium was the seat of production for the Corpus Christianorum, Series Latina (1954) and Series Graeca (1977). Louvain also became a renowned centre for the study of 'oriental' patristics, as is discussed below.

In the Netherlands, formally separated from Belgium in 1830, Protestant scholars were slow to develop an interest in patristic studies. In 1923, with the founding of the Catholic University of Nijmegen, patristics received stronger encouragement. Special mention should be made of Dom Eligius Dekkers, who created the *Clavis Patrum Latinorum* (1951) and was a driving force behind the establishment at mid-century of the Corpus Christianorum, Series Latina (Lamberigts 1998–9).[3] An important—and continuing—Dutch contribution to patristic studies is the journal *Vigiliae Christianae*, whose first issue appeared in 1947, and which for many years was edited chiefly by Christine Mohrmann and Jan Hendrik Waszink.

Eighteenth-century Italian scholars edited and reprinted patristic sources (Petitmengin 1985: 30); in the nineteenth century, Giovanni Battista de Rossi's research on Roman catacombs and inscriptions greatly advanced knowledge of early Christian material culture and practice. In Vienna, the Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum was begun in 1866. As is evident, contributions from scholars of various European nations have been important for the development of

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modern patristic studies. In this essay, however, a brief review of developments in Germany, France, and England must suffice.

Protestant scholars in Germany and England (outside the circle of the Oxford Movement) showed a decided preference for the fathers of the first two centuries, who, in their view, remained closer to the revealed truth of the Bible. In the following centuries, they claimed, 'decline' became rampant—as manifested in metaphysical speculation and conciliar débâcles, allegorical exegesis, 'unscriptural' asceticism, ecclesiastical hierarchy, and 'state-churchism'. Despite German scholars' alleged embrace of the new historical and critical methods, their sectarian and anti-Catholic prejudices, overlaid with a modified Hegelianism, obstructed the development of a more solidly 'historical' view of the early church. Such skewing, however, was by no means solely a 'German problem': as Maurice Wiles has pointedly observed, the entanglements of present concerns with scholarship on the past almost inevitably 'skew the way evidence is read and interpreted' (Wiles 2003: 153).

## 1.1.1 Germany

German universities led the way in creating the academic discipline of church history, the rubric under which patristics developed in the Protestant world. Before the era of readily available critical editions and monographs, the interest in patristics can be charted largely through its treatment in textbooks and general histories of the early church: Johann L. Mosheim's *Ecclesiastical History* (1750s); Johann Gieseler's *Text-Book of Church History* (1824); and at

mid-century Augustus Neander's *General History of the Christian Religion and Church*. The lack of ready access to primary sources was a central obstacle to the development of the field. Mosheim, for example, believed that his contribution lay chiefly in his consultation—uncommon in his day—of the 'original records... the genuine sources of sacred history'. Many manuscripts were still unavailable to scholars, he complained, being shut up 'in the collections of the curious (or the opulent, who are willing to pass for such)'. Although Roman Catholic scholars had greater access to manuscripts (presumably in the Vatican Library and elsewhere), their advantage had not forestalled, in Mosheim's view, their massive errors of interpretation (Mosheim 1810: pp. xiii–xvi).

Evangelistic Christians, however, who considered Mosheim's text 'rationalistic' and devoid of Christian fervour, turned to Johann Gieseler's *Text-Book of Church History*, which provided both lengthy extracts from the primary sources and evangelical spirit. Most favoured by mid-nineteenth-century professors, however, were the works of Augustus Neander, who held the Professorship of Church History at Berlin. Those who deemed Gieseler's textbook too synoptic; Mosheim's, 'scanty, cold, and superficial'; and English works by Milman and Waddington 'diffuse, declamatory, partisan, ignorant, popular' and 'mislead[ing]', praised Neander's

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*General History of the Christian Religion and Church* as the only one worthy of the name.[4] Yet his multi-volumed work was far too large and dense for classroom use (and too wedded to the notion of 'development' for the taste of some English-language scholars). Also much admired at the time were Neander's studies of John Chrysostom and of Julian 'the Apostate'.

Several decades later, Adolph von Harnack's *History of Dogma and Mission and Expansion of Christianity in the First Three Centuries* strongly influenced the developing conception of patristics on the Continent and in the United States. The production of critical editions and monographs received a further stimulus in 1882, when Harnack and Oscar von Gebhardt founded Texte und Untersuchungen zur Geschichte der altchristlichen Literatur. In 1890, the Prussian Academy, impelled by Harnack and Theodor Mommsen, established the Kirchenväter-Kommission that produced the series Die griechischen christlichen Schriftsteller der ersten drei Jahrhunderte—a bringing together of *Altertumswissenschaft* and *Kirchengeschichte* (Treu 1993; May 1993; Rebenich 1993). Mommsen's stimulation of prosopographical research also encouraged the creation of *The Prosopography of the Later Roman Empire* by British scholars A. H. M. Jones and associates (1971) and the *Prosopographie chrétienne du Bas-Empire* by Henri-Irénée Marrou and other French scholars (1982). Accompanying these endeavours was the establishment of journals, the numbers of which markedly increased in the years after 1870 (Fugmann and Pollmann 1995: 240, 254–7). Last, the translation of patristic texts into German was undertaken by the Bibliothek der Kirchenväter, established in 1869.

In the twentieth century, the first volume of Franz-Josef Dölger's *Antike und Christentum*: *Kultur und Religiongeschichtliche Studien* appeared in 1929. Dölger, like many scholars internationally, wished to ground early Christianity more firmly in its late ancient classical setting; the name change of his institute to Institut zur Erforschung der Spätantike underscored this point (Fontaine 1984: 456). And from Ulrich von Wilamowitz-Moellendorff's request that Werner Jaeger undertake the edition of Gregory of Nyssa's *Contra Eunomium* resulted the edition of *Gregorii Nyssensi opera* (Jaeger 1921–).[5]

More recently, in 1997, Hanns Christof Brennecke and Christoph Markshies

launched the *Zeitschrift für Antikes Christentum* (*ZAC*) (*Journal of Ancient Christianity*). Linking German- and English-speaking scholars, *ZAC* aims to incorporate 'patristics' into the newer scholarship on late antiquity, methodologies of the history of religions, and material culture (Kessler 1998: 520). In their first editorial, Brennecke and Markshies noted that increasing specialization among late ancient studies scholars often left them unaware of important discoveries, editions, or debates in areas related to their own; *ZAC* would serve to communicate such information, as well as to offer both 'external' and 'inner-Christian' perspectives on early Christian history and theology (Brennecke and Markshies 1997). *ZAC* renders an important service to the international community of patristics scholars.

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## 1.1.2 France

Even in the seventeenth century, French scholars were active in creating tools for patristic scholarship. Jean Mabillon's pioneering work on the principles of documentary criticism (*De re diplomatica*, 1681) was an impetus for later critical scholarship. The Benedictine Maurists at Saint-Germain-des-Prés undertook editions of patristic texts, starting with the works of Augustine in 1679; in the eighteenth century, they continued with editions of John Chrysostom, Basil, Tertullian, Cyril of Jerusalem, Cyprian, Origen, and Gregory of Nazianzus (Chaussy 1989: 91–4, 189–93; Petitmengin 1985: 27–9)—an enterprise, Gibbon pointedly remarked, that should have made scholars in England blush with shame.[6] Of special importance were the Maurist Bernard de Montfaucon's editions of Athanasius, Origen, and John Chrysostom, which were either reprinted or used as a base by Migne. In addition, Louis-Sébastien le Nain de Tillemont's multi-volumed *Mémoires pour servir à l'histoire ecclésiastique des six premiers siècles* (1693–1712) provided a detailed account of the early church. French scholarship on the fathers thus received an early and impressive start.

J.-P. Migne's publication of the 218 volumes of the Patrologia Latina (1844–64) and the 166 volumes of the Patrologia Graeca (1857–66) marked a major step in making patristic texts available to a wider public—although doubtless not as wide as the abbé himself desired (Bloch 1994; Mandouze and Fouilheron 1985).[7] Migne's patrologies were a truly 'international' collaboration, involving scholars, editors, and proofreaders from Greece, Germany, Spain, Holland, and Belgium, along with a large contingent of Frenchmen, among whom Dom Jean-Baptiste Pitra's (often unacknowledged) work was central to the enterprise (Catrice 1985: 218; Soltner 1985).

The fortunes of patristic studies in nineteenth-century France were adversely affected by anticlericalism, the Franco—Prussian War, and the distinctive organization of the state university system, which was sometimes inhospitable to theology (Fontaine 1984: 448). In contrast to Germany, the university was not decisive in the French development of patristic studies. Although the Catholic University of Paris was established in 1875, it acquired a faculty of theology only in 1889, after the suppression of the Sorbonne's. Yet, since a French law of 1880 had prohibited private institutions from granting degrees or using the title 'university', the Catholic University was reduced to an 'Institute', and the study of 'patristics' was, in effect, pushed outside a university setting (Bressolette 1993: 193–4; Fredouille 1993: 100). As Émile Poulat has expressed it, in France, 'the knowledge of the fathers thus appeared as a culture before becoming a specialty' (Poulat 1993: 24).

In late nineteenth-century France, the recovery of the patristic tradition provided

an important counter to the narrow focus on Thomism fostered by Leo XIII's encyclical *Aeterni patris* (1879), while in the twentieth century, French theologians encouraged a renewed Christian spirituality through a return to the fathers.[8]

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Moreover, the debate over Modernism in the early twentieth century, although largely concerned with biblical criticism, also became a *cause célèbre* within patristic studies: Alfred Loisy's *L'Evangile et l'église* (1902) stood as a pointed retort to Harnack's ahistorical, 'essentializing' approach to early Christianity in *Das Wesen des Christentums* (1899) (Fontaine 1993: p. xiii; Poulat 1993: 22; Savon 1993: 127).[9] In the same period, the French Benedictine Dom Germain Morin was editing works of Jerome, Augustine, and Caesarius of Arles (Vessey 1993*a*). Years later, amidst the gruelling hardships of the Second World War, French Jesuits established the Sources Chrétiennes series of patristic texts, now numbering around 500 volumes. A stirring story of Sources Chrétiennes' early years is given in Etienne Fouilloux's *La Collection 'Sources Chrétiennes': Editer les Pères de l'église au XXe siècle* (1995). Augustinian studies in particular flourished, with the founding of the Institut d'Études Augustiniennes in 1956 and the convocation of the Congrès international augustinien in 1954.

Jacques Fontaine stresses the importance of the links between lay scholars and those in religious orders in creating a more 'scientific' patristics in France (Abbé Paul Lejay, Paul Monceaux, Pierre de Labriolle, followed by Jean Bayet, Pierre Courcelle, and Henri-Irénée Marrou). Through the work of these and other scholars, Christian studies were incorporated into the newly named 'late antiquity', a field created by classicists who sought to bridge the 'no man's land' between classical antiquity and the Middle Ages (Fontaine 1984: 454). The French development of patristics thus differed from that in countries where Protestantism dominated; in the latter, patristics was more tightly linked to New Testament studies, and the fathers of the first three centuries received pride of place. (For a helpful overview of the development of patristics on the Continent through the middle decades of the twentieth century, see Charles Kannengiesser's 'Fifty Years of Patristics' (Kannengiesser 1989).)

## 1.1.3 Great Britain

In England, the development of patristics was marked by the Church of England's dominant role in nineteenth-century university life: Anglicanism's 'self-definition' —unlike that of Lutheran and Calvinist churches on the Continent—involved a strong identification with the church fathers (Wiles 2003: 153). High-church Oxford Movement scholars, Edward Pusey and John Henry Newman in particular, spurred interest in patristic studies and collaborated in publishing the Oxford Library of the Fathers (1835–88).

An early 'warning' against the Tractarians' love affair with patristics was sounded by Isaac Taylor, who, though grateful for their uncovering of the alleged 'pretensions of the Romish church', was alarmed by the confidence that they placed in the fathers; Taylor set about 'to loosen a little that antiquarian enthusiasm which is

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putting every thing [*sic*] dear to us in peril' (I. Taylor 1840: pp. viii, xi, xiv).[10] That the high-church appropriation of the fathers was still hotly challenged in the late nineteenth century reveals that movement's powerful influence (Lefroy 1897). Perhaps to provide a more evangelically Protestant version of early Christian texts, the Ante-Nicene Christian Library series was begun by the Scotsmen Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson in 1864. Several of the most prominent English authorities on patristic Christianity—J. B. Lightfoot and F. J. A. Hort, better known as New Testament scholars—were primarily interested in the first three centuries of Christianity, in which territory they steered a mean between high-church Anglicanism (with its concentration on clerical hierarchy, doctrine, and liturgy) and a 'morbid' Puritanism (Lightfoot 1895: 56–7; Hort 1895: 2, 86).

At the turn to the twentieth century, two noteworthy publications were launched in England. The *Journal of Theological Studies* (*JTS*) was founded in 1899 under the editorship of Henry B. Swete. Swete claimed that until then no English journal had 'devoted itself exclusively to the furtherance of theological learning' among students and teachers of theology (Swete 1899). Although hoping for an international readership, the editors of *JTS* nonetheless believed that a more judicious embrace of the new critical scholarship suited Englishmen better than the more radical approaches emanating from Germany (Wiles 1999: 492 n. 1, 508). Another of Swete's contributions to the establishment of patristics in England was his small handbook *Patristic Study*, published in 1902. Although designed for busy clergymen, *Patristic Study* outlined an ambitious programme of guided reading in the Greek and Latin fathers, along with basic bibliography.

A second important undertaking was the *Patristic Greek Lexicon*. The *Lexicon*, begun in 1906, was completed only in 1961 under the editorship of G. W. H. Lampe. Along the way, the *Lexicon* became a supplement to the Liddell—Scott—Jones dictionary, whose editors in the early twentieth century chose to exclude references to Christian texts except for the New Testament (Chadwick 1982: 66; Burghardt 1950: 265–8; Souter 1903: 512).

Last but not least, Leslie Cross's establishment of the Oxford International Patristic Conference in 1951 was of signal importance for the encouragement of patristic scholarship in the later twentieth century. Meeting every four years, this conference now attracts more than 700 scholars, many of whose papers are published in *Studia Patristica*. In addition, the Oxford Conference spurred the development of more specialized symposia on Origen and on Gregory of Nyssa (Wiles 2003: 158, 161–3).

## 1.1.4 'Oriental' Patristics

One important—and trans-national—aspect of patristic studies from the nineteenth century onward has been scholarship on the 'oriental' fathers. To this end, the Corpus Scriptorum Christianorum Orientalium (CSCO) was founded in 1903

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in Paris, and the Patrologia Orientalis (PO) in 1907. The CSCO has published several hundred volumes of Syriac, Coptic, Arabic, and Ethiopic texts, with the PO adding Armenian and Georgian to its repertoire. In mid-twentieth-century Belgium, Paulin Ladeuze and Louis Théophile Lefort promoted Coptic studies, while Joseph Lebon's work on Monophysite sources (especially Severus of Antioch) fostered Syriac patristics. Tracing the development of Syriac and other 'oriental' studies in Europe from the sixteenth century, Sebastian Brock stressed

the importance of collaboration between scholars from the Middle East and India, for whom patristic traditions remained a living faith, and European scholars (British, Estonian, Dutch, French, German, Irish, Italian) trained in critical-historical methods (Brock 1994*a*, *b*).

In addition to critical editions of these 'oriental' fathers' writings, the proliferation of interpretive studies and translations—especially in the areas of asceticism, 'heresy', liturgy, hymnology, Mariology, and biblical exegesis—makes knowledge of these 'oriental' writers' works available to a wider audience (e.g. Brock 1984, 1992, 1997, 1998, 1999; Drijvers 1984; McVey 1989; Griffith 1992, 1995, 2002; Frishman and Van Rompay 1997; Shoemaker 2002). The study of eastern Christian texts now flourishes to the extent that younger students of late ancient Christianity routinely expect to acquire facility in the languages of ancient Christianity other than Greek and Latin.

## 1.2 From Patristics to Early Christian Studies

How did 'patristics' become 'early Christian studies' in the late twentieth century, and how did 'early Christian studies' itself develop to adopt new modes of analysis? Several factors—most prominently exhibited in North America—fostered the change in conception and nomenclature. The term 'patristics' fell increasingly into disuse, taken as a sign of ecclesiasticism, maleness, and 'orthodoxy', from which some scholars wished to dissociate themselves. Yet the more traditional topics—philology, theology, exegesis, historical studies—continued to flourish, sometimes taking surprising turns.

### 1.2.1 Institutional Factors

For understanding changes in nomenclature and conception, institutional considerations claim first consideration. As 'patristics' was assimilated to Humanities

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departments in secular universities and colleges, the relevance of confessional alliance declined: polemics there might be, but they did not usually relate to issues of sectarian commitment, as was frequently the case in the nineteenth century.

Although graduate education was slow to develop in the United States (Veysey 1965; Oleson and Voss 1979; Storr 1953), fifty-two Ph.D. programmes in Religion were in operation by 1970, aided by a 1963 Supreme Court ruling that granted public educational institutions the right to teach 'about' religion. Between 1964 and 1968, the number of graduate students in Religion jumped from 7,383 to 12,620, a rate of growth exceeding that of any other academic discipline. From this time onward, graduate students in Religion frequently chose programmes in non-denominational departments of religious studies within university settings. This trend was also present in some of the newer British universities, such as Manchester and Bristol. Programmes at Columbia, Duke, Princeton, the University of Pennsylvania, Yale, among other universities, spurred change in the discipline through organizing special seminars and reading groups on late antiquity/early Christianity. As Conrad Cherry has put it, there was 'the birth of a new university discipline out of the womb of theological studies' (Cherry 1995: 90)—and 'early Christian studies' received the benefit of the field's overall growth.

Moreover, the fact that North American academic life (unlike that of some

European institutions) is organized so that junior scholars—women in almost equal numbers with men—are installed in regular-rank academic positions, and have the chance (with appropriate scholarly productivity) to rise to the professoriate, provides greater opportunity for the younger cohort to explore their own research interests. In these settings, traditional conceptions of 'patristics' were rapidly modified. The organization of academia and the rapid growth of religious studies programmes are thus significant institutional factors in the shift to 'early Christian studies'.

Another institutional factor spurring new approaches was the formation of the North American Patristics Society (NAPS) in 1970, which now counts more than 1,500 members and hosts conferences attracting international audiences.[11] Although in the late 1980s and early 1990s, NAPS members heatedly debated a name change for the Society, they reached a tacit agreement that non-traditional approaches could be accommodated under the older rubric. The launching of the *Journal of Early Christian Studies* (*JECS*; a continuation of *Second Century*, 1981–92) by NAPS in 1993 provided a venue for scholarship from non-traditional standpoints—'a showcase for work in newer fields, such as women's studies and literary theory', the editors wrote in the first issue (Clark and Ferguson 1993: p. vi). Elizabeth Clark and Everett Ferguson (who had been editor of *Second Century*) were the founding editors, with J. Patout Burns assuming a co-editorship in 2000, and David Brakke the head editorship in 2005. *JECS* now counts more than 1,400 subscriptions world-wide.

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Another institutional factor that encouraged new approaches was the establishment of book series. Of signal importance was Peter Brown's editorship of The Transformation of the Classical Heritage series at the University of California Press, which published its first volume in 1981 and now boasts more than thirty titles. Also important is the recently revived series, Oxford Early Christian Texts, edited by Gillian Clark and Andrew Louth, while Oxford Early Christian Studies, started in the early 1990s, has continued to flourish. A more theoretically oriented series, Divinations: Rereading Late Ancient Religion, now published by the University of Pennsylvania Press, is edited by Daniel Boyarin, Virginia Burrus, and Derek Kreuger. NAPS also sponsors a Patristic Monograph Series, presently published by the Catholic University of America Press and edited by Philip Rousseau. Scholars from the Catholic University of America also contributed The Fathers of the Church and Ancient Christian Writers series, which has provided scores of patristic texts in English translation (Kannengiesser 1989: 643). The development of publishing venues explicitly focused on late antiquity and early Christianity was of central importance in promoting a new conceptualization of the field.

Last, it is significant that some of the most influential scholars of late ancient Christian studies in the English-speaking world—including, but not limited to, Timothy Barnes, Peter Brown, Averil Cameron, Robin Lane Fox, Ramsay MacMullen, Robert Markus, and Mark Vessey—are by disciplinary training and academic placement situated entirely *outside* departments of theology or religious studies. Their contributions have immensely enriched the study of early Christianity by bringing (among other things) a strong historical and 'area studies' approach to the subject. 'Early Christian studies' is now conceptualized less often as a branch of 'church history' than as an aspect of late ancient history and literature (Brakke 2002: 475–6). *Neither* denominationally oriented institutions *nor* religious studies departments, in other words, can now claim a monopoly on the field. Institutional arrangements, it is clear, have been central to the development of 'early Christian studies', especially in North America.

## 1.2.2 Disciplinary Factors: Social History

Another factor influencing the development of 'early Christian studies' is disciplinary: social history's dominance of the historical profession in the second half of the twentieth century. More recently, social history absorbed some aspects of cultural history, including an older 'history of ideas'; Roger Chartier suggests the phrase 'the cultural history of the social' to describe this shift (Chartier 1989: 549, 552). In the English-speaking world, scholarship on the social history of the late Republic and early Empire by Sir Ronald Syme, Fergus Millar, Peter Brown, John Matthews, Keith Hopkins, Richard Saller, Peter Garnsey, and Roger Bagnall, among others, was eagerly assimilated by those working in early and late ancient Christian studies.

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Within early Christian studies, the interest in social history was manifest in research on women, asceticism, law, slavery, writing, the family, children, and heresy. On the family, for example, we can note anthologies edited by Halvor Moxnes (1997) and by David Balch and Carolyn Osiek (2003) and studies by Raymond Van Dam (2003), Brent Shaw (1987) Andrew Jacobs (2003) and Rebecca Krawiec (2003). In law, books by Judith Evans Grubbs (1995), Antti Arjava (1996), and Jill Harries (1999) proved important, as have studies of children (Leyerle 1997; Bakke 2005). (Other topics will be discussed below.) In addition, new *Letters* and *Sermons* of Augustine, discovered and edited by (respectively) Johannes Divjak (1981) and François Dolbeau (1996), have added a valuable cache of texts relating to the social world of that church father. Last, computers have enabled social historians, including those of late Christian antiquity, to achieve a higher degree of precision and refinement in their work, as is evidenced by Michele Salzman's *The Making of a Christian Aristocracy*: *Social and Religious Change in the Western Roman Empire* (2002).

## 1.2.3 Social Science Influences

Still another impetus to the changed conception of 'patristics' was an interest, shared by many scholars of religion, in certain aspects of the social sciences, especially anthropology. In addition, social-scientific *theory* provided new 'mental tools' quite different from the theological approaches that had dominated traditional early Christian studies. In the late 1970s and early 1980s, the seminars sponsored by the National Endowment for the Humanities and organized by Wayne Meeks on 'the social world of Christianity' encouraged the social-historical and social-scientific approaches of (among others) William Countrymen (1980), Elizabeth Clark (1979), and Bruce Malina (1986). Likewise, groups meeting under the aegis of the American Academy of Religion and the Society of Biblical Literature ('The Social World of Early Christianity'; 'Ascetic Behavior in Greco-Roman Antiquity'; 'Early Christian Families'; 'Social History of Formative Judaism and Christianity'; 'Europe and the Mediterranean in Late Antiquity') spurred interest in social science, as well as social history, approaches. Scholars treating texts of the earlier patristic period (*1 Clement*, the *Shepherd of Hermas*, Ignatius, and the *Didache*) drew on theories derived from Max Weber, Bryan Wilson, Peter Berger, Thomas Luckman, Émile Durkheim, and Pierre Bourdieu to illumine their work. Slightly later, social network theory, with its analyses of power relationships and 'brokerage', enabled scholars of early Christianity to unravel the workings of patronage and social hierarchy in late antiquity; a special issue of the journal *Semeia* (56 (1992)), edited by L. Michael White, was devoted to the subject. Studies of the social mechanisms of resistance, ritual theory, cost—benefit analysis, and public policy have variously

inspired writings by Brent Shaw (1996), Rodney Stark (1996), Hal Drake (2000), and Michael Penn (2005).

Cultural anthropology, however, was the branch of social science most frequently appropriated by scholars of early Christianity and late antiquity. The 'thick description' of interpretive anthropology (Geertz 1973) resonated with historians' efforts to explain via contextualization. In addition, the subject-matter of some anthropological studies—purity and impurity, symbols—seemed ready-made for religious studies scholars, as were such theoretical tools as Mary Douglas's 'grids and groups' for the study of social connections and power relations inside and outside various communities (Douglas 1970).

Peter Brown pioneered the introduction of anthropology to studies of late ancient Christianity. Reflecting on his intellectual development, Brown stressed the liberating effect of Mary Douglas's work on his early scholarship: books such as *Purity and Danger* 'did not circulate among ancient historians', he wrote, but only among those who studied 'small face-to-face societies' (Brown 1997: 10, 21). Brown's essay on sorcery (1972) provides a good example of his anthropological investment.

Once anthropology was acknowledged as a stimulating 'talking partner' for religious studies scholars, the latter appropriated the notion of 'liminality' from Arnold Van Gennep and Victor Turner for the analysis of early Christian rituals such as baptism. Anthropological studies of pilgrimage (e.g. by Victor Turner and Edith Turner (1978)) were put to good use in Georgia Frank's *The Memory of the Eyes*: *Pilgrims to Living Saints in Christian Late Antiquity* (2000) and David Frankfurter's edited volume, *Pilgrimage and Holy Space in Late Antique Egypt* (1998). Anthropological studies by Claude Lévi-Strauss and Mary Douglas of food practices (including cannibalism) informed articles and books by Andrew McGowan (1994, 1999), Blake Leyerle (1995), and Teresa Shaw (1998).

## 1.2.4 Social Justice and the Academy

Another important influence on the development of early Christian studies originated *outside* the academy in movements seeking social justice for minorities—the formerly colonized, women, and gays—but readily found expression *inside*. Scholars of early Christianity, like their counterparts across the Humanities and Social Sciences, analysed the topics of women, sexuality, gender, 'the body', power, and post-coloniality from historical, theoretical, and comparative standpoints.

The first scholarly manifestation of these interests within early Christian studies pertained to women (Ruether 1974, 1979; Kraemer 1980, 1988; E. A. Clark 1979, 1983, 1984, 1986; Brock and Harvey 1987; with further contributions by Torjesen 1993; G. Clark 1993; Power 1995; Cooper 1996; Brooten 1996; Miller 2005; and Johnson 2006; among others—the Virgin Mary not excepted, Limberis 1994). From beyond the English-speaking world, this new sub-field was enriched with studies by (for example) Franca Ela Consolino (1986, 1988), Ruth Albrecht (1986), Kari Elisabeth Børresen (1981, 1991), Cordula Nolte (1995), Ann Jensen (1996), and Ute Eisen (2000).

Linked to the interest in the social history of women was the investigation of gender, 'the body', and sexuality. Scholars of early Christianity were greatly influenced both by Michel Foucault's volumes on *The History of Sexuality* (1978–86), in which sexuality in the ancient world was treated as a social and historically situated category, and by Aline Rousselle's *Porneia: On Desire and the Body in Antiquity* (1983). Peter Brown's *The Body and Society: Men, Women, and Sexual Renunciation in Early Christianity* (1988) was an early and important contribution to this discussion for religion scholars. Interests in women, sexuality, the body, diet, ancient medicine, and power merged in studies by Elizabeth Castelli (1986), Gail Patterson Corrington (1986), Elizabeth Clark (1989), Virginia Burrus (1991, 1994), and Teresa Shaw (1998). 'Gender', however, was not left entirely to social historians of early Christianity; more theologically oriented studies also mined the theme (Miles 1992; Harrison 1990; Coakley 1996; Burrus 2000). Although these studies have preponderantly focused on the female and 'the feminine', a growing number treat masculinity, male homoerotic interest, and transvestism (e.g. S. Young 1994; Cooper and Leyser 2000; Brakke 1995*b*, 2001; Davis 2002).

Interest in 'the body' also emerged in scholarly work on suffering and martyrdom (Droge and Tabor 1992; Perkins 1995; Boyarin 1999; Castelli 2004). Significant essays from the *Journal of Early Christian Studies* on these topics—as well as on suicide and torture—include James Rives's 'The Piety of a Persecutor' (1996); Dennis Trout's 'Re-textualizing Lucretia: Cultural Subversion in the *City of God*' (1994); and Brent Shaw's 'Judicial Nightmares and Christian Memory' (2003).

Still a different approach to 'the body' is illustrated by Susan Ashbrook Harvey's *Scenting Salvation: Ancient Christianity and the Olfactory Imagination* (2006). While scholars of late ancient Christianity, often inspired by film theory, had for some years explored the role of vision, 'the gaze', in early Christian texts (Leyerle 1993; Frank 2000), Harvey turns to a different sense, that of smell. Smells, Harvey argues, served as powerful signifiers in that they were invisible and immaterial, yet viscerally experienced, transgressive and unstable, unable to be contained. Especially in the post-Constantinian era did Christians engage the olfactory sense in liturgical practice, and as associated with relics, asceticism, and pilgrimage. Here, bodily experience is seen to bear epistemological significance, as a means for humans to gain knowledge of their relation to the divine.

Interest in women, gender, sexuality, and 'the body' merged in the renewed interest in early Christian asceticism—a topic that had often been neglected by scholars coming from Protestant traditions. Now, however, quests for the 'origins' of asceticism and phenomenological approaches retreated, and greater attention was paid to differentiation by time and place: for Egypt, see Rousseau (1985), Elm (1994), Brakke (1995*a*, 2006), and Goehring (1999); for Cappadocia, see Elm (1994) and Rousseau (1994); for Gaul, see Klingshirn (1994) and Stewart (1998); for Italy, see Trout (1999) and Lizzi (1989; 1991); for Palestine, see Binns (1994) and Hirschfeld (1992); for Syria, see Brock (1984, 1992, 1998); and Griffith (1994, 1995). Philip

Rousseau's *Ascetics, Authority, and the Church in the Age of Jerome and Cassian* (1978) covered more than one area and author, as did Elizabeth Clark's *Jerome, Chrysostom, and Friends* (1979), Susan Ashbrook Harvey's *Asceticism and Society in Crisis: John of Ephesus and 'The Lives of the Eastern Saints'* (1990), and Conrad Leyser's *Authority and Asceticism from Augustine to Gregory the Great* (2000). The work of the Society of Biblical Literature's Group on Ascetic Behavior in Greco-Roman Antiquity resulted in two large volumes, *Ascetic Behavior in Greco-Roman Antiquity* (Wimbush 1990) and *Asceticism* (Wimbush

and Valantasis 1995). Particular practices of asceticism, such as fasting (T. Shaw 1998) and 'spiritual marriage' (Leyerle 2001), received special attention. Jerome's contribution to the development of women's asceticism was given thorough treatment by Patrick Laurence (1997). Equally to be noted are late ancient Christians who stood *against* the (to them) excessive ascetic enthusiasm fostered by Jerome and others. Robert Markus memorably characterized Augustine's contribution to the debate as 'a defence of Christian mediocrity' (1990), while articles (1987, 1993) and a book by David Hunter (2007) have provided the fullest discussion in recent times of the opponents of ascetic fervour.

The traditional view that Egyptian ascetics were illiterate devotees was challenged by Samuel Rubenson's claims for the letters of Antony—letters which, if accepted as authentic, establish that 'desert father' as a sophisticated interpreter of Origenist theology (Rubenson 1990). Another area in Egyptian monasticism of burgeoning interest is Shenoute studies. Stephen Emmel heads an international team of scholars engaged in preparing the critical editions of Shenoute's *Canons* and *Discourses*. Books reflecting this interest include Rebecca Krawiec's *Shenoute and the Women of the White Monastery* (2002) and Caroline Schroeder's *Disciplining the Monastic Body: The Asceticism of Shenoute of Atripe* (2006).

That asceticism, in theory an expression of humility, might in practice provide ample opportunity for the exercise of power was a view stimulated by Peter Brown's now classic article, 'The Rise and Function of the Holy Man in Late Antiquity' (1971). This essay, revised several times, was feted on its twenty-fifth anniversary by a conference held at the University of California—Berkeley and by an issue of the *JECS* (1998).[12] The analysis of power was also at the forefront of Brown's *Power and Persuasion in Late Antiquity* (1992), Richard Lim's *Public Disputation, Power, and Social Order in Late Antiquity* (1995), and Elizabeth DePalma Digeser's *The Making of a Christian Empire: Lactantius and Rome* (2000). That bishops became significant wielders of power as well as community-builders was evident in Neil McLynn's *Ambrose of Milan: Church and Court in a Christian Capital* (1994) and McLynn's forthcoming 'Gregory of Nazianzus: Orthodoxy and Experiment in a Christian Empire', William Klingshirn's *Caesarius of Arles: The Making of a Christian Community in Late Antique Gaul* (1994), Philip Rousseau's *Basil of Caesarea* (1994), David Brakke's *Athanasius and the Politics of Asceticism* (1995*a*), Andrea Sterk's *Renouncing the World Yet Leading the Church: The Monk-Bishop in Late Antiquity*

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(2004), Claudia Rapp's *Holy Bishops in Late Antiquity* (2005), and Susanna Elm's 'Sons of Hellenism, Fathers of the Church: Gregory of Nazianzus, Emperor Julian, and the Christianization of the Late Roman Elites' (forthcoming)—while James J. O'Donnell's *Augustine: A New Biography* (2005), with its focus on that bishop's battles with the Donatists (and others), sets its subject resolutely in the realm of 'power politics'.

## 1.2.5 'Others' and Neighbours

Another indication of changes within 'early Christian studies' itself is the integration of early Christianity into the larger study of 'late antiquity' and its placement alongside its Jewish and 'pagan' neighbours. Indeed, some—such as David Brakke—have argued that the term 'Christian' might well be dropped in descriptions of the field in favour of 'late ancient studies' or 'late antiquity', which accords no privileged place to Christianity. Such was the guiding plan of the American Academy of Religion programme unit organized in 1994 by Brakke and

Kate Cooper, 'Europe and the Mediterranean in Late Antiquity' (Brakke 2002: 475–8). That the thirteenth volume of *The Cambridge Ancient History* (1998), devoted to the late Empire, positions 'orthodox' Christianity alongside its 'polytheist', Jewish, Manichaean, and alleged heretical neighbours signals that historians of late antiquity now recognize religion's central importance in the era's cultural history (Cameron and Garnsey 1998). The development of Manichaean studies in relation to the Roman Empire has brought that particular 'other' into clearer view (S. N. C. Lieu 1992; BeDuhn 2000)—and who might constitute 'neighbour' or 'other' continues to expand as scholars focus on the Roman frontier and beyond (Garsoïan, Mathews, and Thomson 1982; Cowe 1990–1; Blanchard and Darling Young 1998). Post-colonial theory has spurred new interest among scholars of Christian antiquity concerning notions of 'race' and 'ethnicity' (Buell 2002, 2005).

The study of late ancient Christianity's relations with Judaism has also gone on apace, with seminal works such as Wayne Meeks and Robert Wilken's *Jews and Christians in Antioch* (1978) and Wilken's *The Land Called Holy* (1992), followed by Miriam Taylor's *Anti-Judaism and Early Christian Identity* (1995), Judith Lieu's *Image and Reality: The Jews in the World of the Christians in the Second Century* (1996) and *Christian Identity in the Jewish and Graeco-Roman World* (2004), Andrew Jacobs's *Remains of the Jews*: *The Holy Land and Christian Empire in Late Antiquity* (2004), Daniel Boyarin's *Border Lines*: *The Partition of Judaeo-Christianity* (2004), and in essays and a book by Paula Fredriksen (1995, 1999, 2006). An issue of *JECS* (9/4 (2001)), edited by Daniel Boyarin, explored the topic 'Judaeo-Christianity Redivivus'. Studies of women in Judaism, Christianity, and paganism of the era include Ross Kraemer's *Her Share of the Blessings: Women's Religions among Pagans, Jews, and Christians in the Greco-Roman World* (1992).

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A lively interest in the 'other' has also been exhibited in discussions of what was formerly labelled 'heresy'. In 1982, Patrick Henry rued that social challenges to 'authority' in the 1960s encouraged the view within early Christian studies that 'orthodoxy' was oppressive and its challengers ('heretics') more interesting and worthy of study. Scholarship, Henry claimed, had gone beyond an 'even-handed' treatment of the 'heretics', who were now seen as 'the true religious geniuses' (Henry 1982). While Henry appeared correct in his analysis of changing currents, some might applaud, rather than rue, the development he noted.

Texts that were once considered outside the purview of orthodoxy (Ehrman 2003; Koester 1965) are now well incorporated into early Christian studies. Especially prominent has been work on the apocryphal acts of the apostles, whose 'trajectory' from the New Testament offers a different vision of Christianity's development than do the Pastoral Epistles and 'mainstream' Christianity of the second and third centuries. In 1983, Corpus Christianorum established a Series Apocryphorum, which continues to produce new editions of these texts. Building on the work of François Bovon, Eric Junod, and others, scholars have analysed the ways in which women, gender, asceticism, and the family have been portrayed in these writings (Davies 1980; MacDonald 1983; Burrus 1987; Valantasis 1997; Jacobs 1999; Davis 2001). Of special interest has been the role assigned to Mary Magdalene in some of the apocryphal acts and Gnostic materials (King 2003*a*).

Among late ancient religions, 'Gnosticism' has in recent decades received ample and sympathetic treatment. The mid-twentieth-century finds at Nag Hammadi spurred an explosion of scholarship on the topic: during the 1970s, the journal *Vigiliae Christianae* devoted more space to Gnosticism than to any other single

subject. From a quest for 'origins' and 'influences', and from a conceptualization of 'Gnosticism' as 'Christian heresy' that marked nineteenth- and much twentieth-century scholarship, newer treatments question whether the term 'Gnosticism' correctly categorizes the highly diverse Nag Hammadi texts (M. A. Williams 1996; King 2003*b*). Many studies of women and of female imagery in the Nag Hammadi texts were published, of which Karen King's edited volume, *Images of the Feminine in Gnosticism* (1988), remains central.

Among other so-called 'heresies' receiving reconsideration, Arianism takes pride of place. Robert Gregg and Dennis Groh's *Early Arianism: A View of Salvation* (1981), Gregg's edition of papers on Arianism from the 1983 Oxford International Patristics Conference (*Arianism: Historical and Theological Reassessments* (1985)), Rowan Williams's *Arius: Heresy and Tradition* (1987), Daniel Williams's *Ambrose of Milan and the End of the Nicene—Arian Conflicts* (1995), and the numerous essays of Christopher Stead and Maurice Wiles on the topic all signal a more sympathetic reception (Wiles 2003: 167)—while Lewis Ayres abandons the category of 'Arians' as an inadequate historical descriptor, considering it 'Athanasius' creation of a genealogical rhetoric' (Ayres 2004: 110). Studies of Priscillianism (Burrus 1995), Messalianism (Stewart 1991), and Origenism (E. A. Clark 1992) show how 'heresy'

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appears differently in varied social and cultural frameworks. A special issue of the *JECS* (4/4 (1996)), 'The Markings of Heresy: Body, Text, and Community in Late Ancient Christianity', edited by Virginia Burrus, was devoted to reconsidering 'heresy'. And Susanna Elm, Eric Rebillard, and Antonella Romano's edited volume, *Orthodoxie, christianisme, histoire* (2000), represents a lively contribution to the ongoing revision of traditional categories.

## 1.3 Bridges between Old and New

### 1.3.1 Theology

Despite newer social and cultural approaches to the study of late ancient Christianity, it is not the case that theology has been abandoned. In some quarters, theology and history are being more satisfactorily integrated to construct a genuinely *historical* theology. Here, an instructive example is offered by J. Rebecca Lyman's *Christology and Cosmology: Models of Divine Activity in Origen, Eusebius, and Athanasius* (1993). Later constructions of 'orthodoxy', Lyman claims, provide no key to theological concerns of the second through mid-fourth centuries, and the imposition of such later models serves only to 'obscure the actual history of early Christianity' (Lyman 1993: 7, 161). Underscoring the diversity of early Christian theologies, Lyman invites readers to attend to how the varying cosmological models embraced by various early Christian writers correlate with the different communal settings in which they lived and worked, from urban study groups to an ascetically oriented, and imperially established, *ecclesia* (Lyman 1993: 9, 162–4). The *function* of religious language in its social-historical setting is Lyman's overall concern.

A second example of 'theology in a different mode' is Virginia Burrus's '*Begotten, Not Made': Conceiving Manhood in Late Antiquity* (2000). Far from abandoning the concept 'patristics', Burrus pursues it with vigour, borrowing 'mental tools' from French feminist theory. Here, the fathers 'masculine' Trinitarian language is interrogated with the tools of gender theory.

## 1.3.2 Biblical Interpretation

Another area that links traditional and newer scholarship is early Christian biblical interpretation. Customary distinctions, such as 'Alexandria vs. Antioch', have been modified (Schäublin 1974; O'Keefe 1997: 42; Louth 1983: 118; F. Young 1989), with stronger agreement that 'figural representation belonged to all forms of early Christian exegesis' (F. Young 1997: 259). Newer handbooks of patristic exegesis (Simonetti

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1994; Kannengiesser 2004), while in a traditional mode, provide resources for students of biblical interpretation.

Of particular importance for studies of the fathers' biblical interpretation has been a renewed interest in allegory. In the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, allegory was decried by many Protestant scholars, whose deaf ear for its intricacies and spiritual power left them unsympathetic to the exegesis of (for example) Origen and Gregory of Nyssa (Crouzel 1993: 104; E. A. Clark 1999: 70–8). Championed decades ago by scholars from the Catholic tradition—Henri de Lubac (1959), Henri Crouzel (1964), and Bertrand de Margerie (1980) —allegory has been restored to the forefront of discussion, assisted by recent literary theorists' interest in the topic. Allegory is now seen not as so much as an embellishing trope, but as an interpretive practice that accomplishes 'work' of its own, as has been argued in David Dawson's *Allegorical Readers and Cultural Revision in Ancient Alexandria* (1992), Douglas Burton-Christie's *The Word in the Desert: Scripture and the Quest for Holiness in Early Christian Monasticism* (1993), Maureen Tilley's *The Bible in Christian North Africa: The Donatist World* (1997), Elizabeth Clark's *Reading Renunciation: Asceticism and Scripture in Early Christianity* (1999), Richard Layton's *Didymus the Blind and His Circle in Late-Antique Alexandria* (2004), and some essays in J. Den Boeft and M. L. van Poll-van de Lisdonk's edited volume, *The Impact of Scripture in Early Christianity* (1999). The relationship between ancient Jewish and Christian interpretive techniques has also received renewed attention (Boyarin 1993).

## 1.3.3 Material Culture

Various forms and practices of material culture, such as early Christian art, archaeology, and inscriptions, have been the focus of recent study. Most students of early Christianity, not trained in art history or archaeology, have been largely 'borrowers' from scholars such as Thomas Mathews, Jas Elsner, Henry Maguire, Robert Nelson, Charles Barber, and Annabel Wharton. Archaeological explorations and the resulting epigraphical and other finds have yielded interesting results for early Christian studies: for example, William Tabbernee's study of 'Montanists' in Asia Minor (Tabbernee 1997, 2003). A group working on early North African Christianity, established in 1994–5, received funding from the National Endowment for the Humanities to support their project 'Devotion and Dissent: The Practice of Christianity in Roman Africa'. Headed by Robin Jensen and J. Patout Burns of Vanderbilt University, the group organizes conference sessions (soon to appear as a book) that explore how material culture, including attention to ritual practices, can illuminate the study of texts. Shrines and mosaics, amulets and relics, have come back 'into their own', as fascinating objects of study for scholars of late ancient Christianity (e.g. Brown 1981; Van Dam 1993; Frankfurter 1998; G. Clark 1999; Frank 2000; Constas 2002; Miller 1998, 2000, 2004, 2005). Through the 'corporeal

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imagination' of late ancient writers, the holy was understood as present in matter—a claim considered dubious by philosophers and theologians a few centuries earlier (Miller, forthcoming).

In the last decades, the material practices associated with reading and writing in Christian antiquity have been explored (Gamble 1995; Haines-Eitzen 2000). Reconsideration has been given to biography and hagiography, whose 'map onto' social reality has been critically scrutinized (Cox 1983; Hägg and Rousseau 2000; Krueger 2004). Moreover, recent scholars trace the intersection of textuality and 'materiality', especially in ascetic devotions and the writing of hagiography (Krueger 2004; Miller, forthcoming).

## 1.3.4 The New Cultural Theory

By the 1990s, some scholars of late ancient Christianity were borrowing 'mental tools' from literary (and other) theory and from cultural studies more frequently than from the social sciences. Post-structuralist analysis of category construction has attracted interest—although, to be sure, scholars could analyse the development of categories (such as 'religion') without explicit reference to theory (e.g. Smith 1990, 1992). The constructed quality of religious categories has been a focus of interest in Denise Kimber Buell's *Making Christians: Clement of Alexandria and the Rhetoric of Legitimacy* (1999) and her *Why This New Race?: Ethnic Reasoning in Early Christianity* (2005), as well as in Dale Martin's *Inventing Superstition: From the Hippocratics to the Christians* (2004). In these works, the tools of ideology critique and post-colonial theory are brought to bear on ancient texts.

Late ancient Christian studies in general, however, leapt from a theological to a social-historical orientation in the 1970s and 1980s; bypassing structuralism and other contemporary intellectual currents, the discipline was a late-comer to post-structuralist analysis. Overlooked in the rush for alignment with the social sciences was a point not then so obvious: that scholars of late ancient Christianity work, for the most part, on 'high' literary and philosophical texts that lend themselves well to theoretical analysis, not with native informants, nor with masses of data amenable to statistical analysis. Some representative essays suggesting these newer directions can be found in *The Cultural Turn in Late Ancient Studies*, edited by Dale Martin and Patricia Cox Miller (2005), and also in the essays and book (*Grammar and the Christian Imagination in Late Antiquity*) of Catherine Chin (2006, 2008).

The renewed interest in early Christian texts as forms of *literature* is well illustrated in the work of three scholars of late ancient Christianity: Averil Cameron, Mark Vessey, and Patricia Cox Miller. In contrast to Peter Brown's *Power and Persuasion in Late Antiquity* (1992), in which 'persuasion' is analysed as a social and political category, Averil Cameron's *Christianity and the Rhetoric of Empire: The Development of Christian Discourse* (1991) explores how texts link with social forms

to form 'discourse': Foucault's presence is here effectively signalled. Puzzling why scholars have been reluctant to examine early Christian texts *as literature*, Cameron summons her readers to consider the roles of figuration, narration, metaphor, and paradox in early Christian writing (Cameron 1991). As she puts it

elsewhere, Christian writings from late antiquity should be read first as literary productions before they are read as sources of social data (Cameron 1997: 145)—a thesis suggested by the very title of her edited volume, *History as Text: The Writing of Ancient History* (1989).

A similar theme informs the essays of Mark Vessey. Like Cameron, Vessey seeks to integrate the history of interpretation with social forms of reading, writing, and teaching. Vessey extends Brian Stock's notion of textual communities back into the early Christian period and invites scholars to explore 'the functions and ideology of writing in late antiquity' (Vessey 1991: 144, 158). In articles focusing on Augustine, Jerome, and Cassiodorus, Vessey elaborates how writers, texts, and audiences jointly produced competing modes of interpretation—and thus competing theologies—that enlisted different Christian clienteles (Vessey 1993*b*, 1998*a*, 2005).

In 'The Demise of the Christian Writer and the Remaking of "Late Antiquity": From H.-I. Marrou's Saint Augustine (1938) to Peter Brown's Holy Man (1983)', Vessey (1998*a*), offers a respectful critique of historians who, in his view, neglect the *textual* quality of their evidence. Vessey notes Peter Brown's 'tacit and tactical effacement, in the interests of a certain kind of vividness... of the products and procedures of ancient literacy'. Augustine's placement in an elite literary culture disappears from Brown's account in favour of the story of a man who lived his life 'among men' (Vessey 1998*a*: 382–3).[13] By interpreting biography as 'portraiture', Vessey argues, Brown bypasses the *literary* quality of ancient texts (Vessey 1998*a*: 405). Likewise, Brown's 'holy man' essay that appeared in *Representations* (1983), Vessey argues, vests 'the *repraesentatio Christi*... in the "vivid person" of the late antique holy man', thus 'circumvent[ing] one of the main challenges posed by such a "New Historicism" or "Cultural Poetics" [as undergirds the journal *Representations*], that of theorizing the interactions of text and society' (Vessey 1998*a*: 409). Vessey's argument challenges the assumption that readers in our time can be brought 'face-to-face' with the ancients; a consideration of their literary representation is always demanded.

Patricia Cox Miller's books and essays have provided elegant readings of late ancient texts. Informed by post-structuralist theory (primarily literary and psychoanalytical) and by deep reading in ancient and contemporary philosophy, her work itself enacts what reading patristic texts as *literature*, considered in social and historical context, might mean. From her exploration of dreams as an interpretive 'language' of late antiquity (Miller 1994), and her evocation of late ancient poetic images of bodies—bestial (Jerome's centaur), human and potentially blazing (Eustochium's), spectral (the witch of Endor's shade)—readers derive an enhanced appreciation of the patristic imaginary (Miller 2001).

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Analysing the creation and development of 'patristics'—and then 'early Christian studies'—adds an instructive chapter in the study of the institutional and intellectual aspects of a discipline's formation.

## Notes

[1] For 'disciplinarity' as an ancient as well as a modern concern, see discussions of Augustine's modification of the ancient disciplines in Pollman and Vessey (2005). We may note, with J. O'Donnell (2001: 203), that neither 'late ancient studies' nor 'patristics' is considered a 'discipline' by deans, provosts, and presidents of universities of our time; is the field in their eyes an 'undiscipline'?

[2] Schnorrenberg (2004).

[3] For scepticism regarding the enterprise, see Waszink (1949); for praise,

Burghardt (1950: 259–61).

4. From an anonymous review in the *Christian Inquirer*, praising the English translation of Neander's *The History of the Christian Religion and Church, During the First Three Centuries*, trans. Henry John Rose (Philadelphia: James M. Campbell & Co.; New York: Saxton & Miles, 1843).

5. On Wilamowitz's contribution of funds (solicited for his eightieth birthday present) to support the project, see Burghardt (1950: 261–3).

6. Gibbon, *Autobiography*, ed. Sheffield (London, 1907), 39, cited by Vessey (1993*a*: 186).

7. Henri Marrou expressed his scorn for this 'grand captain of industry', whose editorship reveals 'more about business than about science' (Marrou 1961: 82).

8. *Aeterni patris* in effect raised the status of Thomas to that of the pre-eminent doctrinal authority for Roman Catholics.

9. Recall Loisy's famous line, 'Jesus foretold the Kingdom, and it was the Church that came' (Loisy 1988: 145). Scholars now problematize Harnack's influence on French scholarship: he over-read 'system' into patristic writings (Crouzel 1993: 102–3, 105; Savon 1993: 114–15, 119).

10. Taylor argues that English Protestants were at a disadvantage, since both Romanists and Oxford divines knew far more about the history of the early church than do Taylor's readers (I. Taylor 1840: 34, 59), but accuses the Tractarians of hoodwinking the English public by passing over early Christian teachings that would be shocking to uninformed and simple-minded Bible-Protestant Christians—such as the early Christian exultation of celibacy and lifelong virginity (pp. 99–102). Taylor declares that since he—independent of the established church, a married layman who is thoroughly exempt from 'antiquarian enthusiasm'—has the patristic texts in hand, he is in a good position to inform his fellow countrymen of the real dangers to religion and morals lurking in those texts (pp. xv–xvii). Taylor's knowledge of the patristic writings is remarkable for his time and circumstances.

11. See the website <http://moses.creighton.edu/NAPS/Other_Information /Presidents/presidents.html >.

12. Find It ⊖ McGill  Peter Brown, 'The Rise and Function of the Holy Man in Late Antiquity', *JRS* 61 (1971): 80–101 ; with some nuances and revisions in 'The Saint as Exemplar in Late

Antiquity', *Representations*, 1 (1983): 1–25, and 'Arbiters of the Holy: The Christian Holy Man in Late Antiquity', in Brown (1995). The conference, 'Charisma and Society: The 25th Anniversary of Peter Brown's Analysis of the Late Antique Holy Man', was held 13–16 March, 1997, some papers from which were published in *JECS* 6 (1998).

13. Vessey cites the final paragraph of Brown (1967: 433) which in turn cites Possidius's *Vita Augustini*, 31. 9.

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