

New Perspectives on Late Antiquity

New Perspectives on Late Antiquity

Edited by

David Hernández de la Fuente

CAMBRIDGE
SCHOLARS

P U B L I S H I N G

New Perspectives on Late Antiquity,
Edited by David Hernández de la Fuente

This book first published 2011

Cambridge Scholars Publishing

12 Back Chapman Street, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE6 2XX, UK

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data
A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

Copyright © 2011 by David Hernández de la Fuente and contributors

All rights for this book reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted, in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise, without the prior permission of the copyright owner.

ISBN (10): 1-4438-2718-5, ISBN (13): 978-1-4438-2718-8

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Preface: New Perspectives on Late Antiquity	1
David Hernández de la Fuente (Universidad Carlos III / Universität Potsdam)	

Key Note Paper: The Field of Late Antiquity.....	6
Peter Brown (Princeton)	

Part I: Ancient History and Archaeology

OVERVIEW PAPERS

The Deconstruction of the Emperor in the IV th Century.....	23
Pedro Barceló (Universität Potsdam)	

Paganism and Christianity during the 4 th Century: Crossed Influences ...	40
Jaime Alvar (Universidad Carlos III)	

The Seclusion of the Orator and the Decline of Hellenistic Paideia in the Christian Empire.....	56
Rosa Sanz Serrano (Universidad Complutense)	

Oriental Trade in the Iberian Peninsula during Late Antiquity (4th-7th Centuries AD): An archaeological perspective.....	76
Enrique García Vargas (Universidad de Sevilla)	

CASE STUDIES

New Findings of Late Antiquity in a Town of the Vascones Area (Los Bañales de Uncastillo, Zaragoza, Spain)	119
Javier Andreu, María J. Peréx and Juan José Bienes (UNED)	

Anti-Germanism in Constantinople or the Revolt of Gainas?	124
Eike Faber (Universität Potsdam)	

The Possibilities for Financial Gain in Lusitania during Late Antiquity . 136
Marta González Herrero (Universidad de Oviedo):

Coins and Power in Rome: Political Ideology in the 4th Century 150
Cláudio U. Carlan (Universidade Federal de Alfenas / Minas Gerais)

Sidonius Apollinaris and the Fourth Punic War 158
David Álvarez Jiménez (Universidad Complutense)

From *villae* to *villulae*: Settlement and Social Organization in Late
Antique Hispanic Countryside..... 173
Saúl Martín González (Universidad Complutense)

New Lines of Enquiry in the Study of the Late Antiquity of Baetica (I):
The Christianisation of the Rural Landscape..... 188
Francisco José García Fernández and Jerónimo Sánchez Velasco
(Universidad de Sevilla)

New Lines of Enquiry in the Study of the Late Antiquity of Baetica (II):
Archaeological Topography of the City of Córdoba 206
Jerónimo Sánchez Velasco (Universidad de Sevilla)

Late Roman Metallurgy in Castro of El Castellón (Santa Eulalia
de Tábara, Zamora)..... 229
Jose Carlos Sastre Blanco (Universidad de Granada)
and Patricia Fuentes Melgar (Universidad Complutense)

Part II: Philosophy and Classical Studies

OVERVIEW PAPERS

How Original was Neoplatonism in the Platonic Tradition? 247
Francisco L. Lisi (Universidad Carlos III)

On the One and the Diverse: Pervigilium Veneris..... 263
Carmen Codoñer (Universidad de Salamanca)

John of Gaza and the Late Antique Greek Ekphrastic Poetry..... 288
Daria Gigli (Università di Firenze)

The One and the Many and the Circular Movement: Neo-Platonism and Poetics in Nonnus of Panopolis	305
David Hernández de la Fuente (Universidad Carlos III/ Universität Postdam)	
Rhetoric, Satire and Encyclopaedia in Martianus Capella.....	327
Paula Olmos (Universidad Carlos III)	
CASE STUDIES	
Plotinus' Nous and the Timaeus' Demiourgos: The Generation of the Sensible World in Enneades VI 7 [38] 1-3	353
Francesco Fronterotta (Università di Lecce)	
Dionisysm in Late Antiquity: The Three Dionysos in the <i>Dionysiaca</i>	367
Rosa García-Gasco (Universidad Carlos III)	
Christian Assimilation of “Pagan” Elements: An Apologetic Concept? .	380
Miguel Herrero de Jáuregui (Universidad Complutense)	
New Perspectives for the <i>Laterculus</i> of Polemius Silvius	393
David Paniagua (Universidad de Salamanca)	
Towards a New Critical Edition of Emporius' Work (RhLM 561-574 Halm)	407
Luigi Pirovano (Università di Milano)	
Late Antique φαντασία and the Greek Fathers: A Survey	416
Aglæ Pizzone (Università di Milano)	
Aesopic Tradition and Rabbinic Literature	433
Lorena Miralles (Universidad de Granada)	
Bibliography	447
Contributors	517

PREFACE: NEW PERSPECTIVES ON LATE ANTIQUITY

DAVID HERNÁNDEZ DE LA FUENTE

It is essential for the History of Ideas to consider how the cultural legacy of Classical Antiquity was transmitted and reinterpreted as a faithful reflection of each epoch in order to understand the key moments of change in the history of mankind. Be it from the general viewpoint of history or the more particular fields of history of religions, literature, or philosophy, any cultural transformation of the Western World, as W. Jaeger has put it, has included a reinterpretation of the classical legacy, when it has not been directly caused by it.

Perhaps it is fully justified to think of Late Antiquity (3rd-7th centuries) as a first Renaissance of the Classical World. If we understand this concept as recreation and reaffirmation of the given cultural tradition that is recognized as the prestigious source of our civilization, this period can be then considered a fundamental landmark for the transmission of classical legacy. It was no doubt a time of drastic changes between two different conceptions of the world, which gave way to what would be the medieval Christian World in both the East and the West. In any case, it is during Late Antiquity when the classical heritage of the Hellenic *enkyklios paideia* was linked definitively to the Judaeo-Christian and Germanic elements that have modeled the Western World.

During the last half-century scholars have devoted great academic interest to the diverse impact of the cultural, historical and spiritual transformations of this period throughout the Mediterranean basin. The period known as Late Antiquity, after the pioneering coinage of the term *Spätantike* by A. Riegl (1901), has been the subject of intense and fruitful scientific debate among historians, philosophers and philologists in the last thirty years.

No doubt, Peter Brown is the most conspicuous scholar in this area of study, of which he has been a founder and promoter since his famous book *The World of Late Antiquity* (London 1971). Throughout his many books, from his biography of Augustine of Hippo until his essay *Authority and*

the Sacred (1995) and beyond, Professor Brown has always upheld the interdisciplinary study of this distinct period, with special emphasis on the interaction between the changing society and the private spiritual life. Other authors (Averil Cameron, *The Mediterranean World in Late Antiquity*, London and New York 1993) have also promoted this label. More recent critics, however (B. Ward-Perkins, *The Fall of Rome and the End of Civilization*, Oxford, 2005) have questioned it as corresponding to the interests of the Anglo-Saxon and Germanic scholarship.

In any case, the differential validity of a study of this period has been already established enough in several disciplines, from history and philology to archeology. Issues such as the emergence of Christianity along with the booming of Neo-Platonism, the economic crisis and the crisis of values, the movement of population, the ethnic and linguistic contacts and many other factors of this time of change have marked its analysis. Particularly in the realm of the spiritual, from the seminal study of E.R. Dodds (*Pagan and Christian in an Age of Anxiety*, Cambridge 1968), many efforts have been devoted by the scholarship to clarify the concepts not only of religious change and cult syncretism (cf. e.g. W. Fauth, *Helios megistos: zur synkretistischen Theologie der Spätantike*, Leiden 1995), but also of a certain “fundamentalism” *avant la lettre* (cf. P. Barceló, ed., *Religiöser Fundamentalismus in der römischer Kaiserzeit*, Stuttgart, 2010.) Thought and literature especially reflect a new aesthetic sensibility and a peculiar interpretation of the traditional legacy of Hellenism in the light of new philosophical and spiritual trends. As for literary studies, it should be also noted that the rhetoricalization of the educational system results in a noticeable increase of the importance of certain literary instructors and schools throughout the Eastern Empire (see R.A. Kaster, *Guardians of Language: The Grammarian and Society in Late Antiquity*, Berkeley-Los Angeles-London 1988).

Nowadays, the interdisciplinary study of Late Antiquity is offering important materials for a better understanding of the most influential phenomena of this period of change in historical, socio-political and spiritual dynamics (see works such as G.W. Bowersock, P. Brown, O. Grabar, *Late Antiquity. A Guide to the Postclassical World*, Cambridge, 1999). More than ever, it is necessary to work on this period from the joint point of view of philology, philosophy and social and religious history in order to provide a transversal analysis of the transformations of the classical legacy that shaped the foundations of Western civilization.

However, new trends in the study of Late Antiquity, and the reactions for and against, require a periodical scientific update. In this sense, and following the aforementioned studies, the present volume proposes a

periodical overall approach to Late Antiquity beyond traditional boundaries between academic disciplines: History, Classical and Semitic philology, History of Philosophy and Archeology. A scientific update from a cross-sectional view gathered in a single volume.

Thus, the collective book presented here under the title *New Perspectives on Late Antiquity* combines the diverse interests and the common desire of the contributors –unity and diversity, as a Neo-Platonic inspiration– and aims at providing an overall picture of this era, with particular attention to the texts and sources that testify the historical contamination of cultures, religions and languages, and their reflection upon literature and thought. This book focuses not only on the analysis of new materials and latest findings –as, for example, the new contributions of archeology–, but rather puts together the different pieces of this mosaic of materials and offers a dialogue from a plural perspective.

The origin of this volume is in the First International Congress "New Perspectives on Late Antiquity," which was held in Segovia (Spain), 21-23 October 2009, and has now taken shape here. This colloquium opened a series of international conferences that intend to regularly gather prestigious researchers from different universities and research centers to foster an academic debate on the current state of our knowledge about Late Antiquity. This series of meetings in the town of Segovia is not only a forum for scientific update, but also a meeting of international academic reflection and discussion about this historical period.

The present monograph consists of two sections, which include overview papers and case studies, introduced by a key note paper on the field of Late Antiquity by Professor Peter Brown. The first section summarizes the contributions of Ancient History and Archaeology, among which there is a historical study of Pedro Barceló on the demise of imperial power, an analysis of cultural interaction between paganism and Christianity by Jaime Alvar, a picture of the decline of rhetoric and the social role of rhetoric in Late Antiquity, by Rosa Sanz and, last, a scientific update about the latest archaeological evidences of the trade to the Mediterranean (4th to 7th centuries) by Enrique García Vargas. The case studies of a select group of Spanish, German and Brazilian scholars (Javier Andreu, María J. Pérex, Eike Faber and Marta Herrero among others), present a very enriching variety of historical and archaeological issues, ranging from conflicts between Germans and Romans to the economic and social history of Late Antique Hispania.

As to the second section on Philosophy and Classical Studies, the general papers provide an overview of the position of Neo-Platonism between tradition and innovation in the History of Ideas, with an

assessment of its insertion in the Platonic tradition by Francisco Lisi and three comprehensive studies on the reflection of philosophy upon Greek and Latin literature. The first of them, by Carmen Codoñer, examines the *Pervigilium Veneris* between unity and diversity in the framework of the Latin Poetry of the fourth century. Two Late Antique Greek poets, Nonnus of Panopolis and John of Gaza, illustrate the impact of Neo-Platonic ideas in poetic *ekphrasis*, as it can be seen in the contribution of Daria Gigli and in my own paper. And a Latin Encyclopaedist, the fifth-century African pagan Martianus Capella in Paula Olmos' paper, exemplifies the boundaries between Rhetorics and Neoplatonic contents in Late Antiquity. As for case studies, presented by several Italian and Spanish scholars such as Francesco Fronterotta or Miguel Herrero de Jáuregui among others, they reveal an interesting panorama of the philosophical and literary trends of the time, examining the contamination not only of genres and categories, such as rhetoric, mythology and apologetics, but also of cultural traditions as Platonism, classical paganism, Christianity or Judaism.

I would like to express my gratitude to all individuals and institutions who have made possible both the First symposium "New Perspectives on Late Antiquity," and this monograph. First of all, I thank Professor Antonio López Peláez, Director of the Centre of the Universidad Nacional de Educación a Distancia (UNED) in Segovia, whose enthusiasm has made of Segovia a center for the study of Late Antiquity, since he has warmly supported and hosted the first of a series of meetings at this wonderful Roman city; for their fundamental support, I am deeply indebted to Professor Francisco Lisi, Director of the Institute of Classical Studies at Universidad Carlos III and to Professor Pedro Barceló (Geschichte des Altertums. University of Potsdam), two excellent scholars and persons with whom I am honored to have worked in recent times between Spain and Germany; I thank both Professor Rosa Sanz Serrano, from the Universidad Complutense, and Maria J. Peréx, Head of the Department of Ancient History at the UNED, who have also contributed greatly to the success of the first workshop and beyond. I cannot but warmly thank Javier Andreu Pintado, Rosa García-Gasco, Eike Faber, David Álvarez Jiménez, Jorge Cano Cuenca, Diony Rendón González and Susana Torres Prieto, dear colleagues and friends. Local institutions such as the City of Segovia, Caja de Ahorros de Segovia and the Royal Academy of History and Art of San Quirce have generously embraced our seminar in a city of Roman character and history.

Last, but not least, this book is dedicated to Professor Peter Brown, who has honored us accompanying both the birth of these colloquia and of this book. An entire generation of scholars working on Late Antiquity is

deeply indebted not only to his vast erudition but also to his kind-hearted humanistic values.

KEY NOTE PAPER: THE FIELD OF LATE ANTIQUITY¹

PETER BROWN

Looking back over more than half a century, I realize that the two crucial moments in my own decision to become a student of Late Antiquity occurred when I read two books by two great foreign scholars. I read each in a context that was quintessentially English. On a summer's afternoon, in a punt on the River Cherwell as it flows past the towers of Oxford, I read the *Saint Augustin et la fin de la culture antique* of Henri-Irénée Marrou and its challenging after-word, his *Retractatio*.¹ It was the first and the last time that I indulged in so very English a form of relaxation. But Marrou's *Retractatio* has been with me ever since. That was in 1956. A year later, in 1957, in the British School at Rome, I read the *Aspetti sociali del quarto secolo* of Santo Mazzarino.² I read it with such rapt attention that I forgot to join the other scholars of the British School at four o'clock *punto* –on the hour– to partake in the English ritual of afternoon tea. Through this moment of forgetfulness, I gained a largely unmerited reputation for being a *chalcenteros* –a stakhonovite of ancient studies.

What was it in these two books, written by two scholars of such very different temperament and training, which held my attention at this time? Both proposed a more positive evaluation of the last centuries of the ancient world than I had previously encountered. For Marrou, the civilization of the later empire was *un organisme vigoureux, en pleine évolution* – a vigorous organism, fully capable of evolving further. For Santo Mazzarino, the history of fourth century Rome was a history still marked by continuity with the ancient past. The later empire was an epoch of *civilitas*, in which the brittle, sparkling values of the ancient city still predominated, if in a changed world.

¹ The numbers in bold refer to the commented bibliography at the end of this paper.

This was not what I had heard before. To appreciate how new and how exciting such views could appear to a young student, we must go back to the mood of the Europe of the 1950s. It was a Europe which had only recently emerged from an age of tyranny and violence, with the ending of what has come to be called (only too aptly) the Thirty Years War of modern times – between 1914 and 1945. It was a Post-War world, set against the further, spreading shadow of the Cold War. The mood was favorable to dark thoughts. Conflict, the breakdown of ancient institutions and the passing of ancient ways of life and thought: these were the themes on which historians of antiquity tended to concentrate when they turned to the Roman world in its last centuries. A year later still, returned from Rome, I listened to the Warburg Lectures of 1958 were devoted to *The Conflict between Paganism and Christianity in the Fourth Century*. Brilliantly coordinated and introduced by my mentor, Arnaldo Momigliano, they were about the death of an ancient religion. The opening words of Herbert Bloch, in his lecture on the last pagan revival in Rome, caught only too faithfully the mood of a Europe still accustomed to the night: **3**

Saint Bernard of Clairvaux says: *Habet mundus iste noctes suas, et non paucas* (“this world of ours has its nights, and not a few of them”). We ourselves have been passing through such a period of darkness for nearly half a century uncertain even now as to whether the present respite will end in a true dawn...

In times like ours, [he went on to say] it becomes easier to understand kindred periods in which long-established traditions and values disintegrate.

According to earlier scholars, similar shadows fell over the last centuries of the Roman Empire. With magisterial certainty of touch, the great Russian historian, Mikhail Rostovtzeff, had set the scene in the last chapter of his *Social and Economic History of the Roman Empire* (of 1926): **4**

The social revolution of the third century ...destroyed the foundations of the economic, social and intellectual life of the ancient world.

To read Rostovtzeff was to believe that, after the third century, night fell on the ancient world. In Western Europe, no dawn would appear for many centuries. Rostovtzeff presented the Roman empire of the fourth and fifth centuries as a world whose principal features already looked straight towards the Middle Ages. In the trenchant words of Ferdinand Lot, in *La*

fin du monde antique et le début du moyen-âge (of 1914), **5** the later Roman empire

was already, economically, in the Middle Ages; politically and socially, it was the prelude to the Middle Ages.

As for the religious ferment of the age, this was easily explained. In choosing the title of his luminous lectures of 1963, *Pagan and Christian in an Age of Anxiety*, **6** my fellow-Irishman, E.R. Dodds, borrowed the term “Age of Anxiety” from his friend, the English poet W.H. Auden. For Auden the phrase summed up the sinister recrudescence of physical and intellectual violence which swept across the Europe of the 1930s. For E.R. Dodds, the age between Marcus Aurelius and Constantine was similar. Dodds cited with approval the maxim of André Festugière, that “misery and mysticism are related facts”. In his view of the third century, Dodds was content to follow the negative judgment of Rostovtzeff:

From a world so impoverished intellectually, so insecure materially, so filled with fear and hatred as the third century, any path that promised escape must have attracted serious minds...

[And then he continued]

The entire culture, pagan as well as Christian, was moving into a phase in which religion was to be coextensive with life and, the quest for God was to cast its shadow over all other human activities.

To read, in 1956 and 1957, the *Retractatio* of Marrou and the *Aspetti sociali* of Santo Mazzarino was to come out from a region of chill shadows into a landscape still warmed by the late afternoon sunlight of a very ancient world. There was life after the third century; and this life came to bear the name “Late Antiquity”.

But that was in the late 1950s. What followed and where are we now? So let us now look back at the development of the field of Late Antiquity in this last half-century.

What strikes me first about the opening decades of the period which began in the 1950s, was the fierceness with which younger scholars (such as myself) turned to the study of Late Antiquity so as to find a way out of the post-war mood to which I have referred. A post-post-war generation had had enough of histrionic ruminations on decline and fall and on the end of civilization. It did not need to be told (in the words of Johann Huizinga, writing in 1919) that

Great evils form the groundwork of history.

The evils had happened. What we now had to learn was how to understand what had survived, both in the Europe of our time and in the last centuries of the ancient world. Hence, I suspect, the overwhelming attention devoted, in the study of Late Antiquity in these first decades, to the issue of continuity. This was a reaction to what struck scholars at the time as the element of excessive melodrama in conventional accounts of irrevocable break down in the world of the third century and after.

For this reason, the study of continuity among historians of the late antique world, who had to come to grips with the pessimistic judgment of Rostovtzeff and his followers, represented a shift of interest away from an older debate – the *Kontinuitätsproblem* that had played such an important role in the study of the western early Middle Ages. As the name suggests, this was a problem debated by German scholars with their French colleagues. It concentrated on the role of former Roman institutions and cultural forms in the so-called barbarian kingdoms of the West.

But the debate around the *Kontinuitätsproblem* was about what happened *after* Rome. The debate on continuity among late antique historians was about what had happened *within* Rome itself. How much of the living tissue of Roman life had been severed by the crisis of the third century? What was old and what was new in the social structures and the cultural forms that had emerged in the post-Constantinian empire of the fourth century? How long would the kinetic energy imparted by the sheer mass of a civilization whose basic forms had existed, in many regions, for over a millennium, continue to take it into the future; would this energy finally fail it, and in what century – in the late fourth? in the fifth? in the seventh or even later?

What interests me in retrospect was the manner in which this new debate on continuity – a debate on continuity *within* Rome rather than *after* Rome – coincided with a geographical re-location of the center of interest of ancient historians. For many decades after 1950, the center of gravity of late antique studies shifted away from the northern frontiers of the Roman world (where the *Kontinuitätsproblem* continued to be debated among early medievalists) to the Mediterranean. The Mediterranean was the privileged world of *civitas* as Santo Mazzarino defined it. This was the zone where continuity was to be found. Claude Lepelley's remarkable recovery of the resilience of an entire "municipal civilization" in the cities of late Roman North Africa (in 1979) ⁷ was balanced, in the eastern Mediterranean by the studies of the Antioch of Libanius by Paul Petit (in 1955) and of Wolfgang Liebeschuetz (in 1972). ⁸ Dieter Claude's *Die byzantinische Stadt im 6. Jahrhundert* (in 1969) followed the same line of research. ⁹

Above all, the epigraphic work of Louis Robert took us into a world whose value system seemed to span the hiatus between the classical and the later empire so effortlessly that Robert could turn to the sermons of a fourth century Christian bishop in Cappadocia (to the sermons of Basil of Caesarea) to interpret the phrases used by an urban benefactor of the early third century. At the time, those in *Hellenica* 11/12 (for 1960), opened a world to me. **10** Robert's insights have been confirmed and refined on urban sites all over Asia Minor; and most notably by the work of Charlotte Roueché on Aphrodisias in Caria, (*Aphrodisias in Late Antiquity* of 1989 and *Performers and Partisans at Aphrodisias* of 1993). **11** For historians of Late Antiquity, Aphrodisias in Caria was a charmed site. For here was a Greek city which rose from the ground in its full, late Roman dress as a result of the excavations begun by Kenan Erim in 1960.

Altogether, from the 1960s onwards, late antique studies turned to the East. Like the Constantine of Dante, *si fece greco*. This was a significant re-location of a debate which had begun with Marrou's monograph on Augustine and Mazzarino's brilliant study of the food supply of fourth century Rome. But it can not be said (as Dante did of Constantine) that this good intention *fè mal frutto* – brought forth bad fruit. Without the work of researchers prepared to apply their mastery of classical Greek to what we already knew (or thought we knew) of the culture and politics of Byzantium in its first centuries, late antique studies as we know them simply would not have happened.

In England, at least, this was a significant change. Many of us (like myself) had begun as historians of the Latin West. We had read Augustine; we had visited Rome. In my case, I had an even longer journey to the East than most of my colleagues. For I had begun as a western medievalist not as an ancient historian.

Each of us owes a personal debt to those who (each in our own academic region) opened the late antique Greek world to us. In my case, I owe more than I can my case, express to Averil Cameron, to Alan Cameron and to Fergus Millar, whose ground breaking articles of that time opened to me God's plenty.

Those who now read Averil Cameron on *Christianity and the Rhetoric of Empire* (of 1991) or her new synthesis on *The Byzantines* (of 2006) **12**; the work of Alan Cameron on the *Greek Anthology* (of 1993) and on *Greek Mythography in the Roman World* (of 2004) **13** and the Sather Lectures of Fergus Millar, aptly entitled *A Greek Roman Empire. Power and Belief under Theodosius II* (of 2006) **14** must realize what it was like for a former student of the Latin world, still hesitant in matters Greek, to have had as friends and colleagues such giants in their youth.

But, of course, the greatest excitement of all was that the opening up of the East did not stop at the Greek world. The study of Late Antiquity soon came to include the great Third World of the Sasanian empire (with the major article of Averil Cameron on “Agathias on the Sasanians” in *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* of 1969) ¹⁵ and then, a little later, it also came to include a late antique Christianity which stretched East of Antioch as far east as the Iranian plateau, as far north as the Caucasus and as far south as Ethiopia. (Indeed, in the form of Manichaean and Nestorian communities, a recognizably late antique version of Christianity reached as far the oasis cities of the Taklamakan desert and the foreign quarters of Chang’an/modern Xian, the western capital of seventh century China).

The growing body of literature of the highest quality devoted to the history and literature of the Christianities of the East shows that the study of Late Antiquity has taught us that those who wish to find what are now called “the Christian roots of Europe” must now be prepared to add to their Greek and Latin, oriental languages such as Syriac, Coptic, Armenian, Ethiopic, Soghdian and Georgian. They must be prepared to take a long, hot journey to what, alas, have become dangerous lands. They will find some of those roots on the banks of the Euphrates, along the Nile and in the highlands of Armenia and Ethiopia. Christianity has never been an exclusively European religion. To understand its essence, it is no longer enough (as it was for my more innocent Irish ancestors of the early middle ages) to make the pilgrimage only to Rome.

The same must be said for the further extension of late antique studies into the area of the origins of the Islamic world. Here also scholars have become aware that a *Kontinuitätsproblem* must be faced. One book made this plain to me at an early stage. This was the brilliant monograph of Ugo Monneret de Villard, *Introduzione allo studio dell’archeologia islamica* of 1966.¹⁶ In a series of luminous essays, Monneret de Villard showed the extent to which the imagined chasm between the civilization of the ancient world and that of medieval Islam was due to a trick of perspective. It was based on a failure to look at the middle distance between the two worlds. Monneret de Villard (and those who follow him) have urged us to do justice to the profound mutations of classical forms which had already taken place in the regional architecture of late antique Syria and Egypt. For there we can find a bridge between the ancient and the Islamic worlds.

Altogether, to pay serious attention to the late antique Middle East, as a period of cultural and artistic development in its own right, was the equivalent, for studies of the relation of Islam to the classical inheritance, of the discovery of the Missing Link in human palaeontology. At last one could see how, in the ancient and densely settled regions of the Middle

East, one world might flow naturally into the other. As a result, one of the greatest schisms in the historical imagination of Europe –that between Islam and the ancient world– has begun to be healed. A remarkable enterprise in collaboration between late antique and early Islamic scholars has led to the series first begun under the editorship of Averil Cameron (in 1992) on *The Byzantine and Early Islamic Middle East*. **17** It is perhaps in this area that the original momentum of late antique studies (which began as a result of meditations on the society and culture of the Latin West in the fourth and fifth centuries) has come to find a field of action in a world far distant from Rome, in a way that we barely dreamed of half a century ago.

But what has this taught us? To find unexpected elements of continuity between the ancient world in its classical form and their later expression in what is now called the late antique period was an exciting enterprise. It helped to banish from our minds the false but alluring nightmare which linked the death of civilization to the fall of Rome. It has been reassuring to find that life has continued, not only after the military crisis of the third century but even after the seemingly definitive onslaught of Islam in the seventh century.

But I think that to emphasize this aspect alone would trivialize our enterprise. What we have learned, above all, is greater respect for the long-term rhythms of a distinctive civilization. We have come to do justice to the startling galaxy of great writers and thinkers (principally pagan and Christian) which we have long associated with the late antique period. Furthermore, this list has been lengthened considerably by the addition of those who wrote (or whose works have survived) in oriental Christian languages.

But we have also followed the challenge of Marrou in his *Retractatio* and in his luminous *Histoire de l'éducation dans l'Antiquité* of 1948 in a more profound way. **18** We have learned to pay more attention to the unbroken tissue which held these superbly individual authors in a resilient chain which linked the centuries and which held Christians and pagans together in a single cultural horizon despite their religious differences.

This means that we have learned to listen with respect to what I would call the “background noise” of a civilization – to the little men charged with the humble task of reproducing a culture from one generation to another. This has happened increasingly in the last decades. We have been introduced to the late antique *grammaticus* by Robert Kaster (in his *Guardians of Language* of 1988). **19** We have met the schoolmasters who presided over the writing exercises in Greek and Coptic, that have been made known to us by Raffaella Cribiore (in 1996). Only recently has the

extent of this silent labor been revealed through the spectacular discovery (in 2007) of verses written on a schoolroom wall at Trimithis, in the oasis of Dakleh, far to the south in the western desert of Egypt. The study by Tony Grafton and Megan Williams on *Christianity and the Transformation of the Book* of 2006 points in the direction. **20**

We have also gained immeasurably more respect than had our predecessors for the long, slow task of commentary – whether this was of the pagan philosophers or of the Bible. In his brilliant Inaugural Lecture to the Collège de France of 1983, Pierre Hadot likened the work of the commentators to *bricolage*, to the creative re-ordering of ancient modules of thought in a manner that could be quite as exciting as the gene-splicing practiced by modern genomic scientists. **21**

As a result of our study of the unglamorous under girding of the secular and religious culture of Late Antiquity, in recent decades, we have become more sensitive to a side of Late Antiquity which we had, perhaps, tended to overlook in the 1960s and 1970s. The urban focus of the *civilitas* revealed by Santo Mazzarino to be so essential a feature of the fourth and fifth centuries; the classical rhetoric still taught with such gusto in great cities, on which Marrou and others have concentrated with manifest affection: these sparkling highlights of late antique civilization had tended to eclipse the slow, low profile world of books, of commentators and of subsidiary guardians of culture – and not least the lawyers, as Caroline Humfress has reminded us in her challenging recent study, *Orthodoxy and the Courts in Late Antiquity* of 2006. **22** Yet something of this world survived the crises which shook the West in the fifth century. A lot of it survived the crisis of the Islamic invasions which are usually thought to have brought a “dark age” on Byzantium in the seventh century.

We have to suppose a tissue of remarkable resilience –largely hidden from us, like an immense ocean shelf from which no more than scattered islands emerge above the waters – in order to explain the fact that, in the monastery of Qenneshre overlooking the Euphrates, George bishop of the Arabs, who died in 743, could still pass on to his colleagues choice pieces of information concerning the institution of the Roman Kalends and the origin of the name of the river Tiber. He did this in a monastery that lay at the center of the great echo chamber of an Oriental Christianity whose very divisions had maintained a fervid dialogue on issues of religion and philosophy, which had long taken place in Syriac and Greek, and which had begun to take place also in Arabic.

The great monastery of Qenneshre (knowledge of which I owe largely to the researches of my student, Jack Tannous) played the role of a flagship of learning in the Syriac Monophysite world of its time. It is a

reminder that we should not define the civilization of Late Antiquity exclusively in terms of its civic heritage and of the classical education in rhetoric and literature which went with that heritage. Our interest in the continuity with the ancient past of the city and of classical literary education should not make us forget the diversity and flexibility of a late antique society. This society had many layers of learning and which could adjust to many different social landscapes.

For this reason, I would suggest that we should not treat the state of the cities (and of the culture most closely associated with the cities) as the sole indicators, for good or ill, of the health of late antique civilization. Cities were central to any definition of Roman civilization. But they were never the only bearers of that civilization. We have to find room, in our overall image of the culture and society of Late Antiquity, for a phenomenon elegantly categorized by Hervé Inglebert, in his *Histoire de la Civilisation Romaine* (of 2006). ²³ Inglebert has suggested that we pay attention to what he calls an “antiquité tardive *post-romaine*”—basically, for a Late Antiquity after or without the Roman city. It is this “post-Roman Late Antiquity” which we see at work in the great rural monasteries of Syria and Egypt from the age of Justinian to that of Harun al-Rashid.

It is tempting to continue, in this manner, with a wide overview of the development of the field of Late Antiquity in all its many aspects. But I would like to end, rather, in a more focused manner. At the risk of seeming egotistical, I would like to pass on to you some of the lessons which I have learned in the past five years when writing a book on a theme that is central to this period. It may be helpful to you to share with me the sense of the speed with which the field of Late Antiquity has expanded and the challenges which this expansion has brought with it.

Deo volente the book will be called “*Through the Eye of a Needle*”: *Wealth and the Formation of Latin Christianity, 350-550 AD*. In deciding to write it, I took up the challenge delivered by my mentor Arnaldo Momigliano, half a century ago, in his Introduction to the Warburg Lectures of 1958 on *The Conflict between Paganism and Christianity*. There he observed that social historians of the Roman Empire in its last centuries had

talked of social changes without ever discussing the most important of all social changesthe rise of Christianity.

Then he continued:

Christianity produced a new style of life, created new loyalties, gave people new ambitions and new satisfactions ... [As a result] The social equilibrium changed – to the advantage of the spiritual and physical

conditions of monks and priests and but to the disadvantage of the ancient institutions of the empire.

He concluded briskly:

We all know the basic facts.

I could not have started off to write my book with more clear guidance. I also thought that I could not have chosen to walk along what appeared to be a more solidly constructed high road. This was a road which had been trodden firm by many generations of past scholars, for whom the passing of the ancient world and the rise of Catholic Christianity in the Roman West had always been a particularly stirring part of the grand narrative of the birth of Europe.

You can imagine my surprise and my excitement when I realized, only a few years ago, that, once again, I was as much in the dark as I had ever been as a young student. *Non vacant tempora* – time does not take time off: and nowhere is this more true than in contemporary study of the late antique world. When I returned, after some years, to take up again the study of the economy and society of the Latin West, as a prelude to my study of the use of wealth in the Latin churches, I realized that when Momigliano evoked the social and economic context to the rise of Christianity in the West (drawing on the social and economic histories of the Roman world available to him at the time) not a single “basic fact” to which he referred in 1958 has survived the criticism of subsequent scholars. Over the years, the literary and legal texts to which we have always turned for knowledge of the late Roman social system have been read, re-read and re-interpreted in ways that leave them with little of their former solidity. Issues on which we once seemed certain are no longer so. Major witnesses have been discredited. Significantly different interpretations of the overall social development of the late Roman West have been proposed.

Most of this has happened very recently. I need only refer to the challenging work of Jean-Marie Carrié on the Roman colonate and related topics, of Domenico Vera on estate management, to the more recent work of Jairus Banaji on *Agrarian Change in Late Antiquity* and to the synthetic *tour de force* of Chris Wickham’s *Framing the Early Middle Ages* to realize that we are looking out on a very different social world than that to which we were accustomed only recently. **24**

Furthermore, what Andrea Giardina (citing Bryan Ward Perkins) has called an “archaeological revolution” has altered from the ground up our view of the texture of late Roman life in general and of religious practice

in the Christian churches in particular. The new archaeology of the late antique world is different from its predecessors. It does not simply extend, through archaeological methods, what we already knew from other documentary evidence. It looks out on new landscapes of which we had previously known nothing. It claims to tell us about long term trends of population, about patterns of settlement, about networks of exchange, about living standards and forms of social stratification that can be seen on the ground while they were never seen in texts.

This archaeology also alters our view of the texture of late antique Christianity. Let me take as a single example (among many others) the work of two scholars who are well known to me as friends and students: Kimberley Bowes, *Private Worship, Public Values and Religious Change in Late Antiquity* of 2008 and Éric Rebillard, *Religion et sepulture* of 2003. ²⁵ Both Bowes and Rebillard, each in their different manner, have shown us a way into the Christian household. They have shown how both the domestic piety practiced on the estates of the rich and the forms of urban burial in great cities such as Rome speak mutely but insistently of an unfamiliar Christianity – a Christianity not of the church but of the family, which we can barely glimpse in the textual evidence provided by the works of bishops and clergymen.

Altogether, whether applied to material culture in general or to religious practice in particular, this is an archaeology which brings to the study of day to day life in Late Antiquity a thrill of utter strangeness. It is like the first view of the landscape of Mars, relayed to earth by an interplanetary probe.

These are exciting times. We are looking out at a new social landscape of the late Roman West. The later Roman state is seen as a more active presence both in ensuring the circulation of goods and in imparting status to the upper classes. There are fewer *latifundia* than we thought there were, and many more small gentry. The texture of the towns (and hence of the Christian congregations within them) is also revealed to be more differentiated than we had thought. What Walter Scheidel has called (in a pertinent critique of widespread notions of Roman and late Roman social structures) the “binary tunnel vision” that insists on seeing late Roman society as brutally divided between rich and poor, has lost much of its rigidity. ²⁶ The notion of poverty itself has been brilliantly analyzed by Christol Freu, for Italy, in *Les figures du pauvre* of 2007. ²⁷ The patient labor of the *Prosopographie chrétienne* of the late Charles Pietri and Luce Pietri, brought forward by the studies of Claire Sotinel, has given a new social profile to the clergy in Italy and, by implication, in other regions. ²⁸

Put very briefly, I have found that I have been challenged by recent changes in the social history of the Roman West to re-write large parts of the conventional narrative of the rise of Latin Christianity. The church's rise to wealth and influence is not as simple a matter as we had thought. It cannot be said that an aristocracy of senators and great landowners rapidly took over the higher echelons of the Catholic church, and that their prestige and great wealth alone made the shift of the "social equilibrium" of Roman society towards the church a foregone conclusion.

That old narrative must be rejected. For there is another, more exciting story to be told. It will, of course, include aristocrats and great bishops. But it will also be the story of the humbler men and women for whom a niche has now been found in the social structures of the late Roman West. The rise of Latin Christianity owes much to those humble persons. Hence my interest in the wealth of the church. For the flow of wealth to the churches can be used by us as a barium trace. I have observed that the barium trace of wealth does not lead only to the top of Roman society – to the rich as great donors and as princes of the church. It also leads down into a world of which we knew very little only a few years ago. It takes us closer to the hitherto unnoticed multitude whose faces we can now glimpse (to take only one example) in the four thousand humble epitaphs and votive inscriptions from Gaul and Spain alone, between 300 and 750, brought to our attention by Mark Handley in his *Death, Society and Culture* of 2003). **29**

The history of the "Eye of a Needle" will include many protagonists who played the role of the camel in the Gospel pericope. We will meet well-known camels – Paulinus of Nola, Pinianus and Melania the Elder and Honoratus of Arles. We will meet well-known critics of camels – Ambrose, the Pelagian *de divitiis* and Salvian of Marseilles. But the healthy state of the field of Late Antiquity has enabled us to go further, to include the *dua minuta* of the Widow. One can not be grateful enough to the progress of a field which, in my own recent experience, has come to touch as felicitously on areas of social history and material culture (in the manner of Santo Mazzarino) as it has done on the cultural tissue of an entire civilization (in the manner of Henri-Irénée Marrou).

I trust that this brief survey of the many ways in which the field of Late Antiquity has developed, between 1950 and the present, will prepare us for further, challenging surprises in coming years. For, as historians, that is our joy.

cum consummaverit homo, tunc incipiet. (Ecclesiasticus 18:6).

When a man hath done, then he begins.

It cannot be otherwise. For to use words of an *Altmeister* – William Lowther Clark, the author of *Saint Basil the Great: A Study in Monasticism* of 1913:

But it is just in this that the fascination of history lies; the student feels himself confronted by forces too mighty to be measured by any instruments at his disposal.

Or, as our Symmachus once said:

Uno itinere non potest pervenire ad tam grande secretum.

Bibliography in order of mention

1. H.I. Marrou, *Saint Augustin et la fin de la culture antique*, BEFAR 145 (Paris 1938; *Retractatio* BEFAR 145 bis (Paris 1949).
2. S. Mazzarino, *Aspetti sociali del quarto secolo* (Rome 1951).
3. *The Conflict between Paganism and Christianity in the Fourth Century* ed. A.D. Momigliano (Oxford 1963).
4. M.I. Rostovtzeff, *Social and Economic History of the Roman Empire* (Oxford 1926).
5. F. Lot, *La fin du monde antique et le début du moyen-âge* (Paris 1914).
6. E.R. Dodds, *Pagans and Christians in an Age of Anxiety* (Oxford 1965).
7. C. Lepelley, *Les cités de l'Afrique romaine au Bas-Empire* (Paris 1979 and 1981).
8. P. Petit, *Libanius et la vie municipale en Antioche au ive siècle* (Paris 1955); J.H.W.G. Liebeschuetz, *Antioch. City and Imperial Administration in the Later Roman Empire* (Oxford 1972).
9. D. Claude, *Die byzantinische Stadt im 6. Jahrhundert* (Munich 1969).
10. L. Robert, *Hellenica* 11-12 (1960): 569-572.
11. C. Roueché, *Aphrodisias in Late Antiquity* (London 1989) and *Partisans and Performers at Aphrodisias* (London 1993).
12. Averil Cameron, *Christianity and the Rhetoric of Empire* (Berkeley 1991) and *The Byzantines* (London 2006).
13. Alan Cameron, *The Greek Anthology from Meleager to Planudes* (Oxford 1993) and *Greek Mythography in the Roman World* (Oxford 2004).
14. F. Millar, *A Greek Roman Empire. Power and Belief under Theodosius II* (Berkeley 2006).
15. Averil Cameron, Agathias on the Sasanians, *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 23/24 (1969): 1-150.

16. U. Monneret de Villard, *Introduzione allo studio dell'archeologia islamica* (Venice 1966).
17. ed. Averil Cameron and others, *The Byzantine and Early Islamic Middle East* (Princeton, New Jersey from 1992 onwards).
18. H.I. Marrou, *Histoire de l'éducation dans l'antiquité* (Paris 1948).
19. R. Kaster, *Guardians of Language* (Berkeley 1988).
20. R. Cribiore, *Writing, Teaching and Study in Greco-Roman Egypt* (Atlanta 1996) and R. Cribiore and others, A teacher's dipinto from Trimithis (Dakhleh Oasis), *Journal of Roman Archaeology* 21 (2008): 171-192; A. Grafton and M. Williams, *Christianity and the Transformation of the Book* (Harvard 2006).
21. P. Hadot, Leçon inaugural. Collège de France, 18 février 1983.
22. C. Humfress, *Orthodoxy and the Courts in Late Antiquity* (Oxford 2006).
23. H. Inglebert, *Histoire de la civilisation romaine* (Paris 2006).
24. J.M. Carrié, Le "colonat du Bas-Empire": un mythe historiographique? *Opus* 1 (1982): 351-370; D. Vera, Forme e funzioni della rendita fondiaria nella tarda antichità, *Società Romana e Impero Tardoantico* 1, ed. A. Giardina (Bari 1988): 367-447; J. Banaji, *Agrarian Change in Late Antiquity* (Oxford 2001 and 2007); C. Wickham, *Framing the Early Middle Ages. Europe and the Mediterranean, 400-800* (Oxford 2005).
25. K. Bowes, *Private Worship, Public Worship and Religious Change in Late Antiquity* (Cambridge 2008); E. Rebillard, *Religion et sépulture* (Paris 2003).
26. W. Scheidel, Stratification, deprivation and quality of life, *Poverty in the Roman World*, ed. M. Atkins and R. Osborne (Cambridge 2007): 40-59.
27. C. Freu, *Les figures du pauvre dans les sources italiennes de l'antiquité tardive* (Paris 2007).
28. C. Sotinel, Les évêques italiens dans la société de l'Antiquité tardive: l'émergence d'une nouvelle élite?, *Le trasformazioni delle élites in età tardoantica*, ed. R. Lizzi Testa (Rome 2006): 377-404.
29. M. Handley, *Death, Society and Culture. Inscriptions and Evidence in Gaul and Spain, AD 300-750* (Oxford 2003).

PART I:

ANCIENT HISTORY AND ARCHAEOLOGY

OVERVIEW PAPERS