

# “What’s in a name?”

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It was almost exactly half a century ago, in 1958, that I received my first lesson in the naming of Late Antiquity. The first course of CUF lectures that I ever offered was on the society and culture of the Roman world from the fourth to the sixth centuries AD. Guided by the title of the most monumental of all recent treatments of the age, the work of Ernst Stein, whose second volume (on the sixth century) was written in French, and entitled *Histoire du Bas-Empire – du Bas-Empire* – I named my own course, simply, “Lower Roman Society”. I was surprised by the number of young persons (mainly, if I remember rightly, of the male persuasion) who crowded into the elegant, Georgian space of the Wharton Room of All Souls College to hear what I had to say.

They were sadly disillusioned. What they heard was not nearly as low as they had every reason to expect from Roman society, once it had a mind to go low. They received, poor things, no lowness whatsoever. Rather, they had to undergo, from the mouth of a young man already set on fire by a reading of Santo Mazzarino’s great work – *Aspetti Sociali del Quarto Secolo* – an excited disquisition on the relation between social stratification and the circulation of the *solidus* in the post-Constantinian age.

They did not return next week.

It was not until 1964, when lecturing on Saint Augustine in the Hovenden Room, that I made frequent use of the term “late antique”. I did so in an effort to convey the haunting mixture of classical reticence and new religiosity in a Christian text, which has continued to make the Cassiciacum Dialogues of Augustine such puzzling documents to those who come to them from a reading of his *Confessions*. I think that I succeeded. As the undergraduates left the room, jostling each other in the narrow bottom of the stair case, I distinctly heard one rebuke the other, with a taunt of ... “Oh, you ... Late Antique Man.”

It does no harm, for the profile of a field, to be interesting enough to remain, for some, a term of abuse. Nowadays, I note that the fact that Late Antiquity can be conveniently abbreviated, in the English language, as *LA*, has misled some serious scholars to opine that the entire subject must have been thought up in Los Angeles. By engaging in distinctly flighty topics such as religion, culture and the civilization of the

Christian Orient, the study of late antiquity appears (in the imagination of such grave persons) to breathe the euphoric air of southern California.

But this is not true. As far as I am concerned, my own relation to the field of late antiquity bears the indelible stamp of Oxford, between the years 1956 and 1975.

It is about these years that I wish to talk this evening.

I do so, first and foremost, because it is a joy for me, in the company of so many of my friends, to visit those years, once again, still in their company. Let me mention particularly, at this time, Fergus Millar who, for almost half a century, has been my friend and high-hearted comrade in crime – the crime of thinking wide about the Ancient World.

But I also do it for a less personal reason:

No one has ever claimed that Late Antiquity is an easy field. Geographically, it ranges, within the conventional frontiers of the Roman empire itself, from Britain to the Euphrates. But the study of late antiquity has further widened the horizons of scholars so as to embrace the whole of western Asia, eastward across the Iranian plateau as far as Central Asia, north to the Caucasus, deep south to Yemen and Ethiopia, and (through a series of triumphs of interpretative archaeology) deep into the worlds of Central Europe, Scandinavia and the steppe-corridor of the Black Sea.

Harder still: The study of this world involves the mastery of classical languages and, when needed, of the languages of the Christian and, later, of the Islamic Middle East.

Yet, most difficult of all, is the fact that the classical languages which (in the 1950s) many of us had absorbed from our schooldays, were being spoken by persons who, we instinctively felt (at least, in the more respectable educational establishments and, certainly, in the School of *Literae Humaniores*) had no right to be doing so. In late antiquity, Christians and Jews impenitently committed Latin and Greek.

The discovery that these ancient classical languages had become transformed by the infusion of new ideas, held by new religious groups, and that knowledge of Jewish and Christian texts in Greek and Latin might open up entire new horizons for the study of the ancient world was judged to be news better kept to learned members of the clergy – and with Henry Chadwick around, the clergy was as learned as they come. The existence of such writings was news that was broken to the learned world in Oxford, on a four yearly basis, at a series of International Patristic Congresses, through lectures delivered in the Great Hall of the Examination Schools by giants of European scholarship, such as Henri-Irénée Marrou and Christine Mohrmann. But that was safely out of term and had no effect whatsoever, that I remember, on the teaching of Greek and Latin in Greats.

It was left to those of us who studied in the School of *Modern* History (which was deemed to have begun as shockingly recently – by the standards of ancient history then current – as the accession of the Emperor Diocletian in 284 AD) to savor the baroque vigor of Augustine, Jerome and Claudian and (every one of us, every year, for the Preliminary Examination) to construe and encourage others to construe the serene ecclesiastical Latin of the Venerable Bede.

The sheer geographical space covered by the field, the diversity of languages needed to exploit it and, even for those who come to it with a conventional mastery of Latin and Greek, the need to sink into the strange religious worlds of so many vocal, new participants in ancient culture and society, have always made the study of late antiquity a daunting venture. It is a venture that requires the gift of perseverance. What gave that gift varies from person to person. And hence the need for gratitude – for deep, personal gratitude to anyone and to any thing which, quite frankly, has helped to pull us through.

My first debt, of course, was to books. It now takes a major effort of the historical imagination to enter into a world effectively dominated by non-circulating libraries, where the xerox machine was unknown. This meant that books were places.

Only recently, I experienced a feeling of strangeness as I sat at home, reading Morin's edition of newly discovered sermons of Augustine, printed in the 1930 centenary collection of *Miscellanea Agostiniana*. There was good reason for this sense of unease. This massive tome with its generous print and wide margins had its allotted place in the Theology section of the Lower Bodleian. To be precise, it was near to the window overlooking the inner courtyard, to the left as you entered from Classics. To think of removing it from that place was as inconceivable as to think of removing a feature from a well-known landscape – like stealing the Rock of Gibraltar or removing the head of Washington from Mount Rushmore. A few hours later, to place pages of this volume across a xerox machine, so as to make copies of *Sermon Denis 24* for the use of a seminar, awoke in me an Oedipal thrill which (in the 1950s) would have kept the Freudian analysts of that distant age in business.

But even to find these books, I had to re-locate from the Upper to the Lower floor of the Bodleian. My world was to be that of the Lower Bodleian: the world of Classics and Theology. In the Oxford of the late 1950s, this, in itself, was a significant move. Until then I had worked in the Upper Bodleian, a floor above the Lower Bodleian, beneath a band of seventeenth century frescoes which showed Hermes Trismegistos, the Cumaean Sybil, Plotinus, but not (I already noted) Porphyry, the great enemy of the Christian church – to such an extent was late antiquity still contemporary to the Oxford of Archbishop Laud.

For I had not previously had any contact whatsoever with Classics or with Ancient History. I had not received a Classics education in my school. I had studied Medieval and Modern history for my Oxford degree as an undergraduate; and from 1956 until I left Oxford in 1975, I taught Medieval History – the history of Europe from 284 to 717 and of England from Hengest and Horsa to the Hundred Years War and beyond. The School of Modern History, my tutors assured me, was a School for Life. It was not exactly a School for Late Antiquity.

For this reason, to move down to Lower Bodley was to receive an education in what was for me, at that time, the alien discipline of ancient history.

The lay out of the rooms implied, in no uncertain manner, that all that I would now have to know about the ancient world and the Early Church was there. It was in the texts themselves, which faced me in solid rows of Greek and Latin. And, beside the texts, there were the articles in learned journals which stretched through every language of Europe.

But with articles, the dominant feeling was that, if one had to read such things at all, it was to correct one's first impression of the texts – a correction which, of course, the truly intelligent "Greats Man" (the imagined product of an Oxford teaching in ancient history) needed to do rarely, if at all.

There were, however, a few "real" journals, to which one might safely turn on such an occasion. The rest were deemed second-rate products, best ascribed to the vanity and itch to write of foreigners – especially of Italians. Their immediate usefulness was far from apparent. To say this is, of course, grossly unfair to the genuine cosmopolitanism of the leading representatives of the classical tradition in Oxford. But, alas, young students seldom imitate their betters. Rather, they pick up, by default and with deadly sensitivity, the "mood" instilled by a teaching tradition and by the ideals of scholarship towards which this teaching tradition aspires.

This mood encouraged the reading of "hard" journals, such as the *Journal of Roman Studies*. I scanned the review pages of the *JRS* with reverence, in order to find out what it was like to be a "real" ancient historian. Here were "proper" reviews. They were reviews delivered in a distinctive, punitive style, like public executions of the early modern period. They were read by the young as reminders, alternately encouraging and chilling, that on matters of historical interpretation, the general opinion, in Lower Bodley, was adamant: ancient historians, if they did their business properly, could give answers that were either enduringly right; or they would be revealed, publicly (and preferably in the pages of the *JRS*) to be shamefully wrong.

Bruised by such local certitudes, I took refuge, somewhat shamefacedly, in the thought that there might also be a "soft" fringe to classical scholarship, available to those

with the modern languages to read them. In effect, what I learned from the periodical shelves of the Lower Bodleian, was that Late Antiquity was an international endeavor.

It was soon apparent to me that each country had its own classical tradition, its own late antiquity and, very much, its own conflict of Christianity and paganism. To pick up the unmistakable tone of a *laïc* Frenchman in the *Empire chrétien* of André Piganiol, of a conservative Catholic in an Italian journal or of a Lutheran contributor to the *Zeitschrift für Kirchengeschichte* was much more than to discover the “bias” of a particular article. It was to add alternative layers to one’s own heart and mind, by seeing one’s own preoccupations with Christianity in the last centuries of the Roman Empire from the standpoint of European cultures very different from one’s own.

For that reason alone, the dark green volumes of the *Vizantiskii Vremennik* stood out for me (high up on the shelves, in the corner of Lower Bodley, near the window that looked out to Hertford College and the then Indian Institute) as an irresistible challenge. What one brought back from hours of battling through Madame Udalcova on “Social Structures and Political Conflict in Ostrogothic Italy” may not have repaid the effort. But to sit for long hours with a Russian dictionary in hand was to cross a Checkpoint Charlie of the mind.

To be candid, I was a very pretentious young man. I use the word without negative connotations – though a negative streak was undoubtedly present – largely because I was an intellectually ambitious young man in an academic system which, in effect, worked through satisfying the vast pretentiousness of the young. It did so because, at that time, it offered little else. To start to do research in Oxford was to be shot, within a few months, from a situation of weekly tutorial supervision into a total educational vacuum. There were no seminars; no symposia and conferences; no reading groups that I knew of; and only the most desultory contact with a supervisor.

In that situation, I was more than fortunate to have as my supervisor none other than Arnaldo Momigliano. It was Peter Fraser who had lent me Momigliano’s essays on Michael Rostovtzeff and on Gibbon and the Antiquarians. I absorbed them in a winter’s evening in my first weeks at All Souls. I never looked back after that. It was the resolutely pan-European vision of the man which moved me and has moved me ever since. The human warmth, the range, the sense of process and, hence, above all, the tolerance of creative error as an entire civilization searched for its own roots in the classical past, struck a chord in me at that time and has done so ever since.

But it is profoundly misleading (a projection on to the conditions of the Oxford of that time of the workings of entirely different academic systems) to call myself the “student” of Arnaldo Momigliano. I learned to know and to love him as a mentor, an exemplar and a friend. But to say that one had been “taught” by him would be like

expecting to be “taught” by a supernova star in full explosion. For Arnaldo was already very English in one crucial and admirable respect. He instantly treated me as a total equal, a fellow adventurer in the high and ever-interesting enterprise of history. From the time of our first formal meeting, he sent to me every offprint that he would write.

I would visit Arnaldo in what for me was the strange world of University College, London. It was so strange indeed, that, when lost on the first occasion, I instinctively did what I would have done in Oxford: turned to the Porter’s Lodge for directions. At the end of a seemingly endless corridor I sighted an elderly gentlemen in formal dress, sitting behind a glass window – only to realize, as I approached what I thought was a uniformed porter in his lodge, that I was looking at Jeremy Bentham himself, mummified in his glass case.

I eventually found Arnaldo in an office piled high with new books, engaged in hot debate with a colleague on the Greek and the Hebrew words for city wall. He would introduce me to the new books with a sweep of the hand, indicating that I was, of course, acquainted with them; and then, without introducing the colleague, he would turn to me for my own opinion on the recondite matter that they had been discussing. Epiphanic encounters with Olympian learning of this kind were not necessarily good for the Super Ego of a young graduate student. I remember once that, when I saw Arnaldo enter Lower Bodley, I ducked beneath the table, ostensibly to pick up a pencil, and hid there until he had passed.

Altogether, Arnaldo communicated an attitude to scholarship that lifted one magnificently free of the parochialism of any one university tradition. But he did not pass on what I needed most at the time – a sense of the historian’s craft. For this I relied on intermittent but decisive contacts with the living masters of their field. The first of these, of course, was A.H.M. Jones.

I would meet Jones in a somewhat unexpected environment. Jones had been a Fellow of All Souls College, and he would occasionally appear, in the early 1960s, on Gaudy nights. This was when All Souls’ was at its most impenitently “worldly”. On such evenings, the London Fellows reigned. Senior civil servants waved sparklers. Leaders of political parties launched rockets against the Radcliffe Camera. Lord Hailsham, in particular (dressed correctly, right down to the silver buckled shoes of a *quondam*) would roar with joy, as the fireworks exploded all around him in the Codrington Quadrangle.

Throughout this bacchanal, Jones would settle back into a large sofa in the deserted Common Room, sucking his pipe. With eyes sparkling with a little boy’s enthusiasm, he would simply think aloud. It was a direct experience of the tenacious, inspired commonsense which made every lecture and every article of this apparently dry and artless man electric with understanding. Did I know, Brown, that Roman styles of

divorce survived until the end of the sixth century? That the sale of bishoprics, though common in Merovingian Gaul, appeared to be absent in the eastern empire? That *curiales* were still to be seen in seventh-century Spain? That there was a good book still waiting to be written on the Visigothic kingdom?

It is not surprising that many among those who helped me most in these years were Marxists. Geoffrey de Sainte Croix and E.A. Thompson (whom I knew only by his written work) had little sympathy with the tendency of ancient historians to lose interest in the Roman Empire once Tacitus had laid down his pen. As Marxists, they wished to follow the ancient world through to its final, grand demise, with the collapse of the slave-system and the rise of feudalism. Their ideological hostility to Christianity ensured that they took its rise and establishment in the Roman empire seriously. They knew how to look beyond a narrow canon of classical historical narratives, to those texts that betrayed the slow emergence, over long centuries, of new social formations.

The first offprint that I received from an Oxford ancient historian was Geoffrey de Sainte Croix's brilliant sketch of the changing meaning of *suffragium*, from the Roman Republic to the early medieval cult of saints. It was published, of course, not in *JRS* but in *The British Journal of Sociology*. (This article was, for me, a formative influence. It lay for years in the back of my mind, until I returned to it, with gratitude, many decades later, when writing on the holy man and the cult of the saints).

Such persons reached out with a magnificent absence of classical inhibitions, to pluck down with two hands the superabundant evidence provided by Christian sources in all languages for the Roman world in its decisive, last centuries of crisis. It was de Sainte Croix who told me, with evident relish, that, in the entire history of the ancient world, the only evidence which provided monthly figures for the rising cost of foodstuffs in a time of famine was a sixth century Syriac account of the city of Edessa – *The Chronicle of Joshua the Stylite*.

I trust that I have not tried your patience by attempting to conjure up, through these few anecdotes, what it was like for a young man to find himself breathing the rarefied and chill air of what was, for him, the alien planet of ancient as opposed to medieval history.

Looking back, however, I think that the real changes in the Oxford of those distant days, which led to the gradual emergence of late antiquity as a period of valid interest, happened at a different level. It was easy to see the issue, simply, as a Period War. When would Lit. Hum. decide to reach beyond the age of Trajan? When would Modern History find room (in its provision of teaching and supervision) for those whose skills as Roman historians plainly entitled them to reach at least to 410?

Yet I think that what really changed, in those years, was more decisive. It was the definition of history itself. It was this change which finally made possible the merging of ancient and medieval history, through the study of late antiquity by methods common to both fields.

As I have said, entering a Lower Bodleian bristling with serried ranks of texts was an overpowering lesson of what constituted “real” history for the ancient historian. But I had come from a world of medieval scholarship where the nature of “real” history was defined very differently, but with equal certainty. So fierce, indeed, was the definition of “real” history among Oxford medievalists that it amounted almost to a gender-category. “Real” history, in the world of Oxford medieval studies, was basically “man talk”. It was talk about concrete things that lay as close to the hard earth of medieval reality as they could drop. It depended on evidence of brutish but reassuring solidity, stored in the Public Record Office in London and scattered throughout the land in the muniment rooms of castles and of cathedral chapter houses. This was real history. Naomi Hurnard, in her lectures on the Anglo-Norman Franchise, spoke “man talk” quite as firmly as did the Regius Professor, Vivian Galbraith. Galbraith’s first (and, indeed, only) advice to me, when he interviewed me as a potential graduate student in medieval history, was brusque and to the point. Vigorously poking the coal fire in his rooms in Oriel College, he barely looked up at me: “Brown. [he said] So you wish to do ecclesiastical history? Have you got a bishop? Everyone must have a bishop, you know. Go and read his register”.

Texts, of course, existed. They were printed in many volumes of the Rolls Series. But they did not count. They were the work of monkish chroniclers, whose tendency to exaggeration, whose moral bias and whose pervasive Catholic ideology made them as distasteful as they were unreliable. As sources for the history of the middle ages they had long been relegated to oblivion by the withering scorn of John Horace Round, working (at the end of the nineteenth century) on the “real” stuff of history – on the Pipe Rolls, stored in the Public Records Office of London, far from the dreaming Gothic spires of Oxford.

The Oxford of my generation was determined not to be caught dreaming. The result was a Philistinism which had to be heard to be believed. And hear it I did. I heard a leading College Fellow in medieval history announce, with relief, that: “Now that we have got rid of Dante [a Special Subject of the time], I can get down to Henry III and the Barons.” I was already in a mood to gather such detrimental anecdotes. In the year of the 400th anniversary of Shakespeare’s birth (in 1964) I solemnly counted, in the examination paper which covered the entire history of England from 1307 to 1660, the questions that bore any relation whatsoever to the cultural history of the age: one half question alone, out of over twenty, was the result.

Only when this rigid pose began to give way to a recognition that literary texts awash with cultural meaning might serve as guides to the past quite as much as did the archives of the Public Record Office was it possible to think of a collaboration between medievalists and ancient historians. In around 1960, each had a long way to go. Ancient historians could read the texts. But they had to learn to enter into ideological messages which betrayed the preoccupations of persons (Jews, Christians and late pagans) who had either been absent (in earlier centuries) or (if present at all) had been excluded from their narrow vision of the classical past. Medievalists had to learn to take texts seriously at all, if they were to learn to linger with pleasure on their texture and to explore their possible role as microcosmic indicators of the quality of an age, rather than to dismiss them out of hand as no more than untrustworthy, monkish flapdoodle.

It was Richard Southern who presided over this change, when Chichele Professor, from 1961 to 1969.

In the first place, Southern encouraged the creation of new Further Subjects in the History School. This meant, in effect, that the undergraduates were no longer forced to study only the Constitutional History of England through collections of texts, the most venerable of which was the medieval volume assembled by Bishop Stubbs of Oxford – *Select Charters and other illustrations of English Constitutional History from the earliest times to the reign of Edward I*.

Instead, among the further options, a Further Subject emerged on “Byzantium and its Northern and Eastern Neighbors from 500 –700.” This Further Subject was put together as a result of collaboration between myself, Dimitri Obolensky and the great Arabist, Sam Stern. Its establishment (in around 1966) marks the true birth of Late Antiquity in the Modern History School of Oxford. It defined both a distinctive chronological period and a distinctive area: the Balkans, the east Roman empire and its Sasanian and, later, Islamic neighbors. For the first time it was possible to read (in translation) texts that linked the age of Procopius, without a break, to that of al-Baladhuri and ibn-Ishaq, and that enveloped the entire area from the Danube to Arabia and the Iranian plateau. To teach that Further Subject and to provide public lectures for it was, for me, my first and most exciting *joyeuse chevauchée* across the world of late antiquity as it has come to be defined. It was, in large part, the ground breaking commentary of Averil Cameron on Agathias and the Sasanians (which later appeared in *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* in 1969, though I already knew of it through Averil’s dissertation) which acted as my guide as I launched out on this strange and exhilarating terrain.

Yet Southern’s legacy went deeper than that. In his Inaugural Lecture he had defended the use of texts in medieval history, through a characteristically low-key and winning presentation of the clash (in the late nineteenth century) between John Horace

Round and Edward Augustus Freeman, the then Regius Professor of History at Oxford. Round was the acerbic representative of a new professionalism, which drew on the administrative documents of the Public Records Office. Freeman, by contrast, emerged with unexpected sympathy in Southern's presentation, as the last of a great tradition of medieval historians still reared in the Classics, who had dared to base his account of the end of the Anglo-Saxon polity on narrative texts of high rhetorical content. The message was clear. If Freeman could not be dismissed out of hand as absurd, then the time had come for medieval texts – texts read with care in the manner of the classics – to re-enter the study of medieval history from which the strictures of professional medievalists such as Round had effectively excluded them for almost a century.

And there were those who could take up this challenge. I think with particular gratitude (when remembering those years) of my friend, Karl Leyser. Karl was a scholar radioactive with erudition on the Middle Ages in general, and on the world of Ottonian, Salian and Hohenstaufen Germany in particular. The very existence of that world constituted a challenge to the focus on Anglo-French affairs which had provided most Oxford medievalists with their paradigms of “real” history. East of the Rhine, “real” history happened very differently, and with very exciting results. In his lectures, in his articles and in his hypnotic conversation, Karl drew on a great German tradition of *Ideengeschichte*, *Staatsymbolik* and *Begriffsgeschichte* which had always accorded to Einhard, Widukind, Thietmar of Merseburg and Otto of Freising the same respect as we had learned to lavish on Aurelius Victor, Ammianus Marcellinus and Orosius. In the magic space, created by Karl in his lectures in the Dining Hall of Magdalen College, the methods of the ancient historian and of the medievalist came together, quite unselfconsciously, as he conjured up (from contemporary literary sources) the realities and the dreams of the court of Otto III.

But the greatest friend of late antiquity, in the Modern History School, proved to be the Venerable Bede. The fate of the Venerable Bede in Oxford is, perhaps, the only good argument for an inflexibly rigid examination syllabus. Bede was an evergreen. Every year, every undergraduate had to be taught enough of Book Three of Bede's *Ecclesiastical History of the English People* to pass the Preliminary Examination in Latin. Every year, tutors throughout the University strove to make Bede user-friendly to the young, for this one moment in their lives. Bede was a routine. Bede was a challenge to the ingenuity of young tutors anxious to help the young to beat the system. The margins of my own copy of his *Ecclesiastical History* are marked with an elaborate system designed to break the bank, through predicting (from what passages had already been set in recent years) what passages might appear in the oncoming examination.

And suddenly, in the late 60s and early 70s, Bede became interesting. He emerged as the joining point, in the School of Modern History, of the ancient and the medieval world. For here was a literary text, heavy with Christian ideology, that could be read with late Roman eyes to the great profit of the medievalist.

For this reason, the appearance of Henry Mayr-Harting's *The Coming of Christianity to Anglo-Saxon England*, in 1972, marked the end of a double isolation of English medieval history.

First: The England of the Venerable Bede was set, firmly, in a Europe-wide context (a context further elaborated by the brilliant review of *The Coming of Christianity* by James Campbell).

Second: *The Coming of Christianity* cast new light on the cultural and religious history of Anglo-Saxon England by viewing it as a yet later province of the late antique world. To cite only one example, to which I constantly return: Henry did not present the rococo style of Aldhelm of Malmesbury as some insular eccentricity. He showed that it was a northern extension of the rhetorical traditions of Visigothic Spain, which were themselves nourished on specimens of African oratory of the age of Augustine. The imagined hiatus between two worlds had been bridged, and, with that, the hiatus between two traditions of scholarship – one devoted to ancient, and one to medieval history. It showed what late antiquity could do, to give a vivid new face to an old friend of the Preliminary Examination in Modern History.

By 1975, a series of seminars were held in the new underground rooms of All Souls College, in order to make this joining plain. They were devoted to the theme of Christianization. They ran, without a break, from the age of Constantine to Charlemagne. Representatives of *Literae Humaniores* and Modern History were equally present at the table. The methodologies of each School informed the methodologies of the other. The experiences of senators of fourth century Rome enriched our understanding of the warlords of seventh century Northumbria. Attitudes to the profane past in *Beowulf* cast a backward light on the role of myth in the poetry of Sidonius Apollinaris. It was a fitting occasion for Patrick Wormald to present the first version of his ground breaking essay, which used models drawn from the behavior of the late Roman nobility to challenge conventional narratives of the Christianization of northern Europe: "Bede, *Beowulf* and the conversion of the Anglo-Saxon aristocracy". It was the Venerable Bede who had made the join.

As for myself, what the growth of late antiquity has come to mean to me, after these Oxford years, has been, above all, the growth of an ever-widening circle of friendship which has come to embrace both America, Europe and Japan. This has been brought about through the engagement of so many scholars, of widely different intellectual

backgrounds and widely different skills, from different regions and (increasingly) of markedly different ages from my own, in what had begun for me (as I now look back on my distant days in the Lower Bodleian) as a very lonely business.

So let me end with a citation from the Pseudo-Clementine *Recognitiones*. It sums up, in a few phrases, the gratitude which I would wish to express to each and every one of you on this magnificent occasion, of which I could not have dreamed, half a century ago, when I was still groping (to the understandable disappointment of the young) to find a name to call what we have now come to know as the field of Late Antiquity.

*ex mundo tempus, et ex hoc hominum multitudo; ex multitudine electio amicorum, ex quorum unanimitate pacificum construitur dei regnum.*

(Ps.-Clement, *Recognitiones* 1.24.3)

From the created universe came time. And from the stretches of time came the multitude of human kind. And from that multitude, the choice of friends, from whose unity of mind the peace of a kingdom of God is built.