

its ambition—to resist definitive narration—is based on a philosophical confusion. There is no last word to a life's story or a time's tale inasmuch as none of us is master and final arbiter of the meanings we articulate. Those who come after us will determine, with some but not absolute authority, what our lives have meant—not just to them but to us as well. As long as there is a future, there is no end to the articulacy of the past; the dead speak in tongues of fire. O'Donnell's kind of postmodernism goes wrong in affecting to contrive a multiplicity of meaning that should come naturally. It is his art and not the nature of a life that is going to keep us from narrating Augustine to death. The attempt to use artifice to keep a life's story from ever coming to a resolution is a form of defensiveness. Most of us are defensive in this way about our own lives; O'Donnell is defensive about Augustine.

Of the many psychoanalytic offerings in O'Donnell's book, this is the one I find the most telling (77): "We do well to ask of an author, precisely at the moment when he is most in control of his material and our attention, what he is afraid of." This good counsel hails from a chapter on the *Confessions*, the book of Augustine's that has been O'Donnell's obsession to know. In answer to the question he poses, I would say that O'Donnell as defender of Augustine is most afraid of becoming his apologist. His apologists have all failed him by mimicking his language and neglecting to grasp for themselves what he is actually saying. That is the judgment of Augustine's readership that O'Donnell ventures in the introduction to his three-volume edition, Latin text, and commentary, of the *Confessions*. Readers of Augustine, he suggests, have yet to contend with his human God (perhaps the upper-case can return here).

In book X of Plato's *Republic*, Socrates warns two young philosophers not to flirt with a poetic muse unless they are prepared to look hard for truth and not be taken in by the seduction of beautiful words. Socrates is here the unapologetic defender of poetry; he blackens a seduction in order to encourage real reading. O'Donnell does for Augustine what Plato does for poetry. Not everyone will appreciate the irony of such service. Fans and critics of O'Donnell's biography are nevertheless likely to agree at least on this: his should not be anybody's only book on Augustine.

James Wetzel, Villanova University

Gillian Clark
Christianity and Roman Society
New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004
Pp. xii + 137.

Tempora non vacant. Henry Chadwick's elegant study of Christian history and theology, *The Early Church*, first appeared in 1967. Peter Brown's seminal *Making of Late Antiquity* is now over thirty years old. Decades of intensive work on religion in Late Antiquity, much of it stimulated by the publications of these two authors, now stand between current undergraduates and these two forma-

tive surveys. Some truly excellent, more specialized essays (I am thinking of works such as Robert Markus' *End of Ancient Christianity*) can serve ambitious students for orientation in particular slices of the period that stretches from the early Empire to the rise of Islam. But, as anyone responsible for teaching broad undergraduate survey courses in ancient Christianity knows, the passage of time combined with the perennial need for a good introductory text in this area has increasingly required pedagogical improvisations.

This situation provides simply one of the many reasons to rejoice at the appearance of Gillian Clark's new book. Clark has miraculously managed to provide lucid and engaging discussions of difficult issues and problems in astonishingly few pages without ever sacrificing historical complexity. Each of her six thematic chapters opens with several epigrams quoting a variety of ancient sources from a spread of several centuries. This device deftly makes one of her major points: no single view prevailed on any topic, even among those who shared the (ostensibly) "same" tradition. Chapter 1 provides a bird's-eye view of her project, summarizing the topics of her next five chapters. It also introduces Clark's very full cast of characters: ancient Christians are her focus, but Jews and pagans of all sorts people her pages as well.

Chapter 2, "Christians and Others," reviews problems with our sources as well as problems with our labels ("Jew"/"Christian"/"Heretic"/"Gnostic" and so on). Clark also presses the fundamental question, not why Christianity (in whatever form) survived, but how. Her next chapter (3) considers how martyrdom, both the phenomenon and the idea, may have affected the Christian movements' growth. (This chapter is a particularly successful mix of social history, intellectual history, and critical historiography.) Chapter 4 picks up with the voluntary, slow-motion martyrdom provided by ascetic disciplines. Chapter 5, "People of the Book," explores literacy; the sort of second-tier textual community that can form in oral cultures, where people are familiar with heard, not read, stories; majority culture's *paideia* and rhetorical traditions; and the emperor Julian's efforts to form pagan priests in the image and likeness of Christian ones. In Chapter 6, "Triumph, disaster, or adaptation?" Clark closes her essay by contemplating the benefits and the liabilities realized by wedding imperial and episcopal power in the fourth and fifth centuries. And she ends on the well observed point that the rhetoric of Christian difference seems much sharper and clearer than the social reality.

Christianity and Roman Society concludes with an extremely useful bibliographical essay (118–21), and the book's own bibliography of references is both ample and extremely up to date (122–33). Clark's manner of discussing problems of method and interpretation in the body of her text, however, and the notation format that she follows throughout make the entire work a sustained consideration of current scholarship in the field. For this reason, her slim study could serve equally well as a valuable text in a seminar on method or as a limber introduction in an undergraduate lecture-survey. Indeed, since each of her chapters is itself diachronic and independent of the others, different syllabi might assign them in whatever order the professor wished. The book's great topical flexibility is not the least of its virtues.

Some extremely minor quibbles. Clark repeatedly identifies Irenaeus as “mid-second century,” but he is not. Ancient Jews were “monotheist,” but this did not mean that they thought that there was only one god (6); rather, they thought that their god was supreme and that they rightly directed their loyalty and piety to him. To say that early Christians rejected Jewish sacrifice is a bit confusing (9): except for Paul’s letters (which do not reject *latreia*) all Christian texts are post-70, when Jews are no longer sacrificing, and those in the Diaspora (unless convenient to Leontopolis) never were. Perhaps Christian synagogue communities were more welcoming to Gentile godfearers than were non-Christian synagogues (26). But Christian synagogues made a much tougher demand on their godfearers than non-Christian ones did on theirs. Only Christian godfearers had to renounce the worship of their native deities. More normative synagogues never made such a demand but permitted gentiles to voluntarily affiliate as pagans. As a result, only the Christian godfearers were at risk of persecution by the resentful, perhaps frightened majority.

No matter. Clark and Cambridge University Press have done a great favor for anyone teaching in the area of Roman-period Christianity. May *Christianity and Roman Society* have just as long a shelf-life as its illustrious predecessors.

Paula Fredriksen, Boston University

Charles Kannengiesser

Handbook of Patristic Exegesis, 2 vols.

Boston and Leiden: Brill, 2004

Pp. xxxiv + 1496.

In two substantial volumes Charles Kannengiesser, along with a number of invited contributors, offers us a *Handbook* that contains a huge amount of information and bibliography on the development of early Christian exegesis up to the eighth century. There is little doubt that these volumes are a major reference work that will soon be found on the shelves of all respectable research libraries. At the same time, a number of significant problems with the work demand comment. But let me begin with the many contributions made by this *Handbook*.

The first volume begins with 370 pages (divided into four chapters) discussing in general terms some of the major themes and methods of early Christian exegesis. Kannengiesser first gives us a survey of journals and research tools in the field. He and a number of contributors then consider the Jewish and Greco-Roman educational and rhetorical background of early Christian exegesis. Chapter 4 by David Balás and Jeffrey Bingham is one of the stars of this volume: the chapter outlines how individual books (and collections of books) within the Scriptural canon were viewed and offers a survey of extant commentaries on each book. This material is extremely useful and very helpfully presented. Every chapter is provided with an extensive and usually excellent bibliography, which will be of immense help for those teaching advanced courses in the area.