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*The Reception of the Church Fathers and Early Church Historians, c. 1470–1650.* Andreas Ammann (Universität Bern), Sam Kennerley (Trinity College, Cambridge), Kirsten Mcfarlane (Lincoln College, Oxford), 23.09.2016.

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## The Reception of the Church Fathers and Early Church Historians, c. 1470–1650

On 23 September 2016, (lay) historians and literary scholars assembled at Trinity College, Cambridge, to reflect on âThe Reception of the Church Fathers and Early Church Historians, c. 1470â1650â. One of their principal aims was to ponder what impact these earlier Christian sources had on the development of the early modern sense of the Christian past. Todayâs scholarship investigating this reception comes in many forms.

ANDREW TAYLOR (Cambridge) paid very close philological attention to how Philo was read and edited in the 1550s. RICHARD SERJEANTSON (Cambridge) underlined (with reference to Arnaldo Momigliano) that scholars have only recently recognized that the foundations of historical scholarship were laid by church historians. He tracked the great controversy from the fifteenth to the seventeenth centuries about the place and the time of Emperor Constantineâs baptism, discussing the views of Bartolomeo Platina (d. 1481), Johannes LÃ¶wenklau (d. 1594) and Jean Morin (d. 1659).

ANTHONY GRAFTON (Princeton) also quoted Momigliano as he had been âspot-onâ in pointing out the importance of Eusebius for early modern scholars in the 1960s. In his talk, Grafton followed the âtwists and turnsâ of the Eusebian revival in the Renaissance and Reformation. Eusebiusâs inclusion of original documents in his Church History had paved the way for the documentary method of sixteenth-century scholars. Grafton told the story of how Eusebius inspired such diverse figures such as Paul of Middelburg (d. 1534), Guillaume BudÃ© (d. 1540), Thomas Cranmer (d. 1556) and John Foxe (d. 1587). Eusebiusâs practice of working with assistants might have inspired the team-work project of the Magdeburg Centuries.

CRISTINA DONDI (Oxford) presented her data-based project âThe Fifteenth-Century Book Tradeâ, which allows scholars to retrace the distribution of incunables across the world. Material evidence (bindings, signatures, marginalia etc.) is used to identify the movements of early printed books. MADELINE MCMAHON (Princeton) explained how Desiderius Erasmus (d. 1536) elevated the reception of a church father to a new level by fashioning an image of himself based on Jerome; this was, in turn, a Jerome based on his own image. Erasmusâs editing became a âform of theologyâ. In his *Defence of the Apology*, John Jewel (d. 1571), on the other hand, pointed out the weaknesses of church fathers. Many humanists had seen the fathers as both authoritative and fallible, so McMahon also offered insights into how fifteenth-century humanists studied the church fathers in discerning fashion. Poggio Bracciolini (d. 1459), for example, juxtaposed church fathers such as Augustine and Jerome, recognizing how they had differed in their opinions on numerous points.

ALEX WRIGHT (Cambridge) concentrated on William Caveâs *Primitive Christianity: or, the Religion of the Ancient Christians in the First Ages of the Gospel.* Cave (d. 1713) studied the genre of commendatory letters and was the first English scholar to write a literary

history of the Church. SAM KENNERLEY (Cambridge) traced an aspect of a âchange in directionâ of early modern Catholicism by exploring how patristic studies were extended to the East. This outreach was supported by Marcello Cervini (Pope Marcellus II, d. 1555). SUNDAR HENNY (Bern) dealt with presentism in seventeenth-century patristics in Zurich, while CORNEL ZWIERLEIN (Bochum) investigated Non-juror patristic studies and the Levant. MARK VESSEY (Vancouver) reviewed aspects of Erasmusâs method as found in his *Ratio seu compendium verae theologiae* (1518/19).

In a thought-provoking talk, NICHOLAS HARDY (Cambridge) examined how political circumstances, patronage as well as the disciplinary conventions of controversial theology conditioned the writings of Isaac Casaubon (d. 1614). Such influences made Casaubon, like other humanists, a flexible and inconstant figure, to whom even the term âscholarâ in the strictest modern sense should perhaps not be applied.

JEAN-LOUIS QUANTIN (Paris) gave the keynote lecture to conclude the conference. His overview of the geography of patristic printing was a history of patristic studies in disguise. He recounted how Venetian publishing became increasingly disconnected from patristic scholarship and how Paris printers then ascended to market dominance. Was it beneficial for patristic studies, however, that only one order (the Maurists) came to monopolize this field so strongly? Or did this very monopoly contribute to a slowdown of patristic studies from the eighteenth century onwards? Quantin left this interesting question open.

In conclusion, one could not have wished for much more from this high-powered short conference, both in terms of variety and intellectual stimulation; perhaps only the participation of theologians might have added more viewpoints.

**Conference Overview:**

*Panel 1. Chair: Andreas Ammann (University of Bern)*

Andrew Taylor (Churchill College, Cambridge): Reading Philo in the 1550s

Richard Serjeantson (Trinity College, Cambridge): Reborn in Rome? The baptism of Constantine and the writing of church history, 1475â1650

Anthony Grafton (Princeton): The reception of Eusebius as a church historian

*Panel 2. Chair: Emily Michelson (University of St Andrews)*

Cristina Dondi (Lincoln College, Oxford): The circulation of the early editions of the fathers: an evidence-based approach

Madeline McMahon (Princeton): Feuding Fathers: John Jewel reads Jerome on the Origenist Controversy

Alex Wright (Sidney Sussex College, Cambridge): âLetters and Learningâ. William Caveâs âPrimitive Christianityâ (1673) and the early modern study of âliterae commendaticiaeâ

*Panel 3. Chair: John-Paul Ghobrial (Balliol College, Oxford)*

Sam Kennerley (Trinity College, Cambridge): The globalisation of patristics in the circle of Marcello Cervini

Sundar Henny (UniversitÃ¤t Bern): Presentism in Seventeenth-Century Patristics

Cornel Zwierlein (Ruhr-UniversitÃ¤t Bochum): Non-Juror Patristic studies and the Levant

*Panel 4. Chair: Joanna Weinberg (University of Oxford)*

Mark Vessey (University of British Columbia): The renaissance of late antiquity in Erasmusâ âRatio seu compendium verae theologiaeâ (1518/19)

Nicholas Hardy (Trinity College, Cambridge): Isaac Casaubon, the fathers, and post-Reformation theological controversy

*Keynote lecture. Respondent: Scott Mandelbrote (Peterhouse, Cambridge)*

Jean-Louis Quantin (Ãcole Pratique des Hautes Ãtudes, Sorbonne, Paris): A European geography of patristic scholarship, sixteenth to the seventeenth-century

Book-launch of Scott Mandelbrote and Joanna Weinberg (eds.), Jewish Books and their Readers (Leiden, 2016), presented by Thomas Roebuck (University of East Anglia).

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