

*Von den Anfängen bis Konstantin*, München, C.H. Beck, 2018; third revised edition, 2021) as noted by its reviewers.

Throughout the book, but especially in the first of the concluding chapters, Leppin reflects on the historical developments that culminated in Constantine becoming the first Christian emperor, and on how his personal convictions and political strategies shaped the structures of both the church and the Roman Empire. As Leppin observes, “knowingly or not, he [Constantine] selected a group in the episcopally led Christians that was particularly well suited to interlink with the power of the state” (p. 392). Despite such statements, and the seemingly foreboding subtitle of the book, it does not aim either to explain or to justify the so-called “Constantinian turn”. Rather, it seeks to present a consistent and comprehensible account of the preceding epoch to a general readership.

Written in clear and accessible language, and in a style that engages with the sensibilities of the modern reader, the book remains highly approachable even for a non-specialist audience, while still offering much of interest to scholars of early Christianity. Despite, or rather because of, some inevitable generalisations and simplifications, it achieves its aim with considerable elegance, especially when one considers that it narrates the history of three centuries in fewer than 500 pages.

The most valuable quality of Leppin’s study is his pedagogical approach to the book’s structure. Each chapter is divided into sections that can be read within an hour and are concluded with an insightful summary. Such a structure not only aids the comprehension of individual parts but also facilitates the reading experience overall.

The translation by Kathrin Lüddecke is clear and highly readable. The volume contains only a handful of minor errors, and my sole complaint to the editors would be their decision to opt for endnotes rather than footnotes.

Athanase Bukin

LETTENEY, Mark, *The Christianization of Knowledge in Late Antiquity: Intellectual and Material Transformations*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press 2023, xvi-290 p.

In this volume, Letteney examines the process of Christianization in late antiquity, particularly in the 4th century, from an epistemic perspective (rather than political or religious). The eight chapters, organized in two parts with an appendix, join up in a neat circle around the

question posed in Chapter 1 about the (pre)scriptural nature of truth. After a thorough analysis of what Letteney contends to be the novel and dominant epistemic practice, notably of Theodosian Age scholarship, Chapter 8 circles back to the question of an (im)possible authority of the written word with a study of the *Palestinian Talmud*.

The structure of the present study is engagingly fluid. Letteney skillfully guides his readers step by step and chapter by chapter, through his overarching thesis: the transfer of a Christian epistemology to other scholastic domains. Thus, the introductory chapter affirms the interconnectedness, or, to use the author's term, "interimplication" (p. 8) of the different scholastic domains in late antiquity, which is one of the fundamental prerequisites for his argument. Part I of the book "New Readers" opens with "A History of Christian Fact Finding" where Letteney explores the epistemic methods of authors of the 2nd and 3rd centuries: Clement of Alexandria, Ignatius of Antioch, Justin Martyr, Irenaeus, and Tertullian. Letteney aims to illustrate that textuality need not necessarily be the recognized tool in knowledge production it will become – this the argument of the subsequent chapters – in the 4th century. This rich overview of different, as it were, 'alternative' approaches to knowledge production usefully and convincingly illustrates Letteney's point that "[...] the seeming inevitability of textual interpretation, even among Christians, is a mirage" (p. 60). The following chapter focuses on what Letteney contends to be the turning point in epistemic method: the Nicene controversy and the establishment of the Creed under Constantine. With Athanasius of Alexandria the study moves to its core concern: textuality as a scholastic method. The author shows how Athanasius's canon constitutes the foundation of the three-tiered system of "(1) aggregation of a scholastic patrimony, (2) distillation of the patrimony into a creed, and (3) sublimation of further dispute to the newly minted creed" (p. 83). Taking his cue from *Concerning the Decrees*, which acts as an authoritative scaffolding to the Nicene Creed, Letteney underlines the relevance of aggregating sources in the forging of authoritative statements. This movement thus also stands at the centre of Chapter 4, "A New Order of Books in the Theodosian Age," where this Christian "epistemic operation" (p. 91) is traced not only in the works of Christian authors (notably Jerome and Sozomen) but also in the works of Aulus Gellius, Macrobius, and Martianus Capella. Here, Letteney shows how in the 5th century with Macrobius, the literary genre of the miscellany redirected its generic amassing of material into a varied work (as was the case for Aulus Gellius) towards an appropriation of the Christian method of aggregation and distillation of an authoritative