WOLF LIEBESCHUETZ

John Hugo Wolfgang Gideon Liebeschuetz

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elected Fellow of the British Academy 1991

by

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Wolf Liebeschuetz, classical historian, made a distinctive contribution to the study of late antiquity. His family, escaping the Nazi regime, came from Hamburg to England in 1938. In the late 1940s, when he began his undergraduate degree, the period now known as late antiquity was absent from most UK university courses in Classics or in History. By 1992, when he entered his productive retirement, it was a flourishing international field of study. His books address central questions which continue to be debated: the decline or transformation of the classical city and of the Roman empire; the impact or integration of non-Roman 'barbarian' peoples; religious change and the effect of Christianity.

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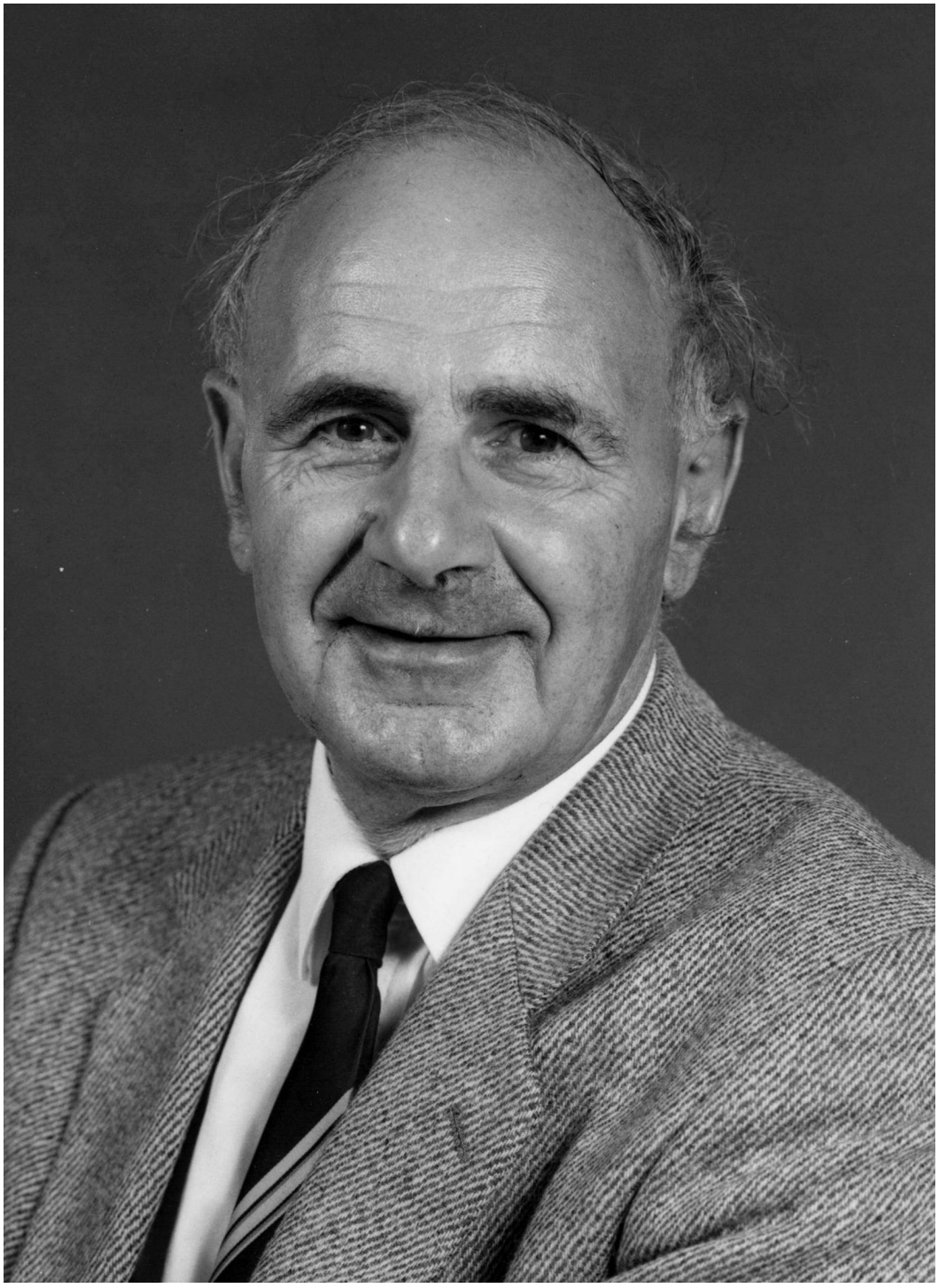

W. Liebknecht

John Hugo Wolfgang Gideon Liebeschuetz, always known as Wolf (in the English pronunciation), was born in Hamburg in 1927. He was the eldest child of Rachel and Hans, members of the Liberal Jewish community to which their families had belonged for several generations. Rachel is evoked with pride and affection in the memoir Wolf prefixed to his final volume of collected papers.[1] Daughter of the bacteriologist Professor Hugo Carl Plaut, she was a doctor and a research physiologist; she was the first woman appointed to the Institute of Physiology at Hamburg, and according to a speech made in her honour in 1980, the only woman.[2] She joined the Institute in 1919, but left, as was then required, on her marriage in 1924. She continued to give weekly lectures at the university, until the National Socialist government which came to power in 1933 enacted the 'law for the restoration of the professional civil service'. This prevented her using her *venia legendi* (licence to teach), so she devoted herself to the education of her three children. Hans Liebeschuetz, son of a physician, had a classical education, then spent a year in Berlin at a seminary for Liberal rabbis. He also enrolled at the University, where he attended lectures by Wilamowitz and Eduard Meyer among others. After war service in France, he taught in a progressive secondary school, and lectured in medieval Latin and literature at the university of Hamburg until he too lost his teaching post; because of his war service, he was able for a time to teach at the seminary in Berlin. The staff of the Warburg Library in Hamburg were also prevented from teaching, and in 1933 the Director, Fritz Saxl, arranged for the transfer of the Warburg Institute to London.[3]

As danger grew, Rachel and Hans ensured that their children learned English. In 1936 Rachel took them to visit her brother Theodor, who had settled in England after losing his job in Germany. Hans was among the many Jewish men arrested on Kristallnacht (9 November 1938) and was imprisoned for a month in Sachsenhausen. Wolf remembered that he never spoke about it; and that the day after celebrating his release, the children were sent to England, where Theodor could sponsor them. Their parents and maternal grandmothers followed as soon as they could; Hans was sponsored by Gertrude Bing of

[1] W. Liebeschuetz, 'Introduction: About the Author', in *East and West in Late Antiquity: Invasion, Settlement, Ethnogenesis, and Conflicts of Religion* (Leiden: Brill, 2015), pp. vii-xxiii. Quotations not otherwise referenced are from this memoir.

[2] Appendix 3 to 'Rachel & Theodor: the Plaut Family 1888–1848', typescript dated 2009, author E.A.R. Liebeschuetz, with notes and additions by Wolf Liebeschuetz. This is one of several accounts of family history deposited with the British Academy in Wolf's later years. They are interesting on many questions besides family and financial networks: theories of education, varieties of religious commitment, experience of anti-semitism.

[3] https://warburg.sas.ac.uk/about-us/history-warburg-institute/transfer-institute. In 1944 the Institute became formally part of the University of London.

the Warburg Institute.[4] Hans and Rachel, with their children, became British citizens in 1947. Wolf thought, in retrospect, that they could have returned to Germany, where Rachel could have resumed her medical career, but had decided against for the sake of the children and the grandmothers. They kept their connections in Hamburg, where the family is commemorated by *Stolpersteine*.[5] Wolf, who loved and often visited Germany, was invited to Hamburg in 2012 as an *Augenzeuger* to speak of his family's experience. It was much less terrible, he wrote, than that of some others who spoke.

Wolf's family settled in South London, where he attended Whitgift School Croydon, 'a very good school', from 1940 to 1945. He wrote that much of his first term was spent in air raid shelters (Croydon was on the corridor of bombing routes through Kent into London), and that his fellow pupils saw him as a German and did not fully realise that as a Jew he did not want Hitler to win. He did not remember discrimination or hostility, but he was not invited to their homes. At Whitgift School he played rugby, learned Latin, and had a year of Greek, but did not enter the classical sixth: he took his Higher School Certificate in Science, intending to become a doctor. Two years of National Service (mainly in the Canal Zone) confirmed that he lacked practical skill, and he applied instead to read History at University College London. This choice was influenced by Fritz Saxl, who told his friend Hans Liebeschuetz that UCL had two outstanding professors of history, Hale Bellott in American History and A.H.M. Jones in Ancient History. Wolf opted for Jones (elected Fellow of the British Academy, FBA, in 1947). He said in his 2015 memoir 'The choice decided the rest of my life', commenting 'Most of my publications show traces of his teaching'. That is evident in his clearly stated and precisely documented arguments.

The UCL Ancient History syllabus then extended to 641, the year of death of the emperor Heraclius who had resisted Persian and Arab invasions of the eastern Roman empire, and Jones was interested in the later period. Both the syllabus and the interest were unusual for the time. In 1947, when Edward Thompson (later Wolf's predecessor as head of Classics and Archaeology at Nottingham) published with Cambridge University Press *The Historical Work of Ammianus Marcellinus*, he and his reviewers noted that few colleagues were concerned with the 4th century AD, fewer still with its great historian. Half a century later Robert Markus wrote in his biographical memoir of Thompson (elected FBA 1964) 'Late Antiquity was, quite simply, not on the standard

[4] Hans Liebeschuetz taught in schools before he was appointed in 1946, by Geoffrey Barraclough, to the Department of Medieval History at the University of Liverpool. He published especially on John of Salisbury. Wolf wrote the entry on his father for the *Neue Deutsche Biographie*: see 'About the Author' n. 2 for this and other references to the life and work of Hans Liebeschuetz.

[5] Literally 'stumbling blocks': small concrete cubes, carrying a brass plate with name and dates, inserted into a road or pavement to show that 'here lived' a victim of Nazi persecution. The artist Gunter Demnig initiated this project in 1992.

maps of academic study', at least in Britain.[6] Even the name 'late antiquity' was not yet in general use; *Spātantike* began as a term in history of art, *le bas-empire* or *tardo impero* or 'late Roman' were possible labels. Jones had a group of devoted students, though he was a poor teacher, whose lectures consisted of setting out the source-material for every statement he made; Wolf wrote that he 'had no pedagogical skills at all', and that it must have been 'hard going' for students who were not already interested and prepared to exert themselves. Before Jones moved to Cambridge in 1951, Wolf asked for his advice on PhD topics. Jones suggested the letters of Theodoret, bishop of Cyrrhus in north Syria in the early 5th century, or the letters and speeches of Libanius, teacher of rhetoric and exceptional networker in 4th-century Antioch. This made sense in that Jones wanted to know how things worked,[7] especially in local administration, and for this Theodoret and Libanius have much to offer. But it is demanding material for a graduate student, especially for one without the intensive classical training which Jones took for granted. Wolf chose Libanius. There survive 1544 letters (many, to be fair, are brief notes of recommendation) and over 60 speeches, from a career extending over four decades; some seven hundred people are named in the letters; Libanius avoided using words, including official titles, which are not found in the classical Greek of Demosthenes; and he has 'a reputation for being impenetrable'.[8] There was little help available in secondary literature, other than Otto Seeck, *Die Briefe des Libanius zeitlich geordnet* (1906).

Wolf's benign memoir does not mention these reservations, but he wrote that 'it was slow work' when he embarked on the letters and speeches of Libanius in the twelve Teubner volumes edited by R. Foerster (1907–23). This major scholarly achievement provides Greek text with Seeck's numbering, critical apparatus, preliminary discussion in Latin of manuscripts and editions, and an index of proper names. Wolf later told Peter Brown FBA that he learned Greek 'on the job' from the Latin translations in the edition of the letters by J.C. Wolf (Amsterdam 1738). He also found that the notes in the edition of J.J. Reiske (1791–7) were still helpful. His doctoral supervisor was Arnaldo Momigliano (elected FBA 1954), who in 1951 moved from Bristol to UCL as successor to Jones. Momigliano had come to Britain in 1939, displaced from his professorship in Roman History at Turin by the racial laws of Fascist Italy. The biographical memoir

[6] Most biographical memoirs are now available online at the British Academy website. In this memoir, they are listed with their publication details: thus 'Edward Arthur Thompson 1914–1994', *PBA*, 111 (2001), 679–93, p. 683. Robert Markus (elected FBA 1984) was born in Budapest; in 1939 his family took refuge in England. In 1958 Christopher Brooke appointed him to the Department of Medieval History at Liverpool, and in 1974 he moved to a chair at Nottingham. Wolf, his colleague and friend, wrote his memoir: 'Robert Austin Markus 1924–2010', *Biographical Memoirs of Fellows of the British Academy*, 12 (2012), 475–89.

[7] John Crook, 'Arnold Hugh Martin Jones 1904–1970', *PBA*, 57 (1972), 425–38, at pp. 432–4. Jones's wartime activity included the Civil Service, an experience which influenced his concerns as a historian.

[8] R. Cribiore, *Between City and School*: *Selected Orations of Libanius* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2015), p. 25.

makes it possible to see both why Wolf could have found his learning inspirational and why the relationship might not in practice have been easy.[9] Wolf's 2015 memoir scarcely mentions Momigliano, but warmly acknowledges the help of the classicist and Byzantinist Robert Browning (elected FBA 1978).[10]

At the start of his doctoral work (1951–2) Wolf took a Postgraduate Certificate of Education which qualified him to teach in state schools. This was a sensible move at a time when university posts would be in Classics or in History rather than Ancient History. He was understandably concerned about finding a job, especially when he married in 1955. Margaret Taylor was a fellow UCL graduate; her subject was English, and Wolf wrote that she greatly improved the writing of his thesis and of everything he wrote thereafter. She was, he said, a born teacher, a claim he also made for his father but not for himself. They were married for over sixty years, and had four children and five grandchildren. Wolf's family obituary commented that it was a lifelong partnership, 'Wolf's academic nature being ideally complemented by Margaret's intelligence, practicality and contemporary mindedness'.

According to Wolf's memoir, it was on the day he submitted his thesis, at the end of 1956, that he first heard of Paul Petit, *Libanius et la vie municipale à Antioche au quatrième siècle* (Paris, 1955). This is, to say the least, surprising: it was a Grenoble dissertation directed by William Seston of the Sorbonne, and the approving reviews by Jones and by A.F. Norman, published in 1957, were probably written in 1955–6.[11] Wolf did not blame anyone for failure to alert him, but he wrote that for him Petit's book was a 'disaster': it was made clear to him (by whom?) that 'there would now be no room for a second book on Libanius and Antioch'. Fifteen years later, when Wolf published his first monograph *Antioch*: *City and Imperial Administration in the Later Roman Empire* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1972), he listed *Libanius et la vie municipale* in the first, bibliographical, footnote (p. 1, n. 1): 'a very good book containing a reliable and comprehensive exposition of the material and an authoritative discussion of its significance'. Petit's book did not itself rule out a university post, for publications were not in 1957 required of beginning lecturers, nor indeed were doctorates. (Even in the late 1960s, when a PhD was for most academics a professional requirement, some senior colleagues did not consider it a real doctorate: that was an honorary DLitt or equivalent.) In provincial universities, the expectation was that young colleagues would be mentored by the professor, who was also the head of department. Rapid progress to a book was not

[9] Peter Brown, 'Arnaldo Dante Momigliano 1908–1987', *PBA*, 74 (1988), 405–442.

[10] This was characteristic of Browning. 'A typical comment is "He was not my supervisor, but he was as helpful as if he had been."' Averil Cameron, in 'Robert Browning 1914–97', *PBA*, 105 (2000), 289–306, p. 291.

[11] A.H.M. Jones, *Classical Review*, 7 (1957), 252–4; A.F. Norman, *Journal of Roman Studies*, 47 (1957), 236–40.

encouraged. The problem was, still, the lack of university posts in ancient history.

So Wolf became a schoolteacher, despite unsuccessful previous experience of teaching in the army and in school ('I lasted no more than a term' at Barnsley Grammar School). From 1959 to 1963 he taught Latin and German at Heanor Grammar School, Derbyshire. In his own estimation he was an adequate but not a good teacher: he could keep order, but did not have the gift for making pupils think they must learn what the teacher wants them to learn. Like many school teachers of classical subjects, he continued academic work. He published three articles based on his thesis, and wrote one on Virgil *Georgics* III, which he had read with a pupil. He also responded to the suggestion of J.N.L. Myres that the followers of the (perhaps British) 4th-century theologian Pelagius had social aims.[12] Jones had written on the tendency for historians to interpret 'heresies' as disguised social or national movements.[13] His examples did not include Pelagius, who as Augustine depicted him was the heretical enemy of *gratia*, 'grace', in its theological sense: that is, the free gift of God on which, in Augustine's view, human beings entirely depend. Myres suggested that the followers of Pelagius were enemies of *gratia* in its social sense 'favour': networks of social connection, in which exchange or expectation of favours could lead to corruption so blatant that Roman law made some attempts to restrain it. Wolf used Libanius to document such exchanges of favours, but made a well informed case against taking 'Pelagianism' as any kind of movement, and for understanding Pelagius as concerned with individual moral standards.

Wolf also compiled the index to A.H.M. Jones, *The Later Roman Empire 284–602: a Social, Economic and Administrative Survey* (Blackwell, 1964). This major work occupied, in its first edition, two handsomely produced volumes of text (in total 1068 pages) and a third volume of notes (406 pages; the index takes almost 40 pages), with a set of maps. Making the index was very informative, but it took Wolf many weekends and an entire Easter holiday. Jones noted in his Preface the exacting tasks carried out by a 'devoted band of ex-pupils': 'Mr. G. de Ste Croix' read proofs, 'Mr. J. Martindale' checked all the dates and the references to laws excerpted in the Codex Theodosianus and in the Codex and Novellae of Justinian, and 'Mr. W. Liebeschuetz compiled the Index'. De Ste Croix (elected FBA 1972) was a Fellow of New College, Oxford; Martindale worked with Jones on the *Prosopography of the Later Roman Empire*, which became a British Academy Research Project; like Wolf, they had doctorates, which Jones

[12] J.N.L. Myres, 'Pelagius and the End of Roman Rule in Britain', *Journal of Roman Studies*, 50 (1960), 21–36. Wolf's response 'Did the Pelagian movement have social aims?' appeared in *Historia*, 12 (1963), 227–41. His publications from 1959 to 2006 are listed in J. Drinkwater & B. Salway (eds), *Wolf Liebeschuetz Reflected* (BICS 2007).

[13] A.H.M. Jones, 'Were ancient heresies national or social movements in disguise?', *Journal of Theological Studies*, 10 (1959), 280–98. Wolf considered the intellectual context for such interpretations in his biographical memoir of W.H.C. Frend: *PBA*, 150 (2007), 37–54, p. 43–4.

saw no need to mention. 'Jones *LRE*' quickly became a standard resource. Its influence, approach and limitations have been extensively discussed, and in 1964 its publication was an event. Momigliano's review in the *Oxford Magazine* (1965) is often cited. He noted the book's distinctively English character: only a traditional public school education would give the command of Greek and Latin, and the stamina, required to read so many primary sources; only in England could one get away with ignoring the secondary bibliography, because there was always a colleague available to be questioned instead; and the book was in the English tradition of Royal Commissions, social surveys, and Fabian Society pamphlets. In a comment widely cherished, Momigliano observed 'His work deserves to go down to future generations as the Jones Report on the State of the Roman Empire (AD 284–602).'[14] Forty years on, David Gwynn convened an Oxford seminar commemorating the anniversary of publication, and Wolf wrote a fair-minded and perceptive Afterword for the edited volume.[15] One contributor, Bryan Ward-Perkins, had not previously worked with *LRE*, and remarked on the excellence of the index.

By the time *The Later Roman Empire* was published, Wolf had a university post. Encouraged by Robert Browning, and with references from Browning, Jones, Momigliano, and his headmaster, he was appointed in 1963 to an assistant lectureship at the recently (1957) chartered University of Leicester. It was the year of the Robbins Report, commissioned and accepted by the Conservative government, which recommended that there should be university places for all candidates qualified by ability and attainment. Expansion followed; in this instance, Wolf was appointed together with Peter Wiseman (elected FBA 1986), who could not afford to fly from the British School at Rome for interview, but was later unofficially told that he looked good on paper and two posts were offered. Ancient History was still subordinate to classical languages and literature, and it was important to teach across the range: Wolf in his first year was to teach some Latin and lecture on Plautus *Menaechmi* and on Thucydides books 6–7, as well as teaching 'some' Roman history (he did not say what, but it is not likely to have been late antiquity). But Classics was changing. While Wolf was teaching at Heanor, the local authority voted to replace selective grammar schools, which traditionally taught classical languages, with comprehensives, which were unlikely to offer them. Universities ceased to require a pass in Latin, at Higher School Certificate level, for a place on a Humanities course. They began to offer courses in Classical Civilisation and in Ancient History, with classical texts studied in translation and classical languages *ab initio* if at all. At Leicester, Classical Civilisation within Combined Honours, rather than Honours Classics, increasingly attracted students.

[14] *The Oxford Magazine*, 4 March 1985; quoted by Wolf in *Barbarians and Bishops* (1990), p. 240.
[15] D. Gwynn (ed.), *A.H.M. Jones and the Later Roman Empire* (Leiden: Brill, 2008).

The Professor and Head of Department was the legendarily learned Abraham (Addi) Wasserstein, another who had escaped, by a longer and more dangerous route, from the Nazi regime.[16] Wolf wrote that Classics was a happy and stimulating department, and that he enjoyed the opportunities for discussion at the university-wide societies which did not long survive the expansion: Victorian, Humanities, Social History. (He did not mention two beliefs widely held at Leicester circa 1970: that Classics, like all other subjects above the seventh floor of the towering new Attenborough Building, would perish in the event of fire; and that the building's paternoster lift, commemorated in David Lodge's novel *Changing Places* (1975), was a device for eliminating senior faculty.) Many colleagues at Leicester and elsewhere remember Wolf's kindly interest in their work and readiness to engage in discussion; though as his Nottingham colleague John Drinkwater observed, there might be 'a certain degree of apprehension' because he was so well informed.[17] Others have noted that Wolf could be quietly forceful in requiring evidence or in reaffirming an argument. Discussion could take a while as Wolf reflected, thoughtfully uttering with various intonations 'yes … yerss … yes…' The long pauses represented by the dots were disconcerting on the phone, as Mark Humphries found many years later when conferring from Maynooth on *Ambrose of Milan*: *Political Letters and Speeches* (2005).

Wolf wrote that student unrest in the late 1960s was good humoured, even when Addi Wasserstein stood guard to prevent the occupation of the library. In 2015 he thought it too soon to evaluate the shift from subject-oriented to student-oriented teaching, but he observed that loss of confidence in state-funded university education had made it easier for governments to cut public funding. This 'hastened the end of a golden age'. He did not say why the age was golden, but the judgement is understandable. A smaller student population (even after Robbins) allowed smaller classes and greater attention to the development of individual students, who were usually under less financial pressure because UK residents were exempt from tuition fees and were entitled to means-tested maintenance grants which they did not have to repay. A lower academic workload allowed time for conversation with colleagues and even for research, at least in vacations, without immediate need to publish. There was much less administration because there was much less assessment of everything that academics did. (Peter Wiseman remembers that Addi Wasserstein was puzzled when as Head of Department he was assigned a secretary: 'I am a scholar: why should I need a secretary?') Wolf could also have seen an analogy with Libanius regretting the shift from education in classical literature and rhetoric, which formed minds and morals and gave public life its quality, to skills required by the imperial government.

[16] Wasserstein, born in Frankfurt in 1921, eventually reached Britain after the end of the Second World War. He took a BA and a doctorate at Birkbeck, then from 1951 taught in the Department of Greek at Glasgow until his appointment to Leicester in 1960. In 1969 he moved to a chair at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem.
[17] *Reflecting Wolf Liebeschuetz,* p. 2.

In 1972 Wolf published a revised version of his thesis. *Antioch*: *city and imperial administration in the later Roman empire* was the first of his five monographs, all published by OUP with Wolf's full complement of initials. There was now room for a second book on Antioch and Libanius, because Wolf had access to more archaeological and epigraphic evidence for Roman Syria (including material from Jones *LRE*), and because of his own wide interests. As in all his books, he acknowledged in the Preface a range of help, including the 'arid and arduous work for the completion of the manuscript' of Margaret and Rachel Liebeschuetz. A.F. Norman lent him extensive unpublished notes; colleagues answered queries and helped him to learn from work published in Russian; and (in the terse style of Jones) 'Mr. P.R.L Brown advised on the conversion of the thesis into a book'. Peter Brown (elected FBA 1971) was OUP's reader for *Antioch*. In 1967 he had written a long review of Jones *LRE*; it was in the *Economic History Review* and Wolf did not see it until after he had submitted his manuscript.[18] Wolf, by now an experienced author of articles, had for some time been in contact with Brown, who quotes in *Journeys of the Mind* a letter from Wolf ('a pupil of Jones, and already a model scholar of the later empire') thanking him for an offprint of 'Religious Coercion in the Later Roman Empire'. Wolf's approval is characteristically expressed: 'Like your earlier papers it conveys the true "feel" of the Later Empire. This success is achieved – or so it seems to me – by a deliberate refusal to simplify complex situations by forcing them into predetermined schemes.'[19]

Jones died suddenly in 1970, before *Antioch* was published. John Matthews (elected FBA 1990) ended a very positive review of *Antioch* with the words 'its appearance would have been a source of pride to Jones, and can be to its author'.[20] *Antioch* was, he said, carefully and systematically presented; it was also 'a rich and perceptive book'. He praised especially Part I on the life of Libanius and 'the literary interpretation of his works': this refers not to literary criticism but to literary conventions which affect the material used by historians. Wolf asked whether silence about an event or a person shows that Libanius did not know, or did not care, or that it was dangerous to say; or that some topics were simply not mentioned in letters, which were typically used to maintain connections among the educated elite. He asked who actually heard or read, and in what

[18] *Economic History Review*, 20 (1967), 327–43 (reprinted in *Religion and Society in the Age of Saint Augustine,* Faber 1972, pp. 46–72). Wolf listed this review in the Addenda (*Antioch,* p. 287) of material he had read only after completing his text.

[19] P. Brown, *Journeys of the Mind* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2023), p. 241–2. 'Religious Coercion in the Roman Empire: the Case of North Africa', *History*, 48 (1963), 283–305, is reprinted in *Religion and Society in the Age of Saint Augustine*.

[20] *Urban History Yearbook*, 1 (1974), 66–7. John Matthews, Fellow of Corpus Christi College, Oxford, was appointed in 1969 to a university lectureship in late Roman history. This shows the growth of interest in the period; Brown, *Journeys of the Mind*, p. 349–50 comments on the problems of establishing 'late Roman' in Oxford structures.

context, the speeches which survive as texts; he noted that speeches were often reworked and that their introductions, in particular, are often misleading. He acknowledged that the techniques of rhetoric, such as one-sided selective accounts, generalisations, and outspoken abuse, make it very difficult for the historian to establish what happened. His comments are sharpened by comparisons with other authors of the late 4th century, including John Chrysostom bishop of Antioch then of Constantinople (probably a student of Libanius) and Synesius bishop of Cyrene in North Africa. Both reappear in his later work.

Wolf also offered sympathetic reflection on the personality and ideals of Libanius, who had, he thought, the political attitudes to be expected of the landowning municipal aristocracy, but who was also sensitive to the sufferings of the powerless. Wolf's Libanius teaches 'the Hellenic tradition in the face of rivalry from Latin and Law, and criticism if not hostility from Christianity' (p. 8). His commitment to rhetoric is that of a professor for whom regular teaching, not display speeches, is the central activity; but he is a sophist, a professional speaker, not a philosopher. Philosophy is for him the ally of rhetoric (not, as Plato held, its opponent), but though he deploys commonplaces of political philosophy 'it was not Libanius' habit to think systematically or consistently on any topic' (p. 9); here Wolf's sympathy would be muted. Libanius cares about city government and regards himself as a citizen of Antioch. He disregards Roman imperial administration and resents time given to the study of its language and law and to shorthand as a skill needed by its officials; his resentment is the greater because people who entered the imperial service were exempt from duties as city councillors. His faith is in *logoi*, literally 'words' or 'discourse': that is, in the power of classical Greek literature and rhetoric to instil intellectual and moral qualities. Shared possession of *logoi* gives public life its quality, and is linked with traditional religion, but, again, Libanius does not analyse what he says about this. Wolf's own consistent view of the connection is most strongly expressed in *The Decline and Fall of the Ancient City* (2001): the culture absorbed by the better off from an education based on literary texts was conveyed to the majority, who did not go to school, in religious festivals which included theatrical shows, and these festivals, funded by the wealthy, fostered civic community.

Chapter 2, on 'the livelihood of the people of Antioch', demonstrates sympathy for all kinds of people. Wolf considered rural as well as urban districts, shopkeepers and peasants as well as landowners and traders. He discussed the management of taxation in money and produce, and estimated population and levels of poverty. Chapters 3 and 4 examine the activities of the municipal council, and of the imperial authorities, in the administration of justice, food supply, building works, entertainments, and finance for all these. Wolf's final chapter on 'the transformation of civic institutions' traces the displacement of the city council, elected from a traditional class of local landowners, by a new aristocracy of powerful individuals who had risen in the imperial service and were

influential patrons, but who did not make decisions in public and were not accountable to their peers. He discussed the workings of patronage in the countryside, where soldiers might offer protection to peasants and villages might deploy patrons to resist landlords and tax-collectors. He noted that the custom of 'acclamations', shouts of approval or disapproval, allowed some expression of public feeling about officials or decrees, and that craft guilds made some provision for beggars. He thought that Antioch in the late 4th century was predominantly Christian; there were many pagans in the upper classes and among the students of Libanius, but pagans and Christians did not form 'hostile camps' and traditional festivals continued even as Christian festivals began to displace them. Wolf commented on the Jewish communities of Syria; on John Chrysostom's vehement sermons against Christians who engaged in Jewish practices and against divisions among Christians; on the rise of asceticism, both solitary and communal, which challenged the values of civic life, and on the influence of monks in the countryside; on the rise of the bishop as a leading authority within the city, and how his values and priorities differed from those of civic leaders. (Wolf's sympathies were discernibly with the civic leaders; in later work he showed some approval of the bishops and monks, in so far as their activities supported communities in city and countryside.) He discussed the rise of Latin language and Roman law in education, and the continuing strength of Greek rhetoric, notably in Christian preaching. The Conclusion sees the beginnings, in 4th-century Antioch, of some characteristics of later Muslim cities, in particular the lack of civic cohesion and the separation of 'racial or religious' groups; Christians and pagans could share civic concerns, but the division between Jews and Christians, intensified by the sermons of John Chrysostom, foreshadowed the later rivalry of monotheistic religions. The themes of *Antioch* recur in Wolf's subsequent work, especially in *The Decline and Fall of the Ancient City*.

The concise Introduction to *Antioch* ends with balanced observations. Antioch, which is exceptionally well documented among the cities of the Roman empire, shows how imperial administration weakened effective local self-government; but Libanius 'provides evidence of the selfishness and incompetence of the local oligarchy'. (Wolf tended to lose sight of this aspect in his preference for hereditary city councillors.) The problem of reconciling the claims of state administration and civic self-government has arisen at many periods, and Antioch can be seen as part of a larger pattern: the transformation of the classical world into the world of the Middle Ages. In his 2015 memoir, Wolf noted a more immediate relevance: 'a centralising and nationalising Labour government was making the theme of the negative impact on civic self-government of an active and interventionist central administration seem topical'. In universities, that impact was increasingly felt through the funding decisions of the University Grants Committee. The Council of University Classical Departments, formed in 1969, did what it could for morale and for practical solutions as the annual Treasury grant to the university

sector dramatically shrank. In 1979 Wolf moved from Leicester to Nottingham as successor to E.A. Thompson, who had been Professor of Classics since Nottingham was chartered in 1948. 'That was lucky,' he observed, because for over a decade there would be no more chairs in Classics in the UK. Leicester was not alone in seeing premature retirements, some of them compulsory. Nottingham was financially more secure, but three years after Wolf's arrival his friend Robert Markus, who was appointed Professor of Medieval History in 1974, took voluntary early retirement to help protect against redundancies. (Like Wolf, he flourished in retirement: he said it was the best decision, except for his marriage, he ever made.) Small 'uneconomic' departments were closed, or were merged into larger units. It was sometimes possible to move from such departments to another university, and Wolf was able to strengthen Nottingham Classics with 'extremely able' appointments from Lancaster and Sheffield. A colleague remembers arguing with him about Margaret Thatcher, whom he admired, presumably despite the devastating impact of her Conservative administration (elected 1979) on the civic self-government of universities. Wolf recognised in his 2015 memoir that his views remained conservative.

Wolf's second monograph, *Continuity and Change in Roman Religion* (1979) was published in the year of his appointment to Nottingham. By then Peter Brown's 'small but highly influential book' *The World of Late Antiquity* (Thames & Hudson, 1971) had prompted new interest in the cultural history of a world which extended in time and space far beyond late Roman.[21] But Wolf returned to an earlier range of Roman history to pursue political and religious ideas, which had no place in Jones's teaching (memoir, p. xiv) but were always important for Wolf. *Continuity and Change*, according to the Acknowledgements, developed from teaching Livy book I on the early history of Rome. This had earlier prompted an article in which Wolf explored Livy's combination of 'thorough-going rationalism' (in this context, belief that events have natural not super-natural causes) with advocacy of Roman public religion.[22] The 2015 memoir adds that a third-year course on the persecution of Christians was the stimulus for the book. The acknowledgements include John North and Peter Wiseman, both experts on Roman republican history; Peter Walsh, who had read the complete manuscript, and who was expert on Livy and on Christian texts; Wolf's Leicester colleague Sheila Spire, who specialised in Greek philosophy; and his neighbour Dr M. Koerner who had translated and summarised parts of J. Linderski (1966, in Polish) on Roman electoral assemblies, in which religious ritual was important. *Continuity and Change*, according to another concise introduction, is 'about religious change and particularly about the interrelation

[21] Averil Cameron, 'The "long" late antiquity: a late twentieth-century model', in T.P. Wiseman (ed.), *Classics in Progress* (OUP for the British Academy, 2002), 165–91, at pp. 166–7.
[22] 'The Religious Position of Livy's History', *JRS*, 57 (1967), 45–55.

between religious attitudes and the general political situation' (xiii). The book, Wolf wrote, is based mainly on Latin literary sources. He rarely deployed anthropological, or any other, theory (in this book, there are brief observations on accusations of magic where systems of power clash); he did not start from a provisional definition of religion, or from questions of what counts as religion in different contexts, or from warnings about what his readers might find disconcerting in Roman religion.[23] He raised the problem that Romans were unusually concerned with correct religious observance, but belief in the gods apparently had little effect on their conduct. Polybius suspected that Roman religion was a pious fraud devised to control the people, but Wolf pointed out that religious requirements affected mostly the educated elite whose members held both political and religious office. He agreed with John North that Roman religion was a living religion, and that the widely used work of W. Warde Fowler (*The Religious Experience of the Roman People,* 1923) and of Kurt Latte (*Römische Religionsgeschichte*, 1960) was mistaken in characterising it as a complex of formal survivals. In an illuminating footnote (n. 18) to his 2015 memoir he suggested that this view 'reflected a widely held liberal assumption, shared, I think, by my parents, that religion was essentially a matter of individual conviction, and that the communal element of liturgy and ritual was "mere ceremony".'

Continuity and Change is dedicated to the memory of Wolf's father Hans Liebeschuetz (d. 1978), who had attended and later taught at a Liberal rabbinic seminary in Berlin, and who was much concerned with the foundation (1956) of Leo Baeck College in London for the training of Liberal and Reform rabbis. Wolf wrote in his 2015 memoir 'The family's Jewishness had a considerable influence on my life. It certainly stimulated my interest in Ancient History.' He recalled that his mother told her children stories of heroism from the Bible, and that his father discussed biblical criticism with him at the time when Wolf was of an age to be prepared (by correspondence) for confirmation into a Liberal synagogue in London. There is no mention of synagogue attendance or of observance at home. Wolf and his siblings married out, and in the family histories he deposited with the British Academy he noted a wide range of Jewish and Christian adherence among his relatives. He wrote (memoir, p. xxiii) 'My Jewish background has served me well in my career as an Ancient Historian. But Judaism has figured very little in my writings.' He did not enlarge on either statement, and did not suggest that his 'Jewish background' helped him to reflect on the questions of ethnicity which were important to his work in the 1990s. It is perhaps surprising that (apart from one article in the *Journal of Jewish Studies*[24]) he did not write specifically about Judaism, in a time

[23] Contrast the Preface to M. Beard, J. North & S. Price, *Religions of Rome volume I: A History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998). The preliminary guidance in their Bibliography lists Liebeschuetz 1979 as a general history of Roman religion.

[24] 'The Influence of Judaism among Non-Jews in the Imperial Period', *JJS*, 52 (2001), 235–52.

when classical historians were increasingly aware that it was too little acknowledged in the history of the Graeco-Roman world.[25] But most were also aware that they were not equipped to discuss the language and traditions of the Hebrew Bible and the modes of argument of rabbinic Judaism, or to understand how these texts could be used for historical information. Wolf too may have thought this was not his area of expertise.

Wolf acknowledged the limitations of basing *Continuity and Change* on Latin literary sources. He was concerned with the Roman ruling class and with 'the well-being of society as a whole' rather than with individual religious needs; he often referred to Greek influence but did not discuss Greek writings in detail; he did not discuss the people 'who wrote no books but left inscribed dedications or tombstones'. But, he argued, the religious attitudes of the Roman establishment 'represent, to some extent at least, a self-conscious and articulate version of the ideas which united Roman society' (xv). He maintained this position in later work. Two decades later, in the wide-ranging chapter on Religion which he contributed to the Cambridge Ancient History volume XI (2000) he argued that 'writers are conscious and articulate about developments which affect everybody' (p. 285).[26] In *Ambrose and John Chrysostom* (2011), noting that recent writers on the development of Roman religion avoided using evidence from literature and philosophy, he suggested more strongly that there is interaction between what intellectuals think and what 'ordinary' (the inverted commas are his) people believe about their own religious practices; 'it can even be argued that the writings of philosophers and philosophical moralists often represent a systematic and logical arrangement of the thoughts and values that are current among some, or even most, of their unphilosophical contemporaries' (p. 19).[27]

Continuity and Change, in just over 300 pages, engages with an impressive range of Latin literary sources, beginning with the 'disintegrating republic', continuing through several phases of civil war and reconstruction which include the 'third-century collapse' of Latin literature and of political structures, and concluding with the common ground between Christians and educated pagans which made possible Constantine's support for Christianity. Divination, Wolf noted, is a constant, though a 'fundamental change of religious attitude' in the course of the 2nd century allowed a much wider range of oracular material to be accepted as divinely inspired. Morality is also a constant in that the

[25] Geza Vermes (elected FBA 1985) prompted the revision of E. Schürer, *The History of the Jewish People in the Age of Jesus Christ 175 BCE-AD 135* (revised and edited by G. Vermes, F. Millar, M. Black & M. Goodman, 3 vols, T&T Clark, 1973–87), which was influential in drawing the attention of classical historians to questions which had chiefly concerned biblical scholars. Judaism, in classical antiquity and after, was a constant concern for Momigliano: Evelyne Patlagean, *Annales*, 37 (1982), 1004–13.

[26] A. Bowman, P. Garnsey & D. Rathbone (eds), *The Cambridge Ancient History XI*: *The High Empire, AD 70–192* (2000).

[27] *Ambrose and John Chrysostom*: *clerics between desert and empire* (OUP 2011).

gods were thought to want the Roman way of life to be preserved, but there was no detailed definition of moral rules, and it took time for Greek philosophical teaching about good gods and their worshippers to be generally accepted. Wolf's clear judgements on religious attitudes and on the political situation can often be contested, the more so because discussion of so many authors is necessarily concise and complex questions are relegated to brief though well-informed footnotes. (A striking example is 'On function of religion in society see, for instance: E. Durkheim (1912); M. Weber (1922–3); A. Macbeath (1952).') Wolf commented on literary conventions, on the purposes of individual writers, and (especially in the final chapter) on whether the authors were typical of their class. Latin literary sources had the advantage that *Continuity and Change* was concerned with what people said and did, not with speculation about the origins and significance of cults and deities. Reviewers gratefully acknowledged Wolf's clear-headed common sense.

Wolf saw fundamental change in the shift from republic to monarchy, when the ruling class 'had to adjust to a state which was no longer their own' (p. 101). The writings of Seneca, he thought, reflect a change in the character of public life, in that senators could no longer feel, as Cicero and his fellow senators felt, that they were serving their own state. Seneca did not advocate withdrawal from public life, but expected to judge his actions by his conscience according to the guidance of philosophy; Wolf observed (p. 113) 'Inasmuch as Stoicism involved precepts for life based on a coherent system of belief, it was a religion in the way Judaism and Christianity are religions, and Roman paganism was not'; but Seneca could not reconcile belief in a caring personal god with Stoic theory on the chain of cause and effect. Wolf's interest in Stoicism continues through Lucan and Silius Italicus, Tacitus and Pliny, then Chapter 5, 'Towards the later empire', begins with 'the end of an epoch'. In this period, as Wolf saw it, Latin rhetoric and historiography decline, Latin literature declines and Greek culture predominates, and Rome is no longer the main creative centre. Marcus Aurelius led Wolf to further reflection on Stoicism; Apuleius led him to the motives for initiation as a worshipper of Isis, to a brief mention of Platonism, and to the difference between Isis-worship and Christian communities. There follows 'collapse and transformation in the third century', in which Cassius Dio, 'the last senatorial historian', shows concern about the power of the army. Wolf observed that 'his feelings are like those which many have about the progress of trade union power today' (p. 225); perhaps not only those who usually shared Wolf's conservative views, as the book was written in the 1970s and published after the 'Winter of Discontent' of 1978–9. After Dio there is a gap in history-writing, both Latin and Greek, and a lack of inscriptions; Wolf thought this resulted less from the impact of wars than from 'profound cultural transformation' in concern for the city and its history. (He assessed the epigraphic evidence in detail in *The Decline and Fall of the Ancient City*.) The literary evidence, in his view, shows not only the growing strength of

Christianity, but also a lack of interest in the secular world. He used Christian authors as sources for ways of thinking (he was interested especially in the rhetoric teachers Arnobius and Lactantius) and for historical claims: for instance that before Diocletian in the late 3rd century decided on persecution, Christianity had become the majority religion in 'important parts of the empire, especially Asia Minor and North Africa' (p. 245). In the years when *Continuity and Change* was written, classicists still tended to leave Christian texts to theologians (the more so as the texts were usually shelved in a different part of the library, or even in a different building), and some theologians were unduly trusting of Christian authors. A decade later, with the convergence of theology and history in early Christian studies, scholars were more likely to ask how much it meant to call oneself Christian, how far the narrative of the 'triumph of Christianity' depends on the histories of Eusebius in the 4th century and of his successors in the 5th, and whether Christian texts dominate the record of late antiquity not because Christians dominated the culture, but because they were motivated to copy and preserve texts which then survived into the age of print. In the meantime, many classicists were grateful for Wolf's guidance on the motives (explored with characteristic attention to the army) for the 'Great Persecution' of the early 4th century and the reasons for its failure, and on the divergent accounts of Constantine's conversion, which he interpreted as a political decision made in order to obtain 'effective supernatural support' against his rivals and thereafter to safeguard the empire. He held that Constantine did not realise how far the church was distinct from the state in its officials and its objectives, and that the immediate effects of his support were not systematic. There is brief discussion of Constantine's attempt to Christianise the empire, of the Romanisation of the church, and of changes under Constantine's successors. Wolf thought that the ancestral religion of Rome lost out not because it was deficient as a personal religion, but because the 3rd-century crisis demonstrated its failure to achieve support for the community. He saw a general loss of confidence in traditional Roman values; so in the further crisis of the 5th century, when the political framework collapsed, the church provided community. He would explore these themes more fully in his later work.

Barbarians and Bishops (1990, 'for my mother Rachel Liebeschuetz'), published after a decade at Nottingham, shows Wolf returning to late antiquity, specifically to the late 4th and early 5th centuries. The Preface acknowledges the interest in barbarians of his predecessor Edward Thompson, the importance of conversations with Robert Markus, and the help of some leading historians: Timothy.Barnes, Alan Cameron, Averil Cameron, Peter Heather, John Matthews. It also acknowledges the encouragement of John Cordy at OUP. This may have been needed. Wolf was always a productive scholar, whose teaching inspired his research and publication, and whose monographs, published at approximately ten-year intervals, were heralded by detailed studies in journals and edited

volumes.[28] But he was also, for thirteen years of increasing demands, Professor and Head of Department of Classics and Archaeology. (He thought it right that Archaeology, soon after his retirement, became a separate department with its own Professor. This should have happened earlier, he said, because archaeology is a distinct discipline with its own methods and concerns; historians and archaeologists should listen to each other, but it is not the job of archaeologists to answer the questions of historians.) The first Research Selectivity Exercise in 1986, and the second in 1989, made heads of department increasingly concerned about publication records and their consequences for funding. It was not always easy to convince their colleagues. Wolf did not record in his memoir his views on the RSE and its successors RAE (Research Assessment Exercise) and REF (Research Excellence Framework), but if he thought it important to contribute a big book, that could explain why *Barbarians and Bishops* seems less successfully integrated than was usual for him.

Barbarians and Bishops addresses the longstanding debate on the decline and fall of the Roman empire and the effects of 'barbarism and religion' (in Gibbon's famous phrase). Its subtitle is 'Army, Church and State in the Age of Arcadius and Chrysostom'. The link is Constantinople, capital of the eastern Roman empire where Arcadius ruled from 395 to 408 and where John Chrysostom was bishop from 398 to 403. Wolf's brief Introduction 'Demilitarization and Christianization' explains that two interconnected events at Constantinople around 400 'illustrate the transformation of the Ancient World'. He assumes readers already know about Gainas (a Gothic military commander who rebelled and briefly occupied Constantinople), Alaric (the Gothic warlord best known for his incursion into Rome in 410), and Synesius (bishop of Cyrene in Libya, whose treatises and letters are important sources for the period). The 'Gainas crisis' of 399–400 could not have happened if the empire had not come to depend on barbarian mercenaries (Wolf, like his literary sources, used 'barbarian' without qualification): 'demilitarization' in this context means not that there were no soldiers, but that Roman citizens no longer expected to fight for their country. The events of John Chrysostom's deposition in 403 would be unthinkable before the triumph of Christianity (as Wolf continued to call it) made possible a conflict between church and state. Social organisation, understanding of citizenship, and abandonment of civic religion are all relevant to the change from citizen soldiers. So in Part I Wolf considered the reasons for recruitment of barbarian mercenaries, especially after the disastrous defeat of a Roman army at Adrianople in 378; the different types of recruitment into auxiliary and regular units of the Roman army, and their consequences for citizenship; and the particular case of the Goths who fought under

[28] Wolf published two volumes of collected papers with Ashgate Variorum *From Diocletian to the Arab Conquest*: *change in the late Roman Empire* (1990) and *Decline and Change in Late Antiquity*: *religion, barbarians and their historiography* (2006), before *East and West in Late Antiquity*: *Invasion, Settlement, Ethnogenesis, and Conflicts of Religion* (Brill, 2015).

Alaric. Part II, on the government and army of the eastern empire, presents the 'succession of outstanding civilian politicians' who, unlike the military commanders dominant in the west, kept the army small, solved problems by diplomacy when they could, and remained culturally Greek and independent of Rome. (Wolf's evident approval would have pleased his Libanius.) The 'Gainas crisis' was a reaction against these civilian policies. Part II is mostly concerned with political crises, but also offers some discussion of the letters of Synesius in relation to the elite of Constantinople, and of new opportunities for aristocratic Christian women. Wolf commented (p. 144–5) that 'Christianity was capable of bringing together in a common cause a much wider spectrum of society than literary education', including soldiers, and 'had the potential to be a great social unifier'; but also that it brought division among Christians and fostered intolerant legislation against pagans, heretics, and Jews (though at first the legal rights of Jews were protected). Part III, 'Chrysostom and the Politicians', considers disputes in theology and in church politics before John was elected bishop: the rise of Constantinople within the empire also caused tensions in the church, where Antioch and Alexandria had longer Christian traditions. Wolf offered a thoughtful account of John's preaching and of his insistence on charitable giving. He recognised that giving to the poor and sick and old simply 'because they were there and were God's creatures' (p. 187) is not a classical idea; he also commented that Christian charity, which provided for basic needs, did not offer the same range of services as councillors did for their fellow-citizens, and that it was independent of city institutions. (An assessment of the services which were actually provided by councillors and civic institutions would be useful here; the Conclusion offers a more positive account of Christian activity.) Wolf next turned to political problems and to the power base which could be achieved by a bishop; then to the people and events which led to John's fall, which he explained with careful attention to the divergent sources. A short final chapter discusses Synesius as a provincial bishop in Cyrenaica, a territory which was much less important politically, but where the aristocrat Synesius had personal status and wide-ranging contacts; Wolf did not comment on his philosophical interests.

The Introduction, surprisingly, does not mention the Conclusion, 'The Historians' Post-Mortem'. In this concise survey of Montesquieu, Gibbon, Jones, and De Ste Croix on the decline and fall of the Roman empire, Wolf reflected on how historians approach their subject, considered what makes a society flourish or decay in terms of economics and of feeling, and explained why he had chosen to concentrate not on economic factors and the slave system of production, but on the military system, for which there is much more evidence. He thought that when defence ceased to be the duty of citizens and relied instead on a professional army, the rights of ordinary citizens were weakened, civic patriotism diminished, and citizenship mattered less as more non-Romans served in the army or settled on Roman land. Wolf also differed from Jones and De Ste Croix on

the effect of Christianity. Jones thought it had little effect, De Ste Croix that its effects were negative in that it caused division and encouraged charity, rather than political reform, as a response to poverty. Wolf in earlier work had noted religious divisions and had seen the shift from civic obligation to personal charity as one aspect of the rise of unelected magnates; here, he observed that charity extended to all, not only to citizens, and suggested that by charity and by communal ceremonies, Christianity fostered a sense of solidarity and helped to preserve cities. Even the ascetic movement, which had been dismissed as ineffective and unproductive, inspired new ways of living and conferred authority on all forms of self-denial. In his final monograph (2011) Wolf would return to the ascetic ideal.

Wolf was elected to the British Academy in 1991, the year before he retired. It was an active and enjoyable retirement. He had a fellowship at the Institute of Advanced Study, Princeton, 'that scholar's paradise', for the autumn semester of 1993. Thanks in part to the long and detailed chapter on 'The Visigoths and Alaric's Goths' in *Barbarians and Bishops*, he was invited to join the 'Transformation of the Roman World' programme (1992–7), funded by the European Science Foundation, which addressed societal change in the period 400–900. The ESF requested that most contributors should be at an early stage of their careers, so Wolf was one of a small number of senior scholars. He was a regular attender, travelling by train to visit places of historical interest on the way. As always, he enjoyed discussion with senior and early-career colleagues alike, and several who are now senior remember with gratitude his friendly interest in their work. He was concerned especially with debates on 'ethnogenesis', the making of an *ethnos* or nation. In *Barbarians and Bishops* he argued that Alaric's war-band was not a migrating tribal nation, but a group consisting mostly but not wholly of Goths, which was shaped by long years of fighting and migration. 'In many ways they had become a new people. Time, danger jointly faced, and leadership made a nation of them. H. Wolfram has called this process "ethnogenesis".' (p. 76). But this useful term could have misleading implications. Wolf held that Alaric's band had from the start 'a sense of ethnic unity' as descendants of the Goths who entered the Roman empire in 376 with a Gothic language and a Gothic translation of the Bible; he suggested that their Arian interpretation of Christianity gave them a way of remaining distinct within the empire. Wolf recognised that those who took a different view of ethnicity (notably Walter Pohl, chair of the working group on 'Empire, Nations and Kingdoms') wanted to reject Nazi racial theories. But he held that ethnicity must be more than 'situational' identity (such that people could consider themselves to be Goths in one context, Romans in another) and that an *ethnos* must have some core belief in tradition and cultural memory. He did not dismiss the problems of demonstrating Gothic tradition and culture when the written sources are Roman and the material evidence is difficult to assess. Peter Heather, who worked with Wolf at the ESF, comments on his 'omnivorous intellectual appetite', his readiness to see what all the evidence

suggested, and his willingness to reconsider problems from first principles with an open mind.[29]

Wolf's intellectual appetite is very evident in the formidable range and thoroughness of *The Decline and Fall of the Ancient City* (2001), which covers both the eastern and the western Roman empire 'with a glimpse at the emerging worlds of Byzantium and Islam and the new kingdoms of the West' (p. 1). His longstanding interest in cities after the 4th century had been brought into focus by his colleague John Rich's request for a contribution on the 'later late' city, and by his Cambridge Ancient History chapter on 'Administration and politics in the cities of the fifth to the mid-seventh centuries'.[30] In terms of Cambridge Histories the mid–7th century, as in Wolf's UCL undergraduate degree, was as far as late antiquity could go before it entered the early medieval period. But the boundaries of late antiquity continued to extend in space and time. In the early 1990s Ralph Mathisen established the biennial meetings of *Shifting Frontiers in Late Antiquity*, drawing together a wide range of relevant expertise in languages, histories, and material culture.[31] The first meeting pioneered organisation by email, which was then so new that it has capital letters (E-MAIL) in the conference volume of 1995, and the associated discussion list lt-antiq made it possible to locate expertise without first having to know who would know. Wolf came to some Shifting Frontiers meetings, and as always enjoyed meeting people and seeing new places. A personal memory from the fourth conference in 2001 helps to explain the affection he inspired. The meeting, in San Francisco, had its conference dinner at a traditional Chinese restaurant, and Wolf was the distinguished after-dinner speaker. Had anyone mentioned that the after-dinner paper at a US conference is a distinctive genre? He stood beneath a flattened arch of scarlet dragons, a karaoke machine beside him flashing 'Pick a song!', and beamed at his audience. 'Well, I must be myself, must I not?' he said, and spoke informatively on his current project, the letter-collection of Ambrose bishop of Milan.

The Decline and Fall of the Ancient City, dedicated to Margaret, begins 'Ever since I finished *Antioch* I have felt that I ought to write a sequel dealing with what happened to the cities of the Empire after the fourth century. This is the sequel, though it has become rather a different kind of book.' It is also the same kind of book in its presentation of clearly stated arguments based on careful attention to an impressive range of evidence: inscriptions, legislation, papyri; literary evidence, which is more abundant for the western empire; the results of archaeological survey and excavation, which is more difficult to do in the western empire because Roman cities are usually in built-up areas.

[29] Peter Heather, pers. comm.

[30] J. Rich (ed.), *The City in Late Antiquity* (London: Routledge, 1992); Av. Cameron, B. Ward-Perkins & M. Whitby (eds), *The Cambridge Ancient History volume 14*: *Late Antiquity*: *empire and successors* AD 425–600 (2001)

[31] https://lateantiquity.web.illinois.edu/

Wolf acknowledged academic debates, for instance on urbanism and on the consumer city, but briefly put his own position rather than entering long discussion. The scope of *Decline and Fall* shows how he had profited from time to write, from the semester at Princeton, and from almost a decade of meetings and conversations. He acknowledged the help of many colleagues, several of whom had kept him informed about investigations in many areas of the empire. The Preface ends 'I know that some of these people are not happy with the book's insistence on the relevance of "decline", but without them the book might not have been written at all.'

The title was indeed provocative in the academic context, for decline was generally less well regarded than transformation, in the ESF project and elsewhere; 1998, for example, saw the first volume in the University of California Press series 'Transformation of the Classical Heritage'. Late antiquity as a subject-area had come into its own by challenging assumptions of cultural and political decline, and Wolf, always alert to the social context of history-writing, was surely aware that at the turn of the millennium it seemed possible to hope that a multicultural Europe could integrate new arrivals and adapt to diversity and change. But *Decline and Fall* is recognisably the same kind of book as *Antioch* in the conclusions Wolf reached from his consideration of new evidence and his reassessment of old questions. He 'reacted against the minimizing of the impact of the Germanic tribes, the blacklisting of "decline" and the rejection of "crisis"' (memoir, p. xxiii). *The Decline and Fall of the Ancient City* begins 'This book is about the transformation of cities and life in cities … in the period when the classical Roman world was changing into the world of the Middle Ages'. 'Transformation', of government, cities, and culture, recurs throughout the book. But Wolf's sympathies are clearly with the classical city not yet transformed, as he (and his Libanius) envisaged it in *Antioch* and thereafter. To summarise: classical cities, which are urban centres with rural territories, have institutions of government. Roman imperial rule preferred oligarchic government by the wealthy, not by the popular assembly, so that cities were managed by councils in which, by the late 2nd century, office was hereditary. Councils were responsible for the administration of law and order, and for meeting the requirements of the imperial government, especially in tax-collection. They could do this provided that their fellow citizens accepted their authority. Civic pride and cohesion, the generosity of the wealthy, and loyalty to the empire were expressed in religious festivals and in great public buildings. But after the crisis of the 3rd century (now 'so called', but Wolf still thought it happened) Diocletian and Constantine imposed higher taxes; councillors were reluctant to carry out duties which became more difficult; festivals were affected by lack of money and by Christian hostility; and more bureaucratic supervision was needed to make the system work. Christianisation brought about the rise to power of the bishop and cultural change in the appearance of cities, in their public entertainments, and in education, 'that is the institution by which the values and experiences of past generations are passed on to the young' (p. 4).

In the Conclusion Wolf recognised that 'the classical city represented a way of life which had been transmitted from generation to generation among the better-off by a lengthy, and largely standardised, literature-based course of education' (p. 402). (Standardisation, he noted earlier, resulted from conformity not from control.) He continued to hold that the majority who did not go to school shared the common culture through festivals and entertainments linked to religion. The place of these secular traditions 'was taken by the Bible and the Lives of martyrs and saints'. For these texts, and for the preachers who taught all comers whatever their social and educational status, Wolf showed no enthusiasm; nor was he impressed by the classical culture of some Christian literary texts. He thought that Christian redefinition of priorities, and loss of secular traditions, contributed to undermining civic patriotism and thereby the political foundations of the empire, in that people who did not feel loyalty to the empire could not easily be mobilised to fight for it. André Piganiol wrote, after the Second World War, that Roman civilisation did not pass peacefully away, but was assassinated by barbarian invasions. Wolf held instead that its basic institutions decayed when cities were governed by magnates who were not formally appointed, who made decisions in private and displayed their wealth without regard to the sensitivities of their fellows, and whose generosity was seen not as civic obligation but as personal Christian charity. (Here he lost sight of John Chrysostom, who insisted that Christian charity is a social obligation for everyone and is not limited to fellow citizens.) The 'running down of the Empire', Wolf thought, was the most important single factor in the transformation of the Roman world, in which by about 650 cities looked different, their populations were smaller and their economic relations were simpler. The countryside too was impoverished, but Wolf commented on the effect of monasteries located near villages, heads of monasteries as local patrons, and village churches providing some sense of collective identity. He was interested especially in updates and revisions of the work of Tchalenko on North Syrian hill villages, which he had used in *Antioch*.

Wolf, according to his memoir, was 'uncertain what to do next' after *The Decline of the Ancient City*, and welcomed a suggestion from Michael Whitby that TTH (Translated Texts for Historians 300–800) wanted a translation of the letters of Ambrose bishop of Milan. TTH, the 'Liverpool series', was founded in the early 1980s by the medieval historian Margaret Gibson and the classical historian John Davies, who collaborated on an Ancient and Medieval History degree and found there were too few texts for students who did not know ancient languages.[32] The volumes are works of scholarship, with a substantial introduction and detailed annotation, so the letter-collection of Ambrose presented a considerable task even for Wolf, even with initial help from Carole Hill, a student of Robert Markus. Translating, he observed in the Preface, 'is much more difficult

[32] G. Clark, 'This Strangely Neglected Author', *Journal of Early Christian Studies*, 16 (2008), 131–41.

than might be thought by those who have not tried their hands at it'. He decided to limit his TTH to the political letters, with two funeral orations on the deaths of emperors; these required discussion of many problems in church and state, and careful consideration of Ambrose's presentation of events.

Work on Ambrose recalled Wolf to John Chrysostom, who differed from Ambrose in character and experience, but who was also a bishop in conflict with a resident Christian emperor and his court. Wolf's final monograph *Ambrose and John Chrysostom*: *clerics between desert and empire* (2011) considers two particular ways in which a bishop might be in conflict with secular power: the ascetic ideal, symbolised by life in the uncultivated 'desert', opposed to the traditional values of household and city; and the belief that a bishop's duty included *parrhêsia*, speaking truth to power with outspokenness or even with confrontation. He found classical 'roots' for asceticism in religious concern for sexual pollution and in philosophical concern for self-discipline and the liberation of the soul; and for outspokenness in admiration of fearless philosophers, especially the 1st-century Stoics (discussed in *Continuity and Change*) who resisted emperors. Wolf noted the growth of regard for celibacy, traced the development of monasticism, and commented on the outspokenness of Christian martyrs and (occasionally) of bishops. Common themes in the preaching of Ambrose and Chrysostom, he concluded, show the common culture of the eastern and western empires rather than direct influence; John Chrysostom may sometimes have been inspired by Ambrose's actions in confrontations with the court, but their situations differed in that Ambrose was an experienced politician and the court at Milan was weaker than the court at Constantinople.

The book is relatively short, with (as Wolf acknowledged) considerably more on Chrysostom than on Ambrose. It was an opportunity to revisit Chrysostom's preaching, and his relationships with the imperial court, which Wolf had discussed two decades earlier in *Barbarians and Bishops*. He was also attracted by debates on Chrysostom's ascetic formation. Palladius in his *Life* of Chrysostom described experience 'on the mountain' beyond Antioch, a landscape which was uncultivated like the desert of Egypt. Wolf was alerted by Wendy Mayer to an argument that Palladius modelled his account on stories of Egyptian monks and desert communities, whereas Chrysostom belonged to a distinctive Syrian tradition.[33] Wolf discussed various forms of Syrian asceticism, some of which did not require separation from cities and secular concerns or from the organised church. He noted that Libanius presented Antioch as a Greek city, without reference to Aramaic culture; but Syriac was spoken in the countryside, and Theodoret, who was born in Antioch, was probably not unusual in speaking Syriac as well as Greek. Wolf could not engage directly with Syriac authors, but as always gave careful attention to Greek and Latin sources. He also commented on recent scholarship more often than in

[33] Martin Illert, *Johannes Chrysostomos und das antiochenisch-syrische Mönchtum* (Zurich: Pano, 2000).

his earlier books, challenging, for instance, the view that John Chrysostom aimed to create a strong Christian identity: 'the application of the discourse of identity … ignores what the individuals concerned were fearing, thinking, and doing' (p. 190 n. 25). The preaching of Chrysostom and his colleagues, he said, aimed to propagate the teachings of the New Testament; a strong Christian identity, and increased power for Christianity, were consequences, not purposes.

Meanwhile, three publications which appeared in 2007 gave Wolf opportunities for further reflection on the interpretation of late antiquity. His Afterword to *A. H. M. Jones and the Later Roman Empire* discussed Jones's achievement, the critique of Jones by the contributors, and what had changed since *LRE* in approaches to the administration and economy of the empire, to justice and the army, to cities and the church. Wolf commented on changing perceptions of politics in the general public, which includes historians: greater interest in public show and manipulation of image, less in law and constitutional rules and administrative structures; he noted greater attention to the construction of power in different contexts. To the *Festschrift* for his friend Averil Cameron he contributed 'The Debate about the Ethnogenesis of the Germanic Tribes', a lucid survey of the arguments and ideologies of different generations of scholars, ending 'My own ideology is that the possession of shared traditions of one kind or another is necessary for the functioning and survival of any human society.'[34] Wolf also helpfully offered to write the biographical memoir of W.H.C. Frend; it shows sympathetic appreciation of Frend's very different character, and of the influences which shaped his impressive but often controversial books about Christian churches in the western and eastern Roman empires.[35]

Wolf's final monograph on *Ambrose and John Chrysostom* was not his final publication. In 2015 his third volume of collected papers on *East and West in Late Antiquity*, introduced by the memoir which provides so much light on his own life, brought together the longstanding concerns of its subtitle: invasion, settlement, ethnogenesis, and conflicts of religion. He noted with pleasure that one paper is concerned with Theodoret, as Jones had long ago suggested. Near the end of the memoir, Wolf said how much he had learned from the 'great masters' and their successors, and from younger scholars who directed attention to new areas; then he briefly reaffirmed his own position. The old and the young, he said, have read different books, had different teachers, and look back on different experiences.

Wolf's funeral, at St Peter's Church, Nottingham, followed the Church of England liturgy. Readings included an enduring work of classical culture, Horace *Odes* 2.10 in Guy Lee's English translation. Kaddish was said in Hebrew and English. Family and

[34] H. Amirav & B. ter Haar Romeny (eds), *From Rome to Constantinople* (Leuven: Peeters, 2007), pp. 341–55.
[35] Frend, 'William Hugh Clifford, 1916–2005', *PBA*, 150 (2007), 37–54.

colleagues spoke with evident affection about Wolf's lively interest in everything and about his constant kindness. These are the common factors in the many comments which have contributed to this biographical memoir.

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