Children in Late Ancient Christianity

Edited by
CORNELIA B. HORN and
ROBERT R. PHENIX

Studien und Texte zu
Antike und Christentum
58

Mohr Siebeck

Studien und Texte zu Antike und Christentum
Studies and Texts in Antiquity and Christianity

58

Children in Late Ancient Christianity

Edited by

Cornelia B. Horn and
Robert R. Phenix

Mohr Siebeck

Cornelia B. Horn, Ph. D. 2001, Early Christian Studies, Catholic University, Washington, DC; professor of Greek and Oriental Patristics, Saint Louis University, St Louis, USA.

Robert R. Phenix, Ph. D. 2005, Languages and Literatures of the Christian Orient, Orientalisches Seminar, Eberhard-Karls-Universität Tübingen.

e-ISBN PDF 978-3-16-151357-2
ISBN 978-3-16-150235-4
ISSN 1436-3003 (Studien und Texte zu Antike und Christentum)

The Deutsche Nationalbibliothek lists this publication in the Deutsche Nationalbibliographie; detailed bibliographic data is available in the Internet at *http://dnb.d-nb.de*.

The book was printed by Laupp & Göbel in Nehren on non-aging paper and bound by Buchbinderei Nädele in Nehren.

Printed in Germany.

This Work is Dedicated to
All the Children in the Contributors' Lives –
Our Own, Those of Our Loved Ones,
and Those Who Live On in the Sources.

Preface and Acknowledgments

The contributors to this volume have allowed us to put together a work which, we believe, reflects fundamental research across the broad spectrum of the study of children in Christian sources from the Late Antique Mediterranean world. The volume came into existence from a conversation between the editors and Dr. Henning Ziebritzki of Mohr Siebeck in November 2007 at the Society for Biblical Literature North American Annual Meeting in San Diego. We are very grateful to him and to Prof. Christoph Markschies, the Chancellor of the Humboldt University in Berlin, who is the general editor of the STAC series, for agreeing to publish this project.

Most of the submissions were received in January–March 2009; one pair of contributors had to bow out for personal reasons sometime in February, leaving the present collection of fourteen articles. The work on editing the volume took place over the course of 2009, with the production of the camera-ready copy, including the compilation of indices, having been accomplished between August and early October. We are grateful to all the contributors for their patience and understanding with us throughout the process of editing and finalizing their work.

We acknowledge the valuable contribution of Ms. Caitlin Stevenson, an MA candidate in the Department of Theological Studies at Saint Louis University, for her hard work on compiling bibliographical information, catching mistakes, and compiling the indices that contribute so much to the utility of this volume. At an earlier stage, Mr. Aaron Overby, a doctoral candidate in the same theology department, offered valuable research assistance. Mr. Matthias Spitzner, head of the Production Department at Mohr-Siebeck, has once again contributed a marvelous effort. Ms. Andrea Horn, in helping watch our own two children, Katharina Jane and Lucas Origène, allowed us to expedite the editing and formatting of this work.

Flic-en-Flac, Mauritius, October 5th, 2009 *C. B. H. and R. P.*

Table of Contents

List of Abbreviations

ACW	Ancient Christian Writers
CCL	Corpus Christianorum Series Latina
CSEL	Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum
LCL	Loeb Classical Library
WSA	The Works of Saint Augustine: A Translation for the 21st Century
WUNT	Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament

Introduction

Cornelia B. Horn and Robert R. Phenix

The study of children in the Late Antique Mediterranean world and its cultural sphere ("Late Antiquity") is a subdiscipline of the study of Late Antique civilization. The present collection of articles examines a further specialization within that subdiscipline by focusing on questions arising from the examination of late ancient Christian literature.

The discipline can be defined as the application of various forms of criticism, including literary, historical, and art criticism, to Christian sources in order to understand the experience, value, and intellectual construction of children and childhood in Late Antiquity. It is therefore an open contribution to the study of children in Late Antiquity, rather than a closed discipline that would be interested only in what children meant for the development of Christian thought. The latter certainly is a significant line of research represented to some extent also in this and other collections, yet it is only one strand in the reconstruction of children and society in this period.

As today, so too in Late Antiquity the debates over the development of children in Christian circles extended to everything that touched on human existence. The essays brought together in the present volume examine a wide spectrum of these issues: education and formation, the healing of children, the role institutions filled in the care of children, especially orphans, predation and exploitation of children, congenital conditions and the value placed on children with special needs in Late Antique Christian sources are only some of the areas examined here. The most important contribution which the collection of all of these essays makes is to foster a more substantial engagement of Christian sources in the scholarly research and discourse that concentrates on children in Late Antiquity.

The problem of the definition of child and childhood in Late Antiquity intersects in the essays in this collection with problems in the sources addressed. The concept of an "apocryphal source" and its significance for tracing Christian thought lies behind several of the essays in this volume that use this material, and the validity of using papyri from a specific findspot to make generalizations about wider Greco-Roman society are only two of

the problems that lie at the foundations of research incorporated into this collection of essays, and addressed directly or indirectly.

This collection of essays draws together an across-the-board sample of research into children and childhood in Late Antiquity. While these texts are certainly of interest for those who work on the intellectual history of Christian writers in the first seven centuries CE, the collection as a whole should appeal to scholars who study children and the social, religious, cultural, and anthropological aspects of their lives. As such, it is also hoped that the information contained in this volume will be of interest for a number of areas of investigation. The scope of the primary sources and the social, cultural, and religious settings that the contributors address advance several areas of the study of children in Late Antiquity.

What sets these contributions apart from available edited volumes on Children in Christian thought is first, that there is a focus on Christian sources from Late Antiquity, second, that the authors have engaged problems that are of considerable depth, rather than providing general overviews of the thought of a particular author, and third that this has allowed for more profound connections to be brought to light between a wider variety of textual sources. The studies offered here represent the state-of-the-art in the study of children in Late Antique Christian sources. They bring to bear a number of significant ideas and methods that are important for understanding religion, society, and culture in Late Antiquity as a whole.

Each contribution constitutes a snapshot of ongoing research, and thus represents an expert-level view of the problems and sources of the subdiscipline. This includes critical evaluation of published materials. There are disagreements and even corrections addressed by one contributor to another, and certainly some authors will respond to criticism from co-collaborators in this volume in their own future work. Indeed, occasionally there are even agreements among the contributors. The authors did not circulate copies of the submissions to the other contributors; these exchanges and differences of perspective are the expected result of thriving scholarship among researchers working on common texts and congruent problems.

The present collection is unique for the type of sources and the degree to which the *corpora* of individual authors have been explored in the work of the contributors, whose approaches represent the future of research in this area. Jewish-Christian pseudepigrapha, New Testament apocrypha, Late Antique papyri, ancient Christian hagiography, biography, historiography, and others have been brought to bear on understanding the religious reception of the status of children in early Christianity, the investigation of children's culture, or the role of Christian institutions in contributing to the social integration of children, only to mention a few of the numerous areas explored in these studies. It is clear that a wealth of informa-

tion is yet to be gathered from these less-studied (but by no means neglected) sources. Here should also be mentioned the engagement of Classical, Late Antique, and Byzantine sources on medicine for information on "child health care" and Christian value in Late Antiquity. Indeed, several contributions in this volume (Kelley, Holmann, Horn, Martens, and Kotsifou) converge to indicate both the feasibility and the desirability of gaining a clearer understanding of the conditions of life for children in situations of distress caused for example by sickness, disability, death, or threats of sexual exploitation.

Contents

Reidar Aasgaard's essay ("Uncovering Children's Culture in Late Antiquity: The Testimony of the *Infancy Gospel of Thomas*") concerning the *Sitz-im-Leben* of the *Infancy Gospel of Thomas* (*IGT*) serves as a brief introduction to the study of the cultural matrix of children's lives in Late Antiquity. His thesis is that the *IGT* may be the only full documentation of children's culture in Late Antiquity, and thus represents a unique genre in Late Antique Christian literature. To demonstrate this, Aasgaard substantiates the existence of children's culture in the general case. He approaches the existence of a children's culture from demographics. Late Antiquity was a time and place with children comprising a much larger percentage of the population than modern Western societies, and more in line with agrarian pre-industrial ones. His essay identifies many of the problems in the artifacts of culture – not least of which is that much of what the mostly illiterate populations of Late Antiquity said about or to children was almost certainly never written down. The very definition of childhood itself, an area of extensive research in recent publications, is part of the problem. Yet the two central biases in scholarship that have hindered the study of children are that scholars refused to recognize the substantial body of primary evidence that is available to support childhood as a distinct stage of life in the sociology of Late Antiquity, and that most literary criticism assumes an adult audience. Aasgaard assembles an array of Christian and non-Christian literature composed or transmitted in Late Antiquity to show that there was a sizeable body of literature composed for and addressed to children. The *IGT* belongs to this category. Aasgaard's article points out the peculiarity that other than the *IGT* (and presumably its early cognates), Christian writers addressing adult or general audiences were unconcerned, for the most part, with filling in the details of Jesus' childhood. Many elements of the majority view of the lower-stratum audience and the clear diversity of recensions of the *IGT* suggest an originally oral composition, consistent with the origins of other children's stories in Late Antiquity. Aasgaard reconstructs the internal evidence that the *IGT* was intended ori-

ginally for children, and suggests ways in which the *IGT* offers insights into the reception of children's pedagogy in early Christianity. One may add that this is a natural combination, as so much of religion consists of some form of instruction. The many treatises by Chrysostom and Jerome on the subject examined in this collection clearly attest this point. The implication of Aasgaard's thorough and well-documented essay is that everything that has been said about the setting of the *IGT*, as well as many works from Late Antiquity in which children have significant roles or in which childhood is a prominent theme, require new assessments as to the intended audiences of these texts as well as with regard to what these texts do and do not reveal about the culture of children and childhood.

If Aasgaard has set the *IGT* among literature composed for children, implying that the ancients saw enough value in children to communicate adult religious doctrine using images of childhood, Tony Burke ("'Social Viewing' of Children in the Childhood Stories of Jesus") reads the *IGT* primarily as an extension of existing genres. He shares Aasgaard's dissatisfaction with previous *IGT* scholarship (both lament the useless baggage of the slanderous "gnostic" classification of most of the secondary literature), but adopts a more clearly philological critique: everyone who has made sweeping and not-so-sweeping literary judgments about *IGT* is still relying on Freiherr von Tischendorff as though his were a critical edition. The other witnesses create a very different impression of the young Jesus, who in Tischendorff's source seems irrational and callous. Many then and now wish their god-men to be impulsive, brutish enigmas, but Burke cautions us from concluding that this was the predilection of the redactor of the oldest complete form of the *IGT*. At the same time, we are told that the *IGT* is perhaps best described as an imitation of the *puer senex* prodigies of the gods and divinized political and social classes, such as kings and philosophers, which was extended in funerary inscriptions to ordinary children themselves, Christian or not.

Aasgaard and Burke find little agreement in the use of the *IGT* for reconstructing the social anthropology of children in Greco-Roman Late Antiquity. The former's *IGT* as an example of children's culture designed for the juvenile audience confronts Burke's *IGT* as revealing an idealized childhood, one which did not correspond to any reality in Late Antiquity. The examples from Greco-Roman sources that each author provides reflect two different formulations of the *Sitz-im-Leben*, with emphases on different sources and different interpretations.

Inta Ivanovska ("Baptized Infants and Pagan Rituals: Cyprian *versus* Augustine") provides an examination of the thought of Augustine of Hippo (d. 430) and Cyprian of Carthage (d. ca. 248) regarding one of the central themes of the study of children in Late Antique Christian sources, namely,

innocence and guilt. If the mind of Augustine is like the archtypical Buddhist portrait of a flitting butterfly impelled from one thought to the next, Ivanovska shows a dog-like Zen in pinning down his wings and those of his more restrained compatriot. Ivanovska procedes from an investigation of Christian theological problems concerning just how defective a child's soul was, and then engages the problem of the child-adult threshold in the two *corpora*. Ivanovska shows that Cyprian, writing during a period of state-sponsored persecution of Christians in Latin North Africa, understood the primary defect in a child to be physical, and thus ending with death, while Augustine, writing at a time when Christianity was for all intents and purposes the only tolerated religion, made a child's fundamental defect one of inherited guilt that remained unaltered by the body's demise. One may extend Ivanovska's observations to the conclusion that we are presented with a political, rather than a strictly theological, conceptualization of child and childhood. Augustine seems to indicate that as bad as it is for children, it only gets worse with the transition to adulthood. Since martyrdom, or freedom from the influence of evil forces (especially demons), is no longer a possibility, it is best to die before one is further corrupted. Ivanovska's article raises the questions of the child's innocence, defect, and the development from child to adult. The political motives of Augustine's thought are not to be discounted; it is hoped that future research into these may shed more light on the reasoning behind his approach to children and their development.

Carole Monica Burnett ("Mother-Child Bonding in the Greek and Latin Fathers of the Church") investigates the value that Late Antique Christian writers placed on raising children. The author examines the attitudes toward motherhood and the natural bond between mother and child in the context of several classical sources and the reception of Fourth Maccabees among Western Christian writers in the third and fourth centuries. The sheaf of commentaries on this text amounts to a harvest of denial of the natural affection of the mother for the child. All writers surveyed in Burnett's study understand motherhood as an even weaker condition of the inferior sex, and like a terrible disease, the Christian woman does well to avoid it. Surely, their attitudes are born from a mix of folk superstition which was absorbed into classical medicine, and the martyr impulse of the new religion, which placed salvation above life. Motherhood, for these Christian writers, is yet another weakness that the will must overcome in order to reach salvation.

There are many instances of men abandoning their sons to join monasteries, and Carrie Schroeder's article, summarized below, discusses the evidence of this phenomenon from Late Antique Egypt. Burnett rather looks at Jerome's portraits of women who abandon their children for a life of as-

ceticism and renunciation, including turning away from raising children. Given that these women were among the Roman élite, they probably could afford others in their employ to take on the majority of the responsibilities for raising them. Paula leaves behind two young children for an adventure that would take her to some of the wealthiest parts of the empire, to live in holy companionship with other like-minded women. Melania the Younger presents us with the case of a woman who is clearly not interested in marriage, resents her husband for his insisting on procreation, and now must have a third pregnancy in order to fulfill her pre-nuptual agreement. Melania will die unless her husband agrees never to have sex with her again. Burnett examines her sources with care and method, but it is color by numbers for the reader: asceticism, whether it meant the total abandonment of family ties (or not, as Rebecca Krawiec has indicated for some), the ascetic life was a way for Christian women to escape the oppression of bearing children. To be sure, the relationship between mothers and sons in Late Antiquity could be characterized as one in which the mother pushed the son toward the pursuit of material wealth and power, thus ensuring the mother a comfortable life and care in old age. One also wonders whether the rejection of this form of mother-son relationship, as Burnett examines in the Monica-Augustine case, was another attempt to set Christians apart from Jews, for whom the care of aged parents was a sacred duty. Burnett concludes that tenderness in mother-child relationships was brought back to Christianity through changes in the view of Mary's own emotions at the suffering and death of Jesus. It may also be the case that for women who were not as affluent as those who followed Jerome and thus for those for whom there was no alternative but to remain part of the husband's household, a model was necessary in order to make personal suffering tolerable. Burnett concludes that the cult of Mary the mother of Jesus delivered that role model, and points to several areas of profitable departure for a study of the material conditions of women and the psychology of their religious experience.

The first of three contributions from Cornelia Horn ("Children in Fourth-Century Greek Epistolography: Cappadocian Perspectives from the Pens of Gregory of Nazianzen and Basil of Caesarea") offers insight into the assumptions behind the prescriptions of fourth-century Greek bishops from Cappadocia, Gregory Nazianzen and Basil the Great concerning social relationships within the family and the relationships tying the family to society and to the Christian church. Taking a start from other research on this question in Cicero's and Pliny the Younger's correspondences and other epistolary sources from Late Antiquity, she engages the two subjects of her research in an attempt to reveal their assumptions and arguments concerning the theological, sociological, and ethical dimensions of family

relationships. Horn first addresses the problem of accurately uncovering assumptions from prescriptive sources, and finds compelling evidence for their utilization; Ville Vuolanto's article, summarized below, provides further complimentary evidence that the authors of the letters themselves understood the reality of Christian families and framed their prescriptions accordingly. In Horn's analysis, Gregory Nazianzen sees children as weak and vulnerable to corruption, and thus in need to be insulated from such effects through baptism and proper upbringing from their first hours. One might suggest that Nazianzen's concern is born from a Christianization of the popular belief that the care and attention paid to the portents surrounding the birth of a child and prophylactic measures to stave off disease, the etiology of which was explained through possession by evil spirits or forces.

Horn then identifies the four key elements concerning children in Gregory's letters: education in a broad sense of upbringing, relationships, hardships, and a reaction to the presentation of children and parents in Classical stories of the gods. Horn does not discuss Gregory's anthropology, for example in Gregory's assumption that the father was the source of the son's physical appearance, and so by extension must also be responsible for his character. This is also the notion of *ēthos* and the question of de-termination: is character for Gregory immutable, as Classical biography presupposed, or does Gregory have a softer form of determinism, namely that a son inevitably imitates his father's character?

In examining Basil's letters, Horn identifies a *lacuna* in the work of Bernard Gain and others, but goes beyond this observation to provide a new framework that indicates the theological significance of broader sociological investigation. Basil, unlike Gregory, comments on the complete cycle of conception, birth, and childhood, and offers ample evidence for discerning his emotional sensitivity to the joys and tragedies of childhood and parenting. Women seem to have been primarily the birthgivers and nurses of children while the father was the one responsible for formation and education. Again, Horn does not examine the sources of these assumptions. Granted, they are not too hard to find: women were thought to be not creatures of the mind, but of the body, weak in character; hence their role in the formation of children was primarily limited to the formation of the body through birthgiving, nursing, and domestic duties. This is clear from the use of the father-child relationship as an analogy illustrating the obligation of a spiritual guide to his student. The discussion of Basil examines the many themes that occur in this literature, and provides sufficient ground for scholars to deepen our understanding of the social and theological aspects of these two writers, a call to which many of the contributors in this collection have responded.

Susan Holman ("Sick Children and Healing Saints: Medical Treatment of the Child in Christian Antiquity") examines the healing of children in Christian sources in light of medical treatises. This study brings valuable evidence from the transmission of classical medicine, drawing attention to the recent work of Peter Pormann, who has made better accessible the Arabic citations of an otherwise lost work of Paul of Aegina, *On the Therapy and Treatment of Children*. Holman gathers some of the scarce evidence among Late Antique Christian sources portraying sick Christian children undergoing treatment. The goal of this study is to provide the proper context for the interpretation of the themes of innocence and causation in narratives about medical incubation at Christian shrines, particularly from the material in Sophronius of Jerusalem's *The Miracles of Cyrus and John*. This practice is a Christianization of a medical phenomenon, beginning at least in Early Bronze Age Mesopotamia, and which was a prominent part of the Greco-Roman Ascleipian cult, among others. The notion of personal fault in the causation of illness is practically a universal idea in the ancient Mediterranean world. Holman's choice of this collection of miracles is grounded in part in the realization that it articulates theological and ideological bias, which are absent from the stories of Cosmas and Damian, for example, thus drawing attention to the use of innocence and causation in the miracle stories as a means of furthering theological and ideological perspectives within the Chalcedonian orthodox framework. Indeed, further research on the treatment of children from earlier periods in Mediterranean history could demonstrate how little the concepts of causality had changed. While the major Late Antique medical treatises are grounded in attempts to explain the etiology of illness without recourse to overtly supernatural forces (such as are all-pervasive in the huge quantity of earlier Mesopotamian-cuneiform literature and the less extensive Egyptian documentation), Christians seem to have maintained, or re-created, a scheme that was more dependent on such forces.

Complementing Holman's analysis of childhood sickness and theological identity, Horn's second contribution ("Approaches to the Study of Sick Children and Their Healing: Christian Apocryphal Acts, Gospels, and Cognate Literatures") approaches childhood sickness and healing from a programmatic perspective of medical anthropology, offering some reflections on the cultural conditions that underly Late Antique presentations of illnesses and healing. The social dimension of sickness is one of these roles. Horn examines social dimensions of healing in the New Testament and in *Apollonius*, ancient popular literature (Greco-Roman novels), and select papyri, this last instance abutting common ground with the contributions of Chrysi Kotsifou and Carrie Schroeder. Following the treatment of key elements that run through this collection of materials, Horn then exmines the

question of gender and healing in selected Late Antique hagiographical sources. Specifically, the phenomenon of distance or avoidance of contact between healer and healed in miraculous contexts seems to be illustrative of the ascetic avoidance of contact with women of any age, with exceptions made for family contexts, as found in the *Acts of Mār Mari*, among other examples. The last sections examine elements of healing drawn largely from Christian Apocryphal texts. These sources offer opportunities to explore the family sociology of the healing of children and its significance for expressing religious concepts. Horn also connects the healing of children in these texts with relevant Greco-Roman medical treatises, and sheds some light on the practice of spiritual healing among Christians in which children or objects associated with them had therapeutic properties.

Nicole Kelley ("The Deformed Child in Ancient Christianity") illuminates the attitudes toward deformed children and based on this information argues for differences in the practices of Christians and their polytheist compatriots. The argument for certain practices, such as the exposition of infants, is necessarily indirect, as Kelley remarks that there are no explicit accounts in Christian sources for this practice. Kelley examines Augustine's view of deformed children as part of the diversity of creation, and even part of a larger and perfect divine plan, with the proviso that this does not necessarily represent how all Christians understood the meaning of human physical deformity. Kelley identifies how Christians received the statement in the canonical Gospel of John 9 that sin was not the cause of congenital defect. She examines the various responses, from rejection of Jesus' assertion (Irenaeus, who also comments on John 5 and gives a more equivocal interpretation) to endorsement (John Chrysostom, Jerome). Kelley then examines the role of fate and nature in understanding congenital deformity in Bardaisan of Edessa, Arnobius of Sicca, and Gregory of Nyssa. Here Kelley observes an important difference: Chrysostom understood deformity to be part of human nature; Nyssa understood deformity to be foreign to the goodness of human nature and thus the result of corruption, which in the Christian understanding comes only from sin. Kelley offers an analysis of Peter and his daughter in the *Acts of Peter* and passages from Jerome's *corpus* to draw conclusions about parents' views of disability and deformity in dedicating children to a life set apart from the world dedicated to spiritual purposes, concluding that Christian parents widely held that marriage was a better calling than chastity. Kelley concludes with a discussion of deformity and the resurrected body in Augustine's corpus, and exposes a contradiction in Augustine's thought on the value of deformity.

John Martens ("'Do Not Sexually Abuse Children': The Language of Early Christian Sexual Ethics") offers a discussion of the word *paidophthoreō*, which he identifies as a Christian coinage, and examines its mean-

ing and significance in the sources wherein it appears. Martens draws from the historical exposition found in his recent work (co-authored with C. Horn), *Let the Little Children Come to Me*. Beginning with the New Testament and drawing from key texts such as the *Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs* and works by Philo, Martens argues on terminological grounds that the rejection of sexual intercourse with minors was an important differential that set Christians apart from polytheists in Late Antiquity, and was an explicit codification of what one could term an "implicit" moral code among Jews as presented in the codified rabbinic legal materials. Martens' key conclusion is that the term in question is broad in its scope, and does not imply any particular form of sexual interaction between adult and child. In making this argument, Martens has offered some fresh insight into selected source texts on their relevance for understanding children in Late Antique society.

Ville Vuolanto ("Choosing Asceticism: Children and Parents, Vows and Conflicts") turns the examination of children and Christianity to the question of personal freedom: did Christianity widen children's ability to make choices for themselves? Vuolanto examines this in the context of Christian children and the choice (or absence of choice) to enter an ascetic life. The author restricts himself to sources spanning the late fourth into the fifth centuries, that is, the usual suspects. Vuolanto seeks to challenge the assumption, articulated by Peter Brown and others, that with the establishment of Christianity, many children and especially girls wished to remain unmarried and abandon the structure of the traditional Greco-Roman family. Vuolanto examines the ideological character of presentations of conflict over ascetic choice in the sources, the role of children in estate planning and in ideas about the afterlife of parents, prescription and actual practice in epistolary material, and a reconsideration of the phenomenon of children choosing asceticism. Vuolanto provides considerable evidence that children who became ascetics maintained family ties, and were even brought back into the family when the needs of continuing the paternal lineage required it. This implies that the decision to enter the ascetic life and remain an ascetic was made in the context of the greater good of the family, as also indicated in the idea of children ascetics as a kind of "insurance" for the spiritual well-being of the family in this world – and in the Hereafter.

Horn's third contribution ("Raising Martyrs and Ascetics: A Diachronic Comparison for Educational Role-Models for Early Christian Children") addresses the literature addressed to women with young daughters on raising them to become ascetics. This study examines less well-known sources and writers, such as Eusebius of Emesa. Another contribution is an explanation regarding the reception of certain biblical passages applied to

Christian martyrdom, such as the *'aqeda* in Genesis 22. Horn identifies that the authors of some accounts of martyrdom or ascetic life had children in mind when considering their audiences, thus contributing to the idea of a "children's culture" for which Aasgaard argued in the case of the *IGT*.

The theme of the *'aqedah* is taken up in an example of monastic obedience in Carrie Schroeder's study of the evidence for children in Egyptian monasteries in Late Antiquity ("Children and Egyptian Monasticism"). Schroeder presents ample evidence for the tensions between allowing children to grow up in the monasteries and the "worldly" responsibilities that attended their upbringing. One papyrus, P. Lips. I 28, which Schroeder presents, is an adoption contract cited at length and discussed by Chrysi Kotsifou in the following article. Schroeder concludes that this papyrus was evidence that the boy Paesis was taken into the monastic setting of his guardian, Aurelius Silvanus. Following this one finds an analysis of selected versions of the *Life of Pachomius*, and its attendant problems for reconstructing monastic social history; the lives seem to favor children as the "seeds" of a next generation of monks. Shenoute's corpus likewise provides evidence for children. Although the Coptic terminology is unclear about which stage of childhood the great abbot meant, Schroeder finds evidence that young men arrived before puberty. Schroeder then examines evidence for the origins and education of children in monastic communities in Egypt. The evidence from hagiographical sources is difficult to interpret, but it suggests that, like the Pachomian letters, children were received into the mainstream of Egyptian monasticism as being better monks than adults. Letters from Kellis are also examined. Evidence from the sixth and seventh centuries suggests that children were fully integrated into Egyptian monasticism. For the eighth century, Schroeder examines papyri from Jeme. These sources are also taken up by Kotsifou who identifies them as donation texts, but Schroeder provides considerable background to understanding their significance for children, and demonstrates how these papyri can be read to ascertain the roles of children in this monastery. Of interest for readers of Holman's article is the reference in a Jeme text to one child promised to the monastery named Peter, who becomes ill because his parents rescinded their vow to dedicate him to the monastery, a phenomenon that Holman mentions in connection with a miracle in the *Miracles of Cyrus and John* no. 38, concerning a young reader, George. This data includes a donation text wherein it stipulates that a child need not become a monk, but rather must turn over all income to the monastery, which goes a long way to illustrating the citation from Arietta Papaconstantinou in Kotsifou's contribution (p. 372), namely, that Christianity, even by the eighth century in this case, hardly changed the fate of children. Schroeder

concludes by offering some reflections on the importance of papyrological sources for the study of Late Antique children.

Congruent to Schroeder's study, Chrysi Kotsifou's contribution ("Papyrological Perspectives on Orphans in the World of Late Ancient Christianity") which examines selections from the vast wealth of papyrological data from Egypt, almost takes up where Schroeder's article leaves off. Whereas Schroeder examines some themes in more detail, Kotsifou offers a broader sampling of the papyrological evidence concerning orphans and points to the importance of papyri for the study of many aspects of the lives of children in and outside of Egypt. The author assembles several English translations of relevant passages, making the article as much a scholarly discussion as a short, handy anthology on orphans in Egyptian papyri. Kotsifou engages the legal aspects of orphans and adoption that many of these papyri presuppose, and reflects on their implications for orphans and, indirectly, for the women who give the children up for adoption or the adults who adopted them. Kotsifou engages some of the important social-anthropological issues, such as the role of wider family members in providing education for orphans, as well as the rhetoric of persuasion found in letters addressing the concerns of children. Kotsifou presents the practice of Christians pledging children to monasteries as a response to the prohibition of the outright selling of children, except in extreme circumstances, after 536, although the practice may have continued thereafter. Still, it was stigmatized, and the letters reveal dire circumstances motivating the pledging of children. What one can draw from Kotsifou's article is that Christianity did not change the fundamental economic conditions of the Roman Empire, and that practices concerning children were dictated by material concerns, perhaps then as much as now. After a review of selected papyri, Kotsifou provides a summary history of the relevance of the church as an institution involved in the lives of orphans and widows, beginning with the 1 Timothy (late 1st or early 2nd c.). Kotsifou's approach is to demonstrate that the importance of petitions in Egyptian papyri reflects a longstanding practice of the church providing assistance to orphans and widows, an activity that was largely not on offer from public authorities. Clearly this imperative is taken from a Christian reading of prophetic texts in the Old Testament. It would be interesting to take Kotsifou's assessment of the sociological dimension and place it in the context of exegetical and paraenetic Christian sources.

Robert Phenix argues for the use of social-anthropology in the study of traditional societies in Ethiopia as a means of capturing assumptions in the presentation of children in Ge'ez hagiography ("The Contribution of Social Science Research to the Study of Children and Childhood in Pre-Modern Ethiopia"). Phenix first examines the problem of the inheritance of *topoi*

from Coptic and other sources, and then sketches some of the key elements of the social anthropological study of relevant groups in Ethiopia, particularly among speakers of Tigray and Amharic. This contribution argues that traditional societies before the 1970's in Ethiopia offer key information that is relevant to the study of literature from much earlier periods. His work points out that while there is much information about children in societies that are relevant for the study of Ge'ez hagiography, they are often incidental, and there is no comprehensive study of children on which the philologist can rely. Much needs to be done in developing further the methodology of applying the results of social-anthropological research to the study of children in Ethiopic hagiography, and this contribution, which draws from a variety of different sources and perspectives, serves to incite further discussion and investigation.

Prospects for Future Research on Children in Christian Sources in Late Antiquity

Each of these studies reveal Late Antique Christian and other sources to be rich in details about children, families, and the social aspects of the formation of Christian theology. Moving forward, the study of this discipline will need a more rigorous social-anthropological method to bring order to the assumptions and methods of which this collection of studies is a representative sample. Until the present, the model is essentially that of historical-critical approaches applied to the study of texts. These are very valuable in providing the initial survey of material, in assessing its facticity and reliability, and in providing a rough-and-ready organization of the results. However, as the questions become more specialized, and the same details are examined from different perspectives, a more powerful framework becomes necessary. If the data are to speak to concerns that seem to be at the heart of the study of any society – the formation of political institutions, the power of religion in organizing society, the role of social reflection in religious thought and in the differentialization of Christianity from its Jewish and Greco-Roman backgrounds, the role of gender in social decisions, and the construction of a normative view of society and its impact, there must be a set of clearly identified social-anthropological methods.

The contributions in this volume also illustrate that there are substantial gaps in understanding how society was organized, and that these gaps require a more robust methodology and further basic investigation of the sources in order to understand the extent to which Christianity contributed to the conceptualization of children. First and foremost is the need for the development of criteria for a disciplined approach to the social and cultural anthropology of children in Late Antiquity, including Christian sources of all media. While this remains a goal to be accomplished in future work on

children in late ancient Christianity, it is still valuable to remind us here of the benefits to be derived from it. Its usefulness and even necessity consists in the ability one may gain to provide a uniform language of presentation that can be a basis of comparison with other ancient and contemporary societies. It will also improve the yield of information and clarify the details of the reconstruction of this area of Late Antique civilization. Finally, it also permits for a more transparent evaluation of the methods used to select sources, interpret and organize the data, and provide verifiable limits on the conclusions that may be drawn from them.

Uncovering Children's Culture in Late Antiquity: The Testimony of the *Infancy Gospel of Thomas*

Reidar Aasgaard

The world of Late Antiquity and Early Christianity was very much a children's world.[1] As in many twenty-first century societies, children constituted a large portion of the population. Demographic calculations, for example, have indicated that one third of the population of Rome was under sixteen years old.[2] Given the special character of the Roman capital, with its not-very-favorable environments for children, the percentage of the young in other cities is likely to have been higher, and even more so in rural areas, the habitat of a majority of the ancient population.[3]

Within research on antiquity, this insight has dawned only slowly, but since the 1990s has been of central concern to many scholars.[4] Studies have been conducted on a variety of issues pertaining to children, such as the phase of childhood within the larger course of life of the human being, living conditions, education, gender relations, societal and religious roles,

[1] The designations "Late Antiquity" and "Early Christianity" are here used in a broad sense of the period from the first to about the fifth century. I use the former expression when dealing with the period in general and the latter when focusing on its Christian aspects.

[2] For calculations see Tim G. Parkin, *Old Age in the Roman World: A Cultural and Social History* (Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992), 36–56 and 280–281; and Christian Laes, *Kinderen Bij De Romeinen: Zes Eeuwen Dagelijks Leven* (Leuven: Davidsfonds, 2006), 21–22. For simplicity, I here use "child" in a very broad sense, applying the term to children between 0–12 years of age, though with focus on the middle stages (ca. 4–10). Clearly, there are – and were – significant differences among children within this span of years, and the ancients were also very much aware of this. See Beryl Rawson, *Children and Childhood in Roman Italy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 134–145.

[3] P. A. Brunt, "Labour," in *The Roman World, Volume II*, ed. John Wacher (London and New York: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1987), 701–716, here 701–703 and 707, holds that up to ninety percent of the population lived in rural areas.

[4] See Reidar Aasgaard, "Children in Antiquity and Early Christianity: Research History and Central Issues," *Familia* (UPSA, Spain) 33 (2006), 23–46, for a survey of research until 2005.

views on childhood, and childhood metaphors.[5] As a consequence, children's lives and attitudes to childhood have been brought into focus in ways that have greatly improved our understanding of ancient childhood.

Was There a Children's Culture in Late Antiquity?

Despite the growing interest in questions related to children in the ancient world, not much has been written on the more distinctly cultural sphere of children's life, on what here will be called "children's culture." It is true that there have been several studies discussing important aspects of this culture, for example ancient educational systems and child-parent relations.[6] Yet only a few scholars have dealt with the issue of a children's culture in systematic or comprehensive ways.[7]

One reason for this relative neglect obviously has to do with the expression "children's culture" itself, which is a concept of recent origin and as such clearly reflects modern concerns. Two questions immediately present themselves in relation to the use of this expression, namely: "what does 'children's culture' mean?" and, "did such a children's culture in effect exist in Late Antiquity?" As for the former question, no simple answer can be given. A response to the question will depend, for example, on one's perception of what is "culture" as well as on one's understanding of how childhood is related to other stages of life. In addition, the character of a children's culture will differ much with time and place. Thus, "children's

[5] See particularly references and bibliographies in Odd M. Bakke, *When Children Became People: The Birth of Childhood in Early Christianity* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 2005); Rawson, *Children and Childhood*; Laes, *Kinderen*; Ada Cohen and Jeremy B. Rutter, eds., *Constructions of Childhood in Ancient Greece and Italy*, Hesperia Supplement 41 (Princeton, NJ: The American School of Classical Studies at Athens, 2007); and Marcia J. Bunge and others, ed., *The Child in the Bible* (Grand Rapids, MI, and Cambridge, U.K.: Eerdmans, 2008).

[6] Richard P. Saller, *Patriarchy, Property, and Death in the Roman Family* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994); Teresa Morgan, *Literate Education in the Hellenistic and Roman Worlds* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998); Raffaella Cribiore, *Gymnastics of the Mind: Greek Education in Hellenistic and Roman Egypt* (Princeton and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001); and Peter Balla, *The Child-Parent Relationship in the New Testament and Its Environment*, WUNT 155 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2003).

[7] Surveys of aspects of children's culture can be found in Cornelia B. Horn, "Children's Play as Social Ritual," in *A People's History of Christianity*, Vol. 2: *Late Ancient Christianity*, ed. Virginia Burrus (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 2005), 95–116; and Karl Olav Sandnes, *The Challenge of Homer: School, Pagan Poets and Early Christianity*, The Library of New Testament Studies. Early Christianity in Contexts 400 (New York and London: T&T Clark International and Continuum, 2009).

culture" can be understood and defined in a variety of ways.[8] In spite of this, I find it tenable, and also fruitful, to speak of such a culture, although in a fairly general sense. I shall here be viewing this culture as a *grid* of the activities, narratives, notions, and perspectives that give shape to children's lives, and I shall pay special attention to what makes this grid different from adult culture or culture in general. Central elements within children's culture for example are children's activities at home, at work, and at leisure time, the cultural heritage handed down to them from previous generations, or the curricula used for instructing them at school. Within this frame of reference, children's culture in particular relates to the aspects of life that go beyond basic necessities such as nourishment, clothing, shelter, and human interaction. It also includes both elements initiated and taught by adults, and elements created and passed on by children themselves.

Also, the second question, whether there existed a children's culture in antiquity, cannot be answered in a simplistic or straightforward manner. Instead, we need to approach the issue in a pragmatic way, by taking our point of departure in demographic conditions. The sheer number of children at any given point in time in the ancient world – the fact that they made up one third to one half of the population – can be seen as supporting the existence of such a culture. With their omnipresence in the homes, at places of work, and in the public arenas, children very likely shaped and developed a way of life with a character of its own – a cultural grid with a profile related to, but still differing from that of adults. The problem with answering this question is not so much *whether* there existed a children's culture or not, but *how* to get access to it. Thus, the question is rather whether and in what ways one can perceive, investigate, and describe this culture. Some of these problems – which represent both challenges to and new possibilities for research – need to be addressed before we can deal with the matter itself.

Challenges and Possibilities in the Study of Children's Culture in Antiquity

The general scarcity of sources dealing with children poses the first challenge. Although this factor should not be overlooked, the ancient evidence – as shown by recent research – has proven to be considerably richer in such material than previously assumed. This has become clear on the basis of the rereading of traditional sources with special attention focused on

[8] For such a discussion see for example Beth Juncker, "Det unødvendiges nødvendighed. Kulturbegreber og børnekultur" ["The Unnecessary Necessity: Concepts of Culture and Children's Culture"], in *Børnekultur: Et begreb i bevægelse* [*Children's Culture: A Concept in Constant Motion*], ed. Birgitte Tufte, Jan Kampmann, and Monica Hassel (Copenhagen: Akademisk, 2003), 12–24.