

How much material is sufficient to draw a conclusion and the nature of those conclusions are crucial issues. Dr Alamichel shows an awareness that the ideal and the reality are not always the same and of the importance of the exceptions when drawing conclusions. The book raises questions both within the text and within the reader's mind. Alamichel does not claim to be able to answer all these questions and is willing to recognise and explore ambiguity where the primary sources do not support clear conclusions.

The book has a clear and easy-to-follow organisation. The overall arrangement is chronological with two primary sections dealing with the Anglo-Saxon period and the medieval period. Within the section "on the Anglo-Saxon period the chapters examine "Marriage and Widowhood," "The Legal Status of Widows," and "The economic (In)dependence of Widows." The medieval section has chapters exploring "Widowhood and Remarriage," and "The Socio-economic Reality of Widowhood." A comprehensive bibliography of both primary and secondary sources, arranged by type of source and author, and a topical index make this a useful resource.

*Widows in Anglo-Saxon and Medieval Britain* contains a wealth of detail in a tightly written book of only 357 pages. This book is not for the novice, but rather for those who have some knowledge of Anglo-Saxon and medieval Britain, the church, and the literature pertaining to the periods. There is a plethora of names and primary documents with little or no contextualizing information. While translations are given for primary documents not in English, documents in forms of early English are given using the original spellings. However the comprehensive detail in the book, its clear organisation and major use of primary sources make this a valuable resource book and suggests that, while not aimed at the beginner, most readers would find the content informative and enlightening.

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**Colish, Maria L., *The Fathers and Beyond: Church Fathers between Ancient and Medieval Thought***

(Aldershot: Ashgate, 2008) hardback; 332 pages, 2 b/w illustrations; RRP £70.00; ISBN 9780754659440

*The Fathers and Beyond: Church Fathers between Ancient and Medieval Thought* is a collection of seventeen papers, which relate to Professor Maria L. Colish's three monographic studies: *The Mirror of*

*Language: A Study in the Medieval Theory of Knowledge*, originally published in 1968 (third edition in 2004); *The Stoic Tradition from Antiquity to the Early Middle Ages*, in two volumes original published in 1985 and with addenda and corrigenda 1990; and *Ambrose's Patriarchs: Ethics for the Common Man*, from 2005. The papers come together under the title *The Fathers and Beyond*, and Colish claims that; "The 'beyond' of the patristic authors is a multi-directional one. It looks backward, and sideways, as they reflected on and made diverse applications of their classical and early Christian heritage (vii)." This book does precisely that.

Colish divides her papers into four subject groupings, rather than chronologically ordering them. The first and largest section investigates the Latin writers of the patristic age in terms of their sources and their uses of those sources. These writers included Marius Victorinus, Augustine, Cicero, Ambrose, and the Stoic tradition. The papers highlight the multi-directionality of these authors particularly through her work on Augustine's rhetoric of silence, which is often viewed as purely Platonic. Colish clearly demonstrates that he freely borrowed from non-Platonic and even anti-Platonic sources as well as Platonic ones. She states (24) that by passing his sources "through the filter of his own rhetorical mentality, he arrives at a conception of silence that assimilates silence to speech whether it be song or the spoken word." Another outstanding paper in this group is "Why the Portiana? Reflections on the Milanese Basilica Crisis of 386." This paper examines Ambrose's confrontation with the imperial court, which stemmed from his refusal to hand over a church to the anti-Nicene court for the celebration of Easter. Colish uses archaeological and architectural scholarship to consider the complex questions posed by Ambrose's refusal.

The second group of papers focuses on Carolingian intellectual history. Colish, in an extensive paper, investigates the debates over *nihil* and *tenebrae*, within the intellectual framework of Carolingian thinking, through Augustine's treatment of negative and privative language, and his conviction that the liberal arts can shed light on the concept of nothingness. One of these Carolingian thinkers was John the Scot. In "Mathematics, the Monad, and John the Scot's Conception of Nihil," Colish considers important questions posed in the ninth century such as: Can the monad be equated with the deity? Can the monad be defined as *nihil*? She demonstrates that John the Scot did not imitate Greek Neoplatonic sources but that he considered these sources independently and discriminatorily. In a time where Europe had not adopted the concept

of zero she considers (467) that John the Scot had offered a mathematical analysis of these questions and concludes that “we need to widen our perspective to include the science of arithmetic, which is clearly at work” in this matter.

The third grouping of papers investigates the semantic theory of Anselm of Canterbury. After an examination of Anselm theories, sources, and applications Colish examines the Stoic tradition in “The Stoic Theory of Verbal Signification and the Problem of Lies and False Statements from Antiquity to St Anselm.” The ancient Stoic sources are mostly in Greek and are fragmentary in nature; thus the dissemination of these ideas in Latin is largely indirect. In considering the Stoic tradition in the Middle Ages through the problem of lies and falsehoods Colish guides the reader through a fascinating labyrinthine path of intellectual history. The fourth group of papers features the patristic legacy in the High Middle Ages. “Rethinking Lying in the Twelfth Century” reconsider issues previously raised but from a moral perspective rather than a semantic one.

The final two papers consider the question of moral neutrality and address the issue of whether non-Christians can be saved. “The Virtuous Pagan: Dante and the Christian Tradition,” demonstrates the complexity of this question and the extent of Christian theological theory that was developed to answer it. However she also reveals that Dante’s posthumous destinations for the assigned souls in *The Divine Comedy* did not always draw upon the medieval Christian tradition.

This set of papers spans Colish scholarly career and they reveal the depth of her scholarship. She draws from not only numerous sources across the history of intellectual scholarship but also from inter-disciplinary sources and this makes *The Fathers and Beyond: Church Fathers between Ancient and Medieval Thought* a significant contribution to medieval scholarship.

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**Forsyth, Katherine (ed.), *Studies on the Book of Deer***

(Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2008) hardback; xvi + 481 pages; RRP €76.50; ISBN 9781851825691

Having waited over five years for the imminent publication of this collection of papers, I have not been disappointed. This collection of studies investigates all aspects of a rare, early Scottish manuscript, the Book