

## ELIZABETH CLARK, DOCTOR OF DIVINITY



Elizabeth A. Clark, the John Carlisle Kilgo Professor of Religion and Professor of History at Duke University, is a scholar of Late Antiquity and early Christian History. She is widely recognized for expanding the field formerly known as “patristics” — the study of the church fathers — by incorporating cultural, social and feminist theory into the study of early Christianity. She has been instrumental to understandings of the role of women, gender, sexuality, orthodoxy, and debates about orthodoxy and heresy.

Professor Clark was born in Port Chester, New York, and moved to the small town of Delhi, New York, at the age of nine. Despite the lack of strong schools with rigorous college preparatory programs in that rural area, she was admitted to Vassar College and graduated in 1960 with a bachelor’s degree in religion. She went on to Columbia University, where she earned both her master’s degree and doctorate in the history of Christianity, in 1962 and 1965, respectively. In 1964, she joined the faculty of Mary Washington College of the University of Virginia, where she founded the College’s Department of Religion. During the late 1960s, she became active in the women’s movement, and this involvement provided the impetus for her early scholarship on women. She taught at Mary Washington for eighteen years, serving as chair of the Departments of Religion and of Classics, Philosophy and Religion, before moving to Duke University in 1982.

Drawing on multi-disciplinary approaches, Professor Clark has used feminist theory, social network applications, and aspects of literary criticism in her scholarship on the history of Christianity. She is the author or editor of thirteen books and over seventy essays and articles. In 1977, she co-edited *Women and Religion: A Feminist Sourcebook of Christian Thought*, which continues to be one of the most influential accounts of the relationship of women to Christianity. She has written on topics including Augustine, early ascetic practices, and women in the early church. Recently she has also begun work on the history of early Christianity in nineteenth and early-twentieth century American seminaries. Her most recent book, *Founding the Fathers: Early Church History and Protestant Professors in Nineteenth-Century America*, examines the influence of seminaries and their focus on advanced liberal studies as a way of exploring the history of American higher education. She is currently working on a sequel to that book which will cover twentieth-century America.

Professor Clark’s influence stems from her own scholarship, as well as that of the students she has mentored. Widely respected as a role model and advocate, she has launched dozens of graduate students on their own scholarly careers.

Professor Clark has served as president of the American Academy of Religion, of the American Society of Church History, and of the North American Patristics Society. In 2010, she received the Dean’s Award for Excellence in Mentoring from Duke University Graduate School. For her landmark contributions to the field, Professor Clark has been awarded numerous Fellowships including the Guggenheim Fellowship (1988), the National Endowment for the Humanities, and the American Council of Learned Societies. In 2003, she received the Distinguished Career Award from the American Society of Church History and she earned the Distinguished Service Award of the North American Patristic Society in 2006.