also includes a very interesting brief anthology of critical responses to the *Pervigilium*, ranging from Voltaire and Walter Pater, through to Schilling and Cameron in the twentieth century. C.'s text is essentially based on that of Shackleton Bailey (1982) with a comparative table of C.'s differences, and has a facing Italian prose translation. C.'s translation avoids prosiness while managing to keep reasonably close to the form and syntax of the original e.g. *P.V.* 1–2:

> Ver novum, ver iam canorum; vere natus orbis est
> vere concordant amores, vere nubunt alites
>
> Nuova primavera, è primavera ormai di canti:
> in primavera il mondo nacque
> in primavera concordano gli amori, in primavera
> si sponsano gli ucelli

But perhaps the most valuable part of C.'s book is the commentary. This is a really excellent commentary given the small size of the edition, and indeed excellent in comparison to almost any commentary on Latin poetry. For example, the note on the topos of the *hieros gamos* in ll. 58–67 is probably the best I have come across; the range of reference begins with Aristotle, *Gen. An.* 1.2.716a15–17, moves to Virgil, *Georgics* 2.325–33, where C. speaks of Virgil's remythologizing of the topos already debunked implicitly by Lucretius, *DRN* 1.250–61, to *Iliad* 14.346–51, Columella 10.194–214, the cosmology of Anchises' speech in *Aeneid* 6.724–32, and from there into philosophical uses of the topos with reference to Euripides, *Melanippe* fr. 484 N^2, Athenaeus, *Deipnosophists* 13.600a–b, Aristagoras, and Empedocles among others. Despite this level of detail, C. presents a highly readable commentary that combines deep philological and philosophical analysis with subtle and sensitive literary criticism. Finally, as an added bonus, C. closes the book with a brief anthology of Latin poems on the rose (one from Florus, the rest anonymous poems from the *Anthologia Latina*) which makes for useful comparative reading.

Overall, I can thoroughly recommend C.'s book as a very valuable addition to the scholarship on the *Pervigilium Veneris*, one which will be of great interest both to students of late Latin poetry and also more generally to anyone interested in Aphroditean poetics.

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TEXTS ON AND BY CONSTANTINE

M. EDWARDS: *Constantine and Christendom. The* Oration to the Saints. *The Greek and Latin Accounts of the Discovery of the Cross. The Edict of Constantine to Pope Silvester.* Translated with Notes and Introduction. (Translated Texts for Historians 39.) Pp. xlviii + 143, maps. Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2003. Paper, £12.95. ISBN: 0-85323-648-8.

To Constantine scholars, the most important of the four works in this contribution to the highly useful Translated Texts for Historians series is the 'Oration to the

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Assembly of the Saints' attributed to Constantine, and even though it rests with some uneasy bedfellows, the translation E. has produced is enough to justify the publication (and purchase) of this volume. The only other English translation of the *Oration*, in the venerable Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers series, is a century and a half old and furthermore lacks important passages from the eleventh-century Moscow manuscript (J) that Ivar Heikel used in his 1902 edition. E. has done a fine job with a daunting text. As he says of another author in this volume, Constantine was 'a man whose style was too ambitious for his talents' (p. xlvii), and matters are not helped by having to work from a Greek text that is itself a translation of a Latin original. E. has put his theological and philological skills to good use, especially in the translation of the eighth Sibylline oracle (with the acrostic 'Jesus Christ Son of God Saviour Cross') and Constantine's quotations from and commentary on Virgil's *Fourth Eclogue*.

The Sibylline and Virgilian sections of the *Oration* have been at the center of arguments against its authenticity, an issue that E. treats with uniformly good sense. Misquotation, for instance, has been a sticking point, but E. observes that the emperor's commentary, however idiosyncratic, can always be traced back to the Latin original (p. xxvi). More importantly, as he further observes, only a Latin speaker would have selected Virgil in the first place. And, he asks, what Greek, even a forger, would have referred to Virgil as the 'wisest of poets' (p. 50)? The Greek acrostic is plausibly resolved by positing that the full text was only added to the written version of the speech.

E. also brings a refreshing perspective to the theology of the *Oration*, which has usually been approached only from the perspective of eastern controversy, and then primarily as a means to fix a date for the speech (if Arianizing, then pre-Nicene). E. takes a western view, with which he finds Constantine's theology fully compatible. Moreover, he observes, 'not all subordination is heretical' (p. xxi). As E. himself says with regard to a different issue, 'large questions are not decided by a single paragraph'.

The question of time and place of delivery is one that has suffered from narrow readings that place more of a burden on phrases or even single words than they can bear. Recent opinion has coalesced around Nicomedia in the mid-320s, but E. argues for Rome a decade earlier, a view he admits is 'eccentric' (p. ix). Much ink has been spilt over references in Chapters 22 and 25 to a 'great city' and 'worthless individual' who seized power by force and became heir to Diocletian's army—and who may or may not also be the 'most impious of men'. These allusions are open to more than one interpretation, and for present purposes the issue comes down to this: did Constantine deliver as well as compose this speech in Latin, or was it translated into Greek prior to delivery? If the former, a western venue, and an earlier date, become more likely. But Eusebius of Caesarea, who attached the *Oration* to his *Life of Constantine*, says at *VC* 4.32 that the emperor composed his speeches in Latin and then had them translated by specialists (*hois touto poiein ergon en*)—a practice going all the way back to the first Augustus (Suet., *Vit. Aug*. 89.1), and one that would suggest an eastern venue for the speech, hence a later date of delivery. Neither Constantine's reliance on western theology nor his citation of western authors would, in my view, prevent an eastern venue, but neither would such a venue have kept Constantine from recycling parts of speeches that he had given much earlier. We should always keep in mind that Eusebius attached this speech not for its occasion but as an example of the type of speech that he says the emperor was always giving.

Little needs to be said about the other works in this volume. It is always easy to second-guess an author's choices, but it does seem that few users of this volume will

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need to compare two accounts of the discovery of the cross, especially since Constantine is at best a marginal figure in this legend, which centers on the efforts of his mother, Helena. The *Acts of Sylvester*, which E. considered but rejected, would have provided a better bridge to the final piece in this volume, the notorious *Donation of Constantine*, used by medieval popes to buttress their spiritual and temporal authority. Nevertheless, there is something of interest in all of these works, and E. has produced reliable translations that make use of the most recent scholarship.

There are a few slips that should be corrected in a future edition: in Chapters 3 and 9 phrases are inadvertently repeated, and in Chapter 6 *tes ges* has dropped out of the translation. In Chapter 14, E. follows Greek usage for 'former' and 'latter', which is certain to confuse English readers. It also would be highly desirable to include the sentence numbers within chapters—an odd omission for a book deliberately written as 'an accurate crib for all these authors' (p. lxvii). (The citations for these errata would be 3.4, 9.4, 6.9 and 14.1, respectively.) A couple other minor errors: Licinius was Constantine's brother-in-law, not son-in-law (p. x), and T. D. Barnes's most recent date for the *Oration* is 325, not 321 (p. xxvi).

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LACTANTIUS' INSTITUTES

A. Bowen, P. Garnsey: *Lactantius:* Divine Institutes. Translated with an Introduction and Notes. (Translated Texts for Historians 40.) Pp. xiv + 472, colour pl. Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2003. Paper, £20. ISBN: 0-85323-988-6.

The church writer Lactantius (*c*. 265–*c*. 325) was once enormously popular, to judge by the extraordinary number of early editions—over 100 by 1700; a recently updated list can be found at http://www.acad.carleton.edu/curricular/CLAS/lactantius/biblio.htm. The humanists adored his Ciceronian Latin, and turned with relief from scholastic aridity to his elegant and spirited presentation of Christian doctrine. But he was not a theologian of professional standards, and his timing was unfortunate, as he wrote just before important doctrinal settlements began at the council of Nicæa. Regarded after the Renaissance as a derivative mind, heretical as well as amateurish, he was relegated to the attention of specialists. More recently, however, Lactantius has ridden the tide of Late Antique studies to greater prominence; the last few years, particularly, have seen a remarkable profusion of scholarly activity. His *De mortibus persecutorum* had been vital to studying the Christian persecutions, but now his other works are gaining attention for content as well as style.

This translation of the *Divine Institutes*, Lactantius' major work, is only the third into English and far preferable to the earlier on many counts. Anthony Bowen is primarily responsible for the translation, textual and linguistic footnotes, and index of proper names; Peter Garnsey for the introduction, the bulk of the annotation, the bibliography, and index of topics. The volume is much more than a translation: G.'s introduction is worthy of special notice as being a comprehensive, short introduction to Lactantius, the first such in English, of use to students and specialists alike whether

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