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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they pursue classics, ancient philosophy, ecclesiastical history, patristics, or intellectual history. Its fifty-four pages begin with sections on Lactantius' life, works, and reputation, and then on the *Institutes* comes a summary of its contents and explanation of its genre and Lactantius' use of authorities. Three sections and a conclusion follow on Lactantius' thought and principal ideas: the supreme good, virtue, justice, the Golden Age, old Rome, Rome under the Tetrarchs, and Lactantius' own Age of Persecution. The introduction is remarkable for its comprehensive understanding and precise use of the scholarly literature. It deftly touches upon the issues that are lively today in Lactantian scholarship—for example Lactantius' alleged dualism, intellectual poverty, and his promotion of religious toleration—while remaining within the scope of a short, general treatment. Only on pp. 50–1 does it get into scholarly debate; here one may detect a rather speculative argument against Harold Drake's and Elizabeth Digeser's idea that Lactantius was committed to religious toleration. G. most convincingly establishes Lactantius as a pioneer along the road developed by Augustine; he gave 'a systematic statement of Christian ethics, the first of its kind from a Christian thinker' (p. 25) and was 'the first Christian writing in Latin to attempt a general account of the religious history of humanity and of Rome' (p. 41). One cavil: not everyone would agree that Lactantius was a convert to Christianity (p. 1), especially not in 'late middle age' (p. 51); no direct evidence exists.

Equally exemplary is B.'s translation. His translator's preface, acknowledging the difficulties posed by long sentences and alien figures of speech, explains that in order to turn Lactantius' Ciceronian Latin into 'English that is comfortable and adequate' he has aimed first to present Lactantius' 'sense and energy' (p. xi). His solution is vigorous, clear, stylish, and engaging, indeed arresting. Some examples: 'Julius Cæsar became a god in Rome because that criminal Mark Antony so decided; Quirinus became a god because some shepherds liked the idea' (*Inst.* 1.15.29). 'The complete failure of any philosopher to find the hearth and home of the supreme good puzzles me' (3.11.5). Here is a Ciceronian periodic sentence:

> Because truth, O Emperor Constantine, is still thought to lurk in obscurity, whether from the ignorance and inexperience of ordinary men who are slaves to a variety of silly superstitions, or from the attempts of philosophers in their intellectual wickedness to muddy things rather than clarify them, I wish I had a faculty of eloquence which, if not the same as Cicero's—that was something quite specially remarkable—was at least close to it; then truth could lean on my powers of intelligence as much as it does on its own strength, and one day it could rise up and shake off confusions, whether general or peculiar to those thought wise, dispelling them all, and it could bring its light of great brightness upon all mankind. (3.1.1)

Metaphor, diction, and rhythm in this text are smashing; I found it a page turner, and a major advance in the art of translating ancient works.

The authors have chosen to include certain passages found in some MSS but not the main tradition and heretofore relegated to footnotes and appendices. These addresses to Constantine, with certain other passages often thought to exhibit dualistic thought, are entirely Lactantian and could well belong to a second edition of his own making; see Eberhard Heck, 'Die dualistischen Zusätze und die Kaiseranreden bei Lactanz', *Studia Patristica* 13 (1975), 185–8. They are most welcome in the main body of this text. The footnotes provide citations for Lactantius' frequent use of authorities, as well as extremely helpful background and explanation in history, literature, philosophy, and theology. The Select Bibliography is broad and detailed, and the indices of topics and

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proper names thorough. The volume is superb in every way, and should prove enormously useful and attractive to its multiple audience.

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DE VIRGINITATE

N. ADKIN: *Jerome on Virginity. A Commentary on the* Libellus de virginitate servanda *(Letter 22)*. (ARCA Classical and Medieval Texts, Papers and Monographs 42.) Pp. xxxvi + 458. Cambridge: Francis Cairns, 2003. Cased, £75, US$120. ISBN: 0-905205-38-3.

In the past three decades Jerome studies have enjoyed a veritable renaissance. Monographs, translations, commentaries, and legions of articles in several languages continue to proliferate, taking aim at various aspects of Jerome's life and work, from the prosopographical and biographical to the exegetical and epistolary. The new commentary by Neil Adkin on Jerome's *Letter* 22 is a significant addition to this already burgeoning bibliography. *Letter* 22, a treatise (*libellus*) cast in epistolary form, was addressed in the middle 380s A.D. to a Christian teenager, Julia Eustochium, who belonged to one of the wealthiest families of late fourth-century Rome. In this letter the thirty-something Jerome plays the dubious part of sage, doling out advice on how a young maiden of high social standing (Eustochium) is to keep her virginity intact while navigating among the precarious temptations and luxuries of the aristocratic lifestyle. This was Jerome's most famous (or infamous?) letter during his own lifetime and throughout the Middle Ages and Renaissance, as its staggeringly complex manuscript tradition attests. It is fitting that *Letter* 22 finally receives its first full-length commentary by a noted scholar who is uniquely suited for the task, having authored to date dozens of articles on this letter and on Jerome's compositional technique in general.

In addition to the commentary, which runs to *c*. 400 pages, the book contains an introduction, six indices, and an exhaustive bibliography. In the brief eleven-page introduction A. gives an assessment of Jerome as a stylist that complements and enhances current scholarly understanding. A.'s Jerome is not really an independent thinker capable of creative thoughts. Instead, he is an intertextual artist with a 'magpie mind and a vast memory' who retains and reproduces in *Letter* 22 'flashy formulations or clever conceits . . . encountered in his voracious reading of other authors' (p. 2). Jerome liberally juxtaposes biblical, classical, and patristic phraseology to his own in order to pad his discourse with an air of authority and to dazzle unsuspecting readers with his rhetorical prowess. Keeping an eye on this trend, A. calls attention to some previously unnoticed classical intertexts that Jerome sneakily adapts but does not cite, such as a Terentian *dictum* (*Eun*. 251–2 cited at *Letter* 22.24; see pp. 213–15). A.'s Jerome is plagiaristic, beyond even the lax standards of the ancient world, for two basic reasons: to compensate for his own lack of originality, and to stay afloat in an extremely competitive market of Christian ascetic writing. But, as A. emphasizes, in his skillful adaptation of others' material Jerome shows off his talent as a brilliant stylist and weaver of elegant textual mosaics.

A. knows well the ins and outs of Late Latin idiom, and his insights succeed at clueing modern readers into how forcefully Jerome's language with its vivid cadences

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