None of this detracts significantly from the quality of the work, but it all adds up to the impression, reinforced by the obtrusive use of modern parallels and personal reminiscence ('I have always had a soft spot in my heart for the Arch of Constantine', begins Chapter 2), that H.'s book is intended as a scholarly and meticulous guidebook. As such, it is indeed useful: it is ultra-reliable in its command and use of the secondary literature; and the stunning illustrations matched with clear exposition have made a lot of things clearer to me than they were before. I would certainly recommend it to undergraduates interested in familiarizing themselves with the Christian archaeology of Rome; and it will be invaluable as a handbook for when Krautheimer's *CBCR* is out of reach—which for me is most of the time. Nothing more than that, however, is to be expected.

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doi:10.1093/clrevj/bni349

CONFORMED TO THIS WORLD?

G. CLARK: *Christianity and Roman Society*. (Key Themes in Ancient History.) Pp. xii + 137. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004. Paper, £15.99, US$24.99 (Cased, £45, US$75). ISBN: 0-521-63386-9 (0-521-63310-9 hbk).

Succinct histories of early Christianity gain coherence from their authors' professional skills and characteristic preoccupations. Professor Clark's focus is sharp and honest. She wants to explain the roots of a faith she subscribes to: in a 'pluralist "post-Christian" society', education tells 'the majority of students . . . very little about what it might mean to call oneself Christian' (pp. 1–2). At the same time, 'this is a historian's, not a theologian's, book' (p. 8); and history here means the history of late classical antiquity.

Coherence comes at a price. The author knows the company she must keep: 'classicists and medievalists, historians and art historians, anthropologists and archaeologists, theologians and legal historians, papyrologists and epigraphers'. She knows the importance of linguistic breadth and sympathy for other religions (Judaism and Islam). She admits that scholars today 'prefer to talk in terms of diversity and pluralism, shifting frontiers and blurred boundaries' (p. 14). Yet, the book remains 'a historian's . . . book', and a classical historian's at that.

Even so, it is remarkable for its integration of narrative and reflection. Both the author's judgement and the practices of contemporary scholarship become, without compromise or condescension, essential to the story. And she can clothe her objective modernity in a humour that never robs her observations of their point. She is particularly astute in her scrutiny of the modern fascination with the body (in respect to both sex and diet), and is ready to censure past extremes.

The main argument is straightforward and convincing: early Christianity, at least to the time of Justinian, bore all the marks of classical culture. In response to Ramsey MacMullen's notorious question, 'What difference did Christianity make?', C. asks simply, 'What difference would you expect?' (p. 107). There *were* differences, of course, and she describes them; but Christianity is presented as neither destructive nor parasitic, neither a substitute nor a forgery: it was the religious face of late Roman classical tradition. It constantly rubbed shoulders, in the author's account, with established views on the structure and destiny of the cosmos and the human person,

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https://doi.org/10.1093/clrevj/bni350 Published online by Cambridge University Press

on a citizen's religious duties, on virtue and literary culture; a proximity that functioned partly as a challenge, partly as a gesture of imitation and dependence. Its assertion of difference never undermined its openness to collaboration. Displacement never disguised compatibility. Even the heroism of the martyr foreshadowed debate (after Constantine) about the appropriate relationship between the religious and the secular.

So, what were the differences? What set Christianity apart from other 'elective cults'? Self-sacrifice counted for most, the author thinks: a readiness to die for one's beliefs, and a readiness (in varying degrees) to 'give to the destitute'. The notion of 'philosophy', of commitment to a moral régime, was also more broadly defined—not least because of Christianity's greater attachment to a large corpus of religious texts. Christian philosophers were also more subtle (the author argues) in their attention to 'thoughts', to distracting emotions and consuming desires, which traditional men of virtue had been more eager to ignore than to resolve.

More pages are devoted here to those convictions than to theology in any narrow sense. The author believes that 'orthodoxy' was defined, at least in part, by people's readiness to concern themselves with the spiritual well-being of others—although she presents a convincing argument that 'orthodoxy', as eventually defined, was essential to the maintenance of a coherent salvation narrative; a narrative that described, explained, and preserved a lasting bond between the human and the divine.

And what of Constantine, of the 'triumphant' church? Here, 'difference' was first betrayed in the emperor's interference over the Donatist affair; and the implications were then played out through the century that followed. The resulting stresses within the Christian community (deplored, I may say, as much by bishops as by anchorites) counted for more than any attempt to supplant the old religion.

I value in a book like this a certain detachment from doctrinal strife. Where it falters is in failing to ask how the inner structures of the Christian community supported its expansive and idiosyncratic approach to cosmology, morality, and the intellectual life. There is little here about leadership and authority in the early phases, about the construction and impact of liturgy and art, about dreams, prayers, fears, and the imagination. C. opens her survey with the question, 'How did a tiny, politically suspect, religious splinter group become the dominant religion of the Roman world?' (p. 1). The question is, of course, spot on, and, as we read the book, we can see the process taking place, thanks to the author's breadth, verve, and clarity. But 'how', and certainly 'why', are questions left in the air: C. ends with what purports to be Augustine's opinion: 'religious believers cannot separate themselves from the society of which they are part' (p. 117). Just how seriously, one wonders, did they try?

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doi:10.1093/clrevj/bni350

PAUL'S WOMEN

B. W. WINTER: *Roman Wives, Roman Widows. The Appearance of New Women and the Pauline Communities*. Pp. xviii + 236. Grand Rapids, MI and Cambridge: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2003. Paper, US$26, £18.99. ISBN: 0-8028-4971-7.

For many years the Divinity School at Vanderbilt University has maintained a superbly equipped library. There is almost nothing by way of texts, commentaries, or

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https://doi.org/10.1093/clrevj/bni350 Published online by Cambridge University Press