

As a theologian, I would like to know how Constantine could have hoped to reconcile contending parties in A.D. 325 by the assertion that the Son and the Father were distinct *ousiai* — the very doctrine (if expressed in those Greek terms) which was condemned a few months before the Nicene Council at the synod of Antioch (222). Again, the bitterest enemy of Marcellus of Ancyra would not have wished to see him anathematized for teaching that ‘the world would end’ (283): the heresy lies in holding that the passing away of this world will be followed by the abdication of Christ. The theology of Constantine is occasionally both subtle and original, leaving no doubt that, like Henry VIII and both our Cromwells, he was every crooked inch a Christian. P.’s concern, however, is with Constantine the emperor, and though he does not quote the phrase, he understands exactly what was implied by his protagonist’s resolution to be ‘bishop (or overseer) of those outside’.

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J. BARDILL, *CONSTANTINE, DIVINE EMPEROR OF THE CHRISTIAN GOLDEN AGE*.  
 Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012. Pp. xxx + 440, illus. ISBN 9780521764230.  
 £65.00/US\$99.00.

Recently, the 1700th anniversary of the acclamation of Constantine (hereafter C.) in 306 C.E. prompted a spate of exhibitions and symposia at museums across Europe and the UK. Bardill’s study of the reign is the first to take advantage of the numerous but scattered insights these gatherings generated — and also the first to take visual evidence as seriously as it takes texts. Starting from the premise that court monuments offer a truer reflection of C.’s own thinking than the partisan writings of Eusebius, Bishop of Caesarea, B. focuses on a handful of iconographic signifiers such as the youthful visage, upturned gaze, diadem and rayed crown. These featured not only on coins but also on a number of large-scale monuments, including, B. argues, the now-lost nude statue of C. that topped his porphyry column at the centre of the new forum in Constantinople, dedicated in an elaborate ceremony near the end of C.’s reign. B.’s desire to understand this somewhat baffling monument drives the entire study. *Contra* those such as T. Barnes, C. Odahl, P. Veyne or M. Edwards who see C. as a fully-committed Christian from early in his reign, and who understand his brand of Christianity as very similar to our own, B. offers a nuanced assessment of what it was about Christianity that might have appealed to a ruler who had reunited the Roman Empire after a century of division and strife. His central claim is that for C., Christianity was a monotheistic solar cult that harmonized easily with long-standing traditions of divine rulership. Though pieces of this argument have been made by others before B., the whole offered here is more than the sum of its parts.

One of the many commendable features of B.’s model is how much it can account for. Most scholars have assumed that phenomena like the persistence of Sol on C.’s coins, or the permission C. granted to the city of Hispellum to construct a temple to the Flavian dynasty, or the rayed crown he was shown wearing on the column statue in Constantinople, must indicate the incompleteness or insincerity of his conversion in 312 C.E. For B., however, these are not contradictions, but rather complementary components of C.’s grand, unified and fervently-held vision of divine, solar kingship, a vision that was capacious, compelling and deeply-rooted enough that all inhabitants of the Roman Empire could get behind it.

On the other hand, the multi-facetedness of B.’s paradigm can at times overtax both the evidence and the reader’s patience. The same monuments come back again and again as new layers of possible meaning are grafted on. The Serpent Column from the Sanctuary of Apollo at Delphi, reinstalled by C. at the Constantinople hippodrome, first features in ch. 3, on Apollo imagery. B. argues that the appropriated monument implicitly likened the deeds of the sun-god to those of the ruler: just as Apollo had slain his serpent-enemy and thereby saved the world, so C. had slain his, to similar effect. Then in ch. 9, on C. and Christ, B. further proposes that ‘given the [just discussed] equation made between Apollo and Christ by the author of Revelation’, it is also possible that with the appropriation of the Delphic monument, ‘Constantine simultaneously intended to imply a parallel between his own military successes and Christ’s victory over the serpent at the beginning of the last millennium’ (362). But, he then acknowledges, ‘although a Christian interpretation might be placed on the Serpent Column, the monument itself ... lacked cultic specificity’. Did the

intrinsic ambiguity of the monuments engender multiple interpretations? Or does it simply mean that we can never know how ancient viewers might have read them? B. vacillates between these two responses to the evidence.

At times too, B. interprets material evidence with more certainty than it deserves — or else simply misinterprets it. The nail-holes for a metal adornment on a sarcophagus at Hagia Eirene can perhaps be connected into a star-shape (which might indicate that the sarcophagus was once C.'s), but they can just as easily be connected to form other motifs as well (fig. 126). C.'s eyes on the famous Ticinum medallion do not appear upturned to me (204). The impression of 'intoxication' with 'divine spirit' that B. alleges for a portrait of Commodus (fig. 11) is more likely an accidental product of its missing nose and paint, and modern installation at an incorrect height. B. also makes much of a steelyard weight at Princeton in the form of a mantle-clad, seated figure holding a globe and shield (164). On the shield is incised a pair of horns terminating in goat heads, which, as A. Alföldi pointed out, is not unlike the motif featured on the shields of C.'s soldiers on the Arch in Rome. Like many before him, B. is so excited by this iconographic match and its apparent implications (namely that this 'statuette' must be modelled on the large-scale statue of C. erected in Rome after the Milvian victory) that he ignores — indeed, does not, apparently, even see — the steelyard figure's large, rounded and entirely female breasts. The breasts, in my view, rather complicate the identification of the figure as C.

Despite these questions about some of his claims, B.'s monograph is a major contribution to Constantine studies. His over-arching argument, that the emperor's monuments offered an open-ended set of associations that may have resonated differently for different viewers, but which cohered into a consistent vision of divinely sanctioned solar monotheism, is a welcome response to more one-dimensional interpretations of the reign. The volume is well written, thoroughly researched and handsomely produced. Its abundant illustrations include illuminating reconstructions of several key monuments in their ancient environments, such as the Constantinople hippodrome and the colossal seated statue of C. in the Basilica Nova in Rome, as well as the porphyry column in the Forum of Constantine.

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A. D. LEE, *FROM ROME TO BYZANTIUM AD 363 TO 565: THE TRANSFORMATION OF ANCIENT ROME*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2013. Pp. xviii + 337, illus. ISBN 9780748627905 (bound); 9780748627912 (paper). £95.00 (bound); £29.99 (paper).

This valuable volume completes the new Edinburgh History of Ancient Rome by providing an overview of the period from the death of the emperor Julian to that of Justinian. While the preceding two volumes in the series, by Clifford Ando and Jill Harries, dealt respectively with ninety-one and seventy-nine years of Roman history, Doug Lee covers two centuries in a book of similar length. This relatively large chronological span means that individual figures, with the possible exception of Justinian, do not receive the same detailed coverage given, for example, to Constantine and Julian by Harries. In working with a larger canvas, however, this volume is successful in illuminating broader trends for the reader, not only by examining the most famous themes of the end of Roman rule in the West and the development of a Christian empire, but also by tracing continuities in other areas, such as the mechanisms of court intrigue and imperial succession, and the workings of the Empire's great urban centres.

After a brief first chapter that sets the scene by outlining the state of the Empire at the death of Julian, chs 2 and 3 establish the book's general working principle of looking at each sub-division of the period from the perspectives of political events, foreign policy and religious issues, examining each in turn. Part I is concerned with the three decades from Jovian to Theodosius I, with the first half of ch. 2 providing a political narrative, while the second half looks successively at the Persian frontier, the Rhine and middle Danube, and finally the lower Danube, giving, as one would expect, significant attention to the Battle of Adrianople and surrounding events. Ch. 3 covers the religious history of these decades, exploring relationships between Christians and pagans, as well as internal divisions within Christianity. This account proceeds through the key moments that often appear in narratives of this period, such as the Altar of Victory controversy, Justina's confrontation with Ambrose and the destruction of the Serapeum, although this is far