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Review of *Augustine: De Civitate Dei (The City of God), Books I & II*, edited with an Introduction, Translation and Commentary by P.G. Walsh

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context (pp. 127–81) and evaluates their influence on later Latin exegetes (pp. 182–246). In the context of his study C. was certainly right to focus on Paulinism and Pauline exegesis. Yet in view of Victorinus' importance for the development of a Latin commentary tradition (philosophical as well as biblical) more work on the commentary genre in connection with his extant commentaries needs to be done. To illustrate this point in brief: C. has a section 'Genre of the Commentary' (pp. 110–26) in which he distinguishes *scholia* and *quaestiones* from 'full treatments of the text commented on', before he discusses Victorinus' description of his exposition as *simplex* in the context of the distinction between literal and allegorical exegesis. This discussion is undoubtedly useful. But a discussion of the commentary genre in connection with Victorinus' commentaries requires more than that. It is more than the mere fact that Victorinus' 'commentaries are ... running expositions of the biblical text that distinguishes them from the fullness of Origen or the brevity of Pelagius' (p. 111). Interestingly, the notes on the translation contain material that could be used for such a study. For example, on p. 293 n. 179 C. refers to a passage in the commentary on Cicero's *De inuentione* which could have informed an exegesis of Gal. 3:20, and on p. 300 n. 21 C. notes that an attempt to explain the meaning of the Aristotelian term *accidens* in *De definitionibus* might well cast light on his understanding of Gal. 3:28 ('for there is neither Jew nor Greek, neither slave nor free, neither male nor female'); for already in that pre-Christian work Victorinus had understood social distinctions as accidental: '“free” and “slave” are not parts of a human being but accidents which accrue to a person'. A systematic study of Victorinus' other commentaries (or commentary fragments) and a comparison of the techniques used there with those used in the Pauline commentaries might just show to what extent Victorinus' rhetorical professionalism influenced his biblical exegesis and that of later Latin commentators. C. points in the right direction, but, at least in this reviewer's opinion, he has not yet completed the whole task.

Thus this book represents an achievement. It is well worth reading. Its display of scholarship is impressive, including its discussion of international scholarship. C. has made an important contribution to the study of the life and work of Marius Victorinus, Latin Paulinism and early Christian Pauline exegesis. In addition he has outlined a task which this reviewer thinks might still be worth doing, namely to trace the role of Marius Victorinus in the history and early development of the Latin biblical and philosophical commentary tradition.

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THE CITY OF GOD

WALSH (P. G.) *Augustine: De civitate Dei (The City of God), Books I & II. Edited with an Introduction, Translation and Commentary.* (Aris & Phillips Classical Texts.) Pp. viii + 228. Oxford: Oxbow Books, 2005. Paper, £16.50. ISBN: 0-85668-753-7 (0-85668-752-9 hbk).

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You have to admire the energy with which Augustine marches forth in the *City of God* to make an almost impossible argument – persuading the unconvinced that Rome's

fall to Alaric and his troops had nothing to do with its realignment into *tempora Christiana*. This he achieves, in the early books of his *magnum opus et arduum*, partly by his rhetorical remorselessness and partly by disorientating his readers with the systematic erosion of Roman self-mythologising. (Note his quizzical treatments of the fabled suicides of Lucretia and Cato.)

Neither the energy nor the remorseless rhetoric will necessarily translate happily into English. But Augustine is well served by P.G. Walsh. W. is, of course, an exceptionally experienced translator of texts, including verbose fifth-century ones (see his complete Paulinus); he is also experienced at dealing with texts of daunting proportions (see especially his work on Livy). And here the vigour and clarity of his translation made me feel as if I were reading the work for the first time. W. almost invariably captures the sense of urgency which pervades these early books; they read as if they were indeed new despatches. (The immediacy of Augustine's project is suggested at *ciu.* 2.1.6, where he belatedly claims the right to structure his own narrative, and not to condemn himself to responding to ill-thought-out accusations.) In general, W. makes translating this very difficult material look easy, both with his assured selection of words and with effective choices about phrasing and sentence length. He has an especially happy touch with the half-hidden metaphor: for example, the significance of the bodies of the dead to 'buttress our belief in the resurrection' (*propter fidem resurrectionis astruendam*, 1.13.5); and a description of the state 'when its walls were standing but its morals were crumbling' (*stantibus moenibus, ruentibus moribus*, 1.33.2). The one place where the translation does not satisfy is, ironically, the first fiendish sentence of the preface to the work. W. leads with the addressee, 'my dearest son Marcellinus', in quasi-epistolary style; but by Augustine, Marcellinus is conspicuously subordinated to the *gloriosissimam ciuitatem dei* which opens the sentence. The demotion of the *ciuitas* here seems to be echoed in W.'s determined translation of *familia* as 'household' (1.29.1; 2.18.13) which, though technically correct, obscures the suggestive relationship between the two terms.

For W.'s commentary, the obvious comparandum is that of Welldon. W. points out that Welldon is brief and somewhat dated – to which one might add that he is whimsical and hard to find. W.'s commentary, while still quite slender, is far better paced. Albeit in summary form, he answers most of the pressing questions raised by the text. At times the notes are a masterpiece of concision. For example, at *ciu.* 2.18.12, where Augustine asks why foes attribute the fall of Rome to Christ when they don't attribute previous ills to their own gods, W. writes, 'the novelty of Augustine's analysis lies in his attributing the moral and political decline of Rome to the malevolent demons posing as the Roman gods. Traditional Romans would have countered with the view that the collapse was attributable to the abandonment of Roman virtues'. W. situates Augustine well amid the Roman historiographers who form the particular background to these two books; he seems less interested in the conversation with Cicero's *De re publica*. The treatment of Virgil is mixed: W. is concerned about Virgil's presumed historicity, but Augustine himself tells us that Virgil's depictions carry general truth (1.4.7), and we must suppose his audience thought likewise.

W. says nothing about the original audience in his very brief Introduction (historical context, apologetic context, sources, and so on); we have to wait for a note on 1.16.1, explaining that the work was 'written primarily for Christians troubled by charges that Christianity was responsible for the fall of Rome', despite the occasional address to anti-Christian opponents. This epitomises his rather *ad hoc* attitude to commentary as a whole. Only rarely are the books translated here compared with

stylistic or thematic traits in later books, and their structure is, for the most part, left to be inferred from the translation. The clarity of the translation makes the strategy viable; none the less, those new to the work may feel a little at sea in Augustine's turbulent and circumstantial arguments.

Three appendices complete W.'s work: the relevant passage from *retr.*; the letter to Firmus, directing how *ciu.* should be bound and distributed; and a short essay on Roman and Christian attitudes to suicide, expanding on the notes to 1.16–27.

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AUGUSTINE AND THE LIBERAL ARTS

POLLMANN (K.), VESSEY (M.) (edd.) *Augustine and the Disciplines: from Cassiciacum to Confessions*. Pp. xii + 258. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005. Cased, £45. ISBN: 0-19-927485-1.
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This volume, a collection of papers presented at a conference at Villanova University in 2000, seeks to redress the traditional tendency to take Augustine, so to speak, for granted, as a mediator, representative of his age, between ancient and medieval and early modern intellectual and literary culture. In contrast it wants to highlight the idiosyncrasy of Augustine's choices and the unlikeliness of his mediating role. It also aims to throw some light on the *prima facie* contradictory notion that Augustine was not only one of the founding fathers of medieval and modern traditions of biblical interpretation, but that he also played a vital role in the process of transmitting the system of the 'disciplines' or 'liberal arts'. It does so by progressing in three steps. A first group of contributions deals with the educational context of Augustine's achievement, a second group focusses on the role of the 'disciplines' within that context, and a third group shows how, with his concept of *doctrina Christiana*, Augustine tried to free himself from the straitjacket of the disciplines to develop his method of biblical interpretation, his 'hermeneutics', as a 'universal discipline' (p. 206). This review can only provide a few glimpses of the tremendous amount of scholarship on display in this volume.

In the first paper Neil McLynn compares Augustine's higher education in Carthage with that of Gregory of Nazianzus in Athens. Similarities are outweighed by differences. Unlike Gregory, Augustine has little or nothing to say about teachers, schools, student associations, competitive public displays of learning, in short, any kind of inspiration in connection with formal education. Augustine seems to have studied what turned out to be key texts for him in solitude, without a Basil to discuss them. When he dedicates a work to a professor, it is someone in Rome. His most important contacts in Carthage are not professors and fellow students, but his mother, his partner and a friend from his home town. While Gregory's Athens is looking down on Alexandria, Augustine's Carthage is looking up to Rome. Gregory was proud of being a Christian in a 'dangerously pagan environment'; Augustine was driven to the Manichees, because the kind of Christianity which he encountered did not appeal to him intellectually. Gregory graduated in