

*Vita Constantini* fits this scheme; or how the *Vita Constantini*, which according to Cameron and Hall 'is clearly a work of apologetic' (12), compares with Eusebius' other writings, such as his works against the pagans (and see the pertinent analysis by Aryeh Kofsky in his *Eusebius of Caesarea against Paganism*, 2000).

Yitzhak Hen

Ben-Gurion University of the Negev

Philip Burton, *The Old Latin Gospels. A Study of their Texts and Language*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000. xi + 232 pp. ISBN 0 19 826988 9.

There is plenty of evidence, although extremely fragmentary, that various versions of Latin translations of the Bible were already in circulation around Gaul and North Africa before the end of the second century. These versions, commonly known as the *Vetus Latina*, were later replaced by Jerome's Vulgate, which gradually became the standard authoritative Latin translation of the Bible throughout Christendom. Unfortunately, though, for large parts of the Bible no manuscript is extant, and knowledge of the Old Latin translations derives exclusively from quotations preserved in the writings of Church Fathers, such as Cyprian of Carthage, Novatian or Tertullian. Traditionally, the Old Latin translations are divided into two major 'traditions' — the so-called 'African tradition', represented by the *Codex Bobbiensis* and the *Codex Palatinus*; and the 'European tradition', which is further divided into the 'North Italian class', represented mainly by the *Codex Monacensis* and the *Codex Brixianus*, and the 'Mixed Texts'. Given the fragmentary nature of our evidence, this division is far from being neat and straightforward.

Some thirty manuscripts (several of which are very fragmentary) of the Old Latin translations of the four Gospels survive, and it is on these manuscript versions that Philip Burton concentrates in his admirable study. In the first part of his book, Burton surveys the various manuscripts and traditions, compares the different versions of the four Gospels, and concludes that a single version can be postulated for the three synoptic Gospels, since '... there are too many instances which without resorting to special pleading can only be explained as a result of a common heritage' (61). As far as the Gospel of John is concerned, Burton identifies two distinctive traditions.

In the second part of the book, after a short introduction on antique and modern theories of translation, Burton analyses various aspects of the Old Latin translations, and his conclusion rightly puts into question the traditional description of the *Vetus Latina* as 'hopelessly literal' and vulgar. The translators, argues Burton, '... are prepared to show flexibility in their renderings, and are able to distinguish various nuances implied by the same Greek word' (94). Moreover, 'while the translators do employ many vulgarisms and post-classical usages, ... they are also willing to ransack the lexicon in order to find exactly the right word; and while they often distort natural Latin idiom out of respect for the original, they are also prepared to use technical words and sets of expressions that are not literal renderings of the Greek' (111-12). These, according to Burton, suggest that the translators were educated native Latin speakers.

In the third part Burton examines the translations' Latinity, lexicon, morphology and syntax, and thus strengthens his conclusions from the previous chapter. The Old Latin Gospels, according to Burton, should not be regarded as an example of 'vulgar Latin', not the least because the concept of 'vulgar Latin' as a separate linguistic entity is untenable. Although the language of the Old Latin Gospels '... shows many constructions belonging to sub-literary registers, and is often heavily distorted by the Greek...', these texts '... are not the most vulgarised of Latin texts, nor are the translations wholly literal. Instead we find some obsolete or obsolescent constructions revived, either because they provide the nearest equivalent to the Greek or apparently out of a certain conservatism on the part of the translators. Moreover, the translators from time to time show a native speaker's command of Latin in choosing between several possible Latin constructions for a

particular Greek idiom and selecting the one most appropriate to the context...' (191). The jewel in the crown, to my mind, is Burton's short appendix on Jerome's translation technique. In it, Burton manages to demonstrate quite persuasively that Jerome's Vulgate translation of the Gospels is often more literal (and consequently less comprehensible) than that of his Old Latin models, although he claimed otherwise.

No doubt scholars in the future will question some of Burton's conclusions (especially the one regarding the common source of the three synoptic Gospels). Nevertheless, Burton's book is an extremely important discussion of a fascinating and complex subject, and it deserves a very warm welcome indeed. Furthermore, Burton's clarity, acumen and blessed brevity, are to be applauded.

Yitzhak Hen

Ben-Gurion University of the Negev

Doron Mendels, *The Media Revolution of Early Christianity. An Essay on Eusebius' Ecclesiastical History*. Grand Rapids and Cambridge: Eerdmans, 1999. x + 270 pp. ISBN 0 8028 4610 6.

The idea of comparing the procedures of ancient writers to those of journalism is not new, whether in relation to the distortions of Julius Caesar, or even the 'artful' reporting of Thucydides (to take the title of a well-known book of some decades ago). But here we have something different, far more sustained and thoroughgoing, and also more arresting. First, this study of Eusebius' *Ecclesiastical History* (*HE*), by the distinguished Jerusalem historian Doron Mendels, achieves sustained concentration, from beginning to end, on the way history is created and communicated, over a wide front. Mendels casts an acute and experienced eye over the processes of selectivity, distortion, manipulation, dramatization, in short, at the way this writer produces news. Second, Mendels takes the bold and adventurous step of putting this enterprise within a theoretical framework which may be somewhat surprising to classicists. He has read extensively in the relatively new discipline of Media Studies and harnesses in a particularly relevant way concepts and language current in this branch of the broader enterprise of Cultural Studies, which addresses itself to analysis of the press (whether tabloid or broadsheet) and television (or for that matter radio) — not, it seems, always clearly differentiated by researchers — as well as the world of advertising. Third, in dealing with a work of history which not only records but is itself a constructive part of a major transformation in society and religion, he has chosen a subject for which this approach is especially apt and fruitful. Even those who dislike Eusebius find it hard to avoid viewing the history of early Christianity in the historian's terms. And fourth, in writing about the growth of the Church, so dependent on active propagation and brilliant communication, that is to say on the entirely new and successful idea of a mission, Mendels has been able to shed light on the entire historical process of the conversion of the Roman Empire, not just on his chosen author.

The advantage of Mendels' systematic importation of modern categories is that it directs attention to fundamental aspects of Eusebius which are very much in need of serious study and have been hitherto surprisingly under-explored. Many commentators have offered observations on Eusebius' invention of a new form of historical narrative, designed to suit an entirely new kind of subject — something which the church historian himself announces at the opening of the work and elsewhere in it. Arnaldo Momigliano, in a justly famous article of 1977, highlighted the historian's innovations, especially in the use of documentary material. Less sympathetic voices, from Burckhardt on, have roundly accused Eusebius of dishonesty. But, even though no reader can be unaware of their presence, there has been surprisingly little study of the rhetorical, persuasive and sensationalizing aspects of Eusebius' narrative. Familiar terms like 'rhetoric', 'propaganda', 'pathos', 'biographical sketches', 'mixed audience', 'the outside world' appear little if at all in Mendels' analysis. Instead we have 'publicity', 'marketing', 'media events', 'personalization',