

G.W. Bowersock (trans.), *Lorenzo Valla, On the Donation of Constantine. The I Tatti Renaissance Library, 24.* Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2007. Pp. xvi, 206. ISBN 10: 0-674-02533-4. ISBN 13: 978-0-674-02533-2. \$29.95.

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This book, volume 24 of the I Tatti Renaissance Library, contains a new translation of Lorenzo Valla's (1407-1457) famous work *De falso credita et ementita Constantini donatione*, with a facing Latin text and endnotes keyed to the translation (p. 2-161; 187-195). The Latin text and translation are preceded by an historical introduction on the genesis of the work and its reception in the sixteenth century (p. vi-xv), and followed by the Latin text and translation of the *Constitutum Constantini* (p. 162-183; notes at p. 195-198). A short bibliography and an index (p. 199-206) conclude the volume.

The *Constitutum Constantini* is a fake medieval charter the origin of which is disputed. It consists of two parts, the first containing the legend of Constantine and Silvester, the second comprising the actual Donation of Constantine, in which the Roman emperor donates the Lateran Palace and the rule of the City of Rome and the entire Western Roman Empire to the pope, who had baptized him and cured him of leprosy. The earliest source of this forgery is the Pseudo-Isidorian False Decretals, a collection of canonical texts dating from around 850. Although the Donation contains flagrant historical mistakes, as Marsilius of Padua (ca. 1280-1342/3) had already showed, several medieval popes used it to support their claim to worldly power. In Lorenzo Valla's time the Donation was included in the glosses (*paleae*) to the *Decretum Gratiani*, an important collection of canonical texts from the twelfth century. During the Council of Ferrara and Florence (1438-1439) it was used once more to support the primacy of the pope. As his correspondence reveals, Valla took a keen interest in all the theological and legal issues discussed at this Council. In the first part of 1440 he wrote his famous treatise, in which he both exposes the Donation as a clumsy artefact by a stupid deceiver and condemns in a sharp polemical tone the pope's claim to worldly power, which everyone took for granted. The historical background to Valla's work is duly passed in review in the introduction, but one feels that the author could have argued more clearly that the issue at stake for Valla was theological and moral rather than scholarly or political.

Valla's treatise is cast in the form of a speech, or rather, several speeches, addressed both to historical figures such as the forger of the Donation, and to the peoples and rulers of his own time. Valla called it an *oratio*; in the sixteenth century it was commonly labelled a *declamatio*. Bowersock writes in the introduction that Valla's attack on the Donation is 'an extension of his literary and philosophical interests' (p. vii) and that it is 'rewarding simply as a bravura exercise in rhetoric and philology' (p. x). These judgments fail in my view to fully recognize the theological and moral objective Valla set himself with this fervent piece of rhetoric. Valla declares at the beginning of his argument that he musters up his courage to face condemnation by the pope in defense of truth and justice: 'Forti animo, magna fiducia, bona spe defendenda est causa veritatis, causa iustitiae, causa Dei! Neque enim verus est habendus orator, qui bene

scit dicere, nisi et dicere audeat.' (With a bold spirit, great confidence, and good hope, the cause of truth, the cause of justice, and the cause of God must be defended. No one who knows to speak well can be considered a true orator unless he also dares to speak out; section 2, p. 5). He confirms his determination to stand firm for the good cause in a letter to Ludovico Trevisan from 19 November 1443, quoted in the introduction, in which he writes that 'he could not suppress or emend the work even if he had to' (p. ix). This spirit is also conveyed in a letter from 31 December of the same year to his Greek teacher Giovanni Aurispa, also quoted (p. viii), in which he made the significant statement that his work on the Donation of Constantine is the most oratorical speech he had ever written ('oratio qua nihil magis oratorium scripsi'). Valla's impassioned yet steadfast plea against the pope's claim to worldly power is his way to give shape to the classical ideal of the orator as a *vir bonus* who acts as a responsible leader in the public areas proper to him. Initially it failed to attract due attention, but when the humanist and reformed scholar Ulrich von Hutten printed it in 1518 and 1519 to press home Valla's example, its power as a political pamphlet (*declamatio*) against the Church became manifest at last, and it gained the celebrity it deserved. Unlike the translation included in the edition of Valla's treatise by Christopher Coleman (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1922, reprinted by the University of Toronto Press, 1993), Bowersock's translation is not only meant to help readers who wish to study Valla's Latin, but also to supply an independent English counterpart. It succeeds happily in both respects, and given the complexity of the subject matter and the brilliance of Valla's prose, this is a great achievement. I venture a single remark on the translation of 'paginam privilegii' in section 40 (p. 65). The translation 'the text of the grant' does not adequately represent the medieval sense of the word ('document, charter'), which Valla ridicules here and, more elaborately, in section 66, where he dwells on the correct, classical meaning of the word; in section 69, Valla employs with sarcasm the word in its medieval sense: 'pagine exemplar', this time properly translated as 'a copy of the document' (p. 115). In the endnotes keyed to the translation the historical, biblical and juridical quotations and references in Valla's text are duly identified, occasionally supplemented with brief explanations. The bulk of the material for the notes is drawn from Wolfram Setz's excellent critical edition of Valla's treatise (Weimar: Hermann Böhlaus Nachfolger, 1976; reprint München: Monumenta Germaniae Historica, 1986). I noticed only two small errors: in section 4, the source of the quotation 'avaritie, que est *idolorum servitus*' (Ephesians 5.5) has been omitted in the notes; in section 78, both Setz and Bowersock have overlooked that in the passage 'Nec persuaderi possum hos scriptores ... fuisse ... fideles habentes quidem emulationem Dei, sed non secundum scientiam, ...' Valla quotes Romans 10.2. On the whole, both the translation and the accompanying notes are of good quality and can very well be recommended to anyone interested in the subject matter.

The Latin text is presented in a division into six parts, numbered I to VI, that goes back to Valla himself. Within these parts, sections are numbered consecutively from 1 to 97. In the editorial note it is said that the Latin text is that of the already mentioned Wolfram Setz (1976), with minor changes, specified as follows: the few typographical errors which occur in Setz have been corrected, punctuation has been altered in four places, italics have been added in one passage where Setz missed a quotation from Virgil, and Setz's paragraphs have occasionally been altered to harmonize with the translation (p. 185). In fact, however, I have counted some thirty places where the punctuation has been changed and three places where italics have been removed. Worse, Setz's carefully established orthography has been altered arbitrarily throughout. As the spelling varies in the different manuscripts, Setz has followed Valla's own practice as far as it can be reconstructed from surviving autographs of his other works (Introduction of Setz's edition, p. 51). Bowersock's edition, while retaining several characteristics of Valla's spelling -- notably *e* instead of *ae* and *oe*; *n* instead of *m* before *c*, *d*,

t, *q* and *f* (though in section 21, *quandiu* has been changed into *quamdiu*); *op*- and *sup*- instead of *ob*- and *sub*- before *t* --, has reversed two others:

1. Valla's habit of writing separately the enclitics *-ve* and *-ne*, as well as *et si*, *quis nam*, *tam et si* (but *tam et si* has been maintained in section 81, and we read *tam etsi* in sections 66 and 77). Valla's *tam diu* has been maintained everywhere.

2. Valla's habit of writing in one word *idest* (while *iandudum*, *necnon*, *nequis*, *quandiu* have been maintained).

Moreover, Valla's *benivolentia*, *iocundius*, *iccirco* have been changed to *benevolentia*, *iucundius* and *idcirco*, while his usage of dropping *s* after *ex*- has been maintained, except in sections 1 (*exsecratione*) and 4 (*expectare*).

Finally, Setz's spelling, based on a close study of the entire manuscript tradition, has been changed in: *temptabunt/tentabunt* (section 16), *mediusfidius/medius fidius* (section 17), *Trachiam/Traciam* (sections 46, 47 and 48), *pretiosis/preciosis* (section 50), *prodiisset/prodisset* (section 75), *genitricis/genetricis* (section 78), *condicione/conditione* (section 90), *T. Flaminius/Titus Flaminius* (section 94). Quite remarkably, Bowersock's spelling of these words is also that of Coleman's edition. Moreover, in twelve places Bowersock follows the reading of Coleman's text, not Setz's: *sacerdotem/pontificem* (section 1), *agnoscat/agnoscant* (section 16), *dignationem/dignitatem* (section 26), *sufficiet/sufficiat* (section 32), *alio volebat/volebat alio* (section 45), *patescet/patescit* (section 49), *senatorem quam patricium esse/senatorem esse quam patricium* (section 54), *videt/vidit* (section 57; the translation maintains the present tense), *et tueor/ac tueor*, and the erroneous *aerem/erem* (section 74), *quenquam/quenque* (section 89), *possimus/possumus* (section 96).

Altogether, these numerous changes reveal that Bowersock's text does not reproduce that of Setz, as it is claimed in the editorial note, and it lacks any explanation of its own editorial principles.

In an appendix the complete Latin text of the *Constitutum Constantini* is given with a facing English translation and notes. The Latin text is that of Horst Fuhrmann, who made a thorough study of the long and complicated manuscript tradition of the *Constitutum Constantini* (Hannover: Hahnsche Buchhandlung, 1968), with minor changes adopted from other versions than the one followed by Fuhrmann (in addition to the changes mentioned in the editorial note, p. 186, Bowersock reads 'domino' instead of 'domno' in section 20). This appendix is a useful addition to Valla's text, but we must not forget that Valla read the Donation (i.e., the second part of the *Constitutum Constantini*) in the *Decretum Gratiani*, namely in part 1, Distinctio XCVI (a chapter devoted to the relations of power between the pope and the emperor), canons 13 and 14 (*Corpus iuris canonici*, vol. 1, ed. Aem. Friedberg, Leipzig: B. Tauchnitz, 1897, reprint Graz: Akademische Druck- und Verlagsanstalt, 1995, 342-345; this text is reproduced in Coleman's edition of Valla's treatise, p. 10-19).

A bibliography and a brief index of names and subjects conclude the volume.

All in all, this new edition of Valla's Oration on the Donation of Constantine leaves one with mixed feelings. Valla's great work brilliantly exemplifies the essential characteristics of fifteenth-century Renaissance humanism and played an important role in the vigorous sixteenth-century debate on the religious and political position of the Church and the Vatican

State. For these reasons, we can only be very thankful that the I Tatti Renaissance Library has made it accessible to a wide audience by means of a good annotated translation. Regrettably, the accompanying Latin text falls short of what may be expected from a scholarly publication of the status vouched for by a leading University Press.