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Forum Antike

Online



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Constantine the Reader. Exegesis and Empire in the *Oration to the Assembly of the Saints*

What does it mean for an emperor to publicly engage in the act of reading the Scriptures? In this paper, I will seek to answer this question by considering the significance of the theme of interpretation in the propaganda of the first Christian emperor in Roman history, Constantine (r. 306-337).

I will focus in particular on the piece, ascribed to him, which survived as an appendix to Eusebius' *Life of Constantine: the Oration to the Assembly of the Saints*.

After discussing the dating and authenticity of the *Oration*, I will argue that its long interpretive excursus focusing on Daniel, the Sibylline Oracles, and Virgil, far from being a digression, holds in fact the key to understand the message of the piece, illustrating the strategies devised by the mature Constantine to project himself as enlightened sovereign.