

of slaves, freedmen, supply sergeants, and petty accountants. The results were seriously dysfunctional» (p. x).

In a real sense, MacMullen is describing the effect of an ethic that tolerated favors and favoritism but not their sale, implicitly encouraged the practice of bribery and extortion made possible through the ambiguity of the law, the larger number and intrusiveness of laws and government bureaucrats, the isolation of the emperor, and a prevailing higher level of violence, with the result that more and more public officials exercised their authority for private profit. The consequences were a decline in power, in honor, in obligation, and in military security, as the effects of corruption were widely felt in governmental and military circles.

Certainly, MacMullen has provided us with much food for thought, though his analysis to a great degree centers on the premise of the corruptibility of human nature as the primary cause for the decline of Rome and intimates (even if he denies) that we are witnessing similar corruption and decline in American public life in our own day.

*Corruption and the Decline of Rome* is indeed another thoughtful and worthy contribution to our understanding of the functioning and malfunctioning of one of the world's most powerful political and military powers.

JOHN E. REXINE  
Colgate University

**Iamblichus: Exhortation to Philosophy.** Including the Letters of Iamblichus and Proclus' Commentary on the Chaldean Oracles. Translated from the Greek by Thomas Moore Johnson, with a Foreword by Joscelyn Godwin. Edited by Stephen Neuville. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Phanes Press. 1988. Pp. 128. Cloth \$ 25.00. Paperbound \$ 14.95.

Iamblichus of Chalcis in Syria (ca 260-330 A. D.) was a pupil of Porphyry, who was himself a pupil of Plotinus. In the *Exhortation to Philosophy* Iamblichus goes directly to Plato and Aristotle and, in Joscelyn Godwin's words in his Foreword, «reduces the immensity of Plato's and Aristotle's thought to manageable proportions» and exhorts us «to add a further dimension to our lives, and one that is definitely rich», one that would seem to suggest that «the practice of philosophy is nothing more or less than what we would call meditation». Thomas Moore Johnson's translation was done in 1907 and published in an extremely limited edition in 1920, which is now not readily available. It is now the first time that this rare work is made generally available to the greater public.

Iamblichus early argues that «wisdom alone is good and ignorance alone is evil» and that «philosophy is the desire for and the possession of science» (pp. 35-36). He makes the Platonic distinction between the body and the soul, with the soul divine and good and ruling over the body. It is a soul characterized by reason, courage, and desire. In a characteristically Platonic way, Iamblichus insists that the soul is better than the body: «For the soul is of such a nature that it urges and checks, and says what to and what not to do» (p. 47). The primary function of the soul is the acquisition of truth. The element of intellect and insight is divine, according to Iamblichus. In fact, he calls it a god. It is, of course, the soul alone that can contemplate the realities of things, that is what we know as, the Platonic Ideas.

