* I agree with your interpretation of this passage, especially with the everlasting crown being a reward for faith! However, I do think that the term “glorious confession” may not just be about confessing one’s sin and seeking forgiveness. In the context of this reading, it may also signify the act of confessing one’s belief in God and Christianity in general to the public, staying true to their faith even if it causes one to be punished; which makes sense to some extent, since Lactantius wrote this in the focus of Christians being persecuted for their beliefs, who would have signified the differing worldview. Thus, the term “everlasting crown” would be a sort of “eternal” reward they will find in heaven, to those who persevered in their faith even during times of adversity and persecution (furthermore showcasing the Roman value of honesty in oneself, like you said).
* I definitely agree with your interpretation of this quote, as it was able to showcase God’s authority and power. In Roman culture and society, there was an obvious “social hierarchy” where some groups were above others, as well as respect for those in a higher position of power. Lactantius emphasizing God’s authority would be a way to signify the Roman values of respect and “pietas” (meaning duty, devotion, and ultimately respect to the gods above humanity), which would have appealed to a Roman audience who embodied these ideals. Furthermore, I also agree that there is an overlap between these two religious’ systems. Perhaps this was done as a way to make it easier for Romans to understand Christianity? By highlighting, to some extent, the similarities that can be seen in both, it can make it somewhat more relatable for Romans.
* I completely agree with you! Lactantius being an advisor to Constantias during this time may have influenced his writing and how he portrayed Constantias. As court historian, he most likely would have had access to information pertaining to the actions of both Herculius and Constantius. This may have led him to think of Herculius as a cruel enforcer of the mandates, while his loyalty and affiliation with Constantius influenced Lactantius to speak well of him; which can be further supported if one were to assume Lactantius had knowledge of Constantius personal feelings and actions towards freedom of religion (which also signifies the Roman virtue of Libertas). Furthermore, considering the historical context behind Lactantius writing this, which involved the persecution of Christians (most definitely involving mandates of some sort), it is quite possible that Lactantius was speaking from his own experience regarding Herculius and his imposition of certain rules.
* I definitely agree with you on your interpretation of this quote. Since he was a Christian writer, his “exactly how it happened” may be through a religious interpretation of these events to further emphasize the divinity and judgement of God. Thus, I don’t think he intentionally “exaggerated events”, but it isn’t improbable that his faith influenced his perspective and his presentation of events. Despite that, I think there is some basis in Lactantius’ writing, more specifically in regards to whether or not Lactantius’ method of writing is accurate. He acknowledges that there are potential biases for future historians that may “corrupt the truth,” which shows that he has understands that writings can be influenced by the certain historian’s perspective. This is something that we don’t really see in other readings we’ve read throughout this semester, where the author recognizes bias and its consequences, and instead seem to ignore this concept altogether.