This study examines the philosophical reflections of Firmianus Lactantius (ca. 250–ca. 325) and the reactions of his readers from the fourth through the early sixteenth century. Starting with a review of his own concerns and intentions, it explores the circulation, influence, adaptations, and reappraisals of his writings on philosophy up to the stage when his texts became ubiquitous. How did readers assess his statements about philosophy? What use did they make of them? Did they consider him a philosopher? If so, of what capabilities? If they did not think of him as a philosopher, what did they take him to be? How did their perceptions of his status shape their analysis of his philosophical reasonings? As will become clear, his status as a philosopher or even his place in the history of ideas varied with changing notions of the nature, purpose, and value of philosophy. He addressed such questions himself: “There have been philosophers of remarkable literary learning,” he said, “but I would not yield place to them for knowledge and understanding of the truth: no one can achieve truth simply by thinking and arguing.” He continued: “I cast no slur on their desire to know the truth, since man’s great greed to acquire it is the doing of God; what I object to, after all that fine and excellent intention of theirs, is the utter lack of product due to their complete ignorance of what truth is and of how, where, and in what frame of mind to seek it.”

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A number of excellent studies have analyzed Lactantius’s views and use of philosophy. The classic work is René Pichon’s *Lactance: Étude sur le mouvement philosophique et religieux sous le règne de Constantin* (1901). It raised a question that continues to engage scholars working on Lactantius’s writings on philosophy: how do we account for his ostensible failure to confront the philosophic currents of his own day? This question is most pronounced in his silence on Neoplatonism and his preoccupation with Epicureanism. The latter, in the view of modern scholars, was essentially moribund by the late third and early fourth century. This question does not arise regarding his interest in Hermetic philosophy, which Antonie Wlosok explored in her *Lactanz und die*...