
Christianity in Late Antiquity

300–450 C.E.

A READER

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The Texts

3. The Origin of Constantine

Although this brief life of Constantine survives only as incorporated into a later (sixth-century) text, it may, in fact, be the earliest biographical record of the first Christian emperor. References to Constantine's Christian enthusiasm were inserted by a later Christian editor, taken mainly from the early fifth-century *History against the Pagans* by Orosius, a disciple of Augustine. The original text probably ended with the defeat of Constantine's co-emperor Licinius and the founding of Constantinople and may have been written before or soon after Constantine's death in 337. Particulars that were later expunged from Constantine's more favorable biographies still appear without apology, such as the prominent role of Constantine's eldest son Crispus (later executed by his father) and Constantine's own modest origins as the "scantly instructed" son of Constantius's first wife (or concubine), Helena. The author seems more interested in narrating Constantine's political and military legitimacy apart from religious considerations, so he highlights Constantine's (perhaps bogus) relation to the third-century Emperor Claudius Gothicus (reign ca. 268–70 C.E.); he recounts the political career of Constantine's father, Constantius; and he places great emphasis on Constantine's military hardiness and sobriety. "The Origin of Constantine" presents a favorable, but not overly tendentious, narrative of the rise of Constantine to sole rule over the Roman Empire, without the later veneer of Christian adoration or the backlash of anti-Christian resentment.

1 (1) Diocletian ruled for twenty years with Her-
 culius Maximianus. Constantius, a grand-nephew of
 the divine Claudius (Gothicus), best of princes,
 through his brother, first became protector, then trib-
 une, and afterward governor of the Dalmatias. Then
 he was made Caesar by Diocletian, along with Ga-
 lerus. Having left Helena, his previous wife, he took
 to wife Theodora, daughter of Maximianus, by
 whom he subsequently had six children, the brothers
 of Constantine. But by Helena, his previous wife, he
 already had a son, Constantine, who later became the
 most mighty of princes.

2 (2) This Constantine, therefore, was born of a
 very humble mother, Helena, in the town of Naissus
 and brought up there (he later adorned this town most
 splendidly). Having been scantily instructed in letters,
 he became a hostage with Diocletian and Galerius and
 fought bravely under them in Asia. After Diocletian
 and Her- culius had laid down their power, Constantius
 asked for Constantine back from Galerius, but Ga-
 lerus threw him into the path of many dangers. (3) For
 when he was a young man fighting in the cavalry
 against the Sarmatians, having seized a fierce barbar-
 ian by his hair, he captured him and brought him to the

feet of the emperor Galerius. Then, having been sent
 by Galerius into a swamp, he entered it on horseback
 and made a way for the rest of the army to the Sarmat-
 ians and brought victory to Galerius, having killed
 many of them. (4) Then Galerius sent him back to his
 father. And Constantine, so that he might avoid
 Severus as he was passing through Italy, crossed the
 Alps with the greatest possible speed, having killed
 the post horses behind him, and came to his father at
 Bononia, which the Gauls previously called Gesori-
 acum. After his victory over the Picts, his father Con-
 stantius died at York and Constantine, by the will of
 all the soldiers, was made Caesar.

3 (5) Meanwhile, two Caesars had been created,
 Severus and Maximinus [i.e., Maximinus Daia].
 Maximinus was given rule over Oriens, and Galerius
 kept for himself Illyricum, Thrace, and Bithynia.
 Severus took Italy and whatever Her- culius [i.e., Max-
 imianus] had previously gained. (6) After Constan-
 tius had died in Britain and Constantine his son had
 succeeded him, suddenly the Praetorian Guard in the
 city of Rome created Maxentius, the son of Her-
 culius, emperor. But at the order of Galerius, Severus
 took an army against Maxentius, but he was suddenly
 deserted by all his men and fled to Ravenna. After
 that, Galerius went to Rome with a vast force, threat-
 ening the destruction of the city, and encamped at the
 fort Interamna on the Tiber. (7) Then he sent Licinius
 and Probus to the city as ambassadors, asking, in ne-
 gotiation, that the son-in-law [Maxentius] should
 seek to obtain what he wanted from his father-in-law
 Galerius by requesting it, rather than by making war.
 This was spurned, and he learned that on account of
 Maxentius's promises, [many] men had deserted his
 side. Disturbed by this, he turned back, and so that he
 could give his army some kind of booty, he told them
 to steal things along the Via Flaminia. (8) Maximinus
 himself fled to Constantine. Then Galerius made
 Licinius Caesar in Illyricum. Next, leaving him be-
 hind in Pannonia, he himself retired to Serdica, hav-
 ing been attacked by a fearsome disease, and he so
 melted away that he died with his entrails exposed
 and rotting, in punishment for the most dreadful per-
 secution, a most just penalty returning on the author
 of a wicked edict. He had ruled for eighteen years.

4 (9) Severus Caesar was ignoble, both in his way
 of life and his birth, and an alcoholic and thus a friend
 of Galerius. It was for this reason that Galerius made
 him and Maximinus Caesars, with Constantine
 knowing nothing of the matter. To this Severus were
 given cities in Pannonia, Italy, and Africa. It is for this
 reason that Maxentius was made emperor: because
 Severus, having been abandoned, fled from his own
 men to Ravenna. (10) Her- culius came there on behalf
 of his son after being summoned, and having de-
 ceived Severus with false promises, took him into
 custody and brought him into the city in the guise of
 a captive and had him kept in a house belonging to
 the state thirty [Roman] miles down the Via Appia
 from Rome. Afterward, when Galerius sought Italy,
 he was murdered and then brought to a place eight
 miles from Rome and put in the monument of
 Gallienus.

(11) Galerius was such an alcoholic that when he
 was drunk, he would issue orders which ought not to
 be obeyed, and on the warning of his prefect, he di-
 rected that none of his orders issued after dinner
 should be implemented.

(12) Meanwhile Constantine, having defeated the
 generals of the tyrant [Maxentius] at Verona, sought
 out Rome. When Constantine was coming to the city,
 Maxentius, coming out of the city, chose a plain
 above the Tiber as the place where they would fight.
 There he was defeated and, fleeing with all his men,
 perished, trapped in the crowd of people and thrown
 down by his horse into the river. On the following
 day, his body was taken up from the river, and his
 head was cut off and brought into the city. His
 mother, when she was questioned about his origins,
 confessed that he had been begotten by a certain Syr-
 ian. He ruled for six years.

5 (13) Licinius too was a man of humble birth
 from New Dacia, who had been made emperor by
 Galerius so that he would fight against Maxentius.
 But after Maxentius had been suppressed, and Con-
 stantine had retaken Italy, he bound Licinius into al-
 liance with him, provided that Licinius would take
 his sister Constantia as his wife in Milan. Once the
 marriage had been celebrated, Constantine went to
 Gaul, and Licinius returned to Illyricum. (14) Some

time later, Constantine sent Constantius to Licinius, suggesting that he should make Bassianus (who had married Constantine's other sister Anastasia) a Caesar, so that Bassianus could hold Italy as a buffer between Constantine and Licinius, following the example set by Diocletian and Maximianus. (15) But Licinius spoiled this arrangement, and through the influence of Senicio, Bassianus's brother, who was loyal to Licinius, Bassianus took up arms against Constantine. He was seized while still preparing himself, and at Constantine's order, was convicted and executed. When Senicio, as the person responsible for the plot, was demanded for punishment, Licinius refused to hand him over, and the peace between them was broken. There was an additional reason besides because Licinius had destroyed images and statues of Constantine at Emona. Open war was declared between the two of them.

(16) Both their armies were taken to the plain of Cibala. Licinius had 35,000 men, infantry and cavalry; Constantine commanded 20,000 infantry and cavalry. After an indecisive battle, in which 20,000 of Licinius's infantry and part of his armored cavalry were killed, Licinius escaped to Sirmium with the greater part of his horse-troops under cover of night. (17) From there, having picked up his wife and son and treasure, he went to Dacia. He made Valens, commander of the frontier, a Caesar. Then, a huge force having been assembled by means of Valens at Hadrianopolis (a city in Thrace), he sent ambassadors to Constantine, who had settled himself at Philippopolis, to talk of peace. The ambassadors returned, baffled, and having taken to war again, they fought together on the plain of Ardia. After a lengthy and indecisive battle, Licinius's men gave way and fled under cover of night. (18) Licinius and Valens turned away and went into the region of Beroea, believing (which was actually true) that Constantine in order to pursue them would be heading further toward Byzantium. Then as Constantine was eagerly hurrying ahead, he learned that Licinius remained at his back. Just then, when his soldiers were weary with battle and route marching, Mestrianus was sent to him as an ambassador to ask for peace, at the re-

quest of Licinius, who promised that he would henceforth do as he was told. Valens was commanded to return to his private rank as he had been before, and, when this was done, peace was confirmed between the two emperors, and Licinius held Oriens, Asia, Thrace, Lesser Moesia, and Scythia.

(19) Then, returning to Serdica, Constantine decided in Licinius's absence that Constantine's sons Crispus and Constantine and Licinius's son Licinius should be made Caesars, and thus rule should be carried on harmoniously, as from both of them. Therefore, Constantine and Licinius were made consuls simultaneously. (20) In the region of Oriens, during Licinius's and Constantine's consulship, Licinius, seized by sudden insanity, ordered that all the Christians should be expelled from the palace. Soon after that, war broke out again between Licinius and Constantine.

(21) Again, while Constantine was at Thessalonica, the Goths broke through the neglected frontiers, devastated Thrace and Moesia, and began to take spoils. Then, in fear of Constantine, after their onset had been checked, they returned prisoners to him and peace was granted them. But Licinius complained that this was a breach of trust, since an area belonging to him had been relieved by someone else. (22) Then, since he alternated between wheedling and haughty orders, he justifiably roused the wrath of Constantine. During the time when civil war was not yet actually being waged but was being prepared for, Licinius wallowed in the crimes of avarice, cruelty, and lust, murdering many wealthy men and seducing their wives.

(23) Then the peace was broken with the consent of both sides. Constantine sent the Caesar Crispus with a huge fleet to take Asia, and Amandus, acting for Licinius, opposed him with a similarly large naval force. (24) Licinius himself filled the slopes of a high mountain near Hadrianopolis with a great army. Constantine turned thither, with his entire force. While the war was going on by both land and sea, Constantine was victorious, due to his troops' discipline in battle (though they had difficulty with the heights), and his luck, and the army of Licinius was thrown

into confusion and disorganized while Constantine was slightly wounded in the thigh. (25) Licinius, fleeing from there, sought Byzantium; and while his scattered forces tried to reach him, Licinius, having closed Byzantium, prepared for a siege on the landward side, feeling secure to seaward. But Constantine put together a fleet out of Thrace. Then, with his usual foolishness, Licinius made Martinianus Caesar. (26) But Crispus, with Constantine's fleet, reached Callipolis, and there he conquered Amandus in a sea battle so comprehensively that the latter was scarcely able to escape alive with the help of those who had stayed on shore. Licinius's fleet was either destroyed or captured. (27) Licinius, abandoning hope of the sea, by which he saw that he would be blockaded, fled to Chalcedon with his treasure. Constantine, having met up with Crispus and heard of his sea victory, invaded Byzantium. Then Licinius staged a battle at Chrysopolis, greatly aided by the Goths whom their ruler Alica had brought: Constantine's force was victorious and destroyed 25,000 armed men of the other side, while the rest took to flight. (28) Then, when they saw Constantine's legions coming in troopships, they threw down their weapons and gave themselves up. On the following day, Constantia, sister of Constantine and wife of Licinius, came to her brother's camp and begged for her husband's life, which he granted. Then Licinius was made a private citizen and entertained at a feast by Constantine, and Martinianus's life was conceded to him.

(29) Licinius was sent to Thessalonica, but Constantine was influenced by the example of his father-in-law Herculius Maximianus, and lest he should assume again the purple he had laid down, to the danger of the state, he ordered Licinius to be killed, as the soldiers of Thessalonica hotly demanded, and likewise Martinianus in Cappadocia. Licinius had ruled for nineteen years and left a wife and son behind him. Although all the participants in the dreadful persecution were already dead, this man was also clearly asking for punishment, who had been a persecutor as far as he was able to.

6 (30) Constantine, in memory of his famous victory, called Byzantium Constantinople, after himself.

As if it were his native city, he enriched it with great assiduity and wanted it to become the equal of Rome. He sought out citizens for it from everywhere and lavished so much wealth on it that he almost exhausted the resources of the imperial treasury. There he founded a Senate of the second rank; the members were called *clari*.

(31) Then he took up arms against the Goths and gave assistance to the Sarmatians, who had begged for it. Thus, through Constantine Caesar, nearly 100,000 died of starvation and cold. Then he accepted hostages, among whom was Ariaric, son of the king. (32) Thus, when peace had been confirmed, he turned against the Sarmatians, who had proved to be of doubtful loyalty. But all the slaves of the Sarmatians rebelled against their masters, and when the latter had been expelled, Constantine willingly accepted them and distributed more than 300,000 people of all ages and both sexes throughout Thrace, Scythia, Macedonia, and Italy.

(33) This Constantine was the first Christian emperor except for Philip (the Arab) who, as it seems to me, became Christian simply in order that the thousandth year of Rome might be said to belong to Christ rather than to idols. From Constantine up to the present day, all the emperors have been Christians, with the exception of Julian, whose impious life left him in the middle of what he is said to have been plotting.

(34) Constantine made the change with due order and care. He issued an edict that the temples of the pagans should be closed without any loss of life.

Soon after, he destroyed that most powerful and numerous race, the Goths, in the very bosom of barbarian territory—that is, in the land of the Sarmatians.

(35) He destroyed a certain Calocaerus, who aspired to a revolution in Cyprus.

He made Dalmatius, son of his brother Dalmatius, a Caesar. He gave Dalmatius's brother Hannibalianus to his daughter Constantia and made him King of Kings and ruler of the peoples of Pontica. Then he ordained that Constantine the younger should rule the Gauls, Constantius Caesar the Oriens, Constans

should rule Illyricum and Italy, and Dalmatius should protect the Gothic shore.

While Constantine was preparing to make war on Persia, he ended his days in an imperial villa on the

outskirts of Constantinople, near Nicomedia, handing on a well-organized state to his sons. He had ruled for thirty-one years and was buried in Constantinople.

4. Eusebius: The Life of Constantine

Eusebius (ca. 260–ca. 339), bishop of Caesarea in Palestine, is best known as the “father of Christian history” because of his highly influential *Church History* (see an excerpt in Text 50). He portrayed himself as an ecclesiastical spokesperson for Constantine’s house, although it is unclear how well he knew the first Christian emperor personally. He wrote the laudatory *Life of Constantine* shortly after Constantine’s death. The work contains elements of a typical imperial biography: the relation between Constantine’s upright character and the economic, military, and political revitalization of the empire (cf. Text 3, “The Origin of Constantine”). It is also a religious history; the triumph of Christianity is part of Constantine’s own religious awakening (cf. Text 2, Lactantius’s “The Deaths of the Persecutors”). This text also hints at a Christian genre that had not yet taken shape in Eusebius’s day: hagiography (see Chapter 11). Constantine the holy man is, like Moses, the prophets, and the apostles, a divinely guided figure.

The following selections from the *Life of Constantine* show how Eusebius blends imperial biography with sacred history. Constantine’s imperial election in the West is confirmed and enabled by God’s direct assistance (including the famous vision of the cross-shaped *labarum*, or “Chi-Rho,” with the words: “By this conquer”). As sole emperor, Constantine actively constructs a Christian empire, building the holy land through magnificent churches. Eusebius portrays Constantine as a legislator Christianizing the empire, as well as uniting the church under imperial control. This image of Constantine as paradigmatic Christian emperor would remain influential in both the eastern and western empires, emerging in models of “sacred kingship” in the West and in the tight link between Byzantine emperors and Orthodox bishops in the East.

BOOK ONE

22 (1) The empire, however, was not left ungoverned. Arrayed in his father’s own purple robe, Constantine emerged from his father’s halls, showing to one and all that, as though revived, his father reigned through him. Then he led the cortège, and with his father’s friends about him, he formed the escort for his father.

Enormous crowds of people and military guards, some before and some following behind, attended the Godbeloved in full state. All of them honored the Thriceblessed with acclamations and laudations and, with unanimous consent, praised the accession of the son as a new life for the dead; and immediately from the first word in their cries of acclamation they proclaimed the new Emperor Imperator and Venerable

Augustus. (2) They lauded the deceased with their acclamations for the son, and they blessed the son as appointed to succeed such a father; all the provinces under his rule were full of happiness and unutterable joy because not even for the briefest moment had they been deprived of orderly imperial rule. This was the end of a pious and devout life that God displayed to our generation in the case of the Emperor Constantius.

23 As to the others who used the methods of war to persecute the churches of God, I have decided that it is not proper to report the way their lives ended in the present account or to stain the record of good deeds by presenting their contrary. Experience of the events is sober warning enough to those whose own eyes and ears have known the story of what happened to each one.

24 In such a way, then, did God, the President of the whole world, of his own will select Constantine, sprung from such a father, as universal ruler and governor, that no man could claim the precedence that he alone possessed, since the rest owed the rank they held to election by others.

25 (1) Once he was established in imperial power, he first attended to the needs of his father’s portion, supervising with loving care all the provinces that had previously been allotted to his father’s government; if any barbarian tribes living beside the River Rhine and the Western Ocean dared to rebel, he subdued them all and turned their savagery to gentleness, while others he repulsed and chased off his territory like wild beasts, when he saw that they were incurably resistant to change to a gentle life.

(2) When these things were settled to his satisfaction, he turned his attention to the other parts of the inhabited world and first crossed to the British nations, which lie enclosed by the edge of Ocean; he brought them to terms and then surveyed the other parts of the world, so that he might bring healing where help was needed. 26 When he then perceived that the whole earthly element was like a great body and next became aware that the head of the whole, the imperial city of the Roman Empire, lay oppressed by bondage to a tyrant, he first gave opportunity for those who governed the other parts to rescue it, inas-

much as they were senior in years, but when none of these was able to give aid and even those who did make the attempt had met a shameful end, he declared that his life was not worth living if he were to allow the imperial city to remain in such a plight and began preparations to overthrow the tyranny.

27 (1) Knowing well that he would need more powerful aid than an army can supply because of the mischievous magical devices practiced by the tyrant, he sought a god to aid him. He regarded the resources of soldiers and military numbers as secondary, for he thought that without the aid of a god, these could achieve nothing, and he said that what comes from a god’s assistance is irresistible and invincible. (2) He therefore considered what kind of god he should adopt to aid him, and while he thought, a clear impression came to him, that of the many who had in the past aspired to government, those who had attached their personal hopes to many gods, and had cultivated them with drink offerings, sacrifices, and dedications, had first been deceived by favorable predictions and oracles that promised welcome things, but then met an unwelcome end, nor did any god stand at their side to protect them from divinely directed disaster; only his own father had taken the opposite course to theirs by condemning their error, while he himself had throughout his life honored the God who transcends the universe and had found him a savior and guardian of his Empire and a provider of everything good. (3) He judiciously considered these things for himself and weighed well how those who had confided in a multitude of gods had run into multiple destruction, so that neither offspring nor shoot was left in them, no root, neither name nor memorial among mankind, whereas his father’s God had bestowed on his father manifest and numerous tokens of his power. He also pondered carefully those who had already campaigned against the tyrant. They had assembled their forces with a multitude of gods and had come to a dismal end: one of them had retreated in disgrace without striking a blow, while the other had met a casual death by assassination in his own camp. He marshaled these arguments in his mind and concluded that it was folly to go on with the vanity of the gods that do not exist and to persist in error in the

face of so much evidence, and he decided he should venerate his father's God alone.

28 (1) This God he began to invoke in prayer, beseeching and imploring him to show him who he was and to stretch out his right hand to assist him in his plans. As he made these prayers and earnest supplications, there appeared to the emperor a most remarkable divine sign. If someone else had reported it, it would perhaps not be easy to accept, but since the victorious emperor himself told the story to the present writer a long while after, when I was privileged with his acquaintance and company, and confirmed it with oaths, who could hesitate to believe the account, especially when the time that followed provided evidence for the truth of what he said? (2) About the time of the midday sun, when day was just turning, he said he saw with his own eyes, up in the sky and resting over the sun, a cross-shaped trophy formed from light and a text attached to it that said, "By this conquer." Amazement at the spectacle seized both him and the whole company of soldiers, which was then accompanying him on a campaign he was conducting somewhere, and witnessed the miracle.

29 He was, he said, wondering to himself what the manifestation might mean; then, while he meditated, and thought long and hard, night overtook him. Thereupon, as he slept, the Christ of God appeared to him with the sign that had appeared in the sky and urged him to make himself a copy of the sign that had appeared in the sky and to use this as protection against the attacks of the enemy. **30** When day came, he arose and recounted the mysterious communication to his friends. Then he summoned goldsmiths and jewelers, sat down among them, and explained the shape of the sign and gave them instructions about copying it in gold and precious stones.

This was something that the emperor himself once saw fit to let me also set eyes on, God vouchsafing even this. **31** (1) It was constructed to the following design. A tall pole plated with gold had a transverse bar forming the shape of a cross. Up at the extreme top, a wreath woven of precious stones and gold had been fastened. On it two letters, intimating by its first characters the name "Christ," formed the monogram of the Savior's title, *rho* being intersected in the mid-

dle by *chi*. These letters the emperor also used to wear upon his helmet in later times. (2) From the transverse bar, which was bisected by the pole, hung suspended a cloth, an imperial tapestry covered with a pattern of precious stones fastened together, which glittered with shafts of light, and interwoven with much gold, producing an impression of indescribable beauty on those who saw it. This banner, then, attached to the bar, was given equal dimensions of length and breadth. But the upright pole, which extended upward a long way from its lower end, below the trophy of the cross and near the top of the tapestry delineated, carried the golden head-and-shoulders portrait of the Godbeloved emperor and likewise of his sons. (3) This saving sign was always used by the emperor for protection against every opposing and hostile force, and he commanded replicas of it to lead all his armies.

32 (1) That was, however, somewhat later. At the time in question, stunned by the amazing vision and determined to worship no other god than the one who had appeared, he summoned those expert in his words and inquired who this god was and what was the explanation of the vision that had appeared of the sign. (2) They said that the god was the Onlybegotten Son of the one and only God and that the sign that appeared was a token of immortality and was an abiding trophy of the victory over death, which he had once won when he was present on earth. They began to teach him the reasons for his coming, explaining to him in detail the story of his self-accommodation to human conditions. (3) He listened attentively to these accounts, too, while he marveled at the divine manifestation that had been granted to his eyes; comparing the heavenly vision with the meaning of what was being said, he made up his mind, convinced that it was as God's own teaching that the knowledge of these things had come to him. He now decided personally to apply himself to the divinely inspired writings. Taking the priests of God as his advisers, he also deemed it right to honor the God who had appeared to him with all due rites. Thereafter, fortified by good hopes in him, he finally set about extinguishing the menacing flames of tyranny.

33 (1) Indeed, the one who had thus previously seized the imperial city was busily engaged in abom-

inable and sacrilegious activities, so that he left no outrage undone in his foul and filthy behavior. He parted lawful wives from husbands, and after misusing them quite disgracefully, returned them to their husbands. He did this not to obscure or insignificant persons, but insolently to those who held the highest positions in the Roman Senate. So he misused disgracefully innumerable freeborn women, yet found no way to satisfy his unrestrained and insatiable appetite. (2) But when he turned his hand also to Christian women, he was no longer able to devise convenient means for his adulteries. They would sooner yield their life to him for execution than their body for immoral use. **34** One woman, the wife of one of the senators with the office of prefect, when she learned that those who procured such things for the tyrant had arrived—she was a Christian—and knew that her own husband out of fear had ordered them to seize her and take her away, having requested a little time to put on her customary attire, went into her room and once alone plunged a dagger into her breast. Dying at once, she left her body to the procurers, but by her actions, which spoke louder than any words, she showed to all mankind, both present and future, that the only thing that is invincible and indestructible is the chastity acclaimed among Christians. Such then did she prove to be.

35 (1) Before the one who committed such outrages all men cowered, peoples and princes, high and low, and were worn down by savage tyranny. Even if they kept quiet and endured the harsh servitude, there was still no respite from the tyrant's murderous cruelty. On one occasion on a slight pretext he gave the people over to slaughter by his escorting guards, and there were killed countless multitudes of the people of Rome right in the middle of the city, by the weapons and arms, not of Goths or barbarians, but of their own countrymen. (2) The number of senators whose murder was encompassed as a means to acquire each one's property it would not be possible to calculate, since thousands were put to death, sometimes on one fictitious charge, sometimes on another. **36** (1) At their peak the tyrant's crimes extended to witchcraft, as for magical purposes he split open pregnant women, sometimes searched the entrails of

newborn babies, slaughtered lions, and composed secret spells to conjure demons and to ward off hostilities. By these means he hoped he would gain the victory. (2) Ruling by these dictatorial methods in Rome, he imposed on his subjects unspeakable oppression, so that he brought them finally to the utmost scarcity and want of necessary food, such as our generation never remembers happening in Rome at any other time.

37 (1) Constantine meanwhile was moved to pity by all these things and began making every armed preparation against the tyranny. So taking as his patron God who is over all, and invoking his Christ as savior and succor, and having set the victorious trophy, the truly salutary sign, at the head of his escorting soldiers and guards, he led them in full force, claiming for the Romans their ancestral liberties. (2) Maxentius put his confidence more in the devices of sorcery than in the loyalty of his subjects and did not even dare to go beyond the gates of the city, but fortified every place and territory and city that was under his dominion with an immense number of soldiers and countless military units. But the emperor who relied upon the support of God attacked the first, second, and third formations of the tyrant, overcame them all quite easily at the very first onslaught, and advanced to occupy most of the land of Italy.

38 (1) He was now very near to Rome itself. Then, so that he should not be forced because of the tyrant to fight against the people of Rome, God himself drew the tyrant out, as if with chains, far away from the gates, and those ancient words against the wicked, widely disbelieved as mere legend, though in sacred books believably recorded for believers, by his divine actions he proved to be true for every single eye that saw his marvels, believing and unbelieving alike. (2) Accordingly, just as once in the time of Moses and the devout Hebrew tribe "Pharaoh's chariots and his force he cast into the sea, and picked rider-captains he overwhelmed in the Red Sea" (Exod 15:4), in the very same way Maxentius and the armed men and guards about him "sank to the bottom like a stone" (Exod 15:5), when, fleeing before the force that came from God with Constantine, he went to cross the river lying in his path. When he himself joined its banks with

boats and bridged it perfectly well, he had built an engine of destruction for himself, intending thus to catch the friend of God. (3) But the latter had his God present at his right hand, while Maxentius constructed in his cowardice the secret engines of his own destruction. Of him it could also be said that "he dug a hole and excavated it, and will fall into the pit he made. His labor will return on his head, and on his pate will his wickedness fall" (Ps 7:15–16). (4) Thus then by God's will the mechanism in the link and the device concealed in it gave way at a time that was not intended, the crossing parted, and the boats sank at once to the bottom with all their men, the coward himself first of all, and then the infantry and guards about him, just as the divine oracles had previously proclaimed: "They sank like lead in much water" (Exod 15:10). (5) So even if not in words, yet surely in deeds, in the same way as those who accompanied the great Servant Moses, these who won this victory from God might be thought thus to have raised the same hymn against the ancient wicked tyrant and said: "Let us sing to the Lord, for he is gloriously glorified; horse and rider he threw into the sea; he became a succor and shelter for my salvation" (Exod 15:1–2); and, "Who is like you among the gods, Lord, who is like you? Glorified among the saints, wonderful, gloriously doing miracles" (Exod 15:11).

39 (1) These and other praises akin to them Constantine expressed in deeds to the universal Captain, the timely Giver of his victory, in the same way as the great Servant, and then rode in triumph into the imperial city. (2) Immediately all the members of the Senate and the other persons there of fame and distinction, as if released from a cage, and all the people of Rome, gave him a bright-eyed welcome with spontaneous acclamations and unbounded joy. Men with their wives and children and countless numbers of slaves with unrestrained cheers pronounced him their redeemer, savior, and benefactor. (3) He, however, being possessed of inward fear of God, was not inflated by their cries nor overexuberant at their praises, but was conscious of the help of God; so he immediately offered up a prayer of thanksgiving to the Giver of his victory. **40** (1) He announced to all people in large lettering and inscriptions the sign of the Savior,

setting this up in the middle of the imperial city as a great trophy of victory over his enemies, explicitly inscribing this in indelible letters as the salvific sign of the authority of Rome and the protection of the whole empire. (2) He therefore immediately ordered a tall pole to be erected in the shape of a cross in the hand of a statue made to represent-himself, and this text to be inscribed upon it word for word in Latin: "By this salutary sign, the true proof of valor, I liberated your city, saved from the tyrant's yoke; moreover the Senate and People of Rome I liberated and restored to their ancient splendor and brilliance."

41 (1) The Godbeloved emperor, proudly confessing in this way the victory-bringing cross, was entirely open in making the Son of God known to the Romans. (2) All the city's population together, including the Senate and all the people, as they recovered from bitter tyrannical repression, seemed to be enjoying beams of purer light and to be participating in rebirth to a fresh new life. All the nations that bordered on the Ocean where the sun sets, set free from the evils that formerly oppressed them, kept rejoicing in happy gatherings as they hymned the mighty Victor, the Godfearing, the general Benefactor, and with one single voice they all acknowledged the common good of mankind, which by God's grace had dawned in Constantine.

(3) An imperial letter was also published everywhere, granting the enjoyment of their goods to those whose property had been confiscated and recalling to their own homes those who had suffered unjust exile. It also released from imprisonment and every kind of liability or threat at law those subjected to them by the tyrant's savagery.

42 (1) The emperor personally called together the ministers of God, regarding them honorably and cherishing them with highest consideration, since he favored those men by deed and word as consecrated to his God. Thus he had as his table companions men whose appearance was modest as to style of dress, but by no means modest in the consideration he gave them, because he thought he should have regard not to the man as most people see him but to the God honored in each. He took them with him also wherever he set out on campaign, trusting that in this, too,

the one they worshipped would be present at his right hand. (2) Indeed he also supplied rich help from his own resources to the churches of God, enlarging and elevating the places of worship, while beautifying the grander ecclesiastical sacred buildings with many dedications.

43 (1) He made all sorts of distributions to the poor, and apart from them showed himself compassionate and beneficent to those outside who approached him. For some poor desperate wretches who publicly solicited alms he would provide not only money or necessary food, but decent clothing for the body. For those who were originally of higher birth but had run on hard times, he made more generous provision, with imperial magnanimity providing munificent benefactions to such persons: to some he made grants of land, others he promoted to various offices. (2) Those unfortunate enough to be orphaned he cared for in the father's stead and repaired the vulnerability of widowhood for women by personal concern, so far as to find them husbands from his acquaintance, and rich men for orphaned girls deprived of parents. He managed this by supplementing the dowry needed for the brides to bring to those who were receiving them in the bond of marriage. (3) Just as the sun rises and spreads the beams of its light over all, so also Constantine shone forth with the rising sun from the imperial palace, as though ascending with the heavenly luminary, and shed upon all who came before his face the sunbeams of his own generous goodness. It was not possible to come near him without receiving some benefit, nor would the good hopes of those who looked to him for support ever be disappointed.

44 (1) Toward all people in general he was such a man. But to the Church of God he paid particular personal attention. When some were at variance with each other in various places, like a universal bishop appointed by God he convoked councils of the ministers of God. (2) He did not disdain to be present and attend during their proceedings, and he participated in the subjects reviewed, by arbitration promoting the peace of God among all, and he took his seat among them as if he were one voice among many, dismissing his praetorians and soldiers and bodyguards of every kind, clad only in the fear of God and sur-

rounded by the most loyal of his faithful companions. (3) Then such as he saw able to be prevailed upon by argument and adopting a calm and conciliatory attitude, he commended most warmly, showing how he favored general unanimity, but the obstinate he rejected. **45** (1) There were even some who spoke harshly against him, and he tolerated them without resentment, with a gentle voice bidding them to behave reasonably and not be contentious. Some of them respected his rebukes and desisted, while those who were past curing and could not be brought to a sound mind he left in the hands of God, being unwilling himself to devise anything whatever to any person's hurt.

(2) For this reason it came about that those in Africa reached such a pitch of dissension that crimes were committed, some evil demon apparently resenting the unstinted present prosperity and driving those men on to criminal actions, in order to provoke the emperor's fury against them. (3) His envy however did not prosper: the emperor treated what was being done as ridiculous and said he understood the provocation of the Evil One; the crimes were not done by sane men, but by those either out of their minds or goaded to frenzy by the evil demon; they ought to be pitied rather than punished; he was in no way harmed by their lunatic folly, except in so far as he felt pain for them out of extreme kindness of heart.

46 Thus then the emperor, serving God the overseer of all with his every action, took untiring care of his churches. God repaid him by putting all the barbarian nations beneath his feet, so that always and everywhere he raised trophies over his foes, and by proclaiming him Victor among them all and making him a terror to foes and enemies, though he was not naturally such, but the gentlest, mildest, and kindest man there ever was.

47 (1) While he was thus engaged, the second of those who had retired from power was caught organizing an assassination plot and met a shameful death. He was the first whose honorific inscriptions and statues and whatever else of the kind had been accorded him anywhere in the world to acknowledge his rank were removed because of his profane impiety. (2) After him others of the same family were

caught organizing secret conspiracies against him, God miraculously disclosing the plots of all these to his servant by supernatural signs. (3) Indeed, he often vouchsafed him manifestations of deity, when divine visions were miraculously displayed to him and provided him with all sorts of foreknowledge of future events. It is not possible to describe in words those unspeakable marvels from God's grace that God himself saw fit to bestow on his servant. (4) By these he was safely hedged about to the end as he lived his life, pleased at the loyalty of his subjects, and pleased also that he saw all those under him passing their lives in contentment and utterly overjoyed at the happiness of the churches of God.

48 Such was he until the tenth anniversary of his accession was reached. For that he celebrated popular festivals everywhere and offered up prayers of thanksgiving to God the King of all like sacrifices without fire and smoke. . . .

BOOK THREE

25 Such was the situation when another memorable work of great importance was done in the province of Palestine by the Godbeloved. It was this. He decided that he ought to make universally famous and revered the most blessed site in Jerusalem of the Savior's resurrection. So at once he gave orders for a place of worship to be constructed, conceiving this idea not without God, but with his spirit moved by the Savior himself.

26 (1) Once upon a time wicked men—or rather the whole tribe of demons through them—had striven to consign to darkness and oblivion that divine monument to immortality, at which, brilliant with light, the angel who had descended from heaven had rolled away the stone of those whose minds were set like stone in their assumption that the Living One was still with the dead, when he announced the good news to the women and removed the stone of disbelief from their minds by the information that the one they sought was alive. (2) It was this very cave of the Savior that some godless and wicked people had planned to make invisible to mankind, thinking in

their stupidity that they could in this way hide the truth. Indeed with a great expenditure of effort they brought earth from somewhere outside and covered up the whole place, then leveled it, paved it, and so hid the divine cave somewhere down beneath a great quantity of soil. (3) Then as though they had everything finished, above the ground they constructed a terrible and truly genuine tomb, one for souls, for dead idols, and built a gloomy sanctuary to the impure demon of Aphrodite; then they offered foul sacrifices there upon defiled and polluted altars. They reckoned there was one way alone and no other to bring their desires to realization, and that was to bury the Savior's cave under such foul pollutions. (4) The wretches could not understand that it would be against nature for the one who had crowned his brow with the conquest of death to leave his accomplishment hidden. No more could the sun remain unnoticed by the whole world inhabited by man, as it shines after rising above the earth and drives its proper chariot course across the sky; but brighter than this the Savior's power as it illuminates the souls, though not the bodies, of men was filling the entire world with his own beams of light.

(5) Nevertheless the devices of these godless and wicked men against truth lasted for long ages, and no one was ever found—no governor, no commander, no emperor even—competent to clear away what had been perpetrated but one alone, the friend of God the universal King. (6) Possessed therefore by the divine Spirit, he did not negligently allow that place that has been described to remain smothered by all sorts of filthy rubbish through the machination of enemies consigned to oblivion and ignorance, nor did he yield to the malice of the guilty; but calling upon God to be his collaborator, he ordered it to be cleared, thinking that the very space that enemies had sullied should especially benefit from the great work being done through him by the All-good. (7) At a word of command those contrivances of fraud were demolished from top to bottom, and the houses of error were dismantled and destroyed along with their idols and demons.

27 His efforts however did not stop there, but the emperor gave further orders that all the rubble of

stones and timbers from the demolitions should be taken and dumped a long way from the site. This command also was soon effected. But not even this progress was by itself enough, but under divine inspiration once more the emperor gave instructions that the site should be excavated to a great depth and the pavement should be carried away with the rubble a long distance outside because it was stained with demonic bloodshed. 28 This also was completed straightaway. As stage by stage the underground site was exposed, at last against all expectation the revered and all-hallowed Testimony (*martyrion*) of the Savior's resurrection was itself revealed, and the cave, the holy of holies, took on the appearance of a representation of the Savior's return to life. Thus after its descent into darkness, it came forth again to the light, and it enabled those who came as visitors to see plainly the story of the wonders wrought there, testifying by facts louder than any voice to the resurrection of the Savior.

29 (1) With these things thus completed, the emperor next gave orders by the stipulations of pious laws and by generous grants for a place of worship worthy of God to be built with rich and imperial munificence around the Savior's cave, as if he had intended this for a long time and had looked into the future with superior foreknowledge. (2) He instructed those who governed the eastern provinces by generous and lavish grants to make the building out of the ordinary, huge, and rich, and to the bishop of the church who then presided in Jerusalem, he sent the following document. By it he displayed in clear terms the love for God in his own soul and the purity of his faith in the Savior's Word, writing in this fashion:

30 (1) *Victor Constantinus Maximus Augustus to Macarius.*

So great is our Savior's grace, that no words seem enough to match the present miracle. For the evidence of his most sacred passion, long since hidden under the ground, to have remained unknown for such a long period of years, until through the removal of the enemy of the whole republic it was ready to be revealed, once they were set free, to his servants, truly surpasses all marvels. (2) If all those from every part of the world with a reputation for wisdom were

to gather together in one place and try to say something worthy of the event, they would not be able to compete with the least part of it. The evidence of this miracle surpasses every natural capacity of human thought in the same degree that heavenly things are by common consent mightier than human. (3) That is why it is always my first and only goal, that, just as the evidence for the truth manifests itself with newer wonders every day, so all our souls may by utter seriousness and unanimous endeavor also become more earnest about the holy law. (4) The thing therefore which I consider clear to everybody is what I want you in particular to believe, namely, that above all else my concern is that that sacred place, which at God's command I have now relieved of the hideous burden of an idol that lay on it like a weight, hallowed from the start by God's decree, and now proved yet holier since it brought to light the pledge of the Savior's passion, should be adorned by us with beautiful buildings.

31 (1) *It is thus for your own Good Sense to make such order and provision of what is needed that not only a basilica superior to those in all other places, but the other arrangements also, may be such that all the excellences of every city are surpassed by this foundation. (2) As to the building and decoration of the walls, be advised that our friend Dracillianus, who exercises his office among the praefecti illustrissimi, and he who is governor of the province have been entrusted by us with its care. For my Religious Care has ordered that craftsmen and laborers and everything they may learn from your Good Sense to be needed for the building work should forthwith be supplied by their provision. (3) As to the columns or marble, you should after a survey yourself write promptly to us about what you may consider to be of most value and use, so that whatever quantity and kind of materials we may learn from your letter to be needful may be competently supplied from all sources. It is right that the world's most miraculous place should be worthily embellished. 32 (1) As to the vault of the basilica, whether you decide that it be coffered or in another style of construction I would wish to learn from you. If it were to be coffered, it might also be decorated with gold. (2) In short, in*

order that your Holiness may make known with all speed to the aforementioned magistrates how many laborers and craftsmen and what other expenditures are required, take care to refer immediately also to me not only the matters of the marble and pillars, but also the lacunary panels, should you judge that best.

God preserve you, dear Brother.

33 (1) Thus did the emperor write. No sooner had he written than the commands were put into effect. New Jerusalem was built at the very Testimony to the Savior, facing the famous Jerusalem of old, which after the bloody murder of the Lord had been overthrown in utter devastation, and paid the penalty of its wicked inhabitants. (2) Opposite this then the emperor erected the victory of the Savior over death with rich and abundant munificence, this being perhaps that fresh new Jerusalem proclaimed in prophetic oracles, about which long speeches recite innumerable praises as they utter words of divine inspiration.

(3) As the principal item he first of all decked out the sacred cave. It was a tomb full of age-long memory, comprising the trophies of the great Savior's defeat of death, a tomb of divine presence, where once an angel, radiant with light, proclaimed to all the good news of the rebirth demonstrated by the Savior. **34** This then was the first thing, like a head of the whole, which the emperor's munificence decorated with superb columns and full ornamentation, brightening the solemn cave with all kinds of artwork. **35** He then went on to a very large space wide open to the fresh air, which was decorated with a pavement of light-colored stone on the ground, and enclosed on three sides by long surrounding colonnades.

36 (1) On the side opposite the cave, which looked toward the rising sun, was connected the royal temple, an extraordinary structure raised to an immense height and very extensive in length and breadth. Its interior was covered with slabs of varied marble, and the external aspect of the walls, gleaming with hewn stone fitted closely together at each joint, produced a supreme object of beauty by no means inferior to marble. (2) Right up at the top the material that encased the outside of the roofs was lead, a sure protection against stormy rain, while the interior of the

structure was fitted with carved coffers and like a vast sea spread out by a series of joints binding to each other through the whole royal house, and being beautified throughout with brilliant gold made the whole shrine glitter with beams of light. **37** Round each of the sides extended twin ranges of double colonnades, in upper and lower stories, their tops also decorated with gold. Those at the front of the house rested upon huge pillars, while those inside the front were raised under blocks plentifully decorated all round their surfaces. Three doors well placed to face the sunrise received the crowds flowing in. **38** Facing these as the chief point of the whole was the hemisphere attached to the highest part of the royal house, ringed with twelve columns to match the number of the Apostles of the Savior, their tops decorated with great bowls made of silver, which the emperor himself had presented to his God as a superb offering.

39 For those going on from there to the entrances situated at the front of the shrine, another open space awaited them. Arcades stood there on either hand, a first court and colonnades beyond, and finally the gates of the court. Beyond these, right in the middle of the open square, the porticoes forming the entrance to the whole, beautifully wrought, offered to those passing outside a striking view of what was to be seen within.

40 This, then, was the shrine that the emperor raised as a manifest testimony of the Savior's resurrection, embellishing the whole with rich imperial decoration. He adorned it with untold beauties in innumerable dedications of gold and silver and precious stones set in various materials. In view of their size, number, and variety, to describe in detail the skilled craftsmanship that went into their manufacture would be beyond the scope of the present work.

41 (1) He took in hand here other sites venerated for their two mystic caves, and he adorned these also with rich artwork. On the cave of the first divine manifestation of the Savior, where he submitted to the experience of birth in the flesh, he bestowed appropriate honors, while at the other he dignified the monument on the mountaintop to his ascension into heaven. (2) These also he artistically honored, perpetuating the memory of his own mother, who had

bestowed so much good on human life. **42** (1) This lady, when she made it her business to pay what piety owed to the all-sovereign God and considered that she ought to complete in prayers her thank-offerings for her son, so great an emperor, and his sons the most Godbeloved Caesars her grandchildren, came, though old, with the eagerness of youth to apply her outstanding intellect to enquiring about the wondrous land and to inspect with imperial concern the eastern provinces with their communities and peoples. (2) As she accorded suitable adoration to the footsteps of the Savior, following the prophetic word that says, "Let us adore in the place where his feet have stood" (Ps 132:7), she forthwith bequeathed to her successors also the fruit of her personal piety.

43 (1) She immediately consecrated to the God she adored two shrines, one by the cave of his birth, the other on the mountain of the ascension. For the God with us allowed himself to suffer even birth for our sake, and the place of his birth in the flesh was announced among the Hebrews by the name of Bethlehem. (2) Thus then the most devout empress beautified the Godbearer's pregnancy with wonderful monuments, in various ways embellishing the sacred cave there. The emperor himself shortly afterward honored this, too, with imperial dedications, supplementing his mother's works of art with treasures of silver and gold and embroidered curtains. (3) Again the emperor's mother erected on the Mount of Olives the monument to the journey into heaven of the Savior of the Universe in lofty buildings; up by the ridges at the peak of the whole mountain she raised the sacred house of the church and constructed just there a shrine for prayer to the Savior who chose to spend his time on that spot, since just there a true report maintains that in that cave the Savior of the Universe initiated the members of his guild in ineffable mysteries. (4) There also the emperor bestowed all kinds of offerings and ornaments on the great King.

These then were the two everlastingly memorable, noble, and utterly beautiful dedications to her Savior at two mystic caves, which Helena Augusta, the Godbeloved mother of the Godbeloved emperor, founded as tokens of her pious intent, her son providing her with the right arm of imperial authority. (5) But the

lady not long after reaped the due reward. She had traversed a whole lifespan amid everything good to the very portal of old age; by words and deeds she had produced luxurious growth from the Savior's commandments; and then she had completed in full vigor of mind a life so orderly and calm in both body and soul, that as a result she also met an end worthy of her religion and a good reward from God even in this present life.

44 As she visited the whole East in the magnificence of imperial authority, she showered countless gifts upon the citizen bodies of every city and privately to each of those who approached her, and she made countless distributions also to the ranks of the soldiery with magnificent hand. She made innumerable gifts to the unclothed and unsupported poor, to some making gifts of money, to others abundantly supplying what was needed to cover the body. Others she set free from prison and from mines where they labored in harsh conditions, she released the victims of fraud, and yet others she recalled from exile. **45** Brilliantly though she shone in such things, she did not despise the other aspects of devotion to God. She allowed herself to be seen continually making personal visits to the church of God. She adorned the places of worship with shining treasures, not neglecting the shrines in even the smallest of towns. One might see the wonderful woman in dignified and modest attire joining the throng and manifesting reverence toward the divinity by every kind of practice dear to God.

46 (1) When she had finally completed the course of a long-enough life and was called to the higher sphere, having lived to something like 80 years of age, when she was very near the end she made arrangements and dispositions, drawing up her last will in favor of her only son the emperor, the monarch and world-ruler, and his sons the Caesars, her own grandchildren, bequeathing to each of her issue part of her estate, everything she possessed in the whole world. (2) Having settled her affairs in this way, she finally came to the end of her life. So great a son was present and stood by her, ministering and holding her hands, so as to make it seem likely to right-thinking people that the thrice-blessed one was

not dead, but had in reality undergone a transformation and removal from earthly life to heavenly. Her very soul was thus reconstituted into an incorruptible and angelic essence as she was taken up to her Savior. **47** (1) Even the temporal dwelling of the blessed one deserved no ordinary care, so with a great guard of honor she was carried up to the imperial city, and there laid in the imperial tombs.

Thus passed away the emperor's mother, one worthy of unfading memory both for her own God-loving deeds and for those of the extraordinary and astonishing offspring that arose from her. (2) He deserves to be blessed, all else apart, for his piety to the one who bore him. So far had he made her Godfearing, though she had not been such before, that she seemed to him to have been a disciple of the common Savior from the first, and so far had he honored her with imperial rank that she was acclaimed in all nations and by the military ranks as *Augusta Imperatrix*, and her portrait was stamped on gold coinage. (3) He even remitted to her authority over imperial treasuries, to use them at will and to manage them at her discretion, in whatever way she might wish and however she might judge best in each case, her son having accorded her distinction and eminence in these matters, too. It was therefore right that while recording his memory, we should also record those things wherein, by honoring his mother for her supreme piety, he satisfied the divine principles that impose the duty of honoring parents. . . .

BOOK FOUR

14 (1) Thus finally, all nations of the world being steered by a single pilot and welcoming government by the Servant of God, with none any longer obstructing Roman rule, all men passed their life in undisturbed tranquillity.

(2) The emperor judged that the prayers of the godly made a great contribution to his aim of protecting the general good, so he made the necessary provision for these, becoming himself a suppliant of God and bidding the leaders of the churches make intercessions for him. **15** (1) The great strength of the

divinely inspired faith fixed in his soul might be deduced by considering also the fact that he had his own portrait so depicted on the gold coinage that he appeared to look upward in the manner of one reaching out to God in prayer. (2) Impressions of this type were circulated throughout the entire Roman world. In the imperial quarters of various cities, in the images erected above the entrances, he was portrayed standing up, looking up to heaven, his hands extended in a posture of prayer. **16** Such was the way he would have himself depicted praying in works of graphic art. But by law he forbade images of himself to be set up in idol-shrines, so that he might not be contaminated by the error of forbidden things even in replica.

17 One might observe the more solemn aspects of these things by noting how he conducted matters even in the imperial quarters in the manner of a church of God, being himself the leader in earnestness of those constituting the church there. He would take the books in his hands and apply his mind to the meaning of the divinely inspired oracles and would then render up lawful prayers with the members of the imperial household. **18** (1) He also decreed that the truly sovereign and really first day, the day of the Lord and Savior, should be considered a regular day of prayer. Servants and ministers consecrated to God, men whose well-ordered life was marked by reverent conduct and every virtue, were put in charge of the whole household, and faithful praetorians, bodyguards armed with the practice of faithful loyalty, adopted the emperor as their tutor in religious conduct, themselves paying no less honor to the Lord's saving day and on it joining in the prayers the emperor loved.

(2) The Blessed One urged all men also to do the same, as if by encouraging this he might gently bring all men to piety. He therefore decreed that all those under Roman government should rest on the days named after the Savior, and similarly that they should honor the days of the Sabbath, in memory, I suppose, of the things recorded as done by the universal Savior on those days.

(3) The Day of Salvation, then, which also bears the names of Light Day and Sun Day, he taught all

the military to revere devoutly. To those who shared the divinely given faith he allowed free time to attend unhindered the church of God, on the assumption that with all impediment removed, they would join in the prayers. **19** To those who did not yet share in the divine Word, he gave order in a second decree that every Lord's Day they should march out to an open space just outside the city, and that there at a signal they should all together offer up to God a form of prayer learned by heart; they ought not to rest their hopes on spears or armor or physical strength, but acknowledge the God over all, the giver of all good and indeed of victory itself, to whom it was right to offer the lawful prayers, lifting up their hands high toward heaven, extending their mental vision yet higher to the heavenly King, and calling on him in their prayers as the Giver of victory and Savior, as their Guardian and Helper. He was himself the instructor in prayer to all the soldiery, bidding them all to say these words in Latin:

20 (1)

"You alone we know as God,
You are the King we acknowledge,
You are the Help we summon.
By you we have won our victories,
Through you we have overcome our enemies.
To you we render thanks for the good things past,
You also we hope for as giver of those to come.
To you we all come to supplicate for our Emperor
Constantine and for his Godbeloved Sons:
That he may be kept safe and victorious for us in long,
long life, we plead."

(2) Such were the things he decreed should be done by the military regiments every Sunday, and such were the words he taught them to recite in their prayers to God. **21** Furthermore, he caused the sign of the saving trophy to be marked on their shields and had the army led on parade, not by any of the golden images, as had been their past practice, but by the saving trophy alone.

22 (1) He himself, like someone participating in sacred mysteries, would shut himself at fixed times each day in secret places within his royal palace chambers and would converse with his God alone, and kneeling in suppliant petition would plead for the

objects of his prayers. On days of the Feast of the Savior, intensifying the rigor, he would perform the divine mysteries with his whole strength of soul and body, on the one hand wholly dedicated to purity of life, and on the other initiating the festival for all. (2) He transformed the sacred vigil into daylight, as those appointed to the task lit huge wax tapers throughout the whole city; there were fiery torches that lit up every place, so as to make the mystic vigil more radiant than bright day. When dawn interposed, in imitation of the beneficence of the Savior, he opened his beneficent hand to all provinces, peoples, and cities, making rich gifts of every kind to them all. (3) Such then was his religious practice toward his own God.

23 For all those under Roman rule, both civilian and military, access was universally blocked to every form of idolatry, and every form of sacrifice banned. A decree went also to the governors of each province directing that they should similarly reverence the Lord's Day. These same persons at the emperor's behest honored the days of martyrs as well, and adorned the times of festival with public gatherings. Such things were all carried out as the emperor desired. **24** Hence it is not surprising that on one occasion, when entertaining bishops to dinner, he let slip the remark that he was perhaps himself a bishop, too, using some such words as these in our hearing: "You are bishops of those within the Church, but I am perhaps a bishop appointed by God over those outside." In accordance with this saying, he exercised a bishop's supervision over all his subjects and pressed them all, as far as lay in his power, to lead the godly life.

25 (1) Hence it is not surprising that in successive laws and ordinances he prohibited everyone from sacrificing to idols, from practicing divination, from having cult figures erected, from performing secret rites, and from defiling the cities by the carnage of gladiatorial combat. (2) To those in Egypt and especially Alexandria, who had a custom of worshipping their river through the offices of effeminate men, another law was sent out, declaring that the whole class of homosexuals should be abolished as a thing depraved, and that it was unlawful for those infected with this gross indecency to be seen anywhere.

(3) Whereas the superstitious supposed that the river would no longer flow for them in its customary way, God cooperated with the emperor's law by achieving quite the opposite of what they expected. For although those who defiled the cities by their abominable practice were no more, the river, as though the land had been cleared for it, flowed as never before and rose in abundant flood to overflow all the arable land, by its action teaching the senseless that one should reject polluted men and attribute the cause of prosperity to the sole giver of all good.

26 (1) Indeed, with countless such measures taken by the emperor in every province, there would be plenty of scope for those eager to record them. The same applies to the laws that he renewed by transforming them from their primitive state to a more hallowed one. It will be easier to explain briefly the nature of these reforms also.

(2) Ancient laws had punished those without children by stopping them inheriting from their kinsmen. This was a harsh law against the childless, since it punished them as criminals. By repealing this, he permitted the proper persons to inherit. The emperor made this change toward sacred justice, saying that it was those who offended deliberately who ought to be corrected with fitting punishment. (3) Nature has made many childless, when they have prayed to be blessed with large families, but have been disappointed through bodily infirmity. Others have become childless, not through rejecting the natural succession of children, but through abstaining from intercourse with women, an abstinence that they chose through a passion for philosophy, and women consecrated to the sacred service of God have practised a chaste and absolute virginity, consecrating themselves by a pure and all-holy life of soul and body. (4) Ought this then to be thought to deserve punishment, and not admiration and approval? Their zeal is highly deserving, their achievement surpasses nature. Those therefore who are disappointed in their desire for children by bodily infirmity should be pitied rather than penalized, and the lover of the Supreme deserves the highest admiration and not punishment. Thus the emperor with sound reasoning remodeled the law.

(5) Furthermore for those near death ancient laws prescribed that even with their last breath the wills they made must be expressed in precise verbal formulas, and that certain phrases and terminology must be used to state them. This led to much malicious manipulation to circumvent the intentions of the deceased. (6) The emperor noted this and changed this law, too, saying that the dying person should express what he had in mind in plain simple words and everyday speech and compose his will in an ordinary document or even unwritten if he wished, provided he did this in the presence of trustworthy witnesses, able to preserve accurately what is entrusted to them.

27 (1) He also made a law that no Christian was to be a slave to Jews, on the ground that it was not right that those redeemed by the Savior should be subjected by the yoke of bondage to the slayers of the prophets and the murderers of the Lord. If any were found in this condition, the one was to be set free, the other punished with a fine.

(2) He also put his seal on the decrees of bishops made at synods, so that it would not be lawful for the rulers of provinces to annul what they had approved, since the priests of God were superior to any magistrate.

(3) He made countless decrees like these for those under his rule. It would need leisure to commit them to a separate work for the precise analysis of the emperor's policies in those also. What need is there now to set out in detail how, having attached himself to the God over all, he pondered from dawn to dusk on which of mankind to benefit or how he was fair to all and impartial in his benefits?

28 But to the churches of God in particular he was exceptionally generous in his provision, in one place bestowing estates, and elsewhere grain allowances to feed poor men, orphan children, and women in distress. Then with great concern he also provided huge quantities of clothing for the naked and unclad. He singled out as worthy of special honor those who had dedicated their lives to godly philosophy. He would all but worship God's choir of those sanctified in perpetual virginity, believing that in the souls of such as these dwelt the God to whom they had consecrated themselves.

29 (1) Indeed in order to enlarge his understanding with the help of the divinely inspired words, he would spend the hours of the night awake, and repeatedly made public appearances without calling upon speechwriters; he thought that he ought to rule his subjects with instructive argument and establish his whole imperial rule as rational. (2) Consequently when he gave the invitation, countless multitudes rushed to join the audience to hear the emperor's philosophy. If while speaking he had occasion to mention God, standing quite straight with intense face and subdued voice, he would seem to be initiating the audience with deep awe in the inspired doctrine, and then when the hearers let out favorable exclamations, he would indicate that they should look to heaven and save the adulation and honor of their reverent praises for the King over all.

(3) In planning his addresses, he would at one point set out refutations of polytheistic error, showing that the religion of the heathen is a deception and a façade for atheism; at another point he would recommend that the sole Godhead should be acknowledged and would systematically expound providence both in general and in particular cases. From there he would proceed to the Savior's dispensation, demonstrating the necessity for it to happen in terms of what is appropriate. He would then go on to deal with the doctrine of divine judgment. (4) Next he would touch on things that struck the audience most forcefully, rebuking thieves and frauds and those who committed themselves to greedy profiteering. Striking them, and as if actually flogging them, with his argument, he made some of his courtiers bow their heads as their conscience was smitten. Testifying in plain words, he announced to them that he would give an account to God of their activities, for the God over all had given him sovereignty over things on earth, and he in imitation of the Supreme had committed particular administrative regions of the empire to them; all however would in due course be subject to scrutiny of their actions by the Great King. (5) Such were the constant themes of his affirmation, his admonition, his teaching.

With the assurance of the authentic faith he held and expressed such views, but they were slow to learn

and deaf to what is good; they would cheer his words with cries and acclamations of approval, but in practice they ignored them through greed. 30 (1) So in the end he tackled one of those round him and said, "How far, my man, do we make greed stretch?" Then on the ground he drew with the staff that he had in his hand the measure of the height of a man and said, "If all the wealth in the world and all the land there is becomes yours, you will still not possess more than this plot here marked out—assuming you even get that." (2) But in spite of what he said and did, not one was restrained by the blessed one; yet events have manifestly convinced them that the pronouncements of the emperor were like divine oracles and not mere words. 31 But since the fear of death failed to deter the wicked from their evil ways, the emperor being wholly given to clemency, and none of those who governed the various provinces took any steps anywhere at all against the offenders, this certainly brought no small reproach upon the whole regime. Whether that was fair or not is for each to judge as he sees fit, and I content myself with recording the truth.

32 However that may be, Latin was the language in which the emperor used to produce the text of his speeches. They were translated into Greek by professional interpreters. By way of example of his translated works, I shall append immediately after this present book the speech that he entitled, "To the assembly of the saints," dedicating the work to the Church of God, so that none may think our assertions about his speeches to be mere rhetoric.

33 (1) One other thing seems to me to be unforgettable, a deed that the marvelous man did in our own presence. On one occasion, emboldened by his devotion to divine things, we asked permission to deliver an address about the Savior's tomb for him to hear. He listened with rapt attention, and where a large audience was standing round right inside the palace he stood up and listened with the others. When we begged him to rest on the imperial throne that was nearby, he would not do so, but made a shrewdly considered critique of the speech and affirmed the truth of its doctrinal theology. (2) Since it took a long time and the speech still continued, we suggested breaking off; he however would not allow it, but urged us to go

on to the end. When we asked him to sit, he kept refusing, saying at one time that when the doctrine of God was being discussed, it was wrong for him to relax while he listened, and at another that it was

good and beneficial for him to stand: it was a holy thing to listen to divinity standing up. When this, too, came to an end, we returned home and took up our regular business.

5. Zosimus: The New History

The adamantly anti-Christian historian Zosimus composed his history of the "corruption" of the Roman Empire some time around the year 500. His vitriolic account of Constantine, reproduced, in part, here, relies on an earlier account by the equally ardent non-Christian Eunapius (writing around 400). It is, in some respects, an accurate historical account; we read about Constantine's reorganization of the political, military, and economic structures of the empire following his rise to sole rule. We read about his foundation of New Rome, the eponymous city of Constantinople, on top of the old city of Byzantium. We read about episodes that are usually absent from Christian accounts like Eusebius's, such as the mysterious execution of Constantine's wife Fausta and eldest son Crispus. All these events are framed by Zosimus (and his source Eunapius), however, as the result of Constantine's defective character and his self-serving adherence to Christianity, described here as the last religious resort of a blood-stained killer. Constantine's conversion, for Zosimus, is merely one more sign of the man's outrageous impiety and one more factor that would lead to the corruption and deterioration of a proud, pious empire. As Zosimus plainly states: "Constantine was the origin and beginning of the present destruction of the empire" (*New History* 2.34).

29 (1) The whole empire now devolved on Constantine alone. At last he no longer needed to conceal his natural malignity but acted in accordance with his unlimited power. He still practiced the ancestral religion, although not so much out of honor as necessity, and he believed the seers, since he had learned by experience that they prophesied the truth in all his successes. But when he came to Rome, he was filled with arrogance, and thought fit to begin his impiety at home. (2) Without any consideration for natural law, he killed his son, Crispus (who, as I related before, had been considered worthy of the rank of Caesar) on suspicion of having had intercourse with his stepmother Fausta. And when Constantine's mother, Helena, was saddened by this atrocity and was incon-

solable at the young man's death, Constantine, as if to comfort her, applied a remedy worse than the disease: he ordered a bath to be overheated and shut Fausta up in it until she was dead. (3) Since he was himself aware of his guilt and of his disregard for oaths as well, he approached the priests seeking absolution, but they said that there was no kind of purge known that could absolve him of such impieties. A certain Egyptian, who had come from Spain to Rome and was intimate with the ladies of the court, met Constantine and assured him that the Christian religion was able to absolve him from guilt and that it promised every wicked man who was converted to it immediate release from all sin. (4) Constantine readily believed what he was told and, abandoning his an-

cestral religion, embraced the one that the Egyptian offered him. He began his impiety by doubting divination, for since many of its predictions about his successes had been fulfilled, he was afraid that people inquiring about the future might hear prophecies about his misfortunes. For this reason, he applied himself to the abolition of divination. (5) When an ancient festival fell due and it was necessary for the army to go up to the Capitol to carry out the rites, for fear of the soldiers he took part in the festival, but when the Egyptian sent him an apparition that unrestrainedly abused the rite of ascending to the Capitol, he stood aloof from the holy worship and thus incurred the hatred of the Senate and people.

30 (1) Unable to endure the curses of almost everyone, he sought out a city as a counterbalance to Rome, where he had to build a palace. When he found a place in the Troad between Sigeum and old Ilium suitable for constructing a city, he laid foundations and built part of the wall, which can still be seen to this day as you sail toward the Hellespont. But he changed his mind and, leaving the work unfinished, went to Byzantium. (2) The site of the city pleased him, and he resolved to enlarge it as much as possible to make it a home fit for an emperor, for the city stands on a hill that is part of that isthmus formed by the so-called Horn and the Propontis. Formerly it had a gate at the end of the portico built by the Emperor Severus (this was when he was reconciled to the Byzantines after being angry with them for harboring his enemy Niger) (3) and the wall used to run down from the western side of the hill to the temple of Aphrodite and the sea opposite Chrysopolis. On the northern side of the hill, the wall ran down to the harbor called Neorion (the Docks) and thence to the sea that lies opposite the channel through which one enters the Black Sea. The length of this narrow channel leading into the sea is about three hundred stades. (4) This, then, was the extent of the old city.

Constantine built a circular forum where the gate used to be and surrounded it with double-roofed porticoes. He set two huge arches of Proconnesian marble opposite each other, through which one could enter the portico of Severus or go out of the old city.

To make the city much larger, he surrounded it with a wall fifteen stades beyond the old one, cutting off the whole isthmus from sea to sea.

31 (1) When he had thus enlarged the original city, he built a palace scarcely inferior to the one in Rome. He decorated the hippodrome most beautifully, incorporating the temple of the Dioscuri in it; their statues are still to be seen standing in the porticoes of the hippodrome. He even placed somewhere in the hippodrome the tripod of Delphic Apollo, which had on it the very image of Apollo. (2) There was in Byzantium a huge forum consisting of four porticoes, and at the end of one of them, which has numerous steps leading up to it, he built two temples. Statues were set up in them, in one Rhea, mother of the gods. This statue the Argonauts had set up on mount Dindymus overlooking the city of Cyzicus, but they say Constantine damaged it through his disregard for religion, by taking away the lions on each side and changing the arrangement of the hands; (3) for whereas previously she was apparently restraining lions, now she seemed to be praying and looking to the city as if guarding it. And in the other temple he set up the statue of *Fortuna Romae*. Houses were then built for the senators who accompanied him.

Constantine fought no more successful battles; when the Thraiphallians, a Scythian people, attacked him with five hundred horses, not only did he not oppose them, but when he had lost most of his army and saw them plundering as far as his fortified camp, he was glad to save himself by flight.

32 (1) Being thus at peace, he devoted his life to pleasure. He distributed a daily grain ration to the people of Byzantium, which they continue to receive to this day. Public money was spent on structures that were mostly useless, while some he built were shortly after pulled down, being unsafe owing to their hasty construction. He also thoroughly confused the ancient and established magistracies. (2) Previously there were two praetorian prefects who administered the office together, and not only the court soldiers were under their care and command, but also those entrusted with the protection of the city and those on the frontier. For the prefecture was considered second only to the emperor, and it was in charge of the

corn dole and corrected military crimes with proper punishments.

33 (1) Constantine upset this sound organization and divided the one office into four. He assigned to one prefect all Egypt, in addition to the Pentapolis in Africa; the East as far as Mesopotamia; Cilicia, Cappadocia, and Armenia; the whole coast from Pamphylia to Trapezus and on to the forts near Phasis; Thrace and the neighboring provinces of Moesia (which extends to the river Asamus) and Rhodope (to the city of Topirus); Cyprus; and the Cyclades save Lemnos, Imbros, and Samothrace. (2) To the second he gave Macedonia, Thessaly, Crete, Greece and the islands around her, the two Epiruses, Illyricum, Dacia, the Triballi, Pannonia, as well as Valeria and upper Moesia. To the third went all Italy and Sicily; the adjacent islands, Sardinia and Corsica; and Africa from the Syrtes to Mauretania Caesariensis. To the fourth he gave the Gaul beyond the Alps, Spain, and also the island of Britain. (3) After thus dividing the office of the prefects, he was anxious to reduce their influence still further, for whereas the commanders of the soldiers everywhere used to be centurions and tribunes and *duces* who held the rank of generals in each place, Constantine set up Magistri Militum, one of horse, the other of infantry, and to these he transferred power to command the troops and to punish those guilty of crimes, depriving the prefects of this authority. (4) That this was damaging both in peace and war I shall immediately show. Since the prefects had collected taxes everywhere by means of their subordinates to cover military expenses, and since the soldiers were subject to their discretion in penalties for crimes, the troops naturally realized that the person who supplied them with provisions also punished those who made a mistake, and so did not dare do anything contrary to duty through fear both of losing their allowance and of immediate punishment. (5) Now, however, since one person is paymaster and another is in charge of discipline, the soldiers do what they like and, furthermore, the greater part of the provisions goes into the pockets of the magister and his subordinates.

34 (1) And Constantine did something else that gave the barbarians unhindered access to the Roman

Empire. By the forethought of Diocletian, the frontiers of the empire everywhere were covered, as I have stated, with cities, garrisons, and fortifications that housed the whole army. Consequently it was impossible for the barbarians to cross the frontier because they were confronted at every point by forces capable of resisting their attacks. (2) Constantine destroyed this security by removing most of the troops from the frontiers and stationing them in cities that did not need assistance, thus both stripping of protection those being molested by the barbarians and subjecting the cities left alone by them to the outrages of the soldiers, so that henceforth most have become deserted. Moreover he enervated the troops by allowing them to devote themselves to shows and luxuries. In plain terms, Constantine was the origin and beginning of the present destruction of the empire.

35 (1) He proclaimed his son, Constantine, Caesar, and later appointed his other sons, Constantius and Constans, the same rank. The size of Constantinople was increased until it was by far the greatest city, with the result that many of the succeeding emperors chose to live there and attracted an unnecessarily large population that came from all over the world—soldiers and officials, traders and other professions. (2) Therefore, they have surrounded it with new walls much more extensive than those of Constantine and allowed the buildings to be so close to each other that the inhabitants, whether at home or in the streets, are crowded for room and it is dangerous to walk about because of the great number of men and beasts. And a lot of the sea round about has been turned into land by sinking piles and building houses on them, which by themselves are enough to fill a large city.

36 (1) I have often wondered why, since the city of Byzantium has grown so great that no other surpasses it in prosperity or size, no divine prophecy was given to our predecessors concerning its progress and destiny. (2) After thinking about this for a long time and reading through many historical works and collections of oracles and spending time puzzling over them, I finally came across an oracle said to be of the Sibyl of Erythrae or Phaennis in Epirus (who is said to have been inspired and given out some oracles).

Nicomedes, son of Prusias, believed this oracle and, interpreting it to what seemed his own advantage, made war on his father at Attalus's instigation. The oracle runs thus:

37 (1)

O king of Thrace, you will leave your city. Among the sheep you will rear a great lion, crooked-clawed and terrible,

Who will plunder the treasures of your country
And take the land without toil. I say to you, not long
Will you enjoy your royal honors (5)

But will fall from your throne which is surrounded by columns.

You will disturb a sleeping wolf, crooked-clawed and terrible,

Who will put the yoke on your unwilling neck.

Wolves will then make their lair in the land of Bithynia

By Zeus' decree. But power will soon pass to (10)

The men who dwell in Byzas' seat.

Thrice-blessed Hellespont, walls built for men by the gods

At the gods' behest,

Before whom the terrible wolf must submit, compelled by necessity.

O inhabitants of Megara's city, my holy place, (15)

I will no longer keep silent about my father's intentions but reveal

The divine oracles' message clearly to mortals.

Thrace will bring forth a great woe, and the birth is imminent,

A serpent child bringing evil to the land sometime.

A savage ulcer will grow on the side of the land (20)

Which will swell and swell until, suddenly bursting,

It will pour blood.

(2) This oracle tells, although ambiguously and in riddles, virtually all the evils that were to befall the Bithynians because of the burdens that later fell upon them, and how power was swiftly "to pass to the men who dwell in Byzas' seat." The fact that the predictions did not eventuate for a long time should not induce anyone to think that the prophecy refers to another place, for all time is short to the god who is and always will be. These are my conclusions from the words of the oracle and from subsequent events, but if anyone thinks it ought to be interpreted differently, he may do so.

38 (1) After this, Constantine continued wasting revenue by unnecessary gifts to unworthy and useless people and oppressed those who paid taxes while enriching those who were useless to the state, for he thought that prodigality was liberality. (2) He also laid a gold and silver tax on all merchants throughout the empire, including the poorest urban shopkeepers; he did not allow even unfortunate prostitutes to escape. The result was that as each fourth year came round when this tax had to be paid, weeping and wailing were heard throughout the city because beatings and tortures were in store for those who could not pay owing to extreme poverty. (3) Indeed, mothers sold their children and fathers prostituted their daughters under compulsion to pay the exactors of the *chrysargyron*. Anxious also to contrive some harm for the more affluent, Constantine appointed each of them to the rank of praetor and used this honor as a pretext for demanding a large sum of money. So when those appointed to arrange this came to the various cities, everyone could be seen fleeing and going abroad, for fear of gaining this honor and losing all their property. He also made a list of the property of the richest people, on which he imposed a tax called a *foliis*. By such exactions the cities were exhausted, for as these demands persisted long after Constantine, they were soon drained of wealth and most became deserted.

39 (1) After oppressing the state in all these ways, Constantine died from a disease. His three sons (born not from Fausta, the daughter of Hercules Maximianus, but from another woman whom he killed on a charge of adultery) succeeded him, but abstained from administration and devoted themselves to the inclinations of youth, rather than to the service of the state. (2) First of all, then, they divided the empire, and Constantine, the eldest, and Constans, the youngest, obtained everything beyond the Alps, Italy, and Illyricum, as well as the countries around the Black Sea and Carthaginian Africa, while to Constantius were entrusted Asia, the East, and Egypt. And in a sense Delmatius, his brother Constantius, and Hannibalianus acted as their colleagues: they all wore purple robes adorned with gold and out of respect for their relationship to himself had been appointed to the rank of the so-called *nobilissime* by Constantine.