

62. Constantine's exhortation to the bishops about their imparting the bath of baptism
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The chapters of the fourth book

¹² 'Religious service'.

TRANSLATION

Eusebius Pamphili
On the Life of the Blessed Emperor Constantine

BOOK I

I—II. *Preface*

I—3. *Constantine's immortality*

[15] I (1) It was but recently the whole human race celebrated various ten-year periods for the great Emperor with festive banquets. It was but recently we ourselves hymned the conqueror with praises for his twenty years, taking the floor at the Council of God's ministers. Just now we wove garlands of words also for his thirty years, in the very palace hardly yesterday to crown his sacred head. (2) But today our thought stands helpless, longing to express some of the conventional things, but at a loss which way to turn, stunned by the sheer wonder of the amazing spectacle. Wherever it casts its gaze, whether east or west, whether all over the earth or up to heaven itself, every way and everywhere it observes the Blessed One present with the Empire itself. (3) On earth it perceives his own sons like new lamps filling the whole with his radiance, and himself powerfully alive and directing the whole government of affairs more firmly than before, as he is multiplied in the succession of his sons. If previously they still shared the honour of Caesars, now that they have put on his whole mantle of Godfearing virtue, they have been declared Imperatores Augusti, singled out with their father's honours.

2 (1) When our thought observes the one who was recently visible in a mortal body, and amazingly present with us even after his life is ended, when Nature rejects over-prolongation as alien—when our thought observes him endowed with the imperial palaces and properties and honours and panegyrics, it is utterly disconcerted. (2) But now that it reaches upward to the very vaults of heaven, it pictures there too the thrice-blessed soul in the presence of God, [16] stripped of all mortal and earthly attire, and

brilliant in a flashing robe of light. (3) Then perceiving that soul no longer confined in mortal occupations for long periods of time, but honoured with the ever-blooming garland of endless life and the immortality of a blessed eternity, thought in its mortality stands agape, uttering not a word, but convicted by itself of its impotence; it condemns itself to silence, and concedes to the superior and universal Thought the right to utter worthy praises. For him and him alone who is the immortal Thought of God is it possible to confirm his own words, 3 (1) by which he predicted that those who give him glory and honour would excel in generous recompense, while those who set themselves up as his enemies and foes would bring on themselves the destruction of their lives. Hence he has now proved the promises of his own words to be unfailing, showing the ends of the lives of godless tyrants who attack God to be abominable, but making even the death of his servant as well as his life to be enviable and worthy of much praise, so that this too became memorable and worthy not of mortal but of immortal record.

(2) Mortal nature, finding consolation for a mortal and fragile end, appeared to glorify the tombs of our predecessors with immortal honours by dedicating portraits; some by devising pictures in coloured encaustic painting, or statuary figures carved from lifeless material, and others by incising deep lettering on blocks and pillars, supposed they could entrust the merits of those they honoured to everlasting monuments. Yet those were all mortal things which are destroyed by the passage of time, since they were the configurations of corruptible bodies, and did not portray the shapes of an immortal soul. Nevertheless they seemed to satisfy those who had nothing else to set their hopes upon after the termination of mortal life. (3) But God, God the universal Saviour of all, who has stored up benefits beyond mortal imagination for the lovers of true piety, gives even here as a first instalment a foretaste of his rewards, somehow guaranteeing immortal hopes to mortal eyes. (4) This is what ancient oracles of prophets, transmitted in Scripture, predict; this is what lives of Godbeloved men in ancient times illustrious with every kind of virtue attest when they are recounted to the new generation; this is what our own age also has proved to be true, when Constantine, alone among all those who have ruled the Roman Empire, [17] became a friend of the all-sovereign God,

and was established as a clear example to all mankind of the life of godliness.

4-6. *God's achievement in Constantine*

4 This is also what God himself, whom Constantine honoured, by standing at Constantine's side at the beginning, the middle and the end of his reign, confirmed by his manifest judgement, putting forward this man as a lesson in the pattern of godliness to the human race. As the only one of the widely renowned Emperors of all time whom God set up as a huge luminary and loud-voiced herald of unerring godliness, he is the only one to whom God gave convincing proofs of the religion he practised by the benefits of every kind which were accorded him: 5 (1) he honoured his imperial reign with three complete decades, and circumscribed his human life with twice that number. Making him the model of his own monarchical reign, he appointed him victor over the whole race of tyrants and destroyer of the God-battling giants, who in mental frenzy raised weapons against the Sovereign of the universe himself. (2) They, you might say, appeared briefly and were at once extinguished, while God, who is one and only, fortified with divine armour his servant as one against many. By him he cleansed humanity of the godless multitude, and set him up as a teacher of true devotion to himself for all nations, testifying with a loud voice for all to hear, that they should know the God who is, and turn from the error of those who do not exist at all. 6 As a loyal and good servant, he would perform this and announce it, openly calling himself a slave and confessing himself a servant of the All-sovereign, while God in recompense was close at hand to make him Lord and Despot, the only Conqueror among the Emperors of all time to remain Irresistible and Unconquered, Ever-conquering and always brilliant with triumphs over enemies, so great an Emperor as none remembers ever was before in reports of those of old, so Godbeloved and Thriceblessed, so truly pious and complete in happiness, that with utter ease he governed more nations than those before him, and kept his dominion unimpaired to the very end.

7-9. *Constantine superior to other emperors*

7 (1) Among the Persians of [18] old, ancient story indeed relates that Cyrus was declared more illustrious than those before him. Yet one ought to have regard not just to that, but to the end of a long life, and they say that he suffered a death which was not fitting, but vile and shameful at a woman's hand. From among the Macedonians Alexander, so the sons of Greece relate, overthrew countless tribes of diverse nations, but before he reached full manhood he died an early death, carried off by revelry and drunken orgies. (2) He reached two years past thirty, and of this the period of his reign measured one-third; he waded through blood, a man like a thunderbolt, mercilessly enslaving entire nations and cities, young and old alike. But while his youth had barely blossomed, and he still mourned his lost childhood, fate fell deadly upon him, and childless, rootless, homeless, in a foreign and hostile land, that he might harm the human race no more, removed him. At once his empire was divided, as each of his servants tore off a portion and seized it for himself.

For such deeds as these he is hymned in choruses; 8 (1) but our Emperor began where the Macedonian ended, and doubled in time the length of his life, and trebled the size of the Empire he acquired. (2) With mild and sober injunctions to godliness he equipped his troops, then campaigned against the land of the Britons and the dwellers at the very Ocean where the sun sets. He annexed the whole Scythian population, which was in the far north divided into numerous barbarian tribes; (3) and once he had also extended his Empire in the extreme south as far as the Blemmyes and Ethiopians, he did not treat the acquisition of what lay in the orient as beyond his scope, (4) but illuminating with beams of the light of true religion the ends of the whole inhabited earth, as far as the outermost inhabitants of India and those who live round the rim of the whole dial of earth, he held in subjection all the toparchs, ethnarchs, satraps and kings of barbarian nations of every kind. These spontaneously saluted and greeted him, and [19] sent their embassies with gifts and presents, and set such store by his acquaintance and friendship, that they honoured him at home with pictures of him and dedications of statues, and alone of emperors Constantine was recognized and acclaimed by them all. For his part he used

imperial addresses to announce his own God openly and boldly even to the people of those lands.

9 (1) Yet it was not in words he did these things whilst failing in deeds. He travelled every virtuous road and took pride in fruits of piety of every kind. By the magnanimity of his helpful actions he enslaved those who knew him, and ruled by humane laws, making his government agreeable and much prayed for by the governed. Then finally the God he honoured, after he had struggled for a long period of years in the divine athletic contest, crowned him with the prizes of immortality, and removed him from a mortal reign to that endless life which he has reserved for holy souls, having raised up a threefold offspring of sons to succeed to his Empire. (2) Thus also did the throne of Empire descend from his father to him, and by natural law it was stored up for his sons and their descendants, and extended to unaging time like a paternal inheritance. So may God himself, since he both exalted the Blessed One when he was still among us with divine honours, and dying adorned him with exquisite perfections from himself, become also his recorder, inscribing his successful conflicts on tablets of heavenly monuments for long eternities.

10-11. *Eusebius' purpose and plan*

10 (1) As for me, even though to say anything worthy of the blessedness of the man is beyond my power, while to be silent would be safe and peril-free, yet one must model oneself on the human painter, and dedicate a verbal portrait in memory of the Godbeloved, if only to escape the charge of sloth and idleness. I would be ashamed of myself if I did not put together what I can, little though it be and poor, for the one who out of his extraordinary devotion to God honoured us all. (2) I consider that the book which deals with the deeds of the great imperial mind, deeds bestowed by God, will in any case be edifying and necessary for me. Would it not be a disgrace if the memory of Nero and of those others far worse than Nero, vicious and godless tyrants, were to find ready authors, who have [20] embellished their accounts of wretched deeds with stylish expression and stored them in many-volumed histories, while we are silent, when God himself has vouchsafed to bring us together with an

Emperor so great that all history has not reported his like, and to see him, to know him, and to share his company? It therefore behoves us, above all others, to give to every one whose desire is stimulated to divine affection by the representation of noble deeds our own unreserved account of good things.

(3) Those writers who have composed lives of worthless characters which are of no use for moral improvement, whether from partisanship or animosity towards certain persons, or possibly also as a demonstration of their own personal skill, by flaunting their fluency with words have unnecessarily expanded their narrative of shameful actions, setting themselves up, before people whose good fortune under God is to escape those evils, as teachers not of good deeds, but of deeds fit for the silence of oblivion and darkness. (4) For my part, may the account which I give, feeble though it is when compared with the greatness of the subject of our discourse, yet derive lustre from the mere reporting of good deeds; and the recording of actions dear to God shall provide reading not unprofitable, but of practical benefit to well-disposed minds.

II (1) The greatest, the imperial parts of the history of the Thriceblessed, his encounters and battles in war, his valiant deeds and victories and routing of enemies, and how many triumphs he won, his peacetime decrees for the welfare of the state and the benefit of the individual, and the legal enactments which he imposed for the improvement of the life of his subjects, and most of his other acts as Emperor, and those which everybody remembers, I intend to omit. My purpose in the present work is to put into words and write down what relates to the life which is dear to God. (2) Since even these events are innumerable, I shall pick out from those which have reached us the most significant and worth recording for those who come after us, and even of these I shall set out the narrative as briefly as possible, since the occasion demands that I offer unrestrained praises in varied words of the truly Blessed One. It was not possible to do this in the past, for we are forbidden to call any man blessed before his death in view of the uncertainty of life's changes. Let God be called upon for aid, and as fellow-worker let our inspiration be the heavenly Word.

12-24. *Birth, family, and youth*

12. *Childhood among the tyrants*

[21] Let us begin our story with our subject's early youth.

12 (1) An ancient report relates that terrible generations of tyrants once oppressed the Hebrew people, and that God, disclosing himself as gracious to the oppressed, provided for Moses, a prophet still in his infancy, to be reared in the heart of the palace and family circle of the tyrants, and to learn to share the wisdom they possessed. When the passage of time summoned him to manhood, and Justice who helps the injured began to pursue those who injured them, it was time for the prophet of God to leave that home of the tyrants and serve the will of the Supreme, diverging in actions and words from the tyrants who had brought him up, and acknowledging as his own those who were his true kith and kin. God then raised him up as leader of the whole nation, and he liberated the Hebrews from bondage to their enemies, while through him he pressed the tyrannical race with the torments of divine pursuit. (2) This ancient report, which most people regard as a kind of myth, was previously in everybody's ears, but now the same God has vouchsafed to us also to be eyewitnesses of public scenes, more certain than any myth because recently seen, of wonders greater than those in story. Tyrants who in our time set out to make war on the God over all oppressed his Church, while in their midst Constantine, soon to be the tyrant-slayer, still a tender young boy and blooming with the down of youth, like that very servant of God, sat at the tyrants' hearth, yet though still young he did not share the same morality as the godless. (3) With the aid of the divine Spirit a virtuous nature drew him away from that way of life towards one of piety and the favour of God, while at the same time imitation of his father was a motive which challenged the son to imitate what was good. For he had a father—since at this point his memory also deserves to be revived—most distinguished among the Emperors of our time. It is necessary to give a brief account of him where it touches on the merit of his son.

13-18. *Career and character of Constantine's father*

[22] 13 (1) When four men shared power in the Roman Empire, this man was the only one who adopted an independent policy and was on friendly terms with the God over all. (2) They besieged and ravaged the churches of God and demolished them from top to bottom, removing the houses of prayer right to their foundations; he kept his hands clean of their sacrilegious impiety, and did not resemble them at all. They stained their provinces with civic massacres of godfearing men and women; he kept his soul unstained with their defilement. (3) By the confusion of evils of unnatural idolatry they enslaved first themselves and then all their subjects to the deceits of evil demons; he led those under his rule in the way of utter tranquillity, and determined that for his people what affected devotion to God should be unharmed. While the others held the threat of very heavy taxation over all men and threatened them with a life unliveable and worse than death, Constantius alone provided sound and peaceable government, and supplied aid from his resources no less than a father would provide. (4) Since this man's countless other virtues are universally celebrated, having mentioned one or two achievements and used these as illustrations of those omitted, I shall pass on to the proper subject of my work.

14 (1) Since many stories about this Emperor were in circulation, that he was kind and good and extremely attached to what pleases God, and that because he was extremely sparing of his subjects he had not assembled any financial reserves, the Emperor who then exercised supremacy sent and rebuked him for neglect of the public interest and reproached him for penury, giving as evidence for his allegation the fact that he had nothing in reserve in his treasury. (2) He asked those who came from the Emperor to wait where they were, while he summoned those persons from all the provinces under his rule who had abundant wealth and told them that he needed money, and that now was the time for each of them to demonstrate his spontaneous loyalty to their Emperor. (3) When they heard this, as if it had been their long-felt desire to demonstrate their good [23] will, quickly and eagerly they filled the treasuries with gold and silver and other financial resources, vying with each other in their effort to

give more, and they did this with happy smiling faces. (4) When this happened Constantius invited those who had come from the senior Emperor to be eyewitnesses to his wealth. Then he ordered them to transmit the testimony of what their eyes had seen to the one who had accused him of poverty. He further added to his remarks that these funds had not been acquired from tricksters or by fraud, and that whereas he had now gathered them under his own hand, they had formerly been kept for him in the care of the owners of the money who acted as faithful depositaries. (5) They were overcome with amazement at what had happened, and it is reported that after their departure the most generous Emperor sent for the owners of the money, and told them they should take it all and go home, commending these persons for their obedience and ready loyalty.

(6) That was one action which illustrates the generosity of the man in question. The other might provide manifest evidence of his holy concern for divine things. 15 Provincial governors were throughout the world persecuting the godly by the decree of those in power. Starting first of all from the imperial palaces themselves the Godbeloved martyrs endured the trials of true religion, facing with eager fortitude fire and iron, deep sea and every kind of death, so that the whole imperial service might soon be stripped of Godfearing men, a policy which had the chief effect of depriving its perpetrators of God's protection; for by persecuting the Godfearers they also expelled their prayers.

16 (1) To Constantius alone a wise counsel born of a pious mind occurred. He performed an act which is remarkable to hear of, and astonishing to have done. A choice was offered to all the imperial servants under him, from lowly domestics to those with commissions as governors: he proposed that either they sacrifice to the demons and be permitted to stay with him enjoying the customary advancement, or if they did not comply they should be excluded from all access to him and be removed and dismissed from his acquaintance and intimacy. (2) When they had divided two ways, some to the latter group and some to the former, and the nature of the decision of each was clearly demonstrated, the amazing man then finally revealed his secret trick: he condemned the one group for cowardice and self-concern, and warmly commended the others for their sense of duty to God. Thereupon he declared those who had betrayed

God not worthy of imperial service either: how could they keep faith with the Emperor if they were found to have no conscience about the Supreme? He therefore decreed that they were to be banished far from the palace, while those, he said, who for their truth had been attested worthy of God, would be the same where the Emperor was concerned; he appointed them as bodyguards and watchmen for the imperial house, saying that he ought to employ such men among his chief and closest friends and servants, and to prize them above stores of great treasure.

17 (1) This brief account shows how Constantine's father is remembered. What sort of end ensued for him, when he had shown himself so disposed towards God, and how far the God whom he had honoured made clear the difference between him and his partners in Empire, might be easily discovered by anyone who applies his mind to what actually happened. (2) When he had for a long time given proofs of his merit as an emperor, recognizing only the God over all and condemning the polytheism of the godless, and had fortified his house all around with the prayers of holy men, he finally finished the course of his life serenely and undisturbed, exactly as in the saying that it is a blessed thing to have no troubles and to give none to another. (3) Thus directing the whole period of his reign in peace and tranquillity, he consecrated his whole household to the one God of the Universe, with his children and wife, and including the domestic servants, so that the body of persons assembled within the imperial quarters was in all respects a church of God; with it were present also ministers [25] of God, who conducted constant rituals on behalf of the Emperor. These things were done only under him, at the time when under the others it was not permitted to mention the race of the godly by so much as their name.

18 (1) Close on this followed his reward from God, so that he now came to share the supreme imperial power. Those who were advanced in years managed somehow to withdraw from power, frequent changes having afflicted them from the first year of their onslaught on the churches; finally Constantius alone was entitled First Augustus. Originally he had been distinguished by the crown of the Caesars and had been appointed senior among them; after proven service among them he was promoted to the rank most highly regarded by the Romans, and was given the

title of First Augustus of the four appointed to succeed. (2) But he excelled the other emperors also by the singularity of his large family, assembling a great band of sons and daughters. But when he was about to complete his mellow old age by paying the debt our common nature exacts and finally departing his life, God once more became for him a doer of marvellous works, by arranging that the first of his sons, Constantine, should be present to take over his Empire.

19-21. *Constantine joins his father*

19 (1) This son was with his imperial colleagues; and in their midst, as has been said, he conducted himself in the same way as that ancient prophet of God. Now that he had passed from childhood to youth he was granted highest honour among them. As such we knew him ourselves as he travelled through the land of Palestine in company with the senior Emperor, at whose right he stood, a noble sight for those with eyes to see, able already [26] to display an imperial quality of mind. (2) In handsome physique and bodily height no other could bear comparison with him; in physical strength he so exceeded his contemporaries as even to put them in fear; he took pride in moral qualities rather than physical superiority, ennobling his soul first and foremost with self-control, and thereafter distinguishing himself by the excellence of his rhetorical education, his instinctive shrewdness and his God-given wisdom.

20 (1) As a result of this those then in power observed with envy and fear that the young man was fine, sturdy and tall, full of good sense. They reckoned that his stay with them was not safe for them, and devised secret plots against him, though out of respect for his father they avoided inflicting public death upon him. (2) The young man was aware of this, and when once and again the plottings were with God-given insight detected by him, he sought safety in flight, in this also preserving his likeness to the great prophet Moses. In the whole affair God was working with him, intending that he should be present to succeed his father. 21 (1) Immediately he had escaped the schemes of the plotters he made all speed to get to his father, and he arrived after so long away at the very moment when his father's life was reaching its final crisis. When Constantius saw his son quite unexpectedly

standing there, he rose from his couch, flung his arms round him, and declared that his mind had been relieved of the only grief which had prevented him from setting life aside, which was the absence of his son; and [27] he sent up a prayer of thanks to God, saying that he now considered death better than deathlessness, and duly set his affairs in order. (2) He gave instructions to his sons and daughters, who gathered round him like a choir, and in the palace itself, on the imperial couch, he handed over his part of the Empire by natural succession to the senior in age among his sons, and expired.

22-4. *Constantine declared Emperor*

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 honoured 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 which 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, nor 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 which he alone possessed, since the rest owed the rank they held to election by others.

25-41. *2. Deeds in War I: The Liberation of the West*

25. 1. *Constantine settles his father's domain*

[28] **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 which 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.

25.2-26. *Constantine observes the plight of Rome*

(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, inasmuch 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.

27-32. *Constantine seeks divine aid and receives the labarum*

27 (1) Knowing well that he would need more powerful aid than an army can supply because of the mischievous magical

devices practised 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 [29] 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 favourable predictions and oracles which 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 honoured the God who transcends the universe, and had found him a saviour 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 marshalled these arguments in his mind, and concluded that it was folly to go on with the vanity of the gods which 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.

28–32. *The vision of Constantine*

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 [30] 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 which 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 which 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 which had appeared in the sky, and urged him to make himself a copy of the sign which 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 jewellers, 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 which 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 [31] 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 Saviour's title, *rho* being intersected in the middle 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

37-8. *Constantine's victory*

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 saviour and succour, 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 which 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 which 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 [35] he overwhelmed in the Red Sea' (Exodus 15: 4), in the very same way Maxentius and the armed men and guards about him 'sank to the bottom like a stone' (Exodus 15: 5), when, fleeing before the force which 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 labour will return on his head, and on his pate will his wickedness fall' (Psalm 7: 16-17). (4) Thus then by God's will

the mechanism in the link and the device concealed in it gave way at a time which 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' (Exodus 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 succour and shelter for my salvation' (Exodus 15: 1-2); and, 'Who is like you among the gods, Lord, who is like you? Glorified among the saints, wonderful, gloriously doing miracles' (Exodus 15: 11).

39-41. 2. *Celebrations and monument to victory*

[36] 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, saviour and benefactor. (3) He, however, being possessed of inward fear of God, was not inflated by their cries nor over-exuberant 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 Saviour, 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 valour, I liberated your city, saved from the tyrant's yoke; moreover the

Senate and People of Rome I liberated and restored to their ancient splendour 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 which bordered on the Ocean where the sun sets, set free from the evils which 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.

41. 3-48. *Emperor of the West*

41. 3-43. *Generosity to Christians and others*

(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 honourably and cherishing them with highest consideration, since he favoured 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 honoured in each. He took them with him also wherever he set out on campaign, [38] trusting that in this too the one they worshipped would be present at his right hand. (42. 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.

44-5. *Constantine deals with Church disputes*

44 (1) Towards 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. [39] (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 surrounded 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 favoured 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.

46-7. *Victories abroad, plots unmasked, and divine favours*

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 [40] 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 which 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. *Decennalia celebrations*

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.

49-59. *The crimes of Licinius*

49-50. *Breaking faith*

While these things continued to give him joy, what he heard about the distress of the eastern provinces certainly did not.

49 (1) There also, so it was reported to him, a wild beast threatened the Church of God and the rest of the provincials. The Evil Demon, as if [41] to compete, was working for the opposite of what was being done by the Godbeloved, so that it seemed that the whole Roman domain had been left in two parts and resembled night and day, with darkness spread over those who lived in the east, and brilliant daylight illuminating the inhabitants of the other part. (2) Because innumerable benefits from God were supplied to the latter, the sight of what was happening was not tolerable to Envy, which hates good, nor to the tyrant who was oppressing the other part of the world. While his government was successful he had been privileged with a connection by marriage to so great an Emperor as Constantine, but he ceased to imitate the Godbeloved and was beginning to follow the evil of the policy of the ungodly: his own eyes had seen their lives brought to an end, yet he attempted to follow their policy rather than terms of friendship with his superior.

50 (1) He therefore waged constant war against his benefactor,

and had no regard in his mind for laws of friendship, oaths, kinship, or treaties. That most generous man had provided him with tokens of true good will by granting him the privilege of sharing his paternal descent and the ancestral imperial blood by joining him in marriage to his sister, and allowed him the right to enjoy authority over those who live in the east, while he with the opposite in mind constructed all manner of schemes against his superior, adopting first one kind of plot and then another, in order to repay his benefactor with evil. (2) At first he did everything craftily and deceitfully under the guise of friendship, hoping that his crimes would remain undetected; but the other's God exposed to him the darkly devised plots. When he was detected in his first crimes, he went on to a second deception; sometimes he offered the hand of friendship, sometimes he confirmed treaties with oaths. Then he suddenly breaks the agreement, once more seeks terms through [42] an embassy, yet again tells shameful lies, and ends up declaring open war; in his mindless folly he finally began a campaign against the very God whom he knew the Emperor worshipped.

51-54.1. *Measures against Christians*

51 (1) First of all he began an investigation, for the time being discreet, of the servants of God under his control, who had never been involved in any offence against the state, hunting for some malicious pretext to accuse them. Not finding any fault, however, or any way of charging those men, he issued a law decreeing that the bishops should never communicate actively with each other at all, that none of them be permitted to visit his neighbour's church, and that no synods, councils, or discussions of common interest be held. (2) That was just a pretext for ill-treating us: one either had to defy the law and be liable to punishment, or submit to the decree and break the Church's canons. There was no other way of resolving important issues except by synodical meetings; divine canons prescribe that episcopal ordinations may only take place in this way.

The Godhater issued such decrees because he knew that he was acting contrary to the Godbeloved. While the one promoted peace and concord by assembling the priests of God in obedience to the divine law, the other schemed to disable what was good

and tried to shatter harmonious concord. 52 Furthermore, because the friend of God saw fit to receive the servants of God within the imperial court, the Godhater chose the converse and drove all the godly men under him from the imperial court, and sent into exile the very persons around him who were most faithful and loyal, and those who for their former noble deeds had achieved honour and high rank in his service he ordered to become slaves to others, and to perform menial tasks. All their goods he grabbed as if they were no one's, and even threatened with death those who claimed the saving name.

This same person, who possessed a soul passionate and unbridled, and committed countless adulteries and unmentionable atrocities, could not believe in chastity as a virtue in human nature, taking himself as the wretched standard. 53 (1) Hence he made a second law, requiring that men and women should not be present together at prayers to God, nor women attend the sacred schools of virtue, nor bishops give instruction to women in devotional addresses, but that women should be appointed as teachers of women.

(2) When everybody treated these rules as ridiculous, he devised another scheme to destroy the churches. He said that the normal assemblies of lay people should be held outside the gates in open country, since the air outside the gates was much fresher than that in the urban places of worship.

54 (1) As not many were obedient in this either, he finally came into the open and ordered that members of the army in each city were to be demoted from ranks of command, if they would not sacrifice to the demons. The ranks of officers in every province were thus deprived of Godfearing men, and the creator of these laws was himself deprived of prayers, since he had robbed himself of holy men.

54.2-55. *General policy and character*

(2) What need is there to recall secular affairs, and how he ordered that those suffering imprisonment should not be permitted charitable distributions of food, nor pity be shown to those in bonds perishing with hunger, nor any kindness be allowed at all, nor any kind deed be done by those drawn by natural feeling to compassion for their neighbours? In legislation

this man was shocking and quite wicked, absolutely extreme in harshness of character, inasmuch as the penalty was also imposed, that those exercising charity should suffer the same as those who received it, and that those who provided philanthropic ministrations should undergo the same as those already in misery.

55 (1) Such were the decrees of Licinius. What need is there to list his innovations about marriage, or his alterations about those passing from life, in which he criminally annulled long established good and wise laws of Rome and substituted foreign ones of harsh effect, inventing countless pretexts to harm his subjects? Thus he devised new land measurements, so that the smallest plot should be reckoned greater in size, out of greed for extra taxation. (2) Thus also he registered persons who were no longer on estates but long since dead and buried, making this a source of further profit to himself. [44] His miserliness had no limit, and his greed was insatiable. Hence when he had filled all his treasuries with an enormous quantity of gold and silver and money, he complained bitterly of poverty, his soul oppressed with Tantalus-like passion. (3) The barbaric punishments he invented for persons who had done no wrong, the confiscations of goods, the executions of noble and respected men, whose lawful spouses he handed over to filthy menials to be foully abused, and the number of married women and young virgins whom despite the physical deterioration of old age he himself raped, there is certainly no need to dwell upon, since his final extremes have made the early ones appear small and negligible.

56-9. *Licinius ignores the fate of Galerius and Maximin*

56 (1) His final madness was to take up arms against the churches, and attack whichever of the bishops he regarded as chiefly opposing him, and reckoned as hostile the friends of the Godbeloved and great Emperor. (2) Hence his anger with us became very intense, and he stopped thinking rationally and his mind became completely deranged. He did not let the memory of those who before him had persecuted the Christians enter his mind, nor of those whom he had himself been established to destroy and punish for the evil of their policies, nor of those he had himself witnessed, when he saw with his own eyes the first

initiator of the evils, whatever his name was, smitten with divinely inflicted illness.

57 (1) When this person began the assault on the churches, and became the first to stain his soul with the blood of just and godfearing men, God-sent punishment pursued him, beginning with his very flesh and extending to his mind. (2) A general inflammation arose in the middle of his bodily private parts, then a deeply fistulous ulcer; these spread incurably to his intestines, from which an unspeakable number of maggots bred and a stench of death arose; his whole bodily bulk having been converted by excess eating into a vast quantity of fat, which then, as it decomposed, is said to have caused an intolerable and frightful spectacle to those nearby. (3) As he wrestled with so many evils he did indeed ultimately become aware of his crimes against the Church. He then made confession to God and stopped the persecution of Christians, by laws and imperial rescripts he encouraged the building of churches, and ordered them to do as they were accustomed and pray for him.

58 (1) Such was the penalty paid by the originator of the persecution. But though he was witness of these things and knew them well from experience, the person our story is describing forgot them all completely, neither reminding himself of the punishment imposed on the first nor the avenging judgement against the second. (2) The latter had even striven to outdo his predecessor in a sort of competition in evil, and prided himself on the invention of novel punishments to use on us. He was not satisfied with fire and iron and crucifixion, wild beasts and deep seas, but went on to invent a new form of torture in addition to all these, and decreed that the organs of sight should be mutilated. So great throngs not only of men, but of women and children, the sight of their right eyes and their ankle-joints maimed by iron and branding, were committed to forced labour in mines. (3) For these things he also was soon pursued by the judgement of God, when, drawing confidence from his hopes in demons, whom he supposed to be gods, and in his countless thousands of soldiers, he went to war. At that time, his hope of divine help gone, he took off the imperial dress, for which he was not fit, timidly and cowardly slipped into the crowd, and planned to survive by flight; and then, going into hiding in one estate and village after another, [46] he supposed he could escape detection dressed as a menial.

(4) But he did not also elude the great eye which supervises everything. Just when he finally hoped that his life was safe, he was struck down by a fiery shaft from God, his whole body consumed with the fire of divine vengeance, so that his whole physical appearance as he had been before became unrecognizable, dry skeletonized bones like mere phantoms being all that was left of him. 59 (1) As the chastisement of God became more severe his eyes began to protrude and fell from their sockets leaving him blind, as he was subjected by the most just verdict of God to the very punishment which he had been first to introduce for God's martyrs. Still living despite such great afflictions, he too in the end acknowledged the God of the Christians and renounced his own war against him; he too composed recantations just as his predecessor had done. In published laws and decrees he confessed his own error in the matter of those he had supposed to be gods, testifying that by personal experience he had come to recognize only the God of the Christians.

(2) Though Licinius had learnt all this from the facts, and not by hearsay from others, he still got involved in the same things, as though his mind had been blacked out by a moonless night.

BOOK II

*1-22. Deeds in War II: The Victory over Licinius**1-2. Licinius attacks the Church*

[47] 1 (1) We have described how this person began his headlong fall into the pit where God's enemies lie. The policies of those, whose destruction for irreligion he had seen with his own eyes, he now began to emulate to his own hurt, and he rekindled the persecution of Christians like the blaze of a long-extinguished flame, stirring up the fire of irreligion to fiercer heat than had those before him. (2) Like some wild beast, or a twisting snake coiling up on itself, breathing wrath and menace of war with God, he dared not yet, for fear of Constantine, openly assail the churches of God subject to him. Rather he disguised the poison of his evil, and planned insidiously and gradually his policies against the bishops, and began to remove the most distinguished of them by a conspiracy of the provincial rulers. Even the method of slaughter used against them was grotesque,

of a kind quite unheard of before. The actions taken at Amasea in Pontus surpassed all extremes of cruelty.

2 (1) Some of the churches now suffered complete demolition for the second time, following their previous devastation. Others were shut by the local officials, to prevent their regular members from congregating and rendering to God the authorized services. The one who gave this command did not believe that these services were performed for his benefit, his judgement being affected by a bad conscience, but [48] he was convinced that we were carrying them out and propitiating God for Constantine. (2) Certain persons, who were his fawning lackeys, convinced that what they did was congenial to his profanity, imposed death sentences on the most respectable church leaders, and they were taken away and punished without excuse like bloody murderers, though they had done no wrong. Some now faced a quite new form of execution: their bodies were gradually chopped with a sword into many pieces, and after this harsh torment, shocking beyond the tales of tragedy, they were thrown into the deep sea as food for fish. (3) Furthermore, as so recently before, once more there were banishments of Godfearing men, and again the countryside and again the desert received the worshippers of God. When these policies of the tyrant were also progressing in this way, he began finally to think about launching a general persecution; he had taken the decision and there would have been nothing to prevent his putting it into immediate effect, had not the Champion of his own people anticipated the event, and lit a great lantern in the darkness and blackest night, when he guided to these parts his servant Constantine.

3-5. Preparations for a war of religion

3 (1) Constantine regarded the report of the matters described as no longer tolerable. He arrived at a considered conclusion, and combining firm determination with his innate kindness he set out to the defence of the oppressed. He reckoned that it must be a pious and holy act by removing one man to rescue most of the human race: as long as he kept using great kindness, and was merciful towards one undeserving of sympathy, the latter was gaining nothing, since he did not turn away from the practice of evil at all, but merely increased his rage

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