

falsehoods in which your idle folly is entangled, and how venomous the poisons with which your teaching is involved, so that the healthy are brought to sickness and the living to everlasting death through you.

(2) *You opponents of truth, enemies of life and counsellors of ruin! Everything about you is contrary to truth, [118] in harmony with ugly deeds of evil; it serves grotesque charades in which you argue falsehoods, distress the unoffending, deny light to believers. By continually sinning under a pretext of godliness you make all things foul, you wound innocent and pure consciences with deadly blows, you all but rob human eyes of daylight itself.* (3) *Why should I go into detail, when to speak about your villainies as they deserve is more than a short time and our business permits? The crimes done among you are so great and immense, so hateful and full of harshness, that not even a whole day would suffice to put them into words; and in any case it is proper to shut the ears and avert the eyes, so as not to impair the pure and untarnished commitment of our own faith by recounting the details.* (4) *Why then should we endure such evils any longer? Protracted neglect allows healthy people to be infected as with an epidemic disease. Why do we not immediately use severe public measures to dig up such a great evil, as you might say, by the roots?*

65 (1) *Accordingly, since it is no longer possible to tolerate the pernicious effect of your destructiveness, by this decree we publicly command that none of you henceforward shall dare to assemble. Therefore we have also given order that all your buildings in which you conduct these meetings are to be confiscated, the purport of this extending so far as to prohibit the gathering of assemblies of your superstitious folly not only in public but also in houses of individuals or any private places.* (2) *The best thing would be for as many as are concerned for true and pure religion to come to the Catholic Church and share in the sanctity of that by which you will also be able to attain the truth. But let there be wholly removed from the prosperity of our times the deception of your perverted thinking, by which I mean the polluted and destructive deviance of the heretics and schismatics. It is in keeping with our present blessedness, which under God we enjoy, that those who live in good hopes should be led from all disorderly error into the right path, from darkness to light, from vanity to truth, from death to salvation.*

(3) *To ensure that [119] this curative measure may also be enforced I have commanded, as already stated, all the meeting places of your superstition, I mean all the places of worship of the heretics, if indeed it is proper to call them places of worship, be confiscated and handed over incontestably and without delay to the Catholic Church, and other sites become public property; and that hereafter no opportunity be left for you to*

meet, so that from this day forward your unlawful groups may not dare to assemble in any place either public or private.

To be published.

66 (1) Thus were the secret conspiracies of the heterodox destroyed by the Emperor's command, and the wild beasts, the captains of their sacrilege, were driven off. Of those deceived by them there were some who through fear of the imperial warning crept into the Church with fraudulent purpose, dissembling as occasion required, since the decree also required the books of these persons to be hunted out, and they were caught carrying out forbidden evil practices; this showed that they did it all to procure safety by pretence. Others perhaps with genuine intent went over to hope in the Supreme. (2) The presidents of churches made careful distinction between these persons: those who tried to join on fictitious grounds they warded off from the flock of God as wolves hiding in sheep's fleeces; those who did so with a pure heart they tested over a period and after sufficient trial included them among the number of those allowed entry. (3) This then was the policy towards the infamous heretics. Those who had no sacrilegious doctrinal teaching, but were in other ways separated from the common fellowship by reason of schismatic individuals, they received without delay. They came flocking back like those returning from exile to their native land, and acknowledged their mother the Church, from which they had wandered off, but now with joy and gladness made their return to her. The parts of the common body were united together and joined in a single harmony, and alone the Catholic Church of God shone forth gathered into itself, with no heretical or schismatic group left anywhere in the world. For this great achievement also, among those that ever were, only the Emperor who cared about God could claim responsibility.

BOOK IV

I-14. I. *The Prosperous Empire*

I-4. *Philanthropy*

[120] I (1) While the Emperor was doing so much to build up and honour the Church of God, and was performing all that would bring the Saviour's teaching into good repute, he did not

of hair and beard; the appearance of their hairy faces was foreign and astonishing, their bodily height exceptional. The faces of some were red, of others whiter than snow, of others blacker than ebony or pitch, and others had a mixed colour in between; for men of Blemmyan race, and Indian and Ethiopian, 'who are twain-parted last of men' (Homer, *Od.* 1. 23), could be seen in recounting those mentioned. (2) Each of these in turn, as in a picture, brought their particular treasures to the Emperor, some of them golden crowns, some diadems of precious stones, others fair-haired children, others foreign cloths woven with gold and bright colours, others horses, others shields and long spears and javelins and bows, showing that they were offering service and alliance with these things to the Emperor when he required it. (3) The Emperor received these from those who brought them and recorded them, and responded with equal gifts, so as to make the bearers very rich all at once. He honoured the most distinguished of them also with Roman titles, so that very many now longed to remain here, forgetting any thought of returning to their homes.

8-14. I. *Foreign relations III: Peace with Persia*

8 When the Persian emperor also saw fit to seek recognition by Constantine through an embassy, and he too dispatched tokens of friendly compact, the Emperor negotiated treaties to this end, outdoing in lavish munificence the initiator of honorific gesture by what he did in return. Certainly, when he learnt that the churches of God were multiplying among the Persians and that many thousands of people were being gathered into the flocks of Christ, he rejoiced at the report, and, [123] as one who had general responsibility for them everywhere, there too he again took prudent measures on behalf of them all. This also he shall explain for himself in his own words through the letter which he dispatched to the Persian emperor, commending these people to him with utmost tact and discretion. This document also is in circulation among us, written by the Emperor personally in Latin, which may be more readily understood by the reader when translated into Greek. It runs like this:

9 *Guarding the divine faith I participate in the light of truth. Led by*

the light of truth I recognize the divine faith. By these things therefore, as events confirm, I acknowledge the most holy religion. I confess that I hold this cult to be the teacher of the knowledge of the most holy God. Having the power of this God as ally, beginning from the shores of Ocean I have raised up the whole world step by step with sure hopes of salvation, so that all those things, which under the slavery of such great tyrants yielded to daily disasters and had come near to vanishing, have enjoyed the general restoration of right, and have revived like a patient after treatment. The God I represent is the one whose sign my army, dedicated to God, carries on its shoulders, and to whatever task the Word of Justice summons it goes directly; and from those men I get immediate and happy recompense in marks of signal victory. This is the God I profess to honour with undying remembrance, and him I clearly perceive with unsullied and pure mind to take highest place.

10 (1) *Him I call upon with bended knee, shunning all abominable blood and foul hateful odours, and refusing all earthly splendour, since by all these things that lawless and unmentionable error is tainted, which has overthrown many of the nations and whole peoples, dropping them in the nethermost depths. (2) Those things which the God of the Universe, out of concern for [124] human welfare and because of his own love for mankind, has made available for use, should certainly not be diverted to suit the desire of individuals; he requires of men only a pure mind and soul unblemished, making these the measure of deeds of virtue and piety. (3) He takes pleasure in works of kindness and gentleness, befriending the meek, hating the violent, loving faithfulness, punishing unfaithfulness, shattering all ostentatious power, taking vengeance on overweening arrogance; those who proudly exalt themselves he utterly destroys, while he gives what they deserve to the humble and forgiving. (4) So because he also values highly righteous empire, he strengthens it with his own resources, and guards the imperial mind with the calm of peace.*

11 (1) *I believe I am not mistaken, my brother, in confessing this one God the Author and Father of all, whom many of those who have reigned here, seduced by insane errors, have attempted to deny. But such punishment finally engulfed them that all mankind since has regarded their fate as superseding all other examples to warn those who strive for the same ends. (2) Among them I reckon that one, who was driven from these parts by divine wrath as by a thunderbolt and was left in yours, where he caused the victory on your side to become very famous because of the shame he suffered.*

12 *Yet it would appear that it has turned out advantageous that even*

in our own day the punishment of such persons has become notorious. I have myself observed the end of those next to me, who with vicious decrees had harassed the people devoted to God. All thanks therefore are due to God, because by his perfect providence the entire humanity which reveres the divine Law, now that peace has been restored to them, exults triumphantly. Consequently I am convinced that for ourselves also everything is at its best and most secure [125] when through their pure and excellent religion and as a result of their concord on matters divine he deigns to gather all men to himself.

13 *With this class of persons—I mean of course the Christians, my whole concern being for them—how pleasing it is for me to hear that the most important parts of Persia too are richly adorned! May the very best come to you therefore, and at the same time the best for them, since they also are yours. For so you will keep the sovereign Lord of the Universe kind, merciful and benevolent. These therefore, since you are so great, I entrust to you, putting their very persons in your hands, because you too are renowned for piety. Love them in accordance with your own humanity. For you will give enormous satisfaction both to yourself and to us by keeping faith.*

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.

14. 2-39. *Constantine's Sanctity*

14. 2-16. *Personal piety*

(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 upwards 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 [126] 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.

17-21. *Staff and military personnel*

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 Saviour, 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 honour 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 Saviour, and similarly that they should honour the days of the Sabbath, in memory, I suppose, of the things recorded as done by the universal Saviour 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. [127] 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 learnt by heart; they ought not to rest their hopes on spears or armour 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 towards heaven, extending their mental vision yet higher to the heavenly King, and calling on him in their prayers as the Giver of victory and Saviour, 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.

22-3. Domestic religion

[128] 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 Saviour, intensifying the rigour, 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 Saviour 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 towards his own God.

23-5. Christianity promoted and idolatry suppressed

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 honoured 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 practising 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 [129] 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.

26-8. *Legislation and public charity*

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 which 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 towards 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 which 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 remodelled the law.

(5) Furthermore for those near death ancient laws prescribed that even with their last breath the [130] wills they made must be expressed in precise verbal formulae, 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 Saviour 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 honour 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.

29-33. *Speaking and listening*

29 (1) Indeed in order to enlarge his understanding with the help of the divinely inspired words, [131] 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 favourable exclamations he would indicate that they should look to heaven and save the adulation and honour 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. Thence he would proceed to the Saviour'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 judgement. (4) Next he would touch on things which 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 which 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, [132] 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 which 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 which the marvellous 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 Saviour'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 which 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 [133] this too came to an end, we returned home and took up our regular business.

34-7. *Letters on Christian topics*

34 He meanwhile in his prudent care for the future of the churches of God wrote a letter to us personally on the copying of divinely inspired Scriptures. With it he appended another on the most holy feast of Pascha. After we had addressed to him a mystical explanation of the account of the festival, the reply with which he honoured us in response may be learnt by reading the letter itself, as follows:

35 (1) *Victor Constantinus Maximus Augustus to Eusebius.*

It is a major undertaking, greater than words can describe, to speak worthily of the mysteries of Christ and to interpret in a suitable way the dispute about and origin of Pascha, and its beneficial and painful bringing to fulfilment. Worthily to express the divine to human beings is impossible even for those of able intellect. (2) Nevertheless with great admiration for your learning and endeavour I have gladly read the book myself, and as you desired I have ordered it to be published for the large number who are sincerely attached to the worship of God. (3) Now that you are aware how cordially we enjoy receiving such gifts from your Intelligence, do make every effort to give us the pleasure of more frequent literary works, in which you allow you are well trained. We are urging you 'already sprinting', as the saying goes, to your habitual studies. Such great confidence certainly shows that the one who renders your efforts into the Latin tongue has not been found by you to be unworthy of what you have written, true though it is that it is impossible for such a translation satisfactorily to represent the elegance of the words.

May God preserve you, beloved brother.

Such was his letter on that subject. The one on the provision of divine Scriptures runs as follows:

36 (1) *Victor Constantinus Maximus Augustus to Eusebius.*

[134] *In the City which bears our name by the sustaining providence of the Saviour God a great mass of people has attached itself to the most holy Church, so that with everything there enjoying great growth it is particularly fitting that more churches should be established. (2) Be ready therefore to act urgently on the decision which we have reached. It appeared proper to indicate to your Intelligence that you should order fifty volumes with ornamental leather bindings, easily legible and convenient for portable use, to be copied by skilled calligraphists well trained in the art, copies that is of the Divine Scriptures, the provision and use of which*

you well know to be necessary for reading in church. (3) Written instructions have been sent by our Clemency to the man who is in charge of the diocese that he see to the supply of all the materials needed to produce them. The preparation of the written volumes with utmost speed shall be the task of your Diligence. (4) You are entitled by the authority of this our letter to the use of two public vehicles for transportation. The fine copies may thus most readily be transported to us for inspection; one of the deacons of your own congregation will presumably carry out this task, and when he reaches us he will experience our generosity.

God preserve you, dear brother.

37 These then were the Emperor's instructions. Immediate action followed upon his word, as we sent him threes and fours in richly wrought bindings { . . }

37-9. *Conversion of cities*

This may be confirmed by another rescript of the Emperor, in which he explains that he was pleased to learn that our neighbouring city of Constantia, which formerly consisted of absurdly superstitious men, had in a movement of godly religion turned from its former idolatrous error, and that he welcomed what they had done { . . }

38 At this time then in the province of Palestine Constantia endorsed the saving religion, and achieved higher honour both with God and with the Emperor. It was designated a city, which it had not been before, and exchanged its name for the superior title of the Emperor's religious sister.

39 (1) The same action was taken by many other places, like that with the Emperor's name in Phoenicia, where the citizens committed to the flames a barely countable number of wooden cult-figures, adopting instead the Saviour's Law. (2) In other provinces whole crowds changed sides and came to the knowledge of the Saviour; in every territory and city they got rid of the things they formerly held sacred, made of all kinds of wood, as if they were nothing. Temples and built-up precincts they demolished without orders from anyone, and building churches on their foundations they changed from their former error.

(3) To describe one by one the deeds of the Godbeloved is not so much our task as that of those who were privileged to spend the whole time with him. We have put down briefly in this work

the information we have received, and shall now go on to the last period of his life.

40-52. 3. *Final Achievements*

40. *Tricennalia and promotion of sons*

40 (1) Thirty years of his reign were nearing completion. His three royal sons, most illustrious Caesars, were appointed at different times as co-emperors. The one with the same name as his father, Constantine, was first to share the honour at the time of his father's tenth anniversary; the second, adorned with the same name as his grandfather, Constantius, about the time of the twenty-year celebrations; and the third, Constans, who by the name applied to him signifies firmness and constancy, was promoted about the end of the third decade. (2) So like a trinity having acquired a triple Godbeloved offspring of sons, [136] and having honoured his offspring with adoption into imperial rank at the end of each decade, he reckoned his own thirtieth anniversary an auspicious occasion for thanksgivings to the universal King of all, and decided that it would be fitting to carry out the consecration of the *martyrion* which had been constructed with all artistic endeavour in Jerusalem.

41-2. *The Council at Tyre*

41 (1) Envy however, resentful of this too, like a dark cloud opposing the sun's bright beams, tried to disturb the brilliance of the festival, once more confusing the Egyptian churches with his disputes. (2) But the one who cared about God again armed a full synod of bishops as God's army and mobilized them against the mean demon, ordering them to hasten from all Egypt and Libya, from Asia and Europe, first to resolve the dispute, and then to conduct the consecration of the shrine referred to. (3) On their way he commanded them to settle their quarrels at the metropolis of Phoenicia, since it was not right to attend the worship of God with divided counsels, when the divine Law forbids those in dispute to present their offerings before they are reconciled in friendship and are at peace with each other. (4) Those salutary commands the Emperor per-

sonally vitalized with his own intellectual effort, and directed them to go about their business in total concord and harmony, writing as follows:

42 (1) *Constantinus Victor Maximus Augustus to the Holy Synod at Tyre.*

It would perhaps be apt and very much in keeping with the prosperity of our times [137] that the universal Church should be free from strife and that the servants of Christ should refrain from all verbal attacks. But since some persons, spurred on by unhealthy rivalry (for I could not say they live up to their own standards) are trying to turn everything upside down, something which I consider an extreme disaster, I therefore urge you, 'already sprinting' (as the saying is), to come together without delay, to constitute the Synod, to defend those in need of help, to bring healing to brothers at risk, restore to concord members at variance, and to correct what is wrong, while time permits, so that you may restore to so many provinces that proper harmony which quite monstrously the arrogance of a few persons has destroyed. (2) That this purpose is pleasing to God the Sovereign of the universe, to me the supreme object of every prayer, and for yourselves, if you do re-establish peace, a cause of not inconsiderable fame, I am sure all men will agree. So do not delay further, but use your best endeavours straight away, and bring your business to a swift and proper conclusion, meeting of course in the absolute sincerity and good faith, which everywhere, almost uttering the words audibly, that Saviour whom we worship requires especially of you.

(3) Nothing that falls to my particular care will be lacking to you. Everything you mentioned in your letter has been done by me. I have written to the bishops you wished me to, that they should come and take part in your deliberations; and I have sent Dionysius, a man of consular rank, who will also notify those who ought to attend the synod with you, and will be present to observe the proceedings, with a particular eye to good order. (4) Should any one (which I do not expect) attempt even now to thwart our command and refuse to attend, somebody will be sent from me from here to expel him by imperial mandate, and [137] to make it clear that it is not right to oppose decrees of the Emperor promulgated on behalf of the truth.

(5) Finally it shall be your Holiness' task, by unanimous verdict, pursuing neither enmity nor favour but in accordance with the ecclesiastical and apostolic canon, to discover the proper remedy for the offences committed or mistakes if they have been made, so that you may free the

Church of all malicious criticism, relieve my anxiety, and, by restoring the blessing of peace to those now at variance, win for yourselves highest fame. God preserve you, dear brothers.

43-8. *The assembly in Jerusalem*

43 (1) While these orders were being put into effect, another imperial officer intervened, pressing the Council with an imperial letter, and urging them to go at once and not defer their journey to Jerusalem. (2) So they all set off from the province of Phoenicia and came by public transport to their destination. All the space there was then filled with a vast divine chorus, as notable bishops from every province gathered together in Jerusalem. (3) The Macedonians sent the bishop of their metropolis, the Pannonians and Mysians fair blossoms from among them of God's younger generation; a sacred member of the Persian bishops was present, a man very learned in the divine oracles; the Bithynians and Thracians enhanced the dignity of those attending the Synod. (4) The more important Cilicians were not missing, and the leading Cappadocians also excelled among the rest for their scholarly learning. All Syria and Mesopotamia, Phoenicia and Arabia with Palestine itself, Egypt and Libya, the inhabitants of the Theban area, all together made up the great divine band, and innumerable laity from all the provinces accompanied them. An imperial staff attended all these, and leading officials from the palace were sent to enhance the splendour of the festival with imperial supplies.

44 (1) There was also the one in charge of all these things, a man close to the Emperor, famous for his faith and piety, and for his expertise in divine Scripture; [139] being famous for his religious confession at the time of the tyrants, he was rightly entrusted with making these arrangements. This person, in accordance with the Emperor's wish, fulfilling his duties to perfection, honoured the synod with a friendly reception, with brilliant banquets and merry parties. (2) To the unclad poor and to the untold multitudes of indigent men and women, and to those who were in want of food and other necessities, he made lavish distributions of money and clothing, and furthermore beautified the whole shrine with rich imperial dedications.

45 (1) While he performed this service, God's ministers

enriched the feast with both prayers and sermons. Some praised the Godbeloved Emperor's devotion to the Saviour of all, and recounted in detail the magnificent work connected with the *martyrion*; some with festive sermons based on divine doctrines provided a variety of intellectual delights for all to hear. (2) Others gave expositions of the divine readings, disclosing hidden meanings, while others incapable of this propitiated God with bloodless sacrifices and mystic ceremonies; for the general peace and for the Church of God, for the Emperor himself, who was responsible for such great things, and for his Godbeloved sons, they offered up prayers of supplication to God. (3) This was the occasion when we also, being honoured with favours beyond us, graced the feast with various addresses to those assembled, at one time interpreting in a written work the elaborate descriptions of the Emperor's philosophical ideas, at another making figurative thoughts from the prophets apply to the symbolic rites presently in hand. In this way the festival of dedication was carried out with joyful celebrations in the thirtieth year of the Emperor's reign.

46 A description of the Saviour's church, of the salvific cave, of the Emperor's works of art and large number of offerings made of gold, silver and precious stones, all of this we have set down to the best of our ability in a separate work addressed to the Emperor himself. In due course, after the present book is finished, we shall publish that work, joining to it the speech on the thirtieth anniversary. The latter [140] we delivered a little later, having made the journey to the city named after the Emperor, in the Emperor's own hearing, thus having a second opportunity to praise God, the universal Emperor, in the imperial palace. The friend of God, while he listened to it, was like a man overjoyed; he said so himself after the hearing, when he dined with the bishops present and received them with every kind of honour.

47 This second synod, the greatest of those we know, the Emperor assembled in Jerusalem, following that first synod, which he had brilliantly celebrated in the capital of Bithynia. That one however was a celebration of victory, which offered prayers of thanksgiving in the twentieth year of his reign for the defeat of enemies and foes at the very Place of Victory (Nicaea); this one beautified the third decade, as the Emperor consecrated

the *martyrion* to God, the Giver of all good things, as a peace-time dedication around the Saviour's tomb.

48 When all these things were being done by the Emperor, and his great valour on God's behalf was being praised by the mouths of all, one of God's ministers in an excess of boldness declared in his presence that he was 'Blessed', because in this present life he had been judged worthy of universal imperial power, and in the next he would rule alongside the Son of God. He was annoyed on hearing these words, and told him he should not say such rash things, but should rather pray for him, that in both this life and the next he might be found worthy to be God's slave.

49-50. *The universal Empire*

49 During the course of his thirtieth year of reign he celebrated the marriage of his second son, having earlier done the same for the eldest. Parties and festivals were held, with the Emperor himself acting as bridegroom's friend to his son. He gave splendid banquets and receptions, the men celebrating in one place, the ladies in separate parties elsewhere, and rich distributions of gifts were bestowed on both peoples and cities.

50 On that occasion embassies from the Indians, who live near the rising sun, presented themselves, bringing gifts. These were all sorts of sparkling jewels, and animals of breeds differing from those known among us. These they brought to the Emperor showing that his power extended as far as the Ocean itself, and also how the [141] rulers of the land of India, by honouring him with painted pictures and the dedication of statues, recognized and confessed him as Sovereign and Emperor. So when he began his reign the first to be subjected to him were the Britons near where the sun sets in the Ocean, and now it was the Indians, whose land lies near the sunrise.

51-2. 3. *Sons prepared for succession*

51 (1) Now that he was in control of both ends of the entire inhabited world, he divided the government of the whole Empire among his three sons, as though disposing a patrimony to those he loved best: he allocated to the eldest his grandfather's portion,

to the second the government of the east, and that between them to the third. (2) To provide them with a good inheritance that would also save their souls, he planted in them the seeds of godliness, introducing them to sacred studies, and appointing as their teachers men of proven piety. For secular studies too he set over them other teachers of first-class scholarship. Others introduced them to military science, another group educated them in politics, and yet others trained them in legal skills. (3) An imperial retinue was allocated to each of the sons, soldiers, praetorians, and bodyguards, and military officers of various ranks, generals, centurions, commanders, and tribunes whom their father had previously tried for their expertise in war as well as for their loyalty to him. 52 (1) While they were still of a tender age the staff attached to the Caesars were obliged to accompany them and administer public affairs. But when they reached manhood their father by himself was all the instruction they needed. Sometimes he encouraged them while they were with him with personal admonitions to copy him and taught them to make themselves imitators of his godly piety. Sometimes when communicating with them in their absence about imperial matters he would express his exhortations in writing, the greatest and most important of these being that they should prize the knowledge of God the King of all and devotion to him above all wealth and even above Empire. (2) By now he had also given them authority to take action for the public good by themselves, and he urged them that one of their prime concerns should be the Church of God, instructing them to be frankly Christian. So for his part the Emperor [142] guided his sons, and they, not simply obeying orders but of their own free will, exceeded their father's exhortation: they applied their own efforts strenuously to sanctification under God, and fulfilled the precepts of the Church in the palaces themselves along with all their households. (3) Another effect of the father's planning was that his children were given as household companions only Godfearing men, and even of the highest officials who were in charge of public affairs some were such. So with men faithful before God, like a strong perimeter wall, he protected them.

52. 4-73. *Baptism and Death*52. 4-55. *Constantine's physical health and faith in immortality*

52 (4) When these matters had been duly settled by the Thriceblessed, God the Disposer of all good decided, since affairs universally had been well arranged by him, that it was now the right time to transfer him to better things, and exacted from him his debt to nature. 53 He was completing the thirty-second year of his reign, short of only a few months and days, and about twice that number of years of life. At that age his body remained sound and unimpaired, free from any defect and more youthful than any young man's, handsome to look at, and fit enough to do whatever needed physical strength, such as training, riding, and travelling, engaging in wars, raising monuments over defeated enemies and winning his usual bloodless victories over his opponents.

54 (1) His spiritual qualities had also advanced to the peak of human perfection. He was outstanding in all virtues, but especially for kindness. Most people considered this reprehensible because of the base conduct of selfish men, who attributed their own wickedness to the Emperor's forbearance. (2) It is true that we ourselves during these particular years noticed two difficulties. There was a relaxation of censure against wicked rapacious men, who damaged the whole course of affairs; and there was also an unspeakable deceit on the part of those who slipped into the Church and adopted the false façade of the Christian name. (3) His kindness and generosity, however, the straightforwardness of his faith, and the sincerity of his character led him to trust the outward appearance [143] of those reputed to be Christians, who with a faked attitude contrived to keep up the pretence of genuine loyalty to him. By entrusting himself to them he came to be blamed for their misdeeds, as Envy fastened this smear on his virtues. 55 (1) These men were, however, before long overtaken by divine punishment.

Meanwhile the Emperor's own mind was so far advanced in rhetorical skill that to the very end he continued to compose speeches, and continued to make public appearances and to deliver divinely edifying instructions to his audiences. He con-

tinued to legislate for both civil and military matters and to plan all things beneficially for the affairs of mankind. (2) It is worthy of record that as he reached the very end of his life he recited a kind of funeral speech before his regular audience. Speaking at length he discoursed in it upon the soul's immortality, on those who passed this present life devoutly, and on the good things stored up by God for those dear to him; and with long demonstrations he made it clear what end those on the other side will meet, as he included in his script the overthrow of the godless. By asserting this point very emphatically he appeared to be getting at some of those around him, so that he even asked one of those with pretensions to wisdom how the argument struck him, and he testified to the truth of what had been said, and though reluctant gave emphatic praise to the condemnation of polytheists. (3) In giving such a sermon to his acquaintance before his death he was like one making ready for himself a smooth and easy journey to the higher realm.

56-7. *Preparations for war against Persia*

56 (1) It also worthy of record that about the time in question, when there were reports of disturbances among the eastern barbarians, he said that this victory over them was what he had still to achieve, and he started military moves against Persia. (2) Once the decision was made he set the military officers to work, and also discussed the campaign with the bishops at his court, planning that some of those needed for divine worship should be there with him. (3) They said that they would only too gladly accompany him as he wished, and not shrink back, but would soldier with him and fight at his side with supplications to God. He was delighted with their promises and [144] made arrangements for their journey . . .

57 [Thereupon with much embellishment he also equipped for the conduct of that war the tent to form the church in which he intended to make supplications to God the Giver of victory together with the bishops. Meanwhile the Persians, learning of the Emperor's preparations for war, and being much afraid of doing battle with him, asked him by an embassy to make peace. At this the most pacific Emperor received the Persian embassy, and gladly came to friendly terms with them. And now the great

feast of the Pascha arrived, in which the Emperor kept vigil with the others, offering up prayers to God.

58 Thereupon he made preparations to build the *martyrion* in memory of the Apostles in the city named after him.]

58–60. *The shrine of the Apostles*

. . . He himself built up the whole shrine to an unimaginable height, and made it glint with various stones of every kind, facing it from the ground up to the roof. He divided the ceiling into delicate coffers and plated the whole with gold. Up above this on the roof itself he provided copper instead of tiling to protect the building securely against rain. Round this too glittered much gold, so that by reflecting back the rays of the sun it sent dazzling light to those who looked from afar. Trellised relief-work wrought in bronze and gold went right round the building. 59 Such was the eager care the shrine enjoyed as the Emperor greatly enriched it. Round it was a spacious court wide open to the fresh air, and round this quadrangle ran porticoes which faced the middle of the court where the shrine stood, and official houses, washrooms, and lampstores extended along the porticoes, and a great many other buildings suitably furnished for the custodians of the place.

60 (1) All these things the Emperor dedicated to perpetuate for all mankind the memory of our Saviour's Apostles. But he had another object also in mind when he built, which though secret at first was towards the end surmised by everybody. (2) He had prepared the place there for the time when it would be needed on his decease, intending with supreme eagerness of faith that his own remains should after death partake in the invocation of the Apostles, so that even after his decease he might benefit from the worship which would to be conducted there in honour of the Apostles. He therefore gave instructions for services to be held there, setting up a central altar. (3) So [145] he erected twelve repositories like sacred monuments in honour and memory of the company of the Apostles, and put his own coffin in the middle with those of the Apostles ranged six on either side. This too, then, as I said, he planned with careful thought, a place where after his life was over his remains would find a proper resting place.

(4) So having planned these things in his mind long in advance he dedicated the shrine to the Apostles, in the belief that their memorial would become for him a beneficial aid to his soul; and God did not disappoint him of the very things he looked for in his prayers. (5) Even as he was finishing the first disciplines of the paschal festival, and was enjoying the Day of Salvation in light and joy, having brightened the festival for himself and everyone, while he was spending his time in this way to the very end and was actually engaged in these things, God with whose aid he performed them vouchsafed at a propitious time to translate him to higher things.

61–4. *Illness, baptism, and death*

61 (1) First a bodily indisposition came upon him, then illness supervened, and thereupon he went out to the hot water baths of his city, and from there to the city named after his mother. There he spent his time at the chapel of the martyrs, and offered up supplicatory prayers and petitions to God. (2) But when he became aware that his life was ending, he perceived that this was the time to purify himself from the offences which he had at any time committed, trusting that whatever sins it had been his lot as mortal to commit, he could wash them from his soul by the power of the secret words and the saving bath. (3) Having perceived this, he knelt on the floor and made himself a suppliant to God, making confession in the *martyrion* itself, where also he was first accorded the prayers that go with laying-on of hands.

He left there and reached as far as the suburbs of Nicomedia. There he called together the bishops and addressed them thus:

62 (1) 'This is the moment I have long hoped for, as I thirsted and yearned to win salvation in God. It is our time too to enjoy the seal that brings immortality, [146] time to enjoy the sealing that gives salvation, (2) which I once intended to receive at the streams of the river Jordan, where our Saviour also is reported to have received the bath as an example to us. But God who knows what is good for us judges us worthy of these things here and now. (3) So let there be no delay. If the Lord of life and death should wish us to live again here, even so it is once and for all

decided that I am hereafter numbered among the people of God, and that I meet and join in the prayers with them all together. I shall now set for myself rules of life which befit God.'

(4) Such were his words. They in their turn performing the customary rites fulfilled the divine laws and imparted the secret gifts, giving such preliminary instruction as is required. Alone of all the Emperors from the beginning of time Constantine was initiated by rebirth in the mysteries of Christ, and exulted in the Spirit on being vouchsafed the divine seal, and was renewed and filled with divine light, rejoicing in his soul because of his intense faith, awestruck at the manifestation of the divinely inspired power.

(5) When the due ceremonies were complete, he put on bright imperial clothes which shone like light, and rested on a pure white couch, being unwilling to touch a purple robe again. 63 (1) Then he lifted up his voice and offered up a prayer of thanksgiving to God, after which he went on to say, 'I know that now I am in the true sense blessed, that now I have been shown worthy of immortal life, that now I have received divine light.' He went on to call those persons wretched, and said they were pitiable, who did not share those good things. (2) When the tribunes and senior officers from the armies filed in and lamented, bewailing their own imminent bereavement, and wished him extension of life, he answered them too by saying that he enjoyed true life now, and only he knew the good things he had received; they were therefore to hasten his journey to God and not postpone it. (3) Thereupon he made disposition of his property. The Romans who lived in the imperial city he honoured with annual grants. On his sons he bestowed as a father's estate the inheritance of Empire, having arranged everything as he desired.

64 (1) Each of these events took place during the greatest festival, the utterly sacred [147] and holy Pentecost, honoured with seven weeks and sealed up with a single day, during which divine words describe the ascension into Heaven of the universal Saviour and the descent of the Holy Spirit upon mankind. (2) Being granted these things during the festival, on the last day of all, which one might not inaccurately call the Feast of Feasts, about the time of the midday sun the Emperor was taken

up to his God; he bequeathed to mortals what was akin to them, but he himself, with that part of him which is the soul's intelligence and love of God, was united to his God. That was the end of the life of Constantine.

65-7. Mourning and lying-in-state

We now go on to the sequel. 65 (1) Immediately the praetorians and the whole company of personal guards tore their clothes, threw themselves on the ground, and started beating their heads, uttering wails of lamentation with groans and cries, calling him Master, Lord, and King, not so much Master as Father, just as if they were trueborn children. (2) Tribunes and centurions wept aloud for their Saviour, Protector, and Benefactor, and the rest of the troops suitably attired mourned like flocks for their Good Shepherd. (3) The populace similarly wandered all round the city, expressing their inward anguish of soul with groans and cries while others were thrown into a sort of daze, as each one mourned personally and smote himself, as if their life had been deprived of the common good of all.

66 (1) The military took up the remains and laid them in a golden coffin. They wrapped this in imperial purple, and bore it into the city named after the Emperor; then in the most superb of all the imperial halls they laid it on a high pedestal, and by kindling lights all round on golden stands they provided a wonderful spectacle for the onlookers of a kind never seen on earth by anyone under the light of the sun from the first creation of the world. (2) Within the palace itself, [148] in the central imperial quarters, the Emperor's remains, adorned with imperial ornaments, with purple and crown, was guarded day and night by a huge circle of people keeping vigil.

67 (1) The commanders of the whole army, the *comites* and all the ruling class, who were bound by law to pay homage to the Emperor first, making no change in their usual routine, filed past at the required times and saluted the Emperor on the bier with genuflections after his death in the same way as when he was alive. After these chief persons the members of the Senate and all those of official rank came and did the same, and after them crowds of people of all classes with their wives and children came

to look. (2) These proceedings continued for a long time, the military having decided that the remains should stay there and be watched until his sons should arrive and pay respects to their father by personally attending to the rites. (3) Alone of mortals the Blessed One reigned even after death, and the customs were maintained just as if he were alive, God having granted this to him and no other since time began. Alone therefore among Emperors and unlike any other he had honoured by acts of every kind the all-sovereign God and his Christ, and it is right that he alone enjoyed these things, as the God over all allowed his mortal part to reign among mankind, thus demonstrating the ageless and deathless reign of his soul to those with minds not stony-hard.

68-73. *Succession and funeral*

While this was going on, 68 (1) the tribunes sent men chosen from the military officers, long known to the Emperor for faithfulness and loyalty, to report the events to the Caesars. (2) They did this, and as if by supernatural inspiration all the troops everywhere, when they learnt of the Emperor's death, came to one determination, as if the great Emperor were still alive for them to recognize no other than his sons alone as sovereigns of Rome. (3) Soon they saw fit to designate them, not Caesars, but from that time onwards each one an Augustus, which might be taken as the supreme and highest token of the original imperial authority. They did these things, announcing their individual votes and voices to each other in writing, and in a single moment of time the concord of the armies was made known to all people everywhere.

69 (1) The inhabitants of the imperial city and the Senate and People of Rome, when they learnt of the Emperor's decease, [149] regarding the news as dreadful and the greatest possible disaster, fell into unrestrained grief. Baths and markets were closed, as were public spectacles and all the customary leisure activities of happy people. The previously easygoing went about dejected, and together they all praised the Blessed One, the Godbeloved, the one who truly deserved the Empire. (2) Not only did they voice such cries, but took steps to honour him in death as if he were alive with dedications of his portrait. They

depicted heaven in coloured paintings, and portrayed him resting in an aetherial resort above the vaults of heaven. These also named his sons alone and no others as Emperors and Augusti, and with suppliant cries begged that the remains of their own Emperor should be kept by them and laid in the imperial City.

70 (1) But those here were also paying respect to the one honoured before God. The second of his sons arrived at the city and brought his father's remains, himself leading the cortège. The military officers went in front in close order, and a throng of many thousands followed, and lancers and infantry escorted the Emperor's body. (2) When they reached the shrine of the Saviour's Apostles they laid the coffin to rest there. The new Emperor Constantius, honouring his father in this way, by his presence and by the respects paid to him fulfilled the things which the obsequies required.

71 (1) When he had withdrawn, together with the military officers, the ministers of God took the central position among the crowds and the assembled Godfearing laity, and they performed with prayers the rites of divine worship. Then tributes were paid to the Blessed One as he rested above on his high platform, while the people in their multitudes with those consecrated to God, not without tears but with plentiful weeping, offered prayers to God for the Emperor's soul, doing all that would most please the Godbeloved. (2) God showed his favour towards his servant also in this, that even his end bestowed the Empire upon his cherished and trueborn sons as his successors, and that [150] he was accorded the place he earnestly desired alongside the monument to the Apostles, as one may see even today that the mortal dwelling of the thriceblessed soul shares the honour of the invocation of the Apostles and is numbered among the people of God, having divine rites and mystic liturgies bestowed upon it, and enjoying participation in sacred prayers, he himself even after death holding on to empire. As if brought back to life he manages the whole administration, and Victor Maximus Augustus by his very name commands the government of Rome.

72 He is not like the Egyptian bird, which they say has a unique nature, and dies among aromatic herbs, making itself its own sacrifice, then revives from the ash and, as it flies up, turns into what it was before. He is more like his Saviour, who after the

manner of seeds of corn multiplied with the blessing of God, and instead of one grain produced an ear and filled the whole wide world with his fruit. Just like him the Thriceblessed instead of one became manifold by the succession of his sons, so that he is honoured also by the setting up of portraits among all the provinces along with those of his sons, and the name of Constantine is familiarly heard even after the end of his life.

73 At the same time coins were struck portraying the Blessed One on the obverse in the form of one with head veiled, on the reverse like a charioteer on a quadriga, being taken up by a right hand stretched out to him from above.

74-5. *Conclusion: The Unique Emperor*

74 Having shown these things to our very eyes in the case of Constantine alone in all time, who was transparently displayed as a Christian, God who is over all exhibited how great was the difference for him between those who have seen fit to worship him and his Christ and those who choose the opposite. They, by setting out to attack his Church, made him their own enemy and adversary, and the disastrous end of the life of each one indicated the manifest punishment for their hostility to God, just as the end of Constantine made plain to everybody the rewards of the love of God. 75 He alone of all the Roman emperors [151] has honoured God the All-sovereign with exceeding godly piety; he alone has publicly proclaimed to all the word of Christ; he alone has honoured his Church as no other since time began; he alone has destroyed all polytheistic error, and exposed every kind of idolatry; and surely he alone has deserved in life itself and after death such things as none could say has ever been achieved by any other among either Greeks or barbarians, or even among the ancient Romans, for his like has never been recorded from the beginning of time until our day.

COMMENTARY

BOOK I

I-II. *Preface*

I-3. *Constantine's immortality*

Eusebius begins with an elaborate preface in high style, explaining his enterprise and justifying his praises of the dead Constantine (1. 2, *makarion*, 'the Blessed One'; 2. 1-3), who yet lives on and rules through his three sons (cf. IV. 71. 2), who are now Augusti (1. 3). Great men in the past have been honoured with portraits or inscriptions (3. 2), but God himself has shown favour and given victory to Constantine, the 'friend of God', and set him as an example of the godly life (3-6). In victorious kingship, Constantine surpasses Cyrus and Alexander (4-8); in domestic policy he was humane and magnanimous, and was granted legitimate successors by God (9). Eusebius calls for divine aid in his own attempt to draw a verbal portrait of the Emperor (9. 2-10. 1), in a composition which will be far more edifying than the lives of Nero and other tyrants (10. 2-4). Eusebius claims that he will omit the Emperor's deeds in war and his legislation in time of peace; he will record only the Christian aspects of Constantine's life, and will be selective and brief in the narrative (11. 1-2), in the interests of giving more space to the Emperor's praises, which could not be written during his lifetime in view of the unpredictability of life (11. 2).

The introduction demonstrates the awareness of and distancing from standard rhetorical panegyric that is found more overtly stated in the prologue to *LC*; but whereas the latter adopts a highly theoretical, yet self-conscious tone, and mystical language, the *Life*, being more biographical in format, is nearer to textbook panegyric (for the problem of the literary genre see Introduction, § 6).

I. I. various ten-year periods. Modern editors delete as a scribal addition the words 'twice-ten' and 'thrice-ten' which follow in the manuscripts.

we ourselves hymned the conqueror. Eusebius delivered

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EUSEBIUS

Life of Constantine

Introduction, translation,
and commentary by
Averil Cameron
and
Stuart G. Hall

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