

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

orations both for Constantine's Vicennalia, after the Council of Nicaea in 325 (III. 15; the speech does not survive) and his Tricennalia (*LC*, see Drake, *In Praise of Constantine*). The date of the latter, delivered in Constantine's presence in the palace at Constantinople, was 25 July 336 (IV. 46-7; see Drake, *De laudibus*). The Emperor's Decennalia was celebrated in Rome in 315 (I. 48); Eusebius was in the east and did not meet him until 325. He telescopes the chronology for more vivid effect, though Constantine did die only a year after his Tricennalia, on 22 May 337.

**garlands of words.** Eusebius evokes the well-used imagery of games and festivals; cf. e.g. *LC* 6. 1.

**1. 2. our thought stands helpless.** Modesty is a standard topos of the panegyrist. *Logos* ('thought') cannot be translated adequately. In Greek it has two broad meanings: (a) '(ordered) thought', 'mind', 'reason', and (b) '(articulate) speech', 'word'. A development of (a) among philosophers applies it to the principle of order or the ordering providence of God in the universe, which Christian thinkers (starting with John 1: 1-14) identify with the Son of God, Jesus Christ; Eusebius plainly alludes to this in 2. 3 below, 'the superior and universal Thought (*logos*)'. A common development of (b) is to call a whole speech or literary work a *logos*; the Bible as 'word of God' is one important special case, and again Jesus Christ is perceived as God's spoken 'Word' in that sense. Here Eusebius says that his own thought/speech is silenced; he goes on nevertheless, invoking God's *Logos* to his aid. Constantine's relationship to the *Logos* is a main theme of *LC* (cf. e.g. 2. 3-5).

**whether east or west.** The theme of world-wide empire recurs later (I. 8; IV. 5-7).

**1. 3. like new lamps.** Light imagery is standard in panegyric; light in heaven, *LC* 1. 6. Constantine's sons are called 'beacons and lamps of the brilliance emanating from himself' at *LC* 3. 4.

**himself powerfully alive.** Eusebius stresses the continuity between Constantine and his three sons in order to defuse potential hostility towards or between them, and probably also to urge them to continue Constantine's policies; the same image of Constantine ruling through the succession (*diadoche*) of his sons

recurs at IV. 71. The imagery of the *LC* is more fanciful still: the four Caesars are 'yoked . . . like colts beneath the single yoke of the imperial chariot', and controlled by Constantine with the 'reins of holy harmony and concord' (*LC* 3. 4). The Emperor 'rides along, traversing all lands alike that the sun gazes upon, himself present everywhere and watching over everything'. Caesars: see below. The fourth mentioned in *LC* was Dalmatius, killed after Constantine's death in 337; Eusebius writes him out at *VC* IV. 51 (on which see n.), when describing Constantine's division of the Empire among them in 335.

**whole government of affairs.** Literally 'the whole of life'; the notion of 'governing' is in the participle (*diakubernonta*).

**Caesars . . . Augusti.** Constantine (b. 316) was created Caesar at Serdica on 1 March 317, as part of his father's truce with Licinius (Barnes, *CE* 67), Constantius (b. later in 317), became Caesar in 324, Constans (b. 323 or 320) on 25 December 333 (Barnes, *NE* 8). The three Caesars were hailed as Augusti on 9 September 337, after eliminating possible rivals, including Dalmatius (for the background, Barnes, *CE* 262, and further on IV. 51).

**2. 1. panegyrics.** The word used is *hymnoi*; *LC* is a panegyric, as is *SC*, delivered at the dedication of the church of the Holy Sepulchre in 335 (see on IV. 45-6; Eusebius delivered more than one) and the speech on the dedication of the church at Tyre (*HE* 10. 4. c.315; Eusebius refers to his *panegyrikos logos*, *HE* 10. 12, and to the many panegyrics delivered at the dedication, 10. 3. 2; his own professed modesty, 10. 4. 1).

**2. 2-3. 1. the immortal Thought of God.** Only the divine *Logos* can properly praise Constantine, in whom his own promises had been shown to be true. The divine Word constantly promises rewards for the righteous and destruction for the wicked (frequently in the Psalms, e.g. Ps. 18, 52, 58).

**3. 1. godless tyrants.** Eusebius has in mind especially the biblical Pharaoh who oppressed the Israelites, and goes on to liken Constantine to Moses (I. 12) and his ending of the persecution to the deliverance of the children of Israel. His rivals Maxentius and Licinius are presented as persecutors and

tyrants themselves (I. 26, 33–6; II. 1–18; Constantine's divinely inspired victory: II. 19).

**the death of his servant.** Constantine's death is implicitly contrasted with those of the persecutors (Lact., *DMP*, esp. 33, 49); the horrible deaths of Galerius (called Maximian by Lactantius) and Maximin are recounted at I. 57–8, and see I. 27. 3; cf. the same terminology in *HE* 8–9, and for the model, see 2 Macc. 9: 8–9 on the death of Antiochus Epiphanes. While the term 'servant' (*therapon*) is quite common in Christian writings, including the *VC*, with reference to those who worship or serve God, Eusebius often applies it to Constantine to indicate his likeness to Moses: see especially I. 6, 39. 1, and cf. Num. 12: 7; Heb. 3: 2.

**3. 2. Mortal nature . . .** Eusebius lists the various kinds of conventional imperial commemoration: portraits, pictures in encaustic, statues, inscriptions, all ultimately useless attempts at permanent commemoration in perishable materials.

**3. 3. stored up . . . gives even here as a first instalment.** The language is of money and banking.

**3. 4. ancient oracles of prophets.** Eusebius refers to the Scriptures in vague and literary terms. 'Ancient oracles': cf. *LC* prologue 5, 'the oracles of learned men' (see Calderone, 'Eusebio', 7; cf. *SC* 17. 7, 'prophetic voices . . . sacred books'; *LC* I. 1 'the lessons of sacred writings'; *VC* I. 12. 1 'an ancient report'). The authenticity of Christian prophecy was of vital concern to Eusebius, and he was particularly anxious to prove the inefficacy of pagan oracles; this is to be found especially in *PE*, in answer to Porphyry's *Against the Christians* drawing on the latter's *Philosophy from Oracles*.

**lives of Godbeloved men.** Eusebius uses the terminology of biography—*bioi*. He had himself written about Origen and Pamphilus in this way (*HE* 6. 1–32; *Apology*, 6. 33. 4; Pamphilus, *HE* 6. 32); however, he surely refers here to biblical figures such as Abraham and Moses (cf. 'in ancient times').

**Constantine.** The Emperor is named for the first time.

**a friend of the all-sovereign God.** Constantine as the 'friend' of the Logos is a central theme in *LC*, e.g. 2. 1–3, 5. 1, 4; Calderone, 'Eusebio', 18. So also of Abraham, Isa. 41: 8, Jas 2: 23.

**clear example to all.** Again the language of biography; cf. 4. 1 'a lesson in the pattern (*hypodeigma*) of godliness'; 5. 2 'teacher of piety'.

#### 4–6. God's achievement in Constantine

4. God has set up Constantine to be his herald to promote godliness, and has proved his favour with the benefits of long reign, long life, and victory over his enemies. Constantine's mission and his election by God are similarly emphasized at *LC* 6. 21.

**5. 1. twice that number.** Constantine was probably born in 272 or 273 (Barnes, *NE* 39); his age at death is variously given in later historical sources as between 60 and 65; Eusebius elsewhere says that he began to reign at the age when Alexander died, i.e. at the age of 32, and lived twice as long (*VC* I. 8), and that his life was about twice as long as his reign, which is counted at nearly thirty-two years (*IV*. 53). Against this, *VC* I. 19. 1, Lactantius, the *Panegyrici Latini*, and Constantine himself quoted at *VC* II. 51 use words like *adulescens*, *iuvenis*, or *pais* when referring to his accession and first years, or in reference to 301–2 and 303; however, this was part of his official propaganda to emphasize his youth (Barnes, *NE* 39–41, and cf. *Pan. Lat.* 4 (10). 16. 4, AD 321. For a date of birth c. 280, see C. E. V. Nixon, 'Constantinus Oriens Imperator: Propaganda and Panegyric. On Reading Panegyric 7 [307]', *Historia*, 42 (1993), 229–46, at 239–40). For the idea of youth as a panegyric topos in relation to Constantine: see R. R. R. Smith, 'The Public Image of Licinius I', *JRS* 87 (1997) 200, and below, I. 19.

**the model of his own monarchical reign.** Eusebius draws the analogy between the one God and the one Emperor. The word, *eikon*, for which cf. also *LC* I. 1, is the standard word for 'image'; that the earthly kingdom is a copy or model of the heavenly one (by *mimesis*) is a basic tenet of Eusebian political theory which he shared with Philo and with Hellenistic and Platonic traditions (Calderone, 'Eusebio', 10, in answer to Baynes, 'Eusebius', 169–70, and with bibliographical refs.; see also 12–13). Monarchy is contrasted with polyarchy at *LC* 3. 6, even while Eusebius praises the partnership of Constantine and his sons, by which he is spared the burden of sole rule (3. 1).

6. The section concludes with a typically fulsome panegyric flourish. Eusebius does not report official imperial titulature, but 'unconquered' recalls the title *invictus*, and the piling up of praises recalls the long catalogues of imperial epithets and titles. For the significance of 'servant' see on 3. 1.

7-9. *Constantine superior to other Emperors*

7. 1. **ancient story.** Alexander is recommended by Menander Rhetor for a rhetorical comparison in a *basilikos logos* (see D. A. Russell and N. J. Wilson, eds., *Menander Rhetor* (Oxford, 1981), 92 and cf. below, I. 8), and Cyrus is another standard *exemplum* for use in praise of rulers; Maximian is compared with Alexander at *Pan. Lat.* 10 (2). 10, AD 289, and Constantine at 6 (7) 17, AD 310, and 9 (12) 5, AD 313; Nazarius compares him with all other rulers, past and present, including Alexander (see M.-C. L'Huillier, *L'Empire des mots: Orateurs gaulois et empereurs romains, 3<sup>e</sup> et 4<sup>e</sup> siècles* (Paris, 1992), 203). There is no trace here of the argument in Eusebius' *Commentary on Isaiah* in which he had expounded the scriptural presentation of Cyrus as the Lord's anointed, given the task of freeing the Jews from Babylon and returning them to Jerusalem (Isa. 44: 8-45: 13; see Hollerich, 'Religion and Politics', 315; Barnes, *CE* 249, sees this as a late work). The term 'ancient story' disguises Eusebius' actual source, which was more probably the rhetorical tradition than Xenophon's *Cyropaedia*. Cyrus's death is differently reported in Xen., *Cyrop.* 8. 7. 2, Hdt. 1. 204 and Diod. 3. 11.

**Alexander . . . so the sons of the Greeks relate.** Again Eusebius is deliberately vague in giving his source; cf. 'ancient story'; for the use of 'sons' (*paides*) cf. *LC* 1. 1, on which see Calderone, 'Eusebio', 5-6. Eusebius gives a very hostile view of Alexander, and in both cases it is the deaths of these two kings that he compares unfavourably with Constantine's own; moreover, while Alexander subdued nations with blood, Constantine did so 'with utter ease' and was the 'gentlest of men' (IV. 46). Nevertheless, Plutarch, *Alexander*, may have been a source, see on I. 11. The 'servants' of Alexander (*therapontes*, a term often used by Eusebius for Constantine in relation to God; see on 3. 1 above) are the Successors; the comparison (soon to be proved unfortu-

nate when Eusebius wrote) is with the sons of Constantine, who, he implies, peacefully inherited an undivided empire. *Pan. Lat.* 9 (12). 5, AD 313, also compares Constantine with Alexander.

8. 1. **began where the Macedonian ended.** Constantine succeeded (25 July 306) at the age at which Alexander died, lived twice as long (see on 5. 1), and trebled the amount of territory he had inherited, namely his father Constantius's portion in the west, Britain, Gaul, and Spain.

8. 2. **mild and sober injunctions.** The language is that of the standard imperial virtues, Latin *clementia* and *prudentia*. For imperial virtues in the Latin panegyrics see Nixon and Rodgers, 22; L'Huillier, *L'Empire des mots*, 331-2.

8. 2-4. **campaigned against the land of the Britons . . . illuminating . . . the ends of the whole inhabited earth.** Constantine's world-wide dominion (see above) recurs as a theme in bk. IV, with the topos of foreign embassies (IV. 5-7, 50; see Barnes, *CE* 253). Constantine was in Britain in 305-6, 307, 310, and apparently also in 313 (based largely on coin evidence, though *VC* I. 25 seems to place his last campaign before that against Maxentius). **Scythian population** (Goths): IV. 5, cf. *Origo* 31; **Blemmyes and Aethiopians**: IV. 7; **India**: IV. 50. No mention is made of the Sarmatians (IV. 6), or of Persia (IV. 8, 56) (see notes *ad locc.*). Apart from Britain, the campaigns belong to the last period of Constantine's life; the introduction looks back from the perspective of his last years and his death. The passage seems to contradict Eusebius' intentions as stated at 11. 1-2 below, but as with the references to Cyrus and Alexander, it draws on one of the stock themes of panegyric (cf. Porphyrius, *Carm.* 5. 1 ff., 14. 9-10, written in exile, and so before 325). Eusebius emphasizes throughout that these conquests bring the 'light of true religion' and enable Constantine to announce the truth of God to the nations.

8. 4. **gifts and presents.** Cf. IV. 7 and I. 43 below. Generosity (*liberalitas*) is a mark of a good ruler: see H. Kloft, *Liberalitas Principis. Herkunft und Bedeutung: Studien zur Prinzipatsideologie* (Kölner historische Abhandlungen, 18; Cologne, 1970).

**recognized and acclaimed by them all.** For universalism and dominion in relation to Constantine, see G. Fowden, *Empire to*

*Commonwealth: Consequences of Monotheism in Late Antiquity* (Cambridge, 1993), ch. 4.

**imperial addresses.** These (*prosphonemasi*) were not so much Constantine's harangues (IV. 29–32) as written documents (so *prosphonein* at II. 61. 1, III. 24. 1, and elsewhere). Eusebius is probably thinking of the letter to Shapur (IV. 9–13). He ascribes to Constantine the freedom of speech, or 'boldness' (*parrhesia*) of the Apostles (Acts 4: 29, 28: 31).

**9. 1–2.** Eusebius stresses God's favour to Constantine, his translation to heaven and the blessing of his three sons and their smooth accession in unbroken line from Constantine's father, Constantius. The language is that of athletic contests, routinely applied by Christian writers from St. Paul onwards.

**9. 1.** The opening words seem to be modelled on Isocrates, *Evagr.* 45 and *Xen., Hier.* 11. 14; see Kloft, *Liberalitas Principis*, 19.

**holy souls.** Eusebius explicitly places Constantine in the class of *hosioi*, holy men.

**9. 2. may God . . . become . . . his recorder** (*grapheus*). Eusebius is fond of the imagery of drawing, painting and inscribing; see 10. 1 and 3. 2, and cf. 2. 2–3: only the divine Logos can properly praise Constantine. The notion of God as an artist already had a long tradition and had been used by Philostratus, *Life of Apollonius of Tyana*, and by Methodius of Olympus (Sr. Charles Murray, 'Art and the Early Church', *JThS* NS 28 (1977), 321 n.).

#### 10–11. Eusebius' purpose and plan

**10. 1. verbal portrait.** Eusebius likens his work to that of an artist drawing a picture (*eikon*) of Constantine. For the idea in earlier biography cf. also Plutarch, *Alex.* 1. 2, and later, Greg. Nyss., *Life of Moses* 3. 15, where the author says that his aim is to 'trace out in outline . . . the perfect life'; for the Plutarchan model see on 10. 3–4, and 11.

**10. 2. Nero and . . . those others far worse than Nero.** Eusebius has in mind the persecuting emperors, of whom he had written himself in the *HE*. His reference to 'authors who

have embellished their accounts', 'stylish expression', and 'many-volumed histories' is not likely to be based on his own reading of secular works, but is part of the contrast he draws between supposedly corrupt secular histories and his own work.

**to see him, to know him, and to share his company.** Despite the reliance of many earlier scholars on this phrase in order to present Eusebius as Constantine's 'court theologian' (e.g. Storch, 'Constantine', 149–50), Barnes has argued that their contact was more distant and much less frequent; this is important for evaluating the claims he makes in the *Life* and the sources of his documents. What Eusebius claims here is in fact a modest acquaintance.

**10. 3–4.** Eusebius claims a moral and edifying purpose and invites a comparison with Plutarch's *Lives*: for a discussion of *VC* I. 10 see Raoul Mortley, *The Idea of Universal History from Hellenistic Philosophy to Early Christian Historiography* (Lewiston, NY, 1996), 174–81 (see p. 177 also with reference to the language of drawing, cf. 10. 1 above).

**11. 1.** Eusebius claims that he will omit both Constantine's deeds in war and his deeds in peace (the two standard components of conventional panegyric) in favour of his religious character and actions, being selective even there; similarly Plut., *Alex.* 1. 11, on which this passage may be based (see Mortley, *Universal History*, 175–7, referring to the *VC* as 'concerned with characterology of the Plutarchan type', and citing as examples of details about character *VC* I. 14 and 42–5; other passages, e.g. about legislation, are also interpreted by Eusebius for the light they shed on Constantine's character). A similar aim is announced at *LC* pref., 2–3. Since some of what follows seems to ignore what is said at *VC* 11, the passage has been taken by many scholars as evidence for a change of plan on Eusebius' part (e.g. Barnes, 'Panegyric', 99). It may be an indicator of the unrevised or unfinished state of the *Life*, but Eusebius is not a tidy writer and often left loose ends, as in his revisions to the *HE*. He constantly brings out the Christian significance of Constantine's military and civil actions, as he sees it, and Constantine's victories are an important indication for him of God's favour in recognition of his faith (so F. Heim, *La Théologie de la victoire de Constantin à Théodose* (Théologie historique, 89; Paris, 1992), 91–2). He is here partly excusing himself to the

reader for what might otherwise be regarded as culpable omissions, but equally, he himself interprets in a religious light what might seem otherwise to be secular. L'Huillier, *L'Empire des mots*, 214 and 248, points out the high proportion of space in the Latin panegyrics devoted to military narrative, and the religious language used of Constantine in *Pan. Lat.* 6 (7), 9 (12), and 4 (10). Eusebius was writing in the same tradition.

**11. 2. forbidden to call any man blessed before his death.** Eccles. 11: 28.

### 12-24. Birth, Family, and Youth

#### 12. Childhood among the tyrants

**12. 1. Moses.** Eusebius first sets out here the typology he will apply to Constantine: brought up like Moses in an enemy court (that of Diocletian at Nicomedia), like him he freed his people from tyrants (the persecutors) and led them to freedom and their inheritance (Christianity). See Introduction, § 7. He draws the analogy between Maxentius and Pharaoh at *HE* 9. 9. 5-8, based on Exod. 15, and cf. below, 20. 2; 38. 2, 5; 39. 1 (cf. *HE* 9. 9. 9); Constantine's victory in 312 is explicitly compared with that of Moses at *VC* I. 39. 1. Here Eusebius uses Exod. 1-14 and Acts 7: 20-36; the implication in 12. 1 is that Constantine learnt wisdom at the court of Nicomedia (for his education see on 19. 2). The apologetic argument implied in the passage is that the miracles shown to Constantine demonstrate the truth of the stories about Moses (12. 1-2, cf. *HE* 9. 9. 4, a passage used at *VC* I. 38. 1). See Hollerich, 'Religion and Politics', and 'Moses and Constantine', with Mortley, *Universal History*, 172-4.

Moses played an important role in Eusebius' thought: the *HE* begins with Moses as the foremost of the prophets of Israel who spoke of Christ (*HE* 1. 2. 4 ff.), and the comparison of Moses and Christ occurs at length in *DE* 3. 2. 1-30, where Eusebius says that Jesus was like Moses in that he too liberated his people, though he was also greater than Moses. The role of Moses in relation both to Judaism and to Christianity features both in *PE* and *DE*. Thus, while Eusebius is careful not to say so directly, the application of the Moses typology to Constantine stands in

direct comparison to its earlier use by Eusebius in relation to Christ (see further Hollerich, 'Religion and Politics', 317-24).

**An ancient report.** Almost the same phrase that is used of Cyrus (*palaios logos*, 7. 1), but in this case referring to Scripture, which Eusebius does not cite directly. It is repeated below, 12. 2. Moses's upbringing at the court of Pharaoh: Exod. 1: 22-2: 10, and esp. Acts 7: 18-23.

**12. 2. which most people regard as a kind of myth.** Eusebius seems to go out of his way to write as if for non-Christians, though see below, on 38. 1. Moses was well-known to them in the context of Jewish apologetic in the guise of wise lawgiver; it was argued by some that Plato was influenced by Moses and that he was the teacher of Orpheus (see J. Gager, *Moses in Greco-Roman Paganism* (New York, 1972); A. Droge, *Homer or Moses? Early Christian Interpretations of the History of Culture* (HUT 26; Tübingen, 1989); Mortley, *Universal History*). In this debate the *Life of Moses* by Philo, a writer influential on both Origen and Eusebius, played a central role. In the *HE*, Eusebius had also defended Origen's interpretation of Moses from the criticisms of Porphyry, and mentions a work of Origen's 'On the harmony of Moses and Jesus' (6. 19). The explicit analogy with Moses in the *VC* extends only through the campaign against Licinius narrated in bk. II (in II. 12 Constantine builds a tabernacle for himself where he can retire to pray), but the structure of the *VC* can be seen nevertheless as reflecting the three phases of forty years each in the life of Moses: (a) birth and upbringing at the Egyptian court, (b) leading the Israelites out of Egypt, and (c) Moses the lawgiver, making the tabernacle and overthrowing idolatry. These divisions were exploited in later works such as Gregory of Nyssa's *Life of Moses* (see M. Harl, 'Les trois quarantaines de Moïse', *REG* 80 (1967), 407-12, and 'Moïse figure de l'évêque', in A. Spira, ed., *The Biographical Works of Gregory of Nyssa* (Philadelphia, 1984)).

**eyewitnesses of public scenes.** Eusebius lays stress throughout on the 'proofs' and signs which demonstrate Constantine's favour with God; I. 4, 30, 57.

**Tyrants.** See on 3. 1 above.

**12. 3. he had a father.** On Constantius I, posthumously known as Chlorus, Eusebius pads out what he had written at

*HE* 8. 13. 12–13, though there he had also stated that Constantius was the first of the tetrarchs to be deified (13. 12). Constantius rose from a military background to become *praeses* of Dalmatia and praetorian prefect of Maximian in Gaul, before being made Caesar in 293 as a member of the tetrarchy (Fig. 1), and Augustus on 1 May 305 (Barnes, *NE* 4, 35–7; *Origo* 1 repeats the claim of descent from Claudius Gothicus made for the first time in *Pan. Lat.* 7 (6). 2, AD 310). Eusebius goes much further here than in the *HE*, declaring that he was ‘on friendly terms with the God over all’ (13. 1) and ‘extremely attached to what pleases God’ (14. 1), and suggesting that Constantine himself was already favourable to Christianity before his father’s death (12. 3, though see 27 below). This would seem to confirm Lact., *DMP* 24. 9, which makes Constantine’s first act on his accession the ending of persecution (Elliott, ‘Conversion’ and ‘Early Development’), though most scholars in the past have taken 312 to be the date of his conversion. However, it is suggested by a Latin panegyrist that he saw a vision of Apollo in 310 (*Pan. Lat.* 7 (6), 21, dismissed by Barnes, *CE* 36; see for this B. Müller-Rettig, *Der Panegyricus des Jahres 310 auf Konstantin den Grossen* (Stuttgart, 1990)). The treatment of Constantius differs substantially in *Pan. Lat.* 9 (12), AD 313 and 4 (10), AD 321, and the latter introduces a divine sign into its narrative of the battle at the Milvian Bridge, the heavenly troops of Constantius seen coming to Constantine’s aid: L’Huillier, *L’Empire des mots*, 247–8.



FIG. 1. Gold medallion from Arras, showing the entry of Constantius Chlorus into London, AD 293. Trustees of the British Museum.

### 13–18. Career and character of Constantine’s father

**13. 1. this man was the only one.** Eusebius claims that Constantius did not carry out the persecutions in his own western part of the Empire, with its centre at Trier; it was important for Christian writers to distance Constantius from the tetrarchic policy, so Lact., *DMP* 8. 7, ‘he was different from the others’, and 15. 7, ‘Constantius, to avoid appearing to disagree with the instructions of his seniors [Diocletian and Maximian], allowed the churches—that is, the walls, which could be restored—to be destroyed, but the true temple of God, which is inside men, he kept unharmed’. Here and at *HE* 8. 13. 13 Eusebius denies that he even destroyed churches. It is true that he had a daughter called Anastasia (a Christian name), and see Eusebius’ anecdotes and elaborations below, esp. 17. 2–3; however, in the Latin panegyrics Constantius is presented as a pagan, e.g. 6 (7). 3. 3–4, AD 307; 9 (12). 25, AD 313, and see also Eus., *HE* 8. 13. 12. Elliott, ‘Conversion’, 421–2, argues for his Christianity.

**13. 2. They besieged and ravaged the churches of God.** The persecution of Christians began in February (Lact., *DMP* 11–12) or March (Eus., *HE* 8. 2. 4), 303.

**13. 3. evil demons.** Eusebius, like Christians generally, regards the pagan gods as demons. Originally the terms *daimon* and *daimonion* had the neutral sense of ‘divinity’ or ‘spirit’, but acquire evil connotation in Christian circles. See Elaine Pagels, *The Origins of Satan* (Harmondsworth, 1995), and see in particular *SC* 13. 5–6, 15, for an apologetic account of the defeat of these ‘gods’ by the Christian God; in *PE* demons send oracles and are dispersed by the Gospels. For Eusebius’ use of the term see Sirinelli, 201–2, 312–26.

**13. 4. having mentioned one or two achievements.** Eusebius’ earlier account of Constantius was already favourable (*HE* 8. 13. 13–14, and see *Pan. Lat.* 6 (7). 4. 4; 7 (6). 3. 4); now he embellishes it with further anecdotal material, and stresses Constantius’s monotheistic piety. In view of the fate of the male descendants of Constantius and Theodora in the bloodbath following Constantine’s death in 337, it was also desirable to lay emphasis on Constantius as the perfect father

of Constantine and to avoid mention of the six children of his second family (Barnes, *NE* 37); see however **17.3** and **18.2** below.

**14.** Constantius's kindness to his subjects (see also Lib., *Or.* 59.15) is illustrated by a moral tale traced by Winkelmann to Xen., *Cyrop.* 8. 2. 15-17.

**14.1. the Emperor who then exercised supremacy.** Probably Diocletian, and thus referring to Constantius's period as Caesar. He was made Augustus when Diocletian retired on 1 May 305. Eusebius' stories about Constantius are there to prove his point, and are quite out of proportion with the rest of the narrative.

**15-16.** A story, hardly credible, offered as further 'proof' of Constantius's unwillingness to persecute, and illustrating the general statements of 13. 2-3 and *HE* 8. 13. 13; however, 16. 1 might suggest that he did in fact enforce sacrifice. There is a biblical model for the story in the actions of Jehu in 2 Kings. 10: 18-25.

**15. fire and iron, deep sea and every kind of death.** For a catalogue of the sufferings of the martyrs, abbreviated here, see *HE* 8. 14. 13.

**16.1. demons.** Above, 13. 3.

**17.2-3.** Eusebius might appear to claim that before 305 Constantius was Christian himself and converted his wife Theodora and his children; Constantine makes it more explicit at II. 49, describing his father as calling on 'the Saviour God'. See Elliott, 'Conversion' and 'Early Development', for this interpretation. But Eusebius' language is ambiguous (see below on **27**), and Constantine could well interpret Constantius's call on the one God as the Christian God. Helena, Constantine's mother, whom he had married early and presumably divorced (though some sources claim that she was merely his mistress or concubine, Barnes, *NE* 36), is not mentioned, despite the eulogistic section about her at *VC* III. 43-7 Eusebius has left in the reference to Constantine's half-brothers and sisters, despite writing out the younger Dalmatius at IV. 50, see note *ad loc.*, and cf. also below, **18. 2**; **21. 2**. If Constantius's family was infiltrated by Christianity, Eusebius does not know it.

**17.2. the saying.** The source is unknown; see p. 22.

**17.3. in all respects a church of God.** As Constantine's was later to be (IV. 17). Eusebius had used the idea already of Valerian, *HE* 7. 10. 3, from Dionysius of Alexandria. He imagines the court populated with ministers of God, i.e. clergy, conducting regular Christian services of prayer.

**18.1. Those who were advanced in years.** i.e. Diocletian and Maximian, whom Eusebius typically does not name. For a longer account of their retirement in 305, see *HE* 8. 13. 11.

**First Augustus.** i.e. the senior of the two Augusti (the other was Galerius). Eusebius adds this detail to what he has taken from *HE* in order to support Constantine's claims.

**18.2.** For praise of Constantius, cf. **17.** Constantius's children; see above, on **17.2**; Barnes, 'Panegyric', 99, lists this reference as unlikely after the murders of summer 337, but admits that 'he may well have forgotten to delete the already written sentence'. Eusebius' point is that Constantius was prolific, his colleagues largely childless, and that this is a sign of divine favour.

#### **19-21. Constantine joins his father**

**19.1. that ancient prophet of God.** Constantine's stay among the other tetrarchs is again (cf. **17.2**) likened to that of Moses among the Egyptians.

**from childhood to youth.** For such emphases on Constantine's youthfulness, see above on **5.1**.

**we knew him ourselves as he travelled through the land of Palestine.** Eusebius is referring to 301-2, when he apparently saw Constantine travelling by the side of Diocletian; cf. *Oration to the Saints* 16. 2, claiming that Constantine had seen for himself Memphis and Babylon, and see Barnes, *NE* 40.

**19.2-20.1. physique and bodily height.** An ideal Emperor's inner virtue would be reflected in his outward appearance; cf. Eusebius' description of Constantine at the Council of Nicaea (325) at III. 10. 3-4. For references in the Latin panegyrics to imperial strength and vigour, see Smith, 'Public Image of Licinius I', 196-7.



**19. 2. rhetorical education.** In contrast, *Origo* 2 describes him as having had little education (*litteris minus instructus*), in which it is followed by many modern scholars, who attribute Constantine's alleged weakness in theology to his military background. But the author of the *Oration to the Saints*, and of many other orations, can hardly be described as uneducated, nor would the court of Diocletian at Nicomedia have been uncultured; see also *Epit.* 41. 14, and Barnes, *CE* 47. The theme itself falls under the panegyric heading of upbringing and formation.

**20. 1–2. secret plots . . . safety in flight.** Constantine also resembles Moses in having made his escape from the 'tyrants'. It is not improbable that Galerius, the junior Augustus to Constantius after 1 May 305, would have wanted to prevent the latter's son, who had been left out of the settlement, from leaving Nicomedia and joining his father. Constantius is said to have sent a letter to Galerius announcing his illness and asking for his son (Lact., *DMP* 24. 3). However, Eusebius gives a version carefully designed to obscure any sign of ambition on Constantine's part; Lact., *DMP* 24. 5–6, Praxagoras, as reported by Photius, *FGrH*, 219, *Aur. Vict.*, *Caes.*, 40. 2 ff., *Epit.*, 41. 2–3, and Zosimus, 2. 8. 2 ff. all have more colourful stories of Constantine's escape, and *Origo* 3–4 makes him get away on horseback and defeat the Sarmatians, whereupon Galerius does send him to Constantius. For Eusebius it is important to claim that it was God who revealed his danger to Constantine (as also at *IV.* 47), while his flight resembled that of Moses after killing the Egyptian (*Exod.* 2: 11–15). However, if God was working for Constantine (20. 2), so was Constantine himself.

**21. 1. he arrived . . . at the very moment.** A similar story already in Lact., *DMP* 24. 8, though no place is mentioned, and Constantius commends Constantine to his soldiers, not the family. *Pan. Lat.* 6 (7). 7. 1 ff. and *Origo* 4 make it clear that Constantine actually met his father at Bononia (Boulogne), and that they then marched north and campaigned against the Picts in Scotland, Constantius dying only later at York (25 July 306). Of this campaign Lactantius and Eusebius know nothing. Eusebius makes Constantine's first visit to Britain considerably later (see *I.* 25. 2). Eusebius' deathbed scene is also the more dramatic version; it has Biblical precedents in *Gen.* 49: 1 (Jacob)

and *1 Kings* 1: 28–35 (David and Solomon). Constantine's dramatic flight also falls under the rhetorical head of the *celeritas imperatoris* (e.g. *Pan. Lat.* 3 (11). 4. 4, AD 291, of Diocletian and Maximian, 4 (10). 36. 5, AD 321, of Crispus).

**21. 2. handed over his part of the Empire by natural succession.** The whole passage (21. 2–22. 2) is a much expanded version of *HE* 8. 13. 12–14. Eusebius does even more here to suggest smooth dynastic succession (cf. *Pan. Lat.* 6 (7). 5. 3, AD 307); however, the next few years in practice see Constantine manoeuvring first to gain acceptance and then to detach himself from the tetrarchy. Eusebius avoids these awkward facts, if he knows them, by concentrating on, or even inventing, the details of Constantius' funeral (cf. *IV.* 70–2 for Constantine's own, also conducted by his son). Proclaimed Augustus at York on 25 July 306, Constantine sent his picture to Galerius, who recognized him, albeit reluctantly, only as Caesar (Lact., *DMP* 25. 1; *Pan. Lat.* 6 (7). 5. 3, attributing the snub to Constantine's modesty). Constantine's first wife was Minervina (Barnes, *NE* 42–3); he was recognized as Augustus by Maximian in 307 with his marriage to the latter's daughter, Fausta. Maximian had returned from exile in support of his son Maxentius, who by late 306 had also proclaimed himself Augustus. The alliance allowed Constantine to claim legitimation against the wishes of Galerius by appealing to the senior emperor (as set forth in *Pan. Lat.* 6 (7) of 307, celebrating his marriage and the alliance; see B. H. Warmington, 'Aspects of Constantinian Propaganda in the Panegyrici Latini', *TAPA* 104 (1974), 371–84; C. E. Nixon, 'Constantinus Oriens Imperator', *Historia*, 42 (1993), 229–46, against Grünwald, *Constantinus*, who regards the panegyric as 'official'). In fact Maximian himself was not at this time recognized formally as Augustus; for these complicated events, omitted or glossed over by Eusebius, see Barnes, *CE* 29–30, *NE* 4–6.

#### 22–4. Constantine declared Emperor

**22. 1. his father reigned through him.** As Constantine now reigned through his sons (*I.* 3, *IV.* 71). Nazarius also claimed the benevolent influence of Constantius on Constantine's reign (*Pan. Lat.* 4 (10), AD 321).

22. 2–23. Constantine is similarly singled out from the other tetrarchs by his legitimate succession at *HE* 8. 13. 13, where it is also said that he was ‘in every way wise and very religious’.

23. **persecute the churches of God.** Similar language of Licinius, below, 56. 1.

**I have decided that it is not proper to report the way their lives ended in the present account.** See therefore I. 27, 47 for brevity, but contrast I. 57–9 (based on *HE*) and notes, and cf. I. 11. 1 for another stated intention in the *VC* that appears to be subsequently broken. Barnes, ‘Panegyric’, 99, lists this among the inconsistencies suggestive of revision. Here Eusebius no doubt has in mind that he has in fact omitted the effects of persecution on the persecutors, told in his source, *HE* 8. 13. 10–11.

24. Eusebius concludes the section, whose purpose has been to demonstrate God’s unique choice of Constantine to rule. Chs. 22–4 make the transition in the narrative from the lengthy section on Constantius to Constantine, the main subject.

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

Eusebius appears to follow the usual panegyric order and moves next to deeds in war (*praxeis kata polemon*); see Introduction, § 5.

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

25. 1–2. The provinces ruled by Constantius since 1 May 305 were Gaul, Britain and Spain; however, despite the absence of a chapter division in the manuscripts, 25. 2 seems to suggest that Eusebius did not consider Britain as part of Constantius’s ‘portion’. The British campaign is not attested elsewhere; Eusebius’ source might be Constantine’s letters, cf. II. 28. 2 and IV. 9 (where Ocean is mentioned, as at 25. 2).

Eusebius skims over the events of several years (306–12), omitting Constantine’s marriage in 307 to Fausta, the daughter of Maximian, and in general his brief and tendentious account ignores completely (or does not know of) the fraught political

situation in the Empire; Severus, declared Augustus by Galerius and sent to deal with Maxentius, was defeated and surrendered to Maxentius’s father Maximian, who had the title Herculus, at Ravenna (early 307), and was later ‘removed’ near Rome. It was now that alliance with Constantine seemed a good idea to Maxentius and Maximian, left in open hostility to Galerius in the east, while Constantine saw this as a useful, if temporary, expedient; sooner or later he would need to eliminate Maxentius himself. *Pan. Lat.* 7 (6), addressed to Maximian and Constantine, managed with wonderful coolness to celebrate the alliance, including Constantine’s reception into the Herculan line (2. 5; 8. 2), without a mention of Maxentius or Galerius. The latter’s military expedition against Maxentius in the autumn of 307 was unsuccessful, and a diplomatic battle began. Constantine’s ally, the elderly Maximian, was forced in 308 to seek refuge with Constantine himself by his own son. By the settlement made at the conference of Carnuntum in November 308, held in the presence of both Maximian and Diocletian, Licinius (promoted by Galerius to replace Severus) and Maximin, Caesar since 305, were declared Augusti; Maxentius was excluded, and the job of defeating him given to Licinius (Barnes, *CE* 32 and *NE* 6). But Maxentius managed to retain control of Rome, and Maximian, forced to retire again, took refuge with Constantine; by 310 he had made another bid for the purple, but was handed over to Constantine by the city of Massilia and persuaded to commit suicide. At this point in 310, *Pan. Lat.* 6 (7) (?1 August) effectively detaches Constantine from the tetrarchy by introducing the idea of his dynastic descent from the third-century Emperor Claudius Gothicus (21–2, and see above), and by attributing to him a vision of Apollo (21), thereby giving him a religious affiliation separate from the tetrarchic and Herculan one; the gods are said to have received Constantius into heaven and welcomed Constantine (for the tendentiousness of the panegyric, see Barnes, *CE* 35–6). But Eusebius may not have had any more detailed information than when he wrote the account in *HE*.

25. *Lact.*, *DMP* 24. 6, famously says that Constantine’s first action was to ‘restore the Christians to their worship and their God’ (trans. Creed). Even if true, this need not mean (despite Elliott, ‘Conversion’) that he was already actually a Christian; the

comment which follows, 'This was the first measure by which he sanctioned the restoration of the holy religion' gives Lactantius' own later interpretation. It is understandable that Eusebius, having denied that Constantius persecuted, makes no mention of such a measure.

**25. 2–26.** *Constantine observes the plight of Rome*

**26. When he then perceived.** Eusebius omits all the political events, and represents Constantine as unaware of Maxentius's activities until shortly before his own campaign against him. The idea of the oppression of Rome appears also in *HE* 8. 14. 1–6.

**he first gave opportunity.** Clearly meant to defend Constantine's apparent delay, suggested by Eusebius' conflation of the chronology of these years, and to cover him from any charges of aggression (a theme taken seriously in the panegyrics; cf. *Pan. Lat.* 4 (10). 8, AD 321, and cf. Lact., *DMP* 43. 4; *Pan. Lat.* 9 (12), AD 313; 4 (10). 9–13, AD 321). Eusebius never gives the titles of Constantine's rivals, and rarely their names (see R. T. Ridley, 'Anonymity in the Vita Constantini', *Byzantion*, 50 (1980), 241–58; Winkelmann, p. liii). This is a general stylistic feature of the work, as of panegyric in general: thus for instance when Pacatus departs from the rule and names Magnus Maximus at *Pan. Lat.* 2 (12). 45. 1–2, it is to considerable rhetorical effect. The account in *HE* 8. 13. 12–15, is not much more detailed, despite mentioning Licinius, Maximin, and (unnamed) Maximian.

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

**27. 1. magical devices.** The whole campaign will be presented as the victory of Christianity over pagan superstition, even though Maxentius too had proclaimed toleration for Christians (*Mart. Pal.* (S) 13. 12–13; *HE* 8. 14. 1; for his policies see D. de Decker, 'La Politique religieuse de Maxence', *Byzantion*, 38 (1968), 472–562). His resort to magic is described at *HE* 8. 14. 5.

**he sought a god to aid him.** The choice is presented in terms of monotheism versus polytheism, as was apparently also the

case with Constantius (cf. 27. 3, 'his father's God'). Constantine had not known his father until the latter's deathbed and does not know the identity of his father's God until he receives the sign and vision of Christ himself. In this he is like Moses, who is confronted by the God of his father (*Exod.* 3: 6) and has to ask his name (*Exod.* 3: 13–15); for Eusebius, it is Christ who also appeared to Moses at the bush (*HE* 1. 2. 10–13). Neither Constantius nor Constantine is yet aware who the one God is. See further on 32 below.

**27. 3. those who had already campaigned against the tyrant.** These were in fact Severus, Licinius, and Galerius (see above), as usual unnamed, but Eusebius seems to be thinking only of Severus and Galerius. Constantine's own philosophical critique of polytheism can be seen in *Or. ad sanct.* 4. Here Eusebius attributes to him a doctrine already familiar enough, and biblical ('Herod' in Acts 12: 1–23), that persecutors of Christians come to a dreadful end. This is Lactantius' theme throughout the *DMP* and is elaborated by Constantine in his letter of relief to Christians at *VC* II. 24–27. The delusion represented by faith in oracles and diviners reappears at *VC* I. 28. and II. 50–1, 54. Eusebius' version of Severus's death reads more like an account of an assassination than execution or suicide after capture (for which see Lact., *DMP* 26. 10–11; *Origo* 4. 10). He does not seem to have very good information, unless he is simply keeping the focus on the religious aspects of Constantine's rise (see above on 25. 1–2).

**he decided he should venerate his father's God alone.** There was much in common at this time between Christians and monotheist pagans (Liebeschuetz, 'Religion'), and this does not mean that Constantius was as yet a Christian. Cf. the apparently monotheistic prayer which Constantine enjoined on his army (*IV.* 19–20, cf. Lact., *DMP* 46. 6, a similar prayer revealed to Licinius in a dream before his defeat of Maximin, and many passages in the *Pan. Lat.*). Barnes, *CE* 43, suggests that Constantine's 'moment of psychological conviction' may have come only at the consciousness of victory; while this accords with the narrative of *VC* I. 27–32, see below for some of the problems with Eusebius' account.

28–32. *The vision of Constantine.*

What follows is probably the most famous passage in the *Life*. Eusebius bases his account of the campaign against Maxentius and the Battle of the Milvian Bridge (28 October 312) on what he had already written at *HE* 9. 9. 2–8. But there, despite the record of Constantine's prayers before the battle and the analogy of Pharaoh's chariots being engulfed in the Red Sea, there is no hint of a vision. He inserts here, more than twenty-five years later, an elaborate story which, he claims, he had heard from the Emperor personally, 'a long time after', and 'confirmed with oaths' (28. 1). It differs in almost all respects from Lactantius' account of the dream experienced by Constantine before the battle of the Milvian Bridge at *DMP* 44, with which legend-writers and historians alike have regularly mixed it up. The versions of the battle in *Pan. Lat.* 9 (12), of 313, and 4 (10), of 321, are couched in religious vocabulary and record signs of divine favour, but these are not Christian (the two panegyrics were also composed eight years apart and differ substantially: see L'Huillier, *L'Empire des mots*, 235–48, with plan on p. 236). For the inscription on the Arch of Constantine (315) see on 40. 2. But Eusebius' vision as recounted here, like the prayers in *HE* 9. 9. 2, is located before the Italian campaign is launched. In neither work does he recount an eve-of-battle prayer or vision.

Eusebius' information about the west was limited before 325. Though there is no sign that Eusebius had special access to the Emperor at the Council of Nicaea in that year, he might have heard Constantine talking about his conversion and the long-ago battle (cf. Constantine's language at II. 49–54), even perhaps as late as 336, when he was in Constantinople. For his own claims see I. 1; III. 49; IV. 7. 1. He also claims to have got the stories about the efficacy of the *labarum* from Constantine (II. 6. 2–9. 3, esp. 8. 2, 9. 3). But that does not guarantee their accuracy in either case; even the Council of Nicaea took place thirteen years after the event, and after Constantine's recent victory had transformed the situation. When Eusebius made the final revisions to *HE*, after the victory and before the Council, he did not insert anything about a vision. When he composed the *VC*, however, Eusebius needed a miracle for his portrayal of Constantine, and miracles need authentication. Secular pane-

gyrists commonly claimed special knowledge for their more unlikely stories (cf. *Pan. Lat.* 7 (6). 21, the vision of Apollo in 310; also Claudian claiming to report the dying words of Theodosius about the succession, *III Cos. Hon.* 144–5, and Corippus the dying words of Justinian to similar effect, *Iust.* 4. 337–8; these reported conversations tend to have had no other witnesses). Such accounts typically use vocabulary of 'seeing', and of astonishment: on examples in the panegyrics, see L'Huillier, *L'Empire des mots*, 301. Eusebius makes a similar claim for his report of Licinius' address to his soldiers at II. 5 (see note *ad loc.*), as also for an incident during the campaign of AD 324 (II. 8. 2–9. 3). Furthermore, he admits to having seen the *labarum* only 'somewhat later'; (see below on I. 32. 1; with I. 30). The alleged vision of Apollo in 310 allowed Constantine to 'see himself in the visible form of the first princeps, Augustus, with whom Apollo had similarly been associated' (see Nixon and Rodgers, 250 n. 93; Smith, 'Public Image of Licinius I', 187). Here the vision story serves a different though related function by providing the necessary parallel for the story of Moses and the burning bush. God says to Moses 'I am the God of thy father' (Exod. 3: 6, cf. *VC* I. 17. 3–28. 1); both Moses and Constantine are taken by surprise (Acts 7: 31, from Exod. 3: 3; *VC* I. 28. 2), and both ask the name of the God (Exod. 3: 13, *VC* I. 28. 2). The account of the shape of the standard and its manufacture (31) recalls that of the making of the Ark of the Covenant (Exod. 25–7, cf. also below on II. 12). Finally, like the Ark and the *labarum* (II. 7–9, 16), so too the rod of Moses is stretched out to ensure victory (Exod. 17: 8–13, cf. *VC* IV. 5. 2). For a sceptical view of Eusebius' claims see Leeb, 43–52. Heim, *La Théologie de la victoire*, 92–8, argues that Eusebius left out such manifestations in the *HE* for theological reasons, but it seems more likely that the account is new in the *VC*.

The account has been endlessly discussed. Burckhardt, 271–2, simply omits it from his account of the battle, and later states that 'the familiar miracle . . . must finally be eliminated from the pages of history', and again, 'history cannot take an oath of Constantine the Great too seriously, because, among other things, he had his brother-in-law [Licinius] murdered despite assurances given under oath. Nor is Eusebius beyond having himself invented two-thirds of the story' (p. 296; note that he is

no kinder to Lactantius, p. 246); Grégoire, 'Eusèbe' and 'La Vision', argued that the story was a christianization of the miracles told by the Latin panegyrists, by an unknown author, not Eusebius, of the late fourth or early fifth century; the case against such views was best put by Baynes, though signs and wonders were certainly not limited to Christians (see R. MacMullen, 'Constantine and the Miraculous', *GRBS* 9 (1968), 81–96), and the piercing eyes of rulers were associated in panegyric with their capacity to see divine visions (Smith, 'Public Image of Licinius I', 198–9). Elliott, 'Conversion', argues against 312 as a conversion experience on the grounds that Constantine was Christian already, but for the case for development, see Leeb. A rival pagan account of Constantine's conversion also circulated (e.g. Zos. 2. 29, and cf. the satirical version in Julian, *Caes.* 336), whereby he became Christian in the attempt to find forgiveness for the deaths of his son Crispus and his wife Fausta in Italy in 326 (naturally not mentioned by Eusebius), and built Constantinople to get away from the hostility shown to him in Rome; the story is rejected by Sozomen, *HE* 1. 5.

**28. 1. As he made these prayers.** Eusebius' vision is separated in time from the Battle of the Milvian Bridge; it takes place earlier, 'on a campaign he was conducting somewhere' (28. 2), even before Constantine's campaign against Maxentius began (cf. 32. 3; 37. 2).

**a long while after.** Perhaps in 336 (see above); but the story may not have been told to Eusebius alone, and so 325 is not ruled out.

**the time which followed provided evidence for the truth of what he said.** A typical Eusebian apologetic argument.

**28. 2. About the time of the midday sun.** For the phrase, see also on IV. 64. 1. Constantine sees his vision in the middle of the day, not in a dream. This has led to speculation about some natural astronomical event, like the so-called 'halo phenomenon'. For details and bibliography see Peter Weiss, 'Die Vision Constantins', in J. Bleicken, ed., *Colloquium aus Anlass des 80. Geburtstages von Alfred Heuss* (Frankfurter Althistorische Studien, 13; Frankfurt, 1993), 145–69, who argues that Constantine did see such a phenomenon, but in 310 (cf. *Pan. Lat.* 6

(7). 21. 3–7), and gradually came to identify the *summus deus* of that experience with Christ; on this view, the *labarum* was also the product of his experience in 310, cf. J. J. Hatt, 'La Vision de Constantin au sanctuaire de Grand et l'origine celtique du *labarum*', *Latomus*, 9 (1950), 427–36. Eusebius certainly does not think in such terms.

**a cross-shaped trophy formed from light, and a text attached to it which said, 'By this conquer'.** Constantine sees a cross. Nothing in the text suggests he sees a *chi-rho* emblem at this point. When Eusebius describes the *labarum* or battle-standard later, the chief shape is the long upright and the cross-piece, making a simple cross. The more detailed and jewelled version, replete with hanging portrait-banner and surmounted with *chi-rho*, is what Eusebius himself had seen, and which he says was an exact replica of what Christ showed to Constantine in a dream (see 29–31 below, which are unambiguous). Historians have created problems by trying to assimilate the vision to what Lactantius writes about the sign given in a dream on the eve of the Milvian Bridge battle (*DMP* 44. 5, with Creed's notes). This was some form of staurogram (a cross with the top looped over) or a *chi-rho*, as on Constantine's helmet on the Ticinum medallions of 315 (see on 31. 1), to be painted on the shields of the army. Whether the *chi-rho* was already recognized as a Christian sign is not clear: see R. Grigg, 'Constantine the Great and the Cult without Images', *Viator*, 8 (1977), 1–32, at 17–18.

Constantine sees the sign 'resting over the sun', which he continued to commemorate on his coins as Sol Invictus (see Bruun, 'Sol'), whether out of numismatic conservatism (Barnes) or as a sign of solar monotheism. 'Trophy' (*tropaion*) is a favourite word with Eusebius, used both generally and (particularly) of the cross; cf. e.g. 37. 1 where the 'victorious trophy' of Christ is glossed by 'Saviour's sign' or 'saving sign' (*soterion semeion*); the same terminology in *LC*, e.g. 9. 14, 16 (again the two words juxtaposed), and see on IV. 21. It was an idea of long standing (see e.g. Justin, *1 Apol.* 55. 3; Origen, *Jo.* 20. 36). For Eusebius, and in later eastern tradition, the cross represented victory rather than suffering. See further on these equations Storch, 'Trophy'; in application to the *labarum*, *VC* IV. 21; *LC* 6. 21. Eusebius has

already in *LC* elevated the 'sign' into a symbolic representation of both the cross and of victory, and uses similarly fluid terminology in the *VC*: see Heim, *La Théologie de la victoire*, 98–105, with bibliography at 103 n. 289. The text 'By this conquer' is clearly part of the heavenly vision, though perhaps originally associated with the dream of 29. The thought is plainly present in the inscription described in 40. 2.

The vision of Constantine had a long subsequent history in later versions, including the Byzantine *Lives*, and in many semi-legendary accounts, especially in connection with the story of the finding of the True Cross (see below on III. 28 ff.). The (lost) late fourth-century church history by Gelasius of Caesarea was an important intermediary for transmitting the *VC* to the church historians of the fifth century and later. See Winkelmann, intro., pp. xix–xxv; S. N. C. Lieu and D. Montserrat, eds., *From Constantine to Julian* (London, 1996), and above, Introduction, § 11.

**the whole company of soldiers.** The vision is witnessed by all Constantine's army; numbers suit the public character of the miracle.

**on a campaign he was conducting somewhere.** Eusebius implies that this was before he decided to attack Maxentius, while still in Gaul or even Britain. The vision is not connected by Eusebius with the Battle of the Milvian Bridge; indeed, the dream (29. 1), the manufacture of the standard (30), the adoption of Christ as Constantine's God, and the christianizing of the court (31. 1–3) are all placed before the campaign against Maxentius begins (37).

**29. 1. the Christ of God appeared to him with the sign.** As well as his vision, Constantine also has a dream, in which Christ himself appears to him together with the cross. He is told to manufacture a copy of what he had seen in the sky. This is the *labarum*, depicted on coins from Constantinople in 327 (*RIC* vii, Constantinople no. 19; Fig. 2), and from Trier and Rome, 336–7, and known to Eusebius from 325 onwards (I. 32. 1, 30), though it is hardly likely that as yet there was the kind of elaborate jewelled version that Eusebius describes. The coin representations do not agree in every detail and there may well have been no standard type; in any case Eusebius describes it in

its later form; so also Leeb, 43–52, and see A. Alföldi, "Hoc signo victor eris": Beiträge zur Geschichte der Bekehrung Konstantins des Grossen', in T. Klauser and A. Ruecker, eds., *Pisciculi: Festschrift F. Dölger* (Münster, 1939), 1–18, repr. in H. Kraft, ed., *Konstantin der Grosse* (Wege der Forschung, 31; Darmstadt, 1974).



FIG. 2. Constantinople, AD 326–7. *Labarum* piercing a serpent. Trustees of the British Museum.

Lactantius gives a quite different account, and Eusebius' version must be carefully separated from it, though they are often conflated in modern accounts (e.g. *ODB* s.v. *Labarum*). In Lactantius' version, written not very long after the event, Constantine was told in a dream before the battle by an unidentified voice to mark his soldiers' shields with the 'heavenly sign of God' (Lact., *DMP* 44. 5); he did so, and was victorious. The sign seems to have been some form of the *chi-rho*. Lactantius also reports a dream experienced by Licinius (whom he regards as Christian) before his battle against Maximin, *DMP* 46. 3–6; Licinius was visited by an archangel, who dictated a prayer which was written down, and copies of which were distributed to the army officers (46. 7). But in the *VC*, in an account written much later, the dream of Constantine (recounted by Eusebius alone) and the vision which it follows take place before the campaign has even begun.

Constantine is given a revelation from Christ of a heavenly emblem, and directed to replicate it. Similarly in Exodus Moses is shown a pattern for the Ark of the Covenant and the tabernacle, which he proceeds to copy (Exod. 25–7, 36–9); the pattern was thought of as concretely existing in heaven (see esp. Exod. 25: 9, and the interpretation in Heb. 8: 3–6). Parallels between Constantine's cross-trophy and the Ark of the Covenant

may be noted. Painting apotropaic emblems on shields was nothing new: MacMullen, 'Constantine and the Miraculous', 87 (also on the *labarum*).

**30. recounted the mysterious communication.** Moses too, after receiving instructions from the Lord, speaks to the people (Exod. 35: 4) before summoning the craftsmen in gold and jewels (Exod. 35: 30–36: 1).

**the shape of the sign.** The overall cross-shape is meant, the *chi-rho* mentioned in 31. 1 not being part of the shape but of the decoration of the *labarum* (*contra* Drake, 'True Cross', 72; the 'sign' mentioned so often in *LC* is also the cross, see above). Cf. 32. 2 below, which makes the point clear.

**This was something which the Emperor himself once saw fit to let me set eyes on.** Cf. 32. 1, 'That was, however, somewhat later.' Eusebius saw the *labarum* in its established form, as depicted on Constantine's late coins, and here describes what he had seen later (see on 29. 1, and compare III. 12). Even in this form it could be described as cross-shaped, and resembled a military *vexillum*; Firm. Mat., *Err. prof. rel.* 20. 7 refers to it as the *vexillum fidei*.

**31. 1. tall pole.** Or possibly 'long spear', but the object resembles a flagpole rather than a weapon. It was plated with gold like the ark of God and its carrying-bars in Exod. 25: 10–13.

**forming the shape of a cross.** The whole structure is cruciform. The fact that the military *vexillum* was cruciform had been noted by Methodius, *Porph.* 1, who claimed that earthly emperors thus used the cross 'for the destruction of wicked habits'. The description of the wreath and the first two letters of the name of Christ point clearly to the later *labarum*, as it was depicted on coins.

**These letters the Emperor also used to wear upon his helmet in later times.** Like other Christian signs, the *chi-rho* emblem is in fact rare on Constantine's coins, and the early silver medallions of 315 from Ticinum (Pavia) showing the Emperor wearing a high-crested helmet with the Christogram are exceptional (Fig. 3). See P. Bruun, 'The Christian Signs on the Coins of Constantine', *Arctos*, NS 3 (1962), 5–35, against A. Alföldi, 'The

Helmet of Constantine with the Christian Monogram', *JRS* 22 (1932), 9–23; though the form of the *chi-rho* is attested before Constantine, there is no certain Christian use (E. Dinkler, *Signum Crucis* (Tübingen, 1967), 134–5).



FIG. 3. Ticinum, silver medallion of Constantine with *chi-rho*, AD 315. Staatliche Münzsammlung, Munich.

**31. 2 From the transverse bar . . . hung suspended a cloth.** The general shape was typical of that of a Roman standard, with a symbolic image above a banner. The rich tapestry may have been more true of the specimen observed by Eusebius later; the original was perhaps more utilitarian.

**But the upright pole . . .** This sentence is difficult to interpret. The portrait or bust of the Emperor is attached to the main shaft of the standard. Eusebius might mean that there was a distinct structure in addition to the monogram and the banner, which held the imperial portrait; however, the portrait should be on the banner itself. Eusebius says the bust was made of gold; perhaps it was hung from the central shaft or cross-piece. The reason for this obscurity may be that after describing the square-shaped banner he deliberately re-emphasizes the very tall upright pole so as to underline the cruciform shape of the whole. The bust is right up 'below the trophy of the cross', i.e. immediately under the cross-bar, or, as he says, near the top of the delineating tapestry. Thus the Emperor himself is directly associated with the central point of the cross, with his sons beside him. The manuscripts read *diagraphontos*, 'delineating', whereas editors prefer *diagraphentos*, 'delineated' (either 'just described', or 'decorated with pictures'). In preferring the manuscript reading we assume that Eusebius means to emphasize that the top edge of the banner marks the important line in the design, i.e. the cross-piece.

**head-and-shoulders portrait of the Godbeloved Emperor, and likewise of his sons.** Eusebius does not say how many sons are depicted. There are three medallions shown on the *Spes publica* coin of 326–7 (Fig. 2) and on the obverse the legend bears the names of Constantine and his sons Constantine and Constantius; by 327, therefore, the name of Crispus had been removed, though it had appeared on the *aes* coinage of 326–7, together with those of the younger Constantine, Constantius, Helena, Fausta, and Constantia (*RIC* vii, 570). If Eusebius had seen a version of the *labarum* in 325 this would have been before the death and *damnatio* of Crispus, which happened in 326.

**31. 3. This saving sign.** i.e. of the cross (see on 28. 2).

**32. 1. he summoned those expert in his words.** Constantine is instructed by bishops or clergy (*mystai* are initiates) as to the meaning of his vision; for the language see also on **III. 25–8; IV. 61. 2–3.** He hears about the Son of God, and of the meaning of the cross, and of his life on earth. Having learnt this from God's own teaching, as he believed (32. 3), he decided to read the Scriptures and made Christian clergy his advisers. Eusebius thus demonstrates Constantine's closeness to and dependence upon his clerical advisers; cf. 32. 3 'he listened attentively'.

Eusebius presents the process as one of preparation of the kind familiar in the Christian catechumenate. The 'convert' is driven by some sign from God to seek instruction from those who know the Scriptures, and learns about Christ and his coming and saving work. Constantine's vision had been an answer to prayer to his father's God; now he learns (perhaps from his father's own courtier-bishops, 17. 3 above) who that God really is. He is even given a detailed account of the divine and human nature of the Son, information usually reserved for the final period of baptismal preparation, and henceforth adopts a pattern of Christian worship ('with all due rites', 32. 3).

Eusebius summarizes the function of the cross as a token of immortality, 'an abiding trophy of that victory over death which he had once won'. His younger contemporary Athanasius writes of its power to convince men of immortality (*Inc.* 50. 5). While not specifically biblical, the idea originated in the conception that Christ's death and resurrection bring resurrection to mankind (e.g. 1 Cor. 15: 20–2), though the cross is the means of Christ's

triumph over human condemnation and 'principalities and powers' in Col. 1: 13–15. Constantine himself presents the death of Christ rather inconspicuously as the climax of his battle to defeat the powers of ignorance and evil (*Or. ad sanct.* 15).

**32. 2. Onlybegotten Son.** The title for Christ originates in John 1: 18. *Pais* (son) is also scriptural (e.g. Acts 4: 27); it is favoured in Christian liturgical texts, and used by Eusebius of royal offspring (see on 7. 1 above).

**self-accommodation.** The life of Jesus is thought of as a heavenly embodiment of the divine Son or Word; 'self-accommodation' (*oikonomia*) is the regular Greek term for what modern theologians refer to loosely as 'the Incarnation'.

**33–41. 2. The campaign against Maxentius**

**33–36. The crimes of Maxentius**

From 33 to 40 Eusebius relies heavily on his earlier version of the defeat of Maxentius in *HE*, particularly 8. 14 (the persecutions by Maxentius and Maximin: *VC* I. 33–6) and 9. 9. 9–11 (Constantine's victory, reproduced with only slight additions in *VC* I. 37–40). The *VC* account begins with the excesses of Maxentius (on his regime see Barnes, *CE* 37–8), necessary to establish him as a persecutor and thereby to justify Constantine's attack, and moves (omitting most of the advance through Italy) to the preparations for the final battle (37), which is described in highly rhetorical fashion (38), and to Constantine's entry into Rome (39), where Eusebius stresses that the Emperor attributes his victory to God and publicly proclaims the victorious cross (39. 3–41. 2).

**33. 1. the one who had thus previously seized the imperial city.** i.e. Maxentius; cf. below, 47. 1, 49. 1 for similar phrases (here taken in general terms from *HE* 8. 14. 1).

**not to obscure or insignificant persons, but . . .** From here the *VC* again picks up *HE* 8. 14. 1–2, expanding on Maxentius's sexual indulgences but suppressing his early favour towards Christians (14. 1), then leaving this passage to be picked up again at 35. 1 below. The language used in 33. 2 of Maxentius's female targets (cf. *Pan. Lat.* 4 (10). 34, *AD* 321) is used in relation to Maximin at *HE* 8. 14. 14 and of the



tyrants generally at *LC* 7. 7. For the noblewoman's suicide (34) see *HE* 8. 14. 17; this is a version of the story of Lucretia, and see Barnes, *CE* 42. Eusebius turns to the end of the *HE* chapter, returning at 35–6 to where he had left off, and now using 8. 14. 3–6. Effectively, 33–6 are in part a *cento*, in part a development, of *HE* 8. 14; see Hall, 'Eusebian Sources', 245–7, with further detail. For the slaughter of the populace (35. 1) see Aurel. Victor, *Caes.* 40. 24, cf. Zos. 2. 13, and for Maxentius's superstitious practices, *Pan. Lat.* 12 (9). 4. 4; according to Lact., *DMP* 44. 1. 8–9, Maxentius consulted the Sibylline Oracles. These accusations are part of the stock in trade of panegyric and its counterpart, invective.

**35. 2. thousands were put to death.** Hardly 'thousands', since this seems to refer not to the multitudes mentioned above but to senators put to death for gain.

#### 37–8. Constantine's victory

**37. Constantine . . . began making every armed preparation against the tyranny.** We have left Constantine 'on a campaign somewhere' (28. 1). Of what happened next, Eusebius, using *HE* 9. 9. 3, says only that he defeated three armies of Maxentius and 'advanced to occupy most of the land of Italy' (37. 2); in this account, Constantine fights the whole campaign under the patronage of 'God who is in heaven, and his Word, even Jesus Christ who is the Saviour of all' (*HE* 9. 9. 3). The three battles took place in Cisalpine Gaul and at Turin and Verona (*Pan. Lat.* 9 (12). 5, 6, 8; also 11 (surrender of Aquileia); 4 (10). 19–26; *Origo* 12 (Verona, also depicted on the Arch of Constantine); Zos. 2. 15 (no cities named). Eusebius has been careful to insert the detail of the cross-shaped *labarum* ('victorious trophy . . . salutary sign' (*soterion semeion*), not present in the *HE* version). Note that Constantine took the initiative, as in *HE* 9. 9. 2; in Eutrop. 10. 4 and Aurel. Vict., *Caes.* 40. 16 Maxentius is reluctant to fight, while in Lact., *DMP* 44. 4 he declares war ostensibly to avenge his father's death, and Zos. 2. 14–15 has him planning war before Constantine attacks.

**37. 2. sorcery.** See on 27 and 33. 1 above.

**soldiers and . . . military units.** Zos. 2. 15 gives numbers: 90,000 infantry and 8,000 cavalry for Constantine; for Maxentius,

80,000 from Rome and the vicinity, 40,000 Carthaginians, some Sicilians, in total 170,000 infantry and 18,000 cavalry. According to *Pan. Lat.* 9 (12). 3. 3, 5. 1–2 (the earliest account), Maxentius had 100,000 in all, Constantine less than 40,000; he had left some troops on the Rhine, and for his numbers cf. also Lact. *DMP* 44. 2. At 37. 2 Maxentius does not dare to leave the city.

**first, second, and third formations.** Perhaps the battles at Segusio, Turin, and Verona described in *Pan. Lat.* 9 (12). 5–8, AD 313; 4 (10). 21–2, 25, AD 321. Verona appears to have been a long and difficult encounter.

**38.** The account is based closely on *HE* 9. 9, but implying more directly that God's providence caused Maxentius to construct his bridge badly (38. 2–3), just as God effectively dragged him out to fight (38. 1). The tale of moral retribution is thereby enhanced. In *Pan. Lat.* 9 (12). 17 the bridge is crowded and Maxentius drowns while trying to cross the river on horseback; in Lact., *DMP* 44. 9 he finds the bridge already broken when he tries to flee; in *Epit.* 40. 6 he is thrown and drowns while crossing a bridge of boats; in Zos. 2. 16. 2–4 the bridge (not of boats) collapses under him, as in *HE*. Cf. also Lib., *Or.* 59. 20, with Maxentius's trick and the same moral. For the differences between *Pan. Lat.* 9 (12), AD 313, and 4 (10), AD 321 see L'Huillier, *L'Empire des mots*, 235–48.

Note that Eusebius introduces the scriptural citations from Exodus and from Psalm 7 (38. 3) with similar phraseology to that used of the Moses story above (see on 12. 2); it is here taken straight from *HE* 9. 9. 4. The analogy between Constantine and Moses is not explicitly made in either place, but see 39. 1 'the great Servant' (an addition here).

**38. 2. the friend of God.** Above, 3. 4.

**38. 3. in his cowardice.** Not in *HE* 9. 9, but also introduced at 38. 4; Eusebius thinks the device in the bridge a 'dirty trick'.

**38. 4. divine oracles.** Of the Scriptures (Exod. 15: 10), see above on 3. 4.

**38. 5. might be thought thus to have raised the same hymn**  
The hymn is attributed to Constantine personally in 39. 1.

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

39. 1. Eusebius adds the direct comparison between Constantine and Moses.

39. 2. An expanded version of *HE* 9. 9. 9, with more stress on the senators (see Hall, 'Eusebian Sources', 251). For Constantine's dealings with the Senate after his victory cf. *Pan. Lat.* 9 (12). 20, AD 313; his address to the Senate is depicted on the Arch of Constantine (Fig. 4).

39. 2. **acclamations.** For a brief introduction to the practice of acclamation in late antiquity see C. M. Roueché, 'Acclamations in the Later Roman Empire: New Evidence from Aphrodisias', *JRS* 74 (1984), 181-99, at 181-8. Constantine himself urged the formal use of acclamations in provincial assemblies (*CTh* 1. 16. 6, AD 331), and *CTh* 7. 20. 2, AD 320, preserves actual acclamations addressed to him.

39. 3-40. 2. This passage is based on *LC* 9. 8-11 (Winkelman, 156, and see Hall, 'Eusebian sources', 252-54). The statue described at 40. 2 comes however from *HE* 9. 9. 10. The Latin inscription translated into Greek here is very close to that on the Arch of Constantine, except that the latter, ostensibly set up by the Senate and the Roman people, substitutes the neutral *instinctu divinitatis* for the mention of the 'sign': *quod instinctu divinitatis mentis/magnitudine cum exercitu suo/tam de tyranno quam de omni eius/factione uno tempore iustis/rempublicam ultus est armis* ('since through the instigation of the Divinity and the greatness of his own mind he with his army revenged the state with just arms on one occasion from the tyrant and all his faction'). See N. Hannestad, *Roman Art and Imperial Policy* (Aarhus, 1986), 319-26; the language is highly traditional (cf. Augustus, *Res Gestae* 1: *exercitum . . . per quem rem publicam a dominatione factionis oppressam in libertatem vindicavi*). The same language could apply to conquests over civil enemies or usurpers, as in the *Res Gestae*, or, as applied by Eusebius and others, to the defeat of the persecutors; the inscription is virtually unaltered from *HE* 9. 9. 11, except that the singular 'tyrant' has been replaced, in the light of hindsight, with the more general 'yoke of tyranny'. The Arch was finished quickly; recent excavations have suggested to some that rather than being a new monument, albeit using *spolia*,

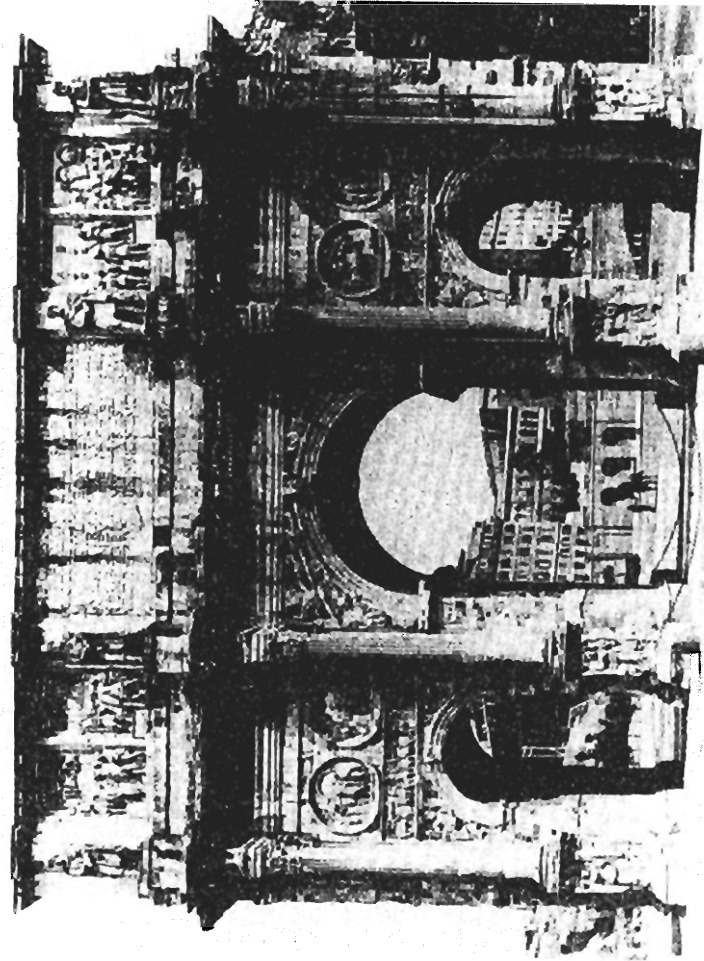


FIG. 4. Arch of Constantine, Rome, AD 315. Courtauld Institute of Art.

the present Arch represents Constantinian additions made to an existing Hadrianic monument: C. Panatella, P. Pensabene, and M. Milella, 'Scavo nel area della Meta Sudans e ricerche sull'arco di Costantino', *Archaeologia Laziale* 12/1, *Quaderni di Archeologia Etrusco-Italica*, 23 (1995), 41–61; see Fig. 4. None the less, the reuse of earlier imperial representations, with recarved heads depicting Constantine and Licinius in two cases in the act of sacrificing, constituted a 'quotation' from the repertoire of imperial success, as indeed do the themes of the new friezes: see P. Pierce, 'The Arch of Constantine: Propaganda and Ideology in Late Roman Art', *Art History*, 12 (1989), 387–418.

The identification of the statue gives rise to problems: Eusebius describes how Constantine was depicted in large size holding in his right hand a cross-shaped standard ('in the shape of a cross', and cf. 41. 1), 'in the middle' of Rome, as a trophy over his enemies, though it is only one of many such images (40. 1): the statue bore a triumphal inscription. The question is whether the surviving colossal head and other fragments in the Musei Capitolini (Fig. 5) come from this statue or from another colossus (see on IV. 15. 2); since both the head, which looks to be post-325, and the hands may have been altered or replaced the identification is not impossible (see E. B. Harrison, 'The Constantinian Portrait', *DOP* 21 (1967), 79–96, at 93, and for further discussion, Leeb, 62–9). According to *Pan. Lat.* 12 (9). 25. 4, AD 313, a gold statue was also dedicated to Constantine by the Senate. Over a dozen sculpted images of Constantine survive, in addition to coin portraits: for the development of Constantinian portraiture and its various messages from 306 onwards see Smith, 'Public Image of Licinius I', 185–7, and for its connection with the ideology of imperial panegyric, see pp. 194–202.

41. 1–2. Eusebius sums up and repeats what he has said already above about Constantine's profession of the cross (see also *LC* 9. 8–9), about the jubilation in Rome (some repetition from 39 above) and about the extent of Constantine's rule and the general happiness (cf. 25. 1 above; *Pan. Lat.* 12 (9). 19). As 22–4 complete 12–24, so 41. 1–2 completes and rounds off 25–40, while simultaneously acting as introduction to the following section about government of the west. Jubilation, happiness, and general prosperity (*felicitas*) are standard themes of imperial panegyric, as

is the cheerfulness of the Emperor's own appearance (see Smith, 'Public Image of Licinius I', 197–8).

#### 41. 3–48. *Emperor of the West*

Eusebius interposes between the accounts of the campaigns against Maxentius and Licinius a short section about Constantine's administrative acts following his defeat of Maxentius in 312. Much of this material has already appeared in *HE*, and appears again here in adapted form (Hall, 'Eusebian Sources', 254–9).



FIG. 5. Colossal head of Constantine. Rome, Palazzo dei Conservatori.

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

**41. 3. imperial letter.** A rescript of settlement, restoring property and exiles and releasing prisoners, in similar terms as the measures recorded after the defeat of Licinius, at II. 20. 2-5 and II. 30-42. Rather than suppose that Eusebius is reporting a measure otherwise unknown, compare in general terms the language of *HE* 10. 5. 2-14 ('Edict of Milan') and 15-17 (letter to Anullinus), whence he has probably developed this passage. 41. 3 does not mention either Christians or persecution as such, nor make any reference to the previous edict of Galerius calling off persecution (311), which Eusebius had reported at *HE* 8. 17.

**42. 1-2.** Constantine's favours to the Church. This is developed by Eusebius in hindsight, and no doubt in order to reinforce the view he wishes to promote of the Emperor's deference and honour towards bishops (cf. also III. 15; IV. 56); *HE* 10 has nothing about personal meetings or campaigns, nor about enlargement and decoration of church-buildings at this time. Probably Eusebius had no actual information about Constantine's church building in Rome after 312. As above, Eusebius here generalizes from a limited number of known measures mentioned in *HE* 10. 5, together with *VC* II. 24-42 (see below). For Constantine's general programme of church-building see II. 45. 1.

**table-companions.** At III. 15 the dinner given by Constantine to the bishops after the Council of Nicaea is described as though exceptional, but see also IV. 24 and 46. The present passage is reminiscent of the generalizations earlier as to the similar favours shown by Constantius Chlorus (above, esp. 17. 3).

**43.** Constantine's generosity to his subjects in general ('those outside', i.e. outside the Church, cf. IV. 24). For 'grants of land', at 43. 1, compare *CTh* 10. 8. 1, AD 313, though it is not clear that Eusebius had any specific legal source in mind. Again the chapter is highly generalized, and ends with a panegyric statement on the stock theme of liberality, also depicted on the Arch of Constantine (again at IV. 1-4; for Christian charity see also III. 44 on Helena, and IV. 44. 2); the solar imagery at 43. 3, like the conceit of the rejoicing of nature in imperial felicity, also

belongs in the context of imperial and tetrarchic panegyric (see MacCormack, *Art and Ceremony*, e.g. 172-3; Liebeschuetz, *Continuity and Change*, 241, with 281-2 on Constantine and Sol); Kloft, *Liberalitas Principis*, 170-7. Ch. 43 interrupts the section on Constantine's favours to the Church, which is resumed at 44. 1.

**44-5. Constantine deals with Church disputes**

Eusebius refers to the quarrel between Donatists and Catholics in Africa (he has given the text of four of Constantine's letters about this in *HE* 10. 5. 15-7. 2), but only in very general terms (44. 1 and 45. 2). A similarly brief mention comes in Constantine's letter to Alexander and Arius at II. 65.

**44. 1-2. he convoked councils . . . He did not disdain to be present.** Barnes (*CE* 58, *NE* 72, n. 110) takes this to mean that Constantine was himself present at the Council of Arles (AD 314; sources, see Barnes, *NE* 242). However, his presence is not mentioned at *HE* 10. 5. 18-20 and 21-4, which refer to this and to the earlier synod in Rome under Bishop Miltiades, and is more likely to be a retrojection by Eusebius of the circumstances of the Council of Nicaea (325, see III. 6-23; esp. the detail of those present at 44. 2). Significantly, Constantine's urging of peace is a major theme of the account of the latter's antecedents at II. 65-73; synods are mentioned in general terms at II. 65. It is typical of Eusebius to generalize from only one example, as here with 'some were at variance . . . in various places'; similarly, while 'councils' may refer to the synod in Rome and the Council of Arles, it may equally be a broad generalization from the latter alone. Eusebius is an enthusiast for the authority of episcopal synods: see 51 below.

**45. 1. gentle voice.** The word used (*praos*) is standard in imperial panegyric in Greek, which compliments the mercy (Lat. *clementia*) of the Emperor. Constantine's rebukes, as well as his patience, appear at *HE* 10. 5. 22, and for the likeness to Moses, see on 46 below.

**45. 2. those in Africa** That is, the Roman province of Africa whose capital was at Carthage.

**some evil demon.** Cf. II. 61 for the 'spirit of Envy' as a cause

of the dispute over Arius and IV. 41. I referring to Athanasius and the Melitians; at II. 65, as here, Constantine himself uses the imagery of madness and disease of Donatists, but ascribes the schism to persons of 'heedless frivolity'. Here they are described as resentful and perverse, stirred up by 'the evil demon'; their actions will stir up the Emperor's anger against them. Eusebius goes out of his way to play down the seriousness of the Donatist schism (against which Constantine's measures ultimately failed). That Constantine finally left irreconcilable Donatists to the judgement of God is confirmed by Optatus, *App.* 9 and 10 (Stevenson, *NE* 311-12).

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

**46.** Though Winkelmann sees a reference to the campaign against the Franks in summer 313 (*Pan. Lat.* 12 (9). 21. 5), this is more likely to be a very generalized statement of the panegyric theme of Constantine's piety (here to the Christian Church) and the universal *felicitas* and victory which it inevitably brought. *Pietas* (Gk. *eusebeia*) is an indispensable quality of the good ruler, easily adapted for Christian use (Liebeschuetz, *Continuity and Change*, 243); it is applied to Constantine in a pagan context e.g. at *Pan. Lat.* 7 (6). 20. However, there may be biblical touches here too, for instance in 'putting all barbarian nations under his feet' (cf. Ps. 8: 6, 18, 38 and 17: 39; cf. 1 Cor. 15: 27, Heb. 2: 7); Moses is also called *praos*, 'meek' or 'gentle', at Num. 12: 3 (see on 45. 1).

**47. 1. the second of those who had retired from power.** This is Maximian, the father of Maxentius, and the passage comes directly from *HE* 8. 13. 15, where it appears in the right chronological order, between the rise of Licinius (308) and Constantine's defeat of Maxentius (312). Here it is placed at the end of Constantine's measures in the west, which seem to follow on from the defeat of Maxentius; however, the context is clearly a general account of plots and conspiracies against Constantine (see below). There are two contemporary and pro-Constantinian versions of Maximian's end: *Pan. Lat.* 6 (7). 14-20 and Lactantius, *DMP* 29. 3-8. Lactantius tells the story in a highly coloured version: after the Conference of Carnuntum (probably November, 308; see Creed, *ad loc.*; Barnes, *NE* 5;

Drake, *In Praise of Constantine*, 19-20), Maximian had tried to trick Constantine, his son-in-law, into limiting the numbers of troops he took to Gaul and spread malicious stories about him, apparently in 310, but Constantine, hearing what was going on, returned and after successfully besieging Maximian at Marseilles, spared him; only after a further plot foiled by Fausta, Maximian's daughter and Constantine's wife, was he given the choice of the manner of his death, and hanged himself (see also on this account Moreau, 367-8).

**47. 2. others of the same family.** Possibly a reference to Fausta and Crispus, whose mysterious deaths in 326 are otherwise passed over in total silence, but more likely to Bassianus, the husband of Constantine's half-sister Anastasia, who was foiled in a plot with Licinian connections and killed in 315-16 (*Origo*, 14-15; see Barnes, *CE* 66-7); see also 50 below for the general idea.

**47. 2. supernatural signs.** Eusebius makes the most of the idea behind *HE* 10. 8. 7 'God exposing every deceit and sharp practice to the Godbeloved Emperor', and now claims a plethora of miraculous signs. The Moses typology is also present in the chapter: like Moses, Constantine is called God's 'servant' (47. 2 and 3), and Moses too had received direct revelation and had seen the Lord (Num. 12: 6-8, cf. Num. 12: 3 in 46, above). Constantine is credited now with frequent visions, clearly another generalization (see on 44. 1-2). He suffers plots from his relatives, as Moses did from Aaron and Miriam. Finally, Num. 12, the passage alluded to here, immediately precedes Moses's preparations for invading the land of Canaan, just as 47 precedes the beginning of the account of Constantine's campaign against Licinius (for all this see Hall, 'Eusebian Sources', 261-2).

**48. Decennalia celebrations**

**48. tenth anniversary of his accession.** Constantine early counted his *dies imperii* as 25 July 306, the day of his proclamation by the troops, though he did not formally receive the title Augustus until his marriage to Fausta around September 307 (*Pan. Lat.* 7 (6); see Barnes, *NE* 5, with nn.). His Decennalia thus fell in the year July 315 to July 316.

**sacrifices without fire and smoke.** The Christian liturgy was

known as 'the bloodless sacrifice', and Eusebius may mean here that Constantine authorized eucharistic offerings in celebration ('prayers of thanksgiving', *eucharistous eucharis*, and cf. the 'due rites' of 32. 3). More probably, Eusebius alludes to the general view held by philosophers, Jews, and Christians alike that sacrifice should be spiritual rather than physical (notably Porphyry, *De Abstinencia* 2. 24; see generally Frances M. Young, *The Use of Sacrificial Ideas in Greek Christian Writers from the New Testament to John Chrysostom* (Patristic Monograph Series, 51; Philadelphia, 1979)). So Constantine's prayers are without animal sacrifice, which had been opposed in Christianity from the start (see 1 Cor. 8). On Constantine and the prohibition of sacrifice see below on II. 45; IV. 23, 25.

#### 49–59. *The Crimes of Licinius*

I. 49–II. 19 recount the campaign against Licinius and his defeat. In the first part, the same ground is covered as in *HE* 10. 8–9, with similar variations and additions as in the previous section. *VC* I. 49. 1–50. 2 is marked by Winkelmann as being expanded from *HE* 10. 8. 2–6. In addition, however, the jubilation of ch. 48 picks up *HE* 10. 8. 1; the 'fierce beast' of 49. 1 recalls *HE* 10. 9. 3, but Eusebius has changed the application of the enemy corresponding to Maxentius (*HE* 8. 14) from Maximin to Licinius. At *HE* 10. 8–9 Licinius gets little space, since this is an addition at the final stage of revision; in the *VC* a much lengthier treatment is required, and space for Maximin is correspondingly reduced (I. 58–9). Contrast Lactantius, *DMP* 43. 1–2; 44. 10–2; 45–7; 49, where Licinius is still Constantine's ally, fighting in the name of the supreme God (46. 3, with his dream of an angel), and his victory over Maximin (313) balances Constantine's defeat of Maxentius. The blackening of Licinius, who in 313 was apparently as pro-Christian as Constantine, began early in order to justify Constantine's aggression against him, and the hasty job done on this by Eusebius in the *HE* is much enhanced in the *VC*. For the process, and for the difficulty inherent in reconstructing Licinius' genuine policies and legislation, see S. Corcoran, 'Hidden from History: The Legislation of Licinius', in Jill Harries and Ian Wood, eds., *The Theodosian Code* (London, 1993), 97–119; see also Fig. 6 (p. 225).

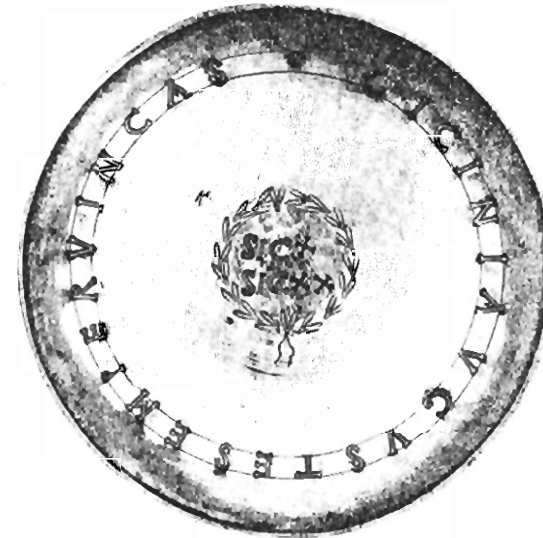


FIG. 6. Silver dish with inscription of Licinius. Trustees of the British Museum.

#### 49–50. *Breaking faith*

**49. 1. the whole Roman domain . . . left in two parts.** *HE* had envisaged the orderly division of the Empire as seen in 313, and was only very superficially revised after the defeat of Licinius in 324. At the end of the reign *LC* 1–3, esp. 3. 5–6, has set out a different idea, that of the superiority of monarchy over polyarchy, one Emperor on earth representing one God in heaven; and Eusebius is anxious in the *VC* that the sons of Constantine should maintain unity (above, on the introduction, esp. I. 3, 5). **night and day . . . darkness . . . brilliant daylight.** Light imagery is used of Constantine's generosity (43. 3) and of the true religion (II. 19. 1).

**49. 2. Envy, which hates good.** *HE* 10. 8. 2 has both Envy and the evil demon, which appears separately here at 49. 1; cf. 45. 2.

**49. 2. a connection by marriage.** Constantine's half-sister Constantia married Licinius at Milan in February 313 (Lact.,

**51. 2. episcopal ordinations.** At least three bishops must be present to ordain a new bishop (Nicene Canon 4, 325, reinforcing a long-standing rule; see *HE* 6. 43. 8).

**53.** Nothing else is known of these measures separating women from men in church contexts. The instruction of candidates for baptism was chiefly done by male clergy, and so would have been impeded.

**53. 2.** Open-air worship: the opposite policy from that adopted by Constantine's building programme. For Licinius' administration see Barnes, *CE* 69–72.

**54. 1.** The purging of the army of Christians is described at *HE* 10. 8. 10, though the order has been reversed, with the result that the prayers of the courtiers for the Emperor mentioned there are here ascribed to the soldiers. The 'demons' are the traditional gods. *ILS* 8940 shows troops being compelled to consecrate an annual statue of Sol (Barnes, *CE* 71). Overall in the *VC*, Eusebius gives the impression that the army was much more christianized than seems to have been the case, even considerably later in the fourth century.

#### 54. 2–55. *General policy and character*

**54. 2–56. 1.** *HE* 10. 8. 11–16 is effectively reproduced word for word, except that the rhetorical figure repeated at 10. 8. 11 and 12 ('unlawful laws') is omitted both times in the *VC* passage, while what *HE* says on land-taxes (10. 8. 12) is somewhat expanded so as to present a more circumstantial account of Licinius' greed, again a stock theme in relation to bad emperors (Constantine in turn is accused of greed by Zos. 2. 38 and by the Anon. *De Rebus Bellicis*, 2); for the theme in *VC* see I. 17; IV. 29–31. The fairness and clemency of Constantine is also contrasted with the cruelty of Licinius by Aurelius Victor, *Caes.* 41, and cf. Lact., *DMP* 50. Conversely, as part of the account of Constantine's liberality *VC* IV. 3 records that he instituted an investigation into unfair land-tax measurement (see also *ILS* 1240–2 for a *peraequator census Gallaciae*). At 54. 1 and 55. 1 Eusebius uses the rhetorical device of *praeteritio* (the claim to omit, while actually listing the charges), favoured in invective, whose rules generally were the inversion of the rules for panegyric. The allegations of

Licinius' bad character are a case of rhetorical expansion for similar effect. There is no other evidence for his laws on marriage and inheritance (55. 1–2); however, Constantine too was concerned about inheritance (IV. 26). The attack on churches and bishops (56) comes from *HE* 10. 8. 14, followed by *HE* 10. 8. 9 (56. 2).

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

**56. 1.** Winkelmann punctuates differently: '... and attacks the bishops; whoever he regarded as chiefly opposing him he also reckoned as hostile, the friends. . . .'

**56. 2.** This passage comes from *HE* 10. 8. 9, and forms a transition to 57–8, which interrupt the narrative and seem to contradict what Eusebius has already said at I. 23. But Eusebius' purpose is made clear in 58. 1 and 59. 1–2: unlike Constantine (I. 27), Licinius did not learn the lessons of experience. There may be an implied lesson here for the sons of Constantine. Eusebius does not attempt to address the recent example of the deaths of Dalmatius and Hannibalianus, but when the time came, these would have had to be explained in a similar manner.

**57–9. 2.** On Eusebius' accounts of the deaths of Galerius in 311 and of Maximin in 313, see Hall, 'Eusebian Material'. 58. 1–2 is based on *HE* 8. 14. 13–14 (the martyrs under Maximin), a chapter already used for I. 33–6 (Maxentius) and I. 47. 1 (Maximian); see too the parallel in *LC* 7. 7 (closer to *HE*). However, the emphasis here is less on the sufferings of the martyrs than on the cruelty of Maximin. Much is also taken closely from *HE* 8. 16. 3–4, 17. 1 (57) and from 9. 10. 2–15. 4 (58), though with some omissions for brevity; in his account of Maximin, Eusebius omits all that relates to the events of Maximin's hostilities with Licinius and his final defeat (see above on 28. 2 and 49), but this is likely to be done in order to gloss over the fact that Licinius' victory in 313 was seen by some as directly parallel to Constantine's defeat of Maxentius (so Lactantius, *DMP*, though apparently unknown to Eusebius); further, Eusebius wishes here to emphasize that, far from being on Licinius' side, he had been deliberately misled (II. 4. 2, 4. 2, 11. 2). There are some changes from the model

(*HE* 9. 10. 14) in 58. 4-59. 1 so as to enhance the lesson by making Maximin's illness more public. Maximin's admission of the truth of Christianity (59. 1) is important for the argument of the *VC* as a whole, as is the mention of the 'experience' of God's judgement, for which see also *I.* 23, 28; *II.* 11. 1; *III.* 55. 5, 58. 1; in contrast (59. 2), Licinius could have learnt, but did not, from the deaths of Galerius (which he had seen) or of Maximin (of which he knew). The concluding sentence brings back the narrative to Licinius and prepares us for Constantine's campaign against him. The whole passage heightens the folly and wickedness of Licinius, a religious and historical point which perhaps overrides Eusebius' general purpose of silence over the fate of the persecutors (23).

## BOOK II

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

*1. 1-2.* Eusebius' chief source is still *HE*. Winkelmann notes the similarity of phraseology at *1. 1* with *HE* 10. 8. 2, also on the deaths of the wicked; the next chapter, *HE* 10. 9. 5, is also to the point (*HE* 10. 9. 6 also at 19. 2 below).

*1. 1-2. wild beast, or a twisting snake.* For Licinius as a wild beast see *HE* 10. 9. 3; for the snake/serpent image, see on *III.* 3 below.

*1. 2-3. 2.* Derived from *HE* 10. 8. 14-9. 3, almost verbatim, and picking up the reference from the last use at *I.* 56. 1; the account of Licinius as persecutor, especially of bishops, which he had given nearly fifteen years before, serves Eusebius again for the same purpose. The changes are minor: Eusebius adds the name of Constantine at *1. 2* and *2. 1*, expands for clarity at *2. 2*, *4, 5* (but abbreviates at *2. 3*), makes minor changes at *2. 1*, but heightens the wording at *2. 2*, omits the summary of Constantine's victory at *HE* 10. 9. 1, but essentially repeats 9. 2-3. Eusebius carefully omits Crispus, who is mentioned at *HE* 10. 9. 4 as stretching out the right hand of salvation together with Constantine, and who still appears on coins as Caesar in 326 (*RIC* vii, Constantinople no. 6). Eusebius returns to *HE* 10. 9. 6

at 19. 2 below, in his account of Constantine's triumph; there is no use of *HE* in the intervening section.

*1. 2-2. 1. Amasea in Pontus.* There was a bishop at this town on the River Iris as early as 240. The events described here are not otherwise known. In *HE* 10. 8. 14-15 we read 'at Amasea and the other cities of Pontus', and the destruction and closure of church buildings are told as though affecting Pontus only. Here they are apparently told as referring to the whole eastern church. Thus the author of the ancient chapter headings divided before *2. 1*, and modern editors follow his interpretation of *VC* here. Departing from his account in *HE*, Eusebius generalizes, probably with no serious historical justification, by adding the words 'by the local officials' (*hegemones*, i.e. the governors in each district).

*2. 3.* Eusebius describes a persecution of which little is known. That there were banishments of prominent Christians is implied by Constantine's provisions in *II.* 30-2 below. Their loyalty might well be suspect as Constantine's army approached. But Licinius can hardly even have thought of requiring all citizens to worship the gods, in spite of what Eusebius says.

*3-5. Preparations for a war of religion*

*3. 1. he set out to the defence of the oppressed.* A blatant attempt to gloss over the fact that Constantine was the aggressor; Eusebius adopts Constantine's own estimate of his mission in attacking Licinius; see *II.* 28. 1-19.

*3. 2. the tokens of his hope in God.* This refers to the miraculous standard of *I.* 28-31. The manuscripts add 'by means of the aforementioned standard', deleted as a scribal gloss by editors.

*4-5.* Constantine's preparations for war are contrasted favourably with Licinius' resort to pagan diviners and oracles, reinforced by Licinius' exhortatory address to his men, reported at 5. 2-4. Unlike Constantine and his father Constantius, Licinius surrounds himself with false prophets who encourage him in his delusions. The passage picks up the theme of Licinius' blindness to true signs (see on *I.* 57-9. 2). For the resort of Constantine's



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### *Life of Constantine*

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