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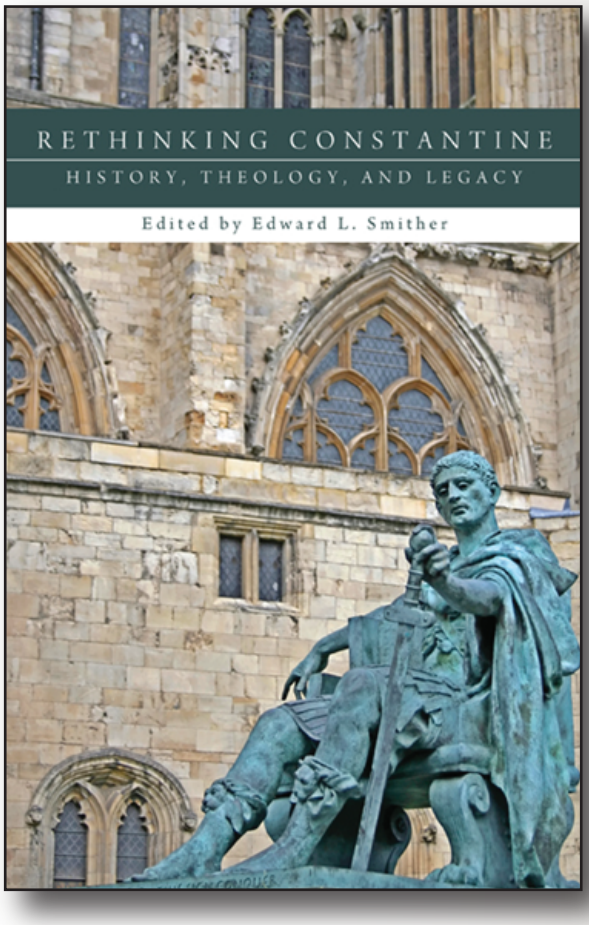
RETHINKING CONSTANTINE

HISTORY, THEOLOGY, AND LEGACY

Edited by Edward L. Smither

What happens to the church when the emperor becomes a Christian? Seventeen hundred years after Constantine's victory at Milvian Bridge, scholars and students of history continue to debate the life and impact of the Roman emperor who converted to faith in the Christian God and gave peace to the church. This book joins that conversation and examines afresh the historical sources that inform our picture of Constantine, the theological developments that occurred in the wake of his rise to power, and aspects of Constantine's legacy that have shaped church history.



"Like him or dislike him, one cannot ignore Constantine in Christianity. His legacy can be seen at every turn, from Sunday observance to law to ecclesiastical dress! These essays help us to come to terms with the scope of that legacy."

—Thomas O'Loughlin
University of Nottingham

"The early fourth-century Constantinian revolution had enormous consequences for the life and worship of the Christian Church—indeed, its far-reaching impact is still with us in a variety of ways. In recent days, both scholarly re-assessment of this revolution and popular fiction have brought Constantine to public notice once again, and this collection of essays provides an extremely helpful guide in taking stock of one of the great turning points in church history."

—Michael A.G. Haykin
The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary

"If we are going to assess Constantinianism rightly, we have to get Constantine right. The contributors go a long way toward accomplishing this task. In place of the caricatured Constantine of popular fiction and theology, this collection of essays presents a living, breathing Constantine, flawed and failing, but a genuine believer struggling to use his power in a way that would please the 'Supreme God' who had chosen him."

—Peter Leithart
New Saint Andrews College

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History, Theology, and Legacy

edited by
Edward L. Smither

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Contents

Abbreviations

ANF	*Ante-Nicene Fathers*
Anthol. Gr.	*Anthologia Graeca* (Greek Anthology)
App.	Optatus, *Appendices to De Schismate Donastistarum (Against the Donatists)*
Brev. Coll.	Augustine, *Breviculus conlationis cum Donatistis (Summary of the meeting with the Donatists)*
CCGTP	*Corpus Christianorum Thesaurus Patrum Graecorum*
CCSG	*Corpus Christianorum Series Graeca*
CCSL	*Corpus Christianorum Series Latina*
CSEL	*Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum*
CTh	*Codex Theodosianus*
Comm. in Is.	Eusebius, *Commentarius in Isaiam (Commentary on Isaiah)*
Cresc.	Augustine, *Contra Cresconium Donatistam (Against Cresconius the Donastist)*
DI	Lactantius, *Divinae institutiones (Divine Institutes)*
Ep.	*Epistulae (letters)* from various authors
FC	*Fathers of the Church*
GCS	*Die Griechischen Christlichen Schriftsteller*
HE	*Historia ecclesiastica (Ecclesiastical History)* from various authors (Eusebius, Philostorgius, Rufinus, Sozomenus, Theodoret, and Socrates)
HE gent. Angl	Bede, *Historiam ecclesiasticam gentis Anglorum (Ecclesiastical History of the English People)*
ID	Lactantius, *De Ira Dei (On the Anger of God)*
JECS	*Journal of Early Christian Studies*
JEH	*Journal of Ecclesiastical History*

Abbreviations

JTS	*Journal of Theological Studies*
LCL	*Loeb Classical Library*
MP	Lactantius, *De Mortibus persecutorum (On the Manner in which the Persecutors Died)*
NPNF	*Nicene Post-Nicene Fathers*
OD	Lactantius, *De Opificio Dei (On the Workmanship of God)*
Optatus	Optatus, *De Schismate Donastistarum (Against the Donatists)*
PG	*Patrologia Graeca*
PL	*Patrologiae Latinae*
Paneg. lat.	*Panegyric latini*
SC	*Sources Chrétiennes*
TDNT	*Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*
TU	*Texte und Untersuchungen*
VC	Eusebius, *Vita Constantini (The Life of Constantine)*
VCol.	Admomnan, *Vita Columbae (The Life of Columba)*
Vir. ill.	Jerome, *De Viris illustribus (Illustrious Men)*

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1

From Sinner to Saint?

Seeking a Consistent Constantine

Glenn L. Thompson

Seventeen hundred years after gaining control of the western Roman world, Constantine remains one of only a handful of Roman emperors whose name is still widely recognizable. This is due primarily to the new relationship that he formed between himself, the Christian church, and the empire and its legal system. Yet even some of the most basic aspects of that relationship are still hotly debated by scholars. This chapter presents a brief overview of the past several decades of Constantinian scholarship and then addresses several areas where history and theology converge and where consensus is still lacking. In particular, an Augustinian approach is used to examine the motives for and timing of Constantine's conversion and to evaluate his Christian "walk." The final section examines how both Christians and pagans[1] viewed the emperor in the years following his reign, and this serves as a further check on the earlier sections.

1. On the legitimacy of using *pagan* as a non-pejorative term for non-Christians in this period, see the recent masterly discussion of Cameron, *Last Pagans of Rome*, 14–32.

"Out of the Mist": The Current State of Constantinian Studies

In a typically trenchant overview of the state of Constantinian studies, Timothy Barnes writes that it was only with the publication of Lactantius in the late seventeenth century that "the historical Constantine . . . began to emerge from the mists of the emperor's own propaganda, of fourth-century polemic, of distortion by ecclesiastical historians and of sheer myth-making."[2] However, as Barnes himself shows in the pages that follow that statement, misreadings and misunderstandings in most of those areas have continued to prevent us from gaining an accurate picture of the so-called "first Christian emperor" right to the present. Yet, in the past several decades much solid groundwork has been laid for a more nuanced and accurate study of Constantine, even though a great divergence of interpretation remains on many key points.

Eusebius and Lactantius remain fundamental to our knowledge of Constantine and his relationship to the church, yet in the first half of the twentieth century it became almost axiomatic that due to their Christian partisanship, both played very loose with the facts. While it is still recognized that they, as all authors, at times slant or omit facts to fit their purpose, the charges of radical manipulation of their sources have now been shown to be totally unjustified. For Lactantius, Barnes notes that the 1958 article of Christian Habicht, following upon the commentary of Jacques Moreau and the numismatic studies of Patrick Bruuns, removed any final doubts as to the basic accuracy of *De Mortibus (On the Manner in which the Persecutors Died)*, written in 314/315.[3] The rehabilitation of Eusebius began at almost the same time with the 1954 publication of a papyrus letter of Constantine that confirmed the accuracy of that same letter as Eusebius had entered it into his *Vita Constantini (Life of Constantine)*.[4] In 1962, two works by F. Winkelmann dismantled the remaining objections to Eusebius' reliability.[5] As a result, the introduction and notes accompanying Cameron

2. Barnes, *Constantine: Dynasty,* 6–7; his entire review of the development of Constantinian studies (ibid., 6–26) is the best single introduction to the subject that I have seen, and the paragraphs that follow owe much to it.

3. Habicht, "Zur Geschichte"; Moreau, *Lactance*; and Bruun, *Constantinian Coinage*. See also Bruun's more extensive *Roman Imperial Coinage*.

4. Jones and Skeat, "Notes on the Genuineness of the Constantinian Documents."

5. Winkelmann, *Die Textbezeugung der Vita Constantini*; and Winkelmann, "Zur Geschichte."

and Hall's 1999 translation of Eusebius' *Vita Constantini* make it clear that, even if it was not written totally as a history but is also part encomium and part sympathetic biography (*bios*), the content must be taken seriously.[6] More thorough and nuanced research into the numismatic, legal, and epigraphic record for the period, together with Wilkinson's recent re-dating of Palladas' epigrams to the first half of the fourth century, have all refined our ability to use the rest of the extant source material more accurately.[7]

Barnes himself must be given pride of place in the narrative study of the Constantinian period. For the past forty years, he has churned out a constant stream of articles and books on the period, cataloging the movements of the emperors, pointing out faulty dates in the legal codes, and distinguishing different editions and revisions within the ancient literary texts—and castigating those with other views. Although it was only in 2011 that he produced a volume resembling a biography of Constantine, his previous articles, and especially his volumes on *Constantine and Eusebius* (1981) and *The New Empire of Diocletian and Constantine* (1982), have become essential reference tools for the period.[8]

Numerous other monographs and biographical studies have swollen the literature on the period during the past several decades. In 1972, Norman Baynes penned an influential biography of the emperor from a Byzantinist's point of view, and seven years later Ramsay MacMullen added a Roman historian's perspective. Five years later in 1984, the latter published *Christianizing the Roman Empire AD* 100–400, re-opening the debate on the rate and depth of Christianization before and during the fourth century.[9]

But it was with the turn of the millennium that monographs on the period became a growth industry. In 2000 alone, three important monographs appeared: Elizabeth DePalma Digeser used the rehabilitated Lactantius to argue that his program of tolerance was a strong influence on Constantine and his policies; Harold Drake's study emphasized how

6. Cameron and Hall, *Eusebius, Life of Constantine*, 30.

7. Wilkinson, "Palladas and the Age of Constantine." On Constantine's literary, legal, and epigraphic corpora, see respectively Silli, *Testi Costantiniani*; Dörries. *Das Selbstzeugnis Kaiser Konstantins*; and Gruenewald. *Constantinus Maximus Augustus*.

8. Barnes, *Constantine: Dynasty*. Many of his early articles have been collected in *From Eusebius to Augustine: Selected Papers 1982–1993*. He and Peter Brown must be given credit more than any others for the appearance in the past half century of Late Antiquity as a recognized period of academic study.

9. Baynes, *Constantine the Great and the Christian Church*; MacMullen, C*onstantine* and *Christianizing the Roman Empire*.

Constantine developed a nuanced working relationship with the hierarchy of Christian bishops that allowed them both to flourish; and John Curran's work traced how Constantine and his family were integral to the physical changes that turned the capital of the empire from a pagan to a Christian city.[10] Two additional studies in mid-decade re-examined Constantine's relationship to his new faith. R. Ross Holloway gleaned insights from his study of the memorial arches, basilicas and tombs in the capital, while Johannes Roldanus attempted to evaluate the ethical and theological implications of the emperor's conversion and its impact on church and empire.[11] Hans Polsander's 1996 biography came out in a second edition in 2004, while the following year, Charles Odahl's work on the emperor appeared.[12] Raymond Van Dam sought to take a more political approach in his 2007 monograph, *The Roman Revolution of Constantine*, downplaying Christianity as the central theme of his reign and seeing him rather, like his predecessors, focusing on legitimizing his rise to power, solidifying his rule internally and against the barbarians, and his dynastic preparations for his sons.[13]

As scholars approached the 1700th anniversary of the Milvian Bridge, attention refocused on Constantine's dream, conversion, and its aftermath. Charles Freeman sought to explain how the Roman Empire of the fourth century developed into a monotheistic state. Peter Leithart attempted to defend Constantine and the Christian state from modern theological attacks that view a Christian state as a fundamentally flawed concept, while the French historian Paul Veyne argued that only a fundamental religious experience could have caused Constantine to adopt the Christian cause and stay with it. Meanwhile, Van Dam sought to examine the Milvian Bridge incident itself and how its interpretation has been used throughout history, while Jonathan Bardill exhaustively studied iconographic issues in order to "achieve a better understanding of the emperor's philosophy and propaganda of rulership and its relationship to his changing public and private faith."[14]

10. Digeser, *Making of a Christian Empire*; Drake, *Constantine and the Bishops*; Curran, *Pagan City and Christian Capital*.

11. Holloway, *Constantine and Rome*; Roldanus, *Church in the Age of Constantine*.

12. Pohlsander, *The Emperor Constantine*; Odahl, *Constantine and the Christian Empire*.

13. Van Dam, *Roman Revolution*. For Barnes's critique, see "Was There a Constantinian Revolution?"

14. Freeman, *A.D. 381*; Leithart, *Defending Constantine*; Veyne, *When Our World*

These and other full-length monographs on Constantine and his period have been buttressed by hundreds of articles and shorter studies. The bottom line? Constantine's Christianity is now rarely questioned, and his relationship with the church is seen as more complicated and symbiotic than earlier. However, there is still no agreement as to when, why and how he became a Christian, or how his Christianity and his attitude towards the non-Christian segment of the empire changed or remained the same throughout his reign.

The Motivation and Timing of Constantine's Conversion

The discussions over Constantine's conversion have been muddied by a lack of clarity on what is meant by Constantine becoming a Christian. Secular historians have often assumed that it simply meant that the god of the Christians either had been added to or had risen to the top of the emperor's personal pantheon, or that, as the result of astute political calculation, he began publicly siding with the Christians. However, such definitions would not have been acceptable to the Christian church with which he now identified, or to its leadership—a church that clearly now accepted him as in some way one of themselves, or at least their most elevated supporter. Thus, it would be more useful to look at the church's own definitions of conversion and membership.

Then as now, conversion to Christianity presupposed an acquaintance with its most basic teachings and worldview. The more formal conversion process included three parts: 1) a spiritual and mental "turning away" from other gods and exclusive attachment to the creator God and his incarnate Son Jesus Christ as the one true God; 2) formal instruction in the new faith; and 3) public acceptance of the rule of faith, or creed, together with baptism. As with the case of Augustine, the turning away could be a process of months or years and was normally achieved through some type of repeated or on-going contact with Christians and their message. This was

Became Christian; Van Dam, *Remembering Constantine*; Bardill, *Constantine, Divine Emperor*, 1–2. Since Leithart wrote as an evangelical, his work has received much attention in evangelical circles. He is certainly right in seeking a more balanced approach to Constantine and many of his conclusions are correct; yet his analysis is not grounded in a direct and nuanced use of the primary source material, and his pre-conceived conclusions about Constantine and the Christian state will keep his work from having much impact in the more general field of late antique history.

then followed by a formal catechetical period that by this time lasted several weeks or months. The final stage, public confession of faith and baptism, took only hours and these two steps often occurred within minutes of each another. Such a pattern, however, does not seem to fit Constantine well at all.

There is some evidence that Constantine was exposed to Christian beliefs within his own family environment while growing up. Despite his later claims, however, it appears that his father was not a Christian (although he may have had sympathies for the faith and its adherents).[15] Constantine's serious commitment to the new faith did not begin until sometime after the time in 310 when he was said to have seen the god Apollo while performing sacrifices at a temple in southern Gaul.[16] Yet by the end of October 312, when he defeated the army of Maxentius under the banner of Christ, he was willing to publicly identify with this exclusivist minority religion. While the discussions over his continued use of solar imagery will continue, his personal and total commitment to the new faith was seen already at this juncture in both his snubbing of the traditional victory sacrifice to Jupiter Optimus Maximus on the Capitoline and in his immediate patronage of the local church of Rome and the wider church and its clergy. While he would leave the city of Rome within a few months to return only on the rarest of occasions, he never again left his new religion.

Paul Veyne, writing openly as a non-believer, has noted that Constantine's actions in late 312 have to be taken at face value. First, he cites J. B. Bury's classic statement: "It must never be forgotten that Constantine's revolution was perhaps the most audacious act ever committed by an autocrat in disregard and defiance of the vast majority of his subjects." Then he adds that Constantine's conversion "made it possible for him to take part in what he regarded as a supernatural epic, indeed to direct it himself and thus ensure the salvation of humanity." Shortly afterward he adds that "the major decisions that he took . . . were designed to prepare a Christian future

15. Alföldi (*Conversion of Constantine*, 6-7) notes that one of Constantius Chlorus's daughters was named Anastasia, showing Christianity had entered the family by then and that Constantine later said (Eusebius, *VC* 2.49 and 1.27) his father had called on the Redeemer for aid for much of his life.

16. *Paneg. lat.* 6(7).21.4–5; cf. the reconstruction of events by Woolf, "Seeing Apollo." Also, by re-evaluating Jerome's *Vir. ill.* 80, Digeser (*Making of a Christian Empire*, 135) and Barnes (*Constantine: Dynasty*, 177–78) argue that Lactantius began his tutorship of Crispus in 309/310 at Constantine's court in Trier. If so, he may have been a new source of Christian information and influence on the emperor as well at this very same time.

for the Roman world." Thus Veyne sees clearly that these are not the actions of a man who regards Christianity as "an 'ideology' to be inculcated in his subjects for political purposes."[17] His consistent support of Christianity and its organized church must be interpreted as the actions of a "true believer." Of this Constantine himself was sure, even if others may have yet doubted.

On this point, Christian interpreters should heartily agree with Veyne and they could use Augustine to add further substance to the argument. Too much ink has been spilt on Constantine's religious preferences and political motives. The discussion needs to be turned on its head. This would have been done for us if the author of *The Confessions* rather than Eusebius had written the emperor's *Vita*. We would then have an account of the emperor's early brushes with the Christian faith and teaching, his dalliances with Apollo, Sol, and Hercules, and, in particular, we would know more about how God had gradually reeled the emperor into his church. As it is, we do not know the details, but we can guess the process for Constantine may have been almost as lengthy as that for Augustine. And we do know the result. As the late French historian Yves Modéran put it, "It is clear that, from the Christian point of view, as of 312 Christ had chosen the Emperor."[18]

An interpretation that stresses the divine assault on Constantine and his eventual succumbing to it may be less historically satisfying, even if it is more accurate. But it is more theologically valid and it is the best explanation for the emperor's unwavering allegiance to his faith and his personal vocation within it. He knew that he had been sought and found, and, like St. Paul, he had then been given a purpose that even a young ambitious emperor could hardly have imagined earlier—not merely to re-unite and strengthen a fragmented empire, but to change the world forever. This is what gives his frequent allusions to his calling its unshakable foundation despite the setbacks he experienced in leading the church and empire towards its divinely-ordained future glory. It was his lack of theological depth and insight, not any lack of genuine commitment that led to any future failings as a Christian emperor. From a theological perspective then, Van Dam has set up a false dichotomy when he says "before Constantine was

17. Veyne, *When Our World Became Christian*, 2, 7–8.

18. "Il est clair que, du point de vue chrétien, le Christ avait choisi l'empereur dès 312." He continues: "Et on imagine mal, étant donné l'excellence des relations de l'Eglise avec Constantin dès ce moment, qu'elle ait répandu cette interprétation sans l'accord du pouvoir" (Modéran, *La conversion de Constantin*, 8).

a Christian emperor, he was a typical emperor."[19] Instead he was a Christian emperor faced with the same problems as previous emperors but now seeking to deal with them from a worldview that saw the advance of the Christian faith as essential to Rome's glorious future, and himself as the key player in God's plan.

An Emperor Living as a Christian

Already while lecturing on Romans in 1514–15, Martin Luther came to understand that while the Christian, despite his best intentions, continued to sin outwardly, through faith God still viewed him as righteous. From this he then concluded, "God is wonderful among his saints, for they are at the same time both just and unjust for him (*cui simul sunt iusti et iniusti*)."[20] Here is yet another place where Luther was indebted to his monastic order's illustrious namesake, the great bishop of Hippo. Augustine and Luther agreed that, if the Christian is truly *simul iustus et peccator* (*at the same time righteous and a sinner*, as this teaching came to be phrased)—a constant fight between the new man and the old—then the life of a Christian will not always look Christian. Even more so the life of a Christian emperor.

From the time of the Milvian Bridge, we see the emperor supporting the church and trying to live like a Christian, although he may well have been unsure what that meant in many practical aspects of his life, especially in his imperial duties. As mentioned earlier, he seemed to understand that as a Christian he could not lead his victory parade to the Temple of Jupiter for sacrifice.[21] He may not even have addressed the Senate in the Curia, since that would have involved offering incense to Victory on the altar found there. Instead, we find him within days donating a parcel of land to the Roman church on which a magnificent basilica would be erected

19. Van Dam, *Roman Revolution*, 11.

20. The Luther citations can be found in *Der Brief an die Römer*, WA 56:268-269.

21. Straub comments rightly "At the very moment of his conversion he was compelled to realize that from then on he was forced to respect the *lex propria Christianorum*, defined by Tertullian; he had to renounce, at least for his own person, pagan sacrifices if he really intended to remain sure of the protection of the powerful God who had rendered him his miraculous aid, or—in other words—if he was seriously interested in appearing to the Christians as worshipping their God. To make a sacrifice or to refuse to make it had been, of course, the official test of religious faith in the time of persecution" (Straub, "Constantine as ΚΟΙΝΟΣ ΕΠΙΣΚΟΠΟΣ," 41). See also Straub, "Konstantins Verzicht Auf Den Gang Zum Kapitol," 297–99.

at his own expense to serve the church in the city.[22] He also ordered the completion of the magnificent basilica in the Forum Romanum begun by Maxentius. But it is not a gigantic statue of a god that fills the apse, but rather a statue of himself, holding his new military standard equipped with a Christogram.[23] Thus his commitment to his new religion was put in plain sight for all to see, even while he portrayed himself as a larger-than-life emperor.

It is on these and other such actions that we should first and foremost judge his commitment to the new religion, not on what he did or did not do to the structure or practice of traditional Roman religion.[24] On that latter subject, he had to feel his way forward. As a new adherent to the faith, he would have sought the advice of Christian leaders or Christian confidents within the imperial entourage. The Roman bishop or his representatives would have been consulted in determining his benefactions and other activities in the capital in the last months of 312. It appears that by that time the Spanish bishop Ossius was already a member of his entourage, giving him advice on his dealings with the larger Christian church.[25] Perhaps he had already begun private instruction in the faith. But certainly from this time on, Ossius and others were used in this capacity wherever the emperor's travels took him. A more thorough chronological examination of his writings might well reveal traces of his theological development in the decade after 312. For instance, Alföldi has pointed out that as early as the Synod of Arles (314) he referred to himself as the *famulus Dei* (servant of God), a phrase used of Moses in the Septuagint (2 Chr. 1:3), and one that became a favorite of his.[26]

On the other hand, even his Christian advisors may at times have been unable to provide clear advice for him in practical matters. For never before had there been a Christian emperor. So the church as well as the emperor had to improvise in this new reality. As Straub put it, "*The Church was not prepared for a Christian emperor of the kind represented by Constantine*.

22. On the procedures involved, see Krautheimer, *Ecclesiastical Building Policy*, 520–25.

23. On the question of whether he was holding a cross, a Christogram, or some other Christian symbol (as Eusebius claimed in *HE* 9.9.11), see Curran, *Pagan City,* 78–79.

24. Already in late 312 or early 313, a mass of denarii and a few large medallions were minted in Trier showing Constantine with the new Christian monogram on his helmet (Alföldi, *Conversion of Constantine,* 41).

25. Eusebius, *HE* 10.6.2.

26. Alföldi, *Conversion of Constantine*, 33.

. . . Constantine, therefore, could not expect any special advice from the Church in regard to his imperial duty. Even when he wished to obtain the guarantee of the Christian God for the prosperity of the Roman Empire, he had to make use of the well-tried methods of traditional Roman policy."[27] While perhaps somewhat overstated, Straub must surely be correct that the emperor's own Christian advisors would have struggled to give the emperor advice in matters of state policy that involved religion. Yet his actions, benefactions, and decrees all indicate that he was attempting to show the church, and reassure its God, that he was a pious and committed believer. While we don't know God's opinion, all evidence from the church is that they accepted him as a "friend" of the church, an imperial "God-fearer" or proselyte of the gate, although probably not a formal catechumen. The Donatists also approached the emperor for a hearing, expecting that they would find a fair if not a sympathetic ear for their brand of Christian practice.

This brings up the question of his delayed baptism. Already a century earlier, Tertullian's writings clearly indicated that baptism was viewed by many as an initiation rite that cleansed a person from past sins, but not future ones. In fact, it made future sins even more difficult to erase! This made for a very real dilemma for a Christian emperor who knew that in the coming years his official duties would include taking part in battle, ordering executions, and overseeing justly a predominantly pagan population and governmental system.[28] It is perhaps this above all that led Constantine to delay his own baptism for twenty-five years. He must have felt the unnaturalness of this situation, for he clearly saw himself in some way as God's earthly representative over the secular Roman world in the same way as bishops were his spiritual representatives. This is the best way to understand his famous statement that he was κοινὸς ἐπίσκοπος, "a bishop common to all."[29] The description by Eusebius in the *Vita Constantini* is

27. Straub, "Constantine as ΚΟΙΝΟΣ ΕΠΙΣΚΟΠΟΣ," 46; emphasis his. Pagans must have been just as confused about how to interact with the new convert. Nixon and Rodgers (*In Praise*, 293), when discussing the imperial orator who was charged with delivering a panegyric for Constantine in 313, comment that he was "apparently a pagan who does not quite understand what Christianity requires, or perhaps does not quite approve." Van Dam (*Roman Revolution*, 10) comments that "the greatest challenge that the reign of Constantine posed, for both Christians and non-Christians, was simply imagining a Christian emperor."

28. In 313, for example, he had many prisoners executed after his victory over the Franks (cf. *Paneg. lat.* 12[9].23.3–4).

29. Eusebius uses the term κοινὸς ἐπίσκοπος ἐκ θεοῦ καθεσταμένος (*VC* 1.44.1) when

accurate when it says, "Just as if he were one sharing in the holy mysteries (οἷά τις μέταχος ἱερῶνν ὀργίων) of our religion, he would seclude himself daily at a certain hour in the innermost chambers of his palace, and there in solitary communion with his God, he would kneel in humble supplication and entreat the blessings of which he stood in need" (*VC* 4.22). Note well the "just as if." The unbaptized were not allowed to share in or even view the celebration of the sacrament, or to take full part in the worship of the Christian community. Eusebius is not solely serving as hagiographer when he points out that Constantine did still regularly kneel in prayer and worship within the imperial quarters. Straub misses the most important point when he interprets this passage as indicating that the emperor was making the palace into a new church. What Eusebius was most interested in communicating was that Constantine was being as Christian as possible in his devotional life, even though he had decided, due to his circumstances, to forego baptism and the public participation in church life that his baptism would have allowed.[30]

But, if he was trying so hard to be a good Christian, how could he have done some of the things he did. The acts most commonly cited are the execution in 326 of his firstborn son Crispus and the emperor's second wife Fausta. Crispus, born most likely about the turn of the century, was raised in close proximity to his father, and was tutored by the Christian Lactantius, perhaps as early as 310. In 324, Crispus distinguished himself with both an important naval victory and a leading role in the land battle of Chrysopolis, helping to seal the fate of Licinius and making his father sole emperor. However, within a score of months he was tried, condemned, and executed upon his father's orders. Soon after, Constantine's second wife Fausta was also put to death. The precise reasons for his actions have

describing how the emperor called church councils to deal with issues that were transregional, thus playing the part that the Roman bishop would later seek to fill as ἐπίσποπος τῶν ἐπισκόπων. Elsewhere, when speaking to bishops he calls himself ὁ συνθεράπων ὑμῶν (their "co-servant"). Dagron argues (*Emperor and Priest*, 135) that Eusebius stressed the "conception of the emperor as *quasi-bishop*" in order to exclude the "more radical conception . . . of the emperor as *bishop of bishops*."

30. On his deathbed, after deciding to be baptized, Constantine acknowledges that God could still restore him to health, if he so wished. If that would happen, he says, he could then finally be numbered among God's people and meet and join in their prayers (Eusebius, *VC* 4.63.3). Whether this reflects Constantine's actual words or thoughts, or just Eusebius' reconstruction of events, in either case it illustrates clearly that the church had not publicly made any imperial exceptions to their normal policy of membership or worship life.

been long debated without a satisfactory explanation. It really matters little whether it was caused by an incestuous relationship or a plot against the kingdom. For our purposes we need only note the parallel with King David. Supreme rulers who are also sincere men of faith at times succumb to impetuous and self-serving actions that belie their religious convictions. Does this invalidate their faith? Not if repentance follows. And Augustine and Luther would not even be surprised by such actions; after all, even a Christian emperor is *simul iustus et peccator*.

Eusebius does not attempt to whitewash the deeds in any way, but simply omits reference to them, although stories must have abounded among the populace—especially the pagan community. Nor do we have evidence that the Christian hierarchy either reprimanded or excused his actions. This is an area where one would welcome some additional scholarly musing. Perhaps this silence indicates that contemporary church leaders were just as baffled about what had happened as we are, but also were not quick to rush to judgment. Since the emperor had otherwise been acting in such a pious way, there must have been some good reason for these actions as well.[31]

Constantine's involvement at the Council of Nicaea should also not be over-interpreted. First of all, much is often made of the fact that he took the initiative to call together the council and set its agenda, at least in part. It is unlikely that he did this on his own initiative, but rather it would have been after consultation with, or even at the instigation of, his Christian advisors. The use of a council had already become the time-honored and formal method for addressing problems within the wider church. Since the days of Paul, Christians had been encouraged to settle their own disputes in-house, *not* in public by use of the Roman court system. However, what was to be done when such local arbitration failed? The natural solution was for an appeal to leaders in the regional church. When even that failed, the North African Donatists in 313 appealed their case directly to Constantine. While accepting their right to do so, the emperor decided against a governmental review of this religious case and instead directed the appeal trial to be conducted before well-known Christian leaders from outside the province—first at Rome, then at Arles.[32] In other words, he was merely

31. Stephenson (*Constantine*, 272) suggests the executions may have caused Ossius to leave court and return to Spain, but there is no evidence to support this beyond the chronology.

32. Straub notes that the proceedings were the equivalent of the Roman *cognitio* with the examining bishops serving as *iudices dati* ("Constantine as ΚΟΙΝΟΣ ΕΠΙΣΚΟΠΟΣ,"

following traditional Roman judicial procedure with a twist. A decade later problems in the Egyptian church had spread throughout the eastern Mediterranean, so Constantine used the same procedure, commanding the bishops from across the empire to gather and settle the issues through a sort of episcopal "senate."

The change of the original venue from Ancyra to Nicaea (site of an imperial summer residence) was surely so that the emperor could be present. He did give an opening speech. But since our knowledge of the actual proceedings is so sparse, we do not know for certain how much he spoke in the official sessions or whether he instead met with individual delegates to do some arm-twisting.[33] What does seem clear is that he did not have a vote. This was similar to his position in the Roman senate, where he could offer his own *relatio* on a subject and listen to individual responses, but it was the Senate, cowed as it surely was, which officially enacted all legislation.[34] So while he certainly made his presence felt, and while it was an innovation to have a non-clergyman addressing the group and present at its sessions, he probably viewed it as part of his duty as God's appointed κοινὸς ἐπίσκοπος, and we have no record that the bishops present found his presence offensive.

When the council had made its decisions, the emperor then saw it as his duty to use his position and authority to confirm and enforce them. They were, after all, legal rulings from the point of view that the emperor had called for this procedure and had overseen the judicial fairness of it. Thus, he enforced the exile of heretics. But note that he never of his own accord removed a bishop from office. When a few years later the Synod of Tyre removed Athanasius from office, Constantine was inclined to agree that this would help quiet things in the East. However, when Athanasius personally appealed, the emperor merely ordered him to Trier for further consultations without confirming or rejecting his dismissal. That was a

47). I am unconvinced that Roldanus is correct that Constantine wanted Miltiades of Rome to discuss this with a "small arbitration committee" and that the bishop "thwarted" his plan when he invited fifteen Italian bishops to participate and thus made it into a council (*Church in the Age of Constantine*, 39).

33. Eusebius exaggerates when saying that Constantine responded to each speaker (*VC* 3.13), although it is possible that the emperor took part in some of the formal sessions. As an example of what appears to be a more private conversation with a bishop at Nicaea, cf. the story preserved by Socrates (*HE* 2.17) of Constantine's conversation with Acesius where, after hearing of his separatist theology, the emperor retorted, "Place a ladder and climb alone into heaven!" (cited in Drake, "Constantine and Consensus," 1).

34. Straub, "Constantine as ΚΟΙΝΟΣ ΕΠΙΣΚΟΠΟΣ," 48–49, citing F. Dvornik.

matter for the church to work out, and he could only assist in their deliberations or confirm their decisions. Again, we see an emperor who is consistently seeking to carry out his office in accord with what he saw as proper Christian teaching and practice.

Thus, it seems clear that Constantine saw himself as a devout Christian from 312 to the end of his life. Yet, despite constant access to Christian advisors, some more competent and orthodox than others, he (as is normal for converts) only slowly absorbed a Christian worldview and the implications of that for his own life and vocation. He was certain that the Christian God had chosen him to rule and reunite the empire, as well as to further the Christian religion, but exactly how each of these was to be done on a day-to-day basis was often harder to determine. Christian scholars, who still often struggle with how to live their faith in an increasingly secular academy, should perhaps be kinder in their evaluation of how well Constantine succeeded in his "walk."

Van Dam thinks that "in the end Constantine seems to have concluded that perhaps Christianity was incompatible with emperorship. After his baptism he appeared like a typical initiate dressed in white" and that then "like Diocletian, Constantine seems to have abdicated . . . he had resolved the tension between Christianity and emperorship by giving up his imperial rule. Now he was just a baptized Christian."[35] Barnes more specifically has suggested that the emperor's ultimate plan was first to imitate Christ by being baptized in the Jordan, then to abdicate, and finally as a soldier of the cross to lead his army against the Sassanids and achieve the ultimate Christian status of martyr. He may well have thought his baptism would disqualify him from serving further as commander in chief with the judicial power to order executions.[36]

Let me briefly add that such a picture of Constantine might also influence how we view his rival Maxentius. It is common to emphasize the joy with which Constantine was received after his victory over the usurper at the Milvian Bridge. This situation may not have been so black and white. Why would a predominantly pagan populace think that Constantine, in some ways just as much a usurper,[37] would be an improvement, especially when he marched into town with his army displaying strange cultic symbols that seemed to be related to the recently persecuted Christian sect?

35. Van Dam, *Roman Revolution*, 357.

36. Barnes, *Constantine: Dynasty*, 166–67.

37. Humphries shows this in detail in his "From Usurper to Emperor."

This would have caused uncertainty among the general population and significant consternation among the still mostly-pagan elites.

On this issue we must beware of an uncritical acceptance of the sources. It is true that Maxentius had become more autocratic in his last years and had started to make more enemies among the upper classes. And it was not just the Christian Eusebius who blackened the defeated leader while praising the victor; a pagan orator did the same: "Your divine valor and its companion mercy . . . revived Rome when she was downcast and completely prostrate, restored her, raised her up . . . from the very jaws of fate . . ."[38] However, such rhetoric in a panegyric is not useful for historical analysis, and the overblown description of Maxentius' excesses by Eusebius seem suspicious. Maxentius, unlike most emperors of the time (including Constantine), spent nearly his entire reign in Rome, carried out an extensive public building program there, and helped revive the city's prestige. Maxentius "promoted an ideology in which he and Rome were inseparable." The coins produced by his mints at Rome "depicted him receiving the globe that symbolized universal rule directly from the goddess Roma."[39] While he probably did alienate many in the city, the picture of him as a totally cruel despot is probably a caricature.[40] On the other side, Van Dam notes that "Constantine never was truly admired by people in Rome, and left it in 326 in disgust."[41] If we view the newly converted Constantine as *simul iustus et peccator*, we might be less inclined to accept overly hagiographical accounts of his conduct, and how others viewed it, especially at the beginning of his reign when most Romans probably adopted a wait-and-see attitude.

An Emperor Becomes a Saint

The emperor Julian would later look back at Constantine as "a wicked innovator and tamperer with the time-hallowed laws and the sacred ethical traditions of our fathers."[42] Many within the Protestant church have

38. *Paneg. lat*. 4(10).3.3, from ca. 322. It is attributed to Nazarius and the translation is adapted from Nixon and Rodgers, *In Praise*, 345–46.

39. Van Dam, *Roman Revolution*, 45, 83.

40. Note David Alexander's comments in chapter 3 below on Maxentius's non-adversarial interactions with the Christian community in Rome.

41. Van Dam, *Roman Revolution*, 326.

42. "*[N]ovator turbatorque priscarum legum et moris antiquitus recepti*" (as quoted by Ammianus, 21.10.8; translation by Alföldi, *Conversion of Constantine*, 31.

basically agreed with Julian, although from their own Christian perspective. They speak of a "Constantinian fall" in which he ushered in a period of great outward growth in the church along with an equally dramatic a spiritual decline into superstition, sacramentalism, and caesaropapism. The Latin church came to have a much more positive view of the emperor, viewing him as a hero for ending the era of persecution and championing the faith. The Orthodox church goes even further, remembering him yet in their prayers as St. Constantine and referring to him in their liturgy as ἰσαπόστολος (equal to the apostles), effectively ranking him above many other fathers and doctors of the church![43] But how was he viewed by pagans and Christians in the fourth century?

As noted earlier, the church was just as surprised as the pagan world at the sudden presence of a Christian emperor in their midst. Van Dam is probably right when he says that "a Christian emperor was a seeming contradiction in terms since Christian leaders were expecting that Christ's 'heavenly and angelic empire' would succeed the Roman Empire, not replace it."[44] Yet by 325, many Christians would have agreed with Eusebius in seeing Constantine as a "heavenly angel of God," not just in appearance, but in calling.[45] According to Freeman, Eusebius developed "an ideology of Christian kingship" during Constantine's reign, seeing him as "God's viceregent on earth, mortal perhaps but enveloped in a supernatural aura as the result of the close friendship and support of his creator."[46]

The sources make it clear that Constantine saw himself as God's gift to the church, called of God to lead the church toward its destiny as the new imperial religion. He thus saw himself in the company of a very select group of historical figures who had been given such momentous callings. He was a new Moses, or a new St. Paul, for like them, he too had received a divine vision calling him to lead God's people out of bondage and to expand his kingdom in new directions.[47] Constantinople, with its Church of the Twelve Apostles, was to be a new Jerusalem as well as a new Rome. And

43. Jerome also referred to Origen as equal to the Apostles (see Rufinus, *Apologia* 1.22).

44. Van Dam, *Roman Revolution*, 10.

45. Eusebius, *VC* 3.10.3.

46. Freeman, *A.D. 381*, 13–14.

47. Eusebius compares him to Moses in *HE* 9.9.10-11 and *VC* 1.39. In Heb. 3:5, Moses is called a faithful θεράπων in the house of God. For an extensive study of this theme, see Rapp, "Imperial Ideology."

there Constantine was to be interred in the midst of memorials and relics of the Twelve—physically, historically, and spiritually an ἰσαπόστολος.[48]

At the time of his death in 337, the Roman world was still overwhelmingly pagan. That section of the population wished to bestow even more extravagant honors on the man who had reunited the splintered and beleaguered empire. In his pre-Christian days as tetrarch, Constantine had briefly identified himself with Hercules, just as the other tetrarchs had identified with Jupiter or Hercules, and had even been commemorated as "begotten of the gods and creators of gods."[49] The contemporary poet Palladas referred to Constantine in one of his epigrams as the "god-beloved man" if Wilkinson is correct.[50] Late in his reign, the Italian city of Hispellum requested permission to construct a temple in honor of the Constantinian dynasty.[51] And the abridged history of Eutropius ends its discussion

48. The structure and its purpose have been highly disputed. Was it to be seen as an imperial tomb, a martyrion, a Hellenistic heroön, or a church—or some combination of these? Was the placement of the emperor's body intended to garner the prayers of the apostles, indicate that he was a thirteenth apostle, or that he was even in some way equal to Christ? Eusebius is our only contemporary source of information. He several times calls it a temple or shrine (νεώς) while describing its construction (*VC* 58–59). He then goes on to say "All these things the Emperor dedicated to perpetuate for all mankind the memory of our Savior's Apostles. But he had another object also in mind when he built, which though secret at first was towards the end surmised by everybody. He had prepared the place there for the time when it would be needed on his decease, intending with supreme eagerness of faith that his own remains should after death partake in the invocation of the Apostles, so that even after his decease he might benefit from the worship which would be conducted there in honor of the Apostles. He therefore gave instructions for services to be held there, setting up a central altar" (*VC* 60.1–2; unless otherwise noted, all translations of *VC* are from Cameron and Hall). Thus, the debate rests on how accurately this reflects the actual intentions of Constantine rather than Eusebius' own interpretation. Wortley calls it a *heroön*, giving the erroneous impression that Eusebius referred to it as such (*Sacred Remains*, 352). See also Dagron, *Emperor and Priest*, 138–43; Bardill, *Constantine, Divine Emperor*, 267–76.

49. *Paneg. lat*. 11(3).2.4.

50. *Anthol. Gr.* 10.91; Wilkinson, "Palladus," 43–44.

51. Van Dam, *Roman Revolution*, 233–34, 249. The Hispellum incident is central to Van Dam's book and his entire reconstruction of Constantine's reign, but Barnes has argued convincingly that the appeal was directed to Constans, not his father (*Constantine*, 20–23). Van Dam more appropriately cites an Italian dedication to Constantine at Saepinum that must date between 313–315: "to the restorer of public liberty, begotten of the gods, our lord emperor Caesar, Flavius Valerius Constantine, pious, fortunate, unconquered Augustus, by decree of the town councilors" (*Restitutori | p[ublicae] libertatis | di[i]s genito d[omino] n[ostro] |imp[eratori] Caes[ari] Flavio | Val[erio] Constantino | pio felici inv[icto] Aug[usto] | d[ecreto] d[ecurionum]*); Van Dam's translation, 249, citing

by telling how his death was foretold by a comet and stating that "he was deservedly enrolled among the gods."[52] With ideas of this sort emanating from their pagan neighbors, Christian leaders may well have welcomed a Constantine that was merely "equal to the apostles."

Constantine himself confused the issue. When he erected a colossal statue of himself atop a porphyry column in his new capital, he had himself depicted as an emperor holding a spear and a globe. To many of the city's pagans, this surely looked indistinguishable from statues of other deified Hellenistic kings or Roman emperors of the past. Yet by Christians the image might have been seen as the ruler who had been given power by their God to restore the glory of the empire. Still others probably regarded it merely as yet another grandiose image of their majestic and egocentric emperor.[53] This confusion would have continued after his death. Was it really Christians or also pagans who, as we are told by both Philostorgius and Theodoret, left burning lamps and candles in front of the statue, and addressed to it prayers for healing?[54] Some of Constantine's coinage was also confusing, since solar imagery continued to be used until 319 at several mints, and even until 323 at Arles.[55] Other numismatic representations seem to depict him, just like earlier emperors, becoming *divus* and being taken into heaven, although Harrison has shown that the images chosen were not those most natural for portraying the emperor as either a god or

L'année épigraphique 1984 (1987) 94n367. Cf. Grünewald, *Constantinus Maximus Augustus*, 222n272.

52. *atque inter divos meruit referri* / ὁ μὲν οὖν συνηριθμήθη τοῖς θεοῖς (Eutropius, 10.8).

53. Barnes shows that there is no early mention of a radiate crown, and therefore the idea that Constantine depicted himself as Helios is misguided. Citing Bassett (*Urban Image,* 201-4), Barnes shows that the statue was in the form of a Hellenistic king or Roman emperor (*Constantine*, 23–25). Bardill, unconvinced, makes the case for it being a radiate statue, but rejects the claim that the radiate statue represented Sol/Helios. Rather it was "a statue of Constantine sporting certain attributes of Sol, not a statue of Constantine as Sol"; yet "Constantine shared in the divine light and divine power (*numen*) of his protective deity" (Bardill, *Constantine*, *Divine Emperor,* 109).

54. Philostorgius, *HE* 2.17, and Theodoret, *HE* 1.34.3.

55. Barnes, *Constantine: Dynasty*, 18, citing Bruun, "Disappearance of Sol," 28–37. Bardill concludes that "the solar attributes of the Father and the Son familiar from the scriptures were clearly thought sufficient to justify Constantine's continued use of the long-standing iconography of Sol," and goes so far as to posit that he may have continued its use hoping "to lead others from paganism to Christianity" (*Constantine*, *Divine Emperor,* 398).

a saint.[56] Still, the coins described by Eusebius that show him riding in a four-horse chariot with a hand stretching down to receive him, while probably meant to show the faithful servant being taken to heaven, could easily be interpreted as the deification of the emperor. Only a skilled theologian could be expected to distinguish between his ultimate *deosis* and a traditional imperial *apotheosis*.[57]

Christian writers of the time, however, were quite circumspect in their language. In his own panegyric of Constantine, delivered in 336 as part of the celebration of the emperor's thirty years in office, Eusebius was not only clear that Constantine had served as God's sole temporal representative on earth, but he also uses the analogy of the Logos' relation to the Father.[58] Yet, as Van Dam points out, "Even as he flattered the emperor by correlating him with the Logos, Eusebius clearly stressed that both the Logos and the emperor were subordinate to God the Father."[59] In the *Vita Constanini*, Eusebius simply calls the emperor "thrice-blessed" (τρισμακάρίος) for having reigned three decades and having three male heirs to succeed him. He was greater than any other emperor that could be remembered, "so God beloved and Thrice blessed, so truly pious and complete in happiness, that with utter ease he governed more nations than those before him, and kept his dominion unimpaired to the very end."[60]

Christian writers throughout the fourth century remained equally cautious in their language and attitudes. Several decades after his death, a complete rebuilding of the burial complex and church occurred under

56. Harrison, "Constantinian Portrait," 95–96.

57. On the coins, see Bardill, *Constantine, Divine Emperor,* 376–80. He concludes that "The title *divus* accorded to Constantine by his sons on the coins they minted to commemorate their father's ascent was, it would seem, not indicative of absolute divinity, but rather an honorary title meaning roughly 'of blessed memory'" (*Constantine, Divine Emperor,* 380). Cf. Straub, "Constantine as ΚΟΙΝΟΣ ΕΠΙΣΚΟΠΟΣ," 44–45. Is it possible that such imagery of Constantine contributed to the developing theology of *deosis* in the eastern church? The images on the coins may also have reflected the abilities of the individual mints, many still staffed by pagans, to carry out the wishes of the emperor.

58. So Van Dam, *Roman Revolution*, 291, citing Eusebius, *De laudibus Constantini*. At the end of chapter 1 Eusebius expounds on the pre-existent Logos, and then in chapter 2.2 makes the first of a number of such comparisons: "[T]hat Preserver of the universe orders these heavens and earth, and the celestial kingdom, consistently with his Father's will. Even so our emperor whom he loves, by bringing those whom he rules on earth to the only begotten Word and Savior renders them fit subjects of his kingdom."

59. Van Dam, *Roman Revolution*, 291.

60. Eusebius, *VC* 1.6.

the sponsorship of Constantius. Constantine's body was moved from its original burial site at the center of the memorials of the twelve apostles to an adjacent location where his successors were also then laid to rest. Two passages in Chrysostom describe the new situation: "In Constantinople those who wore crowns did not wish their own bodies to be buried near those of the apostles, but outside at the very threshold" and "his son thought he was bestowing great honor on Constantine the Great by burying him in the porch of the fisherman; for what gatekeepers are for kings in their palaces, that kings are at the tombs of the fishermen."[61] While Constantius indeed sponsored the rebuilding, the idea for the realignment must certainly have come from church leaders who were uncomfortable with Constantine occupying his original position. No emperor was either equal to the apostles or a thirteenth apostle; Christ alone was the central focus of the church. It was only much later that the emperor began being referred to as ἰσαπόστολος.[62]

Augustine held up Constantine as a model of a Christian emperor who loved God properly and was in turn rewarded with the gift of a long reign and sons to succeed him, but claims to sainthood are absent in his writing. In fact, the first direct references to him as "Saint Constantine" do not appear before the mid-seventh century when the Cypriot Leontius in his biography of Patriarch John of Alexandria ("the Almsgiver") speaks of Constantine as being "truly the holy one of God" (ὁ ὄντως ἅγιος τοῦ θεοῦ Κωνσταντῖνος).[63] Soon after, Anastasius of Sinai would write of "the blessed and holy Constantine" (ὁ μακάριος καὶ ἅγιος Κωνσταντίνος).[64]At some point, May 21 became the day when the eastern church remembered the emperor and his mother—οἱ ἅγιοι Κωνσταντίνος καὶ Ἑλένη οἱ Ἰσαπόστολοι. In the modern Orthodox liturgy, the *troparion*, the short verse chanted towards the close of the Vespers service to set the theme for the services of the

61. Chrysostom, *Contra Judaeos et gentiles quod Christus sit deus* 9 (*CPG* 4326; *PG* 48:825); *Homilies on I Cor.*, *Homily* 26 (on 1 Cor. 12:10, paragr. 5; *CPG* 4428; *PG* 61:582). Cf. Dagron, *Emperor and Priest*, 135–43.

62. Bardill (*Constantine*, *Divine Emperor,* 392n373), Pohlsander (*Emperor Constantine*, 92) and others say this began with Theodoret in the early fifth century, but the passage sometimes cited (*H.E.* 1.1) makes only a vague comparison, and, a search of the *TLG* would indicate that the Greek term ἰσαπόστολος was not used of Constantine for centuries to come. Its first consistent use may well have been in the liturgy.

63. Festugière and Rydén, *Léontios de Néapolis,* 389.

64. Munitiz and Richard, *Anastasii Sinaitae Questiones et Responsiones, Append.* 17.8.76.

coming day, includes the following: "He saw the image of the cross in the heavens and, like Paul, he did not receive his call from men, O Lord. Your apostle among rulers, the Emperor Constantine, was appointed by Your hand as ruler over the imperial city that he preserved in peace for many years, through the prayers of the Theotokos, O only lover of mankind." And the *kontakion*, read after the Gospels, says in part: "Today Constantine and his mother Helen reveal the precious cross, the weapon of the faithful against their enemies. For our sakes, it was shown to be a great sign and awesome in battle."

While these verses surely date to several centuries after our period, the inclusion of Helena as ἰσαπόστολος illustrates the already growing legend. Her discovery of the true cross is seen as being due to just as miraculous a heavenly vision as that which her son received. It is unclear to this writer whether the Orthodox Church came to believe that Constantine was no longer *simul iustus et peccator*, but had already become permanently *iustus* and thus *hagios* already at the time of his death. But there is no sign of this as a theological belief in the fourth or even fifth centuries. Modern historical and theological studies would benefit from viewing Constantine as those Christians did who were his near contemporaries—as *simul iustus et peccator*.