The Life and Legacy of Constantine

Traditions through the Ages

Edited by M. Shane Bjornlie

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The transformation from the classical period to the medieval has long been associated with the rise of Christianity. This association has deeply influenced the way that modern audiences imagine the separation of the classical world from its medieval and early modern successors. The role played in this transformation by Constantine as the first Christian ruler of the Roman Empire has also profoundly shaped the manner in which we frame Late Antiquity and successive periods as distinctively Christian. The modern demarcation of the post-classical period is often inseparable from the reign of Constantine.

The attention given to Constantine as a liminal figure in this historical transformation is understandable. Constantine's support of Christianity provided the religion with unprecedented public respectability and public expressions of that support opened previously unimagined channels of social, political and economic influence to Christians and non-Christians alike. The exact nature of Constantine's involvement or intervention has been the subject of continuous and densely argued debate. Interpretations of the motives and sincerity of his conversion to Christianity have characterized, with various results, explanations of everything from the religious culture of the late Roman state to the dynamics of ecclesiastical politics.

What receives less-frequent attention is the fact that our modern appreciation of Constantine as a pivotal historical figure is itself a direct result of the manner in which Constantine's memory was constructed by the human imagination over the course of centuries. This volume offers a series of snapshots of moments in that process from the fourth to the sixteenth century.

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For my father . . .
Salve sancta parens iterum; salvete, recepti
nequiquam cineres animaeque umbraeque paternae.
Non licuit finis Italos fataliaque arva
Nec tecum Ausonium, quicumque est, quaerere
Thybrim.

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Abbreviations

Calp. *Ecl.*	=	Calpurnius, *Eclogues*
CTh	=	*Theodosian Code*
Endelech. *DMB*	=	Endelechius, *De mortibus boum*
ELQ	=	Juvencus, *Evangeliorum Libri Quattuor*
Eus. *HE*	=	Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History*
Eus. *VC*	=	Eusebius, *Vita Constantini*
LCL	=	*Loeb Classical Library*
LP	=	Duchesne, L., ed. (1886–1955) *Le Liber Pontificalis*, vols. 1–3
MGH	=	*Monumenta Germaniae Historica*
Nemes. *Ecl.*	=	Nemesianus, *Eclogues*
Pan. Lat.	=	*Latin Panegyrics*
PL	=	*Patrologia Latina*
CCSL	=	*Corpus Christianorum Series Latina*
CSEL	=	*Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum*
EETS	=	*Early English Text Society*
Socrates *HE*	=	Socrates Scholasticus, *Ecclesiastical History*
SSCIM	=	*Settimane di Studio del Centro Italiano per il Medioevo*
Verg. *Ecl.*	=	Vergil, *Eclogues*
Verg. *Geo.*	=	Vergil, *Georgics*

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Introduction

Shane Bjornlie

We often associate the passage from the classical period to the post-classical with the rise of Christianity. Over the long centuries during which Christianity expanded from its Abrahamic origins in Mediterranean Judaism, its influence was impressed upon the urban landscape, political ceremonial, the orientation of the intellectual culture and artistic aesthetics, expressions of communal identity and personal piety, definitions for the family and the "marginal" in society and even the mental structures by which people thought about the past. As a result, the rise of Christianity has saturated the evidentiary fabric by which modern readers of the past construct the caesura between the classical world and its post-classical successors. The role played by Constantine as the first Christian emperor of the Roman Empire naturally has also profoundly shaped the manner in which we frame Late Antiquity and successive periods. Indeed, the modern demarcation of the post-classical period is often inseparable from the reign of Constantine. Survey studies of Late Antiquity and the Middle Ages typically commence with Constantine's reign (or that of Diocletian, as a means of foregrounding the "Constantinian revolution").

Of course, the attention given to Constantine as a liminal figure in a process of long-term historical transformation is understandable. Constantine's support of Christianity provided the new religion with unprecedented public respectability and public expressions of that support opened previously unimagined channels of social, political and economic influence to Christians and non-Christians alike. The exact nature of Constantine's involvement or intervention in fourth-century Christianity has been the subject of continuous and densely argued debate. Interpretations of the motives and nature of his conversion have colored, with various results, interpretations of everything from the religious culture of the late Roman state to the dynamics of ecclesiastical politics. These debates have become more refined over time, addressing precisely how Constantine understood Christianity as a religion and how he conceived of the role of religion in governing the state. What receives less-frequent attention is the fact that our modern assessment of Constantine as a pivotal historical figure is itself contingent on the manner in which Constantine's memory was constructed by the human imagination over the course of centuries. The modern fascination with Constantine is the legacy of the complicated and at times

contentious process by which the historical Constantine became the monumentalized "CONSTANTINE" so often appropriated by audiences for highly particular purposes, and at highly particular moments, beginning in Constantine's own lifetime and continuing through the centuries to humanists of the Renaissance and beyond.

In essence, understanding Constantine and his relationship to the religious, political and cultural history of post-classical Europe and the Mediterranean requires understanding many Constantines. One need only compare Constantine to his contemporary, Anthony of Egypt, in order to appreciate the complexity of reconstructing Constantine's legacy in European history. Constantine and Anthony each became representative of different expressions of authority: the one imperial and the other ascetic. Both became enormously influential as touchstones for the representation of particular ideals throughout Late Antiquity, the Middle Ages and the Renaissance. But where Anthony's place in the Christian imagination became more or less crystalized in the form given him in the famous *vita* by Athanasius of Alexandria, Constantine seems to have had more varied incarnations. Eusebius, of course, memorialized Constantine in a *vita* that would certainly have as much influence as the *Vita Antonii* of Athanasius, but Eusebius' writing was never successfully able to contain (or control) the memory of Constantine. Histories, literature, art and even polemic appropriated Constantine, more or less independently, across the centuries in ways that speak to the scope of his presence in the cultural imagination of Europe and the Mediterranean. For example, by the eighth century, Constantine was seen not only as the founder of a Christian Roman Empire, but on a much more local level, he was acknowledged as the (dubious) founder of a prominent monastery in southern Italy. The *Chronicon Vulturnense* recounts the charming story of how three Lombard ascetics founded what would become the famous monastery of San Vincenzo al Volturno by locating an oratory supposedly built by Constantine after experiencing a prophetic vision. According to the legend, Constantine was visited in a dream by three martyred saints (Stephen, Laurence and Vincent) while he napped in the idyllic mountains of Abruzzo, and these three directed him to build the oratory on the site that would become San Vincenzo. The ease with which Constantine was appropriated as the founding figure of a local monastery contrasts markedly with how fixed Anthony's legacy was in the pages of Athanasius's Egyptian desert.

Thus, understanding the legacy of Constantine requires the scholarly apparatus of a good many disciplines (art, history, literature, philosophy, religion), a wide lens of chronological perspectives and attention to meta-historical issues of interpretation. The present volume offers an exploratory foray into the range of contexts in which scholars encounter Constantine across the ages. As such, this volume may be considered a companion to the influential collection of essays published over twenty years ago by Paul Magdalino (*New Constantines: The Rhythm of Imperial Renewal in Byzantium, 4th—13th Centuries*; Ashgate, 1994), although with some noted departures. This volume provides much-needed attention to settings in which the memory of Constantine played

historical roles outside of Byzantium and its immediate orbit in the eastern Mediterranean. Consequently, the studies in this collection tend to focus on the many Constantines present in periods of the post-Roman West.

The chapters of this volume represent three broad, chronological categories: Constantine as actor and construct during his own lifetime, the reception of Constantine in early-medieval contexts from the fifth century to the Carolingian period and Constantine's representation and imported meaning in the high Middle Ages and Renaissance. The contribution of Raymond Van Dam sets the stage for many chapters in this volume by placing the *status quaestionum* in the context of scholarly methodology and pointing in some of the directions where scholarship might move next. Van Dam addresses the kinds of questions currently asked about Constantine and surveys the ability of the more important sources for supporting answers to those questions. Among other insights, Van Dam's elaboration of Constantine as a "Constantin imaginaire", a Constantine received and filtered by the expectations and intentions of an audience removed from the historical person of the emperor, serves as a starting point for the directions taken by many subsequent chapters in the volume.

The chapter by Christopher Chinn provides an example for the how a figment of an author's "imaginaire" moved from one generation to the next. In this case, Chinn begins with a particular representation of the Roman emperor in earlier imperial poetry (the trope of the emperor and the city in pastoral poetry) and follows its development in several sources for the "Age of Constantine": the panegyrical orations written in praise of Constantine and the early fourth-century poet Juvencus. Using the pastoral tradition, Chinn notes the sensitive tremors that develop as a classical tradition accommodates itself to the representation of the relationship of the emperor to the divine in a new, Christian context. With similar concerns about the relationship of Constantine to the "classical" and to Christianity, Elizabeth DePalma Digeser's chapter explores the religious formation of Constantine. With a highly sensitive reading of Lactantius, Digeser points out the differences of Constantine's understanding of Christianity (and religion more generally) to that of his famed biographer Eusebius of Caesarea. As Digeser illustrates quite well, Constantine's understanding of Christianity was deeply infused with platonic philosophical conceptions, including the Hermeticism of Alexandria. H.A. Drake rounds out the chapters dedicated to Constantine in his fourth-century context by questioning the intentionality of Constantine's involvement in matters of religion with an examination of two religious debates that subsequently shaped Constantine's profile as a Christian emperor: the Edict of Milan and the so-called Donatist controversy.

Kristina Sessa steps beyond Constantine's historical lifetime to the late fifth and early sixth centuries, when local communities were creating imagined Constantines. In this case, Sessa turns to the ecclesiastical community at Rome and the *Actus Silvestri*, an account of Constantine's conversion experience and his interaction with Pope Silvester. The *Actus* reveals how the local interests of the church at Rome fashioned a new image of Constantine's relationship to

episcopal authority. Sessa's tight focus on the re-imagined Constantine at Rome expands in the contribution of Shane Bjornlie, which surveys Constantine's representation across the sixth century. According to Bjornlie, the political polemic of imperial succession at Constantinople, charged as it was with the memory of Constantine, accounts at least in part for the wide range of Constantinian representations found in successor states of the western Mediterranean. Where Bjornlie's chapter maps the fragmentation of these representations in relation to their proximity to the political discourses of Constantinople, and hints at discomfort with the presumptions of an imperial Christian ideology, particularly in the West, Kenneth Baxter Wolf explores responses to the realization that the rise of Islam had imposed limits on the ideal of a Christian world empire. By examining three apocalyptic sources in their seventh-century context, Wolf is able to elaborate how Christians could transform the geopolitical failures of Christian Roman Empire into an apocalyptic vision centered on the promise of a "Constantine reborn". As with manifestations of Constantine in the sixth century, Wolf finds that Constantine's deployment into an imagined future, in each case, bears witness to the legacy of many Constantines, with Constantine having a different face in each apocalyptic text. Judson Emerick rounds out Constantine in the early Middle Ages by considering the capital invested in the idea of Constantine at Charlemagne's court. By elaborating on the considerable attachment that Charlemagne's court had to affairs in Constantinople, Emerick is able to illustrate the ways in which Charlemagne's court managed the diplomatic tensions inherent in claiming to be a "new Constantine".

Where Emerick reminds that the reception of Constantine's legacy in the early Middle Ages could be filtered by antagonistic relations with the Byzantine Empire, Brenda Schildgen demonstrates how the Constantinian legend could serve as a touchstone for contesting papal authority in the high Middle Ages. As Schildgen notes in her detailed assessment of Dante's engagement with Constantine, Dante's rejection of the premises of the so-called Donation of Constantine represents but one strand of a continuum of skepticism concerning the secular authority of the church that extended from Bernard of Clairvaux and prefigures Lorenzo Valla's critical humanist approach to the Donation in the fifteenth century. In a study with parallels to that of Schildgen, Jennifer Jahner unravels the metaphoric imagination of fourteenth-century England, which fixated on Constantine and his (in)famous Donation as the embodiment of the late-medieval discomfort with the pairing of church and state. In the theological polemic of John Wyclif, Jahner identifies how the idea of Constantine's relationship to the Church had become a figure for the moral dimensions of wealth in Christian ethical thought. Gerhard Jaritz similarly treats Constantine in the high Middle Ages, but widens the lens to include religious and secular visual representations from thirteenth- through sixteenth-century Italy and eastern Europe. The chapter surveys the distinctive variety of many faces worn by Constantine in the imaginations of the medieval audience: saint, ideal ruler, factotum of papal authority. Despite the central significance of Constantine in many kinds of narratives, Jaritz reminds that in the high Middle Ages,

Constantine was often a marginalized and incidental figure in the narratives of actors that could be more immediate in the medieval imagination. Context always determined Constantine's relative importance, as George Gorse notes in the final chapter on the associations Constantine had in the sculptural and architectural programs of sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Rome. In the face of the rising secular power of the commune of Rome, Constantine nonetheless served as a champion in the reconfiguration of urban authority that both the papacy and secular rulers such as Hapsburg Charles V attempted to impose on the city. As Gorse demonstrates, *Renovatio Romae* was everywhere sensitive to humanist contrasts between classical and papal Rome, and to Constantine's place in those contrasts.

The Life and Legacy of Constantine: Traditions through the Ages had its inception at a symposium dedicated to the interdisciplinarity of classics and medieval studies, held at the Claremont Colleges in Los Angeles (February 2013). That conference, organized by Shane Bjornlie of Claremont McKenna College and Kenneth Baxter Wolf of Pomona College, brought together for two delightful days scholars from a wide range of disciplines to present papers and to discuss the formation of traditions for thinking about Constantine and the impact of those traditions on different historical settings. That symposium itself served as a "Constantin imaginaire", as an imaginary construct drawn from venerable tradition and brought to life in a new context. The Claremont Colleges have maintained a steady and vigorous engagement with medieval history under the aegis of the Claremont Consortium for Medieval and Early Modern Studies, an entity that has flourished for more than two decades under the tireless guidance of Nancy van Deusen of the Claremont Graduate University. In 2013, medieval studies at the Claremont Colleges adopted a broader vision for the study of the classical and medieval worlds in the form of LAMS (Late Antique and Medieval Studies), for which the Constantine symposium served as an inaugural event. This volume is a tribute both to Nancy van Deusen and her diligent stewardship of pre-modern studies at the Claremont Colleges and to the commitment of Claremont College's faculty to a future of engagement in the classical and post-classical in many new, imaginative and memorable contexts.

1 Imagining Constantine, then and now

Raymond Van Dam

The recent celebration of 1,700th anniversaries of important events in the reign of Constantine has produced a remarkable series of conference proceedings, as well as numerous books and articles. At the same time, however, this surge in studies of Constantine has not yet generated a corresponding upsurge in more theoretical and methodological studies of how we might study Constantine. Much of the scholarship on the emperor continues to emerge from perspectives of long standing. One is piety, which emphasizes Constantine's impact as the first Christian emperor and his promotion of Christianity in the Roman world. Another is psychology, which focuses on the connection between the emperor's private intentions and his public initiatives, often in the guise of biographies. Psychology and piety are closed linked, because typically one goal of such studies is to pinpoint the moment of the emperor's conversion to Christianity, or to measure the strength of his personal religious convictions.[1] Another prominent impetus is positivism, which can be defined as a fascination with recovering true facts and correct data about the historical Constantine on the basis of critical readings of the ancient sources. Positivism has long been a mainstay of classical studies, and as more scholars trained as classicists have become interested in late-antique studies, positivism has spilled over from early antiquity to Late Antiquity.

One consequence of these traditional approaches to interpreting Constantine is a rather strict characterization of the information about the emperor and his reign. Constantinian studies typically distinguish among ancient sources, later traditions, and modern scholarship. "Sources" include the more-or-less contemporary written texts, inscriptions, coins, monuments, statues, and objects that provide supposedly reliable evidence about the historical Constantine. "Traditions" refer to the literary texts and works of art, usually from later eras, that retailed legends and folklore about a mythical Constantine. These texts described what Alexander Kazhdan called "Constantin imaginaire," the imagined Constantine.[2] "Scholarship" is what we modern scholars are doing now.

More recently some scholarship has begun to challenge these conventional distinctions by reevaluating writings about early Christianity as literary texts first: for instance, the writings of Eusebius of Caesarea.[3] Marie Verdoner has highlighted Eusebius' skill in constructing his narrative of the history of the

early church. In her perspective, Eusebius was already a postmodern historian, "successful in creating a historical reality by narrating it." The literary artifices of his narrative have subsequently become the evidence for modern accounts of early Christianity. "The narrated world of *historia ecclesiastica* has thus long influenced a basic master narrative about the reality of the early Christian church."[4] Jeremy Schott has analyzed Eusebius' oration commemorating the dedication of a new church at Tyre, which had been rebuilt after the proclamation of religious toleration in 313. Even as Eusebius described the appearance of the church, he interpreted it as the fulfillment of biblical prophecies and a representation of the triumph of Christianity. According to Schott, the church was the equivalent of a "text," a site for the production of multiple meanings.[5]

These analyses emphasize the ancient authors' literary and rhetorical techniques, as well as their specific agendas. They also imply that similar analyses should be deployed for reading the texts about Constantine. Ancient authors, even contemporaries and participants, were not recording forensic descriptions that they intended for us to use merely as sources of data about Constantine. Instead, they were responding to and trying to manage their own specific concerns. According to these literary and rhetorical analyses, ancient texts are more useful for studying the contemporary circumstances of the ancient authors, rather than for retrieving the past circumstances of their nominal subjects. Writing about the past was a presentist dialogue. If an author such as Eusebius "created" early church history in his narrative, then most likely he did the same for his history of Constantine. From this viewpoint Constantine, or perhaps we should say "Constantine," was essentially a literary construct, a rhetorical trope, and a medium for communicating the authors' own agendas.

Two important contemporary authors who discussed Constantine were Eusebius, bishop of Caesarea in Palestine, and Lactantius, a rhetorician who taught one of the emperor's sons at Trier. As learned intellectuals they deployed literary and rhetorical techniques in their texts, and they certainly had their own agendas. But modern studies of *their* techniques and motives for writing should imply a complementary awareness of *our* techniques for reading and writing. How are we to read their texts as our sources? How do we transform their texts about Constantine into our scholarship about the emperor? Somewhat paradoxically, one response to these questions about sources and scholarship is to highlight the emergence of the later traditions, the intervening legends and myths, about Constantine. What both ancient authors were doing in their texts and we modern scholars continue to do in our books and articles is similar to the construction of traditions. Sources, traditions, and scholarship are all forms of representation, of imagining Constantine.

Traditions

Sources and scholarship are obviously linked. This close connection ensures the enduring revival of positivism in historical studies. Positivism, sometimes in the guise of empiricism or higher criticism or Wissenschaft, aims for the

reconstruction of what actually happened in the past. Its primary method is criticism of sources, that is, close readings of texts and objects, which in turn can determine, it asserts, reliable evidence and true facts.

Positivism is having a dampening effect on Constantinian studies, for several reasons. One is its fixation on "facts." An insistence on accuracy and an overtly critical stance are some of the constructive benefits of the positivist mindset. But that concern about accuracy and criticism is not exclusive to a positivist approach; presumably all scholars, whatever their interpretive perspectives, want their research to be accurate and critical. Positivism, however, goes beyond accuracy with its claims to exclusive truth. Positivism highlights truths and falsehoods in ancient texts; as a result, it promotes an outcome of certainty and finality, as if it were possible to produce a singularly correct master narrative of events.

Claims about exclusive truth and singular narratives have had detrimental outcomes. Positivistic scholarship becomes inflexible, unchanging, and repetitious. Positivistic scholarship becomes malicious, with intellectual disagreements too readily transformed into personal attacks on other scholars. This sort of dogmatic scholarship resembles nothing so much as the great theological controversies of Late Antiquity among feuding churchmen and emperors. In those controversies too mean-spirited invective often substituted for genuine intellectual arguments.[6] Perhaps the most damaging outcome is to divert attention from the larger historical trends and developments of the Constantinian era. Those great transformations include the changing relationship between politics and religion (but not just Christianity); new ideas about the extent of the Roman Empire, including the emergence of both the reality and the concept of an eastern Greek empire; the roles of Greek and Latin in shaping culture and religion; and new attitudes about leadership and community, from emperors and bishops to monks and philosophers. Positivistic scholarship is myopic. It is easy to lose sight of the larger ecosystem when only whacking at the weeds.

Another reason positivism is hampering Constantinian studies is its suspicion of theory. With its claims to be scientific and objective, contemporary positivism is a throwback to nineteenth-century historiography. Its patron saints include the distinguished historians Leopold von Ranke and J. B. Bury. In 1903, in his inaugural lecture as professor of modern history at the University of Cambridge, Bury quoted, with strong approval, Ranke's claim to have narrated only what actually happened. Bury furthermore insisted that "history is a science" and criticized the association of history with literature, which was "a sort of vague cloud."[7] In Bury's era the assimilation of history and science seemed both attainable and desirable. Science was still dominated by the Newtonian physics of cause and effect and the Darwinian biology of the survival of the fittest. Historians of antiquity looked for similar sorts of explanations, for instance, by highlighting the impact of great men such as prominent emperors, or by explaining the success of Christianity in terms of its intrinsic attributes. Since then science has changed radically. Now the dominant paradigms are the physics of relativity, the mathematics of probabilities, and the biology

of contingencies. At the beginning of the twenty-first century, the historical enterprise struggles to catch up with the epistemological implications of the scientific revolution of the twentieth century.

These paradigm shifts have exposed again the shaky foundations of neo-positivism in Constantinian studies. Positivism is simultaneously hyper-critical and hyper-credulous, because it can only critique one source by assuming the reliability of another source as a controlling criterion of truthfulness.[8] In its search for truth in the historical past, positivism becomes ahistorical, first by appealing to transcendent standards of objectivity that are outside historical events, and then by failing to acknowledge that the same critique should be applied to modern scholarship, too. A pointed suspicion of ancient texts ought to raise similar questions about the objectivity and truth of any modern narratives.

These days the so-called cultural turn or literary turn or rhetorical turn dominates historical studies. This perspective would approach ancient texts as unique attempts to find understanding and construct meanings. Rather than castigating ancient texts for being tendentious, disingenuous, or false, this approach would highlight the intentions of the ancient authors and/or the reactions of ancient readers. In the case of texts and monuments concerning Constantine, the authors (or artists or builders) did not *mis*represent the emperor; instead, they deliberately represented him in a particular way that happened to correspond to and support their own agendas. Likewise, the readers (or spectators or listeners) brought their own agendas in order to understand the texts, monuments, and images. Authors' intentions and readers' reactions did not always coincide. The proper way for us to evaluate and use the ancient texts and images is by assessing the multiple meanings of texts and images both at specific moments and over time.

Texts and monuments conjured up different meanings already at their moment of composition; they invoked even more meanings over the centuries that separate them from us. Many effective interpretive perspectives are available for examining these differences and changes in meaning. Reception theory and memory studies provide general umbrella overviews emphasizing changes in meaning over time. Intertextuality focuses on the citations of and allusions to earlier texts and monuments that allow readers and viewers to expand the significance of later texts and monuments. Narratology highlights the construction of narratives and, in particular, the use of historical actors as envisioned characters in both contemporary and later accounts. The study of orality examines the wonderful pliability inherent in the transmission of oral traditions. All of these approaches emphasize the construction of the past by ancient and medieval authors and their readers over the centuries, including us modern scholars. All of these approaches also challenge, even undermine, the positivist enterprise.

Modern studies of the later traditions and legends about Constantine are much more attuned to the great potential of these interpretive perspectives. Over the centuries some episodes of the emperor's reign have been repeatedly rewritten. Constantine's vision before his victory at Rome and his subsequent

visits to the old capital, for instance, have been especially susceptible to revision in order to correlate better with later events and trends. In the Byzantine Empire some authors appropriated the story of the emperor's vision of a cross in the sky and located it instead before a battle outside Byzantium, the city that would become Constantinople and replace Rome as imperial capital. In medieval Europe the bishops of Rome claimed authority over secular rulers by claiming to have received a donation of secular power directly from Constantine. Modern studies consistently talk about the Constantine presented in these medieval and Byzantine traditions as a model, an image, a representation, an imagined emperor.[9]

Scholarly research on the "sources" for the historical Constantine should follow the lead of this research on traditions about legendary Constantines. Already in contemporary accounts authors were shaping images of the emperor by alluding to classical traditions, and they were transforming the emperor into a constructed character. In stories transmitted orally, memories were constantly changing. The "reception" of Constantine had started immediately, already during his lifetime.

Sources

Recent conferences held in 2012 and 2013 celebrated Constantine's campaign into Italy, his victory outside Rome in October 312, and his stay at Rome until early 313. These events are uncommonly well documented in ancient literary accounts and artistic representations. This documentation includes a panegyric delivered at Trier in late 313, the sculpted relief panels on the arch of Constantine dedicated at Rome in 315, the images and legends on contemporary coins, and a panegyric delivered at Rome in 321.[10] The most important literary accounts are in Lactantius' apologetic pamphlet about the emperors who were hostile to or supportive of Christianity, Eusebius' *Ecclesiastical History* and *Life of Constantine*, and the stories told by Constantine himself and recorded by Eusebius.

Over the centuries the conventional interpretive stances, whether positivistic, pietistic, or psychological, have encouraged scholars to excavate these ancient accounts for their precious details. These ancient accounts can also, however, be used to illustrate modern interpretive approaches. Lactantius used overtly literary techniques such as a dialogue and parallelism, and he inserted intertextual allusions to the poems of Virgil. Even as Eusebius seemed to ground his narrative by using sources, he also destabilized it by repeatedly rewriting new versions and by quoting his own earlier accounts in new contexts. Constantine may have been the only participant to have his own stories recorded, but he never told those stories until over a decade after the events, and perhaps well over two decades later. Lactantius was allusive, Eusebius constantly rewrote, and Constantine was a latecomer. Their accounts can be used to illustrate briefly the advantages of an awareness of different interpretive methods for Constantinian studies.

Lactantius

Lactantius composed his treatise entitled *Deaths of the Persecutors* after late summer of 314, perhaps in 315, and certainly before the summer of 316. His whereabouts at the time of writing are less certain. In the early fourth century Lactantius was teaching as a Latin rhetorician at Nicomedia in Bithynia. In 303 the emperor Diocletian issued an edict at Nicomedia that imposed penalties on Christians. Lactantius subsequently left Nicomedia to become a tutor for Constantine's son, Crispus, in Gaul, most likely at Trier. The most likely possibility is that he had moved to the Rhine frontier already before 312, and subsequently wrote his treatise at Trier. Another possibility is that he returned to Nicomedia after the publication in 313 of the accord between Constantine and the emperor Licinius that extended toleration to Christians. Yet another possibility is that he remained at Nicomedia until the outbreak of civil war between Constantine and Licinius in 316 and then moved to Gaul. In these latter two scenarios he would have written his treatise at Nicomedia.[11]

The question of location cannot be resolved with certainty. Nor can the question of the identity of his sources for *Deaths*.[12] But whatever his sources, it is certain that Lactantius shaped his information according to his own agenda.

Lactantius had already composed a long book about Christian philosophy. In his *Divine Institutes* he had provided an extended defense of Christianity against the attacks of recent critics. His account in *Deaths* seemed to provide additional proof. In *Institutes* he had promoted Christian virtues and criticized the emperors who were persecuting Christians; in *Deaths* he described the gruesome fates of those persecuting emperors. His *Deaths* was hence another apology for Christianity, but also an appreciation of the emperors Constantine and Licinius, who had supported Christianity.

Lactantius nevertheless wrapped that Christian agenda in a distinctively rhetorical format that included the deployment of literary devices and narrative techniques. Those literary qualities might seem to undermine the historical information. Lactantius set up one episode, for instance, around an extended dialogue between two emperors. In March 305 Galerius arrived at Nicomedia to discuss plans for succession with Diocletian, who had recently been very ill. Initially Lactantius reported their conversation; then his account turned into a back-and-forth dialogue that included snide remarks about possible successors. "He is not worthy!" Galerius said about Maxentius, his son-in-law. "He is a drunken intoxicated buffoon!" Diocletian said about the military officer Severus.[13]

This dialogue has been difficult for modern historians to accommodate as a source of information.[14] On the one hand it might imply that Lactantius had had access to confidential deliberations in the palace, and that therefore his other political observations were equally well-informed. On the other hand it is dismissed as tendentious. A more productive approach would try to match the message with the medium. In order to expose hidden realities, Lactantius was willing to transgress the boundaries of bland reporting of events. Perhaps a better characterization of his narrative mode might be "magical realism," defined

as the combination of irreconcilable elements in order to offer a deeper understanding of reality. The imaginary took priority over accuracy. This dialogue allowed Lactantius to divulge the hidden mystery of court politics, but without claiming any actual knowledge of the emperors' comments. In this case, the underlying "truth" of imperial intrigues was in a fictional dialogue, not in the surface narrative of events.[15]

Lactantius' comments about Constantine were no less stylized (or, we might say, no less "magical"). One rhetorical device is the parallelism he established between Constantine and Licinius. Of these two emperors who supported Christianity, we tend to focus on the role of Constantine. In Lactantius' *Deaths*, however, the featured champion of Christianity was not Constantine; instead, Licinius played the climatic role. Lactantius' account of Licinius' victory over Maximinus in 313 was about four times longer than his account of Constantine's victory over Maxentius in 312. Licinius' victory was also more consequential for Christianity. Maxentius may have been disrespectful toward other emperors, but Lactantius did not associate him with persecution of Christians. In contrast, Maximinus, who had revived persecution in his eastern provinces, was an "adversary of God." Before the final battle Licinius received a vision of an "angel of God," and he composed a prayer for his troops. Licinius and Constantine may have jointly agreed upon a proclamation of religious toleration, but Lactantius located the publication of that proclamation in the context of Licinius' victory.[16]

At the conclusion of *Deaths* Lactantius claimed that he had recorded these events "just as they happened."[17] Our acceptance of Lactantius' account as a source implies some consent to that claim. But if so, then we should downplay the significance of Constantine in 312 and 313. In Lactantius' narrative Constantine was largely a warm-up act for Licinius, and his victory at Rome over a non-persecuting rival was a pale prelude to Licinius' subsequent victory over the last persecuting emperor. In a treatise about the miserable deaths of persecutors, Constantine's victory had little to contribute. The parallelism between the two emperors worked to Licinius' advantage, in which the underlying "truth" about the restoration of Christianity emphasized Licinius' contribution over Constantine's input.

A second crucial rhetorical device is citations from the poems of Virgil. In *Deaths* the only verses Lactantius quoted were not from the Bible, but from Virgil's poems. In his Virgilian perspective the outbreak of persecution was similar to the fateful day marking the initial encounter between Dido and Aeneas. The difficulty in recounting all the afflictions of persecution was similar to the impossibility of describing all the miscreants whom Aeneas saw in the underworld. The death of the emperor Maximian conjured up the failure of Aeneas' relationships with potential brides. The death of Galerius was reminiscent of a lethal plague among animals and the death throes of the Trojan seer Laocoön.[18]

Modern accounts typically locate Constantine's victory outside Rome in 312 in the context of his development as a Christian or his support for Christianity. Eusebius' narrative has set the tone for this religious interpretation.

In his *History* Eusebius compared Constantine's victory to Moses' triumph over pharaoh at the Red Sea.[19] Lactantius was certainly familiar with this biblical precedent, because at the end of his *Institutes* he had already used a comparison with Moses' triumph as a preview for the inevitable fall of Rome.[20] But when contextualizing Constantine's triumph, Lactantius did not use this comparison, or indeed any other biblical citation. Instead, he inserted another Virgilian verse. Lactantius glossed the battle between Constantine and Maxentius with a verse from Virgil's *Aeneid* about a pointless battle between Trojans and Italians, before they blended together to become Romans. Lactantius interpreted Constantine's victory in terms of classical Latin poetry.[21]

In the early fourth century the aura of Virgil was a part of Constantine's court. The emperor himself contributed to the high tone of court culture. After his victory at Rome in 312, Constantine received a panegyrical poem from the senator Publilius Optatianus Porfyrius. The emperor replied with a complimentary letter in which he noted that even though Virgil had been the best of the Latin poets, it was still possible for later poets to enjoy his favor. In particular, he offered his patronage: "In my age a sympathetic hearing, similar to a gentle breeze, honors writers and orators."[22] In one of his orations Constantine proposed his own exegesis of Virgil's Fourth Eclogue, in which he had discovered a prophecy about the work of Jesus and the emergence of a Christian era.[23] By the end of his reign Constantine would have a reputation for "nuturing the fine arts, in particular the composition of literature."[24]

Lactantius was a Christian intellectual, but also a rhetorician who had been teaching Latin texts for many years. Canonical authors such as Cicero and Virgil were significant influences on his writings, for their ideas and their literary styles. In our haste to fit Lactantius' data into predominantly Christianizing accounts of the rise of Constantine, we often overlook the rhetorical aspects of his narrative. According to an excellent recent discussion by Kristina Meinking, Lactantius articulated his ideas about Christian theology in terms of rhetorical principles: "Rhetoric was for Lactantius . . . the epistemological basis for his understanding of Christianity."[25] Rhetoric likewise shaped his thinking about emperors.[26] His use of a parallelism between the two emperors who finally supported Christianity, and his intertextual allusions to Virgil suggest a different, new context for us to interpret Constantine in 312–313. In Lactantius' account Licinius' victory had been more important for promoting Christianity, while Constantine's victory had resembled Aeneas' consolidation of Italy. Lactantius represented Constantine's triumph not as a victory over a persecuting emperor, but rather as the renewal of Virgil's great mandate for the extension of Roman rule. His Constantine was more Virgilian than biblical.[27]

Eusebius

Eusebius' writings are by far our most important testimonies about Constantine and his reign. The writings that directly mentioned Constantine include the final three books of his *Ecclesiastical History*, some of the entries in his *Chronicle*,

and, most notably, his extended *Life of Constantine.* Two literary characteristics of these writings are especially important when evaluating their significance as sources of information about the emperor.

First, Eusebius quoted contemporary documents. In *History*, he quoted edicts and official pronouncements issued by the emperors Galerius, Maximinus, Constantine, and Licinius, as well as five letters sent by Constantine to imperial magistrates or churchmen during the period from 312 to 314. In *Life* he quoted more letters sent by Constantine after his victory over Licinius in 324, including letters that he had himself received. Eusebius is properly praised for citing excerpts and documents in his writings.[28] At the same time he can be criticized for his selectivity and for misrepresenting the original contexts. Some of the documents in *History* and *Life* he quoted (or translated) only in part. For others he provided a commentary that distorted or even contradicted Constantine's own remarks. For instance, in autumn of 324 Constantine sent a letter to the provincials in the East in which he indicated his support for Christianity but also extended toleration to supporters of pagan cults. "Those who persist in their errors are to receive a similar gift of peace and tranquility as the believers." But when he quoted this letter, Eusebius claimed that the emperor had issued an absolute mandate against pagan cults, trying to "block his subjects from demonic error." Eusebius' commentary did not always match Constantine's letters.[29]

Second, Eusebius liked to quote his own earlier treatises. The initial version of his account of Constantine in *History* was composed soon after the emperor's victory in 312, perhaps already in 313 or 314. The final version of his *History* expanded that initial narrative to conclude with Constantine's victory over Licinius in late 324. Eusebius seems to have completed writing that final version soon afterward. Over a decade later, after Constantine's death in 337, he was still writing his *Life*. Because the first part of *Life* covered the same period of Constantine's life to 324, much of the narrative in *Life* consisted of long quotations from the narrative in *History*. For this period of overlap, Eusebius' most important source was himself.[30]

These quotations of his own earlier writings are very revealing about Eusebius' techniques as a historian.[31] In addition to cutting and pasting, Eusebius added and subtracted. Some of his deviations from verbatim quotations were small details; others were more substantial. Sometimes he deleted outdated material that no longer fit with current events. In an early version of *History*, he had cited and praised the proclamation of toleration issued in 313 by Constantine and Licinius. But after the emperors became rivals and Constantine defeated Licinius, Eusebius omitted the joint proclamation in *History* and added criticism of Licinius. By the time Eusebius was writing *Life*, Licinius had become just another in the sequence of persecuting emperors. Sometimes Eusebius inserted supplementary material. The most famous additional episode added to *Life* was the story about Constantine's vision of a cross in the sky before his victory outside Rome in 312. In *Life* Eusebius combined that story with his earlier narrative about the battle from *History*. This combination implies

that Eusebius had essentially composed the "context" for that new story about the emperor's vision long before he had actually heard the story. Inserting that story, however, completely changed the meaning of the earlier narrative. Even Eusebius' "quotations" of himself were new interpretations.[32]

During the extended period of writing and rewriting *History* and *Life*, Eusebius constantly learned more about Constantine and kept on changing his interpretation of the emperor. In the astute quip of Emanuela Prinzivalli, Eusebius was the first continuator of himself.[33] When he was writing the first version of *History* soon after Constantine's victory outside Rome in 312, he knew little about the emperor. Back then he was primarily interested in the emperors in the eastern provinces and their persecution of Christians. In 324 Constantine defeated Licinius and became emperor in the East. In 325 Eusebius met Constantine for the first time at the council of Nicaea. Because the emperor participated in the arguments over theology, thereafter Eusebius could cast him as an arbiter of orthodoxy. Eusebius' subsequent meetings with the emperor were at formal occasions, and in 336 he delivered an oration at Constantinople celebrating the thirtieth anniversary of the emperor's accession.

The agenda of Eusebius' *Life* reflected these different perspectives. As an extension of his *History*, his *Life* continued his account of Constantine's reign and quoted many more imperial letters and proclamations. As a complement to his panegyric, his *Life* praised the emperor as God's herald, God's "heavenly angel," even an analogue of Jesus Christ.[34] As reinforcement for his theological treatises, his *Life* offered an image of Constantine as a Christian emperor that provided a rationale for his theological doctrines about the subordination of Jesus Christ to God. Eusebius' *Life* was the equivalent of a "gospel" of the emperor, in which he constructed a "Constantine" to fit his distinctive ways of understanding history, panegyric, and theology.[35]

As a result, just as readers of the biblical Gospels raised questions about the historical Jesus, so subsequent readers of Eusebius' *Life* were often hesitant, and sometimes even outright critical. Their criticism focused on two concerns: that Eusebius had been too partisan about theological controversies and too laudatory about the emperor. At the beginning of the fifth century the scholar Rufinus translated Eusebius' *History* into Latin. In the process he modified Eusebius' by-now unacceptable theology to promote instead orthodox Nicene theology. As Rufinus translated Eusebius' Greek, he translated Eusebius' theology. He also translated Eusebius' Constantine from God's special representative on earth into a humble benefactor of bishops.[36] Writing about one century after Constantine's death, the historian Socrates was likewise candid about his uneasiness when reading *Life*: "Eusebius was concerned more about his eulogies of the emperor and the grandiloquence of the words in his panegyric, as if in an encomium, than about an accurate narrative of events."[37] These later historians hence faced a dilemma when reading Eusebius. Even as they used the information in *History* and *Life*, they thought it necessary to discard Eusebius' panegyrical and theological agendas. They wanted to construct different images of the historical Constantine.

Constantine

Perhaps the emperor would likewise have had difficulty seeing himself in Eusebius' *Life*. Constantine liked to talk. Loquacity may have been a common trait in his family, because his nephew Julian too would be described as "garrulous and very seldom quiet."[38] One of Constantine's favorite topics was religion. Already in 314 he participated in debates about Christian theology with bishops at the council of Arles. In his later years he sometimes summoned courtiers to listen to his discourses about moral behavior and the proper worship of God. Eusebius himself apparently once attended one of these sessions at Constantinople.[39]

Another favorite topic was himself, and Constantine's comments about religion often touched on his own life. In his discourses about God he noted that his imperial rule was a divine dispensation: "The God over all had presented him with an empire over everything on earth."[40] This symbiosis of autobiography and religion was also a consistent feature of Constantine's writings, and several of his letters featured personal details about his earlier life. In 314, after attending the council at Arles, he sent a letter to western bishops. In his letter he summarized the trajectory of his personal religious development, from his estrangement from a "higher power" to his dependence on God.[41] In 324, after his victory over Licinius, he introduced himself to people in the eastern provinces.[42] In a letter to the king of Persia he described his personal religious beliefs.[43] In these letters Constantine was clearly constructing a series of autobiographies.

Constantine was furthermore the source for some stories that Eusebius recorded in his *Life*. Those stories discussed his victories in battle, and in particular the role of his famous military standard, which had been constructed in the shape of a cross and included a Christian symbol. Eusebius had seen this military standard, presumably during one of his visits to Constantinople: "The emperor himself once allowed me to observe this standard with my own eyes."[44] He had also heard some of the emperor's stories. Some clarified the origin of the military standard as a prelude to the victory over Maxentius in 312. These stories described the famous vision of the cross in the sky, as well as the emperor's subsequent dream of Christ and his consultation with the churchmen who explained the meaning of the cross. Eusebius introduced these stories by citing his source: "A long time afterward the victorious emperor himself narrated [this story] to me, the author of this account, when I was honored with his acquaintance and his conversations." Another collection of stories covered the prelude to Constantine's victory over Licinius in 324. These stories described a vision among Licinius' soldiers and the protection offered by the military standard. Again Eusebius claimed Constantine as the source: "The emperor himself narrated these events to me, the author of this account, at a time of relaxation long after the events." Once the military standard had served as protection during battles; then, years or decades later, it became a memento, a relic that conjured up stories about distant memories.[45]

Claiming Constantine as the source for these stories would seem to enhance the reliability of Eusebius' narrative, because we might assume that the emperor would be the most knowledgeable and trustworthy informant about his early years. Eusebius thought the emperor was an unimpeachable witness: "Constantine confirmed this story with oaths." On the other hand, we might also assume the opposite, that the emperor had the strongest interest in revising his backstory through enhancement and concealment, and that Eusebius had an equally strong interest in enhancing his status by publicizing his closeness to the emperor. "This story," Eusebius announced, "is not mine, but again belongs to the emperor himself, who recalled it for my ears in the presence of companions." Both storyteller and book writer were arbiters of memory in filtering past events to match present circumstances.[46]

The study of oral traditions and the preservation of memories in other societies has emphasized the difficulties inherent in their transmission. One common characteristic of oral traditions is the lack of stability from one telling to the next. No narrator, even a participant or an eyewitness, can escape the tendency toward selectivity and partiality. As the needs of present circumstances take priority, memories of the past become memories for the present. Constantine's stories, as recorded by Eusebius in his *Life*, hence represented a series of distinct moments that should be differentiated: first the actual events, then Constantine's memories of those events, then Eusebius' recollection and recording of the emperor's stories in his *Life*.[47]

The vagaries of this particular process of transmission are, of course, difficult to detect, because all that survives is Eusebius' final written account. But it is possible to recognize the variability in the transmission of memories about the most famous relic of Constantine's past. After Eusebius described the battle standard on the basis of his own autopsy, he located its historical significance in the context of Constantine's vision of a cross in the sky and his preparations for his war against Maxentius in 312. In fact, the version of the battle standard that Eusebius saw could not have been one used that early in Constantine's reign. Eusebius meticulously noted that the decorations on the battle standard included "a golden portrait of the God-beloved emperor, head and shoulders, and likewise of his sons." In 312 Constantine had only one son; his second son was not born until 316. The decorations on this memorial of an earlier victory had clearly been updated to reflect the expansion of Constantine's family. Eusebius furthermore noted a new meaning for the chi-rho monogram of the name of Christ. Originally, he claimed, this monogram had decorated the wreath at the top of the battle standard. "But in later times the emperor was accustomed to wear this monogram on his helmet." The decorations on the battle standard had changed with the times, and in later years both Constantine and Eusebius found new uses and meanings for the monogram. If the paraphernalia on this standard could be so readily updated, then Constantine's stories would have been just as malleable.[48]

A second, related characteristic of oral traditions is contamination. Narrators add to, subtract from, and modify their stories as they learn and hear more. By

the time Constantine told his stories about his military victories to Eusebius, he had already listened to, read, or seen other accounts of those battles. The earliest Eusebius could have heard the stories was in 325, when he met Constantine for the first time at the council of Nicaea and when he attended the banquet celebrating the twentieth anniversary of the emperor's accession. By then Constantine had listened to a panegyric in 313 that extolled his victory outside Rome in the previous year, and he had viewed the relief panels depicting the battle on the commemorative arch at Rome dedicated in 315. It is also possible that Eusebius did not hear the emperor's stories until later in his reign, perhaps at the banquet in 336 celebrating the thirtieth anniversary of his reign. By then, decades after some of the battles, the emperor would have heard or read even more accounts. As a result, whenever he finally told his stories, Constantine was drawing upon both his own memories of the battle and his recollection of other, more recent accounts of the battle.[49]

In fact, the loop of memories may have resembled even more of an Escher-like paradox. In 325, either at the council of Nicaea or at the subsequent anniversary banquet, Eusebius had himself delivered "hymns for the twentieth anniversary" of the reign of the "gloriously victorious" emperor. In 335 Eusebius delivered an oration at Constantinople about the Church of the Holy Sepulcher recently dedicated at Jerusalem. His crowd in the imperial palace included Constantine, who remained standing for the entire performance. In 336 Eusebius was back in Constantinople to deliver another panegyric celebrating the thirtieth anniversary of the emperor's reign.[50] In these panegyrics he had most likely repeated the same sort of observations about Constantine and his battles that he had already recorded in his *Ecclesiastical History* and was preparing to record again in his *Life*. Perhaps the emperor responded, then or later, with his own stories. In this case, Constantine's memories would have been influenced by the accounts of Eusebius, who subsequently cited the emperor as his source for the stories in *Life*.

The conclusion is that Constantine's stories too cannot be accepted, and parsed, at face value, as if they were reliable and independent accounts. Constantine's stories and memories were an aspect of reception: the emperor was encountering his earlier career and shaping his life's story. In our evaluation of these stories Constantine the narrator should be distinguished from Constantine the character. Reception, narratology, magical realism, intertextuality, oral traditions, memory studies: all of these methodological approaches should be applied to our understanding of the texts, and therefore of the historical – and imagined – Constantine. The construction of *Constantin imaginaire* not only began during Constantine's reign, in the writings of Eusebius, Lactantius, and other authors; Constantine himself was an important contributor to the process.

Scholarship

In addition to a survey of the so-called sources, books and articles about Constantine habitually include an overview of previous scholarship. These reviews

of scholarship reference the usual suspects, typically starting with the luminous eighteenth-century polymath Edward Gibbon. Gibbon has earned the right to be first and foremost. In *The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* his lengthy chapters on Constantine were themselves a monograph, complete with extensive background and digressions. One chapter explained the growth and success of Christianity; another described the emperor's administrative and military reforms. Gibbon nevertheless concluded that Constantine had not exploited Christianity merely to ensure the success of his rule. Instead, "the specious piety of Constantine . . . might gradually . . . be matured into serious faith and fervent devotion."[51]

In the mid-nineteenth century Jacob Burckhardt described Constantine instead as far more calculating and opportunistic. Burckhardt argued that Constantine had been motivated only by his "ambition and lust for power," with no interest in spiritual commitment and piety. In 1929 Norman Baynes reasserted the case for interpreting Constantine as a deeply committed Christian who attempted to promote his religious preferences throughout the empire.[52]

Reviewing previous scholarship raises interesting issues about the future progress of Constantinian studies. One is the tendency for respect for great historians of the past to become entrapment in their perspectives and concerns. The most obvious is the question of Constantine's personal religiosity. As the previous quotations indicate, scholars such as Gibbon, Burckhardt, and Baynes are cited primarily for their opinions about the emperor's religious convictions; and still today discussions of the timing of the emperor's conversion or the extent of his piety or the depth of his commitment to religious toleration remain common. To go on arguing these long-standing issues is to concede that these are the important issues to argue.

So a second related issue concerns our willingness and our capacity to move on from the viewpoints of these past masters. Why do we continue to read, or at least to cite, Gibbon, Burckhardt, and Baynes? Their claims as great historians originally rested on their deployment of the evidence and their interpretive schemes. But we no longer consult their writings for the data, we frequently hesitate about their factual reliability, and we would claim that their interpretive schemes have also been superseded. Both Burckhardt's image of an opportunistic Constantine and Baynes' image of a deeply pietistic Constantine are now a bit too extreme, in opposite directions. Of all the older modern accounts of Constantine, Gibbon's narrative is still valuable and interesting to read, but primarily as a literary masterpiece. These days we continue to admire his *Decline and Fall* for its stylistic excellence and its literary merit. Gibbon's masterpiece remains valuable largely because it has become what Bury thought history should never be: great literature.[53]

These older modern accounts also retain value as documentation of the eras in which the historians wrote. Gibbon's *Decline and Fall* in particular is a fine reflection of eighteenth-century philosophical enlightenment, and Burckhardt's *Age of Constantine the Great* of nineteenth-century rationalist humanism. The historians of the twentieth century are still waiting to be properly

contextualized in their eras. The changing evaluations of these books should be a cautionary warning to us too, and their fate can be generalized as a preview of the future of other modern books about Constantine. After the passage of a generation or two, books of history, even great books of history, become period-pieces. In place of being valued as scholarship about Constantine, they become respected as time-bound contributions to the tradition that has created images of Constantine. The publication of new scholarly books relentlessly relegates older books to the liminal zones of "previous scholarship" and eventually of "tradition"; even the best of scholarship is destined to become an aspect of tradition. We should all be so lucky as to have our books become the period-pieces that best represent Constantinian scholarship of the early twenty-first century.[54]

Conclusion

We readily acknowledge that later Byzantine and medieval authors were developing their own agendas when they claimed that Constantine had fought the battle of the Milvian Bridge outside Constantinople or that he had been baptized by the bishop of Rome. It is equally important to acknowledge that the ancient authors who were Constantine's contemporaries were already doing the same. Their accounts were complicated representations of people and events, not simple reflections. Our "sources" were already part of the "tradition" about Constantine.

So are our modern accounts. Each modern book or article about Constantine is the counterpart of one of the ancient accounts. The triumphalism of Eusebius' *Ecclesiastical History* reemerges in pietistic accounts, and the laudatory appreciation of his *Life of Constantine* in biographies; Lactantius' smugness about the deaths of the persecuting emperors reappears in some of the unpleasant remarks of positivist critiques. In the process we construct images of Constantine that reflect our own times and influences.

Looking forward we can anticipate more academic conferences to celebrate such consequential events as the council of Nicaea in 325 and the inauguration of Constantinople in 330. The deployment of modern literary approaches and new interpretive perspectives will not only enrich the enterprise of Constantinian studies; it will also make these future conferences more interesting and more stimulating. Every modern conference is the equivalent of one of those anniversary festivals that Eusebius attended, at which we scholars deliver speeches, share a banquet, and create new traditions. If only the emperor Constantine could attend our conferences to tell a few more tall tales of his own.[55]

Notes

1 For an introduction to the bibliography on Constantine, see Van Dam, 2007 and 2011; for an outstanding critique of recent books, see Flower, 2012.
2 Kazhdan, 1987.
3 Already recommended by Cameron, 1991, p. 53, commenting on Eusebius' *Life of Constantine* as "a work overcriticized on historical grounds and understudied as a literary text."

4 Verdoner, 2011, pp. 1 and 193, although her analysis is focused on Eusebius *HE* 1–7. Likewise Iricinschi, 2011, on Eusebius' construction of Christian identity by appropriating a Jewish past.

5 Schott, 2011.

6 See now the excellent discussion of invective in Flower, 2013.

7 Bury, 1903, pp. 7, 9, 18.

8 For the uneasiness of even the best practitioners, note Burgess, 1999, p. 74, "Eusebius' accounts are invaluable as evidence for the period and are unique for the evidence they provide, but how do we use them in a positivist manner? How do we reconstruct facts and not factoids?"

9 For a brief overview of some medieval traditions, see Van Dam, 2011, pp. 19–32. For a meticulous recent study of "la réception de la figure de l'empereur dans le discours officiel du Siège apostolique" (p. 565), see Moreau, 2012.

10 For discussion of the panegyrics and the arch, see Van Dam, 2011, pp. 103–106, 124–146.

11 For discussion of Lactantius' whereabouts and the chronology, see Van Dam, 2011, pp. 106–124, and (forthcoming). In favor of Lactantius' move to Trier before 312, see the excellent arguments by Elizabeth Digeser in this volume.

12 Christensen, 1980, pp. 42–76.

13 Lactantius, *De mortibus persecutorum* 18.7–15.

14 Note the contortions of modern commentators, such as Creed, 1984, p. 97: "Although the conversation recorded can clearly not be taken as a verbatim account, it . . . is indeed highly plausible"; and Corcoran, 2012, p. 6: "an over-imaginative account. . . . Although clearly fictional . . ., the basic premise embedded in the account . . . makes perfect dynastic sense."

15 Bowers, 2004, p. 123, "magic(al) realism has proved itself . . . to stimulate consideration of the relationship of fiction and representation to reality."

16 Lactantius, *De mortibus persecutorum* 18.9, Maxentius' arrogance; 43.1, adversary; 46.3, angel; 46.6, prayer.

17 Lactantius, *De mortibus persecutorum* 52.1, "*ita ut gesta sunt.*"

18 Lactantius, *De mortibus persecutorum* 12.1, quoting Virgil, *Aeneis* 4.169–70; 16.2, quoting Virgil, *Aeneis* 6.625–27; 30.5, quoting Virgil, *Aeneis* 6.471, 12.603; 33.4, 8, quoting Virgil, *Georgica* 3.549–50, *Aeneis* 2.222–24; with Creed, 1984, p. 93: "All of Lact.'s quotations in this work are from Virgil."

19 Eusebius *HE* 9.9.5.

20 Lactantius, *Institutiones divinae* 7.15.2–4.

21 Lactantius, *De mortibus persecutorum* 44.6, citing Virgil, *Aeneis* 10.757.

22 Constantine, *Epistula ad Porfyrium*, ed. Polara, 1973, vol. 1, pp. 4–6; with discussion in Van Dam, 2011, pp. 158–170; for the political context for Porfyrius' poems, see Wienand, 2012.

23 Constantine, *Oratio ad sanctos* 19–20.

24 *Epitome de Caesaribus* 41.14, with Tarrant, 1997, p. 70: "Constantine's reign was especially rich in the composition of Christian poetry that takes Virgil as its formal model."

25 Meinking, 2013, p. 347.

26 Note the intriguing recent discussion of Paschoud, 2012, who concludes that Lactantius used the model of Judas Maccabeus to invent his story of Constantine's dream: "The author took advantage of the possibilities offered by rhetorical techniques to adapt historical reality to the needs of his narrative" (translated from p. 380).

27 For the influence of Cicero on Lactantius, see Nicholson, 1999, p. 19: "The framework of Lactantius's universal history was Christian, but many of his judgments derived from a continued engagement with the history of Rome."

28 See Inowlocki, 2011, for an excellent discussion of Eusebius' citations as an apologetic technique for demonstrating the superiority of Christian culture over Greek and Jewish culture, and Johnson, 2013, pp. 3–10, comparing Eusebius' quotations to the use of *spolia* in monuments and the blending of verses from Vergil in centos.

29 Eusebius, *Vita Constantini* 2.56.1, 61.1.
30 For a survey of various arguments about the timing and content of Eusebius' versions of *History*, see Van Dam, 2011, pp. 82–95, and (forthcoming). Schott, 2013, p. 364, has called for a "genetic" analysis of Eusebius' *History* "to consider the import of differences and deviations among the Greek, Syriac, and Latin versions." This genetic criticism should be extended to evaluate Eusebius' own multiple versions of his *History*.
31 But they rarely are used in studies of Eusebius as a historian.
32 For the modifications in Eusebius' *Life*, see Van Dam, 2011, pp. 95–100.
33 Prinzivalli, 2012, pp. 83–84.
34 Eusebius, *Vita Constantini* 2.61.1, herald; 3.10.3, angel.
35 For the intersection between history and theology in Eusebius' *Life*, see Van Dam, 2007, pp. 310–313, and 2011, pp. 74–80.
36 For discussion of Rufinus, see Van Dam, 2007, pp. 329–334, and Humphries, 2008.
37 Socrates *HE* 1.1.2.
38 Ammianus Marcellinus, *Res gestae* 25.4.17.
39 Eusebius, *Vita Constantini* 1.44.2, attendance at council, 4.29, session.
40 Eusebius, *Vita Constantini* 4.29.4.
41 Optatus, Appendix 5.
42 Eusebius, *Vita Constantini* 2.48–60.
43 Eusebius, *Vita Constantini* 4.9–13, with the discussion in Angelov, 2014.
44 Eusebius, *Vita Constantini* 1.30.
45 Eusebius, *Vita Constantini* 1.28.1, long time; 2.8.2, relaxation.
46 Eusebius, *Vita Constantini* 1.28.1, oaths; 2.9.3, not mine.
47 Vansina, 1985, p. 160, "Traditions are memories of memories."
48 Eusebius, *Vita Constantini* 1.31.1–2.
49 Vansina, 1985, p. 159, on oral traditions: "Feedback and contamination are the norm." For the timing of the stories, see Van Dam, 2011, pp. 61–66; Bleckmann, 2007, pp. 55–56, suggests that Constantine told his stories toward the end of his reign during the celebration of his thirtieth anniversary at Constantinople in 336.
50 Eusebius, *Vita Constantini* 1.1.1, oration of 325; 4.33, oration of 335; 4.36, banquet of 336.
51 Gibbon, 1932, vol. 1, p. 650.
52 Burckhardt, 1949, p. 292; Baynes, 1931.
53 On the literary sophistication of Gibbon's narrative, see Craddock, 1988, p. 587: "He feels and represents with equal power the constructedness of his account and its responsibility to the texts and materials on which it draws."
54 Note Geary, 1994, p. 181, on the role of scholars in constructing narratives: "Perhaps the phantoms of remembrance are actually . . . modern historians intent on creating our own versions of the past."
55 My thanks to Shane Bjornlie and Ken Wolf for organizing the Symposium at the Claremont Colleges, to the other participants for their comments and conversation, and again to Shane for editing this volume.

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2 The reception of classical pastoral in the Age of Constantine

Christopher Chinn

No pastoral poetry survives from the Age of Constantine, but the tradition of Latin pastoral persisted from the ancient Roman Republic through the fourth century and beyond.[1] The tradition is recognizable by the repetition of tropes and generic markers in successive poets.[2] Allusions to these features of pastoral may be found in non-pastoral literature from the Constantinian period. My aim in this chapter is to examine how Constantinian writers employ one such pastoral trope – the "god in the city" trope – and hence how Constantinian writers perceive the pastoral tradition. I begin by outlining how classical writers of pastoral from the first century until the third deploy the "god in the city" figure in their poetry, and interweave this figure with allusions to Vergil's *Georgics*. First, I provide a brief discussion of Vergil's first *Eclogue* and examine the way in which the poem was interpreted as a kind of autobiography of the poet. Next I examine the reception of Vergil's first *Eclogue* in the Neronian pastoral poet Calpurnius Siculus and in the third-century pastoral poet Nemesianus (often considered the last classical pastoral writer). After setting this context I examine works of Constantinian date, namely, Panegyrics 4 and 6, and Juvencus' *Evangeliorum Libri Quarti*, to see how they develop these ideas.[3] In addition, I provide a reading of a post-Constantinian pastoral writer, the late fourth-century poet Endelechius, as a kind of "control" on the trajectory of Latin pastoral after Constantine. We will see that Constantinian writers engaged with the critical traditions of classical pastoral in active and innovative ways, and that genre remained vital throughout the period.

Vergil's first *Eclogue*

Vergil's first *Eclogue* provides a narrative situation that becomes a motif in later pastoral writers.[4] The poem begins with the shepherd Meliboeus addressing his fellow shepherd Tityrus. We learn that while Tityrus enjoys considerable leisure and security, Meliboeus has been displaced from his property:

> M. Tityre, tu patulae recubans sub tegmine fagi
> silvestrem tenui Musam meditaris avena;
> nos patriae finis et dulcia linquimus arva.

> nos patriam fugimus; tu, Tityre, lentus in umbra
> formosam resonare doces Amaryllida silvas.
> T. O Meliboee, deus nobis haec otia fecit . . .
>   (Verg. *Ecl*. 1.1–6)

> *M.* You, Tityrus, lie under the canopy of a spreading beech, wooing the woodland Muse on a slender reed, but we are leaving our country's bounds and sweet fields. We are outcasts from our country; you, Tityrus, at ease beneath the shade, teach the woods to re-echo "fair Amaryllis." *T.* O Meliboeus, it is a god who gave us this peace . . . (trans. Fairclough and Goold)

In answer to Meliboeus' implicit question as to why Tityrus is able peacefully to relax and compose poetry, while he himself must endure exile, Tityrus answers somewhat enigmatically that a "god" is responsible for his good fortune. In the ensuing conversation Meliboeus eventually asks for the identity of Tityrus' "god" (18). Tityrus again answers indirectly by describing Rome, where the reader presumes the "god" resides (19–41). After this long digression, Tityrus finally gets the point:

> [*T.*] *hic illum vidi iuvenem, Meliboee, quotannis*
> *bis senos cui nostra dies altaria fumant.*
> *hic mihi responsum primus dedit ille petenti:*
> *"pascite ut ante boves, pueri; summittite tauros."*
>   (Verg. *Ecl*. 1.42–45)

> Here, Meliboeus, I saw that youth for whom our altars smoke twice six days a year. Here he was the first to give my plea an answer: "Feed, swains, your oxen as of old; rear your bulls." (trans. Fairclough and Goold)

Here Tityrus characterizes his "god" as a youth, who granted Tityrus the favor of living as he had previously. From at least as early as the fourth century all of this has been read as an autobiographical statement on the poet's part:[5] Tityrus is really Vergil himself, the "god" is Octavian, and the situation is that of the land confiscations following the Battle of Philippi in 42 BC, when many Romans were displaced from their estates by retiring veterans of the wars. It is thus supposed that Vergil himself was the victim of this displacement, and that he supposedly recovered his estate by appealing to Octavian.[6] Whether or not this actually happened, it remains the case that in the pastoral tradition, the motif of "Tityrus in Rome" became a trope for poetical autobiography, history, and politics in subsequent pastoral authors.

Calpurnius

The Neronian poet Calpurnius Siculus[7] reads Vergil's first *Eclogue* according to this biographical-historical tradition, as is evident in his fourth *Eclogue*.[8] In this

poem the shepherds Corydon and Meliboeus converse about Corydon's new song in praise of emperor. Here we find his Meliboeus characterized as a patron who can guarantee Corydon's life of leisure:

> *C. haec ego, confiteor, dixi, Meliboee, sed olim:*
> *non eadem nobis sunt tempora, non deus idem.*
> [. . .]
> *ecce nihil querulum per te, Meliboee, sonamus;*
> *per te secura saturi recubamus in umbra . . .*
> <div align="center">(Calp. Ecl. 4.29–30, 36–7)</div>

This, I confess, I did say, Meliboeus; but it was long ago; our times are not the same now, our god is changed. [. . .] Lo! 'tis thanks to you, Meliboeus, that no complaint passes our lips: thanks to you we recline well-fed in carefree shade . . . (trans. Duff and Duff)

The programmatic words *recubamus in umbra* obviously point to the opening of Vergil's first *Eclogue* (*patulae recubans sub tegmine fagi*, 1.1). Calpurnius thus portrays his Meliboeus as protecting Corydon's ability to "recline in the shade," that is to compose Vergilian pastoral. Indeed, in the lines immediately following, Corydon details how, without Meliboeus' intervention, he would have suffered exile to the ends of the earth (39–47). Here, Corydon's potential exile reflects the Vergilian Meliboeus' actual exile. Moreover, the statement that the "god" (i.e. the emperor) has changed with the times (*non eadem nobis sunt tempora, non deus idem*) obliquely points to Vergil's god in the city.

In the rest of the poem Corydon and his brother Amyntas praise the emperor, while Meliboeus listens. Here the "Tityrus in Rome" motif appears:

> *[C.] at tu, si qua tamen non aspernanda putabis,*
> *fer, Meliboee, deo mea carmina: nam tibi fas est*
> *sacra Palatini penetralia visere Phoebi.*
> *tum mihi talis eris, qualis qui dulce sonantem*
> *Tityron e silvis dominam deduxit in urbem*
> *ostenditque deos et "spreto" dixit "ovili,*
> *Tityre, rura prius, sed post cantabimus arma."*
> <div align="center">(Calp. Ecl. 4.157–63)</div>

But you, Meliboeus, if in spite of all you think that any of my poems are not to be disdained, then take them to the Emperor-God. For you have the right to visit the holy inner shrine of the Palatine Phoebus. Then you shall be to me such as he was who brought Tityrus of tuneful song from the woods to the queen of cities, showed him the divine powers, and said, "We will scorn the sheepfold, Tityrus, and sing first the countryside but, later, the weapons of war." (trans. Duff and Duff)

Calpurnius signals that by Tityrus he means Vergil by attributing Vergil's poetic oeuvre to Tityrus: Tityrus has left behind pastoral (i.e. the "sheepfold" *spreto . . . ovili*); his patron urges Tityrus to sing first georgic poetry (*rura*) and then finally full-fledged heroic epic (*arma*, the first word of the *Aeneid*).[9] Notice that Calpurnius introduces a great deal of pure invention here: we know that the Vergilian Tityrus was induced to go to Rome by his girlfriend Amaryllis, not by some unnamed patron. Calpurnius has read into Vergil a patron parallel to his own Meliboeus, apparently adding his own autobiography to the tradition: Calpurnius' Meliboeus has been variously identified as Seneca and Piso.[10] At any rate the main point of comparison between Calpurnius' Meliboeus and the (non-existent) patron in Vergil is the fact that both have intimate access to the "god" in Rome. In Calpurnius the "god" is now clearly the emperor, as the reference to the Palatine attests.

Calpurnius' fourth *Eclogue* also contains allusions to the fifth *Eclogue* of Vergil.[11] Vergil's fifth *Eclogue*, a kind of eulogy for the dead pastoral hero Daphnis, was read in antiquity as an allegory for the apotheosis Julius Caesar (Servius *ad Ecl.* 5.20).[12] The poem revolves around a conversation between two shepherds, Menalcas and Mopsus. Vergil's Mopsus asserts that he will recite a poem of his that he has written in the bark of a tree: *haec, in viridi nuper quae cortice fagi / carmina descripsi* (Verg. *Ecl.* 5.13–14, "these verses, which the other day I carved on the green beech-bark," trans. Fairclough and Goold). Calpurnius imitates this idea: *cantus viridante licet mihi condere libro* (Calp. *Ecl.* 4.130, "and I may preserve my songs on the green bark," trans. Duff and Duff). This self-referential gesture obviously has significance as a marker of literary history (Calpurnius is "reinscribing" Vergilian pastoral). But in the context of Calpurnius' poem the emperor's presence is palpable: Amyntas is saying that he is now allowed (*licet*) to write poems on tree bark, a gift of the emperor (*ille . . . dat*, Calp. *Ecl.* 4.127). Again, in the Vergilian poem, each character presents a speech in praise of Daphnis. At one point during Menalcas' speech, the landscape itself is famously characterized as praising Daphnis as a god: "*deus, deus ille, Menalca!*" (Verg. *Ecl.* 5.64, "A god is he, a god, Menalcas!" trans. Fairclough and Goold). Calpurnius imitates this moment when he has Amyntas refer to the emperor as a god: "*deus hinc, certe deus expulit euros*" (Calp. *Ecl.* 4.100, "A god, surely a god has driven the east winds hence," trans. Duff and Duff).[13] Notice that Calpurnius makes his political reading of Vergil explicit here: the "god" in question is most definitely Nero, and not an evident intermediary like Daphnis. In a way Calpurnius combines an allusion to Vergil's Daphnis in *Eclogue* 5 with the youth-god of Vergil's first *Eclogue*, who again was later read as Octavian-Augustus.[14] At any rate Calpurnius makes it clear that he is appropriating Vergil's "Daphnis" as a metaphor for an imperial figure, and hence that his allusions to Vergil's first *Eclogue* have a political-historical character.

One final generic gesture on Calpurnius' part deserves note because of its effect on the later tradition. At the beginning of Corydon's first speech in praise

of the emperor, we get the following claim: *ab Iove principium, si quis canit aethera, sumat, / si quis Atlantiaci pondus molitur Olympi* (Calp. *Ecl.* 4.82–3, "From Jove let every bard begin, whoso sings of the *aether*, whoso essays to describe the Olympian burden which Atlas bears," trans. Duff and Duff). Here Corydon contrasts his task of imperial praise to the composition of some other familiar themes in didactic epic.[15] As we will see, to "sing of the *aether*" specifically suggests the kinds of cosmological themes present in Vergil's *Georgics*.[16] We will also see that Nemesianus and others pick up on Calpurnius' generic play.

Nemesianus

The third-century poet Nemesianus[17] signals that he is following Calpurnius by combining elements of Vergil's first and fifth *Eclogues*, and of the *Georgics*, in a single poem.[18] Right at the outset of his first *Eclogue*, Nemesianus combines allusions to Vergil's first *Eclogue* and to *Georgics* 3:[19]

> *incipe, dum salices haedi, dum gramina vaccae*
> *detondent, viridique greges permittere campo*
> *dum ros et primis suadet clementia solis.*
> (Nemes. *Ecl.* 1.6–8)

> Strike up, while the kids crop the willows and the cows the grass, while the dew and the mildness of the morning urge you to let your flocks into the green meadowland. (trans. Duff and Duff)

Here Timetas asks the aged Tityrus to sing a song, a request that Tityrus (who again is clearly meant to be Vergil)[20] refuses. Nemesianus' language recalls the end of Vergil's first *Eclogue*, where Meliboeus laments the fact that he is unable to sing, due to his status as exile, and that his flock will not have its accustomed food: *carmina nulla canam; non me pascente, capellae, / florentem cytisum et salices carpetis amaras* (Verg. *Ecl.* 1.77–8, "no more songs shall I sing; no more, my goats, under my tending, shall you crop flowering lucerne and bitter willows," trans. Fairclough and Goold). In Nemesianus we have an invitation to sing in the "normal" pastoral conditions, a response to Vergil's Meliboeus who has lost his pastoral security. Nemesianus is thus making a metapoetic statement of literary succession by claiming a kind of renewal of the pastoral genre.[21] In these same lines, Nemesianus also alludes to Vergil's depiction of the care of goats and sheep in the *Georgics*: *carpamus . . . dum gramina canent / et ros in tenera pecori gratissimus herba* (Verg. *Geo.* 3.325–6, "let us haste . . . while the grass is hoar, and the dew on the tender blade is most sweet to cattle," trans. Fairclough and Goold).[22] The addition of "georgic" elements into Latin pastoral is a common enough poetic move,[23] but here Nemesianus anticipates his later foray into georgic poetry in Timetas' speech and responds to Calpurnius' georgic gesture noted above.

We also find allusions to Vergil's fifth *Eclogue*.[24] We noted how Calpurnius combines allusions to the first and fifth Vergilian *Eclogues* in order to reinforce

his political-historical reading of Vergil. Here we find Nemesianus doing the same thing. His Timetas praises Tityrus' talent in distinctly Vergilian language: *nam et calamos inflare labello / Pan docuit* (Nemes. *Ecl*. 1.4–5, "Pan has taught your lips to blow the reeds," trans Duff and Duff) ~ *tu calamos inflare levis* (Verg. *Ecl*. 5.2 "you at blowing on the slender reeds," trans. Fairclough and Goold). Moreover, Nemesianus, like Calpurnius, engages in the conceit of poems written on tree bark: *cerasus . . . / . . . inciso servans mea carmina libro* (Nemes. *Ecl*. 1.28–9 "the cherry tree . . . preserves my lay in the carving on its bark," trans. Duff and Duff).[25] All of this sets up the expectation that Nemesianus will follow Calpurnius in equating the "god in the city" and the Daphnis-figure (i.e. the dead Meliboeus) with the emperor.[26] Indeed Nemesianus alludes directly to Calpurnius' version of the "god in the city":

> *perge, puer, coeptumque tibi ne desere carmen.*
> *nam sic dulce sonas, ut te placatus Apollo*
> *provehat et felix dominam perducat in urbem.*
> <div align="center">(Nemes. *Ecl*. 1.81–3)</div>

> Forward, my boy, leave not off the music you have begun. Your melody is so sweet that a favorable Apollo bears you onward and is your auspicious guide into the queen of cities. (trans. Duff and Duff)

Nemesianus clearly appropriates Calpurnius' reading of Vergil here: *dulce sonas ~ dulce sonantem* and *dominam perducat in urbem ~ dominam deduxit in urbem*. Nemesianus does, however, introduce an important difference. Here Tityrus, again clearly Vergil, says of the younger Timetas (probably Nemesianus)[27] "you sing so sweetly . . ." (*sic dulce sonas*). Recall that, in Calpurnius, Tityrus-Vergil was the poet referred to as "singing sweetly." Thus Nemesianus engages in a bit of meta-poetic polemic by portraying himself as the successor to Vergil in a context that clearly points to Calpurnius. Nemesianus has also transformed the patron from an intermediary figure to a primary one. No longer does "Meliboeus" simply control access to the emperor, as in Calpurnius. Instead "Meliboeus" himself possesses the power to help poets and peasants with their land disputes (Nemes. *Ecl*. 1.49–55). Nemesianus also nowhere mentions the emperor (perhaps this is to be expected given the upheaval and instability of the late third century),[28] and keeps his divine figure (Apollo) carefully separate from his "Meliboeus."

As Paladini has pointed out, Nemesianus' response to Calpurnius and Vergil is tinged with doubt regarding the divinity of the poem's honoree.[29] In Vergil, Tityrus says that the youth in the city will "always be a god to me" (*Ecl*. 1.7) and, famously, Menalcas exclaims that the dead Daphnis is a god (*Ecl*. 5.64). Calpurnius combines these two passages by having Amyntas exclaim that the emperor is a god (Calp. *Ecl*. 4.100). Nemesianus, as we have seen, also combines the first and fifth Vergilian *Eclogues.* However, Nemesianus cannot bring himself to be certain about the divinity of the dead Meliboeus. Instead he refers in a more philosophical vein to the afterlife (*Ecl*. 1.19–20), and later wonders

whether souls survive the death of the body (*Ecl.* 1.38–41).[30] The doubt about the divinity of Meliboeus is striking compared to the much more definite sentiments in the corresponding speeches in Vergil and Calpurnius. Generically speaking,[31] Nemesianus' Meliboeus takes over the role of the emperor/god in Calpurnius, since these are the figures receiving praise in the manner of Vergil's Daphnis. Yet as we have seen, Nemesianus' Meliboeus is definitely mortal, but acts as an arbitrator of property disputes and as a literary critic in a manner similar to the "god in the city" in the pastoral tradition.[32]

It is within this context of uncertainty regarding the pastoral tradition that Nemesianus takes up the generic challenge laid down by Calpurnius, and indicates the new direction in which he takes pastoral. We recall that Calpurnius' Corydon compared praise of the emperor to an epic endeavor, citing cosmological themes as examples of epic (*Ecl.* 4.82–3). Nemesianus picks up on all of this in the opening words of Timetas' praise of the dead Meliboeus:[33]

> *omniparens aether et rerum causa, liquores,*
> *corporis et genetrix tellus, vitalis et aer,*
> *accipite hos cantus . . .*
> > (Nemes. *Ecl.* 1.35–7)

> Ether, parent of all; water, primal cause of things; and earth, mother of body; and life-giving air! accept ye these strains . . . (trans. Duff and Duff)

Timetas dedicates his song to the various elements: water, earth, air, and *aether* (the upper air). By placing *aether* first in his list Nemesianus emphasizes his response to Calpurnius' reference to *aether* as an epic theme. Nemesianus' lines also point to a passage in the second book of the *Georgics*, where Vergil details a mythical and metaphorical account of the intercourse between heaven and earth that gives rise to the fertility of the land:

> *tum pater omnipotens fecundis imbribus Aether*
> *coniugis in gremium laetae descendit, et omnis*
> *magnus alit magno commixtus corpore fetus.*
> > (Verg. *Geo.* 2.325–7)

> Then does Aether, sovereign father, descend in fruitful showers into the womb of his joyful consort and, mightily mingling with her mighty frame, gives life to every embryo within. (trans. Fairclough and Goold)

By alluding to Vergil through Calpurnius, Nemesianus takes up the generic challenge and introduces didactic epic material into a pastoral context. As noted earlier, Nemesianus marks his departure from tradition by signaling the inclusion of georgic material right at the outset of his poem. Here we get the content of the georgic gesture with Timetas' invocation of *Aether*. Also important is the "scientific" nature of the Vergilian material, which emphasizes the

philosophical aspect to Timetas' dirge for Meliboeus in Nemesianus. Indeed, Nemesianus literalizes Vergil's metaphor of cosmic intercourse, further emphasizing his "scientific" focus. Just as Timetas expresses doubt as to the immortality of the soul, so also he invokes elemental divinities rather than the traditional gods (as Calpurnius' Corydon maintains is proper). Nemesianus appears to be struggling with the consolatory "answers" provided by the pastoral tradition.[34] His Meliboeus does not receive the same apotheosis as Vergil's Daphnis or Calpurnius' emperor. The "god in the city" has become entirely a metapoetical figure placed in the past, whose role nevertheless parallels that of Vergil's "god" and Calpurnius' emperor. Nemesianus sees himself as part of the pastoral tradition, but unable (again) to reproduce the divine forms of comfort and poetic inspiration found in his predecessors. Again, the political unrest of the third century may have led Nemesianus to feel some doubt about the political "solutions" to social troubles found in Augustan and Neronian pastoral.

Endelechius

Before proceeding to the Constantinian uses of classical Latin pastoral, it will be useful to jump ahead in time and examine an example of clearly Christian pastoral, the *De mortibus boum* of the late-fourth-century poet Endelechius.[35] The poem, which is cast in Asclepiadean stanzas rather than the normal hexameters, is in spite of its decidedly Christian tone distinctly pastoral and specifically Vergilian in character.[36] Like many of its predecessors, the *De mortibus boum* combines two Vergilian contexts in his poem. We are presented with a dialogue between two herdsmen, one of whom (Bucolus) is lamenting (in a manner similar to the Vergilian Meliboeus)[37] the loss of his flock to a plague (13–20). After a long description of the plague, a third herdsman, none other than Tityrus, reveals that the survival of his flock has been ensured by his conversion to Christianity, which may be effected by, among other things, going to visit a "god" in the "city":

> signum, quod perhibent esse crucis dei,
> magnis qui colitur solus in urbibus,
> Christus, perpetui gloria numinis,
>   cuius filius unicus
> hoc signum mediis frontibus additum
> cunctarum pecudum certa salus fuit.
>   (Endelech. *DMB* 105–10)

> The sign which is said to represent the cross of god who alone is worshipped in the big cities, Christ, the glory of the eternal Godhead whose only Son he is, this sign, marked in the center of the forehead, brought my cattle's sure salvation. (trans. White)

This time, of course, the "god in the city" turns out to be Christ. Once again we are faced with the theme of "Tityrus goes to the city." Amidst this Vergilian

bucolic setting is a striking set of allusions to *Georgics* 3, and the famous description of the plague contained there.[38]

Endelechius' use of Vergil's plague description in the *Georgics* is fairly easy to explain given the practice of other Christian appropriations of Vergil. Green has pointed out that the Constantinian poet Juvencus alludes in his Christian epic to Vergil's famous storm description in *Aeneid* 1.[39] The context of this allusion is his own description of a storm on the Sea of Galilee (2.25–38). Juvencus not only appropriates Vergil's language in order to present an "epic" storm, he also, as Green argues, "corrects" certain aspects of his Vergilian model to bring it more in line with a Christian epic narrative (Juvencus has Christ rebuke his disciples for fearing the storm, whereas Aeneas himself is portrayed by Vergil as quite afraid). This kind of intertextual correction may also be seen in Endelechius' use of the Vergilian plague description whereby he rejects Vergil's rational didactic in favor of a faith-based approach to dealing with the disease.

Vergil introduces his great account of the plague by exhorting the farmer to look for the appropriate signs (*causas et signa*, *Georg*. 3.440). He then urges the farmer to apply his "healing hands" (*medicas . . . manus*, *Georg*. 3.454–6) to his sick animals rather than rely upon prayers to the gods. Endelechius "corrects" Vergil by having his Aegon ask Bucolus why he has not applied his "healing hands" to his flock (*medicas manus*, 28). Bucolus responds first that there were not any signs (*signa*, 29) of warning and admits to his helplessness in the face of the speed with which the disease carried off its victims (30–2). It is after all this that Tityrus appears. Bucolus asks Tityrus "what god" (*quis . . . deus*, 102) has spared his flock in language that is obviously reminiscent of Vergil's first *Eclogue*, (*iste deus qui sit*, *Ecl*. 1.18). Endelechius' Tityrus answers this question with a single word: *signum* (105), which he then explains is the sign of the cross. The word *signum* also points to the *causas et signa* in the *Georgics* passage. Tityrus then goes on to say that faith in Christ is the best medicine for a healthy flock. Endelechius appropriates Vergil's plague description in order to the increase the pathos of his own poem, but in the end he inverts Vergil's didactic advice. It is precisely faith in the divine that protects one's flocks, not human "healing hands." The Vergilian "signs" of plague do not avail Bucolus; only the "sign" of the cross will help.

The Latin panegyrics

We now turn to Constantinian allusions to Latin pastoral, and in particular to their appropriation of the "god in the city" motif. Although the *Aeneid* was the main source of Vergilian material in the panegyrics, there are a fair number of allusions to the *Eclogues* as well.[40] The anonymous sixth panegyric (ca. 310) at two points alludes to Vergil's famous fourth *Eclogue*.[41] In both instances, as will be seen, the speaker is attempting to evoke the political reading of the *Eclogues* in order to praise Constantine, and thus to assimilate Constantine to the divine figures in pastoral. In the first passage we find the speaker describing Britain,

which had the honor of being the setting of the proclamation of Constantine as emperor. The speaker uses language that recalls Vergil's description of the Golden Age:

> *Merito te omnibus caeli ac soli bonis Natura donavit, in qua nec rigor est nimius hiemis nec ardor aestatis, in qua segetum tanta fecunditas ut muneribus utrisque sufficiat et Cereris et Liberi, in qua nemora sine immanibus bestiis, terra sine serpentibus noxiis, contra pecorum mitium innumerabilis multitudo lacte distenta et onusta velleribus . . .*
>
> (6.9.2)

> Justly has nature provided you [i.e. Britain] with all the gifts of heaven and earth, land in which neither the severity of winter nor the heat of summer is too great, in which there is such a fecundity of crops as to supply the gifts of both Ceres and Bacchus, in which there are forests without savage beasts, and lands without venomous snakes, but rather there is a countless multitude of peaceful herds distended with milk and laden with fleeces . . . (trans. Nixon and Rodgers)

In addition to the somewhat conventional elements in this description, frequently found in Roman landscape description,[42] the orator employs the phrase *lacte distenta* to refer to the full udders of the highly productive British sheep. This phrase constitutes a reminiscence of Vergil's description of the Golden Age: *ipsae lacte domum referent distenta capellae / ubera . . .* (*Ecl.* 4.21–2, "the goats will bring home their udders swollen with milk," trans. Fairclough and Goold). In addition, references to the lack of predatory animals and of dangerous snakes also recall Vergil's description.[43] Obviously the orator wants to associate Constantine generally with the Golden Age, but the allusion to the fourth *Eclogue* also serves to activate the prophetic context of the poem. This aspect may be seen in the speech's second allusion to Vergilian pastoral:

> *Vidisti enim, credo, Constantine, Apollinem tuum comitante Victoria coronas tibi laureas offerentem, quae tricenum singulae ferunt omen annorum. Hic est enim humanarum numerus aetatum quae tibi utique debentur ultra Pyliam senectutem. Et immo quid dico "credo"? Vidisti teque in illius specie recognovisti, cui totius mundi regna deberi vatum carmina divina cecinerunt.*
>
> (6.21.4–5)

> For you saw, I believe, O Constantine, your Apollo, accompanied by Victory, offering you laurel wreaths, each one of which carries a portent of thirty years. For this is the number of human ages which are owed to you without fail – beyond the old age of a Nestor. And – why do I say "I believe"? – you *saw*, and recognized yourself in the likeness of him to whom the divine songs of the bards had prophesied that rule over the whole world was due. (trans. Nixon and Rodgers)

In this passage (Constantine's famous "pagan vision") we find the phrase "your Apollo" (*Apollinem tuum*), which recalls the beginning of *Eclogue* 4, where the Golden Age is heralded by the rule of Apollo: *tuus iam regnat Apollo* (*Ecl*. 4.10, "now your Apollo rules").[44] The significance of the speech's so-called pagan vision has been hotly debated over the years.[45] But in any case it is clear that the speaker connects Constantine's vision of Apollo with poetic prophecy, as can be seen in the reference to the "divine songs of the bards (*vatum*)" in the final sentence of the passage.[46] Furthermore, it is clear that the speaker views Vergil's fourth *Eclogue* as a suitable vehicle for imperial praise. In the fourth *Eclogue* the rule of Apollo is conflated with the more traditional rule of Saturn (*Saturnia regna*, *Ecl*. 4.5), with whom the Golden Age is usually associated. Moreover, Augustus' appropriation of Apollo as a kind of imperial deity is well known.[47] Hence Vergil was probably trying to connect the mythical Golden Age with the incipient rule of Octavian/Augustus. Our speaker, it is clear, alludes to the Golden Age in order to elevate Britain as an appropriate place for the proclamation of Constantine. The association of Constantine and Apollo in the "pagan vision" section further suggests that the speaker is reading the fourth *Eclogue* as an imperial text. Hence the speaker of the sixth Panegyric seems to equate Constantine with a kind of pastoral divinity. This is consistent with Calpurnius' biographical reading of Vergil's first *Eclogue*, and constitutes a strong response to Nemesianus' doubt about pastoral gods. At the same time, however, the speaker keeps Apollo and Constantine separate, just as Nemesianus (*Ecl*. 1.81–3) separates his Apollo from the (now absent) god-emperor in the city.

While the speech of 310 vaguely associates Constantine with pastoral divinities, the speech of Nazarius in praise of Constantine (the fourth in the collection, ca. 321)[48] enacts many of the specific themes and narrative strategies of the pastoral tradition we have been tracing. In praising Constantine's restoration of order after the civil wars, Nazarius describes how Rome itself has been freed from many cares:

> *Ita pro se quaeque officiis suis functae fortitudo et liberalitas imperatoris cumulatissi-mam Vrbis beatitudinem <iniuria> exhaurienda et congerendis commodis reddider-unt. Facilior quidem, multo proclivior laedendi quam commodandi semper est via. . .*
> (4.33.4–5)

> Thus the Emperor's bravery and generosity each discharged its own duties, and rendered the City's happiness complete both by emptying her of misery and by heaping benefits upon her. The path of injury is always easier and much more downhill than the path of service . . . (trans. Nixon and Rodgers)

After mentioning the benefits that Constantine has bestowed upon Rome, Nazarius proceeds to an aphorism about how it is easier to destroy than to repair. As Roger Rees has pointed out, this aphorism points to the first book of Vergil's *Georgics*, and thus Nazarius likens Constantine to the Vergilian farmer

there.[49] The Vergilian farmer's toil (*labor*) is thematic in the *Georgics* where it is portrayed as the result of the fall from the Golden Age:[50] *pater ipse colendi / haud facilem esse viam voluit* (*Geo*. 1.121–2, "the great Father himself has willed that the path of husbandry should not run smooth," trans. Fairclough and Goold).[51] Moreover, Vergil himself is alluding to his own description of the Golden Age in the fourth *Eclogue*.[52] Thus Nazarius has established a Vergilian context for what follows, a context that activates the theme of the Golden Age in both the *Georgics* and the *Eclogues*.

Shortly after the Vergilian georgic aphorism, Nazarius proceeds to build upon the Vergilian foundation established just above. Here, via *praeteritio*, he details some of the ways in which Constantine has repaired the damage done in the civil war: *praetereo privatim reddita omnibus patrimonia quos illa monstrosa labes extorres domo fecerat* (4.33.7, "I pass over the return of their estates to all the individuals whom that monstrous plague had driven away from their homes," trans. Nixon and Rodgers). By itself this passage does seem particularly Vergilian, but the restoration of estates by the emperor following a civil war is, as we have seen, part of the tradition of interpretation of Vergil's first *Eclogue*. Nazarius reinforces this connection a little later when, after detailing further Constantine's virtues, he returns to his consideration of Rome itself:

> *Sensisti, Roma, tandem arcem te omnium gentium et terrarum esse reginam, cum ex omnibus provinciis optimates viros curiae tuae pignerareris, ut senatus dignitas non nomine quam re esset inlustrior, cum ex totius orbis flore constaret. Populi vero Romani vis illa et magnitudo venerabilis ad imaginem antiquitatis relata non licentia effrenis exsultat, non abiecta languide iacet, sed sic adsiduis divini principis monitis temperata est ut, cum ad nutum eius flexibilis et tenera ducatur, morigeram se non terrori eius praebeat sed benignitati. Placidam quippe rerum quietem et profundum Vrbi otium gentes perdomitae condiderunt.*
>
> (4.35.2–3)

> You felt at last, Rome, that you were the citadel of all nations and of all lands the queen, when you were promised the best men out of every province for your curia, so that the dignity of the Senate be no more illustrious in name than in fact, since it was composed of the flower of the whole world. Even that force and venerable greatness of the Roman people, restored to the likeness of its ancient self, does not exult in unrestrained license, does not lie feebly despondent, but has been so tempered by the constant admonitions of the divine ruler that since it is made pliant and soft to his will it shows itself obedient not to his fearsomeness but to his kindness. Vanquished nations have established quiet repose in the world and profound peace for the City. (trans. Nixon and Rodgers)

In this apostrophe to the city, Nazarius uses the phrase "queen of lands" (*terrarum . . . reginam*), which recalls similar phrases in Nemesianus and Calpurnius,[53] where they are employing the Vergilian "Tityrus in the city" trope. According

to this logic, Nazarius is portraying Rome as the queen of lands as a result of Constantine's efforts, and hence establishes Constantine in a position analogous to the god-youth in *Eclogue* 1. Nazarius' appeal to ancient history (*magnitudo venerabilis*; *ad imaginem antiquitatis*) reinforces this impression by creating continuity between the present Constantinian regime and previous "good" emperors including, presumably, Augustus.[54] Indeed the switch of tense from the present to the perfect (*exsultat* and *iacet* vs. *temperata est* makes it ambiguous whether the "divine ruler" (*divini principis*) refers to Constantine or the generic "good" emperor from Nazarius' conception of history. Finally note the leisure (*otium*) that Nazarius says Constantine has bestowed upon the city. This smacks of the Vergilian Tityrus' characterization of his pleasant situation (*O Meliboee, deus nobis haec otia fecit*, *Ecl*. 1.6), and of course recalls the source of this situation, the trip to the city.

To sum up, Nazarius appears to have established a fairly large-scale intertext with Vergil's first *Eclogue* as a means of praising Constantine and has done so following the generic cues in his predecessors. Within the context of describing the city of Rome under the new emperor (already a vaguely Vergilian gesture), Nazarius first sets up the expectation that we will find Vergilian elements in his speech by simultaneously alluding to the *Georgics* and the *Eclogues* in a manner that recalls Calpurnius and Nemesianus. Then he refers to Constantine's generosity in returning confiscated inheritances just before reflecting on the city as the "queen of lands" and a place of leisure, clearly employing the biographical-historical interpretation of Vergil's first *Eclogue*. All of this looks like a pretty standard reading of Vergil, along the lines of the readings of Calpurnius and Nemesianus. The same goes for the use of Vergil's fourth *Eclogue* in the sixth oration: Britain is compared straightforwardly to the Vergilian Golden Age. Notice that there are not yet any Christian overtones in either speech, as we find later in Endelechius. Indeed, Constantine himself purportedly interpreted the fourth *Eclogue* as a Christian allegory.[55] The panegyrics, where they allude to Latin pastoral, seem to stay firmly within the bounds of the interpretive tradition, and evidently within the spirit of the early years of Constantine's reign. At any rate, there is in the speeches certainly very little of the doubt about the divinity of the pastoral figures, as found in Nemesianus, and it is here that we may see the panegyrics actively engaging in the kind of intertextual "correction" we find in the classical tradition.

Juvencus

Our final test case of the Constantinian reception of classical pastoral is Juvencus, whose hexameter retelling of the Gospels dates from perhaps the 320s.[56] The Vergilian influence on Juvencus is evident everywhere in the poem.[57] As we might expect, reminiscences of the *Aeneid* predominate; there are however some allusions to the *Eclogues*. I will explore one of these allusions here.

Near the beginning of Book 2, Juvencus switches from using Matthew (his primary model throughout the poem) to John, and his version of the calling of

several disciples.[58] Among these is found the calling of Philip and Nathanael. In the narrative Jesus summons Philip, who then takes it upon himself to summon Nathanael: *En nostris, inquit, concessum est surgere saeclis, / quem voces veterum et sancti cecinere profetae.* ("Come, he [i.e. Philip] said, it has been granted in our age for him, of whom the voices of our elders and the sacred prophets sang, to rise up," *ELQ* 2.103–5).[59] In the Vulgate Philip refers to what is written in sacred texts (*scripsit*), while here Juvencus uses the more poetic word "sang" (*cecinere*). The collocation of this verb with the ideas of prophecy and the current age constitute a vague echo of the fourth *Eclogue* (*canamus*; *si canimus*; *ultima Cumaei venit iam carminis aetas*; *magnus . . . saeclorum . . . ordo*), and thus bring to mind the *Eclogues* generally. As Juvencus proceeds to narrate the encounter between Jesus and Nathanael, stronger allusions to the first *Eclogue* emerge. In their initial exchange Jesus proclaims Nathanael's virtues and Nathanael famously asks "From where did you know me?" (*ELQ* 2.113 ~ John 1.48). The following conversation ensues:

> "Cum te diffusae tegerent umbracula ficus,
> ante etiam quam te vocitarent verba Philippi,
> vidit et elegit comitem te spiritus auctor."
> Talibus attoniti sequitur vox Nathanahelis:
> "Progenies veneranda Dei, rex inclite gentis,
> tu populis manifesta salus vitaeque magister"
> Christus ad haec: "Facilis suasit tibi credere virtus,
> arborea quod te vidi recubare sub umbra;
> sed maiora dehinc rerum miracula restant.
> Cernetis pariter totum se scindere caelum
> atque Dei celeres aethram penetrare ministros,
> inde hominis nato claram deferre coronam."
> (*ELQ* 2.115–26)

"While the shadow of the spreading fig tree covered you, even before the words of Philip summoned you, the creator of your soul saw and selected you as my companion." Astonished by such things, Nathanael said: "Revered offspring of God, glorious king of the people, you are the manifest savior of the people and the master of life." Christ responded: "Easily does virtue persuade you to believe, because I saw you lying under the shade of a tree. But greater wonders than these remain. You will perceive at the same time heaven splitting itself apart and the swift servants of God penetrating the aether and bestowing a shining crown on the Son of Man."

As in the Vulgate, Jesus twice mentions the fig tree under which Nathanael had been resting. What is significant for our purposes is the ornate language that Juvencus employs. The shade (*umbracula*) and the verb "cover" (*tegerent*) in Jesus' first mention of the tree, as well as his overall phrasing in the second reference (*arborea quod te vidi recubare sub umbra*), all point to the famous opening of Vergil's first *Eclogue: Titryre, tu patulae recubans sub tegmine fagi* ("you, Tityrus, lie

under the canopy of a spreading beech ...," *Ecl.* 1.1).[60] Juvencus' use of *tegerent* (~*tegmine*) and *recubare* (~*recubans*) are by themselves sufficiently evocative of the Vergilian context. Moreover, the adjective *diffusae* ("spread wide, extended") seems to be a reminiscence of Vergil's *patulae* ("spreading"), also used of a tree. All of this goes well beyond the Vulgate's very plain narration: *cum esses sub ficu* ("when you were beneath the fig tree," John 1.48); *vidi te sub ficu* ("I saw you beneath the fig tree," John 1.50) and pretty clearly marks a conscious allusive flourish on Juvencus' part.

Here I would suggest that Juvencus is appropriating the "Tityrus in Rome" trope in order to invert the context of his model text. Just as he does in his appropriation of descriptions of storms in Latin epic to describe the storm on the Sea of Galilee,[61] so here Juvencus uses a classical model to enhance the stature of Jesus. In Vergil's first *Eclogue*, we remember that Meliboeus discovers Tityrus at ease in the shade of a beech tree, peacefully composing poetry. During the course of their conversation we learn that Tityrus has been fortunate enough to have his appeal to an authority figure (the youth-god) in Rome heard and granted. Tityrus' trip to Rome is motivated by his new girlfriend, Amaryllis. In Juvencus, Jesus himself has seen Nathanael under the tree. Even though Philip seems to summon Nathanael unbidden, it is clear that Jesus all along is behind Nathanael's calling. Hence the sequence of events is run backward: Nathanael starts out at his ease beneath a tree, then visits the "god-youth" and has his spiritual experience. With the Vergilian Tityrus, as we have seen, it is the other way round: Tityrus visits the god-youth and consequently is able to compose poetry in a shady spot. In a sense, Juvencus "corrects" Vergil by showing how divine motivation ought to work: one should not be motivated by one's girlfriend to seek the god, but it is the god himself who summons his followers.

At the end of our episode, Juvencus turns to the prophetic statement that Jesus makes, according to John, immediately after addressing Nathanael. Here Juvencus has again modified his source with Vergilian language. First he embellishes upon the Vulgate's *maius his videbis* (John 1.50, "you will see something greater than these things") with *sed maiora dehinc rerum miracula restant* (*ELQ* 2.123, "but greater wonders than these remain"). This is evidently an allusion to the *Georgics*, where Proteus' shape-changing abilities are described: *omnia transformat sese in miracula rerum* (*Geo.* 4.441, "he changes himself into all wondrous shapes," trans. Fairclough and Goold). Furthermore, in the lines immediately following, Juvencus describes the opening of heaven: *cernetis pariter totum se scindere caelum / atque Dei celeres aethram penetrare ministros* (*ELQ* 2.124–5, "you will perceive at the same time heaven splitting itself open, and the swift servants of god penetrating the aether"). Here Juvencus alludes to Vergil's description of Aeneas' sudden appearance before Dido: *cum circumfusa repente / scindit se nubes et in aethera purgat apertum* (*Aen.* 1.586–7, "when the encircling cloud suddenly parts and clears into open heaven," trans. Fairclough and Goold). Juvencus uses the breaking up of the mist as the model for his sky splitting open, and transforms the mist's dispersal into the *aether* into the angels' penetration of the *aether*. Juvencus transforms the plain language of the Vulgate, in which the angels fly

around the head of the Son of Man, into an actual crown.[62] We could perhaps see here another attempt on Juvencus' part to "correct" Vergil, by showing how his Christian version of the scene is more "divine" than Vergil's. The miracles that Jesus predicts will be more wondrous than the shape-changing of Proteus, and the appearance of the angels is more striking than Aeneas' sudden appearance in Carthage. Indeed, in a typical piece of classical allusive polemic, Juvencus has borrowed a plain comparative (*maius*) from the Vulgate, and transformed it into a statement of poetic superiority, where within the allusive context "greater than these" (*maiora dehinc*) refers to the *Georgics*.[63]

There is perhaps another side of this, however. We have noted how Juvencus alludes to the *Eclogues* through his description of Nathanael's repose under the fig tree. This sets up the expectation that the rest of the passage too is meant to be read according to the logic of the pastoral tradition, including its insistence on collocating the "god in the city" motif with allusions to the *Georgics*. We saw how Jesus' statement of prophecy appears to allude to Proteus in the *Georgics*. Hence Jesus' description of the opening of heaven, in addition to its apparent allusion to the *Aeneid*, could be understood against the background of the *Eclogues* and *Georgics* as well. Here the key is the word *aethram*. We saw how Calpurnius and Nemesianus both alluded to *aether* as a kind of metapoetic metaphor within poems that also evoke the "Tityrus in Rome" motif. For Calpurnius to speak of the *aether* is to engage in a kind of cosmological epic (Calp. 4.82). Nemesianus responded to this by having Timetas open his panegyric of Meliboeus with an appeal to the personified *Aether* by alluding to the epic *Georgics* (Nemes. 1.35–7; cf. Verg. *Geo.* 2.325–7). Hence it appears that Juvencus is alluding to this nexus of ideas within the pastoral tradition, in addition to his obvious heroic concerns in alluding to the *Aeneid*. Jesus' pronouncements take on an epic character based upon the expectations embedded in Calpurnius' and Nemesianus' responses to Vergil. In Calpurnius we saw how the allusion to epic *aether* is made in comparison to the task of praising the emperor (and, by extension, his intermediary Meliboeus). In Nemesianus, we saw how Timetas' invocation of *Aether* introduces his panegyric of Meliboeus, an apparent patron figure. In Juvencus the angels penetrate the *aether*, and hence surpass the cosmological epic narratives proposed by the pastoral tradition. Moreover, Juvencus portrays the *aether* as part of the divine machinery, and not as an alternative to it, as in Nemesianus. Hence we may see an attempt on Juvencus' part to resolve Nemesianus' doubts about the divinity of pastoral figures.

The emperor too plays a role in this pastoral logic. Juvencus is careful to praise Constantine and Christ in ways that are appropriate to their station, while avoiding any overtly dangerous comparisons. Yet Vergilian language is still apparent in Juvencus' praise of Constantine. All this is apparent in the epilogue of *ELQ*, where the overall structure is an imitation of the epilogue of the *Georgics*, with Christ replacing the Vergilian Tityrus:[64]

> *Has mea mens fidei vires sanctique timoris*
> *cepit et in tantum lucet mihi gratia Christi,*

versibus ut nostris divinae gloria legis
ornamenta libens caperet terrestria linguae.
Haec mihi pax Christi tribuit, pax haec mihi saecli,
quam fovet indulgens terrae regnator apertae
Constantinus, adest cui gratia digna merenti,
qui solus regum sacri sibi nominis horret
inponi pondus, quo iustis dignior actis
aeternam capiat divina in saecula vitam
per dominum lucis Christum, qui in saecula regnat.

(*ELQ* 4.802–12)

My mind has taken this strength of faith and sacred wonder, and the grace of Christ shines on me so much that the glory of divine law has eagerly taken the earthly ornaments of speech in my poetry. The peace of Christ has given this to me, and the peace of the age, which the generous ruler of the wide world, Constantine, nourishes. He has earned worthy grace. He alone of kings shrinks from having the weight of a sacred name placed upon him. Because of this, more worthy because of just acts, he may assume eternal life in divine ages through Christ, lord of light, who rules through the ages.

Notice how Juvencus cleverly establishes an analogy that compares the relationship between divine inspiration and his own earthly poetry on the one hand, to the relationship between Christ and Constantine on the other. The poet and the "earthly ornaments" of rhetoric are inspired by Christ, just as the emperor acts as steward to the peace of Christ. The word "grace" (*gratia*) links poet and emperor, and hence both will have a kind of everlasting life: Juvencus makes this explicit in the case of Constantine, but implication is that he, like many classical poets before him, will achieve a kind of poetic immortality. The opening of Vergil's fourth *Eclogue* contains a metaphor that effectively equates the pastoral genre with politics: *si canimus silvas, silvae sint consule dignae* (*Ecl*. 4.3, "if we sing of forests, let the forests be worthy of a consul"). The poem then immediately moves to the prophecy of the Golden Age and the rule of Apollo (*Ecl*. 4.4–10). Juvencus appears to combine all this in his phrase *Christum, qui in saecula regnat*. This recalls both the Golden Age prophecy (*magnus . . . ordo . . . saeclorum*) and the rule of Apollo (*tuus iam regnat Apollo*) in Vergil's fourth *Eclogue*. Here emperor and God are placed side by side as rulers of the Vergilian Golden Age in a distinctly Christian re-enactment of the venerable "god in the city" motif.

Conclusion

The Constantinian reception of classical pastoral thus falls within the interpretive tradition of reading historical circumstances into Vergil's *Eclogues*. Juvencus clearly employs a Christian reading of Vergil's first *Eclogue* (anticipating Endelechius), replacing the pastoral "god in the city" with Christ. The panegyrics, on

the other hand, retain the emperor in the position of "god in the city," along with its various pagan associations. Nevertheless both Juvencus and the pan- egyrists understand the Vergilian god as a stand-in for a real historical figure. Moreover, all three texts seem to respond to the religious doubt introduced by Nemesianus. Juvencus in particular illustrates how Christian pastoral in the manner of Endelechius was possible in the Constantinian period. Moreover it is clear that the Constantinian writers are fully capable of working within the intricacies of the classical pastoral tradition, while at the same time they are able to strike out in new directions just like their classical predecessors, especially through the use of the intertextual device of "correction."

Notes

1 On the post-classical Latin pastoral tradition see Alpers, 1996; Cooper, 1977; Green, 2004; Hubbard, 1998, pp. 45–246. On Constantinian literature see Hose, 2007. On the reception of Greek pastoral in the European tradition see Rosenmeyer, 1969.

2 For post-classical appropriations of Vergil's *Eclogues* see Green, 2004. For post-classical appropriations of Calpurnius and Nemesianus see Mustard, 1916. On tropes and genre in Latin literature generally see Conte, 1996.

3 Text of Vergil's *Eclogues*: Mynors, 1969. Commentaries on Vergil's *Eclogues*: Clausen, 1994 and Coleman, 1977. Text and commentary of Calpurnius: Korzeniewski, 1971. Text and commentary of Nemesianus: Korzeniewski, 1976; see also Williams, 1986. Text and com- mentary of Endelechius: Barton, 2000 and Korzeniewski, 1976. Text and commentary of the Latin Panegyrics: Nixon and Rodgers, 1994. Text of Juvencus: Heumer, 1891.

4 On the "Tityrus in the city" trope see Küppers, 1989. On Christian appropriations of the trope see Barton 2000, pp. 66–97 and Schmid, 1976.

5 Clausen, 1994, pp. 29–30. On historical-allegorical interpretations of Vergil's *Eclogues* generally see Starr, 1995, pp. 131–4.

6 See Winterbottom, 1976.

7 There is some controversy regarding the dating of Calpurnius (see now Karakasis, 2011, pp. 36–7). For my purposes it does not matter much if Calpurnius is dated to the reign of Nero or later.

8 On Calpurnius' fourth *Eclogue* generally see Schröder, 1991 and now Karakasis, 2011, pp. 239–79. On Calpurnius' allegorical readings of Vergil generally see Langholf, 1990.

9 Küppers, 1989, pp. 39–41.

10 On the issue of the identity of Meliboeus see Bartalucci, 1976, p. 93; Magnelli, 2006, p. 471 n. 18; Simon, 2007, p. 53 n. 45; Verdière, 1954, pp. 49–51.

11 Schröder, 1991, p. 26 with n. 8.

12 Clausen, 1994, p. 152 n. 4.

13 Langholf, 1990, p. 364.

14 Clausen, 1994, pp. 31–2.

15 Specifically Aratus' *Phaenomena* (Karakasis, 2011, p. 260; cf. Schröder, 1991, pp. 145–47).

16 On the *Georgics* as a source for Calpurnius see the bibliography in Hubbard, 1998, p. 158 n. 31. On the *Georgics* in Calpurnius' fifth *Eclogue* see now Esposito, 2012.

17 On Nemesianus generally see Green, 2004, pp. 18–21; Himmelmann-Wildschütz, 1972; Hubbard, 1998, pp. 178–212; Paladini, 1956; Schetter, 1975; Walter, 1988.

18 See Korzeniewski, 1976, p. 110.

19 See Hubbard, 1998, pp. 179–80; and Paladini, 1956, p. 319.

20 Schetter, 1975, p. 6.

21 Nemesianus most strongly signals his status as successor to Vergil by beginning his poem with an allusion to the end of *Ecl.* 10, see Green, 2004, pp. 18–9.

22 Nemesianus also combines allusions to Vergil's first *Eclogue* and to the *Georgics* later on: "*namque prius siccis phocae pascentur in arvis . . .*" (Nemes. 1.75) points to the *adynaton* at Verg. *Ecl*. 1.59–63 but uses language from *Georg*. 3.543 (Paladini, 1956, pp. 326–7). The *Georgics* passage is the end of the plague passage and is characterized as a kind of anti-Golden Age (Thomas, 1988, p. 141).

23 For bibliography on the "georgic" elements in Calpurnius' fourth *Eclogue* see Karakasis, 2011, p. 254 n. 77 and p. 267 n. 135. On Nemesianus and Endelechius and the *Georgics* see below. On Sedulius and the *Georgics* see Cooper, 1977, p. 18. Modoin alludes to the *Georgics* in a context that is overall reminiscent of Vergil's first *Eclogue* (Modoin *Ecl*. 1.55–6 ~ *Geo*. 1.30–1).

24 Paladini, 1956, p. 324.

25 Cf. Verg. *Ecl*. 5.13–14 and Calp. *Ecl*. 4.130. See Hubbard, 1998, p. 181 and Paladini, 1956, p. 322.

26 Cf. Hubbard, 1998, p. 182 on the comparison of Vergil's Daphnis and Nemesianus' Meliboeus. Further allusions to Vergil's fifth *Eclogue*: Nemes. *Ecl*. 1.65 and 68 ~ Verg. *Ecl*. 5.35; Nemes. *Ecl*. 1.72–4 ~ Verg. *Ecl*. 5.62–4.

27 Schetter, 1975, p. 7; Walter, 1988, p. 26–7.

28 Cf. Schetter, 1975, pp. 2–4.

29 Paladini, 1956, p. 324.

30 On these issues see Himmelmann-Wildschütz, 1972.

31 In this paper I use the word "generic" and "generically" in the restricted sense that is connected with the idea of genre.

32 Schetter, 1975, p. 18 says that Nemesianus' Meliboeus is "einer von uns."

33 Paladini, 1956, p. 324. Note that the content of the speech itself contains no significant echoes of Vergil's fifth *Eclogue*, but strikes out on its own (Schetter, 1975, p. 25).

34 Nemesianus is in some way interacting with funereal discourse (See Himmelmann-Wildschütz, 1972). Many of his sentiments have much in common with later funereal epigrams, some of which are definitely Christian. In some cases these poems seem to alluded directly to Nemesianus. In *Ecl*. 1 we find the following examples: *Ecl*. 1.19 ~ *CLE* 704.1–2 and 724.4 (definitely Christian); *Ecl*. 1.40 is quoted by *CLE* 755.2–4; *Ecl*. 1.45 ~ *CLE* 705.1 and 742.5 (definitely Christian).

35 On Endelechius see Barton, 2000; Green, 2004, pp. 23–8; Schmid, 1976, pp. 67–96. Other Christian appropriations of the Vergil's *Eclogues* may be found in Pomponius' cento *Versus ad gratiam Domini* (see McGill, 2001) and in an exchange between Ausonius and Paulinus (see Roberts, 1985).

36 On the structure and meter of the poem see Barton, 2000, pp. 30–2. On the poem's character see Barton, 2000, p. 73. There is some precedent for Endelechius' bold change of meter. The Antonine poet Septimius Serenus (mid to late second century) apparently wrote an *opuscula ruralia* in a variety of lyric meters (see Courtney, 1993, pp. 406–22). Hence we may consider Endelechius' poem to be the earliest (and only surviving) example of "true" (as opposed to centonic) pastoral from Late Antiquity.

37 Barton, 2000, p. 54 n. 77.

38 Endelech. *DMB* 21–4~Verg. *Geo*. 3.469, 474–7; Endelech. *DMB* 27–8 ~ Verg. *Geo*. 3.454–6; Endelch. *DMB* 45–7~Verg. *Geo*. 3.515–18; Endelech. *DMB* 51~Verg. *Geo*. 3.506–7; Endelech. *DMB* 85–8~Verg. *Geo*. 4.470–1. On the plague passage generally see Barton, 2000, pp. 97–131.

39 Green, 2006, pp. 61–2.

40 Nixon and Rodgers, 1994, p. 16. Other Vergilian allusions in the Constantinian panegyrics: *Pan. Lat*. 12.12.3 quotes *Geo*. 1.508; *Pan. Lat*. 12.22.2 points to *Geo*. 1.71; *Pan. Lat*. 5.6.2 possibly alludes to *Geo*. 1.47.

41 We may compare this to Constantine's own Christian interpretation of Vergil's fourth *Eclogue* in the *Oration to Saints* (see Edwards, 1999).

42 Particularly conventional are the references to the mild climate. See Nisbet and Hubbard, 1978, pp. 95–6 (on Hor. *Carm*. 2.6) on the rhetorical traditions of landscape panegyric.

43 Lions do not harm flocks: "*nec magnos metuent armenta leones*" (*Ecl.* 4.22); no snakes: "*occidet et serpens*" (*Ecl.* 4.24).

44 Nixon and Rodgers, 1994, p. 250 n. 92.

45 On the issues with Constantine's "pagan vision" see Rodgers, 1980.

46 Originally *vates* means prophet (Varro, *LL* 7.36, cf. Newman, 1967, pp. 14–5). The term is used self-referentially by Augustan poets as an affectation that mingles the old meaning of prophet with the newer connotation of poet (Mayer, 2012, p. 61). See Clausen, 1994, pp. 277–8 for Vergilian usage of the term.

47 On Augustus and Apollo see now Miller, 2009.

48 See Nixon and Rodgers, 1994, p. 338 on date.

49 Rees, 2004, p. 41. Nazarius' collocation "*facilior . . . est via*" recalls Vergil's "*haud facilem esse viam.*"

50 Thomas, 1988, pp. 16–24. Golden Age: Verg. *Geo.* 1.125: "*ante Iovem nulli subigebant arva coloni.*" Cf. Thomas, 1988, p. 88.

51 Rees, 2004, p. 41.

52 Note the following verbal parallel: "*ipsaque tellus / omnia liberius nullo poscente ferebant*" (*Geo.* 1.127–8) ~ "*omnis feret omnia tellus*" (*Ecl.* 4.39).

53 "*dominam deduxit in urbem*" (Calp. 4.161) ~ "*dominam perducat in urbem*" (Nemes. *Ecl.* 1.83).

54 This parallels the way in which *spolia* from the monuments of the "good emperors" were incorporated into the Arch of Constantine. For bibliography see Elsner, 2000, p. 152 with footnotes. I owe this observation to Shane Bjornlie.

55 See Edwards, 1999. Constantine's declaration of his Christianity is vexed: see contributions from DePalma Digeser and Drake in this volume.

56 On Juvencus see Green, 2006, pp. 1–134. Juvencus is certainly Constantinian, as the epilogue to his poem shows (see below).

57 See now Green, 2006, pp. 15–23 and 50–71; Roberts, 2004.

58 Green, 2006, p. 25.

59 All translations, unless otherwise noted, are those of the author.

60 Green, 2006, p. 58. Cf. Calp. 4.37: "*per te secura saturi recubamus in umbra.*"

61 See my earlier discussion on Endelechius.

62 John 1.51: "*et dicit ei: 'Amen, amen dico vobis videbitis caelum apertum et angelos Dei ascendentes et descendentes supra Filium hominis.'*" Cf. *ELQ* 2.125: "*inde hominis nato claram deferre coronam* [sc. *ministros*].*"

63 On this kind of comparative intertextual interplay in classical epic see Hardie, 1993, pp. 4–10.

64 See Sandnes, 2011, pp. 55–8 on the imitation of the epilogue to the *Georgics* here.

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3 Platonism in the palace

The character of Constantine's theology[1]

Elizabeth DePalma Digeser

Historians are fond of celebrating anniversaries. For example, 2013 marked the 1,700th year since an edict, issued in the names of the emperors Constantine and Licinius, promised religious liberty to all Roman citizens, an event often linked to Constantine's presumed battlefield conversion the year before. At least as important as Constantine's conversion, however, is the character of the Christianity that he came to espouse. In looking at Constantine's own words as a source, together with a text of his courtier, the Christian scholar Lactantius, I will suggest that the emperor's Christianity was substantially different from the faith that his biographer the bishop Eusebius of Caesarea describes and which most historians have assumed he promoted – whether or not sincerely. Indeed, Constantine's brand of Christianity was likely instrumental in the almost unprecedented stability of his reign, especially once he gained the East in 324.[2]

What Eusebius elided in his biography of the emperor is that Constantine's Christianity was deeply entangled with ideas that came from contemporary philosophical circles, specifically late Platonist groups which also valued Hermetic wisdom. That people in the early fourth century used Plato as a guide to theology and the good life is not unfamiliar to many of us. More surprising, perhaps, is that many of these Platonist devotees – educated enthusiasts more than philosophers – thought that the legendary ancient Egyptian wise man Hermes Trismegistus was the *source* of Plato's wisdom. Accordingly works attributed to Hermes circulated in these groups along with Platonic texts and commentaries on them. Although most scholars think that the extant Hermetic texts were written fairly late in the second or third century in Greek, some actually do bear traces of more ancient Egyptian theology expressed in Platonist terms.[3] This chapter will consider the evidence for these aspects of Constantine's theology, their probable source, and the role they may have played in the emperor's success.

The first evidence comes from 325. The scene is the Council of Nicaea where bishops have gathered from across the empire at Constantine's behest. Their task was to determine how best to describe the relationship between God the Father and God the Son so that all Christians might have a formula about which they could agree. Scholars have long puzzled over Constantine's

contribution to this conference, namely, his suggestion that the word *homoousios* (consubstantial) would usefully define the relationship between the Father and the Son for the creed that was the goal of the episcopal meeting. According to a letter to his congregation from Eusebius of Caesarea, a council participant,[4] Constantine himself had suggested this word. According to Eusebius, the emperor did not mean by this term to suggest that the Son was a physical part of the Father, but was consubstantial in a "divine," immaterial sense.[5]

Eusebius' account to the Caesareans lies at the heart of two related problems. The first issue is that it exposes ambivalence toward *homoousios* among the early fourth century Christian leadership. "They were intent on adding the word," Eusebius says, revealing his own discomfort after Arius' controversial formulation of the relationship between the Father and the Son had led to the council of Nicaea.[6] In a letter to Alexander of Alexandria, his bishop, Arius reveals his own opposition to the term for its Manichaean associations implying that Christ was merely a material part of the Father.[7] Lest we think that only those, like Eusebius, sympathetic to Arius' theology opposed the term, Ossius, bishop of Cordova and Constantine's advisor, may have advocated the creed at the council (a possibility addressed later),[8] but he dropped the term altogether at the Council of Serdica in 343, using *mia hypostasis* (one essence or one substance) instead to describe the Son's relationship to the Father.[9] Many modern historians have assumed that Alexander of Alexandria was also uncomfortable with the term,[10] although Mark Edwards suggests that it was consistent with his theology.[11] In the end, historians tend to follow the lead of Ambrose of Milan who, writing half a century later, hinted that political utility led the bishops to insert the word in the creed in order to "refute" the Arians, who had consistently rejected it.[12]

As an early advocate for the term, Ossius in his later discomfort points to a more serious difficulty with the expression *homoousios*: namely, that it was not a word from Scripture or common to earlier Christian theological writing. Indeed, the term *homoousios* was rarely used to apply to the relationship between the father and the son before the council of Nicaea,[13] except by Origen of Alexandria who was "scrupulously" careful to "avoid the attribution of material properties" to God.[14] As we have already seen, it was a "stumbling block for all the people attending the council," Arians *and* their opponents. For this reason, "it soon disappeared" in the subsequent debates.[15]

Reckoning that Constantine lacked the philosophical or theological "sophistication" to devise the term, most historians have viewed the ambivalence surrounding the term *homoousios* as reason to call into question Eusebius' identification of Constantine as the source of the term. This is the second issue that Eusebius' letter raises. To some the word's checkered associations indicate that the emperor was probably under the influence of advisors – and not very savvy ones at that.[16] Even Edwards, who argues that the term *homoousios* had more favorable connotations in Egyptian circles, finds it impossible to believe that the emperor had the "dialectical aptitude or even the command of Greek that would have been required of an interlocutor at the conference."[17] Thus,

while acknowledging that his argument means that Eusebius misrepresented the situation "in a public document," Edwards falls back on Ambrose's narrative, arguing that it allows for Alexander, whose theology was already congruent with the term, to have worked in concert with Ossius to propose the term to Constantine, with all parties also recognizing the word's political utility.[18]

Must we, however, discount Eusebius? His letter is the earliest narrative of events. Moreover, Athanasius – who was there and no great friend of Eusebius – accepts the bishop's account of events, even appending his letter to the Caesareans to the end of his *Defense of the Nicene Definition (De decretis Nicaenae synodi)*.[19] Ambrose's account is very late (over half a century after the events), and he was not there. Conversely, the Arians themselves said that Ossius had presented the creed,[20] and many modern historians also see him as the prime mover.[21] Since, as we will see, the term *homoousios* is compatible with Constantine's theology apart from the Council of Nicea, one way to reconcile all of these accounts is to posit that Constantine suggested it, and Ossius promoted it – at least temporarily.[22]

As it happens, even if *homoousios* was a stumbling block for the Christians at Nicaea, the term does appear in the creedal sense within a different scriptural tradition – that of Hermetism.[23] According to the *Thesaurus Linguae Graecae*, apart from Origen, the only places where the term *homoousios* is used in the same sense as in the creed are several Hermetic treatises.[24] The most important is the *Poimandres*, the first treatise of the *Corpus Hermeticum*.[25] In this text, God is expressed by *nous*, or Mind, and the *logos* proceeds from him as the Son of God. "Nous," the text says, "comes from the very essence of god, but has not been cut off from God's essentiality and has expanded like the light of the sun." The text goes on to say that the logos, the Son of God, was "of the same substance (*homoousios*)" as Nous, its source (or Father).[26] The *Asclepius* too – at least, in the Greek version – indicates a consubstantial relationship between the Father and the Son.[27] These formulations cohere with Constantine's conception of the term at Nicaea.

Contrary to the view of scholars who downplay the emperor's cultural literacy, the term *homoousios* is not an isolated example of Hermetic concepts in Constantine's theological vocabulary, for the emperor also draws upon a Hermetic tradition in setting out the relationship between the Father and the Son in his *Oration to the Saints (Oratio ad sancorum coetum)*. The dates and venue that scholars have proposed for this speech have varied wildly across the years, with T. D. Barnes most recently fixing it at Nicomedia at Easter time in 325, and Bruno Bleckmann, dating it a few years after the Council of Nicaea, in 328.[28] Perhaps the best practice in considering this speech as a source is to follow Eusebius, who says that it was the kind of speech the emperor used to give – implying that he may have given different versions at different times. In any case, Constantine commends Plato for distinguishing between two gods, the Father and the Son, and encouraging people to "raise their eyes from the <physical> senses to what the mind perceives," namely, a god who is above being. Subordinated to him is a second god. Both have "a single perfection and

the being of the second god" has the essence from the first (god).[29] Here too there is an echo of the Hermetic treatise, *Asclepius*.

Thus there is a consistency across the glimpses we get of Constantine's theology that could arise in one of two ways. Either there is something in his own formation that would explain his affinity for Hermetic concepts, or indeed a close advisor (someone other than Ossius, perhaps) might have guided the emperor's religious policy. What we know of Constantine's early background does not place him in known hotspots of Hermetic/Platonist activity. We know very little about Constantine's early years, although there are a few hints in sources such as the *Origo Constantini imperatoris*, Lactantius' *On the Deaths of the Persecutors* (*De mortibus persecutorum*), and several Latin panegyrics. Born at Naissus in 272/3,[30] in what is now Niš, Serbia, Constantine probably spent his youth in the West since his father was governor of Dalmatia (at Salona) in the mid-280s, before moving to Trier, first as praetorian prefect (288) and then as the Herculean Caesar, that is, junior emperor in the West (293).[31] At this time, there were four emperors who had divided the empire among themselves. According to two Latin panegyrics,[32] Constantine left the West as a youth to serve as tribune for the emperors Galerius and Diocletian, junior and senior emperors of the East, respectively. During this time the *Origo* says that Constantine saw military action in Asia (*sub eisdem fortiter in Asia militavit*),[33] although we do not know of any specific military action under either emperor in that province at that time. By 303, however, Constantine was certainly at Diocletian's court in Nicomedia, where he apparently resided until 305.[34] Barnes envisions Constantine traveling widely with Diocletian and Galerius between 293 (as a man of twenty) and 303 (now thirty),[35] but these suppositions rest on little solid evidence.[36] Even if the young man did see Babylon and Memphis in the entourage of Diocletian,[37] it is still likely that Constantine spent some considerable time at the Nicomedian court from 299 to 305 – six years precisely when Lactantius was there. Naissus, Salona, Trier, Babylon, Memphis, Nicomedia – none of these cities is known for being home to Hermetic circles. Admittedly, it is extremely difficult to pinpoint where Hermetic circles do exist in the third and early fourth centuries. There is only a very sketchy manuscript tradition for individual treatises from this period, and there was no corpus as such, so we are limited to identifying the place where people who cite them are living. Certain venues are Nag Hammadi in upper Egypt where Hermetica appeared in a fourth-century Gnostic library, Alexandria where they were known to Clement, Carthage where they were known to Tertullian, Daphne near Antioch where they were known to Iamblichus (although he was also in Alexandria), Athens where they were known to Athenagoras, and probably Rome, where they were known to Porphyry (although it is possible that he came in contact with them in Carthage).[38]

The years that Constantine spent at the Nicomedian court, 299 to 305 – after which he joined his emperor father in Trier – indicate that he was there when Diocletian issued the edicts of persecution against Christians in 303. They are also precisely the years when the Christian rhetorician, professor, and

public intellectual, Lactantius, was in Nicomedia.[39] We then lose track of Lactantius until 310, six years after Constantine's accession, when he reappears at the court in Trier to tutor the emperor's son, Crispus, a relationship suggesting that Constantine and Lactantius were already fairly well acquainted at the Nicomedian court.[40] I suggest that Lactantius is the source of Constantine's Hermetic vocabulary.

For, as it happens, Lactantius is the first early Christian author whose work demonstrates a thorough grounding in Hermetic literature.[41] Indeed, he is the only other extant Christian author to develop a systematic link between Christianity and Hermetic Platonism.[42] For Lactantius, Hermetism is one of the foundations upon which he develops the argument of the *Divine Institutes* (*Divinarum institutionum libri VII*), a treatise that he wrote between 305 and 310 and is steeped in Hermetic sources.[43] In this seven-book work of political theology, written to refute the arguments against Christianity made by those who incited the persecution,[44] Lactantius stated that the priests and philosophers behind the pogrom used divine testimonies to justify their theology and cults.[45] He uses his treatise to do the same thing, but eschews Christian Scripture – the validity of which he says the opposition rejects – and argues instead that the opposition should be refuted "as far as possible by authorities which" they themselves acknowledge.[46] Of these divine testimonies, two are prominent: the writings of Hermes Trismegistus and the oracles of Apollo (including those via the Sibyl). Throughout the *Divine Institutes*, Lactantius draws repeatedly on their testimony as evidence for the tenets of Christian doctrine.

Saving the oracles of Apollo for another paper, I will touch briefly on the role that Hermetic wisdom played in Lactantius' own work, before showing how the professor's doctrine might have shaped Constantine's theology and discussing the significance these doctrines had in the palace. Here we have the help of Arnobius, an African apologist from Sicca under whom Lactantius studied.[47] Writing at the same time as Lactantius also to attack the instigators of the Great Persecution,[48] Arnobius, in his *Against the Nations (Disputationes adversus nationes)*, especially addresses himself to "those who hate the name of Christ," who "bring forward arguments against us," who want "the Christian name" to be "degraded," those who have united around their devotion to Mercury (the Latin name for Hermes), Plato, and Pythagoras and their opposition to Christianity.[49] Michael Bland Simmons demonstrated fifteen years ago that one of Arnobius' primary targets was Porphyry of Tyre, the late Platonist philosopher who applied his formidable intellect to undermining Christian doctrine and whom Eusebius implicates in the efforts that led up to the Great Persecution.[50] So we have in Arnobius a clear connection between late Platonism, the advocates of persecution, and the authority of Hermetic wisdom. Arnobius' testimony deserves to be taken seriously, for he speaks as a convert from this school: prompted in a dream to take up Christianity, he was prevented by the bishop of Carthage from joining the church until he forsook his former beliefs.[51] It would seem that Arnobius, then, used to belong to a circle of late Platonists devoted to Hermes and Pythagoras.[52]

Another late Platonist who belongs in this circle is Iamblichus of Chalcis, a student of Porphyry. Although he is seldom mentioned in connection with the Great Persecution, he was teaching in Daphne near Antioch at the cusp of the fourth century. As it happens, Hierocles, one of the key figures inciting Diocletian to launch the persecution,[53] had not only spent the years just before the persecution as an official in Antioch,[54] but he was also deeply familiar with Porphyry's arguments against Christianity – about which he would have had the opportunity to learn from Iamblichus in Antioch's suburb of Daphne.[55] Iamblichus himself favored Hermetic wisdom in his *On the Mysteries* (*De mysteriis*), written probably in the early 290s. Indeed, in building his own theological system, Iamblichus had linked Egyptian Hermetic theology to Pythagorean and late Platonist metaphysics.[56] For the importance of Hermes to Iamblichus, one need read no farther than the second chapter of *On the Mysteries* where the philosopher asserts that he will adopt a Hermetic perspective throughout the work. Not only did Hermetic tradition ground Iamblichus' staunch emphasis on material sacrifice,[57] a ritual that the persecution strove to reinvigorate, but the philosopher also claims that Hermes was the ultimate source for Plato's religious insight.[58]

In light of the late Platonists' appropriation of Hermes Trismegistus and their role in the persecution, several aspects of the *Divine Institutes* are especially significant. These are Lactantius' use of the generic epithet *summus* to describe God, his argument that Christ saved humanity through his teaching, his understanding of conversion as gradual enlightenment, and his idea that an educated believer could read the whole world as testifying to the truth of Christianity. Each of these themes, unique in Christian apologetics, reaches toward similar concepts in Hermetic and late Platonist thought.[59] Suffice it to say that for Lactantius, grounding his advocacy for Christianity through parallels with Hermetic doctrine accomplished several goals. First, it bolstered the resolve of educated Christians whose faith might have been shaken by the late Platonist attacks. Second, it broadened the monotheistic community to include those educated Hellenes, including people in late Platonist circles, who might be open to seeing the compatibility in doctrines that Lactantius pointed out. That this was a realistic goal is amply proved by Arnobius' own conversion. Third, the *Divine Institutes*, by emphasizing the monotheistic character of Hermetic treatises, made common cause among all monotheists – Christian or Hellene – against polytheists, whom Lactantius tars as being led by demons and being deeply committed to sacrifice.

There is good evidence in the dedications to Constantine with which Lactantius begins and ends the *Divine Institutes* that the professor read this treatise aloud to the court at Trier over a space of several years, beginning in 310.[60] Thus, whether or not his mother Helena led Constantine to Christianity, one of the most sustained discussions of theology that the emperor knew was that espoused by the *Divine Institutes.*

We are used to reminding ourselves that the problem is not whether Constantine became a Christian, but it is to understand what kind of Christian he

became. The Hermetic frame in which Constantine articulated his Christianity presents a very different portrait of the emperor than that which Eusebius paints in his *Life of Constantine* (*De vita Constantini*). If we follow the chain of Hermes from beginning to end, we see in its beginning with Arnobius, not a Platonist philosopher, but a devotee turned convert repulsed by the Platonist school's zealous campaign against Christianity. This was the man who taught Lactantius rhetoric, in so doing, bringing his student into his cultural world. Whether or not Lactantius was a convert or Christian in his upbringing, it is fair to say that both he and Arnobius show us a form of Christianity deeply entangled with the texts and traditions associated with late Platonism – not so much the texts of the philosophers, perhaps, but those circulated by their enthusiasts and students. For Arnobius, and even more Lactantius, the arrival of Jesus Christ and the texts of the Scriptures became the measure by which to assess this literature. That much of it still rang true to them does not mean that their pure Christian faith was somehow polluted by an unreflective Hermetism, but that like Origen and his figural exegesis, they saw new truths in old texts.

Through Lactantius, this is the Christianity that Constantine came to espouse, even if we should credit his mother for bringing him to the church steps. That he espoused it, even in the 320s after Lactantius' likely death,[61] suggests that this was his theology. No doubt it surprised and disconcerted the predominantly eastern bishops who attended the council of Nicaea (it certainly surprised Eusebius who tried so hard to efface it in his biography). Bringing such a theology within the walls of the church: what did this mean? That Constantine would look for areas of agreement, avoid polarizing discourse, try to include, not exclude, that he would be surprised that Arius' views were a problem. That the bells of such a theology rang outside the walls of the church is also significant for it meant finding common cause with "pagan" monotheists even while diminishing the role of polytheistic sacrifice. Here, Constantine looks – not back to the recent religious violence – but ahead to an ecumenical empire, one whose Christian theology, at least, might be articulated in such a way as to attract the people who had once forcibly tried to repress it. He took other similar steps in the 320s, including bringing the philosopher Sopater to court, a man who hailed from the classrooms of Iamblichus.

In the Arthur Conan Doyle mystery "Silver Blaze," Sherlock Holmes shows how silence can sometimes be the most important, but most difficult clue to perceive in solving a mystery. In the story, the silence was the "dog that did not bark," indicating that the murderer and horse thief was someone associated with the house where a crime had occurred. In the mid-320s, the dogs that did not bark at Constantine were the former supporters of Licinius, among whom surely numbered many monotheistic Hellenes, including some Platonists. We think of Constantine's defeat of Licinius in 324 as uniting the whole empire for the first time under a Christian sovereign. This is true. But the character of that sovereign's Christianity was key to his success and to the next twelve years of peace that the empire enjoyed in the East and in the West.

Notes

1 My original inspiration for this project was a lecture I prepared for the conference "Costantino il Grande: Alle Radici dell'Europa," sponsored by the Pontificio Comitato di Scienze Storiche, Vatican City, 18–21 April 2012. My topic was "Constantine's Formation," and here I seriously considered for the first time the possible religious and philosophical influences on the young emperor. This chapter appeared as "The Education of Constantine (Formazione di Costantino)." In *Costantino il Grande: Alle radici dell'Europa*, Colvolo and Sfameni, ed., 2015, pp. 137–49.

2 Constantine ascended the throne in the northwest quadrant of the empire in 306. By the time he died in 337, he had brought the entire Roman imperium under his personal control. The only emperor who ruled longer was Augustus (27 BC – 14 AD).

3 See Fowden, 1993.

4 Eusebius, *Epistula ad Caesarienses* 7, in Athanasius, *De decretis Nicaenae synodi* 35 in Opitz, 1940, 3.1, pp. 42–7, "There was nothing to contradict in this statement of faith . . . [that Eusebius had introduced to the Council]. In fact our most pious Emperor, before anyone else, testified that it was comprised of most orthodox statements. He even confessed that such were his own sentiments, and he advised all present to agree to it, and to subscribe and agree with its articles, with the insertion of the single word, 'of the same being as' (*homoousios*). He gave his interpretation of this word, saying that '<the Son> was not "of the same being as" according to what we experience in our bodies, as if the Son had come to be by dividing or breaking off from the Father. (ὅτι μὴ κατὰ τῶν σωμάτων πάθη λέγοιτο ὁμοούσιος <ὁ υἱός>, οὔτ' οὖν κατὰ διαίρεσιν οὔτε κατά τινα ἀποτομὴν ἐκ τοῦ πατρὸς ὑποστῆναι·) For his nature could not be subjected to any bodily experiences, as it does not consist of matter, exists in a spiritual realm, has no body. Therefore such things must be thought of in divine, unspeakable concepts.' Such were the theological remarks of our most wise and most pious Emperor" (trans. Nicene and Post Nicene Fathers).

5 Theodoret, *Historia Ecclesiastica* 1.12.17 takes Constantine to mean that Christ was latent in the Father before emerging as the Son; cf. Edwards, 2012, p. 493.

6 *Epistula ad Caesarienses* 7 see above n. 3.

7 In Athanasius, *Epistula de synodis Arimini et Seleuciae* 16 (in Edwards, 2012, pp. 484–5; Opitz, 1935–41, p. 231.

8 In Philostorgius, *Historia ecclesiastica* 1.7.9.

9 Ossius in Theodoret, *Historia ecclesiastica* 2.8.47.

10 cf. Edwards, 2012, p. 483; Hanson, 1988, p. 140; Simonetti, 1960, p. 125 n. 76; Stead, 1977, p. 233.

11 Edwards, 2012, pp. 483–4, 489, 491–2.

12 *De fide* (in *Sancti Ambrosi opera = Corpus scriptorum ecclesiasticorum latinorum*, vol. 32) 3.15.125; Beatrice, 2002, p. 245; Edwards, 2012, p. 500.

13 Beatrice, 2002, pp. 249–55; indeed the Council of Antioch in 268 condemned its use in deposing Paul of Samosata. See Athanasius, *Epistula de Synodis Arimini et Seleuciae* 43–5; Hilary, *De synodis* 80–1; Edwards, 2012, p. 485.

14 Edwards, 1998, pp. 568–80 argues that Origen did use the term. His evidence is Rufinus' translation of Pamphilus' defense of Origen. Edwards (p. 661), however, acknowledged the possibility that Rufinus introduced the term to his translation, written late in the fourth century. See also Ramelli, 2011, pp. 21–49. For more skeptical views, see Hanson, 1983, pp. 53–70. Edwards, 2012, pp. 484–6 suggests on the basis of Theodoret, *Historia ecclesiastica* 1.5.2, that there may be some evidence for the use of the term in Egypt contemporaneous to Arius. In this context, it is worth noting Egyptian overtones in Origen's theology. Cf. Khalil, 2014, pp. 9–24.

15 Beatrice, 2002, p. 257.

16 See, for example, Ferguson, 2008, p. 432.

17 Edwards, 2012, pp. 493–4 thinks further that for Constantine to promote the term would force him to depart from his stated principles of non-intervention (revealed for Edwards in his reluctance to weigh in on the Donatist issue [Optatus, *Contra Parmenianum Donatistam*, Appendix 23]) and his flip-flopping: "forcing" it on the council, but then waiving it for Arius and Euzoius less than ten years later [Socrates, *Historia ecclesiastica* 1.26]).

18 Edwards, 2012, pp. 494, 496.

19 Ayres, 2004, pp. 337–59.

20 In Philostorgius, *Historia ecclesiastica*, 1.7.9; Beatrice, 2002, p. 245. von Harnack, 1909, vol. 2, pp. 333–4 and Zahn, 1867, pp. 22–3 thought that Ossius was the source, but Stead, 1977, pp. 190–222, 223–66 disproved them; Beatrice, 2002, pp. 245–6.

21 cf. Edwards, 2012, p. 483; Jones, 1949, p. 162; Kidd, 1922, p. 26.

22 This possibility would allow for the different emphases in interpretation that Ayres notes (see n. 18). See also Vaggione, 1982, pp. 181–7.

23 Which Ferguson, 2008, acknowledges.

24 There are related uses also in Plotinus, *Enneads* 4.7.10 and Iamblichus, *De mysteriis* 3.21 indicating the relationship of a pure soul with divinity.

25 10, "ἐφήδησεν εὐθὺς ἐκ τῶν κατωφερῶν στοιχείων [τοῦ θεοῦ] ὁ τοῦ θεοῦ Λόγος εἰς τὸ καθαρὸν τῆς φύσεως δημιούργημα, καὶ ἡνώθη τῷ δημιουργῷ Νῷ (ὁμοούσιος γὰρ ἦν), καὶ κατελείφθη [τὰ] ἄλογα τὰ κατωφερῆ τῆς φύσεως στοιχεῖα, ὡς εἶναι ὕλην μόνην"; Beatrice, 2002, p. 257; the other instance occurs in an anonymous alchemical treatise which mentions, "Orphic consubstantiality" and the "Hermetic chain." Frag. 307 in Abel, 1971, p. 270 and frag. 348 in Beatrice, 2002, p. 257 n. 85; Kern, 1922, pp. 338–9.

26 Beatrice, 2002, pp. 257–8.

27 Gersh, 1992, p. 163 and n. 171.

28 Barnes, 2011, pp. 113–7 thinks that the speech "espouses a Christology that [Constantine] could never have used after the Council of Nicaea." But this misunderstands Constantine's claims. E.g., Bleckman, 1997, p. 197 does not think that it has an "Arian tendency."

29 Constantine, *Oratio ad sanctorum coetum* 9.3: "αὐτός τε ὁ ὑπὲρ πάντας τοὺς ἄλλους ἡμιώτατος Πλάτων, [καὶ] τὰς διανοίας τῶν ἀνθρώπων πρῶτος ἀπὸ τῶν αἰσθήσεων ἐπὶ τὰ νοητὰ καὶ ἀεὶ ὡσαύτως ἔχοντα ἐθίσας ἀνακύψαι ἀναβλέψαι τ' ἐπὶ τὰ μετάρσια διδάξας, πρῶτον μὲν θεὸν ὑφηγήσατο τὸν ὑπὲρ τὴν οὐσίαν, καλῶς ποιῶν, ὑπέταξε δὲ τούτῳ καὶ δεύτερον, καὶ δύο οὐσίας τῷ ἀριθμῷ διεῖλε, μιᾶς οὔσης τῆς ἀμφοτέρων τελειότητος, τῆς τε οὐσίας τοῦ δευτέρου θεοῦ τὴν ὕπαρξιν ἐχούσης ἐκ τοῦ πρώτου· αὐτὸς γάρ ἐστιν ὁ δημιουργὸς καὶ διοικητὴς τῶν ὅλων δηλονότι ὑπεραναβεβηκώς, ὁ δὲ μετ' ἐκεῖνον ταῖς ἐκείνου προστάξεσιν ὑπουργήσας τὴν αἰτίαν τῆς τῶν πάντων συστάσεως εἰς ἐκεῖνον ἀναπέμπει." Barnes, 2011, pp. 116–7, however, thinks that Constantine draws on Numenius here, and he cites Rist, 1981, pp. 155–9. As I will argue below, Hermetism through Lactantius, is a much more likely source for Constantine than Numenius.

30 Barnes, 1982, p. 39; Firmicus Maternus, *Matheseos* 1.10.3; *Origo Constantini imperatoris* 2. For date, Eusebius assumes 273 when he claims "that Constantine began to rule at the age when Alexander died, that he lived twice as long as Alexander (*Vita Constantini* 1.8) and that his life was about twice as long as his reign (*Vita Constantini* 4.53)." Barnes, 1982, p. 39. Eutropius, Jerome, Socrates, Photius, Sozomen, Zonaras, Sextus Aurelius Victor, and John Malalas all state that he died between sixty and sixty-five years of age.

31 Barnes, 1982, p. 36; *Origo Constantini imperatoris* 2; Scriptores Historiae Augustae, *Carus* 17.6; *Panegyrici Latini* 10(2).11.4; 8(5).1.5f.

32 7[6]: *Panegyric of Maximian and Constantine* (307) and 6[7]: *Panegyric of Constantine* (310). For dates see Nixon and Rodgers, 1994, pp. 179–85 and 212–4.

33 *Origo Constantini imperatoris* 2.

34 Barnes, 1982, pp. 42–3; Constantine, *Oratio ad sanctorum coetum*, 25 (in Eusebius [1902]); Lactantius, *De mortibus persecutorum* 18.10, 19.1f.

35 Most recently, see Barnes, 2011.
36 Barnes never engages with the *Origo*'s claim that Constantine fought in Asia.
37 Constantine, *Oratio ad sanctorum coetum* 16.2 claims he was an eyewitness to their "pitiable state."
38 See Fowden, 1993, and Frend, 2006, pp. 1–15. Pseudo-Cyprian seems to be indebted to Lactantius: Löw, 2002, pp. 65–71.
39 In the *Divinarum institutionum libri VII* (5.2), Lactantius says that he went to Nicomedia "when the temple of God was being overthrown," a statement that probably refers to Diocletian's decision in 299 to purge Christians from the army and the court. A few chapters later (5.11.15), he indicates his knowledge of a Christian who had withstood torture for two years. Assuming that person was apprehended at the beginning of the general persecution in 303 or 304, Lactantius then was in Nicomedia at least until 305 or 306.
40 Digeser, 1994, pp. 33–52.
41 Löw, 2002, p. 243.
42 Tertullian (*De anima*, 33.2) knows about Hermes and refers to an instance where Hermetic teachings concur with Christian doctrine on the soul's need for permanence. Arnobius *Disputationes adversus nationes* 3.32, 4.14 knows a variety of Hermes/Mercuries (in addition to the one claimed by the *viri novi* [2.13]). Clement (*Stromateis*, 6.4) knows quite a bit about the Hermetic doctrines, but does not develop links with Christian theology in any systematic way. Pseudo-Justin's use (*Cohortatio ad Graecos* 38) is actually a lot like Arnobius'. This text would bear examining for indications that it responded to the same situation: "If any one supposes that he has learned the doctrine concerning God from the most ancient of those whom you name philosophers, let him listen to Ammon and Hermes . . ."
43 There are three possible ways for Lactantius to have gotten his hands on these texts. First, there may have been a Hermetic circle at Nicomedia. This scenario seems unlikely to me since we know of no other intellectual circles there at this time, and Diocletian seems to have chosen it for logistical/military reasons. Second, Lactantius may have brought these texts with him from Africa. Arnobius was his tutor and these texts were known to him (see below). Third, Lactantius may have drawn Hermetic citations from texts that began to circulate in Nicomedia as part of the Platonist attack on Christianity, linked to the Great Persecution.
44 Lactantius, *Divinae institutiones* 5.4.1.
45 Lactantius, *Divinae institutiones* 5.19.8–14.
46 Lactantius, *Divinae institutiones* 5.4.6.
47 Jerome, *De viris illustribus* 80.
48 Arnobius 1.1–2; Simmons, 1995, p. 93.
49 Arnobius 2.1, 12–13.
50 Eusebius, *Praeparatio evangelica* 2.12; Simmons, 1995.
51 Jerome, *Chronicon* 2343.
52 We know from Porphyry's *De abstinentia* that he spent some time in Carthage – enough to train a pet pigeon. The *terminus post quem* for this work is 270, but I think that a later date is more likely. In any event, Arnobius and Porphyry may well have crossed paths. See Digeser, 2012, p. 174.
53 Lactantius, *De mortibus persecutorum* 11; *Divinae institutiones* 5.2.
54 Lactantius, *De mortibus persecutorum* 16.
55 Digeser, 2002, pp. 466–502.
56 Digeser, 2009, pp. 81–92.
57 Van Liefferinge, 1999, p. 91 n. 416.
58 Iamblichus, *De mysteriis* 1.2.
59 For Lactantius' use of the Hermetic corpus in earlier work, see Digeser, 2000, chapter 3.
60 Digeser, 1994, pp. 33–52. Although this argument has been widely accepted (see Girardet, 2006, pp. 41–155 and Shelton, 2011–12, pp. 164–7), Cicatello, 2005–6, pp. 89–104 and Heck, 2009, pp. 118–30 have argued against it. The evidence for the first dedication's

date of 310 comes from the striking similarities between it and *Panegyricus Latinus* 6 [7] of the same year. Cicatello downplays the significance of the dynastic parallels in the first dedication and their connection to the 310 panegyric. In her view, the panegyric's assertion of a new kind of dynastic legitimacy for Constantine reflects local, not court, politics – despite a long history of scholarship to the contrary (see *In Praise of Later Roman Emperors: The Panegyrici Latini*, 1994, pp. 212–7. Heck argues that Lactantius cannot have been in Trier before 313 because he believes that the author of *De mortibus persecutorum* has a Nicomedian point of view – which means for him that he must have resided in that city from the time he arrived ca. 300 through 313, the *terminus post quem* for the historical tract. Even if Lactantius wrote *De mortibus persecutorum* in the East (which I very much doubt), nothing prevents him from having been earlier in the West.

61 Jerome, *De viris illustribus* 80 says that he became tutor to Crispus in extreme old age – and that was in 310.

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4 What hath Constantine wrought?

H.A. Drake

The title of this chapter is meant to echo the famous message Samuel F. B. Morse sent from Washington to Baltimore on May 24, 1844, to inaugurate his new service, the telegraph, "What hath God wrought?" I have substituted Constantine for God in Morse's phrase not to commit blasphemy, but for two more immediate purposes. The first, and most obvious, is to call to mind the events of this reign of more than thirty years, one of the most momentous in Western history; the second is to look at one moment in that long career as a way of understanding a long-standing scholarly controversy over the motives and intentions of the first Christian emperor.

Constantine's accomplishments certainly merit as much wonder as Morse expressed over the telegraph. They range from an unbroken chain of military successes to the foundation of one of the world's great cities, Constantinople. Above all, however, Constantine is remembered for his conversion to Christianity, traditionally as the result of a vision of a Cross promising victory in his battle for the city of Rome in 312CE. Thus began a series of victories that led to the epochal Council of Nicaea in 325 and, in relatively short order, to the creation of an exclusively Christian Roman empire on the ashes of its pagan predecessor.[1]

Given the sweep of these accomplishments, it is easy to understand why Constantine frequently has been condemned as the author of all the subsequent evils attributed to the medieval Church, from the persecution of Jews and heretics to sustained attempts to suppress the Scientific Revolution to all of the excesses epitomized by the infamous Inquisition.[2] As is so often the case when generalizations start to pile up on other generalizations, the devil lies in the details. Accordingly, in this chapter I will look at two events that occurred in the aftermath of Constantine's victory in 312, with the aim of determining what they can tell us about his aims and intentions at the start of his career as a Christian emperor. These are the circumstances surrounding the document traditionally known as the Edict of Milan, which established Christianity as a legal religion, and Constantine's handling of a controversy in the African Church involving a group that we, also traditionally, have called the Donatists,[3] both of which occurred within months of his victory.

It is appropriate to begin with the Edict of Milan, since some scholars have argued that its 1,700th anniversary in 2013 was really a non-event.[4] Technically, this is correct. As Otto Seeck pointed out in a brief article published more than a century ago, the document as we have it is not an edict, and it was not issued in Milan; it is a letter sent by the eastern emperor Licinius to his governor of Bithynia, informing him of decisions he and Constantine made when they met at Milan earlier in the year.[5] Not content with this qualification, T. D. Barnes has characterized the traditional title as a "bogus phrase, which contradicts historical reality" because it masks the fact that Constantine had already granted its terms to Christians under his rule "immediately after he was proclaimed Augustus at York" in 306.[6] While Constantine may indeed have taken such steps as Barnes maintains, the evidence for his doing so depends on an important but highly tendentious source, *On the Deaths of the Persecutors*, written by the Christian rhetor Lactantius, probably in 315. Here, Lactantius asserts that "[t]he first act of Constantine Augustus on assuming imperial power was to restore the Christians to their worship and their God. This was the first measure by which he sanctioned the restoration of the holy religion."[7] As Vincent Puech has observed, this is a very slender reed on which to hang so heavy a case.[8]

Norman Baynes, who also held that such an edict was unlikely, nevertheless took a more level-headed approach in his seminal *Constantine and the Christian Church*, which originated as the British Academy's Raleigh Lecture in 1929. "The Edict of Milan may be a fiction," he concluded, "but the fact for which the term stood remains untouched."[9] Something about the document nevertheless made Baynes uneasy. "[L]et it not be thought that Constantine was a passionless exponent of a philosophic doctrine of toleration," he wrote a decade later. "Constantine's ideal State would be hampered by no fetters of toleration."[10] Here, Baynes was responding to other parts of the document that emphasized freedom of religion for all subjects, not just Christians.[11]

Baynes' demurrer needs some explanation, for these are precisely the clauses that make the document worthy of celebration 1,700 years later; they amount to the first official recognition in Western history of the principle of freedom of religion. The reason Baynes rejected them was that the scholarship of his day was preoccupied with the "sincerity" of Constantine's conversion, an issue that exploded with the publication of Jacob Burckhardt's *Die Zeit Constantin's des Grossen* in 1853. In that work, Burckhardt drew on current fascination with the Great Man and the Will to Power to argue that Constantine was driven by nothing more than "ambition and lust for power."[12] As part of his proof, Burckhardt pointed specifically to Constantine's continued toleration of pagan religion, something it was assumed a genuine Christian would not do.[13] This being the scholarly climate, in order to support Constantine's "sincerity," Baynes had little alternative but to assert that the emperor was, indeed, truly intolerant.

Another sticking point has been the vague way in which the emperors refer to divinity in this document, referring at one point to "whatever divinity there is in the seat of heaven" (*quicquid <est> divinitatis in sede caelesti*, 48.2), at another

to "the supreme Divinity" (*summa divinitas*, 48.3). A "sincere" Constantine, it is assumed, would never have settled for anything less than a full-throated endorsement of the Christian god. The only acceptable explanation, therefore, was that these parts of the document were due to Licinius, not Constantine – a conclusion that Seeck's emphasis on its eastern origin obviously supported.[14]

Two contemporary pieces of evidence cast doubt on this hypothesis. The first is an oration probably delivered late in 313, after Constantine had returned to Gaul.[15] Speaking in Constantine's presence, the orator emphasizes Constantine's close relationship with a deity to whom he refers in similarly vague terms, speaking only of a "divine mind" (*divina mens*, 2.5, cf. 16.2), a "divine power" (*divinum numen*, 4.1), "god, the creator and lord of the world" (*deus ille mundi creator et dominus*, 13.2), a "supreme creator, whose names are as many as the tongues of the nations" (*summe rerum sator, cuius tot numina sunt quot gentium linguas*, 26.1). This last statement reflects the syncretism prevalent at the time, by means of which all the varied deities of the Roman world could be thought as nothing more than different names for the same deity.[16] Yet the orator was not a Christian, or even a monotheist – the "divine mind" that communicates directly with Constantine, "has delegated care of [the rest of] us to lesser gods" (2.5).

Obviously, Licinius could have had no hand in this orator's choice of words. Nor could he have had any influence on the second piece of evidence, the Arch that the Senate in Rome set up next to the Colosseum in 315. Here, too, the inscription speaks only of a "divine prompting" (*instinctu divinitatis*) that, along with Constantine's own magnanimity, led him to free Rome from the tyrant.[17]

The language of the Milan document thus is similar to that of other communications over which Constantine had at least indirect control. Since in these instances Licinius could not have been responsible, scholars have chosen to see these phrases as a compromise by pagans who had to acknowledge Constantine's new religion but could not bring themselves to utter the hated name of Christ.[18] The argument, questionable in any case, is undermined by the fact that an oration delivered in Constantine's presence by a Christian bishop a quarter century later uses similarly vague language and avoids the specific name of Christ.[19]

To his credit, rather than practice the denial and obfuscation that characterizes so much of the present opposition to the Milan document, Baynes broke with tradition to argue that both political and religious needs had to be taken into account to understand Constantine's actions: prior to 324, when he seized control of the East from Licinius, Constantine had to placate a pagan Senate in Rome and a pagan colleague in the East. "It is the union of the political and religious elements in Constantine's action which makes of the emperor a figure in world history," Baynes concluded.[20]

Although his explanation has been widely adopted, it can be argued that Baynes did not go far enough in his search for political motivation, since there was a reason for this vagueness that would have been immediately clear to contemporaries. The Great Persecution conducted by the Tetrarchy that preceded

Constantine's rule, and which was formally ended by this joint proclamation, had been motivated in large part by those emperors' belief that Christian refusal to recognize the gods whom they had made guarantors of their rule – Jupiter and Hercules, in particular – impaired their ability to discharge their duty to conduct relations with those divine forces that were deemed essential to the peace and prosperity of the empire.[21] By exchanging the specific gods of the Tetrarchy for a generalized Supreme Deity, Constantine and Licinius confirmed their commitment to this duty, but also signaled that they intended to pursue a more inclusive method to achieve it. "In this way," they wrote, "it will come about, as we have explained above, that the divine favour towards us, which we have experienced in such important matters, will continue for all time to prosper our achievements along with the public well being."[22]

This document thus shows that both Constantine and Licinius had learned two important lessons from the failure of the Great Persecution. First, that religious allegiance could not be coerced; second, that being too specific about the name of the deity or deities protecting Rome was counterproductive, if the goal was to achieve the *consensus omnium* that imperial ideology also required.[23]

It is not Constantine's participation in this document that needs to be questioned, but the premise that a sincere Christian had to be not only intolerant but intransigently and militantly opposed to any dealings with their pagan oppressors. Once again, this is a premise that grows out of the reaction of intellectuals and dissidents to what they perceived as the monolithic hostility of the Church to the new ideas and freedoms being propounded in the early modern period of European history.[24] By ancient standards, the Christian Church in antiquity was indeed a highly organized and unified body, but nothing like the Church that held sway during the medieval period. Similarly, while the type of zealous and militantly hostile Christian certainly existed in Constantine's day, just as it has at all times including the present, there is no reason to believe such Christians should be considered normative.

For the study of Constantine, the existence of this broader array of Christian sentiment makes the "sincerity" touchstone for the emperor's Christianity obsolete. Instead of asking "Did Constantine really become a Christian?" – a question about which there now can be very little doubt – we should be asking, "What *kind* of Christian did Constantine become?" The second situation from these early days points us toward an answer.

Division in the North African Church probably came to Constantine's attention immediately after his October 28 victory over Maxentius, if indeed he had not known about it even beforehand. The issue was how to deal with Christians who had lapsed during the recent persecution, either by performing the symbolic act of sacrifice to the emperors' "genius" (a sort of tutelary spirit) or, worse, handing over sacred books and vessels to the authorities, an act that made the guilty parties *traditores* ("traitors"). The dissidents, who came to be led by Donatus of Casae Nigrae in Numidia, not only wanted tainted clergy expelled but also any sacraments they had performed, including baptism, nullified. To further complicate matters, the new bishop of Carthage, Caecilian, had been

elected before Numidian bishops arrived with a rival candidate, and he only exacerbated the problem by high-handedly informing the Numidians that they were free to ratify his elevation retroactively.[25]

Constantine's first effort to resolve the situation was to open the imperial purse strings in support of Caecilian.[26] But after receiving a petition from the dissident bishops he decided a broader inquiry was necessary. The dissidents had asked for the case to be heard by bishops from Gaul, where Constantine's father had ruled and taken only token steps to enforce the persecution. Such bishops presumably would be more impartial than any in the sharply divided African Church or than the bishop of Rome, Miltiades, who the *Liber Pontificalis* tells us was from Africa and had probably already tipped his hand in favor of Caecilian.[27] The dissident request put Constantine in a quandary: to give them the court they demanded would be a snub to the bishop of Rome, whose support he undoubtedly needed to cement his ties to the capital's Christian population; at the same time, he undoubtedly saw the merit in their request for impartial judges, and common sense alone would have told him that only a full and impartial hearing would resolve the dissidents' grievances.

Constantine attempted a finesse. He wrote Miltiades, expressing his concern about the potential rift that could be created by the situation and asking him to conduct a hearing into the matter.[28] Thus far Constantine was on solid ground: as he surely had been told, the emperor Aurelian established a precedent some forty years earlier for turning over such controversies to the bishop of Rome.[29] But in the same letter, the emperor informed Miltiades that he had also appointed three Gallic bishops – Reticius of Autun, Maternus of Cologne and Marinus of Arles – to serve as his coadjutors. Moreover, he had also sent them all of the reports he had received, meaning they would be fully briefed on the situation by the time they arrived in Rome.

This news was certainly unwelcome to Miltiades. Bishops of Rome had always been jealous of their prerogatives as heirs to the See established by St. Peter, to whom Jesus had given the keys to his kingdom (Matt. 16:19). It would not have taken Miltiades long to figure out that the three named bishops were certainly known to Constantine, who had ruled Gaul since 306. Had he acquiesced, he would have surrendered control of the proceedings, at least potentially, to the emperor. But Miltiades had as many tricks up his sleeve as did the emperor. Taking advantage of boilerplate language in Constantine's letter that left him in control of implementing the details of the proceeding, Miltiades proceeded to add fifteen Italian bishops to the proceedings, which he now determined would be a synod rather than an arbitration. Then, when the meeting opened, Miltiades announced that the judges would follow the strict rules of evidence established by Roman legal procedure. He blandly asked the dissidents to produce such evidence, which of course they had not bothered to collect, presuming there would be no need. On hearing their response, Miltiades abruptly ruled in favor of Caecilian and dismissed the synod.

Now it was Constantine who had to deal with a pre-emptive strike. There is no way at this remove to be certain what he had intended in his letter to

Miltiades; a traditional reading would hold that giving Miltiades complete control over the process, allowing him to conduct the hearing "however you may deem in accordance with the most holy law,"[30] was not boilerplate as I have called it but the operative part of the letter. I think otherwise for two reasons. The first is the part of the letter in which the sentence appears. It is preceded by appointment of the three Gallic bishops and followed by Constantine's wish that the Church suffer "no schism or dissent of any type."[31] Given that the unprecedented imperial appointment of three coadjutors must have been a bombshell, the concession that Miltiades was still in charge seems no more than a palliative, whereas Constantine's express concern that the controversy be resolved suggests that he had a more informal proceeding in mind – arbitration, rather than judgment.

My second reason is the way Constantine reacted to Miltiades' approach. When the dissidents predictably appealed the decision, the emperor might well have simply said the matter was out of his hands. Instead, with no discernible hesitation, he cast aside the synod's findings and took the further unprecedented step of convening a council on his own authority. We have one of the letters he sent to bishops summoning them to this meeting. Because its significance is often overlooked, I include a full quotation, taken from a contemporary work, Eusebius of Caesarea's *Historia ecclesiastica (HE)*:

> 21 Constantine Augustus to Chrestus, bishop of Syracuse. When some began wickedly and perversely to disagree among themselves in regard to the holy worship and celestial power and Catholic doctrine, wishing to put an end to such disputes among them, I formerly gave command that certain bishops should be sent from Gaul, and that the opposing parties who were contending persistently and incessantly with each other, should be summoned from Africa; that in their presence, and in the presence of the bishop of Rome, the matter which appeared to be causing the disturbance might be examined and decided with all care.
>
> 22   But since, as it happens, some, forgetful both of their own salvation and of the reverence due to the most holy religion, do not even yet bring hostilities to an end, and are unwilling to conform to the judgment already passed, and assert that those who expressed their opinions and decisions were few, or that they had been too hasty and precipitate in giving judgment, before all the things which ought to have been accurately investigated had been examined, – on account of all this it has happened that those very ones who ought to hold brotherly and harmonious relations toward each other, are shamefully, or rather abominably, divided among themselves, and give occasion for ridicule to those men whose souls are aliens to this most holy religion. Wherefore it has seemed necessary to me to provide that this dissension, which ought to have ceased after the judgment had been already given by their own voluntary agreement, should now, if possible, be brought to an end by the presence of many.
>
> 23   Since, therefore, we have commanded a number of bishops from a great many different places to assemble in the city of Arles, before the

kalends of August, we have thought proper to write to thee also that thou shouldst secure from the most illustrious Latronianus, corrector of Sicily, a public vehicle, and that thou shouldst take with thee two others of the second rank, whom thou thyself shalt choose, together with three servants who may serve you on the way, and betake thyself to the above-mentioned place before the appointed day; that by thy firmness, and by the wise unanimity and harmony of the others present, this dispute, which has disgracefully continued until the present time, in consequence of certain shameful strifes, after all has been heard which those have to say who are now at variance with one another, and whom we have likewise commanded to be present, may be settled in accordance with the proper faith, and that brotherly harmony, though it be but gradually, may be restored.

24   May the Almighty God preserve thee in health for many years.[32]

Constantine laments the dissenters' refusal to accept the judgment of the Council of Rome, but also takes note of the basis for their complaint: that only a small number had participated, and that instead of a full and careful examination had rendered a hasty and ill-considered judgment.

Again, interpreting this letter is a judgment call. Its exposition of the case is so bland that it has more often been cited as the first instance of giving bishops access to the imperial post (10.5.23) – sort of the equivalent of first class over economy in modern parlance – than for the revolutionary event of the council itself.[33] That this is so is a tribute to Constantine's skill at wrapping his initiatives in a cocoon of protest. One of the things that must have been on his mind as he summoned bishops like Chrestus was the very real possibility that these prelates might refuse to attend, especially if they had any sense that imperial power was riding roughshod over one of their own.[34] Hence Constantine's complaint about the intransigence of the dissidents: it was probably genuine, as events would show, but at this moment it also served the purpose of deflecting any possible criticism away from him and onto a group that the bishops would have felt was within their own sphere of authority. But throughout his reign Constantine exhibited a strong sense of fair play in judicial proceedings, and an even greater sense of the majesty with which his office endowed him,[35] so the fact that he included the grounds for the dissidents' objection is a strong indication that this is why he listened to them, and why he decided he had to take matters into his own hands.

Nor should the site of the council be overlooked. By this time Constantine had returned to Gaul, so locating the council there would have made it easier for him to stay in touch with its proceedings than had been the case with the Council of Rome, and even to attend himself, if necessary. Indeed, there is some suggestion that he may have done so, even though the evidence for such a conclusion is tenuous.[36] But the choice of Arles out of all the potential sites in Gaul indicates that the emperor had given some thought to the proceedings, for this was the See of Bishop Marinus, one of the three adjudicators he had sent to Rome. Customarily, the bishop of the host city presided over the meeting,

which meant the proceedings of this council would be in the hands of a trusted ally.[37] Indeed, it is not inconceivable that Constantine had acted after receiving reports on the Council of Rome from him and the other Gallic bishops as well as the dissidents.

With or without Constantine's guidance, the council ruled decisively against the dissidents. Their letter, addressed to the new bishop of Rome, Silvester, survives in a dossier put together half a century later by Bishop Optatus of Milevis in an attempt to reconcile with dissidents and set straight the record of the controversy.[38] In it, they condemn the dissidents in no uncertain terms for behaving irrationally and failing to offer any proof of their accusations.[39] Optatus also included a letter from Constantine to the bishops that is frequently cited for the emperor's profession of unworthiness and his reverence for episcopal decisions: "The judgment of priests ought to be taken as if the lord himself were sitting in judgment."[40] With more vehemence than the bishops themselves, he calls the dissidents mad dogs, tools of the devil, guilty of the same traitorous conduct of which they accuse others. What brought on this outburst seems to be that the dissidents had the temerity to appeal this decision as well. "Just like the gentiles, they have filed an appeal," he complains.[41] This comparison of the dissidents with "the gentiles" (*gentes*) is an important signal of the reason for his outrage. Throughout his reign, Constantine viewed appeals as a means by which certain litigants sought to evade justice. More importantly, he seems to have regarded the bishop's court as a means to restore equity to the system.[42] Thus, when he tells the bishops that he considered the dissidents' new appeal a tactic to manipulate justice,[43] it is more than just a sign that he did not expect Christians to mirror such behavior. In a very real way, it means that he had decided the dissidents were not the kind of Christians he wanted to support.

There are further signs in his letter to the bishops that Constantine had turned against the dissidents. In his letter to Bishop Chrestus (at n. 32 above), Constantine's outrage seemed designed, at least in part, to draw attention away from the novelty of his intervention. But at the same time he seemed willing to entertain at least some of the dissidents' grievances. There is no such indication in this letter. And this time he makes no mention of the grounds for the dissidents' appeal, other than to echo the bishops' own judgment that they refused to hear the truth. In the only operative clause, he informs the bishops that he has ordered the dissidents brought to his court, where he intends to keep them until they come to their senses.[44] Even if we were to reduce his outrage by half, therefore, this letter would still indicate a strong shift in Constantine's attitude.

In coming years, he would act decisively against the dissidents, even to the point of briefly forgetting the lesson of the Great Persecution and attempting to coerce their acquiescence. What is important here, however, is not the history of the African schism, which in any case would not be resolved for another century, but the answer it gives to the question regarding the type of Christian that Constantine became. In rejecting the African dissidents, Constantine also was rejecting the type of Christianity that scholars have long posited to be the dominant, indeed the only, Christianity available at the time. Whatever the

merits of their case, the dissidents showed themselves to be rigorous, militant, intolerant and more than ready to reject the authority of the same government to which they had originally appealed (an irony not lost on contemporaries).

Constantine had many reasons to side with the bishops – institutional and political, as well as theological – but other decisions made by those prelates when they met at Arles certainly made it easier for him to choose. For after disposing of the dissidents, the bishops reported to Pope Silvester that they had also dealt with problems affecting each of their provinces. Several of these involved Christians holding state offices, a long-standing problem since state office involved religious duties such as sacrifice that were abhorrent to Christians. But such office remained attractive to upwardly mobile Christians, many of whom took office anyway.[45] So it was not merely abstract or theoretical when the bishops at Arles ruled that Christians appointed to magistracies could continue to partake in communion, provided that they not violate Christian teaching (*disciplina*), presumably meaning that they not participate in sacrifices. Provision also was made for other professions that traditionally put Christians at odds with their faith – army service, horse racing, working in the theater.[46] If Constantine was indeed present for these deliberations, the bishops' decisions become all the more significant, since it appears to have been the emperor's intention to create what I have called a neutral public space that would not compromise Christians who entered government service. Eusebius of Caesarea corroborates this policy when he reports, in the *Life of Constantine*, that the emperor freed magistrates from the duty to perform sacrifice (Eusebius' further claim that he issued a general ban on sacrifice is more problematic).[47]

The African schism may not have been settled, but it served to isolate the dissidents and, more importantly, from it Constantine learned the importance of ensuring widespread involvement in any decision-making process. A decade later, when he encountered the far more consequential split caused in the East by the Arian crisis, he intervened once again to prevent what looked to be a small, isolated body meeting in the See of a sworn opponent and moved the council to Nicaea, summoning bishops from throughout the empire to attend. In addition to being a more convenient site for the bishops, Nicaea was also near his court, then sitting in Nicomedia, and thus, like the Council of Arles, in proximity to himself.[48]

There are other lessons – for us, rather than for Constantine – to be learned from looking at these early interactions between the emperor and the Christian community. The first is that the normative Christian posited in so much scholarship on this era – this being an uncompromising fanatic who survived the Great Persecution "in a mood of resentment and vengeance," in the famous formulation of Arnaldo Momigliano[49] – was not the one to whom Constantine himself was attracted. Were he, he would have sided with the African dissidents, who fill this prescription to the hilt. Second, Constantine would not have been amused by modern scholarship that pictures him surrendering his reign, and the empire as a whole, to the ministrations of the Christian Church. His actions in 313 show that he was quite willing to overturn or ignore Church proceedings

that conflicted with his own goals, which is exactly what we should expect any Roman emperor to do. Third, Constantine showed himself to be capable of exercising both initiative and innovative thinking in order to achieve what he perceived to be a just outcome. Because of this trait, we should not think of him as a passive observer, either when considering his involvement in Church affairs or the consistent use of vague language by others after 312 to characterize the divinity with whom he shared a special bond.

Finally, that there was what might be called a moderate Christian position has a further implication: whereas there is no reason to doubt that Constantine was a Christian, it would be a mistake to think that his agenda as emperor was identical to what scholars have identified as the Christian agenda. Baynes may have been right to conclude that Constantine never wavered from his intention to make the empire Christian, but such a statement cannot now be made without also recognizing that this emperor had his own ideas of what a Christian empire would be and how to go about creating it.

Notes

1 The 1,700th anniversary of Constantine's conversion has added a spate of new books to an already vast list. For a good introduction, see Ehling and Weber, 2011; Lenski, 2006; Melloni et al., 2013; Potter, 2013.

2 For studies of Constantine scholarship in the early modern and modern eras, see the articles in v. 3 of Melloni et al., 2013. Leithart, 2010, shows the pitfalls in equating "Constantine" with "Constantinianism." The baleful legacy of anti-Semitism is confronted in Carroll, 2001.

3 As Shaw, 2011, p. 5 observes, "The word 'Donatist' should be avoided since it was nothing more than a pejorative label foisted on them by the Catholics. In their own self-identity these others thought of themselves as both Christian and Catholic." Shaw has settled on "dissident Christians" as a more neutral alternative.

4 See, e.g., Girardet, 2010, p. 130: "Damit wird das Dokument aber politisch-historisch ganzlich inadäquat bewertet – 1913 war ein falsches Jubiläum, und man kann nur hoffen, daß sich dies in Jahre 2013 nicht als 1700-Jahrfeier wiederhold."

5 Seeck, 1891. The letter is included by Lactantius in Creed, 1984, p. 48. Eusebius put a Greek translation (with some variations) in his *Historia ecclesiastica* 10.5, ed. Bardy, 1952–1960, vol. 3.

6 Barnes, 2011, p. 94.

7 Creed, 1984, 24.9: "*Suscepto imperio Constantinus Augustus nihil egit prius quam Christianos cultui ac deo sui reddere. Haec fuit prima eius sanction sanctae religionis restitutae.*" For the date of this work, Barnes, 1973.

8 Puech, 2011, p. 326: "L'allégation d'une véritable sympathie de Constantin pour le christianism avant 312 ne repose que sur les écrits postérieurs et partiaux de Lactance [24.9] et Eusébe de Césarée [8.13.14]: elle est démentie par toutes les sources contemporaines des événements, en particulier les panégyriques latins et les monnaies. . . . [L]e raisonnement se caractérise par sa circularité."

9 Baynes, 1972, p. 11.

10 Baynes, 1939, p. 686.

11 See, e.g., Creed, 1984, 48.2, "so that we might grant both to Christians and to all men freedom to follow whatever religion each one wished" *(ut daremus et Christianis et omnibus potestatem sequendi religionem quam quisque voluisset)*; 48.3: "we ought to follow the policy of regarding this opportunity as one not to be denied to anyone at all, whether he

wished to give his mind to the observances of the Christians or to that religion which he felt was most fitting to himself" (*ut nulli omnino facultatem abnegandam putaremus, qui vel observationi Christianorum vel ei religioni mentem suam dederet, quam ipse sibi aptissimam esse sentiret*); 48.6, "so that each man may have a free opportunity to engage in whatever worship he has chosen" (*ut in colendo quot quisque delegerit, habeat liberam facultatem*).

12 Burckhardt, 1949, p. 292.

13 The assumption traces back to Edward Gibbon's citation of "the intolerant zeal of the Christians" as the first of his famous five reasons for the religion's success. Gibbon, 1909–1914, vol. 2, p. 3.

14 Viz. Christensen, 1984. Even Hermann Dörries, who fully appreciated Constantine's commitment to freedom of religion, felt obliged to see "the retarding hand of Licinius" in these references. Dörries, 1960, p. 20, n. 8.

15 The speech comes down in a collection of *XII Panegyrici Latini*. For English translation and date, see PL XII (IX) in Nixon and Rodgers, 1994, pp. 288–342.

16 The prayer Apuleius has his protagonist Lucius offer to the "Blessed Queen of Heaven" (*Regina caeli*) in *The Golden Ass* 11.2 is often cited as an example of syncretism. On the growth of monotheistic language in Late Antiquity see Athanassiadi and Frede, 1999; Mitchell and van Nuffelen, 2010.

17 *Corpus Inscriptionum Latinorum* 6.1139; on the pagan antecedents of the phrase, see Lenski, 2008.

18 Put succinctly by Jones, 1962, pp. 82–3: "The passage [in the 313 panegyric] is eloquent of the embarrassment of the pagan orator, forced to avoid all mention of the immortal gods, but averse from sullying his lips with any allusion to the God of the Christians."

19 The word "Christ" does appear once in Eusebius' oration, at 1.3, but it was long ago identified as an interpolation, since the subject of the sentence at this point is not Christ but God the Father. See Drake, 1976, p. 84 and, for the significance of this omission, pp. 46–60.

20 Baynes 1972, p. 34, n. 16.

21 As explained by the emperor Galerius when he sought to end the persecution in 311 with an edict of toleration that Lactantius also reproduced. See Creed, 1984, 34.1–5. See further DePalma Digeser, 2014.

22 Creed, 1984, 48.2: "*quo quicquid <est> divinitatis in sede caelesti, nobis atque omnibus qui sub potestate nostra sunt constituti, placatum and propitium possit existere*"; 48.11: "*Hactenus fiet, ut, sicut superius comprehensum est, divinus iuxta nos favor, quem in tantis sumus rebus experti, per omni tempus prospere successibus nostris cum beatitudine nostra publica perseveret.*"

23 Drake, forthcoming.

24 See further Pocock, 1999.

25 The standard work on this controversy is Frend, 1952, but see now Shaw, 2011. For the documents collected later in the century by the Catholic bishop Optatus, see Maier, 1987–9.

26 Constantine's letter to the proconsul Caecilian is in Eusebius' *Church History* 10.6.1–5; see Maier, 1987–9, pp. 140–2. For the date, Corcoran, 1996, p. 153.

27 *Lib. pont.* XXXIII, ed. Duchesne and Vogel, 1886–1957; Eng. tr. Davis, 1989.

28 Eus. *HE* 10.5.18–19, in Maier, 1987–9, vol. 1, pp. 148–50.

29 The case concerned Paul of Samosata, who refused to surrender the See of Antioch after being deposed by a council of bishops, who then appealed to the Emperor. See Eus. *HE* 7.27–30, and Millar, 1971.

30 "ὡς ἂν καταμάθοιτε τῷ σεβασμιωτάτῳ νόμῳ ἁρμόττειν", Eus. *HE* 10.5.19. Maier, 1987–9, p. 150.

31 "ὡς μηδὲν καθόλου σχίσμα ἢ διχοστασίαν ἔν τινι τόπῳ", Eus. *HE* 10.5.20. Maier, 1987–9, p. 150.

32 To Chrestus, the bishop of Syracuse, in Eus. *HE* 10.5.21–4; Maier, 1987–9, vol. 1, pp. 158–60, tr. McGiffert, 1890, pp. 381–2.

33 This is the first recorded instance of the practice that Ammianus Marcellinus (21.16.18) later would criticize for hamstringing the system. On the precedent, see Millar, 1977, p. 587.

34 One who evidently did refuse was Miltiades' successor as bishop of Rome, Silvester. A letter addressed to him by the bishops at Arles, reporting their decisions, mildly rebukes him for not attending: "*et utinam, frater dilectissime, ad hoc tantum spectaculum interesses!*" Maier, 1987, vol. 1, p. 162.

35 Constantine's commitment to fair proceedings manifested itself most clearly in his famous threat to cut off the hands of court officials who took bribes (see n. 43 below). See further, Dillon, 2012, esp. pp. 97–101. For evidence that the humility Constantine frequently expressed in his dealings with bishops should not be taken too seriously, see Drake, 2014.

36 Barnes, 1981, p. 58, adding the detail that the emperor was "accompanied only by Christian courtiers," relying on Eusebius of Caesarea's *Vita Constantini (VC)* 1.44, where the bishop writes that Constantine convened synods and shared in their proceedings, "as if he were a kind of bishop *extraordinaire*, ordained by God" (οἷά τις κοινὸς ἐπίσκοπος ἐκ θεοῦ καθεσταμένος) – a phrase that serves to normalize Constantine's interventions. There is always a question about how literally to take Eusebius when he generalizes in this way.

37 Marinus is the first signatory of a letter announcing the results of the council: Maier, 1987–9, vol. 1, p. 161.

38 On Optatus, see Shaw, 2011, pp. 62–3. For the letter, Maier, 1987–9, vol. 1, pp. 161–3. Eng. tr. in Edwards, 1997, pp. 185–8.

39 "*nulla in illis aut dicendi ratio subsisteret aut accusandi modus ullus aut probatio conveniret.*" Maier, 1987–9, vol. 1, p. 162.

40 "*sacerdotum iudicium ita debet haberi ac si ipse dominus residens iudicet,*" Maier, 1987–9, vol. 1, pp. 167–71, at 169.

41 Maier, 1987–9, vol. 1, p. 169.

42 Two laws surviving as part of the *Theodosian Code (CTh)* testify to his efforts. *CTh* 1.27.1, possibly issued as early as 318, orders judges to accept transfer of cases to bishops, and the First Sirmondian Constitution of 333 permitted such transfers even if only one party to the suit made the request. See Mommsen-Meyer, 1962, vol. 1, pp. 2, 62 and 907–8; tr. Pharr, 1952, pp. 31, 477. Corcoran 1996, pp. 284–5, believes Licinius was the author of the earlier law. There is a large literature on the vexing question of what Constantine intended by these actions. For my view, with references to earlier literature, see Drake, 2000, pp. 321–36; on bishops' courts, see Lamoreaux, 1995; Lenski, 2001. For Constantine's efforts to regulate appeals, see *CTh* 1.5.1, 1.16.4, 11.30.13, 11.30.16, 11.32.26, 11.34.1, 11.36.2; his famous law threatening to cut off the hands of greedy judges is at 1.16.7 (cf. 8.1.4).

43 Maier, 1987–9, vol. 1, pp. 169–70: "*O rabida furoris audacia! Sicut in causis gentilium fieri solet, appelationem interposuerunt. Equidem gentes minora interdum iudicia refugientes ubi iustitia cito deprehendi potest, magis ad maiora iudicia auctoritate interposita, ad appellationem se conferre sunt solitae.*"

44 Maier, 1987–9, p. 170: "*Ceterum direxi meos homines qui eosdem infandos deceptores religionis protinus ad comitatum meum perducant ut ibi degant, ibi sibi mortem peius peruiderant.*"

45 Eus. *HE* 8.1.1–4, writes that, prior to Diocletian's persecution, Christians held governorships and even served in the imperial palaces, and Lactantius claims Christians attended Diocletian's sacrifices: Creed, 1984, p. 17. The canons of the Council of Elvira in Spain, which met early in the fourth century, cover Christians who hold hereditary priesthoods and hold civic office. See Chuvin, 1990, pp. 15–6.

46 Maier, 1987–9, vol. 1, pp. 164–5. The provision that Christian officials be supervised by bishops had long-range implications, but it is likely that at this stage bishops were only thinking in terms of immediate problems, such as the duty to perform sacrifices. In his *Ecclesiastical History*, Eusebius claims that prior to the Great Persecution, emperors

routinely excused Christian governors from the duty to perform sacrifice (see preceding note).

47 At *VC* 2.44, Eusebius notes that Constantine relieved governors of the obligation to sacrifice. He asserts a general ban at *VC* 2.35. On this issue, see Bradbury, 1994; Errington, 1988); for "neutral public space," Drake, 1995, p. 7.

48 On this occasion, Constantine is known to have taken part in the proceedings, and is frequently credited with being responsible for adoption of the controversial term *homoousios* to describe the relationship between Father and Son in the creed adopted by this council. For his participation, Eus. *VC* 3.10–13. On the controversy, see Ayres, 2004; Gwynne, 2007; Hanson, 1988.

49 Momigliano, 1963, p. 79. For a discussion of the "conflict" model of Christian–pagan relations in this age, see Brown, 2011.

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5   Constantine and Silvester in the *Actus Silvestri*

Kristina Sessa

In thirteenth-century Rome, Cardinal Stefano Normandis built a small chapel at the church of SS Quattro Coronati on the Caelian Hill, in which he commissioned an extensive mural project. The subject matter for the mural, which comprised eleven panels, was the legend of Pope Silvester (313–335 CE) and his baptism of Emperor Constantine.[1] The legend was inspired by (if not based directly on) a late-antique source, the *Actus Silvestri*, a hagiographical representation of Silvester's episcopal tenure, which depicts the pope's healing, baptism, and conversion of Rome's first Christian emperor. According to the *Actus*, Constantine became a Christian not in 312 following a divine vision on the eve of the Battle of the Milvian Bridge, but sometime after 324, when, still a pagan and a persecutor of Christians, he contracted leprosy. After failing to find a cure with pagan healers, Constantine turned to Silvester, who baptized the emperor in the blessed bath waters of the emperor's 'Lateran palace', and healed his body and soul. The conversion narrative of the *Actus* ends with Constantine issuing a series of decrees that privilege Christianity, the Roman see, and its bishop over all other religions, churches, and clergy.

For Cardinal Normandis and other medieval interpreters of the Silvester-Constantine legend, the final sequence of the conversion scene – Constantine's 'official' establishment of the Roman church's ecumenical and juridical primacy – were the key facets of the narrative. The mural program in the Capella di San Silvestro emphasizes these final acts through its representation of Constantine offering the papal mitre to Silvester and his leading the pope's horse through Rome's city gates in the guise of papal *strator* or groom – two images not found in the *Actus Silvestri*.[2] The chapel images reflect a powerful reading of the text in the early thirteenth century, when the Holy Roman Emperor Frederick III frequently challenged the papacy on matters of church and state. To be sure, it was also not entirely original. In the late eighth century, Roman forgers created the *Constitutum Constantini* (more popularly known as the "Donation of Constantine"), a revised version of the Constantine-Silvester legend. In this text, the baptismal scene leads into a detailed delineation of the emperor's 'gifts' of power, privilege, and property exclusively granted to the Roman church.[3]

However, long before its early-medieval rebranding, the legend of Constantine and Silvester was a popular imagined history in Late Antiquity.[4] It inspired

multiple redactions, translations, and copies of the *Actus Silvestri* as well as new iterations of the relationship, such as in the sixth-century collection of papal biographies known as the *Liber Pontificalis*.[5] Scholars have identified at least two different versions of the *Actus* that circulated in Late Antiquity.[6] The earliest, Version A, which is the focus of this study, presents several different stories about Silvester and Constantine: a hagiographic section, which represents Silvester's youth, persecution, and election to the episcopate; the narrative of Constantine's baptism; a lengthy depiction of a disputation between Silvester and twelve Jews that was convened by Constantine and Helena; and a final scene in which Silvester debilitated a dragon living beneath the city of Rome. Scholars believe these very different narratives originally circulated independently as *libelli* until redactors in Rome (the likely provenance) combined them sometime in the second half of the fifth century.[7] A second shorter version, B, appeared in the early sixth century and made its way to the East, where it was translated into Greek before the middle of the sixth century.[8] (Syriac and Armenian translations soon followed.) Additionally, a third composite version (C) that includes additional material (e.g. the story of Helena's discovery of the True Cross; a preface attributing the *Actus* to Eusebius of Caesarea; an account of Silvester's death and burial) was created in the eighth or ninth century. The extraordinary popularity of the *Actus* in the medieval West – there are over 350 extant Latin manuscripts – has hampered the production of a modern critical edition, and scholars must for now rely upon an early modern edition.[9] More complexly still, as a recent study shows, Version A bears signs of revision and amendment that appear to date as early as the mid-sixth century.[10] A 'living text', the *Actus* challenges historians who wish to contextualize the earliest version within any chronologically specific period.

Consequently, historians interested in the late ancient use and meaning of the Constantine-Silvester legend are better served examining broad themes that connect the *Actus* to the messy religious and political world of fifth- and sixth-century Rome, such as the formation of episcopal authority and of imperial identity during an epoch of barbarian government in Italy and elsewhere in the West. For while the eighth and ninth centuries may have given rise to a 'Constantine-Silvester renaissance', the relationship first became ideologically significant centuries earlier, when the Roman church and its bishops had not yet become anything like the papacy in either its early or high medieval forms. As studies have shown, fifth- and sixth-century Roman bishops routinely struggled to assert their authority not only over emperors and high-ranking prelates on religious matters (as the histories of the Acacian schism and Three Chapters Controversy show) but also over local clergy and elite laypeople in Rome and Italy.[11] The Lupercalia affair during the episcopate of Gelasius; the Laurentian schism that rent the Roman church during the time of Symmachus; and the constant acts of disregard and defiance by clergy preserved in the correspondence of Rome's fifth- and sixth-century bishops variously underline the enormous institutional challenges that popes faced when they attempted to govern the Roman church in Italy.[12] These precise conditions generated some of the

most pointed articulations of Petrine primacy in the see's history, as George Demacopoulos has shown in a recent book.[13]

In a similar vein, this chapter will argue, the fabled relationship between Constantine and Silvester provided the 'historical' foundation of yet another episcopal discourse adopted and adapted by late ancient Roman Christians. Through a literary analysis of several scenes in the *Actus Silvestri*, the chapter explores how the legend of Constantine and Silvester constituted a flexible new discourse of authority in Late Antiquity, which fifth- and sixth-century readers and redactors – especially those in Rome – could use to define the very meanings of 'pope' and 'emperor' in the West during a period when both institutions were fluid and contested. Specifically, it will show how the *Actus Silvestri* constructs both Silvester and Constantine as moral 'characters' in the narrative, the former as a true 'Roman' Christian emperor, and the latter as a unique and trustworthy bishop singularly capable of healing an emperor's body and restoring a beleaguered church. Whereas scholars have traditionally focused on Petrine discourse in the formation of Roman episcopal authority, this chapter makes the case for a 'Silvestrine discourse' as central to late ancient debates about the Roman church and its bishop.[14]

Between history and fiction: the late-antique Constantine–Silvester legends

Of course, the claims of the *Actus Silvestri* regarding Constantine's Roman baptism are entirely fictional: the first Christian emperor never had leprosy and he was not baptized in Rome by Silvester in ca. 324. (Rather, the Arian bishop Eusebius baptized Constantine in Nicomedia just before his death in 336.) And while he and his family members founded several churches in Rome (e.g. the Sessorian and Lateran basilicas), Constantine never passed a series of laws exclusively privileging the Roman see. In fact, Constantine and Silvester may never have actually met. When Silvester became bishop in 314, Constantine was no longer in Rome.[15] Although the two may have crossed paths briefly in 315 when the emperor was in the city for two months for his *decennalia*, or in 326 when Constantine returned to celebrate his *vicennalia*, no source documents their interaction. Finally, a recent essay by Glen Bowersock has questioned one of the most fundamental assumptions about Constantine's Roman sojourns: that he founded S. Peter's basilica.[16] Although Bowersock's skepticism is somewhat extreme, he rightly underscores the fact that we have little firm evidence linking Constantine to S. Peter's before the sixth century, and hence relatively little knowledge about his historical role in the fourth-century origins of Christian Rome.[17]

Our understanding of Silvester's life and episcopate is even thinner. Most notably, Silvester did not participate in either the regional synod at Arles in 314 or the first ecumenical Council at Nicaea in 325, both convened and attended by Constantine. While the pope's absence at non-Roman councils later became traditional (he sent representatives instead), Silvester's non-attendance in 325 is

perplexing. Eusebius of Caesarea suggested that Silvester was too old to travel to Nicaea – perhaps, but the pope lived another ten years.[18] Moreover, Silvester's episcopal tenure is virtually unattested by contemporary witnesses, appearing only in brief in the *Depositio episcoporum* (before 354 CE).[19] We have no surviving correspondence from him, only a reference to a single letter addressed to him, and no epigraphic evidence tying him to building projects in the city.[20] According to Augustine, Donatists accused Silvester of being a *traditor* while still a priest (he is said to have handed over sacred books and burned incense).[21] This is obviously a problematic tradition, and it may have compelled the writers of the *Actus Silvestri* to depict Silvester as a *confessor* (see later discussion).[22] Finally, Silvester's grave in the cemetery of Priscilla on the Via Salaria received no attention from his successor Damasus (366–384), whose extensive epigraphic project on Roman martyrs included several other fourth-century bishops.[23] Damasus' silence suggests that Silvester's career and whatever interactions with Constantine he may have had, were not deemed significant enough in the decades immediately following his death to merit notice by a bishop who deliberately sought out episcopal precursors to emulate.[24]

The idea that Constantine was baptized in Rome by its bishop seems to have originated not in Rome but in the East, likely as a response to critical claims about the emperor's conversion.[25] For one, it was well known that Constantine was baptized on his deathbed by the Arian bishop Eusebius of Nicomedia.[26] While problematic at all times from certain perspectives, this fact became a real liability after 380, when Theodosius proclaimed Nicene Christianity as the official religion of the Empire. Consequently, Christian authors tried to fudge (and some simply ignored altogether) the reality of Constantine's heterodox baptism.[27] In fact, some eastern Christian writers transformed the emperor's baptizer from the heretical Eusebius of Nicomedia to the more theologically anodyne Eusebius of Rome.[28] From there it was an easy step for the Roman creators of the *Actus* to ascribe the baptism to the more potentially exploitable Silvester, whose tenure overlapped with Constantine's life.[29] Constantine was also attacked by polytheist critics. The sixth-century pagan historian Zosimus, for instance, retold a version of Constantine's conversion that was popular with pagan audiences since the fourth century.[30] According to Zosimus, Constantine converted to Christianity in Rome in order to absolve himself from the guilt of having murdered his wife and son after consulting with 'a certain Egyptian'. As Garth Fowden has shown, the legend of Constantine's leprosy and baptism likely first developed in the East as a counter-narrative to these polytheist claims.[31]

Precisely when, how, and in what form (oral or written?) the legend of Constantine's leprosy and Roman baptism reached Rome is uncertain, but once known to fifth- and sixth-century authors and redactors it became a 'historical kernal' for a whole series of Latin Constantine and Silvester legends.[32] Proponents of the embattled bishops Symmachus and Laurentius during (or immediately after) the Laurentian schism (498–506/7) produced the *Constitutum Silvestri* and the *Gesta Liberii* among other texts known collectively as the Symmachan forgeries.[33] Both the *Constitutum Silvestri* and the *Gesta Liberii*

refer authoritatively to Constantine's leprosy and healing by Silvester; the *Gesta Liberii*, in fact, cites the text's title.[34] Moreover, the *Constitutum Silvestri* echoes the imagined disputation between Silvester and the Jews over which Constantine and Helena preside by presenting Constantine as the convener of a Roman synod in 324, wherein Silvester issues decrees on clerical discipline and ecclesiastical practices. (As far as we know, no such council ever occurred). A few decades later in the 530s, redactors created an edition of the *Liber Pontificalis*, a serial collection of papal lives beginning with Peter, whose longest biography is dedicated to Silvester.[35] Here too we find the Roman baptism story presented as historical fact and integrated into yet another permutation of the Constantine-Silvester relationship, this one oriented around imperial patronage and the pope's excellence as a steward of ecclesiastical gifts. The legend also circulated beyond Rome in Late Antiquity. For instance, it was known to late fifth- or early sixth-century Gallic forgers of the *Decretum Gelasianum* and to Gregory of Tours, who famously compared the conversion of Clovis by Remigius to Constantine's baptism by Silvester.[36]

Character, liturgy, and power in the *Actus Silvestri*

The *Actus Silvestri* offers striking testimony to the flexibility of the Constantine-Silvester legend: this was a relationship that could serve many different ends, even within the context of a single document. Tessa Canella's recent study of the text makes a fascinating case for reading the depiction of Jews, disputation, and religious tolerance in the *Actus* as part of a larger Ostrogothic-era dialogue about religious diversity and the 'problem' of the Jews within a Christian society.[37] Her analysis focuses primarily on the lengthy debate between Silvester and the Jews (over which Constantine presided) and on the conversion narrative, especially the final law-giving section. What follows examines some of this same material but from a different angle, in order to show how certain effects of the imagined relationship might also speak to the formation of episcopal and imperial authority.

In the *Actus Silvestri*, the reader first encounters Silvester as a young Christian raised by a widowed mother and educated in Rome by a local presbyter during a period of imperial persecution.[38] Persecution is a theme in the *Actus*, and Silvester's first ethically significantly act in the narrative is to shelter an Antiochene holy man named Timotheus, who had fled to Rome from the East, where, the text implies, Christians were especially endangered. In Rome, Timotheus' preaching and success in the conversion of polytheists bring him to the attention of the city's pagan urban prefect, fittingly called 'Tarquinius', who arrests and executes Timotheus. Silvester is then dragged before the prefect, who demands that Silvester sacrifice to the gods and hand over Timotheus' wealth. While imprisoned, Silvester boldly threatens his persecutor, admonishing him that he will suffer far greater punishments in the hereafter than any Christian will on earth.[39] True to Silvester's words, Tarquinius is struck down by divine vengeance in the next scene, when he chokes on a fishbone during his

midday meal.[40] Silvester then becomes a presbyter and, when Bishop Miltiades dies, is elected bishop, though not unanimously. However, the narrative underlines Silvester's worthiness by pointing out that he had been a confessor before becoming a priest. The section concludes with a discussion of Silvester's care for the church's poor and widows, whom he is said to have enrolled on a *matricula* and for his special concern for impoverished clerics. It also describes his liturgical innovations, including a debate with Greek Christians over fasting.[41] We shall return to these ritual details shortly.

As noted, the presentation of Silvester as a confessor likely had an apologetic function, given the rumors circulating in the early fifth century regarding Silvester's apostasy. Similarly, the identification of Timotheus with Antioch and the East may reflect Roman defensiveness during the fifth and early sixth centuries, when it was frequently at odds with eastern churches (such as the Antiochene) over Christological matters.[42] And the remarkable name of Silvester's persecutor, Tarquinius, invokes the eponymous last king of Rome, an Etruscan no less. As we shall see shortly, the *Actus'* depiction of the Roman government as a formerly pagan institution, founded by barbarian 'others', resonates closely with the presentation of Constantine's own conversion not only to Christianity but also to a more pious form of *romanitas*.[43] Furthermore, this section of the *Actus* initiates the story of Silvester's moral development by portraying his deep commitments to hospitality (even when his own life was endangered) and to the care of the poor, especially impoverished clergymen. In this respect, the text inflects his personality with a distinctly clerical-ascetic ethics. To be clear, Silvester never personally adopts renunciatory practices (the *Actus* do not include stories of Silvester undertaking heroic fasts and vigils, or depleting his personal wealth, such as were associated with holy men like Martin of Tours). Moreover, Silvester's body is never tortured or physically maimed, though he is willing to become a martyr – a point further emphasized in the following conversion scene, when Silvester believes that Constantine's soldiers have come to arrest him for execution (rather than benignly escort him to the emperor). Silvester thus remains a living confessor, who cares for his endangered parishioners by directing them to engage in routine acts of renunciation (i.e. alms giving and fasting). In this respect, Silvester defends a range of ascetic and pastoral ideals, from wealth redistribution and fasting to charity for foreign Christians. In Rome, where the monk-bishop model had little traction in Late Antiquity before the era of Gregory the Great (despite its popularity elsewhere in the West), Silvester's brand of pastoral asceticism would have been especially authoritative.

Constantine's character development is also shaped in relation to the theme of persecution. As noted, the idea that Constantine contracted leprosy and was healed through baptism in Rome arose in the East as a response to more cynical portrayals of the emperor's conversion, notably that he was a murderer who sought Christianity only as a last resort. In the *Actus*, Constantine's leprosy is depicted as a form of divine punishment, meted out by God because of his baleful persecution of Christians.[44] According to the text, the emperor initially seeks a remedy for his ailment from pagan experts, including the 'Capitoline

pontiffs' (*pontifices capitolii*), who prescribe a grotesque cure: Constantine is to bathe on the Capitolium in a pool filled with the blood of young boys.[45] The scene shows the emperor ordering the gruesome preparations, but then abruptly changing course when he is hit with a pang of conscience after witnessing the boys' mothers weeping and tearing their hair. Constantine calls off the treatment, stating that he would be 'guilty before God' of horrendous crimes were he to proceed.[46] He sends the families home with lavish gifts via the *cursus publicus* and returns to his Lateran palace, morally changed but still physically sick. However, a more salubrious cure presents itself that night, when the apostles Peter and Paul visit Constantine in a dream, praise his change of heart, and direct him to Silvester, who, they promise, will heal him.[47]

By portraying Constantine as a reformed persecutor, who turns to Christ after recognizing the horror of pagan practices, the *Actus* present Constantine not only as an ethically transformed Christian but also as a true *Roman* leader. Indeed, the *Actus* define Constantine's religious conversion as both a personal moral victory (he individually halts the killing once he recognized the heinousness of the cure) and as a turn towards a more authentically 'Roman' religious system. Thus in a speech to the city's soldiers and civilians, in which he announces his abandonment of the pontiffs' cure, Constantine explains that Roman law prohibits the killing of children, even during wartime, thereby making him a criminal were he to have carried out the pontiffs' directives. The narrative further underlines the association of his decision with *romanitas* when Constantine asks the crowd, 'what benefit will the Romans gain from overcoming the barbarians if they are defeated by their own cruelty?' and when the crown later responds in unison, 'Roman piety (*pietas romana*) commands that the sons be returned to their mothers!'[48] In this manner, the *Actus* show Constantine undergoing a dramatic change, from being a leader who privileged his own interests and pondered barbaric crimes to one whose moral compass aligns closely with a 'Roman' value system, wherein one places 'the desires of the gods' before personal wishes.[49]

Liturgy and the definition of Roman episcopal authority

In the *Actus Silvestri*, Constantine and Silvester's relationship is cemented through the liturgy of baptism, and ritual appears prominently throughout the text. For instance, the first hagiographic section of the *Actus* includes both a description of Silvester's liturgical innovations, including his supposed introduction of a new ritual garment (the *collobium* – a sleeveless tunic worn by deacons, priests, and bishops until the episcopate of Liberius in 352) and an account of his defense of Roman fasting practices against the claims of eastern clerics. In fact, fasting is the subject of a formal debate between Silvester and several eastern Christians, which Silvester predictably wins.[50] Liturgy also plays a pivotal role in the third section of the *Actus*, where Silvester debates a team of Jewish rabbis on matters of theology and doctrine.[51] Here Silvester defeats his disputants not only through his rhetorical abilities but also through ritual

prowess, by resurrecting a bull that one of the Jews had killed but could not revive.[52] Silvester's ritual knowledge is further underscored at the end of the *Actus*, where he appears as an expert in 'dragon control'. A *draco* with poisonous breath had been terrorizing the city for centuries until Peter and Paul appear to Silvester in a vision, and provide him with detailed directions for how to subdue it. The bishop successfully binds the dragon's mouth with a white string (as specified by the apostles) and shuts a set of bronze doors, thereby imprisoning the beast in his subterranean lair and saving the city.[53]

Silvester's ritual knowledge, in other words, is both a primary thematic component of the *Actus* and a major facet of his authority. The depiction of Constantine's baptism and healing, therefore, must be considered within this frame. Though not a perfect snapshot of contemporary practices of baptism in Rome (to the extent that such practices would have been standardized in the fifth and sixth centuries), the conversion scene is both structured by and articulated in language that vividly evokes the experience of baptism.[54] First, Silvester confirms Constantine's belief in Christ as the Son of God ('If I didn't believe', Constantine responded, 'I wouldn't have sent for you as a penitent!').[55] He then directs Constantine to remove his purple robes, don a hair shirt, and undergo seven days of fasting. During this time, Silvester tells the emperor to end the persecution; cease sacrificing to idols; release all debtors, prisoners, and those exiled to the mines; and order weekly alms giving. Constantine performs the fast and professes to Silvester his belief in a single, invisible god, who heals the body and wipes away sin. Silvester subsequently lays his hands on the emperor and makes him a catechumen.[56] Silvester next leads the clerics in a two-day fast. Then on Saturday at vespers, Silvester, his clerics, and the emperor enter the baths of the Lateran palace. Silvester blesses the water, and asks the emperor if he believes 'from his whole heart' (*ex toto corde*) in the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Constantine responds affirmatively and states his rejection of the devil. At this moment, Silvester submerges Constantine's entire body into the pool a single time. The bishop pours chrism over the emperor and offers a prayer, in which he invokes Elisha's healing of the leper Naaman and Paul's recovery of his sight, whom God 'made for us a doctor from a persecutor'.[57] Silvester requests that God cleanse Constantine's soul of its filthy sins and his body of its leprosy. As the participants call out 'Amen', a bright ray of light envelopes the room and a loud sound emanates from the water resembling a hot crackling pan, frightening all. When Constantine emerges from the water – his body fully healed from leprosy – he declares that he has seen Christ. The baptismal scene concludes with Constantine putting on the white robes of the neophyte and spending the following seven days passing a series of decrees, as noted earlier.

The graphic detail of the scene, replete with sights and sounds, is remarkable. It represents in dramatic form the experience of baptism as a materially transformative act, which can alter the senses and physically change the body. Its prominence in the *Actus* may reflect larger conversations in Rome among elites about the nature and meaning of baptism. For example, an early sixth-century letter by the Roman deacon John addressed to an aristocrat named Senarius

presents John's answers to a series of questions that Senarius had asked about the meaning of the baptismal rites. Senarius was especially curious about the catechumenate – a key stage of the process that is also found in the *Actus* (even if in abbreviated form). A few decades later, in 544, the aristocratic Roman sub-deacon Arator delivered his poetic rendition of the Acts of the Apostles to a crowd at the church of S. Pietro a Vincoli. His poem, a recent study has shown, emphasized baptism, especially its symbolic function as a form of rebirth rather than as a form of resurrection, as many other late ancient Christian sources interpreted it.[58] The *Actus*, of course, do not expressly depict Constantine's baptism as a second birth, but they similarly interpret baptism as an act of cleansing and rejuvenation.[59]

Moreover, the scene presents a striking emotional and ritual counterpoint to the equally affective but perverse scene earlier in the *Actus*, where the Capitoline *pontifices* prescribe a bath of boys' blood as the cure for Constantine's leprosy. The juxtaposition of the two pools – the former, a *piscina* on the Capitoline full of 'hot and steaming blood', the latter, a *piscina pietatis* in Constantine's Lateran palace, filled with pure water blessed by a bishop – visually contrasts the two modes of healing as well as the respective practitioners who perform each rite.[60] Equally remarkable is the use of sound in both scenes, with the ululations of the stricken mothers, loudly lamenting their sons' deaths paralleling the crackling of the water in the Lateran font, which announces Christ's presence and his cleansing of the emperor. In a sense, the two scenes with their similar details and dynamics invite the audience to infer core homologies between pagan error and Christian truth, but then to recognize the ultimate efficacy and power of the Christian ritual process as performed by the bishop of Rome.

Yet, the baptismal scene speaks to something more than the superiority of Christianity over paganism;[61] it animates Silvester's papal identity with a unique presence, a presence based not on the passive inheritance of Peter's charge, but on the active performance of supernatural rites to salubrious and productive ends. The baptismal interactions mark Silvester as a powerful liturgical agent, a holy man whose careful performance creates the conditions for a singular spiritual experience, expressed here through sight and sound. The materiality of Silvester's liturgical power contradicts our received understanding of Christian liturgy as practices that are ultimately abstract and idealized (i.e. as symbols to be interpreted rather than as actions that affect realities). As scholars note, this highly Protestantized model of Christian ritual must be rejected, since late ancient religious actions such as baptism were about corporeal (and not simply spiritual) transformations, whether it was a matter of exorcizing demons or healing a diseased body.[62] Thus the entire baptism sequence in the *Actus*, especially if we keep in mind its parallel with the cure of the *pontifices*, underlines not simply the powerful nature of the Christian God, but the character of the Roman bishop as a liturgical warrior, whose power is both intellectual (he can debate with Greeks and Jews) and material (he can resurrect animals and cure emperors of leprosy). Significantly, Silvester himself would become part of Roman liturgy: as both bishop and confessor, he is commemorated in prayers preserved in Verona Sacramentary.[63]

Conclusions

During the fifth and sixth centuries, Christians in Rome searched for new ways to present and interpret their bishop's authority. For some, the figure of Peter, his apostolic status, and his power to 'bind and loose' constituted the core components of a potent discourse, which they used to defend the pope's claims over and against his many competitors, especially outside of Italy.[64] Yet, however emblematic Peter may have become for the papacy, he was not the only available touchstone in Late Antiquity for expressing ideas about Roman episcopal authority. Pope Silvester, and his mythic relationship with the emperor Constantine, offered the fifth- and sixth-century authors, redactors, and copyists of the *Actus Silvestri* a dynamic and flexible alternative. As we have seen, this relationship could be used to articulate both a more active, material vision of papal power grounded in efficacious ritual knowledge, and a pastoral-ascetic discourse, whereby the Roman bishop defines and directs a range of renunciatory practices aimed at assisting the entire community of believers, including those who might come to Rome from abroad.

The Silvester-Constantine relationship was put to other ideological uses as well. As I have argued elsewhere, the presentation of Silvester and Constantine in the *Liber Pontificalis* conveys a strong positive image about the pope's role as the steward of ecclesiastical wealth.[65] In Silvester's vita, which is the longest entry in the entire late ancient document, Silvester's tenure functions as the narrative frame for a mini-history of Constantine's ecclesiastical patronage at Rome, in which authentic records of his donations are embedded within the largely fictional life of the bishop (a life, we recall, that is based in part on the *Actus Silvestri*). For each church that Constantine and/or a family member dedicated, the *Liber Pontificalis* presents a donation list of properties and moveable objects given to that specific basilica. By subsuming these donation lists within Silvester's life, the editors of the *Liber Pontifalis* imply that he, and his successors, personally oversaw the maintenance of the gifts. In this way, the *Liber Pontificalis* constructs a historical precedent or paradigm for seeing the Roman bishop as a trustworthy manager of church property and wealth, who maintains the integrity of gifts. A narrative about a pope who maintained the emperor's donations in the form he had given them would have been especially trenchant in the first decades of the sixth century, when Roman bishops were accused of improperly alienating ecclesiastical wealth.

Constantine's 'rebranding' in the *Actus Silvestri* as a penitent persecutor turned Christian champion of the Roman church is also significant. As numerous studies have observed, the relationship between the popes in Rome and the emperors in Constantinople remained fluid during the fifth and sixth centuries, vacillating between neutral disengagement and active disapproval. Yet beyond the theme of *sacerdotium* v. *regnum*, the *Actus Silvestri* may address a more delicate problem: the fact that late Roman Italy had politically shifted over the course of the later fifth and sixth centuries, from being ruled by a string of largely feckless late fifth-century emperors to government under an effective Arian king and then back under the control of an emperor (Justinian), who used and abused

his powers in unprecedented ways. This background may help to explain the Eusebian emphasis on the *romanitas* of Christianity, and its stated and implied opposition to 'barbarian' piety. I would suggest that the *Actus*' concern to paint Constantine's conversion in ethnic terms is less a critique of the Ostrogothic kings than it is an attempt to find a place for the Roman church and its bishops in a mid-sixth-century milieu, when Justinian had turned the settled coexistence between Roman Christians and their Arian rulers on its head. For instance, the emperor's dictatorial behavior during the Three Chapters Controversy, when he strong-armed Pope Vigilius into condemning authors and texts long since cleared by western churches (a move that put the Roman church directly at odds with both Italian and African clergy), had enraged many Romans. A story about an emperor's cruel beginnings and his misuse of power, which triumphantly concluded with his quick retreat to the safe hollows of 'Roman piety', could have functioned as morality tale, or perhaps a warning, for the present imperial regime in Constantinople. What is more, the *Actus* credits Constantine's transformation to the ritual agency of the Roman bishop – a narrative detail that could encourage a more muscular response from the pope to Justinian's power plays, not to mention greater imperial deference to the pope. In this respect, the *Actus* may speak as much to the perceived weakness of Rome in the sixth century as they do to Constantinople's strength. This last line of interpretation is admittedly speculative, but it is offered in the spirit of the *Actus Silvestri*, a text that inspired so many different readings over the course of its late ancient and medieval life.

Notes

1 For other perspectives on Constantine in visual and architectural representation, see the respective chapters of Gorse and Jaritz in this volume; for the panels at SS. Quattro Coronati, see Figure 11.7 and Jaritz in this volume for discussion.
2 The Carolingian king Pippin the Short supposedly fulfilled the role of 'office of the groom' when Pope Stephen visited Francia in 754. Significantly, the Holy Roman Emperor Frederick I Barbarossa (1155–1190) was the first king to refuse to perform this ceremonial act of subservience to the Roman bishop. Collins, 2009, pp. 228–9.
3 For the *Constitutum Constantini*, see Fuhrmann, 1968 and 1973; and Noble, 1984, pp. 134–7. A recent reevaluation of the text by Fried, 2007 argues that the forgery was produced not in Rome during the later eighth century (as scholarly consensus has held), but in Francia during the ninth century. However, Fried's revisionist chronology and provenance remains controversial. See Goodson and Nelson, 2010.
4 For a summary of the legend's many iterations, see Lieu, 1998.
5 On the Constantine-Silvester legend in the *Liber Pontificalis*, see Sessa, 2010.
6 On the textual history of the *Actus*, see Levison, 1924 and Pohlkamp, 1992.
7 The dating of Version A of the *Actus Silvestri* cannot be precisely determined. References to the text (known variously at the *Actus*, *Gesta*, and *Liber Silvestri*) appear by ca. 500, such as in the *Decretum Gelasianum*, where the *Actus* is listed among the received books that are not read in the churches (because of its anonymity). There is also a fragment of an Italian manuscript dated to the fifth century, which contains part of one section of the *Actus* (Silvester's disputation with the Jews), though as noted earlier, this text may have originally been transmitted as a separate *libellus*. I thus concur with the majority of scholars

who date the earliest version of the *Actus* to after 450. For an overview of the scholarship on dating and provenance, see Canella, 2006, pp. 34–46. On the original transmission of the constituent parts of Version A as separate documents, see Aiello, 1992–3.

8 Levison, 1924.

9 Presently, scholars must rely on the fifteenth-century edition produced by Boninus Mombritius reprinted with new content divisions in De Leo, 1974, pp. 151–221. The Mombritius edition preserves a form of Version C, a composite recension. Pohlkamp has been preparing a modern critical edition of the *Actus* since the early 1980s, but his edition remains unpublished.

10 See Canella, 2006.

11 On multiple challenges that Roman bishops faced in Late Antiquity, see Lizzi Testa, 2004; Sessa, 2012, and Demacopoulos, 2013.

12 For a study of these challenges to Roman episcopal authority, see Sessa, 2012.

13 Demacopoulos, 2013.

14 Demacopoulos, 2013 discusses the extensive scholarship.

15 After defeating Maxentius in 312, Constantine left Rome in January 313. For a chronology of this period, see Barnes, 1981, pp. 62–6.

16 Bowersock, 2005.

17 For a counterpoint to Bowersock's admittedly controversial assessment, see Liverani, 2008.

18 Eusebius, *VC* 3.7.2.

19 For the *Depositio episcoporum*, see *MGH AA* 9, 2.70. For Silvester's biography, see F. Scorza Barcelona, 2000.

20 The epistle to Silvester is from Athanasius of Alexandria on the topic of Arianism, and is mentioned in a later letter from Pope Liberius to Constantius II. See *Fragmenta historica*, Series A VII.4. The *Liber Pontificalis*, a later sixth-century source, attributes several building projects to Silvester, but there is no contemporary fourth-century evidence attesting to his role in their foundation.

21 Augustine, *De unico baptism* 16.27.

22 Pohlkamp, 1992, pp. 195–6.

23 On Damasus' project, see Trout, 2005.

24 Of course, Silvester's reputation as a *traditor* may have discouraged Damasus from including him in the martyrs project.

25 Fowden, 1994.

26 Eusebius, *VC* 4.62.

27 For instance, in Rufinus' continuation of Eusebius' *Historia Ecclesiastica*, Constantine's baptism simply goes unmentioned, though it is included in the histories of Socrates, Sozomen, and Theodoret. See Lieu, 1998, p. 140.

28 The Roman bishop Eusebius may have been first asserted as Constantine's baptizer, which would be an easier 'correction' for Eusebius of Nicomedia. Fowden, 1994, pp. 159–60 and Lieu, 1998, p. 141.

29 As Pohlkamp notes, 1992, p. 196, Jerome predated Silvester's tenure to 310, so that so that the Constantinian peace would correspond exactly with the pope's episcopate.

30 Zosimus, *Historia* 2.29 (almost certainly derived from Eunapius), discussed in Fowden 1994, pp. 156–7.

31 Fowden, 1994. But cf. Pohlkamp, 1992 and 2007, who argues that the entire legend is of Roman provenance.

32 According to Liverani, the story of Constantine's illness and Roman baptism may have circulated in Rome as early as the episcopate of Leo (441–61). However, his argument is based on a reading of epigrams transcribed by later medieval pilgrims, which supposedly once accompanied the now lost mosaics on the façade of S. Peters. Liverani, 2008, pp. 161–8. In any event, as Liverani stresses, the narrative remained highly fluid in this period.

33 On the Symmachan forgeries (a modern title), see Wirbelauer, 1993, for discussion of the phenomenon and new editions (with German translations) of the texts. For the *Constitutum Silvestri*, see op. cit., pp. 228–47.

34 *Constitutum Silvestri*, ed. Wirbelauer, 1993, pp. 228; *Gesta Liberii*, ed. Wirbelauer, 1993, pp. 250 (for the reference to a *Liber Silvestri*, apparently an alternate title for the *Actus*) and 256.

35 *Liber Pontificalis*, Duchesne, ed., 1955, pp. 170–201.

36 Attestations: *Decretum Gelasianum* 4.4.1; Gregory the Great, *Dialogues* 1.7.1–2; Gregory of Tours, *Historia Francorum* 2.31; Aldhelm, *De virginitate* 25.

37 Canella, 2006.

38 *Actus Silvestri* 1.508.

39 *Actus Silvestri* 1.508–09: "*ut tormenta quae christianis temporalia irrogasti; tu aeterna suscipias et inter tormenta ipsa hunc esse deum quem christiani colunt recognoscas.*"

40 *Actus Silvestri* 1.509.

41 *Actus Silvestri* 1.509–10, discussed later.

42 In fact, pro-Chalcedonian refugees came to Rome during the late fifth and early sixth centuries, the best known being Dionysius Exiguus.

43 I thank Shane Bjornlie for helping me to make this connection between Tarquinius and Constantine's conversion in the *Actus*.

44 *Actus Silvestri* 1.510.

45 *Actus Silvestri* 1.510.

46 *Actus Silvestri* 1.510: "*Tunc imperator exhorruit facinus et se tantorum criminum reum fore apud deum existimans . . .*"

47 *Actus Silvestri* 1.511.

48 *Actus Silvestri* 1.511: "*Itemque conctionatus dixit: iussit pietas romana filios suis matribus reddi . . .*"

49 *Actus Silvestri* 1.511: "*Hoc autem facimus: quando voluntatibus deorum voluntates nostras postponimus, et divinis desyderiis obedientes nostra desyderia impugnamus et in hoc certamine victos nos esse hac ratione gaudemus . . .*"

50 *Actus Silvestri* 1.510.

51 *Actus Silvestri* 1.516–29.

52 *Actus Silvestri* 1.528.

53 *Actus Silvestri* 1.529–31.

54 In truth, relatively little known about the practice of Roman baptism before the seventh century, when we can first start to talk of a true 'Roman rite', and there is no reason to assume anything like ritual uniformity. See Johnson, 2007, pp. 159–69; 221–33.

55 *Actus Silvestri* 1.512: "*Ego nisi credidissem, ad te poenitus non misissem.*"

56 *Actus Silvestri* 1.512: "*Imposuit sanctus Sylvester manus super caput eius, et benedicens eum ac faciens cathecuminum abiit.*"

57 *Actus Silvestri* 1.513: "*et fecisti nobis ex persecutore doctorem.*"

58 Hillier, 2014.

59 *HA* 2.537–46, in Hillier, 2014, pp. 15–7. Here I follow Hillier's interpretation and cite his translation of Arator.

60 *Actus Silvestri* 1. 510 and 512.

61 Of course, this reading is also operative. See Pohlkamp, 1992 and 2007.

62 Recent work by Dayna Kalleres has called attention to the materiality of Christian liturgy, especially as it involves demonology. See, for example, Kalleres, 2007.

63 *Verona Sacr.* 35.

64 Demacopoulos, 2013.

65 Sessa, 2010.

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6 Constantine in the sixth century

From Constantinople to Tours[1]

Shane Bjornlie

As much scholarship has already illustrated, at no time did Constantine have a coherent agenda for creating a Christian Roman Empire.[2] Constantine did eventually come to be seen as the tutelary figure in the association between Christianity and Roman Empire, but this was a representation of Constantine cultivated over time by church leaders and by subsequent emperors who sought a recognizable means for communicating legitimacy in an imperial world that was increasingly different from that which had produced the first Roman emperor.[3] Certainly by the early fifth century, Constantine had become established in the late-antique imagination as a founding figure for Christian Empire. For example, the *Theodosian Code* (published 438) began its record of imperial decrees with the enactments of Constantine and ended that record with legislation pertaining to Christianity (Book 16), thus "bookending" a legal presentation of the development of Christian Empire.[4] Similarly, in the fifth and sixth centuries the name of Constantine had acquired the same legitimating power as that of Augustus, particularly in the eastern capital of Constantinople. Emperors such as Leo and Justin were "ritually incarnated" as "new Constantines" upon accession.[5] The potency of Constantine's association with the distinctive kind of Christian rulership that had emerged in Constantinople could be activated to provide legitimacy for even the most questionable of imperial successions.[6] In the sixth century, emperors at Constantinople celebrated the gilded image of Constantine when it arrived via *adventus* at the imperial seat of the Hippodrome in annual celebration of Constantine's birthday and the founding of the city.[7] At the same time, Constantine's legitimating agency was not absolute and universally recognized; rather, the political and religious discourses of the sixth century indicate that the image of Constantine as a new kind of Roman emperor could be appropriated or rejected. Constantine in the sixth century could only be imagined in relation to the ideological definition of Roman Empire, but like every other period of Roman history, an ideological definition of the state was liable to contestation by groups with different interests in the idea of Roman Empire. As can be imagined, the discourse concerning Constantine and his relationship to Christianity and Roman Empire was particularly animated among writers exposed to the political culture of Constantinople. In the western Mediterranean, by contrast, interest in the legacy of Constantine

seems to have had less immediate urgency, with most writers content to channel the stories of Constantine received through Lactantius, Eusebius and other earlier sources. Nevertheless, even in the "successor states" of the former western Empire, Constantinople had considerable political reach and peculiarities in the transmission of Constantine's deeds may have more to do with the perception of Constantinople among Latin writers of the sixth century than a received tradition for Constantine.[8] In what follows, this chapter will outline some of the circumstances of political and religious polemic in which Constantine appears in the eastern and western literature of the sixth century.

Constantine in the hands of Constantinopolitans

Zosimus figures among the earliest of eastern writers of the sixth century to handle the reputation of Constantine and his *Nova Historia* remained current as an interlocutor in the Constantinian discourse throughout the century. His own engagement with the idea of Constantine probably had much to do with his social circumstances as a "Hellene" ("pagan") in the eastern bureaucracy. Zosimus had served as a legal clerk (*exceptor*) in the imperial bureaucracy during the reign of the Emperor Anastasius until being elevated to the rank of *comes*, from which he retired from service to write his history.[9] Although dates for the composition of Zosimus' history are insecure, it is possible that he wrote as late as 518, in the aftermath of volatile events following the death of Anastasius.[10] In the absence of a clearly favored successor, multiple claimants sought the throne, including an obscure palace guardsman (Justin) who was able to secure the purple in part by having himself proclaimed a "new Constantine" before the people and the Senate assembled at the Hippodrome of Constantinople. Justin's formal title as the new emperor was Augustus; but the invocation of Constantine's name provided additional assurance that a soldier of obscure origins would govern according to the appropriate model. Such a statement was probably all the more necessary in that Justin's accession had involved the suppression of Anastasius' nephews as potential heirs and the violent murder of the candidate favored by the *exceptores*, an influential branch of the imperial bureaucracy housed at Constantinople.[11] Although Justin's accession resembles many other contests for the imperial throne, his (probably choreographed) acclamation as a "new Constantine" at the Hippodrome was a means of circumventing accession rituals that typically involved at least nominal consensus with other governing classes at the capital. As a result, being a "new Constantine" could also be construed as autocratic ambition in the imagination of a political elite that was less sympathetic to Justin's reign. Zosimus' association with the *exceptores*, at least some of whom shared his non-Christian affiliation, explains the vituperative character of his treatment of Constantine in the *Nova Historia*. The central theme organizing the narrative of this history is the illegitimacy of Constantine's political legacy.

Zosimus adapted much of the *Nova Historia* from the earlier account of the fourth-century pagan sophist Eunapius.[12] Thus, Zosimus' *Nova Historia* was a

timely resurrection of a fourth-century witness to the Constantinian dynasty who had rejected the influential Christianizing narrative of Eusebius. Zosimus ended the account of his history well before the sixth century, although he claimed to have witnessed the end of the Roman Empire in his own lifetime as the fulfillment of Constantine's actions.[13] Importantly, his construction of an anti-Constantinian teleology begins with the reign of Augustus, for whom Zosimus was not dependent upon Eunapius; thus, although much of Zosimus' treatment of Constantine may derive from Eunapius, the manner in which Constantine contributes to the *Nova Historia* as a whole has more to with Zosimus' polemical intentions.[14] Zosimus noted that the Roman Empire had been successful and expansive when governed by an aristocracy, but the ascendance of Augustus as sole ruler had subjected the state to whim of chance.[15] Although the affairs of state continued harmoniously when authority resided in the hands of a just and moderate ruler such as Augustus, it was inevitable that power would fall to someone with a less scrupulous concern for established custom. The realization of Zosimus' construction of historical inevitability became manifest in the reign of Constantine, whom he identified as "the origin and beginning of the present destruction of the Empire".[16] As Zosimus reconstructed the narrative, Constantine's break with the traditions of the state originated in the executions of his son and wife, for which Constantine turned to Christianity for absolution. Rejecting the traditional religion of the state incited the people of Rome and alienated Constantine, leading to the founding of a new eastern capital, where Constantine quickly confused the established form of Roman government, and where the army became enervated by exposure to spectacles, resulting in the loss of military strength.[17] Thus for Zosimus, Constantine truly was a founding father, but only as the source of the failure of empire evident in the sixth century. Zosimus emphasized the inevitability of Constantine as the incipient source of the state's ruin by including a prophecy that foretold Constantine's founding of Constantinople. According to the oracle, Thrace would produce a monstrous birth, swelling as an ulcer on the seashore until finally bursting with putrid gore.[18]

There is no doubt that some subsequent sixth-century writers found Zosimus' portrayal of Constantine to be provocative. Evagrius, who wrote an ecclesiastical history as late as 593, composed a direct address to Zosimus ("You say, you wicked and deceitful demon . . ."), explicitly rejecting his account of Constantine and the Christian role in imperial history.[19] The fact that Evagrius would find Zosimus' account so worthy of rebuke, presumably seventy-five years after the fact, reveals that Zosimus' history had maintained currency in the popular political discourses of Constantinople, but more importantly that the interpretation of Constantine himself as either "God-beloved and thrice-blessed" or as "sacrilegious and infamous", remained distinct possibilities.[20] It is also worth noting that Evagrius' history, strictly speaking, did not cover the period of Constantine's life, but instead began with the reign of Julian, the last "pagan" emperor whom Evagrius disparaged and whom Zosimus had praised so highly in comparison to Constantine (and at equal length, despite the disparity

in the length of their respective reigns). Nonetheless, Evagrius managed to insert his apology of Constantine, fortified with quotes from Eusebius' *Vita*, as a digression toward the end of his account of the life of the Emperor Anastasius.[21] The placement may be telling, indicative as it is of the historical moment (the death of Anastasius) when challenging the interpretation of Constantine became politically urgent for Zosimus and other "Hellenes" in imperial service.

That Constantine became a figure emblematic for the sixth-century polemic concerning the maintenance of governmental tradition is also clear from the role that Zosimus' history seems to have played in the critique of Justinian, whom Justin associated with himself as an heir and who became emperor in 527. Justinian's overhaul of channels of bureaucratic patronage, his condemnation of Neoplatonism as a source of classical learning and his brutal suppression of "Hellenes" at Constantinople enflamed the bitter resentment of traditionalists, particularly those affiliated with imperial service.[22] Although Justinian seems to have avoided overt association with Constantine in propaganda, this in itself may have been the result of his awareness of how polemical Constantine had become.[23] Zosimus had attempted to demonstrate Constantine's failure as a model ruler by elaborating on particular themes: deviation from religious and administrative tradition, and indulgence in public spectacle and frivolous building projects.[24] As though a deliberate palimpsest, these topics later surfaced as main themes in the critique of Justinian by Procopius and John Lydus, each of whom commented upon Justinian's administration of the eastern Empire as though it had become the fulfillment of Zosimus' history. Procopius and Lydus both enlarged upon Justinian's flawed character by emphasizing innovation as a general tendency of his reign. Each author drew attention to his involvement in Christian disputation, wasteful public building, the deterioration of administrative tradition and the political role of public spectacles as thinly veiled invective.[25] John Lydus, in particular, noted a distinct trajectory in the deterioration of government from Constantine to Justinian. According to Lydus, it was Constantine who first adulterated the authority of the Praetorian Prefect.[26] John was especially concerned that, by Justinian's time, the Praetorian Prefect had become instrumental in dismantling administrative tradition.[27] And like Zosimus, Lydus too described how these things had happened in fulfillment of an ancient prophecy.[28] It is worth noting that Lydus had served with the *exceptores* and that it was this branch of the civil service that would experience the greatest challenges from Justinian's regime, something that may have given Zosimus' critique of Constantine greater currency.

Zosimus' treatment of public spectacle was especially well-suited to an extended political critique of Justinian. Zosimus hinted at a causative chain of events, claiming first that Augustus had introduced pantomime to public theatre, an innocent enough indiscretion which was synecdotal for the manner in which spectacle would become a symptom of political corruption under Constantine.[29] Zosimus also used public spectacle as a medium to contrast the moral dispositions of Constantine and Julian, two emperors already thought of in the popular imagination as representative of opposed religious definitions of

empire. According to Zosimus, Constantine enervated his soldiers by habituating them to entertainments while Julian provoked the hostility of common citizens by abstemiously avoiding spectacle.[30] Procopius and John Lydus later appropriated the theme of public spectacle for the same purpose. It is difficult to imagine an audience in sixth-century Constantinople that would not immediately associate Zosimus' commentary on the political repercussions of public entertainment with the involvement of Justin and Justinian in the Hippodrome. Procopius made much of Justinian's interest in public spectacle even before becoming emperor.[31] The attempted deposition of Justinian (the Nika Revolt) that began with popular protests at chariot races and ended with the slaughter of thirty thousand citizens in the Hippodrome figured as the most visceral indictment of Justinian in the writing of both Procopius and John Lydus.[32]

Whether or not Zosimus intended to extend his negative portrayal of Constantine to Justin and Justinian, the currency of the *Nova Historia* in later eastern discourse suggests that a later readership appropriated it for just that purpose, making Constantine a polemical topic for Justinian. This was certainly the case for the *Julian Romance*, a Syriac text written in the early sixth-century Edessa, which developed contrasts between Constantine and Julian, and suggested Justinian as the apocalyptic fulfillment of Constantine's legacy.[33] The most immediate reaction to this polemical discourse from Justinian's court came from Marcellinus Comes, the author of a *Chronicon* who had enjoyed intimate proximity to the imperial court. Marcellinus had served as a *cancellarius* (personal aide) in Justinian's employ during the reign of Justin and he was later promoted to *comes* when Justinian attained the throne.[34] Marcellinus' affiliation with Justinian's court and the treatment of specific themes in his *Chronicon* suggest official sensitivity to the manner in which the Constantinian polemic might impugn Justinian's reign.

Marcellinus' chronicle does not cover the period of Constantine's reign, but there is an expressed interest in tracing the consequences of Constantine's rule in positive terms. Marcellinus claimed that his history was a continuation of Eusebius' history, which recorded history from creation to the time of Constantine.[35] In this sense, he intended his history to be understood as a continuation of Constantinian triumphalism. Where Zosimus had demonstrated the fulfillment of imperial failure incipient in Constantine's policies by ending his history with the sack of Rome by Goths in 410, Marcellinus instead commenced his history with the reign of the Emperor Theodosius, who pacified the same Goths who had destroyed Valens and the Roman legions at Adrianople. The triumphalist narrative that follows develops steadily with two thematic strands complementary to Justinian's own policies: imperial relations with "barbarian" peoples (primarily the Goths) and religious orthodoxy. Marcellinus' narrative structure makes the clear claim that the Christian orientation of emperors from Constantine to Justinian had a salutary effect on the Empire (not corrosive, as Zosimus had suggested) that was visible in the ability of emperors to restrain and defeat the Goths. The manner in which Marcellinus structured the *Chronicon* conceded the necessity of Justinian's war of conquest in Gothic

Italy and suggested that Justinian's reign should be understood not as the legacy of Constantine's curse, but as fulfillment of an orthodox empire initiated by Constantine.[36]

Similar to Marcellinus' engagement with the history of Zosimus, John Malalas also grappled with the political ramifications of Constantine's reputation for Justinian's reign. As an official in civil service at Constantinople, the attention that Malalas gave to Constantine was hardly coincidental.[37] His *Chronographia* traces the course of biblical empires arising from Adam until reaching the Roman Empire and finally, in Book 13, the reign of Constantine. Like the preface to Marcellinus' chronicle, Malalas invoked the name of Constantine in the preface to his history, perhaps to suggest the political "orthodoxy" of its narrative.[38] The treatment of Constantine is effusive, and Malalas clearly adulterated the legend of Constantine in order to cast him more fittingly as Justinian's predecessor. For example, with respect to Constantine's famous struggle against Maxentius, Malalas reported that Constantine contended with "barbarians", not an emperor supported by the Senate and Roman soldiers. Malalas also comments that, in gratitude to God for his victory, Constantine "immediately . . . destroyed the shrines of the Hellenes and opened up the Christian churches".[39] The anachronistic reference to Constantine's opposition to the "Hellenes" at Rome is best understood as an attempt to provide a legitimating precedent for Justinian's own suppression of non-Christians at the eastern capital. In order to emphasize Constantine as the outstanding Christian emperor, Malalas also manipulated the length to which he treated certain imperial reigns. Malalas truncated the lengthy reign of Constantius (an Arian Christian and Constantine's longest ruling successor) and presented the much shorter reign of Julian at disproportionately greater length, allowing Malalas to compare Constantine and Julian at equal length, as had Zosimus, but with the obvious difference that he portrayed Julian as the antithesis to good imperial governance.[40] From the reign of Constantine, the focus of the *Chronographia* becomes progressively more concentrated on Constantinople, an indication that Malalas' historical perspective was shaped by his experiences in the eastern capital. The fact that the Constantine of the *Chronographia* contended with the same nemeses as Justinian ("barbarians" and "Hellenes") reinforces the rhetorical linkage between the two rulers and illustrates how this linkage formed a part of the discourse of Constantinople's political culture.

Not all writers in sixth-century Constantinople participated in the Constantinian discourse in such polemical terms, by portraying the Constantinian legacy as either triumphalism or apocalypse. For example, the Goth Jordanes, who may have been a refugee of Justinian's Gothic War in Italy, adopted a position towards Constantine that was predicated entirely by his aim to prescribe a reconciliation between Romans and Goths.[41] Jordanes composed two lengthy histories. The first, a history of Rome (*Romana*), unfortunately lacks a treatment of Constantine owing to an extensive lacuna in the text. The *Getica*, however, which provides a history for the Gothic peoples, describes a relationship between Romans and Goths that is entirely at odds with the histories of

Marcellinus Comes and John Malalas. Like so many authors of the sixth century, Jordanes used Constantine as anchorage for important themes, although he posited the novelty that it was Constantine who first forged the symbiosis between Goths and Romans. According to the *Getica*, it was because the Roman army could hardly withstand various "barbarian" peoples (*gentes*) without Gothic allies that Constantine invited the Goths to be ruled under him (*sub Constantino rogati sunt*).[42] Following this union, the Goths subjected Constantine's last imperial competitor (Licinius) to the emperor's victorious sword (*ab imperio Constantini victoris gladio trucidarunt*) and the *foedus* that Constantine formed with the Goths allowed him to found Constantinople.[43] It was under the terms of this treaty that Constantine awarded Pannonia to the Goths, who settled there and remained loyal to Roman emperors.[44] Although the *Getica* does not take an interest in either rehabilitating or denigrating the reputation of Constantine, Jordanes was clearly sensitized to Constantine's importance as a "founder figure", and his handling of Constantine both acknowledges the legitimizing role that Constantine played in the political culture of the capital and also uses that legitimating authority to reject an alternative narrative (current in the histories of Marcellinus and Malalus) which emphasized the political incompatibility of Romans and Goths.

Constantine's legacy in the political culture of sixth-century Constantinople was complicated. It is not simply the case that ecclesiastical narrators constructed an image of the ideal Christian emperor which successive emperors appropriated to legitimize their role in a Christian Empire. The textual record of the sixth century suggests that the memory of Constantine could be adapted and even radically tampered with to suit the political sympathies of different audiences. Justin appealed to an already developed tradition of Constantine as the founding eastern emperor to legitimize his accession at Constantinople. This, however, opened the door for Zosimus to re-imagine the role of Constantine, primarily through the resuscitation and adaptation of Eunapius' history. From there, it was a matter of popular polemics for Procopius and John Lydus to model Justinian after Zosimus' Constantine and for court partisans such as Marcellinus Comes and John Malalas to craft new narratives for understanding the consequence of Constantine in Justinian's reign. What the sixth century offers is not necessarily a better understanding of how Constantine's historical achievements impacted the later Roman Empire, but a fairly detailed account of how imperial politics refracted and re-invented Constantine to suit contemporary needs.

Eastern polemic on Italian shores

The turmoil of Justinian's reign provided a particular context for re-working the political and religious meaning of Constantine's legacy in sixth-century Constantinople. Given that Justinian's conquest of Gothic Italy (the Gothic War, 535–554) was one of the more momentous events of his reign, and one that involved much diplomatic communication between Constantinople and

the political elite of Italy, it should be unsurprising that the political polemic of the eastern capital would translate to Italy.[45] Justinian's attempts to codify doctrinal "orthodoxy", particularly with the so-called Three Chapters Controversy during the period of the Gothic War, similarly involved audiences at Rome in eastern discourses. Several Christian texts originating at Rome may bear the residue of Italian positions in the Constantinian discourse, if not abrupt responses to Justinian's policies in Italy.[46]

The *Liber Pontificalis* presents one point of comparison for Constantinian traditions in sixth-century Italy. A collection of papal biographies, the *Liber Pontificalis* was compiled sometime ca. 530, after the death of Theoderic when the influence of the eastern imperial court had become more assertive and the position of the church at Rome perhaps less secure.[47] The *Liber* portrays Constantine in a manner best described as ambivalent, which itself may indicate a degree of apprehensiveness among Italian clergy toward the kind of associations between church and imperial court promoted at Constantinople. The well-known (and patently fictive) legend of Pope Silvester curing Constantine of leprosy with baptism probably suggests an earlier tradition by which the church at Rome attempted to appropriate the memory of Constantine for its own purposes.[48] However, the same narrative also recounts the persecution that Silvester endured at Constantine's hands.[49] Similarly, the *Liber* inventories in great detail the various properties endowed to the church by Constantine, but does not shy from mentioning the heresy and persecution associated with Constantine's oldest surviving successor (Constantius).[50] In short, in as briefly as the *Liber* refers to Constantine, the text takes greater interest in validating its propertied inheritance from the emperor, as opposed to eulogizing the relationship of Constantine to the church, as had Eusebius and other writers of ecclesiastical history.[51]

Another text associated with the church at Rome, the collection of papal letters known as the *Collectio Avellana*, was compiled towards the end of the Gothic War, and quite possibly in response to Justinian's assertion of imperial authority in church matters during the Gothic War.[52] The majority of the *Collectio* comprises letters to or from bishops of Rome during the fourth, fifth and sixth centuries. Of the nearly 250 documents comprising the collection, over 150 pertain to the period of the emperors Justin and Justinian, including a dossier of letters exchanged between Justinian and several bishops of Rome during the Gothic War.[53] It is perhaps noteworthy that Constantine's relationship with the church at Rome is nowhere directly represented in the *Collectio*. Nevertheless, a legacy for imperial intervention in church affairs is attributed to Constantine indirectly in the first document of the *Collectio*, a *libellus* describing the first communal rupture (and intra-communal violence) experienced by Christians at Rome. According to this short history, Constantius initiated the rupture by causing the exile of Pope Liberius for his support of Athanasius, the staunchly anti-Arian bishop of Alexandria.[54] Liberius' absence precipitated a division of loyalties within the Christian community at Rome between himself and the deacon Felix. After Liberius' death, these divided loyalties translated to a papal election famously contested between Damasus and Ursinus, during

which Christians died in factional rioting.[55] Although this first *libellus* refers to Constantine only as the father of Constantius (*filii Constantini*), his mention in the first line of a text which plots points of conflict between bishops of Rome and secular imperial authorities over the better part of three centuries seems conspicuous. The one passage in which Constantine is mentioned more overtly is in the *libellus* that follows the account of conflict between Damasus and Ursinus. Here, the compiler simply states that the persecution of Christians by emperors of the pro-Arian doctrine began with Constantine, who ordered Arius to be restored to communion with the church of Alexandria (thereby initiating what would translate to conflict between Constantius and Athanasius).[56] It is also worth noting that although the *Collectio* does not thereafter mention Constantine, Constantinople is the single most-often referenced city, which usually forms the focal point of conflict with the bishop of Rome.

One of the most extensive treatments of Constantine in sixth-century Italy is found in the *Historia Tripartita*, composed by Cassiodorus. The *Historia* is a twelve-book abridgement and synthesis of three fifth-century ecclesiastical histories by Socrates Scholasticus, Sozomen and Theodoret. As Cassiodorus later mentioned in his *Institutiones*, he had relied upon a colleague, Epiphanius Scholasticus, to translate the three earlier works from Greek into a Latin volume.[57] Because the *Historia* must therefore predate the *Institutiones*, which Cassiodorus produced at Vivarium after the Gothic War, and the *Historia* does not appear in the preface to the *Variae* or the *Ordo generis Cassiodororum*, which list works that he wrote prior to the Gothic War, the *Historia* probably dates to the period of the Gothic War, during part of which he resided at Constantinople.[58] The works of Socrates, Sozomen and Theodoret extended the history of the church from the time of Constantine to Theodosius II, and the three books of the *Historia* which treat the period of Constantine constitute the most detailed account of Constantine's involvement in church affairs written since the mid-fifth century.

It is worth mentioning that the *Historia* offers a marked departure from Cassiodorus' previous interest in Constantine, represented in the *Chronica* that he wrote for Theoderic's court probably in 519. In the *Chronica*, Cassiodorus merely noted the major milestones in Constantine's public life as emperor: his accession after the death of his father (including mention of his origin, *natus ex Helena concubina*), the vicennalia celebrated by Constantine at Nicomedia and the following year at Rome, the rededication of Byzantium as Constantinople, and his death and the division of his power among three sons.[59] Following the Eusebian tradition for ecclesiastical history, the *Historia*, by contrast, takes much more interest in Constantine as a proponent for the Christian church. Among many details, the *Historia* includes a version of Constantine's vision (1.4.7–9), a repudiation of the claim that Constantine converted to Christianity to purge himself of familial impiety (1.6.1–5), discussion of how the church flourished under Constantine's policies (1.7.1–7) and the liberties conferred upon the church by Constantine (1.9.1–21), interaction with the desert ascetic Antony (1.11.11), his involvement in the Council of Nicaea and the trinitarian debate (1.19.1–17, 1.20.1–4, 2.14.5–6, 2.16.1–5, 2.22.4–16), his warning to the

ruler of Persia (Sapor) concerning the treatment of Christians (3.3.2–14) and his baptism just prior to death (3.12.1–10). What is notable in the account of the *Historia* is the extent to which Constantine's involvement in affairs of the church was tempered by the advice and consensus of leading religious figures. For example, upon experiencing his vision, the *Historia* notes that Constantine sought council with *sacerdotes* and *viros eruditos* of the church (1.5.1–7). By comparison with the lengthy treatment given to the advice he received concerning the vision, Constantine's defeat of Maxentius seems insignificant (1.5.8). Similarly, it was by the advice of Eutychianus, one of Antony's disciples, that Constantine liberated a man accused of treason (1.11.34–36). And again, a letter sent from the Council of Nicaea to the Alexandrian church and included in the *Historia* celebrates the collective decision of the synod – mention of Constantine is limited to gathering the council for deliberation. Indeed, from the report of the *Historia*, it would seem that Constantine's authority in church matters was limited to those occasions when disunity required he convene the collective wisdom of religious leadership, such as his letter summoning the bishops assembled at Tyre to Constantinople (3.7.1–13).

What makes the *Historia Tripartita* specific to the sixth century (as opposed to a collection of recycled fifth-century sources) and gives Constantine his sixth-century dimension is the selectivity with which the *Historia* was assembled. Cassiodorus faithfully reported (in Latin) the accounts of Socrates, Sozomen and Theodoret, but his three antecedents each wrote histories covering the same period (each beginning with Constantine), but with remarkably different narrative styles. Producing a single, blended and coherent narrative from these three authors required the same sort of historical exegesis that contemporary readers probably would have employed for understanding the overlapping narratives of the four Gospels. The Constantine that emerges from the *Historia* was a pious Christian emperor, but one who deferred to bishops and holy men. Constantine's legacy in the *Historia* was a model for the imperial role in actuating deliberation among others. Given Justinian's involvement in matters of Christian doctrine which, from a western perspective, probably seemed arbitrary and authoritarian, the role given to Constantine in the *Historia* was probably a tacit rebuke of imperial intervention. At the very least, Cassiodorus' explicit inclusion of Theodoret among the three authors was a decided rejection of Justinian's condemnation of the Three Chapters – writings from three non-Chalcedonian authors, including the Theodoret whose ecclesiastical history contributed to the *Historia*.[60] Gregory the Great certainly recognized this polemical aspect of the *Historia* and later condemned Cassiodorus' work accordingly.[61]

It is also intriguing to note the difference between the Constantine of Cassiodorus' *Historia Tripartita* and the Constantine of Jordanes' *Getica*. Although recent scholarship has identified a variety of classical and late-classical sources at work in the *Getica*, Jordanes at least claimed to have based his history on the (now lost) *Gothic History* written by Cassiodorus before the Gothic War. The fact that these two texts present very different Constantines – one a military

portrayal designed to show Constantine as the friend of the Goths and the other a religious portrayal of Constantine as the friend of the church – provides something of an index for the complexity of the polemic during Justinian's reign, to which both Cassiodorus and Jordanes responded in different ways. What is certain, however, is that both authors constructed Constantine in response to policies and polemic emerging from Justinian's Constantinople.

Sixth-century Italy also supplies an account of Constantine in the *Excerpta Valesiana* or, as it is better known, the *Anonymus Valesianus*. The *Valesianus* combines two biographies, of Constantine and of Theoderic, the Gothic King of Italy.[62] Stylistic differences suggest independent authorship for each biography, but it is fairly certain that a later compiler eventually combined both biographies at Ravenna, probably during the 550s, when the eastern administration began consolidating imperial control in Italy.[63] The combination of these two biographies makes sense from the perspective of an eastern administration that was only recently established at the former Gothic capital. Since the removal of the Gothic court in 540, Ravenna had been under the direct control of the eastern court, making it a challenging political environment in the 540s and 550s. Eastern authority required legitimization in the same urban landscape where the Goths had left the indelible mark of prosperity. The comparison of Constantine with the Gothic king whose kingdom Justinian had conquered seems embedded in a sixth-century discourse that sought to find a proper relationship between Constantine's legacy and the exercise of imperial power visible in Justinian's reign.

It is perhaps for this reason that *Valesianus* differs so markedly from other accounts of Constantine current in Italy. Where the *Historia Tripartita*, for example, attempted to fashion an identity for Constantine that agreed with Italian concerns over imperial intervention in matters of religion, the *Valesianus* offers an account that is almost entirely secular. Given that the *Historia Tripartita* was known to Liberatus of Carthage as early as the 560s, and therefore may be presumed to have been fairly widespread by that point, it may be that Constantine's role in delivering Cassiodorus' doctrinal message had elicited the rather sterile, political presentation that appears in the *Valesianus*.[64] The various episodes of Constantine's life so regularly charged with religious significance in other sources (the divine miracle associated with his defeat of Maxentius, the defense of Christianity against persecutors and the donation of churches, involvement in various doctrinal disputes, etc.) are absent in the *Valesianus*. The author acknowledges that Constantine was the first Christian emperor (*imperator primus Christianus*), but the account otherwise mentions nothing about his involvement with the church, including silence concerning the debated issue of Constantine's baptism.

Although the *Valesianus* mutes Constantine's association with the Christian church, a studied effort to portray the ideal Roman emperor is nonetheless evident. The text does so in part by rehabilitating critical elements of Constantine's tradition. Although the *Valesianus* draws attention to the lowly status of Constantine's mother (*natus matre vilissima*), the text does so only to contrast

the height of power that he would attain (*postea princeps potentissimus*).[65] Where many sources draw attention to Constantine's execution of his son (Crispus) for alleged treason, the *Valesianus* instead presents Crispus as the model of filial duty, becoming Caesar by his father's command and assisting his father in the civil war against Licinius.[66] Indeed, Constantine's familial *pietas* receives emphasis in noted contrast to the treatment of Zosimus: the *Valesianus* notes that Constantine heeded the entreaties of his sister to spare Licinius (her husband), and that only the threat of military mutiny induced him later to order Licinius' execution, while Licinius' son was allowed to live.[67] And as may be expected, the *Valesianus* removes all stain of innovation from Constantine's reputation: the only change wrought by Constantine (the closure of "pagan" temples) was "just and humane".[68]

It is also clear that the presentation of Constantine in the *Valesianus* was designed to respond to the current polemic concerning the Gothic War. Interestingly, the *Valesianus* seems to suggest precedents for Justinian's destruction of Gothic rule in Italy in the policies of Constantine. Among the various reasons for distrust between Constantine and Licinius were the raids of Goths across borders that Licinius had neglected. When Constantine took decisive measures against the Goths in Licinius' territory, Licinius incited civil war, during which the Goths appear as Licinius' allies.[69] In commemoration of Licinius' defeat and Constantine becoming sole *augustus*, the *Valesianus* reports that Constantine re-founded Byzantium as Constantinople, after which he embarked on a war against the Goths, with the result that "almost a hundred thousand of the Goths were destroyed by hunger and cold".[70] This account of the commemoration of Constantinople, followed so abruptly by the campaign against the Goths, contrasts markedly with the account of Jordanes, who reported that Constantine's treaty with the Goths had allowed him to focus on building the new capital.[71] The discrepancy concerning the political affiliation of the Goths is also highly suggestive: Jordanes claimed that Constantine used the Goths to defeat Licinius (*ab imperio Constantini victoris gladio trucidarunt*), while the *Valesianus* allies the Goths to Licinius and makes Constantine's later campaign against them one of retribution. The connection between Jordanes' *Getica* and Cassiodorus serves to remind that Cassiodorus' *Gothic History* was circulating during the war, which might account for the extent to which the *Valesianus* describes Constantine's hostility toward the Goths. The Goths were the final adversary standing between Constantine and the realization of a united Empire: after defeating the last of his political rivals, Constantine founded a new capital and then waged war against Goths in the Empire. Later, after closing "pagan" temples (another source of disunity in the Empire), Constantine again waged war on the Goths, but this time against the "bravest and most populous" of their peoples outside the Empire.[72] Finally, where most accounts find Constantine preparing a campaign against the Persians at the time of his death, the *Valesianus* notes that both the war on the Persians (*bellum in Persas*) and preparations for the protection of the "Gothic shore" (*ripam Gothicam*) were Constantine's preoccupations when death found him, thus mirroring Justinian's geopolitical concerns.[73]

By combining biographies of Constantine and Theoderic, the *Valesianus* makes a pointed, rhetorical statement concerning the legitimating role of Constantine's policies for Justinian's reign. The first biography (of Constantine) provides a foil to the view of Goths and Romans living in amicable harmony, such as Jordanes and presumably Cassiodorus emphasized. The systematic dismantling of Theoderic's reputation found in the second biography ultimately portrayed him as the heretical barbarian who ruled after the "end of empire". When combined with the first biography of Constantine, which emphasizes his role as the founding father of a politically and religiously re-united Empire, Justinian's Gothic War suddenly appears as a justifiable means of restoring Italy to its "tradition" as a seat of Christian Empire.

Constantine in the post-Roman West

The role of Constantine in sixth-century polemic becomes less discernible in texts further removed from Constantinople, especially in former western Roman regions such as Gaul, Spain and Britain. Constantine was known to the western provinces primarily through the transmission of texts from the earlier period of Late Antiquity: the Latin translation of Eusebius' *Vita* and *Ecclesiastical History*, Jerome's *Chronicle*, possibly several of the *Latini Panegyrici* and the *Theodosian Code*.[74] Even prior to the sixth century, Constantine does not seem to have held the same prominence in historical and religious thought in the West.[75] For example, in contrast to Constantine's role in important fourth-century synods discussed in eastern ecclesiastical histories, none of the documentation for major western church councils since the fourth century mention Constantine as a source of authority.[76] One exception, which perhaps exemplifies how limited Constantine was in western ecclesiastical discourses, is a single letter written in 450 by Gallic bishops urging Pope Leo to confirm the authority and privileges that had been granted to Arles by Constantine.[77]

This general lack of interest in Constantine among the western Christian leadership may speak to differences in the exercise of social and religious authority between western cities and the imperial capital of Constantinople. It would seem that the farther social and political structures were from imperial influence, the less relevant Constantine became. Where sources extant from the western provinces do take an interest in Constantine, by comparison to the more overtly laudatory material such as that written by Eusebius, they often do so in an ambivalent or even conflicted manner. Orosius, writing in the early fifth century when the western imperial government remained viable, made Constantine's reign a crowning achievement in the chronology of a salvation history. This should be unsurprising given Orosius' use of Jerome's *Chronicle* and that text's relationship to the histories of Eusebius.[78] By contrast, a generation removed from Orosius, when imperial authority was less tangible, produced a mixed reception for Constantine. In the middle of

the fifth century, the Iberian chronicler Hydatius acknowledged his debt to the ecclesiastical history of Eusebius, whom he knew to have written "down to the twentieth year of the reign of Constantine", thus acknowledging Constantine in some sense as a chronological marker, although his own *Chronicle* commenced with the reign of Theodosius.[79] A contemporary of Hydatius from Aquitaine, Prosper Tiro, composed a chronicle that mentioned Constantine in a rather discursive series of events: his accession after the death of his father and the rise of a persecution against Christians in the fourth year of his reign; an account of his defeat of Maxentius unadorned by the vision miracle; an obscure mention of Constantine having restored peace in 315 (*pax nostris a Constantino reddita*); the deaths of Crispus and the son of Licinius, with no blame attached to Constantine; the founding of Helenopolis in honor of Constantine's mother; his correspondence with Anthony; and finally, his baptism in the Arian Christian rite.[80] Although Prosper's account of Constantine did not emulate the eulogizing approach of Eusebius or Orosius, it nonetheless represents something of a middle ground by which western histories reconciled Constantine's tradition.

Negative associations with Constantine were certainly current in the fifth-century West. Sidonius knew of verse still current in the mid–fifth century that satirized Constantine's execution of Fausta and Crispus.[81] The *Gallic Chronicle of 511* also treated many of the same narrative coordinates found in previous histories: his accession, the defeat of Maxentius (absent the vision miracle), the founding of Constantinople, the edict against "pagan" temples, the campaign against the Goths, correspondence with Antony and baptism in the Arian Christian rite.[82] The *Gallic Chronicle*, however, explicitly mentions that Constantine ordered the executions of Crispus, Fausta and his nephew by Licinius (unlike Prosper), but more interestingly, calls Constantine's introduction to the Arian Christian rite a re-baptism (*rebaptizatus*), suggesting that Constantine had not merely fallen into doctrinal error through the influence of Eusebius of Nicomedia, but that he had previously received knowledge of "orthodox" faith, to which he subsequently turned his back.[83]

The varied associations that Constantine had with familial and religious impiety in western sources, although never as directly hostile as Zosimus, may nonetheless explain the ambivalent and possibly satirical role given to Constantine in the ecclesiastical history of Gregory of Tours. Written sometime between 591 and 594, Gregory's *Decem Libri Historiarum* is a testament to the process by which western regions formerly integral to the Roman world had become conceptually detached during the course of the sixth century.[84] Gregory understood that his corner of Gaul was an extension of both biblical and Roman past, but it is also clear that for Gregory, Christian history in Gaul had its proper origins in the lifetime of Martin, the patron saint of Tours.

Constantine, by contrast, played a role that was significant only in as much as it allowed Gregory to comment upon the relative importance of secular to religious authority. Gregory uses Constantine to place a tradition for religiously

legitimated Empire in a subordinate position to the awesome authority of a local holy man:[85]

> Constantine was the thirty-fourth to hold the Roman Empire and he reigned happily for thirty years. In the eleventh year of his rule, when peace had been restored to the churches after the death of Diocletian ... the most blessed Bishop Martin was born.

Gregory makes no mention of Constantine's role in securing peace for Christians, but instead continues immediately after by discussing the emperor's execution of his wife and son.[86] Gregory makes no attempt to explain the event, but he does add that Constantine was the patron to a metric version of the Gospels, that his mother Helena discovered a relic of Christ's cross and that Gregory had read about Constantine in the works of Eusebius and Jerome.[87]

   The next and final mention of Constantine compares the ambitious Frankish king Clovis to the emperor in a passage that resonates both Gallic traditions for Constantine and possibly reflects the extension of eastern imperial interests into western religious and political affairs. In the course of discussing the decision of Clovis to repudiate his former "pagan" idolatry, Gregory states:

> King Clovis asked that he might be baptized first by the bishop [Remigius]. Like some new Constantine he stepped forward to the baptismal pool, ready to wash away the sores of his old leprosy and to be cleansed in flowing water from the sordid stains which he had borne so long.

Some elements of this narrative will be obvious from earlier sources for Constantine: the reference to baptism, the cure of leprosy (rendered metaphorical by Gregory) and the acclamation of the king as a "new Constantine" (*novus Constantinus*).[88] Scholars have already noted the likelihood that Clovis' "conversion" to Christianity was likely from Arianism, not from the "nature worship" suggestively portrayed by Gregory earlier in his history.[89] The Arianism of Clovis' sister and a letter preserved from Avitus of Vienne firmly indicate that Clovis previously had been a Christian of the Arian rite.[90] What has not been considered is the prospect that Gregory may have deliberately portrayed a *rebaptizatus* (as Constantine was known in the *Gallic Chronicle of 511*) in order to problematize and satirize Clovis, whose heirs would cause Gregory no small measure of grief (as had Constantine's sons and later Christian Roman emperors who intervened in church affairs). If the claim of Prosper and the *Gallic Chronicle* that Constantine had been baptized in the Arian rite was well known in Gaul, there is a certain irony that arises in denoting Clovis a "new Constantine" for repudiating Arianism. Indeed, the extent to which Gregory emphasizes the familial impiety of Clovis after his conversion suggests a conflation of the Merovingian dynast with that of the first Christian emperor. The stories that Gregory relates about Clovis following the conversion are filled with episodes of deceit, brutality and the systematic elimination of competing members of his "family".[91]

Whether the other Frankish kings described by Gregory were actual familial relations to Clovis may be doubted, but it is certain that Gregory intended them to be known as such.[92] In one of the last passages concerning Clovis, Gregory betrays the construction of satire by claiming that Clovis had lamented the loss of so many family relations, but only "because in his cunning way he hoped to find some relative still in the land of the living whom he could kill".[93]

The purpose of this satirizing comparison of Clovis to Constantine may have also had much to do with the involvement of the eastern Empire in Gallic affairs in Gregory's own day. Gregory reports with a good measure of contempt how various Merovingian rulers had attempted to enhance their legitimacy through contact with Constantinople. According to Gregory, the Emperor Anastasius conferred a consulship on Clovis, for which he styled himself *Consul* and *Augustus*.[94] A generation later, the Merovingian king Sigibert obtained a fragment of Christ's cross from the Emperor Justin II and Chilperic received special commemorative medallions from the Emperor Tiberius II.[95] Gregory's episcopacy at Tours had been embroiled in bitter difficulties throughout this generation of Frankish rulers.[96] The significance of Gregory's Constantinian satire to these diplomatic gestures from the eastern court may be visible in a panegyrical poem that Gregory's acquaintance, Venantius Fortunatus, composed for Justin II and the Empress Sophia. The poem celebrates the gift of the cross fragment and compares the imperial couple to the spiritual equivalent of Constantine and Helena.[97] The patronage that Venantius received from the royal Merovingian monastery at Poitiers, where the fragment was translated, should be born in mind with the fact that the founder of the monastery, Radegund, had family resident in the eastern imperial court. Furthermore, Poitiers and Tours had a strong tradition of rivalry for religious status in the map of Gallic and Frankish politics.[98] Indeed, Gregory's contempt for eastern imperial intervention may have served also as a strategic display. The pretender to the Merovingian throne, Gundovald, had strong connections to Constantinople and had expected to receive support from Poitiers in opposition to King Guntram, the Merovingian ruler under whose authority Gregory and Tours eventually fell.[99] By the time that Guntram obtained Tours, the city had already been the possession of four previous Merovingian kings during Gregory's episcopacy. It was under Guntram that Gregory finally attempted to carve out some semblance of stability in the shifting sands of Merovingian politics and the history that he wrote at this time was representative of this attempt to find solid ground. Gregory's handling of Constantine in that history was attuned to both local tradition and the potential for rupture caused by periodic interventions from Constantinople.

Conclusion

Sometime after 590, John Biclaro completed a history that extended the world chronicle narratives of Eusebius, Jerome, Prosper of Aquitaine and Victor of Tunnuna to include the reigns of the Visigothic kings Leovigild and

Reccared.[100] The impetus for John's work was his rehabilitation at the court of Reccared, which occurred in tandem with Reccared's repudiation of Arian Christianity.[101] The chronicle culminates with John celebrating Reccared as the revived "image" of Constantine.[102] As noted previously, denotation as a "new Constantine" typically signaled either a political accession or conversion, but John instead drew attention to Reccared's role at the Council of Toledo of 589 (which formally adopted Nicene Christianity for the Visigothic kingdom) as a parallel to Constantine's role at the Council of Nicaea. The seventeen years that he had spent in Constantinople would have sensitized John to the political importance of Constantinian discourse and a letter of Gregory the Great seems to indicate that Reccared had a distinct interest in diplomatic overtures to Constantinople, which maintained control of a strategically and commercially significant stretch of coastal southern Spain.[103] The reckoning of the event as the eighth year of Emperor Maurice and the fourth of King Reccared suggests a particular historical and geopolitical symmetry.[104]

John of Biclaro concludes this chapter as an important point of comparison to Gregory of Tours. John and Gregory were contemporaries with interesting similarities and departures. Both writers were students of a long tradition of late-antique Christian history, and both maintained rather fragile political orbits with western royal courts that maintained fraught diplomatic relations with Constantinople. Nevertheless, the regional landscapes of Tours and Toledo were very different places with unique post-Roman and Christian histories and it seems that Gregory and John responded to contemporary Constantinople and the Constantinian legacy in distinctive manners, satirizing and valorizing, respectively. Of course, the specificity of local political and religious circumstances did much to determine these different sympathies for Constantine, but the Constantines of Gregory and John were both received through a long tradition in late-antique Christian history. More importantly, however, these two Constantines were refracted by the authors' selective engagement, not with a single tradition for Constantine, but with unresolved strands of tradition.

Notes

1 My sincere gratitude to Tina Sessa and Ray Van Dam for reading an earlier version of this chapter and for kindly offering suggestions.
2 Van Dam, 2007; more recently, Brown, 2012, pp. 32–4.
3 On the development of Constantine's image, Lieu, 2006, pp. 298–321; Van Dam, 2007, pp. 283–352; see also the contribution of Van Dam in this volume.
4 On the *Theodosian Code* as an overt statement of Christian Empire, Salzman, 1993, pp. 362–78; Brown, 2013, p. 75.
5 *De ceremoniis* 1.91.414 and 426–30; for full discussion, Canepa, 2009, pp. 8–11.
6 On Constantinople as the center of Christendom, Hall, 2000, pp. 731–35; Van Dam, 2010, pp. 68–71.
7 John Malalas, *Chronicon* 13.8; also in the *Chronicon Paschale*.
8 For a similar assessment of conditions for the reception of Constantine in the Carolingian period, see the contribution by Judson Emerick in this volume.

9 On *exceptores*, Kelly, 2004, *passim*; Bjornlie, 2013, pp. 62–7; on Zosimus, *PLRE II*, p. 1206.

10 For an earlier date of 501, Treadgold, 2007, pp. 107–14; for a later date, Goffart, 1971, p. 421, and Paschoud, 2003, ix–xvi; also on Zosimus and Constantine in the early sixth century, Whitby, 1994, 83–93.

11 For Justin's accession, Marcellinus Comes, *Chronicon* 519; Procopius, *Anecdota* 6.1–16; John Malalas, *Chronographia* 410–1.

12 Mehl, 2001, pp. 203–7; Treadgold, 2007, pp. 107–14.

13 Zosimus, *Nova Historia* 1.6.1, 2.7.6, 2.34.2, 3.33.9; on Constantine and imperial decline in Zosimus, Goffart, 1971, and Speck, 1991.

14 The history of Eunapius commenced with events of 270.

15 Zosimus, *Nova Historia* 1.5.4–6.

16 Zosimus, *Nova Historia* 2.34.3–4, trans. Ridley (1982).

17 Zosimus, *Nova Historia* 2.29–34.

18 Zosimus, *Nova Historia* 2.37.5–6.

19 Evagrius, *Historia Ecclesiastica* 3.41, trans. Whitby, 2000.

20 Quoted respectively from Eusebius, *Vita Constantini* 1.6 and Julian, *Caesares* 336.

21 Evagrius, *Historia Ecclesiastica* 3.40–41.

22 Maas, 1992; Kelly, 2004; Bjornlie, 2013, pp. 60–123.

23 On Justinian's avoidance of Constantinian rhetoric, Whitby, 1994, p. 90.

24 Zosimus, *Nova Historia* 1.62, 2.32.2, 2.34.3–4, 3.2.8.

25 On John Lydus, Kelly, 2004; on Procopius, Kaldellis, 2004; also, Bjornlie, 2013, pp. 102–9 and 113–7.

26 John Lydus, *De magistratibus* 2.10.1–2.

27 John Lydus, *De magistratibus* 2.12.1–2.

28 John Lydus, *De magistratibus* 2.21, 3.68.

29 Zosimus, *Nova Historia* 1.6.2 and 2.34.3–4.

30 Zosimus, *Nova Historia* 3.12.1.

31 Procopius, *Anecdota* 7.1–7 and 9.29–34.

32 Procopius, *Wars* 1.24.1–58, and *Anecdota* 12.12, 18.32, 19.12; John Lydus, *De magistratibus* 3.57.1–69.3, 3.70.1–6, 3.72.1.

33 Schwartz, 2011, pp. 565–87.

34 On Marcellinus, Croke, 2001; Treadgold, 2007, pp. 227–35.

35 Marcellinus Comes, *Chronicon, praefatio*, "*Post mirandum opus, quod a mundi fabrica usque in Constantinum principem Eusebius Caesariensis, huius saeculi originem tempora annos regna virtutesque mortalium et variorum atrium repertores omniumque paene provinciarum monumenta commemorans . . .*"

36 Further on Marcellinus' rehabilitation of Justinian, Bjornlie, 2013, pp. 90–4.

37 On Malalas, Jeffreys, Jeffreys and Scott, 1986; Treadgold, 2007, pp. 235–56.

38 John Malalas, *Chronographia, praefatio*.

39 John Malalas, *Chronographia* 13.2, trans. Jeffreys, Jeffreys and Scott, 1986.

40 John Malalas, *Chronographia* 13.1–14, on Constantine; 13.17, on Constantius; 13.18–23, on Julian; on the paired portrayals of Constantine and Julian, Scott, 1994, pp. 59–62.

41 On the origin and aims of Jordanes, Goffart, 1988, pp. 20–111; Croke, 2005, pp. 473–94; Bjornlie, 2013, pp. 109–13.

42 Jordanes, *Getica* 111.

43 Jordanes, *Getica* 111–2.

44 Jordanes, *Getica* 115.

45 On the presence of eastern political polemic in Italy, Bjornlie, 2013.

46 On Justinian's involvement in the Church of Rome, Sotinel, 2005, pp. 267–90.

47 On the context of the *Liber Pontificalis*, Davis, 1989, xiv–xvi; more broadly, on the religious and social conditions of Rome at the time, Sessa, 2012.

48 On the cultivation of the Silvester-Constantine legend, see Sessa in this volume.

49 *Liber Pontificalis* 34.1.
50 *Liber Pontificalis* 34.9–33, 35.3, 36.1.
51 For more on Constantine in the *Liber*, see Sessa in this volume.
52 The publication of the *Collectio Avellana* as a collection is generally assumed to follow shortly after the date of the latest letter, *Epistula* 83 dated at May 14, 553; on the *Collectio* and Justinian's condemnation of the "Three Chapters", Blair-Dixon, 2007, pp. 67–9.
53 *Collectio Avellana* 82–93 date to the period of the Gothic War; for discussion of the distribution of letters within the corpus, Blair-Dixon, 2007, pp. 60–65.
54 *Collectio Avellana* 1.1, "*durior orta est persecution Christianorum ab impiis haereticis Arrianis annitente Constantio, qui et Athanasium episcopum resistentem haereticis persecutes est . . .*"
55 *Collectio Avellana* 1.2–14.
56 *Collectio Avellana* 2.6.
57 Cassiodorus, *Institutiones divinarum et saecularium litterarum* 1.17.1; note also that although the translation of the three Greek sources is attributed to Epiphanius, Cassiodorus wrote the preface to the work and must be assumed to have had final authority over the total composition.
58 Note too that the *Historia* is not mentioned in the *De orthographia*, where Cassiodorus lists all the works he produced at Vivarium after the Gothic War; on the dating of the *Institutiones*, Vessey, 2004, pp. 39–42.
59 Cassiodorus, *Chronicon* 1035, 1056, 1061, 1069.
60 Barnish, 1989, pp. 162–4.
61 Gregory the Great, *Registrum epistolarum* 7.31, "*Restat ergo, ut, si quis illam historiam recipit et synod, quae piae memoriae Iustiniani temporibus de tribus capitulis facta est, contradicat, qui vero huic contradicere non valet, ipsam historiam necesse est, ut repellat.*"
62 On the *Valesianus*, see Barnish, 1983, pp. 572–96.
63 Barnish, 1983, pp. 572–8.
64 On the influence of the *Historia Tripartita* on Liberatus' *Breviarium*, O'Donnell, 1979, p. 246.
65 *Anonymus Valesianus* 1.2.
66 *Anonymus Valesianus* 5.19, 5.23–28,
67 *Anonymus Valesianus* 5.28–29.
68 *Anonymus Valesianus* 6.34, trans. Rolfe, 1939.
69 *Anonymus Valesianus* 5.21–22 and 5.27.
70 *Anonymus Valesianus* 6.30–31.
71 Jordanes, *Getica* 11–12.
72 *Anonymus Valesianus* 6.34.
73 *Anonymus Valesianus* 6.35.
74 On the massive influence of Eusebius and Jerome, in particular, McKitterick, 2006, pp. 7–33.
75 A noted exception, as discussed by Sessa in this volume, is the *Actus Silvestri*, traditionally dated to ca. 400–450, but with recent arguments favoring the late fifth to early sixth century.
76 The *Constitutum Silvestri* (a portion of the early sixth-century Symmachan Forgeries) does give attention to a synod convened at Rome by Constantine in 315, but the fact that this document is a forgery itself suggests some anxiety about the lack of a Constantinian conciliar presence; I am indebted to Tina Sessa for this point.
77 *Epistolae Arelatenses Genuinae* 12, "*Ceterum multa sunt, quibus secundum institute principum cunctis intra regiones nostras civitatibus praeferatur. Haec in tantum ad gloriosissime memoriae Constantino peculiariter honorata est, ut ab eius vocabulo praeter proprium nomen, quo Arelas vocitatur, Constantina nomen acciperit.*"
78 Orosius, *Historiae* 7.26.1–28.31; on Orosius' use of Jerome, Fear, 2010, p. 4.
79 Hydatius, *Chronicon, praefatio* 3.
80 Prosper Tiro, *Epitoma Chronicon* 976, 994, 998, 1018, 1023, 1041, and 1046.
81 Sidonius Apollinaris, *Epistulae* 5.8.2.
82 *Gallic Chronicle of 511*, 455, 457, 466, 468, 471, 473, 474.

83 *Gallic Chronicle of 511*, 462 on executions; 4h74 on baptism.
84 On this aspect of Gregory, see Wood, 2002, pp. 29–46.
85 See the interpretation of Heinzelmann, 2001, pp. 117–8.
86 Gregory of Tours, *Decem Libri Historiarum* 1.36, trans. Thorpe, 1974; the nearly contemporary Gildas, *De excidio Britanniae* 11–12, similarly describes the persecutions of Christians under Diocletian in order to introduce the martyrdom of S. Alban, but then announces the end of persecution after ten years, without mention of Constantine.
87 Gregory of Tours, *Decem Libri Historiarum* 1.36; trans. Thorpe, 1974.
88 Gregory of Tours, *Decem Libri Historiarum* 2.31; trans. Thorpe, 1974.
89 Gregory of Tours, *Decem Libri Historiarum* 2.10; on Clovis' Arianism, Halsall, 2007, p. 306.
90 Avitus of Vienne, *Epistulae* 46.
91 Gregory of Tours, *Decem Libri Historiarum* 2.32–34, 2.37, 2.40–42.
92 For a treatment of Gregory's rhetoric concerning the Merovingian family, Wood, 2003, pp. 149–71.
93 Gregory of Tours, *Decem Libri Historiarum* 2.42.
94 Gregory of Tours, *Decem Libri Historiarum* 2.38.
95 Gregory of Tours, *Decem Libri Historiarum* 6.2 and 9.40.
96 Gregory of Tours, *Decem Libri Historiarum* 4.45, 4.47–48, 4.50, 5.4, 5.13–14, 6.31, 7.12, 7.21–22, 7.24.
97 Venantius Fortunatus, *To Justin and Sophia, Augustus*; George, 1995, pp. 111–5.
98 Gregory of Tours, *Decem Libri Historiarum* 1.48, 7.28, 9.30, 9.40.
99 Gregory of Tours, *Decem Libri Historiarum* 6.24, 7.24, 7.26; on the "Gundovald affair", Bachrach, 1994, *passim*.
100 John Biclaro, *Chronicle, praefatio*, on his antecedents; on John, Teillet, 1984, pp. 428–55, and Wolf, 1990, pp. 1–10.
101 On John's rehabilitation, Wolf, 1990, pp. 1–2; on the politics of Reccared's conversion, Riess, 2013, pp. 150–4.
102 John Biclaro, *Chronicle* 92.
103 Gregory the Great, *Registrum Epistolarum* 9.229; on Byzantine Spain, Wood, 2010, pp. 292–319.
104 This historicized pairing is similarly suggested by Riess, 2013, pp. 150–2.

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7   Back to the future

Constantine and the last Roman emperor

Kenneth Baxter Wolf

The Edict of Milan of 313 marked the beginning of Christianity's transformation from a *religio non grata* into an imperial ideology. As Garth Fowden put it so well, Constantine was the first to connect the "political universalism" of Rome with the "cultural universalism" inherent in Christianity.[1] In the process, Late Antiquity was born, with its "conviction that knowledge of the One God both justifies the exercise of imperial power and makes it more effective."[2] As Fowden saw it, Constantine's new vision of empire lay, both chronologically and conceptually, between the ancient empires of Cyrus and Alexander on the one hand, and the early-medieval Caliphates of the Umayyads and Abbasids on the other. While Constantine was the first to test the political potential of a universalist monotheistic religion, neither he nor any of his successors would ever manage to parlay it into a true "world empire" like those of Cyrus and Alexander. Even when, against all odds, Heraclius managed to beat the Persians in 628, Roman hegemony in the East was short-lived. Within a decade the victory that Heraclius had snatched from the jaws of defeat was snatched from him by the followers of Muhammad. In the end it would be Damascus and Baghdad, rather than Constantinople, that would fulfill Constantine's dream, *mutatis mutandis*, of a true "political-cultural world empire," one whose boundaries truly rivaled – in fact exceeded – the empires of old.

Whether or not it is accurate from a strictly historical point of view to treat the Christian empire and the Islamic Caliphate the way Fowden did, as two expressions of the same distinctively late-antique impulse, there is no question that contemporary stakeholders on both sides of the fence looked at their leaders' political accomplishments through the same Abrahamic lens. Reflecting on Constantine's career, Eusebius wrote:

> Like a faithful and good servant, [Constantine] acted and testified, openly declaring and confessing himself the obedient minister of the supreme King. And God rewarded him by making him ruler and sovereign, and victorious to such a degree that he alone of all rulers pursued a continual course of conquest, unsubdued and invincible; through his trophies he became a greater ruler than tradition records ever to have been before. So dear was he to God, and so blessed, so pious and so fortunate in all that

he undertook, that with the greatest facility he obtained the authority over more nations than any who had preceded him.[3]

If Eusebius could make a case like this for Constantine despite the geographical limitations of his empire, imagine what an Arabic eulogist might do with the achievements of Umar ibn Al-Khattab?

> We set out, barefoot and naked, lacking in every kind of equipment, utterly powerless, deprived of every sort of armament and devoid of all necessary provisions, to fight the Persians and the Romans; that is to say, the peoples with the most extended empires, the peoples that were most manifestly mighty, possessing the most numerous troops, with the most abundant populations and the most imposing domination of other nations. We went to meet them with our meager abilities and our weak forces, and God made us triumph, and gave us possession of their territories.[4]

Even when the Caliphate began to unravel in the ninth century and the Islamic empire gave way to the Islamic commonwealth,[5] this triumphant *futūḥ* narrative never lost its relevance. Why? Because so little of the territory originally conquered by the Muslims would ever be lost to Christians. In marked contrast, the Roman Christians of the fifth, sixth, and seventh centuries had their hands full explaining what was happening to their fading empire in a way that did not impugn their treasured status as God's chosen people.

One of the more desperate (and at the same time safest) ways to make sense out of the dramatic contraction of the Roman Empire first in the West and then in the East was to think apocalyptically, imagining that one day, at the end of history, a Roman emperor would emerge who would, once and for all, carve out that bona fide "Christian world empire" that Constantine's conversion had made seem inevitable.[6] I want to consider three of the earliest forays into this kind of thinking: the Latin *Prophecy of the Tiburtine Sibyl*, the Syriac *Gospel of the Twelve Apostles*, and the Syriac *Apocalypse of Pseudo-Methodius.* In each case I will be drawing attention to the role played by Constantine, both as a historical figure and as a model for that *Constantinus redivivus*, the "Last Roman Emperor."

In order to appreciate this apocalyptic re-purposing of Constantine, it is essential that we appreciate how Constantine's legacy was packaged in the first place by his contemporary apologists, in particular, Eusebius of Caesarea. Regardless of the limitations of Constantine's actual relationship with the church, his distinctive policy vis-à-vis the Christians certainly gave the optimistic and opportunistic bishop plenty to work with as he imagined the possibilities of that hitherto oxymoronic notion of "Christian emperor." At Eusebius' hands Constantine became nothing less than a new Moses, hand-picked by God to deliver His chosen people from their bondage to pagan tyrants.[7] As "a friend of God, the sovereign of all,"[8] Constantine, like Joshua or David, could expect military success wherever he turned.[9] But his "Promised Land" would not be limited, as was that of the Israelite rulers, to one small corner of the

Levant; it would encompass the entire world. This global military conquest would set the stage for a global religious conquest, spearheaded by Christian missionaries enjoying the full support of the imperial government.[10] Eusebius' vision thus gave Constantine something Moses and David never had: a universalist missionary role. He became a kind of *über*-bishop, a veritable thirteenth apostle, whose power and hegemony set the stage for global evangelization.[11]

Eusebius' portrait of Constantine, modeled on the rulers of Israel but given a distinctively Christian missionary twist, provided subsequent Christian historians with an indispensable tool for explaining not only the "flow" of Roman political fortune, but its "ebb." Early fifth-century imperial historians used Eusebian logic to explain, for instance, why the Arian and pagan emperors of the previous century had stumbled. Theodoret of Cyrus concluded that Constantius II "did not possess that assistance which his father had left to him because he did not guard undisturbed the inheritance of his paternal piety."[12] Likewise Sozomen interpreted Julian's demise at the hands of the Persians as a punishment for his revival of paganism.[13] The brevity of his successor Jovian's reign – which fell a full twenty-nine years short of Constantine's "three complete periods of ten"[14] – did not dissuade later historians from claiming that he, like Constantine, "enjoyed God's providence as a reward for his piety." After all, had not Jovian "restored the continuity of Christianity that started with Constantine and was interrupted by Julian"?[15] The anonymous Edessan author of the so-called *Julian Romance*, a fifth- or sixth-century Syriac text,[16] took this typological identification of Jovian and Constantine – as the only two Christian emperors to overcome paganism – to a whole new dimension.[17] In the culminating scene of the *Romance*, the author recounts how the Roman army in Persia hailed Jovian as their leader after Julian had been struck down by an enemy arrow.[18] Jovian agreed to assume the reins of government on the condition that the Romans renounce their paganism; that way, he reasoned, "Christ will rule over you first, secretly as God; and then I will also reign over you, publicly as man."[19] To dramatize this, Jovian had a cross erected in front of the troops upon which they placed the imperial crown. Jovian then prayed before the cross "for the peace of the churches and for the salvation of their children, for the victory of the Romans and for the existence of their kingdom."[20] When he had completed his prayer, the "crown of royalty descended [from the cross], and placed itself on his head." This remarkable coronation scene effectively cast Jovian as a new Constantine and, in the process, turned its author into a new Eusebius.

Due to the ups and downs – mostly downs – of Christian imperial history beginning in the fifth century, Christian historians tended to apply such Eusebian paradigms topically, like ointment administered to a specific part of the body rather than to the whole thing. This allowed them to point to particular instances of divine intervention – like a single victory or a happy death – without having to address the real problem: why the Christian empire was no longer as big as it had been under the first Christian emperor (or for that matter why the Roman empire had never compared to those of Cyrus or Alexander in the first place). If this was a difficult question to answer in the fifth century, it only

got worse in the seventh. For in marked contrast to the Franks *et alii* in the West, the Arabs in the East not only appropriated the choicest parts of the Christian empire, but managed to insulate themselves from their Christian subjects and preserve intact their own distinctive religious identity.[21]

In a general sense, the idea of a last Roman emperor had always been part of Christian apocalyptic thought, if only because Christian observers from the second century on were convinced that Rome would be the last empire the world would ever know.[22] If Rome was to be the last empire, logically there would have to be a last Roman emperor. But at some point between the fourth and seventh centuries there emerged a more specific notion of a "Last Roman Emperor" who would play a key role ushering in the End of Time.[23] To my knowledge, the earliest Christian apocalyptic texts that refer to such a figure are the Latin *Prophecy of the Tiburtine Sibyl*, the Syriac *Gospel of the Twelve Apostles*, and the Syriac *Apocalypse of Pseudo-Methodius.* The relationship between these three portraits of the Last Roman Emperor is complicated by problems of dating and the vectors of influence.[24] To keep things simple, I will be treating them as separate manifestations of the same basic notion of a Last Emperor, proceeding from the most basic to the most complex interpretation of this theme. In each case I will be highlighting the role played by Constantine as the first Christian Roman emperor in shaping conceptions of the last Christian Roman emperor.

The prophecy of the Tiburtine Sibyl was first recorded in Greek in the wake of Valens' disastrous defeat at the hands of the Goths at Adrianople in 378. Almost immediately thereafter, it was translated into Latin.[25] Unfortunately neither of these original versions has survived. The earliest extant Greek text dates from between 502 and 506,[26] while the oldest extant Latin one comes from the eleventh century.[27] Of the two, only the Latin version refers to a Last Roman Emperor,[28] so it is reasonable to assume that this episode was unique to the Latin branch of this textual tradition. Opinions differ as to whether the Last Emperor was present in the earliest Latin version of the Tiburtine Sibyl of the late fourth century or made his debut later, after his spectacular performance in the *Apocalypse of Pseudo-Methodius.*[29]

The frame story of the Latin *Prophecy of the Tiburtine Sibyl* has the pagan prophetess being approached by a hundred prominent Romans, asking her to interpret a dream that each of them had experienced simultaneously, a dream involving nine successive suns. The sibyl obliges, explaining how each of the suns represents a different historical generation. In the subsequent roll call of these nine generations, only two receive any detailed attention: the fourth, which described Jesus's birth and death, and the ninth, which encompassed the entire history of the Christian empire. Of the Christian emperors mentioned in this ninth part of the prophecy, most are identified only by a letter of the alphabet and very few are historically recognizable. One who falls in the latter category is Constantine. Introduced simply as a king named "C," he will, according to the sibyl, "rise up, powerful in war, and rule for thirty years and build a temple to God[30] and implement a law and do justice on earth on

account of God." That is all the prophetess has to say about Constantine. But that turns out to be more than she has to say about any of the other emperors, at least until the very last one:

> Then there will arise a king of the Greeks by the name of Constans,[31] and he will be king of the Romans and of the Greeks. And he will be great in stature and handsome in appearance, splendid in the face and well put together in every single feature of his members. And his kingdom will end after 112 years. In those days there will be great riches and the land will give fruit abundantly. . . . And that same king will have writing before his eyes saying: "King of the Romans, you will appropriate for yourself all the kingdom of the Christians." He will then lay waste all the islands and the cities of the pagans and destroy all the temples of the idols and he will gather all the pagans for baptism and the cross of Jesus Christ will be erected throughout all the temples.[32]

Notice how the universalizing political and missionary role that Eusebius had associated with Constantine is here postponed until the reign of the last "king" and, in the process, transformed into one of the final stages in world history. Notice, too, how the sibyl suggests that "all of the islands and the cities of the pagans" are part of the "kingdom of the Christians," as if the world as a whole is by right Christian. The sibyl goes on to relate how this final, violent extension of Christianity will trigger the release of the "foul peoples of Gog and Magog, which Alexander had enclosed" with his famous Caspian gates.[33] Upon defeating them, Constans

> will come to Jerusalem and, with his diadem and all of his royal regalia deposited there, he will surrender the kingdom of the Christians to God the Father and to Jesus Christ, his Son. And when the empire of the Romans shall have ceased, then Antichrist will be clearly revealed.

In this passage we see the Last Roman Emperor being conflated with Jesus who, according to I Corinthians 15:24, will "hand over the kingdom to God the Father after he has destroyed every ruler and every authority and power; for he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet." In effect the Last Emperor Constans has become Christ's deputy, raised up specifically to fulfill Paul's prophecy. In short the author has taken the Eusebian-Constantinian notion of a Christian world empire and given it a distinctly eschatological twist, depicting Rome as the instrument for mankind's redemption, not simply because it provided a political setting for the initial spread of Christianity, but because it was destined in the end to conquer the world and actively eliminate paganism in the process.

   The Syriac *Gospel of the Twelve Apostles* is much easier to locate in time and space than the Latin *Prophecy of the Tiburtine Sibyl*. It survives as part of a codex produced in northern Mesopotamia, most likely in the city of Edessa, at the

very end of the seventh century or the very beginning of the eighth.[34] This was a pivotal time for the Umayyad Caliphate and, by extension, for the Christian communities living under it. In the wake of the assassination of Mu'awiyah in 680, the Muslim world was torn apart by civil war, giving hope to subject Christians that the end of the Arab "scourge" might finally be at hand. When the Umayyads under Abd al-Malik regained control in 692, emerging from the fray stronger than ever, the new sense of caliphal permanence seems to have inspired many Christians to convert to Islam.[35] The *Gospel of the Twelve Apostles* seems to have been intended to provide wavering Christians with a reason to resist the temptation to abandon the church.[36] To this end its anonymous author set out to refashion world history in a way that would vindicate the Christian Roman empire and its divinely sanctioned role in history despite its obvious upstaging by the Muslim Caliphate.

The *Gospel of the Twelve Apostles* begins with a condensed account of Jesus' life, complete with summary references to his birth, his miracles, his betrayal, his crucifixion, his resurrection, and his subsequent appearance to the apostles. All of this serves as a prelude to a request on the part of the apostles for more details about the promised End of Time. Though Jesus chastises them for their lack of faith, he ultimately complies with their request, inviting them to ascend the mountain where they had previously witnessed his transfiguration. After seven days on the mountain, Peter, James, and John each receive a distinct apocalyptic vision. The first one, narrated to Peter, covers recent Christian imperial history, particularly the post-Chalcedonian divisions rooted in the Christological controversies. Here the author lays bare his Jacobite sympathies, blaming the Chalcedonians both for "dividing the Lord"[37] and for oppressing the faithful, "One-Nature" Christians. For its sins, the imperial church has been suffering the depredations of its enemies ever since. "There will be no Savior for them" until they repent for their theological sins and become "one true flock."[38]

The second apocalypse, revealed to the apostle James, focuses on the transformation of Jerusalem from a Jewish city to a Christian one. It begins with the destruction of Jerusalem under Hadrian, the first step toward its Christianization two centuries later. Here Constantine makes his debut, with the spotlight directed toward his part in the discovery of the True Cross – that "sign that overcomes the evil of the wicked" – and in the construction of the Church of the Holy Sepulcher.[39] Constantine's identity is so intimately associated with this appropriation of the Promised Land that James' apocalypse actually has him dying the moment the construction of the church is completed. The spirit of Constantine, however, is destined to live on: despite the missteps of his successors,

> one from his seed shall rise up in his place . . . and he shall have great and vigorous rule, and the earth shall be governed in his days in great peace: because from God it has been spoken concerning him and concerning his people by the mouth of Daniel: "and it shall come to pass that whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord he will saved."[40]

At the outset of the third apocalypse, the one given to the apostle John, the reader is again presented with Constantine, this time identified as the "king of the North" and the "man who subdues all the peoples by the marvelous sign which appeared to him in heaven."[41] After his death the "kings of the Romans" fall into sin, thus setting the stage for a series of divine scourges that manifest themselves as violent regime changes. Thus the Romans (in the eastern Mediterranean, anyway) are displaced by the Persians, the Persians by the Medes, and the Medes by the Ishmaelites. Though it is easy to recognize Khusro II's incursions (602–628) as the inspiration for the Persian scourge, it is not at all clear where the Medes fit in, except to make history more consistent with Daniel's prophecy.[42] Almost as mystifying is the utter absence of Heraclius, a true "scourge" of the Persians if there ever was one; though if the author's intention was to place all of the emperors after Constantine in the "defective" category, Heraclius' stunning – if evanescent – military success might have required more explaining than the author was prepared to offer.[43] In any case, the third apocalypse describes the Ishmaelite scourge – referred to as the "southern wind"[44] – in much greater detail than any of the others.

> There shall come forth a people of deformed aspect, and their appearance and manners like those of women; and there shall rise up from among them a warrior, and one whom they call a prophet, and they shall be brought into his hands.[45]

After dominating Rome and Persia, they, in their "hateful cupidity," afflict their subjects with a tribute "such as was never heard of," thus encouraging Christian apostasy.[46] Ultimately, however, this harsh "southern wind" is destined to be stilled. In the midst of a civil war, the "man of the North" finally emerges. After "associating with him all the peoples of the earth," he "shall go forth against him [the southern wind] and they shall destroy and devastate his armies."[47] Here the *Gospel of the Twelve Apostles* ends abruptly, without elaborating on the significance of this Christian Roman victory in the grand apocalyptic scheme of things. But the connection between Constantine and the Last Emperor is explicit: the work of the "king of the North," who "subdued all the peoples by the marvelous sign which appeared to him in heaven" is to be completed by the "man of the North," who is to be from Constantine's own seed.

Though traditionally attributed to an early fourth-century bishop in southwestern Anatolia, the Syriac *Apocalypse of Pseudo-Methodius*[48] was, like the *Gospel of the Twelve Apostles*, produced in northern Mesopotamia during the reign of Abd al-Malik, presumably also with an eye to providing wavering Christians with a reason to resist the growing temptation to convert to Islam.[49] To this end Pseudo-Methodius set himself the task of refashioning history – from Adam to the End of Time – in a way that vindicated the Christian Roman Empire despite its obvious upstaging by the Muslim Caliphate. The key component of his complex eschatology: a Last Emperor who would finally achieve universal Christian rule. But the Last Emperor of Pseudo-Methodius is a much more

complex figure than either the Constans of the *Prophecy of the Tiburtine Sibyl* or the "man of the North" of the *Gospel of the Twelve Apostles.* And, oddly enough, this Last Emperor would have very little connection to Constantine.

The key components of Pseudo-Methodius' apocalypse are two. First, the author took advantage of the biblical conflation of the "Midianites" and the "Ishmaelites" in Genesis and Judges[50] so as to interpret the Arab occupation of Israel in his own day as a typological reprise of the Midianite occupation of Israel described in Judges 6.[51] The latter scourge had lasted for only seven years (a biblical "week") before God raised up Gideon to shake off the foreign yoke. Thus the Christians living under Ishmaelite rule in Pseudo-Methodius' day could take heart, knowing that, as tight as Ishmaelite hold on the region might seem to be, it was destined to pass away just as the Midianite one had. Any doubters could console themselves with the fact that even Gideon had had a hard time believing that his people were still God's chosen based on the political reality of Midianite domination. According to Judges 6:

> When the angel of the Lord appeared to Gideon, he said, "The Lord is with you, mighty warrior." "Pardon me, my lord," Gideon replied, "but if the Lord is with us, why has all this happened to us? Where are all his wonders that our ancestors told us about when they said, 'Did not the Lord bring us up out of Egypt?' But now the Lord has abandoned us and given us into the hand of Midian."[52]

If the conflation of the Ishmaelites and the Midianites had not already suggested to Pseudo-Methodius the utility of Judges 6 as a way of undermining the perceived permanence of the Islamic occupation in his day, this exchange between God and Gideon would have. For Gideon's question would have been the question on the lips of every reflective Christian in the wake of the Muslim conquests: "If the Lord is with us, why has all this happened to us?"

The second key component of Pseudo-Methodius' apocalyptic scenario was Alexander the Great, whose prodigious and proverbial empire-building skills he enlisted for the sake of Christian imperial vindication. To this end, Pseudo-Methodius fabricated a whole new genealogy for Alexander, imagining his father, Philip of Macedon, marrying the princess Kushat rather than Olympias, thus providing Alexander with Ethiopian ancestry.[53] This allowed the author to tap into the prophecy captured in Psalm 68: that Kush (that is, Ethiopia) would "hand over to God."[54] This enigmatic passage only made sense when juxtaposed with I Corinthians 15, which (as we saw above) describes how Christ, at the End of Time, would "hand over the kingdom to God the Father after he has destroyed every ruler and every authority and power; for he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet." Taken together these two passages inspired Pseudo-Methodius to posit a Byzantine successor to the half-Ethiopian Alexander who would perform Christ's role as a global monarch at the End of Time, "handing over the kingdom to God."[55] That required even more genealogical creativity on his part. In order to link Alexander's Macedonian

dynasty with Rome in both its classical and Byzantine manifestations, Pseudo-Methodius described how, after Alexander's death, his widowed Ethiopian mother was wooed by Byzas, the legendary founder of the city of Byzantium,[56] leading to the birth of a daughter named, appropriately enough, Byzantina, who would later marry King Romulus of Rome! Thus Alexander's empire, far from being supplanted by Rome, was destined to be completed by it. The point of all this: to make a case for treating Daniel's fourth and final kingdom – which in Daniel's own time had been interpreted as the Macedonian empire but which came to be identified by early Christian exegetes as Rome – as one big, continuous Macedonian-Roman-Byzantine empire, one that connected Alexander the Great at one end with the Last Roman Emperor at the other. As cumbersome as this disjointed empire might have been conceptually speaking, it offered Pseudo-Methodius a way of undercutting the idea that the Ishmaelites had supplanted Rome for the distinction of being the fourth and final empire.[57] According to Pseudo-Methodius' logic, the fact that the Macedonian-Roman-Byzantine empire had a lock on the fourth of Daniel's empires, meant that the Ishmaelite conquests could never be anything more than a scourge, a temporary "chastisement" to test the chosen people, that is, the Christians of Rome, to see which ones would "deny the true faith of the Christians and the Holy Cross and the life-giving mysteries."[58]

Pseudo-Methodius' depiction of the career of the Last Emperor is remarkable, to say the least. Once the "chastisement" inflicted by the Ishmaelites had exposed the weak Christians – that is, those who responded to the apparent success of the Arabs by converting to Islam[59] – the scourge would finally come to an end at the hands of a new Gideon.[60] In the words of Pseudo-Methodius:

> After these calamities and chastisements [perpetrated by] the sons of Ishmael, at the end of that week, when men will be lying in the peril of chastisement and will have no hope that they may be saved from that hard servitude . . ., these barbarian tyrants [that is, the Ishmaelites] will delight themselves with food and drink and rest and will boast of their victory, how they had laid waste and destroyed Persia and Armenia and Cilicia and Isauria and Cappadocia and Africa and Sicily and Hellas and the inhabited parts of the country of the Romans and all the islands of the seas, and [they will] blaspheme by saying: "The Christians have no savior."[61]

Notice how explicitly the author paints the Muslim conquest as a Eusebian challenge, perfectly consistent with Gideon's chiding of God in Judges 6: if the Christians really are God's chosen people, then why does He not intervene on their behalf to protect their territory?[62] It is precisely the unassailable logic of this Ishmaelite taunt that finally jolts God and his deputy into action.

> Suddenly the pangs of affliction, as [those] of a woman in childbirth, will be awakened against them and the emperor of the Romans will go out against them in great wrath and "awake like a man who has shaken off his

wine,"[63] who was considered by them as dead. He will go out against them from the sea of the Ethiopians and will cast desolation and destruction in the desert of Yathrib and in the habitation of their fathers. And the sons of the emperor of the Romans will descend from the western regions and will destroy by the sword the remnant that is left of them in the land of promise. . . . And the yoke of their servitude will be seven times more severe than their own yoke.[64]

After the subjection of the Arabs, and the subsequent annihilation of Gog and Magog, the Last Roman Emperor would come to Jerusalem. There – in a deliberate reversal of Jovian's miraculous coronation in the *Julian Romance* – the mighty warrior would put his crown on the Holy Cross and watch as crown and cross ascended together to heaven.[65] In other words, he would "hand over to God" the political authority that God had given him, now that his Eusebian mission had finally been accomplished: the establishment of a truly universal Christian Roman empire. "As soon as the Holy Cross is taken up to heaven, the Roman emperor will deliver his soul to the Creator, and then all sovereignty, authority, and power will be abolished."[66]

Where does Constantine fit into Pseudo-Methodius' universal history and its culmination? Oddly enough, he doesn't. The author is adamant that "there is not a nation or kingdom under the heavens that could overcome the kingdom of the Christians, as long as it takes refuge in the living cross," claiming that "even the bars of hell, which are the tyrants of paganism, cannot prevail over this kingdom of the Christians."[67] Yet he says nothing about that absolutely pivotal moment when Pseudo-Methodius' Macedonian-Roman-Byzantine empire became Christian. Constantine's absence from the text is all the more glaring given Pseudo-Methodius' explicit reference to Cyrus' role in ordering the building of the second temple,[68] and particularly his account of Vespasian's and Titus' conquest of the "kingdom of the Hebrews."[69] Where is the discovery of the True Cross and Constantine's construction of the Church of the Holy Sepulcher, the final act in the Christian appropriation of the Holy Land? Moreover, if Byzas, the mythical second husband of our Kushite princess, is explicitly identified in the text as the "king who built Byzantium,"[70] why is the "king" who transformed this pagan city into the capital of a Christian empire ignored? Like "Constans," who so clearly mirrors "King C" in our first text, and the "man of the North," who is explicitly identified as being "from the seed" of the "king of the North" in our second, Pseudo-Methodius' last "king of the Greeks" cannot but be connected to the first Christian "king of the Greeks," and yet the text is silent about him. To my knowledge previous scholars who have studied the *Apocalypse of Pseudo-Methodius* have not commented on this lacuna, an easy one to miss if this text is not juxtaposed with other early depictions of the Last Emperor.

Is it conceivable that Pseudo-Methodius' silence about Constantine was part of a deliberate strategy on his part? Was there something about Constantine that might have led the author to delete him from his dream of Christian imperial vindication? Though it would be anachronistic to blame Constantine

for making life difficult for the Jacobites of Northern Mesopotamia, it is possible that he, as the first Christian emperor, was tainted by association with his successors. The work of John Bar Penkaye, a Nestorian monk from the upper Tigris River region who was also writing toward the end of the seventh century, is telling in this regard. Reflecting on the endless afflictions suffered by the imperial church, John found himself longing for that pre-Constantinian era when the "furnace of persecution" kept Christians on their toes.

> Once there was respite, and believing kings held sway over the Romans, it was then that corruption and intrigues entered the churches, and there was a great many creeds and assemblies [of bishops], seeing that each year they made a new creed. Peace and quiet thus brought considerable loss upon them, for lovers of fame did not fail to stir up trouble, furtively using gold to win the imperial ear, so that they could play about with the kings as if they were children. Such, then, were the Romans.[71]

Put simply, John regarded the marriage of church and empire – celebrated by Eusebius as part of the divine plan – as an aberration and pointed to the proliferation of church councils convened by the Christians emperors as its most telling sign. Given the plight of the Nestorians after the third ecumenical council at Ephesus, John can be forgiven for questioning the precedent set by Constantine, the architect of the first one at Nicea. Of course Pseudo-Methodius was not a Nestorian, but the Jacobites fared no better when it came to the religious policies of the Chalcedonian Byzantine court, so it is certainly not unimaginable that Pseudo-Methodius found Constantine to be a defective prototype for his conception of a Last Roman Emperor.[72]

   It is also possible that Pseudo-Methodius excluded Constantine on political grounds, given the fact that his empire was not a true "world empire." Rome had always been forced by its powerful Parthian and Sasanian neighbors to settle for a Mediterranean-based realm that only rarely extended beyond the Euphrates.[73] In marked contrast, each of Daniel's four "kingdoms" – the Babylonian, the Median, the Persian, and the Macedonian – encompassed not only Mesopotamia but also the Iranian highlands all the way to the Indus River. As if to add insult to injury, the Rashidun and Umayyad caliphs had managed, in a matter of decades after Muhammad's death, to create a new "world empire" that actually exceeded the boundaries of the ancient ones, adding, as it did, North Africa all the way to the Atlantic, as well as Spain. The only way for the Christians to top this would be to imagine the Macedonian empire – the one ancient "world empire" with a European point of origin – in combination with Rome, the only ancient empire to encompass the Mediterranean. And that is exactly what Pseudo-Methodius did when he fabricated a family connection between Alexander, Romulus, and Byzas. In effect he turned two different empires into three different phases of the same one: Macedonian, Roman, and Byzantine. In this process, Constantine, the first Christian "king of the Greeks," was understandably upstaged by Alexander, the first "kings of the Greeks" period. Put

simply, in contrast to the *Constantini redivivi* of both the Latin *Prophecy of the Tiburtine Sibyl* and the *Gospel of the Twelve Apostles*, the Pseudo-Methodius' Last Emperor was to be an *Alexander redivivus*.[74]

Trading out Constantine for Alexander may have made sense politically, given the size requirements for the Last Emperor's realm, but it posed one major religious challenge: Alexander was not a Christian. On the other hand, by the time Pseudo-Methodius was writing, he had at least been co-opted for the purposes of Jewish and Christian apocalypticism, Alexander being the one charged with enclosing the "unclean peoples" – who came to be associated with Gog and Magog – behind the Caspian Gates.[75] Not surprisingly Pseudo-Methodius incorporated this legend into his apocalypse, giving it considerably more attention than he did to any of Alexander's other achievements.[76] Pseudo-Methodius tells us that, at the eastern extreme of his conquests, Alexander encountered "unclean peoples" and witnessed their abominable customs, which included "eating mice, dogs, and kittens," as well as "the fetuses that women had miscarried."[77] In his disgust, "Alexander called on God for help" and then herded the "unclean peoples" north, through the one pass in that chain of mountains that effectively separated the "civilized" South from the "barbaric" North. There Alexander "prayed to God and God listened to him" and together they solved the problem of the "unclean peoples." God moved the mountains closer so as to narrow the pass, while Alexander built a colossal gate to close it off altogether, thus confining the unclean peoples until the end of time. Identifying these "unclean peoples" with the biblical Gog and Magog, Pseudo-Methodius later describes their release and their disruption of the "final peace" after the last "king of the Greeks" victory over the Ishmaelites. After a "week of calamity," the unclean peoples would gather at Joppa and be annihilated by an angelic host.[78] At that point "the Son of Perdition" would be revealed and the "king of the Greeks" would make his way to Golgotha, where, in the culminating act of the *Apocalypse,* he would finally "hand over" his truly universal empire to God.

Pseudo-Methodius shows no sign of unease as he anachronistically depicts Alexander praying to and working with the Abrahamic God in the interests of securing his empire.[79] Truth be told, Pseudo-Methodius' Alexander bears a striking resemblance to Eusebius' Constantine. And that, I would argue, is the point of incorporating the "Caspian Gates" scene into the *Apocalypse.* Pseudo-Methodius could not retroactively baptize Alexander, but he could imagine him as the first in a long line of "kings of the Greeks" whose thousand-year "dynasty" would be bounded, on the one hand, by a God-fearing Alexander who conquered the world and confined the "unclean peoples" behind a gate, and on the other, by a God-fearing *Alexander redivivus* who would conquer the world again and survive the release of Gog and Magog, before relinquishing his power to Christ once and for all. In other words, although Constantine seems to have been deliberately excluded from Pseudo-Methodius history-prophecy, the essence of his role as a Christian emperor informs the author's understanding of the last "king of the Greeks" and his all-important role in vindicating the "chosenness" of the Christian empire.

Notes

 1 Fowden, 1993, p. 7.
 2 Fowden, 1993, p. 3.
 3 Eusebius, *Life of Constantine* 1.5; translation: Richardson, 1890, p. 483.
 4 From an anonymous pamphlet quoted by the Iraqi Christian apologist, 'Ammar al-Basri, d. c. 845. Sizgorich, 2009, pp. 1–2.
 5 Fowden, 1993, pp. 138–168.
 6 Paul Alexander argued for Jewish Messianic influence at the root of this expectation of a Last Roman Emperor in Alexander, 1978, pp. 6–14, and Alexander, 1985b, pp. 176–184. Gerrit J. Reinink rejected this theory. Reinink, 1992, pp. 175–176.
 7 Eusebius, *Life of Constantine* 1.12, 1.20, 1.38, 1.39.
 8 Eusebius, *Life of Constantine* 1.3; translation: Richardson, 1890, p. 482.
 9 Eusebius, *Life of Constantine* 1.37, 1.46, 2.28.
10 Eusebius, *Life of Constantine* 4.24.
11 Eusebius, *Life of Constantine* 4.60.
12 Kaegi, 1968, p. 193. The death of the Arian emperor Valens at the Battle of Adrianople (378) elicited similar moralization. Ibid., pp. 196–197.
13 Kaegi, 1968, p. 194.
14 Eusebius, *Life of Constantine* 1.5; translation: Richardson, 1890, p. 482.
15 Kaegi, 1968, p. 195. Drijvers, 2011, p. 145.
16 For the dating of this text, see: Reinink, 1992, p. 171, n. 90 and Schwartz, 2011, esp. pp. 585–587. See also: Reinink, 1990, pp. 76, n. 3. For an English translation of the *Julian Romance*, see: *Julian the Apostate*, 1928.
17 In his eulogy for Jovian, the author of the *Julian Romance* specifically stated: "He [Jovian] walked in the ways of Constantine." *Julian the Apostate*, 1928, p. 252. By implication, Julian walked in the ways of Diocletian. See also: Drijvers, 2010, pp. 229–233.
18 *Julian the Apostate*, p. 198.
19 *Julian the Apostate*, p. 212.
20 *Julian the Apostate*, p. 213.
21 The best recent treatment of the formative years of Islam is Donner, 2010. For the early Muslim success in insulating themselves from "minority" religious influence, see: Glick, 1979, pp. 165–178.
22 The imagined providential connections between the church and the empire date from at least the second century. The idea that God intended the Incarnation to coincide with the greatest extension of the Roman Empire was first enunciated by Melito of Sardis (d. 180), before it was popularized by Origen (d. 254) and Eusebius (d. 339). Alexander notes that from Irenaeus (fl. 180s) on, "almost all the Church Fathers see in the Roman Empire the power 'restraining' the Antichrist and the end of the World." Alexander, 1978, pp. 9–10. This idea is grounded in two passages from the epistles: I Corinthians 15:24–25: "When he will hand over the kingdom to God the Father after he has destroyed every ruler and every authority and power; for he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet;" and II Thessalonians 2:7: "For the mystery of iniquity does already work: only he who now lets will let, until he be taken out of the way."
23 For a comparative look at the notion of the Last Roman Emperor, see: Alexander, 1985b, pp. 151–184.
24 For an overview of the various perspectives on this subject, see: McGinn, 1994, pp. 89, 306 (nn. 59, 60). At one point, Paul Alexander felt that the Latin *Tiburtine Sibyl* predated the *Apocalypse of Pseudo-Methodius*, partly on the grounds that "while the principal function of the Last Roman Emperor in the Latin Sibyl is the conversion of the pagans and Jews achieved partially by warlike actions, the Pseudo-Methodian Emperor fights successfully against Islam. . . . After the Moslem invasions it is not difficult to understand why the Arabs should have taken, in the Pseudo-Methodius tradition, that place of the pagans, Jews, Gog and Magog, and the Huns as the principal enemies of the Last Roman

Emperor." Alexander, 1978, pp. 14–15. Later he reconsidered his position. His last word on the subject: "I no longer believe that the passage on the Last Roman Emperor in the Latin Sibyl is fourth century. The combination of Gog and Alexander is not attested before the seventh century. So this interpolation, if not derived from Pseudo-Methodius, is contemporary with it, or possibly may have a common source." Alexander, 1985b, p. 163, n. 44. Bernard McGinn has since provided evidence that connections between Alexander and Gog were acknowledged as early as the writings of Jacob of Serugh (d. 521). Bernard McGinn, 1979, pp. 56–59. Others, like Maurizio Rangheri, have noted "the differences between the portrait of the Last Emperor found in Pseudo-Methodius and that in the Latin Tiburtine Sibyl," and asserted "that the one cannot have been derived from the other, but that the myth must have been already present in the earliest Latin version." McGinn, 1979, p. 44, in reference to Rangheri, 1973, pp. 708–709, note 79; p. 710, note 85. Han Drijvers argues that the *Gospel of the Twelve Apostles* was written slightly later the *Apocalypse of Pseudo-Methodius* "in the years following 692, when the memory of the struggle between 'Abd al-Malik and Ibn al-Zubayr was still fresh" and "the burden of 'Abd al-Malik's tribute was still heavily felt . . ." That, argues Drijvers, would account for the fact that the author of the *Gospel* saw the Umayyad caliphate as the last "world empire" in the Danielan scheme, while Pseudo-Methodius dismissed the Umayyad ascendency as a scourge. Drijvers, 1992, pp. 210–213.

25 Alexander, 1967, pp. 64–65. For a useful overview of the issues related to this text's history, see McGinn, 1979, 43–44. See also: Holdenried, 2006. For an edition and study of the earliest Greek version, see: Alexander, 1967, pp. 9–29. For an edition of one of the earliest extant Latin versions, see: Sackur, 1898, pp. 177–87.

26 Alexander, 1967, pp. 41–42. The author/editor of this Greek version may have been inspired by the earliest stages of the Byzantine-Sassanid wars (beginning in 502). Ibid., pp. 127–128.

27 Though the earliest extant Latin versions date from the eleventh century, the latest datable historical reference in the Latin versions – that is, the reign of Julian (361–363) – predates the latest datable event in the Greek version: the reign of Anastasius I (491–518). Alexander, 1967, pp. 48–49.

28 In contrast the sixth-century Greek version simply treats the reign of Anastasius I (491–518) as the last one, followed by a "series of eschatological rulers," all of whom connected to Antichrist, who is ultimately killed by Jesus, descending from Heaven. Alexander, 1967, pp. 111–117.

29 See note 24 above.

30 A reference to the Church of the Holy Sepulcher.

31 As Alexander observed, this is the only "Last Emperor" text that provides a name and a physical description. Alexander, 1985b, pp. 152, 155. Ernst Sackur suggested that the choice of Constans as the name of the Last Emperor may have been related to the fact that Constans I, one of Constantine's three sons and co-successors, was the one who upheld the Nicene resolution to the Arian controversy. News of his assassination in the Pyrenees in 350 might have spawned rumors that one day he would return, thus keeping hope alive for Catholics under Constantius II's Arian regime. Sackur, 1898, p. 163.

32 Sackur, *Sibyllinische Texte* 185. The translation is my own.

33 More on this important theme later.

34 Drijvers, 1992, pp. 189–213, esp. 190, 212–213.

35 In his effort to provide a context for the *Apocalypse of Pseudo-Methodius*, Reinink reasoned that the construction of the Dome of the Rock signaled a period of political consolidation under Abd al-Malik in the wake of the second *Fitna*. At this time Abd al-Malik also established Arabic as the official language of administration (as opposed to the various languages of the regions conquered) and minted the first coins decorated with the *shahādah* rather than with images of rulers. He also ordered a census and increased the taxation of *dhimmi* populations, a policy that seems to have encouraged many Christians

to convert to Islam. All of these contextual remarks apply just as well to the *Gospel of the Twelve Apostles*, which was written at roughly the same time in roughly the same place. Reinink, 1992, pp. 178–187. It is worth noting in this regard that when Abd al-Malik built the dome, he might have been laying his own claim to being considered the "Last Caliph," the one who would finally usher in the Judgment. Donner, 2010, p. 199.

36 Based on the contents of the Syriac codex that contains the *Gospel*, Drijvers believes that it was assembled precisely "to bring apostates back to the true faith." Drijvers, 1992, pp. 190–191.

37 *Gospel of the Twelve Apostles*, 1900, p. 32.

38 Ibid., pp. 32–33.

39 Ibid., p. 34.

40 Ibid., p. 34. Actually, the prophet is Joel, the passage being Joel 2:32 (see also: Romans 10:13). As Drijvers observes, the Daniel passage that most closely reflects this sentiment is Daniel 7:27: "The kingship and dominion and the greatness of the kingdoms under the whole heaven shall be given to the people of the holy ones of the Most High; their kingdom shall be an everlasting kingdom, and all dominions shall serve and obey them." Drijvers, 1992, p. 199.

41 Ibid., p. 35. A reference to the labarum that, according to Eusebius, appeared to Constantine on the eve of the battle of Milvian Bridge. Eusebius, *Life of Constantine* 1.28.

42 The famous beasts/empires of Daniel 7: Babylonians, Medes, Persians, and Macedonians. Drijvers, 1992, p. 201.

43 Drijvers, 1992, p. 212.

44 The image is a conflation of the "four winds" of Daniel 7:2 and the "king of the south" of Daniel 11:15.

45 *Gospel of the Twelve Apostles*, 1900, p. 36.

46 *Gospel of the Twelve Apostles*, 1900, p. 37. The "tribute" referred to here reflects Abd al-Malik's famous tax reforms and census. Drijvers, 1992, p. 205.

47 *Gospel of the Twelve Apostles*, 1900, p. 38.

48 Originally written in Syriac, the *Apocalypse of Pseudo-Methodius* was translated into Greek very soon after its composition in 692 and into Latin sometime in the mid-eighth century. The translation of the Syriac version used here comes from Martinez, 1985, pp. 25–33. For the best study of the *Apocalypse of Pseudo-Methodius* and its historical context, see: Reinink, 1992. See also: Alexander, 1985b, pp. 13–51 (which also contains a translation of the text: pp. 36–51).

49 Reinink, 1992, p. 159.

50 For instance, Genesis 37:25–28 and Judges 8:24.

51 "In the future, however, they [the Midianites-Ishmaelites] will come out and devastate the earth and rule over it." Martinez, 1985, p. 129.

52 Judges 6:12–13.

53 This notion of Alexander's Ethiopian ancestry is found nowhere else in the Alexander corpus, though in Pseudo-Callisthenes, Alexander visits and corresponds with Candace, the queen of Ethiopia. Martinez, 1985, pp. 171–172; 134–136. The fact that, at the time Pseudo-Methodius was writing, Ethiopia was a Monophysite kingdom, would have made it especially attractive from a Jacobite perspective as the starting point for Christian vindication. Reinink, 1992, pp. 167–168.

54 Martinez, 1985, pp. 136–137.

55 Pseudo-Methodius' interpretation of the Kushite connection – which is presented as a corrective to the idea that the actual deliverer of the Christians would come from Ethiopia – is the best evidence for his Monophysite identity. Reinink, 1992, p. 163. Martinez, 1985, p. 136.

56 Byzas is referenced in the *Julian Romance*. According to this text, Julian the Apostate wanted to rename Constantinople Byzantium in honor of its founder as a way of "paganizing" the Christian city. Drijvers, 2011, p. 147.

57 This idea is first entertained in a seventh-century Armenian history. *Armenian History attributed to Sebeos*, 1999, vol. 2, pp. 105, 133.

58 Martinez, 1985, pp. 145–148.

59 Reinink, 1992, p. 181.

60 Reinink, 1992, pp. 164–165.

61 Martinez, 1985, pp. 148–149. As Reinink observes: "With these words it is not only a political savior that is meant; the thought is also implied that the military successes of the Muslims could be regarded as a proof for the superiority of Islam over Christianity." Reinink, 1992, p. 153.

62 Reinink, 1992, p. 153.

63 Taken from Psalm 77:65, where it specifically refers to "the Lord." In the *Cave of the Treasures*, this passage is specifically associated with Noah and treated as an allegory for Christ. *Book of the Cave of the Treasures*, 1927, p. 120. Pseudo-Methodius has the Last Emperor acting in place of Christ. Reinink, 1992, p. 153.

64 Martinez, 1985, p. 149.

65 Reinink was the one who first made this important connection between the *Julian Romance* and the *Apocalypse of Pseudo-Methodius*. Reinink, 1992, pp. 170–176.

66 Martinez, 1985, p. 153.

67 Martinez, 1985, p. 136. Elsewhere: "The kingdom of the Romans possesses the invincible armor that conquers everything" (Ibid., p. 130); And again: "For which is the power or the kingdom or the nation under heaven that is powerful and strong enough to overcome the great power of the Holy Cross, in which the kingdom of the Greeks – which is that of the Romans – has taken refuge?" (Ibid., p. 137).

68 Martinez, 1985, p. 132.

69 Martinez, 1985, p. 138.

70 Martinez, 1985, p. 134. Here "Byzas" is rendered "Buz."

71 John Bar Penkaye, *Summary of World History*, book 15; translation: Brock, 1987, p. 59.

72 Though he does not implicate Constantine, Reinink points in this direction when he observes: "By creating a typological relation between the first Greek king, Alexander, and the last Greek king, [the author] could portray an idealized image of the coming 'king of the Greeks' which would be more acceptable to his Monophysite audience. This emperor would not act as a defender and restorer of of the Chalcedonian church of the empire and as a persecutor of the Monophysites, but rather as a protector of all churches, establishing the final world dominion of the Christian empire." Reinink, 1992, p. 168.

73 Trajan launched a successful campaign (113–117) against the Parthian empire that netted Armenia and Mesopotamia, but when Trajan died, the imperial frontier reverted to the Euphrates. In 198, Septimus Severus was responsible for securing northern Mesopotamia for Rome; it would remain a part of the empire until its conquest by the Muslims. Ray Van Dam explores the geographical "untenability" of Rome in Van Dam, 2010, pp. 5–45.

74 I have borrowed this term from Reinink (Reinink, 1992, p. 167), who made this same point about Alexander being a model for the Last Emperor, though without reference to the displacement of Constantine. Reinink concludes that "Pseudo-Methodius' primary concern is to create a typological connection between Alexander, the first king of the Greeks, and the last king of the Greeks." Ibid., p. 165.

75 The earliest reference to this legend is that of Josephus, who tells us (*The Jewish War* 7.7.4) that Alexander built iron gates to confine the Scythians, and then elsewhere (*Antiquities* 1.6.1) identifies Magog as the progenitor of that people whom the Greeks call the "Scythians." Josephus is very positively disposed toward Alexander; by his time Alexander (like Cyrus) was considered to be a great and powerful friend of the Jews, who, according to tradition, not only treated them well when he entered Jerusalem, but claimed to have had a vision in which the Hebrew God encouraged him to invade Asia, promising that he would overcome the Persians. Josephus, *Antiquities* 11.8.5. By

the fifth century, the apocalyptic associations between the "confined peoples" and Gog and Magog (of Ezechiel 38:1–3 and Revelations 20:7–8) were being made in the Syriac versions of the Alexander legend. McGinn, 1979, p. 56; McGinn (Ibid., pp. 57–59) also provides a translation of a metrical homily written by the Syrian Jacob of Serugh (d. 521) referring to this legend. Andrew Anderson's observations are particularly relevant here: "The union established between Greece and the Near East by Alexander's conquests brought into being a new conception, that of the *oikoumene*, the civilized world of common interests. Of this New World Alexander was the creator, of it he became the guardian genius to protect its civilization and to keep its frontiers inviolate against the barbarians dwelling outside." Anderson, 1932, p. 3. For a translation of the Syriac Alexander legend, see: *History of Alexander the Great*, 2013.

76 For speculation as to the exact source of Pseudo-Methodius' understanding of this legend, see: Martinez, 1985, p. 173, n. 6.
77 Martinez, 1985, p. 133.
78 Martinez, 1985, p. 151.
79 The connection between Alexander and the End of Time is made explicit in a metrical homily written by the Syrian Jacob of Seruch (d. 521). "And when all these things had been spoken by the angel to the wise king Alexander, the son of Philip, the angel, in the spirit of the revelation of prophecy, told him to write down these things and teach the world that these things would happen." McGinn, 1979, p. 58.

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8   Charlemagne

A new Constantine?

Judson Emerick

Even before King Charlemagne (768–814) arranged to have his Roman politi-
cal ally, Pope Leo III (795–816), crown him emperor in Rome on Christmas
Day 800,[1] the king's contemporaries might conceive of him as having "impe-
rial" stature. In an oft-quoted letter that Pope Hadrian (772–795) sent to the
Frankish court in May 778 the writer compared Charlemagne directly to the
first Christian emperor, Constantine:

> *Et sicut temporibus beati Silvestri Romani pontificis a sanctae recordationis piissimo
> Contantino, magno imperatore, per eius largitatem sancta Dei catholica et apostolica
> Romana ecclesia elevata atque exaltata est et potestatem in his Hesperiae partibus
> largiri dignatus, ita et in his vestris felicissimis temporibus atque nostris sancta Dei
> ecclesia, id est beati Petri apostoli, germinet atque exultet et amplius quam amplius
> exaltata permaneat, ut omnes gentes, quae hec audierint, edicere valeant: 'Domine,
> salvum fac regem, et exaudi nos in die, in qua invocaverimus te'* [Psalm 19:10]*;
> quia ecce novus christianissimus Dei Constantinus imperator his temporibus sur-
> rexit, per quem omnia Deus sanctae suae ecclesiae beati apostolorum principis Petri
> largiri dignatus est.*

> And just as during the time of blessed Pope Silvester the church of Rome
> was elevated and exalted by the most pious, great emperor Constantine of
> holy memory through his liberality and transfer of power over the western
> regions, thus in your most blessed time and ours may the church spring
> up, exult, and continue ever more fully to be exalted so that everyone who
> hears these things may loudly proclaim, 'Give victory to the king, O Lord,
> and answer us when we call'. Indeed here this day a new most Christian
> emperor Constantine has arisen, through whom God has thought worthy
> to bestow everything on the holy church of Peter, prince of the apostles.[2]

By promoting the Frankish monarch to "imperial" status thusly as *novus Con-
stantinus*, Hadrian did not seek to flatter but to obligate. Four years previously
Charlemagne had conquered Lombard Italy – Pavia, the capital of the Lombard
regnum, had fallen to the Franks in 774 – and in Easter of that same year, while
visiting Pope Hadrian in Rome, the king had promised to transfer control

of many towns and huge swaths of formerly Lombard-controlled Italy to the Republic of Saint Peter.[3] Now in 778, anxious that his Frankish royal ally fully honor the bequest, the Republic's leader wrote pointedly to call those promises to mind: Constantine had favored Silvester by liberal gifts; now Charlemagne should act in the same way toward Hadrian.[4] Hadrian used this ploy again some seven years later in a letter he wrote to the Byzantine emperor Constantine VI and his mother and regent, Irene, as he responded to their invitation in 785 to attend an ecumenical council, the second at Nicaea held in 787 to condemn iconoclasm.[5] Hadrian began by hailing the Byzantine rulers as a new Constantine and a new Helena, respectively,[6] then reminded them how the first Constantine and his mother had worked closely with, and especially favored, Pope Silvester, Peter's vicar. Thus again did Hadrian attempt to define and fix relations between all parties concerned.

Did this political power play echo one that his predecessors, Pope Stephen II (752–757) and Paul I (757–767), had already tried out? These were the popes, brothers actually, who had first arranged the Carolingian royal-papal friendship pact, the religio-political alliance that Charlemagne's father, Pippin III, and Pope Stephen II, solemnized memorably at the monastery of Saint-Denis in 754 when the pope anointed Pippin; his wife, Bertrade; and their two sons, Charlemagne and Carlomann.[7] Pope Stephen thus became, with King Pippin, a spiritual *co-father* of the king's sons and everyone concerned became part of a single "family." The resulting pact became the cornerstone of Frankish royal-papal politics from that moment onward.[8] Three years later, in 757, the papal brothers built a major oratory or chapel at St. Peter's in Rome to enshrine and help establish this Franco-papal accord. Stephen II began the work during his last year in office, and Paul I finished during his first, converting the former imperial, Honorian mausoleum at the south end of St. Peter's transept into a "basilica" dedicated to Petronilla, the spiritual daughter of Peter (that is, baptized by him), whose body (with its marble sarcophagus) Pope Paul I removed from the Catacomb of Domitilla, brought to St. Peter's, and set up as a reliquary altar in the new chapel.[9] This is not the place to detail how Constantine's old Vatican cemetery with its martyrium for Peter became, during the eighth century, a full-fledged church, Rome's prime sanctuary for worship of the saints, and the city's main theater of papal representation (that is, the city's most important cathedral). Suffice it to say that Stephen's and Paul's new chapel joined with others there to provide an impressive stage set for papal liturgy – for papal representation – focused by saints' cults.[10] But key here is that Petronilla's oratory also staged and displayed the shawl (*sabanum*) that Charlemagne's sister Gisela wore at her baptism in 757, the very cloth having been sent by Pippin to Paul for the purpose. The chapel thus promoted the newly established Franco-papal alliance by advertising the "family relations" that obtained between the Frankish king and the Roman pope, both co-fathers of Gisela. In his letter to Pippin of October 757, Paul told the king how the shawl had been installed in all pomp in the chapel of Petronilla and how thus the chapel had become the king's *aeterna memoria*.[11] It is, then, fascinating to

learn that the mid-eighth-century monument *may* also have promoted papal hopes that the monarch, Pippin, would support the priest, Paul, just as Emperor Constantine in legend had supported Pope Silvester. A most suggestive notice – from a fifteenth-century chronicle – tells how a niche (*tribuna*) in the chapel of Petronilla had been painted in "olden times" (*anticamente*) with "the history of Emperor Constantine."[12] Did Hadrian's predecessor, Paul, want to see Pippin as a new Constantine too?[13]

The fresco cycle in question could have dealt with the legend of Pope Silvester and Emperor Constantine from the famous *Actus Silvestri* that recounted, *inter alia*, how the confessor, Silvester, healed the emperor of leprosy by baptizing him, and how in return the emperor had granted the Roman church and its papal leader special privileges.[14] The *Actus* formed by stages during the fifth and sixth centuries from various materials from across the Mediterranean world,[15] but recently Paolo Liverani argued that Romans knew it well already in the second quarter of the fifth century, and that it played an important role in Pope Leo the Great's political program to establish Rome's primacy among the apostolic sees.[16] Of course, the legend in question formed the backbone of the *Constitutum Constantini*, the much discussed, early-medieval forgery known widely as the Donation of Constantine.[17] The document pretends to be an imperial decree issued by the emperor to Pope Sylvester "and to all his successors" in which the emperor, grateful for having been converted to Christianity, baptized, and cured of leprosy by the pope, provides many gifts to the Roman church and her leader, namely, vast properties across the Mediterranean, the imperial palace at the Lateran, primacy among the world's apostolic sees, and even the "imperial power and dignity" in "all provinces, places and cities of Italy, and the western regions."[18] Forty and more years ago, Horst Fuhrmann, editor of the document, argued that it was likely to have been a product of the papal curia at the Lateran datable sometime during the last half of the eighth century. He found stylistic parallels between its text and the letters of Pope Paul I. He judged too that the famous forgery had left its traces in Pope Hadrian's letter to King Charlemagne of 778 that I cited at the start of this essay, the one in which Hadrian, a new Silvester, reminded Charlemagne that he might emulate Constantine by providing the Roman church great gifts.[19]

Most scholars have accepted Fuhrmann's dating of the forged Donation linking it firmly to key events unfolding in Rome during the Carolingian Renaissance.[20] Presided over by Popes Hadrian I (772–795) and Leo III (795–816), and culminating in Leo's crowning of Charlemagne as emperor on Christmas Day, 800, the Renaissance in question has always seemed to come into sharp focus in a famous mosaic decoration – in the main apse conch and apsidal wall of the reception hall, that is, the Triclinium or state dining room that Pope Leo III built at the Lateran in the late 790s.[21] Patterned closely upon reception halls in aristocratic, Mediterranean, late-antique villas and palaces, the *aula* had three apses set out in clover-leaf form as a triconch. Leo's throne occupied the central apse, and sofas for diners to recline upon lined the other two.[22] The banquet hall in question no longer survives,[23] but a reproduction of its main apse wall

with its mosaic, set up at the Lateran opposite the Scala Sancta by Pope Benedict XIV in 1743 purports to record its former appearance (Figure 8.1).[24] The eighteenth-century monument was based upon an early seventeenth-century one: in 1624–1625 Cardinal Francesco Barberini enshrined the remains of Leo III's Triclinium, that is, its still standing main apse wall, by building an aedicula over it and restoring its mosaic extensively. This project formed part of a program sponsored by the Barberini Pope Urban VIII (1623–1644) to mark and preserve Rome's "early Christian" history in its built monuments, especially any that might be construed as linked with Emperor Constantine and Pope Silvester.[25]

Benedict XIV's 1743 version of the monument in question shows that the apse conch had a mosaic depicting Christ's mission to the eleven apostles (Matthew 28:16–20). Two investiture scenes flanked the conch on the surrounding apsidal wall. The one at the viewer's right showed Peter enthroned, the keys to the Kingdom of Heaven in his lap, conferring a pallium upon a kneeling Leo (at Peter's right) and a banner to a kneeling Charlemagne (at Peter's left). Both kneeling figures had square haloes, and both were named in the mosaic, LEO P.P and CARVLO REGI. Since the Frankish ruler has the title of "king" not "emperor," scholars have always supposed that the original Triclinium mosaic

Figure 8.1 Rome, Lateran Palace, Pope Benedict XIV's restoration (1743) of the mosaic of 799–800 decorating the main apse in Pope Leo III's triclinium or banquet hall (Photo: author)

must predate Leo's crowning of Charlemagne as emperor at the end of the year 800. The investiture scene on the viewer's left presently shows Christ enthroned transferring the keys to Peter (Peter kneeling at Christ's right) and offering a banner to Constantine (the emperor kneeling at Christ's left). Peter, haloed, has no inscription, but of course it must be he (Christ transferred the keys to *Peter*, Matthew 16:19). Constantine, however, distinguished by a square halo, has an inscription in mosaic reading. R. / COST / NTI / NVS, unusual because it designates him as "king" not "emperor." While art historians can point to many examples of the transfer of the keys by Christ to Peter (a widely used image of papal authority that reveals Peter and his successors as mediators of human salvation), in none of these does Constantine also appear alongside Christ to share the stage with Peter.[26]

Whether the eighteenth-century restoration of the Triclinium mosaic comes close to the Leonine original remains a vexing question. The engraving published in 1625 purporting to show the main apse decoration from Leo III's Triclinium at the Lateran before its restoration by Cardinal Francesco Barberini[27] reveals that the mosaic on the left side of the apsidal wall had quite fallen away. Thus the investiture scene with Christ, Peter, and Constantine that we see today is a modern *interpolation*.[28] Was it invented for Cardinal Francesco Barberini's restoration in 1624–1625 as a prototype for the scene with Peter, Pope Leo III, and Charlemagne on the right? Did the early modern restorers try thus to link Leo-and-Charlemagne with Silvester-and-Constantine in the spirit of the Donation of Constantine? Indeed, the seventeenth-century restorers thought the investiture scene on the left must originally have depicted Christ enthroned flanked by *Pope Silvester* and Emperor Constantine.[29] But Christ transferring the Keys of Heaven to Pope Silvester does not appear in early Christian or medieval art.[30]

In their recent review of Johannes Fried's book on the *Constitutum Constantini*, Carolyn Goodson and Janet Nelson argue that the seventeenth- and eighteenth-century restoration of Leo III's Triclinium mosaic must be correct on grounds that both the textual evidence (poems; letters; the forged Donation) and Roman papal patronage of the arts in the eighth century provide it a rich context.[31] Despite the arguments of Ingo Herklotz, Manfred Luchterhand, and Frans Alto Bauer noted earlier, most scholars today still see the early modern restoration as an accurate reflection of the Leonine original and as having been inspired by Rome's long preoccupation with the legend of Silvester. But more than that, they go on to claim the mosaic as marking just that moment when the basic ideology of the Carolingian Renaissance, in preparation during the last third of the eighth century, truly burgeoned. The mosaic documents (for most scholars) just that moment when Charlemagne's promise and accomplishments came into the sharp focus – when the ideology of a new western, Latin, Rome-centered, Christian state led by the Frankish monarch in close alliance with the bishop of Rome took clear shape, that is, when Charlemagne himself came to Rome in August 800 to provide the

beleaguered Leo crucial political support and then, in return, in December of the same year, when Leo crowned him emperor in his (Leo's) great cathedral at the Vatican dedicated to St. Peter. Thus nearly everyone sees the Triclinium mosaic of 798–799 as documenting a key turning point, really a kind of summing up of thirty years of Charlemagne's reign, a kind of culmination.[32] And here, they insist, at this moment, the Frankish king appeared clearly as a new Constantine.

Regnum davidicum

But could the legend of Silvester have loomed so large during the last half of the eighth century in Rome and Francia? Does the forged *Constitutum Constantini* that originated during these years in Rome provide so fundamental a key to understanding the Carolingian Renaissance? Despite Pope Paul I's chapel for Petronilla at the Vatican (with its possible paralleling of the Frankish King Pippin I and Constantine), despite Pope Hadrian's auspicious, even encomiastic linking of himself as a new Silvester and Charlemagne as a new Constantine in 778, despite this trope's possible political underpinning in the Carolingian royal–papal friendship pact as displayed in Leo III's Triclinium mosaic, and despite moreover, the trope's echo of the legend that tells how the first, Christian, Frankish monarch, Clovis (d. 511), went to his baptism as *novus Constantinus* under the guidance of Saint Remigius, bishop of Reims, said to be "the equal of Silvester,"[33] it (the trope in question) never came up again during Charlemagne's reign.[34] Not even after Christmas 800 when Pope Leo III crowned Charlemagne as emperor. We should not forget that while the papal curia produced the Donation of Constantine, no curial figure and certainly no pope ever produced the document in public for any political purpose during the entire period in question, a point made by Thomas Noble forcefully in his 1984 book on the formation of the Republic of St. Peter.[35] In fact, more than others, Noble has long argued against thinking that the Renaissance/Renascence/*Renovatio* that Charlemagne sponsored culminated with his crowning in Rome, or that the crowning put him in the public eye in any special way as a new Constantine.[36] Let me now follow this thread further here.

   Rather than see their leader as a new Constantine, the Carolingian court and its clients sought throughout the eighth century to present their kings, first Pippin III, then his son Charlemagne, as mirrors of heroic, biblical, *Israelite* prophets, leaders, and rulers – to treat them (the Carolingian kings) as images of Moses, Joshua, David, Solomon, and Josiah, and especially David. Indeed, during the reign of Charlemagne, casting the Frankish ruler as a new King David became normal, and between 780 circa and 800, as I will show, took on new layers of meaning. Popes addressed Pippin (751–768) as a Moses, Joshua, and/or a David in seven of the letters they wrote to the Frankish court in the 750s and '60s gathered in the *Codex Carolinus*.[37] In an eighth (*CC*, no. 33), datable between 761 and 766, Pope Paul I wrote to

Pippin's sons, Carlomann and Charlemagne, and urged them too to follow the *exempla* of Moses, Joshua, David, and Solomon.[38] It is true that Popes Stephen III (768–772) and Hadrian (772–795) do not speak of the Frankish kings as types of Old Testament leaders, or at least not in any of their now extant letters.[39] But from the earliest moment, as Charlemagne took over as sole king of the Franks in 771 (upon the death of Carlomann), other of his clients look to have carried on. In 775, the insular scholar and member of Charlemagne's court, Cathwulf, compared the young King Charlemagne in knowledge of God's law to both David and Solomon.[40] In 789 when Charlemagne issued the *Admonitio Generalis*, the principal legislation of his reign directed to bishops and abbots and devoted to reform of the Frankish church, he presented himself as a new Josiah – as the Old Testament king who had "visited, admonished, corrected, and tried to call back" the faithful to the true worship of God (II Kings 22, 23).[41] By the 790s, "David" had become Charlemagne's customary pseudonym. In the two dedicatory poems at the beginning of the Dagulf Psalter (fols. 4[v] and 4[r]), an illuminated manuscript from the Court School written in golden letters dating to 794–795, and one that Charlemagne had had prepared as a gift for Pope Hadrian in Rome,[42] the Frankish king appears as a learned and eloquent "harp player" right along with the Israelite King David.[43] In a famous contemporary poem by Angilbert, written in praise of the Carolingian court, the writer addresses his patron, Charlemagne, as David in a frequent refrain: "David loves poets; David is the poets' glory."[44] In a letter dating to 794–795, Alcuin, the great English monk at Charlemagne's court and the king's principal advisor, praised his ruler as David, defender of the Lord's people against heresy,[45] and in a poem of ca. 799 acclaimed him "pious David whom people praised across the world" (*. . . ad laudem populi David in orbe pius*).[46] The great Visigothic intellectual, Theodulf, likewise one of Charlemagne's trusted advisors, might send the king a verse/letter in 796 in which he praised him even more effusively, comparing him to Solomon for his wisdom, David for his strength, and even Joseph – for his beauty.[47]

The *figura* of the Carolingian king as a new Moses, David, Solomon, or Josiah extended at the same time to the people the kings claimed to lead. In the 760s, in a letter to Pippin III, Pope Paul I (757–767) might address Franks who had acted to protect Rome militarily as follows:

> *. . . vos quidem, carissimi, 'gens sancta, regale sacerdotium,*
> *populus adquisitionis'* [1 Peter 2 :9]*, cui benedixit dominus*
> *Deus Israhel, gaudete et exultate . . .*

> . . . you indeed, most dear, 'a holy nation, a royal priesthood, God's own people', whom the lord God of Israel blessed, you rejoice and exult . . .[48]

Franks under Carolingian leaders could be presented as a new Chosen People, a new Israel.[49] In 763–764 Pippin III published a new edition of the ancient

Germanic/Frankish law code, the *Lex Salica*, providing it with a new pro-logue that fulsomely proclaimed the *gens Francorum* as God's people.[50] Then just ten years later, in the letter mentioned earlier, Cathwulf might salute the thirty-year-old Charlemagne as ruling "a kingdom of Europe in all glory and honor,"[51] and present him not just as leader of the Franks but of all believers, a leader of the "*populus Dei.*"[52] The encomium seemed all the more appropriate as Charlemagne, having just conquered the *regnum Langobardorum*, had imme-diately taken the dignity (the title) of king to both Franks and Lombards. But one waits a decade and more (in the documentary record) for the next such claims for royal rule to appear. The notion that Charlemagne, the new David, steered the *populus Christianus* toward salvation stood at the heart of the king's capitulary in the *Admonitio generalis* (789).[53] In the Royal Frankish Annals for the year 791, Franks were said to have acted to redress the harm brought to the "holy church and indeed, the Christian people" by the per-fidious Avars.[54] In his letter to Charlemagne of 794–795, already cited, Alcuin might praise the king as a new David chosen by God to rule, a triumphant sword in his right hand to defend the *populus christianus* against heresy, his tongue proclaiming (preaching/trumpeting!) the catholic faith, and thereby bringing heavenly light to the world as its helmsman (guide) and teacher (*rec-tor et doctor*).[55]

Imperial ceremony and Frankish royal prerogatives

Now it is striking how all these dignities that Charlemagne assumes in Alcuin's writing echo those enjoyed, and constantly insisted upon, by Christian Roman emperors in *Nova Roma* – in the new Rome founded by Emperor Constantine, in Constantinople.[56] Very soon after Constantine's suc-cess over Maxentius on the Milvian Bridge, the new Christian ruler was being compared to Moses: he (Constantine) triumphed over Maxentius (who drowned in the Tiber) just as Moses saved the Israelites by conquering the pharaoh (who drowned in the Red Sea).[57] By extension, and after Constan-tine defeated Licinius in Asia Minor in 324 to succeed to sole leadership in the Empire, the first Christian emperor also became the successor to the Old Testament kings, David and Solomon.[58] We can fully appreciate the result in a mid-fifth-century acclamation for Emperor Marcian (and Empress Pulcheria) provided by the bishops gathered at Chalcedon for the Fourth Ecumenical Council in 451:

> To Marcian, the new Constantine, the new Paul, the new David: [many] years to the emperor David. . . . You are the peace of the world. . . . May Christ . . . protect you. You have strengthened the orthodox faith . . .
> [so that] peace reigns everywhere. Lord, protect the lights of peace. Lord, protect the lights of the world. . . . You have destroyed the heretics . . . Mar-cian, the new Constantine; Pulcheria the new Helena . . .[59]

Or at least the praises that Alcuin meted out to Charlemagne do resemble such Byzantine imperial acclamations – excepting, of course, that the Christian Roman emperor in Constantinople might also be acclaimed as a new Constantine and even a new Paul. What did Franks know of such acclaim for the putative ruler of all the Christians? And for that matter did they also know how, during the reign of the Heraclian dynasty in Constantinople (610 to the early eighth century), the Christian emperor came to be seen not only as a new David, a new Constantine, and so forth, but also, emphatically, as an image of God on earth?

The development of this super-Christianized early Byzantine rhetoric of statecraft has long been the object of intensive study: it coincided with, exploited, and spurred on icon worship in Byzantium. This is, of course, a huge topic beyond the scope of this chapter.[60] But let me note anyway that the Heraclian emperors used icons effectively to establish their rule, and among them, especially an icon of Christ, a miraculous image not-made-by-human-hands, famous already in the later sixth century: the so-called Christ Pantocrator.[61] An icon, a painting on a board, differs from a painting on a wall in that the former is portable and thus can play important roles, mostly theatrical, in public presentations and processions. Let me cite just two documents from many to suggest how this new Greek, seventh-century way of giving biblical or religious sanction to the Byzantine emperor worked.

In a panegyric of 622–623, a poem of some thousand and more lines praising Heraclius's victory over the Sassanian Persians,[62] the emperor's court poet, George of Pisidia, told how the ruler, who fought against the barbarians as a new Moses and in the name of Christ, bore with him a "fearful image" of the *Logos* (= Christ), a miraculous icon "not-painted-by-hands, but by God Himself," from which, said George, the ruler derived all his power, and to which (that is, to God) he (Heraclius) would offer the "first fruits" of battle (lines 19–20, 135, 139–45). George continued: when the Greek troops acclaimed Heraclius in the field before battle, the emperor addressed them holding the icon aloft and said, "This One is the universal emperor and lord and general of our armies" (lines 86–100). Then later in the poem, George described how Heraclius led in battle as God's lieutenant and how, as second-in-command, emperors were "images of God the Father" (lines 401, 433). And one further document to show how during the seventh century people identified the Byzantine emperor with an icon of Christ. The icon in question, "Christ Pantocrator," appeared strikingly on the obverse of a beautifully crafted gold solidus issued by the last Heraclian emperor, Justinian II (Figure 8.2). Solidi, historically used to pay soldiers, always presume a context of military victory. This solidus, minted at Constantinople during Justinian II's first reign (685–695), featured "Christ Pantocrator" on its *obverse* instead of the customary bust-portrait of the emperor, and did that here for the first time in Byzantine coinage. The portrait of the emperor standing robed at full length and holding a cross-staff mounted on a podium with three steps appears on the *reverse*, a most emphatic and effective way to establish the

Figure 8.2 Solidus of Justinian II (685–695), obverse of gold coin (Dumbarton Oaks, Byzan-
    tine Collection, Washington, DC)

earthly imperial ruler as an image of God – as a holy person (Figure 8.3).[63] In
the next century, as emperor Leo III (717–741) and Constantine V (741–775)
hunkered down to save and maintain what remained of the Christian Roman
Empire after the loss of Syria and Egypt to Muslim/Arab conquest in the sev-
enth century, and as "image worship" (as a component of the cult of the saints)
came by stages to be questioned then actually proscribed (first, officially, at the
council of Heireia in 754),[64] the rulers of *Nova Roma* continued to stage them-
selves as "holy persons" and as God's lieutenants on earth just as any Heraclian
leader had ever done. This much, at least, is shown by the famous *Book of Cer-
emonies* compiled under emperor Constantine VII Porphyrogenitus (913–959)
to codify and fix the traditional forms of imperial acclamation. In the many
rituals of imperial display there described, palace and church come together
in the capital as setting for a ruler who, sitting in pomp upon the throne of

Figure 8.3 Solidus of Justinian II (685–695), reverse of gold coin (Dumbarton Oaks, Byzan-
tine Collection, Washington, DC)

Solomon, often played the role of Christ.[65] From the late 620s onward, the
Byzantine ruler, no longer addressed as *imperator* in ancient Roman Imperial
style but as *basileus Romaion*, was to stand at the pinnacle of all earthly rulers as
king of kings, that is, as an image of Christ.[66]

The question of whether western European Latin-speaking people knew
about these developments in the Byzantine ruler cult still looms. During the
seventh and the early eighth centuries commerce and communication across
the Mediterranean from east to west and vice versa diminished sharply. The
Arab/Islamic takeover in the Levant and North Africa first disrupted then killed
the ancient Roman Imperial *annona* system (that is, the transfer of oil and grain
by ship from North Africa, especially Egypt, to the two capitals, Rome and
Constantinople). The seventh-century Slavic invasion of the Balkans, moreover,
closed the ancient Roman roads running east and west across the top of the

Mediterranean world. Preoccupied by its struggle with both the Avaric/Slavic and Arab challenges to its rule, Byzantium's sphere of influence shrank sharply, and its western European provinces were left to fend for themselves in relative isolation. There can be no doubt that the seventh-century stoppage of long-distance trade and communication in the Euro-Mediterranean world did cut off the "West" (Spain, Italy, and transalpine Europe) from the Empire in the "East" and that this had deep cultural consequences.[67] For one thing, it helped set the stage for the transformation of the Byzantine Duchy of Rome into the capital of a new, western, papally led Republic of St. Peter closely allied with Frankish Carolingian monarchs. It undoubtedly spurred the rise of the Carolingian Christian Empire as a competitor to the Byzantine.[68]

Nevertheless – and this can seem paradoxical – during this period of stoppages and closings down, some political and cultural links between the "West" and "East," the Latin-speaking and Greek-speaking Christian worlds, remained quite intact. Not long ago Paolo Delogu argued that the seventh- and early eighth-century papacy continued to engage in a wide, trans-Mediterranean, politico-theological process to assert its primacy among the apostolic sees, and did so much as it had ever done, say, under Pope Leo the Great in the mid-fifth century.[69] Delogu saw the Roman church's full engagement in "the world" (in a unified Greco-Latin Christendom) during the seventh-century Monothelite controversy. Pope Martin I, for example, had mounted so compelling a defense of Chalcedonian Christology versus the newly introduced and imperial-supported Monothelite doctrine, that in 653 the emperor had been forced to have Martin physically deposed, brought to the capital, humiliated publicly, imprisoned, then sent into exile (in the Crimea where the pope died in 655). In the eighth century, Delogu went on, popes defended the role of images in worship versus the Byzantine emperors' push to ban them with the same vigor and sophistication, and in the same Mediterranean-wide frame. Thus when Empress Irene as regent for her son Constantine VI arranged the second ecumenical council in Nicaea in 787, which she used to revoke the iconoclastic decrees of the Council of Hiereia held in 754, Pope Hadrian I sent a treatise supporting the veneration of images that was read out in full at the start of deliberations as a keynote.[70] In the seventh and eighth centuries, moreover, the bishops of Rome opened the city to Greek-speaking refugees from the "East," mainly monks, fleeing the Persians, Monothelitism, and the Arab conquest. Seventh- and eighth-century Rome had a virtually hybrid Greco-Latin Christian culture. Consider, too, said Delogu, how the Roman church in this period stayed in contact with transalpine Christians. In 668–669, for instance, Pope Vitalian sent the refugee and Greek intellectual, Theodore of Tarsus, to Canterbury as archbishop. In the eighth century, moreover, Popes Gregory II (715–731) and Gregory III (731–741) sponsored the mission of the Insular monk, Boniface, to the Saxons. If Latin-speaking, early-medieval, Christian Europe featured many distinct, nearly autonomous "ethnic churches" (the Visigothic, Frankish, and Anglo-Saxon among them), then papal Rome might still claim them all as parts of its larger Euro-Mediterranean world and knit them together.

Histories that present the rise of the Carolingian empire and the Carolingian-Roman papal political alliance as chiefly a product of western Europe's relative isolation from this larger world do not, of course, ignore the papal initiatives just mentioned.[71] Nor do they overlook the various eighth-century Greco-Frankish diplomatic exchanges either. During the 750s and 760s the Greeks tried to gain back control over their central Italian holdings, that is, in Ravenna and the Exarchy, not by treating with the Lombards and the pope who by turns had taken over there, but by seeking support from the new power in the peninsula, the Carolingian King Pippin III. They hoped to enlist the Franks in an Italian adventure versus both Lombards and the popes. Evidence that Greeks and Franks were talking can be found in the Royal Frankish Annals for the year 757 where one reads that Constantine V gave Pippin the gift of a musical instrument, an organ.[72] Ten years later, the same emperor even floated the offer of his son's hand in marriage to Pippin's daughter Gisela.[73] But these Byzantine initiatives can seem to have gone nowhere – with Pippin III's death in 768 cutting off further such Greco-Frankish contact. Only after Charlemagne conquered the Lombard *regnum* in 772–774, that is, took up his father's role as protector of the popes, did relations between the Greeks and Franks appear to resume. With Empress Irene's rise to power in Byzantium after 780 and her great need to maintain secure borders with the Carolingian kingdom in southern Italy – by that time the Greeks no longer had any plausible claim to Ravenna and the Exarchy in the north – she sent ambassadors in 781 to arrange a new marriage alliance with the Frankish king: Charlemagne's young daughter Rotrud became engaged to Irene's equally young son, Constantine VI. This pact, which brought great distinction to the Carolingian royal house, held for some six and more years until, in 787, Charlemagne nullified it as he moved militarily against the Lombard Duchy of Benevento in 787, a Byzantine ally.[74] But as I say, if the classic histories of Charlemagne's rise to power treat these Greco-Frankish exchanges, they still set them against the deep background of the relative isolation of the "West" from the "East."

This view now changes thanks in large part to the work of Michael McCormick, who has pressed hard for some twenty-eight years[75] to refine and extend our knowledge about Byzantine-Carolingian relations.[76] Let me summarize some key results. First of all we must understand, said McCormick, that the two halves of the Christian world, Byzantine and Carolingian, constituted "sibling cultures" that emerged from the same antique and late-antique Euro-Mediterranean matrix. When, for example, each of these cultures simultaneously introduced and exploited a new minuscule script, or when, in both, rulers' ceremony came strikingly to focus upon the aristocratic elites in the imperial/royal court and not as formerly in antiquity upon a general public, we deal not with engines of influence and exchange, but with parallel developments that go to the deep structure of a shared civilization.[77]

Second, in his 1,100-page tome *Origins of the European Economy, Communications and Commerce, AD 300–900*, published in 2001, McCormick argued persuasively that exchange on all fronts, religious, political, and commercial,

between the early-medieval Latin- and Greek-speaking worlds rebounded in the Mediterranean after 750 and then surged significantly between ca. 770 and ca. 820, that is, during Charlemagne's and Louis the Pious's heydays.[78] Wrestling with the paucity of evidence and massaging every surviving record (mainly prosopographical), he tirelessly documented some 169 events during the reigns of Pippin III and Charlemagne (12 implicating Pippin directly; 55 for Charlemagne) that revealed close trans-Mediterranean contact, that is, diplomatic exchanges between the Byzantine and Carolingian courts, and proofs of trans-Mediterranean long-distance trade and correspondence.[79] Sea routes burgeoned, and if the roads between the "East" and "West" that crossed the top of the Mediterranean remained closed (opening only toward the end of the ninth century), sea commerce with the Arab north African world opened new north African land routes to travelers going in both directions. From the 750s onward the "West" did *not* flourish in any kind of isolation from the "East."

McCormick emphasized how from the first moment that the papal-Carolingian friendship pact began in the 750s under Pippin III cultural exchange, "East" and "West" could not help but proceed apace as both cultures, Frankish and Byzantine, met and mingled in Italy – in other words, mixed at their respective borders. Rome, the capital of the Republic of St. Peter, McCormick correctly rehearsed, constituted a hybrid Greco-Latin entity at this moment. Ravenna and the Exarchy, that is, the whole region north of the Appenines and south of the Po river valley, had been a Byzantine province right on down into the 750s. The transalpine Carolingian *missi*, the various embassies packed with Frankish abbots, bishops, and courtiers who traveled between Francia and the papal curia during the last half of the eighth century, and then, during the last quarter of the eighth century, the scions of aristocratic Frankish families that Charlemagne appointed to high office in the former Lombard *regnum* and Duchy of Spoleto, all thus became intimately acquainted with Byzantine civilization.[80]

One of McCormick's most startling revisions concerned his reading of the documentary evidence showing how closely the first Carolingian king, Pippin III, worked with ambassadors from the court of Emperor Constantine V and did so throughout his reign.[81] Pippin III's contact with Byzantium started in the mid-750s just as Frankish armies moved onto the Italian stage and confronted the three parties struggling there for control over the central part of the peninsula, that is, the Greeks, Lombards, and "Romans-from-Rome" led by the popes. McCormick showed that emperor Constantine V's gift of an organ and his offer to marry his son Leo IV to Pippin III's daughter, Gisela, were all aspects of a complex, carefully orchestrated, multi-year Byzantine push to separate the pope and the Frankish king from their alliance. (It almost worked. Pippin III's military support for Popes Paul I and Stephen III diminished notably toward the end of his reign. The Franco-Byzantine rapprochement, however, came to an abrupt halt with Pippin's death in 768 and the ensuing three-year struggle for succession between Charlemagne and Carloman, Pippin's sons.)

So if Carolingian civilization did *not* arise in relative isolation from the Greek, if indeed Franks could not help but have treated closely with the Byzantines during the second half of the eighth century, we have good reason indeed to claim that elites in the Carolingian court must have known how the ruler of *Nova Roma* presented himself to the world. That Franks understood that the earthly ruler of Christendom might well pretend to Christ-like holy status just as we have seen the Byzantine emperors did from the early seventh century onward is shown clearly in a famous and precious early Carolingian document, namely, in the second, longer preamble that King Pippin III added to the *Lex Salica* when he repromulgated this old Salian, Merovingian law code in 763–764.[82] The preamble begins with great praise for the "celebrated Frankish people . . . bold, swift, and stern, firmly converted to the Catholic faith" (*Gens Francorum inclita . . . audax, velox, et aspera, ad catholicam fidem firmiter conversa*), then names the first Merovingian king to have been baptized, Clovis, decribing him as "spirited and noble" *(torrens et pulcher)*, then erupts in a fervent litany-like acclamation:[83]

> *Vivat qui Francus [Francos] diligit,*
> *Christus eorum regnum costodiat,*
> *rectores eorundem lumen suae graciae repleat,*
> *exercitum protegat,*
> *fidem [fidei] munimenta tribuat;*
> *paces [pacis, pacem] gaudia*
> *et felicitatem [felicitatis] tempora*
> *dominancium dominus*
> *Iesus Christus*
> *pietatem [pietate] concedat.*[84]

> Long live Christ who holds the Franks dear,
> May he guard their kingdom,
> May he fill their rulers with the light of his grace,
> May he protect the army,
> May he provide the bulwarks of faith;
> And may Jesus Christ, Lord of lords, grant peace, joy,
> happiness, opportunity, and virtue.[85]

In this prayer where the Frankish king (Clovis as ideal model) is paired with Christ, we may find a direct parallel to the *solidus* of the Byzantine emperor Justinian II, discussed earlier, where an image of the ruler at the back of the coin is paired with a famous icon of Christ on the front (Figure 8.2). Filled with Christ's grace, presented in the prayer as the very locus of joy and happiness for the people he leads, the ideal Clovis and his sponsor, the real Pippin, take on dimensions as holy persons much in the manner of contemporary rulers in Constantinople – much in the manner of emperor Constantine V with whom Pippin treated throughout his reign.

Charlemagne's claims to authority

But if Pippin ever saw himself as parallel in some way to an emperor in Constantinople, if his court and advisors ever entertained any such possibility, it evaporated with his death in 768. Thereupon followed some years of uncertainty about Frankish kingship as Pippin's sons and successors, Carloman and Charlemagne, struggled for hegemony, and as Charlemagne, sole ruler after Carloman's death in 771, pressed to stabilize his realm. Charlemagne's defeat of the Lombard king in 774 brought him much prestige, but those parts of northern and central Italy under Lombard control submitted to him only slowly. Even after having renewed his father's Franco-papal friendship pact with Pope Hadrian in Rome in 774, Charlemagne would delay for some seven to eight years to arrange the borders between his own Italian possessions and those of the Republic of St. Peter. In the 770s Charlemagne campaigned constantly – and inconclusively – in Aquitaine, Gascony, the Spanish March, and Saxony. The youthful Charlemagne had constantly to be on the lookout for rebellious magnates. The outright defeat of his army in Spain in 778 presented a genuine crisis. And as I say, during these years, the rhetoric of royal rule, the fixing of notions of Carolingian kingship did not come into sharp focus. Charlemagne's clients might have tried to shape his role in the 770s – as the Anglo-Saxon monk, Cathwulf, did in his famous letter to Charles in 775 where he declared the king a new David and a new Solomon,[86] or as Pope Hadrian did when he wrote to the Frankish king in 778 addressing him as a new Constantine.[87] But Charlemagne himself remained silent.

That changed dramatically in the next decade.[88] In March 779 at an assembly of bishops, abbots, and counts at the king's palace in Herstal (near Aachen) Charlemagne issued a series of ordinances, the first such *capitula* to have been distributed widely, and thus the first to have shaped his realm legally (abstractly, rhetorically) and in his own voice, his own words – in royal decrees.[89] The Herstal Capitulary formed the basis of the far more comprehensive *Admonitio Generalis*, Charlemagne's most important such legislation issued ten years later, in March 789, from his palace at Aachen, and distributed via royal *missi* to all of high rank, lay and clerical, throughout the realm.[90] For the first time, in this great capitulary, ideology and governmental practice came together compellingly.[91] And it was in the *Admonitio*, as I already noted, that Charlemagne himself claimed, in the prologue, to be acting as "the holy King Josiah" (*sanctus Josias*) named in the Bible (*in regnorum libris* = II Kings 22–23 or *IV Regum 22–23*), that is, as the Israelite monarch who visited among his people, admonished them, corrected their worship, and thus called them back to God's kingdom.[92] Here Charlemagne appeared emphatically as leader of the Franks as a new Chosen People, a new Israel.

But Charlemagne's claim to authority in 789 differs sharply from the one his father proposed (or experimented with) in 763–764 some twenty-five years previously. As we have seen, in his prologue to the *Lex Salica*, Pippin III might present himself as virtually or almost Christ-like. Now if, in the prologue to the

Admonitio, Charlemagne did indeed liken himself to the biblical King Josiah, in the very next sentence he backtracked in a hurry:

> . . . *non ut me eius sanctitate aequiparabilem faciam, sed quod nobis sunt ubique sanctorum semper exempla sequenda, et, quoscumque poterimus, ad studium bonae vitae in laudem et in gloriam domini nostri Iesu Christi congregare necesse est.*

> . . . I say this not to compare myself with his holiness, but because it is our duty, at all times and in all places, to follow the examples of the holy, and necessary for us to gather together whomsoever we can for the study of a good life in praise and glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.[93]

If Pippin might have flirted with assuming rule of a Christian kingdom in a way parallel to that of a Byzantine emperor in Constantinople, Charlemagne refused any such pretension.

King and rector

In the very first sentence of the *Admonitio*, Charlemagne spoke in the first person as "king and *rector* of the Franks and devout defender and humble facilitator of the holy church" (*rex et rector regni Francoum t devotus sanctae aeclesiae defensor humilisque adjutor*). Again, in the *Admonitio generalis* of 789, Charlemagne fused ideology and administrative practice in a way he had not done formerly. If in the Herstal Capitulary he addressed both clerics and laymen and treated issues both clerical and secular separately, he addressed the *Admonitio* to *pastores* and dealt there chiefly with matters ecclesiastical, or better, he addressed everyone, not just priests and bishops, presuming that all had responsibility "to shepherd" God's flocks. Considering "with his priests and counselors" (*cum sacerdotibus et consiliaribus nostris*) how God's people might continue under His protection, the king called ringingly upon the "pastors of Christ's churches, leaders of His flock, the brightest luminaries of the world" (*O pastores ecclesiarum Christi et ductores gregis eius et clarissima mundi luminaria*) and asked "that they strive with great energy and constant preaching to lead the people of god to the pastures of eternal life" (*ut vigili cura et sedula ammonitione populum Dei ad pascua vitae aeternae ducere studeatis*). Here we find a Christian monarch of a different stripe than a Byzantine emperor, one who takes a more humble role – a *para-episcopal* role – one who assumes responsibility like a bishop for both the moral guidance and eternal salvation of the people of God.[94] In a revealing passage in Alcuin's *Four Books against Elipandus* (Elipandus = the bishop of Toledo who took sides, wrongly, in an early-medieval, western, Christological controversy[95]), Charlemagne's most trusted and (arguably) most eloquent advisor responded to a taunt by his opponent that he (Alcuin) had betrayed his king and sponsor saying:

> *Impossibile est enim, ut corrumpatur a quoquam, quia catholicus est in fide, rex in potestate, pontifex in praedictione, judex in aequitate, philosophus in liberalibus studiis, inclytus in moribus, et omni honestate praecipuus.*

> It is indeed impossible that he [Charlemagne] could be corrupted by any-
> one because he is a Catholic with regard to his faith, a king with regard to
> his power, a pontiff with regard to his preaching, a judge with regard to his
> fairness, a philosopher with regard to his liberal pursuits, outstanding with
> regard to his morals, and excellent with regard to every honor.[96]

Rex et rector? Rex in potestate . . . pontifex in praedictione? Charlemagne did emp-
hatically claim, as king, a pastoral (para-episcopal) role.

In a series of essays that charted the slow development of Charlemagne's
court during the king's first two decades of maturity in the 780s and '90s, Don-
ald Bullough argued cogently that Charlemagne and his most trusted advisors
dealt with the whole idea of the *orbis romanus christianus* established by Constan-
tine very casually, and that they remained unimpressed by, and un-envious of,
imperial leadership in *Nova Roma*.[97] Charlemagne's closest advisors, and chief
among them, Alcuin of York, might treat the concept of *regnum imperiale* quite
indifferently – not identify it automatically, or even very readily with the Byz-
antine Empire ruled from Constantinople.[98] Thus, Bullough noted, in a letter to
Charlemagne that Alcuin wrote just shortly after he became abbot of St. Mar-
tin's at Tours – he had moved to Tours from the palace at Aachen in 796 – he,
Alcuin, might tell Charlemagne that he had many pupils he hoped to teach "to
honor your imperial realm" (*ad decorum imperialis regni vestri erudiam*),[99] but then
shortly afterward, Alcuin could also write to the people of Kent, subjects at that
time of the king of Mercia, and address *them* as members of a *regnum imperiale*.[100]
In an oft-cited letter of June 799 to Charlemagne,[101] Alcuin might outline the
"three great authorities of supreme standing in the world" and name, first, the
pope (*apostolica sublimitas*), *rector* of the apostle Peter's see in Rome; then second,
the emperor (*imperialis dignitas*), the secular power of "second Rome" (*secondae
Romae saecularis potentia*); and third, the royal office (*regalis dignitas*),

> *in qua vos domini nostri Iesu Christi dispensatio rectorem populi christiani disposuit,
> ceteris praefatis dignitatibus potentia excellentiorem, sapientia clariorem, regni dig-
> nitate sublimorem. Ecce in te solo tota salus ecclesiarum Christi inclinata recumbit.*

> in which you [Charlemagne] have been ordained as the *rector* of the Chris-
> tian people by the dispensation of our Lord Jesus Christ, surpassing the
> aforementioned dignitaries in the excellence of your power, the lustre of
> your wisdom and the loftiness of your dignity as a ruler. Behold, upon
> you alone rests the entire health, deteriorated as it is,[102] of the churches of
> Christ.[103]

Alcuin used the same words to characterize both the clerical and royal dignities:
both popes and kings functioned as "rectors," both had spiritual "sublimity," and
both differed in this way from emperors who had (merely) secular authority.
Charlemagne emerged as responsible like a bishop for the defense of the church
and the spread of the faith; Alcuin simply ignored the universal command of

emperors. Bullough concluded ringingly: for Alcuin, as for other courtly writers, Charlemagne reigned as a "new David," *not* a "new Constantine."[104]

But Alcuin's de-emphasis of the imperial office in the letters Bullough cited did not stem from any real lack of interest in the *orbis romanum christianarum* founded by Constantine. That indifference was studied and assumed, part of a program that Alcuin and the Carolingian court had worked hard to create in just the years he was writing. In 775 Cathwulf could praise the Frankish king as ruler of a single state-like entity, the *populus Dei*.[105] But it took many years (about a generation) for Charlemagne and his advisors to bring the (rhetorical) "state-in-embryo" that Cathwulf was searching for into any kind of focus. That focus sharpened considerably in the *Admonitio generalis* of 789 and in Alcuin's letters of the 790s just discussed. One sees immediately in them that Charlemagne and his advisors had quite abandoned Pippin III's experiment (Charlemagne was not to be a holy person, an image of Christ on earth). But if Pippin's initiative was inspired by a Byzantine model, so also, in an important sense, was the new pastoral, humble role Charlemagne had assumed: Charlemagne's court advisors designed it specifically to correct and *supplant* imperial rulership in *Nova Roma*.

This is amply evident in the writing of Charlemagne's other great advisor, Theodulf, the Visigoth from Spain, educated in Acquitaine, who joined Charlemagne's court in the later 780s and who collaborated closely with his colleague Alcuin (whom Charlemagne had called to his side only a few years previously). Theodulf's first key contribution was his *Opus Caroli regis contra synodum* written between 790 and 793.[106] In this work, commissioned by the king, Theodulf critiques and corrects the *acta* of the Second Nicene Council of 787 which overturned the decrees of the iconoclastic synod of Heireia convened by Emperor Constantine V in 754,[107] and spelled out anew how images were to be used in worship. Frankish churchmen were not invited to attend II Nicaea, which already for them was a strike against the council (How could it pretend to ecumenical status?). The document they received toward the end of the 780s purporting to be the Latin version of the council's Greek proceedings had obvious syntactical and grammatical defects.[108] The Franks were unimpressed. And ready, too, to be unimpressed. By the late 780s Byzantine-Frankish relations had gone sour. The negotiations between Empress-regent Irene and Charlemagne concerning the marriage of her son Constantine VI to Charlemagne's daughter Rotrud, begun hopefully in 781, had been definitively broken off in 787 as Charlemagne led an army against Benevento, a Byzantine ally. In 788, Irene had sent a large army to southern Italy in the hope of bolstering Beneventan resistance to any Frankish encroachments, which only heightened hostility between the two parties. Little wonder that the Carolingian king and his advisors would seize this moment to press Frankish royal claims to hegemony in the Christian Euro-Mediterranean world.[109] Thus, in the *Opus Caroli regis*, Theodulf had Charlemagne address the world as the new David,[110] as leader of the Franks "who are a spiritual Israel,"[111] and accordingly as the sole *orthodox* world leader, that

is, rector, leader of the *populus christianus* to salvation. Setting out his program in the preface to the *Opus*, and concluding forcefully, Theodulf had the new David recall how the old David "hated the congregation of evil doers and would not sit with the wicked,"[112] which amounted to a very thinly veiled rejection of the leadership of Second Rome – of Irene and her son Constantine VI, who had convoked II Nicaea, and from the Franks' point of view had promulgated heresies.

Thanks to Thomas Noble, whose 2009 book, *Images, Iconoclasm, and the Carolingians*, unfolds Theodulf's *Opus* magisterially,[113] it has now become clearer than ever that we deal with a Carolingian political tract – with a document treating the role of images in Christian worship to be sure, but one that also incorporated integrally the latest Frankish thinking on the nature of royal leadership – on how God institutes earthly rulers.[114] If, in the *Opus*, Theodulf carefully and shrewdly took up the decrees and positions of II Nicaea in elaborate detail, he also wrote a polemic against the Byzantine empire of "white-hot intensity."[115] Noble provides a detailed summary of the document going blow-by-blow through Theodulf's argument.[116] For the purposes of this essay two poignant moments stand out.

The first comes quickly in Book I, chapters 1–4,[117] which deal with the arrogant claims that Theodulf construed the Empress Irene and Emperor Constantine VI to make as they vaunted their positions as leaders (as Theodulf found them doing in the letter they had sent to Pope Hadrian to invite him and his representatives to attend II Nicaea in 785).[118] In Book I, chapter 1, Theodulf starts by observing that no earthly ruler can claim, as Irene and Constantine VI had done, that they might "co-reign with God."[119] Citing Psalm 112:5, "Who is like the Lord our God, the One who sits enthroned on high,"[120] he argued that Byzantine rulers lacked all proper humility by not acknowledging the gulf separating human and divine. The psalmist, King David, had never so exalted himself, Theodulf observed. I have already discussed how during the Heraclian dynasty in the seventh century imperial ceremony had been super-Christianized, and how Heraclius and his successors had posed in public as God's lieutenants on earth. We deal here (in the *Opus Caroli regis*) with a key piece of evidence that the Franks were well acquainted with Byzantine statecraft and just as well able to spin that knowledge to dismantle Byzantine imperial pretensions and magnify their own king.

The second poignant moment comes in Book III, 15,[121] where Theodulf took up the notion discussed at II Nicaea that the honor people pay to imperial images, the respect they confer with the burning of lights and incense before them, resembles that they pay to images of Jesus, his Mother, and the saints in churches and so legitimizes such adoration there. This act evoked Theodulf's towering scorn. He censured those gathered at the synod as having disastrously and heretically transferred imperial ceremonial practice (the adoration of rulers' images) to the domain of Christian worship: where in the Bible did it say that we might adore the images of emperors? Here Theodulf zeroed in to condemn the synod's act by observing that the only people he had ever heard of who

worshiped their rulers were the Babylonians and the Romans! Paraphrasing Orosius,[122] Theodulf wrote:

> *Nam omnem, ut aiunt historiae, Babylonii regni hereditatem et apicis cumulum Romanum suscepit imperium, et inter haec duo regna quasi inter patrem senem, qui iam posse desierit, et filium parvulum, qui aedum dominandi vires acceperit, duo regna vice tutoris, Persarum videlicet sive Macedonum fuisse traduntur.*

> For as the histories say, the Roman Empire received the whole inheritance of Babylon, and between these two kingdoms, as between an old father who was already losing his strength and his young son, who had not yet acquired the power of domination, much was transmitted by two other kingdoms as tutors, that is Macedon and Persia.[123]

Christ's coming should have swept all residue of such idolatry from the world. With this argument Theodulf effectively stripped authority away from the Second Rome now revealed as a new Babylon. In thus rewriting his world's history, that is, by "showing" that the rulers of Byzantium could not claim leadership of the Christian people, Theodulf provided his patron, King Charlemagne, the foundation he needed to proclaim sole orthodox leadership of the people of God.

Conclusion

In 778 when Pope Hadrian wrote to Charlemagne to remind him of his obligations in his new alliance with the Republic of St. Peter, even address him as a new Constantine to suggest that he, like the first Christian emperor, might confer great gifts upon the Roman See, the papal ploy probably bore considerable persuasive value. Charlemagne had been sole king of the Franks for only some seven years at that moment (Carlomann, his brother, having died in 771). If Franco-Byzantine relations were "on hold" during the 770s, the memory of Pippin III's negotiations with Emperor Constantine V were still fresh. And in 781, three years later, Charlemagne would enter into a marriage alliance with Empress/regent Irene (to marry his daughter Rotrud to Irene's son Constantine VI). The prestige that the marriage alliance gave the Frankish king consisted in the suggestion that he might thus pretend to a parallel relationship with the emperor of Second Rome.

But as his reign matured, Charlemagne's relations with Byzantium became less friendly, and then by military necessity after 787–788, openly hostile. During the 780s and especially toward the end of that decade, Charlemagne took giant steps toward formulating a new religio-political rhetoric of rule in consultation with his new courtly think tank dominated by the clerics from Northumbria and Spain, Alcuin and Theodulf, respectively. Two great documents mark the turning point, the *Admonitio generalis* of 789 and the *Opus Caroli regis contra synodum* of 790–793, the first issued as royal decree and distributed

widely in the kingdom, the second as a royal manifesto and kept privately within the king's library.[124] This great European creative moment – and I paraphrase Thomas Noble as I write – brought not a new Constantine to the fore, but a Frankish new David, a supreme pastor, fully responsible for the moral integrity of the Christian people, their teacher on their way to salvation, and the Christian world's sole orthodox leader. The crowning of Charlemagne as emperor in Rome on Christmas 800 was anticlimactic in nearly every way. Rather than highlight that event as a culmination of Carolingian Renaissance thinking about, and staging of, the ruler that had formed during the last third of the eighth century and was then fulfilled during Charlemagne's 'Aachen years' after 800,[125] I would see the crowning as an interruption that marked the start of a new chapter altogether.[126]

Notes

1   Noble, 1984, pp. 291–99; Nelson, 2007.
2   Gundlach, 1892, *Codex Carolinus*, no. 60 on pp. 585–87, and here p. 587, lines 9–18. Cf. King, 1987, p. 287 (English translation).
3   Noble, 1984, pp. 138–48.
4   Noble, 1984, p. 147; Hack, 2006–07, p. 420.
5   The letter was read out at the start of II Nicaea's second session: Mansi, vol. 12, col. 1056 ff. Discussed by Delogu, 2000, pp. 218–20, and now esp. Noble, 2009, pp. 149–56.
6   Mansi, vol. 12, col 1057A.
7   For the annointing see *LP*, *Vita Stephani*, 94, c. 27 (Davis, 2007, p. 63); and Kurze, 1895, *Annales regni francorum*, *ab anno* 754, p. 12. For Paul's early engagement with the politics of the Franco-papal friendship pact as Stephen II's envoy see *LP*, *Vita Stephani*, 94, cc. 5, 8, 49.
8   Angenendt, 1980; Noble, 1984, pp. 80–7 and ch. 8; McKitterick, 2000, pp. 15–6; McKitterick, 2004, ch. 6.
9   *LP*, *Vita Stephani*, 94, c. 52 (Davis, 2007, pp. 74–5); *LP*, *Vita Pauli*, 95, c. 3 (Davis, 2007, pp. 79–81). For analysis of these documents, see McKitterick, 2004, pp. 145–48, and Bauer, 2004, pp. 91–4.
10   Emerick, 2005.
11   Gundlach, 1892, *Codex Carolinus*, no. 14 on p. 511. For the date of the letter, see Hack, 2006–2007, p. 124.
12   De Rossi, 1878, p. 142, notice for the year 1458 in the *Cronaca di Niccolò della Tuccia viterbese*; De Blaauw, 1994, p. 639, n. 127.
13   Did the mid eighth-century chapel builders set out Pippin's memorial in a former *imperial* (Honorian) mausoleum on purpose? Cf. Bauer, 2004, p. 92.
14   Ewig, 1956, pp. 14–6.
15   Canella, 2006. The *Actus* left their trace in the *LP*, *Vita Silvestri*, 34, c. 2 (Davis, 2000, p. 14).
16   Liverani, 2008, pp. 165–72.
17   Ewig, 1956, pp. 29–37. Fuhrmann, 1968, *Constitutum Constantini*, pp. 56–98 (Latin text); Fried, 2007, pp. 129–37 (Latin text after Fuhrmann) and 138–45 (English translation).
18   For grants of "imperial power" and authority in the "West", see Fuhrmann, 1968, *Constitutum Constantini*, cc. 11 and 17, pp. 80–2 and 93–4.
19   Fuhrmann, 1973, pp. 273 ff.
20   For example, as Krautheimer, 1980, pp. 114–17, did in his famous *Rome, Profile of a City, 312–1308*. But recently, Fried, 2007, has argued that the forgery emerged in ninth-century, transalpine Francia, not eighth-century Rome, triggered by the rebellion of

Louis the Pious's three older sons in 833. See, now, Goodson and Nelson, 2010, who rebut Fried and reaffirm the consensus position.

21 On Leo III's Lateran Palace and Triclinium, see now Luchterhand, 1999a and 1999b; Bauer, 2004, chap. 5; and Luchterhand 2014.

22 The *cathedrae* or papal thrones in the apses of Rome's great patriarchal basilicas (the Lateran included) and titular churches helped present popes as high priests – as mediators of human salvation. The throne in Pope Leo III's new Triclinium did almost the same work, but it also helped stage the pope in his more temporal role as leader of the Republic of St. Peter, that political entity having quite replaced the old Byzantine Duchy of Rome in the course of the eighth century.

23 After the popes moved from the Lateran to the Vatican in the mid-fifteenth century, the former palace languished, then slowly became ruinous; Luchterhand, 1999b. What remained was mostly dismantled after 1585 when Pope Sixtus V built a new papal palace at the Lateran; Herklotz, 1995, pp. 178–79.

24 Luchterhand, 1999a, pp. 58 ff.; cf. Goodson and Nelson, 2010, pp. 460 ff.

25 Nicolò Alemanni, 1625. See Luchterhand, 1999a, figs. 5 and 6 (showing Alemanni's engravings of the main apse wall of the Triclinium before and after Cardinal Barberini built his aedicula).

26 See Luchterhand, 1999a, p. 62.

27 See n. 25 above.

28 The point has been argued persuasively by Herklotz, 1995 (see his summary on p. 183), Luchterhand, 1999a, and Bauer, 2004, pp. 109–15.

29 Alemanni, 1625; Herklotz, 1995, p. 179.

30 Luchterhand, 1999a, p. 62.

31 Goodson and Nelson, 2010, pp. 455 ff. They claimed cogently, for example, that the right-hand investiture scene from the Triclinium mosaic had a literary forerunner in the poem that Pope Hadrian I had had inscribed upon a splendid votive crown for St. Peter's at the Vatican; see Goodson and Nelson, 2010, pp. 457–58.

32 For example, ringingly in Goodson and Nelson, 2010, pp. 465–66. See also Nelson, 2007, who argued that Charlemagne's coronation in 800 marked a culmination; see esp. her conclusion, pp. 20–2.

33 Gregory of Tours, *History of the Franks* 2.31; Krusch and Levison, 1951, pp. 76–7.

34 E.g., not one other time in all ninety-nine letters sent by the Popes to the Frankish court between 739 and 791 and collected by order of Charlemagne in the *Codex Carolinus*; see Hack, 2006–07, pp. 409–24.

35 Noble, 1984, pp. 134–37.

36 See, esp. Noble, 1992, and Noble 2009.

37 See the letters of Popes Zacharius, Stephen II, Paul I, and the Antipope Constantine II in Gundlach, 1892, *Codex Carolinus*, nos. 3, 11, 39, 42, 43, 98, and 99. In four of these, nos. 11, 39, 42, and 98, King Pippin appears specifically as a "new Moses" or "new David". See Hack, 2006–2007, pp. 409–13.

38 Hack, 2006–2007, p. 411.

39 Bullough, 1991, p. 54.

40 Dümmler, 1895, no. 7, p. 503, lines 14–15; Story, 1999, pp. 1–3.

41 Boretius, 1883, no. 22, p. 54; Jong, 2005, pp. 115–16. For an English translation of the *Admonitio generalis*, see King, 1987, pp. 209–20.

42 Nees, 1985, pp. 681–90, esp. p. 687; Bullough, 2005, p. 145. Hadrian (772–795) had died before the gift could be delivered.

43 Dümmler, 1881, no. 4, pp. 91–2.

44 Dümmler, 1881, no. 2, pp. 360–63: "*David amat vates; vatorum est gloria David*". *Vates* = prophet, oracle, poet (divinely inspired); Godman, 1985, pp. 5 and 112–18.

45 Dümmler, 1895, no. 41, p. 84, lines 12–24.

46 Dümmler, 1881, no. 45, p. 257, line 12.

47 Dümmler, 1881, no. 25, p. 484, lines 29–30; Godman, 1985, pp. 11–3 and 150–52.

48 Gundlach, 1892, *Codex Carolinus*, no. 39, pp. 551–52, here 552, lines 12–14; Hack, 2006–2007, pp. 411–12.

49 Although the phrases, "new Chosen People" and "new Israel" do not, to my knowledge, actually appear in Carolingian written records, Theodulf did write in the early 790s that the Franks constituted 'a spiritual Israel'; cf. de Jong, 2005, p. 113.

50 Eckhardt, 1969, *Lex Salicae*, pp. 3–9.

51 Dümmler, 1895, no. 7, p. 503, line 1.

52 *Ibid.*, lines 6–7.

53 E.g., cap. 62, which begins, "So that peace, concord, and unanimity with every Christian people may exist . . ." (*Ut pax sit et concordia et unanimitas com omni populo christiano . . .*); Boretius, 1883, no. 22, p. 58; King, 1987, p. 214.

54 Kurze, 1895, p. 88.

55 See n. 45 above.

56 See still Kantorowicz, 1946, chap. 3 on the similarities between Carolingian and Byzantine acclamations of the ruler (esp. pp. 68–70 and nn. 15–18); and more recently, McCormick, 1990, chap. 9, "Frankish victory celebrations."

57 Van Dam, 2011, pp. 70–2, 80–118.

58 Dvornik, 1966, 644–45.

59 Mansi, vol. 7, cols. 169–71, cited by Dvornik, 1966, pp. 780–81. My translation follows that of Dvornik, but with revisions; the acclamation closes Session 6 of the council.

60 For more, see Cormack, 1985, pp. 9–140; Herrin, 1987, chap. 8; Cameron, 1992; Belting, 1994, chaps. 4–7; Haldon, 1997; and now Brubaker and Haldon, 2011, pp. 9–66.

61 In it God incarnate appears as if he were Zeus/Jupiter in Greco-Roman illusionistic style, at bust length, turned to the picture plane in a slight three-quarter view, shown holding a jeweled book in his left hand, and blessing with his right. A very early example of such an icon, an encaustic, still survives at the monastery of St. Catherine in Sinai, datable to the sixth or seventh century; see Weitzmann, 1976, cat. B.1 on pp. 13–15; Emerick, 1998, pp. 331–33.

62 Pertusi, 1959, *Expeditio Persica*, pp. 84–136 (Greek text with Italian translation); Belting 1994, Appendix 3A, pp. 496–97.

63 Breckenridge, 1959; Belting, 1994, pp. 134–39.

64 Brubaker and Haldon, 2011, chaps. 2–5; pp. 189–97 for the council of Heireia.

65 Moffat and Tall, 2012.

66 Chrysos, 1978.

67 Pirenne, 1937; see now, McCormick, 2001, Part I, pp. 25–119, whose research has confirmed this aspect of the famous Belgian historian's hypothesis that the seventh- and eighth-century Arab conquests closed off Euro-Mediterranean communication – or at least for a while (see below in the text).

68 See, for example, the classic study by Classen, 1965, and these "new classics," Noble, 1984, and Herrin, 1987; recently Smith, 2005, offered yet another cultural history of early-medieval Europe that started from the premise that a Latin-speaking Christendom proceeded or developed in isolation, or relative isolation from a Greek-speaking one.

69 Delogu, 2000.

70 See above, n. 5; Hadrian did not attend the council but sent representatives and this treatise instead.

71 See n. 68.

72 Kurze, 1895, *Annales regni francorum*, an. 757, p. 15.

73 Gundlach, 1892, *Codex Carolinus*, no. 45, p. 562, lines 10–12.

74 Kurze, 1895, *Annales regni francorum*, an. 781; de Boor, 1883, *Theophanis Chronographia*, pp. 455 and 463.

75 Starting with McCormick, 1987, pp. 207–20.

76 See especially McCormick, 1994a; McCormick, 1994b; McCormick, 1995, McCormick, 2001; McCormick, 2004.

77 McCormick, 1987, pp. 214–16.
78 McCormick, 2001, pp. 442–43 and map on p. 567 showing the new Mediterranean sea routes that emerged during early Carolingian times (750–800); Marseilles in the Rhone valley was thus linked via the Tyrrhenian southwestward to Tunis in North Africa, or going around Italy's boot and across the Adriatic, connected to Constantinople; in the Adriatic, new routes connected the newly founded trading center, Venice, to Constantinople and Alexandria.
79 McCormick, 2001, Appendix 4; this "register of Mediterranean communications, 700–900" comprises 828 distinct items; the work has gone far to change views of the early-medieval Mediterranean economy; see, e.g., Costambeys, Innes, and Maclean, 2011, pp. 358–78.
80 McCormick, 1994b; McCormick, 1995.
81 McCormick, 1994b.
82 See above, n. 50; also Kantorowicz, 1946, pp. 57–9; Bullough, 1985 (reprinted 1991), p. 125.
83 Eckhardt, 1969, *Lex Salica*, D and E, pp. 6–7.
84 I follow Eckhardt's punctuation, but present the lines in verse format following Kantorowicz, 1946, p. 59; the words in brackets = copyists' variants (see Eckhardt); my translation tries to follow Eckhardt's reconstruction of the text as closely as possible (my thanks to my colleague at Pomona College, Kenneth Wolf, for his help).
85 Or alternately, in the last verse: "And may Jesus Christ, Lord of lords, piously grant the joys of peace and times of happiness."
86 See n. 40 above.
87 See n. 2 above.
88 See still Ganshof, 1949, for analysis of the turning points in Charlemagne's reign.
89 Boretius, 1883, no. 20, pp. 46–51; tr. King, 1987, 203–5. Boretius noted the wide distribution of the Herstal Capitulary not only in Francia but in central and northern Italy as well.
90 Boretius, 1883, no. 22. pp. 52–62; tr. King, 1987, pp. 209–20.
91 Bullough, 1991, p. 141–42; Noble, 1992, pp. 55–60.
92 See above, nn. 41 and 53.
93 Boretius, 1883, no. 22, p. 54, lines 4–6; for the English translation, see King, 1987, p. 209.
94 The *rector* in question was modeled on the bishop described by Pope Gregory the Great in his widely read book, *Pastoral Care*; see Noble, 1992, pp. 59 and 67; and following him, de Jong, 2005, pp. 114–16.
95 I.e., Adoptionism; see Frassetto (2013), vol. 1, pp. 2–3, with bibliography.
96 Migne, 1863, vol. 101, col. 251 = Alcuin, *Libri IV adversus Elipandum* 1.16; *Libri IV* dates toward the end of Alcuin's life (804), according to Chazelle, 2001, p. 54 (I thank Kenneth Wolf for help with the translation).
97 Bullough, 1991; Bullough, 1999; and Bullough, 2005.
98 Bullough, 1999, p. 45.
99 Dümmler, 1895, no. 121, p. 177, line 2.
100 Dümmler, 1895, no. 129, p. 191, line 17.
101 Dümmler, 1895, no. 174, pp. 287–89.
102 The health of Christ's churches having deteriorated? Alcuin had heard with great alarm only months before he wrote these words that Pope Leo III had been attacked in the streets of Rome by Roman aristocrats. Everyone knew, moreover, that, in 797, Emperor Constantine VI had been summarily deposed in Constantinople by his own mother, Irene, who had blinded her son, then taken over sole rule as empress in a most unconventional manner.
103 Dümmler, 1895, no. 174, p. 288, lines 17–26; for the translation, King, 1987, p. 321.
104 Bullough, 1999, pp. 45–6.
105 See above, n. 52.

106 Freeman, 1998.

107 See above, n. 64.

108 Freeman, 1998, pp. 1–85.

109 McCormick, 1994b, pp. 135–36.

110 Theodulf spoke throughout the *Opus Caroli regis* in the voice of Charlemagne; as the title of the document states, the *Opus* was a royal manifesto; see Freeman, 1998, p. 24. In Vat. lat. 7207, the actual manuscript of the *Opus* read out in court before the king, marginal "Tironian notes" (scribal shorthand) record Charlemagne's comments approving key passages; see Freeman, 1998, pp. 3 and 48–50.

111 Freeman, 1998, *Opus Caroli* I, 17, p. 183, line 24: "*nos, qui spiritalis Israel sumus.*"

112 Psalm 25:5 in the Visigothic-Mozarabic Psalter (= Vulg. Psalm 25:5; New International Version Psalm 26:5); see Freeman, 1998, *Opus Caroli regis, Praefatio*, p. 101, lines 32–4: "*Unde et David, quod societas malorum fugierit, Deo quasi purum sacrificium offert, cum dicit: Odio habui congregationis/ malignantium et cum impiis non sedebo.*"

113 Noble, 2009, chaps. 4–5.

114 Noble, 1992 = an early version of chaps. 4–5 in the 2009 study making this point persuasively.

115 Noble, 2009, p. 180.

116 Noble, 2009, pp. 184–205.

117 Freeman, 1998, pp. 105–15; 115–20; 120–24; 124–28.

118 Freeman, 1998, p. 105, n. 61: the letter must have accompanied the Latin translation of Second Nicaea's *acta* that Theodulf was consulting.

119 The objectional phrase read: "Through Him, God, who coreigns with us . . ." *(Per eum, qui conregnat nobis Deus . . .)*

120 *Vulg.* Psalm 112 :5 = New International Version Psalm 113 :5.

121 Freeman, 1998, pp. 399–407.

122 *Historiae adversus paganos;* see Freeman, 1998, p. 404, lines 22–29.

123 Noble, 2009, pp. 198–99 for the summary of *Opus Caroli regis* 3.15, and the English translation.

124 The censure of Second Nicaea, however, did feature in public in the acts of Charlemagne's council of Frankfurt in 794; see Noble, 2009, pp. 169–80.

125 Nelson, 2007, pp. 20–22. See my discussion above, p. 138 (at n. 32).

126 As this chapter went to press, I discovered Hen, 2013, where the author swept over Frankish political rhetoric from the sixth through the ninth centuries, concluding that the image of Constantine was "significantly absent" or "marginalized" throughout.

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9 Dante, Constantine the Christian, and the illegitimate Donation of Constantine

Brenda Deen Schildgen

One of the legacies of Constantine that emerged during the European Middle Ages was the so-called Donation of Constantine. Dante Alighieri (1265–1321), in his *Commedia* (probably written between 1307 and 1320) called the *Constitutum Constantini*, "*Quella dote*," that is, " the dowry" which supposedly gave temporal power and possessions in the western Empire to the pope (Pope Sylvester, 314–335), who had purportedly cured Constantine of leprosy, an event that Dante also recalls in *Inferno*: "*Ma come Costantin chiese Silvestro/ . . . a guerir de la lebbre*" (As Constantine once summoned Pope Sylvester to cure his leprosy).[1] This chapter will examine Dante's political and ecclesiastical objections to the "purported" Constantinian Donation in his political treatise, the *Monarchia*, written in prose and contrast them to his polemic against it in his major poetic achievement, the *Commedia*. Dante attributes the contemporary corruption of the Church to the Donation of Constantine.

Dante includes an assault against this purported gift in all three canticles (*Inferno 19*, *Purgatorio* 32.124–29; *Paradiso* 20.55–60) to identify it as a major cause of the contemporary Church's corruption. By introducing Constantine's wrong choice in the circle of hell where church leaders are punished for simony (*Inferno* 19), repeating it in the sacralized narrative of Roman imperial history in *Paradiso* 6, and returning to it in the transfigured heaven of just rulers (*Paradiso* 20), Dante confronts the consequences of the mixing of political and ecclesiastical powers, a passionate concern that informs all of his mature writing, whether in his letters, his political treatise, the *Monarchia*, or in the *Commedia*.

In Book 3 of the *Monarchia*, Dante addresses the legitimacy and consequences of the so-called Donation philosophically and exegetically, but in the *Commedia*, he attacks its premises and consequences in poetry, adopting the rhetoric of the Revelation of John to upbraid ecclesiastical leadership and lament the demise of the moral authority of the papacy (*Inferno* 19) while pointing to Constantine's gift as its cause. Corrupted by power and money, the Church degrades Christianity, whose apostolic models, as Dante points out, did not seek wealth, but merely to follow "*Nostro Segnore*."[2] The position Dante adopts in the *Commedia*, developed philosophically in Book 3 of the *Monarchia*, remains consistent throughout his later work.[3] Dante, thus, applauds Constantine's conversion, but he nonetheless finds the first Christian emperor responsible for the degradation

of the institution of the Church resulting from "*quella dote*" (that dowry), that is, the so-called Donation of Constantine.[4]

Background

The oldest manuscript of the Donation (Bibliotheque Nationale, Paris, MS. Latin 2777), dating from the ninth century, like many later manuscripts, bears the title "*Constitutum domni Constantini imperatoris.*"[5] Written as though Constantine were the author and addressing Pope Sylvester, the specific text in the *Constitutum Constantini* that confers the power and possessions on the papacy, reads as follows:

> *Ad imitationem imperii nostri, unde ut non pontificalis apex vilescat, sed magis amplius quam terreni imperii dignitas et gloriae potentia decoretur, ecce tam palatium nostrum, ut prelatum est, quamque Romae urbis et omnes Italiae seu occidentalium regionum provintias, loca et civitates sepefato beatissimo pontifici, patri nostro Silvestrio, universali papae, contradentes atque relinquentes eius vel successorum ipsius pontificum potestati et ditioni firma imperiali censura per hanc nostram divalem sacram et pragmaticam constitutum decernimus disponendam atque iure sanctae Romanae ecclesiae concedimus permanendam.*[6]

> To correspond to our own Empire and so that the supreme Pontifical authority may not be dishonoured, but may rather be adorned with glorious power greater than the dignity of any earthly empire, behold, we give to the often-mentioned most holy Pontiff, our father Sylvester, the Universal Pope, not only the above-mentioned palace, but also the city of Rome and all the provinces, districts and cities of Italy and the western regions, relinquishing them to the authority of himself and his successors as Pontiffs by a definite Imperial grant. We have decided that this should be laid down by this our divine, holy and lawfully framed decree and we grant it on a permanent legal basis to the Holy Roman Church.[7]

The document was extant already more than a century, and either of Frankish or Roman origins, when its authority was applied for the first time in 1054 by Pope Leo IX as the schism that divided the eastern from the western churches was taking place. It constituted an assertion of the Roman bishop's authority. Proved a forgery in 1440 by the Italian reformer Lorenzo Valla,[8] originally the Donation probably had an anti-longobardic as well as anti-bizantine political function.[9] According to Bruno Nardi, this falsified document, nonetheless, had successfully entered into circulation and was included in the *Collectio Anselmo* in the tenth century and then in other collections of canons (Burcard of Worms, S. Ivone of Chartres, for example, and Gratian's *Decretum* in the twelfth century, among others).[10] Dante, in Book 3.11 of the *Monarchia*, his treatise on government, written in Latin prose and dated variously between 1309 and 1320, in

other words, while he was writing the *Commedia*, claims that Pope Hadrian had called on Charlemagne to defend him against the Longobards, and he assigns the legal premise for the emperor's role as defender of the Church to this time. In fact, Dante is inaccurate about the details (Pope Leo III was the pope and not Hadrian, and Irene was ruling in Constantinople, not Michael), but the *Constitutum Constantini* clearly by Dante's time had been accepted as a legitimate document by which the Church attempted to exercise power over the temporal order in the western Empire, at a moment when a powerful political theory of "pontifical imperialism," based on the premises of the Donation, was emerging.

Bernard of Clairvaux's *De Consideratione* (1090–1153) had expressed many of the concerns that Dante's *Monarchia* also raises.[11] Written in the twelfth century, it addresses the limits of clerical power in the secular domain. Turning to biblical texts (Christ's gift of keys [Matthew 16.19]; Christ's admonition that he had brought a sword, not peace [Matthew 10.34–35]; and Christ's command to "Render unto Caesar" [Matthew 22.21, Mark 12.17, and Luke 20.25]), Bernard denounces the theory of pontifical power over the state as a dangerous snare and argues ardently for the separation of powers. Focused on the Latin West, Bernard's justification for opposing these pontifical politics bears many similarities to the third book of the *Monarchia* where Dante develops a similar argument. Dante follows Bernard's argument that although the pope possessed "*plenitude potestatis*," the pope's power was over sin not property.[12] A number of papal documents from Dante's time, for example, Boniface VIII's *Unam Sanctam* (1302), Clement V's *Pastoralis cura* (1314), as well as Boniface VIII's *Clericis laicos* (1296), which had argued against the King of France's attempt to tax the Church, demonstrate the currency of the Donation's premises.

The Monarchia and the Donation

Dante does not doubt the authenticity of the document, but nonetheless, one of his aims in the *Monarchia* is to undermine its legitimacy by arguing against its fundamental premise that the emperor could confer this gift on the Church. His method is to apply Aristotelian logic and to challenge particular biblical exegeses that had been used to uphold papal temporal authority. The *Monarchia*, in fact, represents a radical critique of the Donation not because he argues that the *Constitutum Constantini* was a forgery as Valla would later, but because he proposes that its fundamental premises are illegitimate.[13] Because of Dante's direct confrontation with papal authority, controversy over dating the *Monarchia* is usually tied to Dante's own political career and the papal–imperial controversies of his time. For example, Dante's exile from Florence (1302) is often tied to early dates, to show how the views reflect his response to papal interference in Florence's affairs, and the removal of the papacy to Avignon (1302–1308), and later dates to Henry VII's entrance into Italy (1311–1313) and Dante's desire to restore an Augustan Roman Empire that would overcome all the civil and

political discord that dominated his age. Cassell dates the *Monarchia* at 1318 and argues it is a commentary on the "savage controversy" around Pope John XXII's refusal to recognize Ludwig IV as Holy Roman Emperor.[14] In her introduction to her edition and translation of the *Monarchia*, Shaw persuasively argues that the differences between the letters Dante certainly wrote during Henry's expedition (1311–1313) and the *Monarchia* make a much later dating of the treatise likely: in contrast to the exhortations of the letters, the treatise is philosophical discourse in which the poet proposes an idea. She dates it as late as 1319, when Dante was certainly working on *Paradiso*.[15]

Dante's rationale and method for his opposition to the Donation as developed in the *Monarchia*, like the treatise of Bernard of Clairvaux or the papal documents, is based on logic and scriptural interpretation. Blaming the corruption of both the temporal and religious order on the mixing of the two roles that stem from Constantine's gift, Dante explains:

> *Dicunt adhuc quidam quod Constantinus imperator, mundatus a lepra intercessione Silvestri tunc summi Pontificis, Imperii sedem, scilicet Romam, donavit Ecclesie cum multis aliis Imperii dignitatibus. Ex quo arguunt dignitates illas deinde neminem assummere posse nisi ab Ecclesia recipiat, cuius eas esse dicunt; et ex hoc bene sequeretur auctoritatem unam ab alia dependere, ut ipsi volunt.*[16]

> Again some people maintain that the Emperor Constantine, cured of leprosy by the intercession of Sylvester who was then supreme pontiff, made a gift to the church of the seat of empire (i.e. Rome) along with many other imperial privileges. From this they argue that since that time no one can take on those imperial privileges unless he receives them from the church, to whom (they say) they belong; and it would indeed follow from this that the one authority was dependent on the other, as they claim.

Furthermore, as Bruno Nardi shows in his still persuasive argument, Dante argues on logical grounds both against the supposed imperial decision and the papal acceptance.[17] As Dante stated it, "Constantine was not in a position to give away the privileges of empire, nor was the church in a position to accept them" (*Constantinus alienare non poterat Imperii dignitatem, nec Ecclesia recipere*).[18] Dante denies the pope this privilege because, based on reason, "nobody has the right to do things because of an office he holds which are in conflict with that office" (*nemini licet ea facere per offitium sibi deputatum que sunt contra illud offitium*).[19]

A rereading of scriptural passages used in papal documents to uphold arguments for papal supremacy in the temporal domain provides one weapon for Dante's argument to separate secular from religious powers. Here he applies an interpretive strategy combined with Aristotelian logic to counter allegorical readings of the same biblical passages used to support papal power and privilege over the temporal domain. The creation of the "two great lights" (sun and moon) at Genesis 1.16–18 that from as early as the fourth century had been

used to bolster the papal argument for supremacy over the temporal order, he
argues, is based on an allegorical misreading of scriptures:

> *Isti vero ad quos erit tota disputatio sequens, asserentes auctoritatem Imperii ab*
> *auctoritate Ecclesie dependere velut artifex inferior dependet ab architecto, pluribus et*
> *diversis argumentis moventur; que quidem de Sacra Scriptura eliciunt et de quibus-*
> *dam gestis tam summi Pontificis quam ipsius Imperatoris, nonnullam vero rationis*
> *indicium habere nituntur. Dicunt enim primo, secundum scripturam Geneseos, quod*
> *Deus fecit duo magna luminaria – luminare maius et luminare minus – ut alterum*
> *preesset diei et alterum preesset nocti: que allegorice dicta esse intelligebant ista duo*
> *regimina: scilicet spirituale et temporale. Deinde arguunt quod, quemadmodum luna,*
> *que est luminare minus, non habet lucem nisi prout recipit a sole, sic nec regnum*
> *temporale auctoritatem habet nisi prout recipit a spirtuali regimine.*[20]

> The whole of the argument which follows will therefore be addressed
> to those people who assert that the authority of the empire is dependent
> on the authority of the church in the same way as a builder is dependent
> on the architect. They are influenced by a number of different arguments,
> which they draw from the holy Scriptures and from certain actions both of
> the supreme Pontiff and the emperor himself; but they seek to have some
> support from reason on their side as well. Firstly they say, basing themselves
> on Genesis, that God created 'two great lights' – a greater light and a lesser
> light – so that one might rule the day and the other rule the night; these
> they took in an allegorical sense to mean the two powers, i.e. the spiritual
> and the temporal. Then they go on to argue that, just as the moon, which
> is the lesser light, has no light except that which it receives from the sun,
> in the same way the temporal power has no authority except that which it
> receives from the spiritual power.

Following Augustine's point about false allegories (*Monarchia* 3.3.13), Dante
quotes the learned doctor specifically to address interpretive strategies for his
own polemical purposes in the treatise. Thus, Dante adopts Augustine's argu-
ment about the "mystical sense," that not all "reported events" have a further
meaning,[21] and that finding meaning in scripture that was not intended also
will lead the reader astray.[22] Assuming Augustine's authority, therefore, Dante
suggests that two kinds of errors can occur when looking for the mystical sense
of texts: one creating a level of meaning when it does not exist and the other
creating a far-fetched meaning that is inadmissible.[23] To show that the papal
interpretation of the "two lights" is incorrect,[24] Dante argues that it is not the
words themselves that convey the meaning, but the "intention of the author,"
the "context" of the pericope in the Bible, and the metaphorical implications
for Dante and the fallacious arguments in the allegorical readings of the "sun"
and "moon."[25] Applying Aristotelian logic and a literal approach to Genesis, he
confronts the two lights' reading to undermine the papal position and the false

allegory. Aristotle provides the "accident" argument whereby Dante can label ecclesiastical and temporal power as human inventions, which could not exist before man existed. Second, based on logic and chronology, Dante argues that according to the order of creation as told in Genesis, the powers were created on the fourth day and man not until the sixth. In the state of innocence in the garden, man would not have needed these structures of law and order:

> *His itaque prenotatis, ad id quod superius dicebatur dico per interemptionem illius dicit quo dicunt illa duo luminaria typice importare duo hec regimina: in quo quidem dicto tota vis argumenti consistit. Quod autem ille sensus omnino sustineri non possit, duplici via potest ostendi. Primo quia, cum huiusmodi regimina sint accidentia quedam ipsius hominis, videretur Deus usus fuisse ordine perverso accidentia prius producendo quam proprium subiectum: quod absurdum est dicere de Deo: nam illa duo luminaria producta sunt die quarto et homo die sexto, ut patet in Lictera. Preterea, cum ista regimina sint hominum directiva in quosdam fines, ut infra patebit, si homo stetisset in statu innocentie in quo a Deo factus est, talibus directivis non indiguisset: sunt ergo huiusmodi regimina remedia contra infirmitatem peccati. Cum ergo non solum in die quarto peccator homo non erat, sed etiam simpliciter homo non erat, producere remedia fuisset otiosum: quod est contra divinam bonitatem. . . . Non igitur dicendum est quod quarto die Deus hec duo regimina fecerit.*[26]

Having made these preliminary observations, with reference to the point made earlier I now proceed to refute that claim of theirs that those two lights allegorically signify these two kinds of power. The whole force of their argument lies in this claim. That this interpretation is completely untenable can be demonstrated in two ways. Firstly, given that these two kinds of power are accidental properties of man, God would seem to have perverted the natural order by producing accidents before their subject, which is an absurd claim to make about God; for those two lights were created on the fourth day and man on the sixth, as is clear from the Bible. Further, given that those two powers guide men towards certain ends, as we shall see presently, if man had remained in the state of innocence in which he was created by God, he would have had no need of such guidance; such powers are thus remedies for the infirmity of sin. Therefore since on the fourth day man was not only not a sinner but he did not even exist, it would have been pointless to produce remedies; and this is against divine goodness. . . . It therefore cannot be maintained that on the fourth day God created these two powers.

Innocent III had used the "two lights" analogy in a letter addressed to Acerbo Falseroni and the Tuscan nobility in 1198, in which he argued that the nobility were the moon, which receives its light from the sun. By Dante's time, the analogy was well-established and Boniface VIII and Clement V re-affirmed the analogy in the argument for papal supremacy.[27]

But Dante sets out to dismantle the strained allegory and when he examines the passage logically, he can conclude:

> *Sic ergo dico quod regimen temporale non recipit esse a spirituali, nec virtutem que est eius auctoritatis, nec etiam operationem simpliciter; sed bene ab eo recipit ut virtuosius operetur per lucem gratie quam in celo et in terra benedictio summi Pontificis infundit illi. Et ideo argumentum peccabat in forma, quia predicatum in conclusione non est extremitas maioris, ut patet; procedit enim sic: luna recipit lucem a sole qui est regimen spirituale; regimen temporale est luna; ergo regimen temporale recipit auctoritatem a regimine spirituali . . . in predicato vero conclusionis 'auctoritatem': que sunt res diverse subiecto et ratione, ut visum est.*[28]

> . . . the temporal realm does not owe its existence to the spiritual realm, nor its power (which is its authority), and not even its function in an absolute sense; but it does receive from it the capacity to operate more efficaciously through the light of grace which in heaven and on earth the blessing of the supreme Pontiff infuses into it . . . for [the argument] runs like this: the moon receives its light from the sun, which is the spiritual power; the temporal power is the moon; therefore the temporal power receives its authority from the spiritual power.

What Dante rejects adamantly is that "authority" comes to the temporal from the spiritual domain. Inserting his own ample allegorical reading that stretches the original text to suit his conclusion, he makes the moon the temporal power that receives spiritual light, not authority, from the spiritual power, the sun.

In another rereading of scripture, Dante addresses how Genesis 29.34–5, the births of Levi and Judah, have been misinterpreted as a prefiguration of the separation of powers and the superior position of priestly authority. Dante dismisses this as false logic and as a gross misreading of scripture based on false allegories and analogies that erroneously equate birth order with authority:

> *De femore Iacob figura horum duorum regimum, quia Levi et Iudas: quorum alter fuit pater sacerdotii, alter vero regiminis temporalis. Deinde sic arguunt ex hiis: sicut se habuit Levi ad Iudam, sic se habet Ecclesia ad Imperium: Levi precessit Iudam in nativitate, ut patet in Lictera: ergo Ecclesia precedit Imperium in auctoritate. Et hoc vero de facili solvitur: nam cum dicunt quod Levi et Iudas, filii Iacob, figurant ista regimina . . . nam aliud est 'auctoritas' et aliud 'nativitas' . . .*[29]

> . . . from the loins of Jacob there came forth a prefiguration of these two powers, in the persons of Levi and Judah: the one was the father of the priesthood, the other of temporal power. From this they go on to argue: the church stands in the same relation to the empire as Levi stood to Judah; Levi preceded Judah in birth, as we read in the biblical account; therefore the church precedes the empire in authority. Now this point

too is easily refuted, for when they say that Levi and Judah, the sons of Jacob, prefigure those powers . . . I say again . . . "authority" is one thing and "birth" another.

Arguing against misguided biblical allegories and biblical pre-figurations that had been deployed to establish papal supremacy, Dante then moves to using the Bible as history, for "God's vicar" was claiming its authority over the temporal order as analogous to God having chosen Samuel as priest to appoint and remove Saul as king of Israel, which Dante contradicts by asserting that Samuel, on this occasion, was acting as an emissary or messenger of God's command, not as a precedent for other cases.[30] Here Dante takes the Bible as a legitimate historical precedent to argue that a wrong interpretation had supported papal claims to authority. Just the contrary, he argues, Samuel's selection of Saul as king was a special case in which he had functioned as God's messenger. He also confronts the papal argument that the gifts from the three Magi to Jesus (Matthew 2.1–13), specifically gold and frankincense, signify "God is the Lord of spiritual and temporal things; the supreme Pontiff is God's vicar; therefore he is the lord of spiritual and temporal things." This Dante contests logically, using Aristotle as his tutor on syllogistic reasoning to argue that it is not possible for Peter's successor to be equivalent to divine authority.[31]

To sustain his position against the premises of the Donation, Dante also employs some of the same quotes from the New Testament that Boniface VIII had used in *Unam sanctam* (1302) and in his *Allegacio* (1303), which were later cited by Clement V to bolster the Church's argument that only spiritual authority can judge earthly power, or that the spiritual authority has precedence over all other forms of authority. Boniface VIII's *Unam Sanctam*, which Dante takes to task in Book 3 of the *Monarchia*, represents a resurgence of a pontifical imperialist theory against which Bernard had argued. In this document, Boniface asserts that God ordained the Church as ruler of the temporal domain and that temporal authority should be subject to spiritual power.

Dante's criticism of the misuse of scriptures that could lead to incorrect interpretations (based on Augustine's expressed concerns) seems specifically to attack Boniface VIII's very short bull, the *Unam sanctam*, which develops its argument from the authority of scripture. Allegorical readings dominate the tract that argues for the unity of all Christians in one Church. No doubt with Philip IV (Philippe le Bel), the King of France, as the primary recipient, Boniface attacks the notion of the temporal autonomy of monarchs, using scripture to argue that the Church is the institution that has earthly jurisdiction over kings and rulers. Thus, beginning with a quotation from the Song of Songs (6.9), "One is my dove, my perfect one" (*Una est columba mea, perfecta mea*), Boniface claims this refers to the Church with one Lord, just as Noah's Arc refers to the one Church. On Jesus' command to Peter to "Feed my sheep" (John 21.17), Boniface argued, all sheep are committed to Peter and his successors. Arriving at the "two swords" of Luke 22.38 that suggested two orders, Boniface maintains one sword referred to the temporal (material) and the other to

ecclesiastical (spiritual) power, but both belonged to Peter and his successors.[32] With more than ten biblical citations and references in a two-page tract, Boniface uses all the quotations to support the main point, "Therefore we declare, state, define and pronounce that it is altogether necessary to salvation for every human creature to be subject to the Roman Pontiff" (*Porro subesse Romano Pontifici omni humanae creaturae declaramus, dicimus, diffinimus et pronunciamus omnino esse de necessitate salutis*).[33] Dante, however, recalling Matthew's recounting of Christ's words to Peter, "And whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven" (Matthew 16.19), posits that the Church cannot base its claim to supremacy over all matters on this foundation:

> *Ex quo arguunt successorem Petri Omnia de concessione Dei posse tam ligare quam solver; et inde inferunt posse solver leges et decreta Imperii, atque leges et decreta ligare pro regimine temporali* . . .[34]

> On this they base their argument that God has granted to Peter's successor the power to bind and loose all things; and they infer from this that he can "loose" the laws and decrees of the empire, and "bind" laws and decrees in the place of the temporal power . . .

Where does Dante find grounds for this argument? Pitting one biblical quote against another to take on the illogical consequences of the Church's position, he recalls that Christ also said to Peter, "I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven," that is, "I shall make you gate-keeper of the kingdom of heaven."[35] To counter the Church, Dante turns here to a linguistic argument, an essential feature of Augustinian biblical hermeneutics,[36] for the "whatsoever" (*quodcunque*) in the quotation he takes to mean "all that" (*omne quod*), that is, "all that pertains to this office you shall have the power to loose and bind," thus limiting the "whatsoever" to the range of reference, in this case "the office of the keys of the kingdom of heaven." This Dante accepts, but categorically denies that this phrase could possibly have applied to Peter's or his successors' power to "loose and bind the decrees or laws of the empire."[37]

Using the false allegory accusation again, Dante systematically exposes Boniface VIII's argument about Peter's words spoken to Christ in Luke when he says, "Behold here are two swords."[38] The Church had argued that the two swords allegorically referred to the two powers, which Peter was to possess wherever he found himself. According to Dante, the Church argued thus:

> *unde arguunt illa duo regimina secundum auctoritatem apud successorem Petri consistere. Et ad hoc dicendum per interemptionem sensus in quo fundant argumentum. Dicunt enim illos duos gladios, quos assignavit Petrus, duo prefata regimina importare.*[39]

> . . . that those two powers as far as their authority is concerned reside with Peter's successor. This too must be answered by demolishing the allegorical

interpretation on which they base their argument. For they claim that those two swords alluded to by Peter signify the two powers [temporal and spiritual].

Dante exposes this already very tenuous allegorical interpretation by claiming that the Church's position is at odds with Christ's intention. Adopting another feature of Augustine's hermeneutics,[40] he argues that one must examine the context of the quotation, for he writes that this was spoken on the day of the Last Supper, that twelve apostles were present, and they were reminded of what they needed when setting out. In the time of trials just beginning, Jesus tells them, they may sell a cloak to buy a sword (Luke 22.36), meaning all twelve would need a sword. Thus, he proposes that the context of the reference to "two swords" opens up the possibility for many other interpretations.

But Dante also uses scripture literally to undermine the Church's claim to temporal authority. Quoting from Matthew to appropriate Jesus' words to his disciples as he charged them with their mission, "Provide neither gold, nor silver, nor brass in your purses, nor scrip for your journey" (Matthew 10.9–10), Dante concludes, "the church was utterly unsuited to receive temporal things because of the command which expressly forbade it" (*Sed Ecclesia omnino indisposita erat ad temporalia recipienda per preceptum prohibitivum expressum*).[41]

As the authoritative text to which Dante turns to support his arguments, the Bible proves its malleability and its openness to diverse interpretations. If nothing else, the quotations Dante and the popes cull from the Bible to sustain their arguments prove Jerome's point in his letter to Paulinus on the translation of the Bible: "We heed not what we should find, but what we seek. It is easy to form all manner of shapes from pliable wax" (*mollis cera*), which Jerome likens to the words of scripture, citing the apostle Paul's own words on carnal versus spiritual reading.[42] Scripture, used as proof text, demonstrates its simultaneous pliability and unreliability.

The *Commedia* and the Donation

Although Dante was likely working on both the *Monarchia* and the *Commedia* during the same period, and the rhetorical intention and polemical position as regards the Donation are the same, the differences in genre allow Dante to explore its intrinsic problems through diverse discursive means.[43] While the *Monarchia* relies on logic and reason, as well as biblical hermeneutics employed argumentatively, in the *Commedia*, he could forgo argumentation in favor of drama, allegorical representation, and prophetic utterance. *Inferno* 19, where we see the simonists punished eternally, hosts many of the popes from Dante's lifetime, even if they were not yet dead by the dramatic date (1300) of the poem. In this context of Dante's eternal damnation of the popes of his times, we also find the first reference to Constantine and to the Donation that purportedly gave temporal power to the Roman papacy: "*Ahi, Costantin, di quanto mal fu matre, / non la tua conversion, ma quella dote / che da te prese il primo ricco patre!*"

(Ah Constantine, of how much ill was mother, not your conversion, but that dowry which the first rich Father took from you!). Here Dante addresses Constantine, lauding his conversion, but calling the Donation a dowry that the pope, the first rich father, took from him.[44] Among these simonist popes, we find Nicholas III (pope from 1277–1280), who prophecies that Boniface VIII (1294–1303), the pope partially responsible for Dante's exile from Florence in 1302, would join him and would be followed by Clement V (1305–14), "*un pastor sanza legge*" (a shepherd without laws),[45] whose most grievous error, besides his political alliance with Philippe le Bel of France (Phillip IV), was to move the papacy to Avignon (*Inferno* 19. 85–87). When Dante calls Constantine's gift a female dowry taken by a Father, that is, the Church, in this context of Church corruption, he reverses conventions perhaps to highlight how much against nature, reason, and history he considers Constantine's acts. Constantine, as mother of the gift that endowed the rich father (the pope), and paralleling his reversal of history by moving the seat of the Empire to the East, becomes female when he gives his gift to the pope. When we also incorporate the idea of dowry here, the metaphor becomes even more tangled because a female endows a male.

In another allusion to Constantine, in *Paradiso* 20, the figurative Eagle in the sky that represents a transfigured Roman *imperium*, identifies the just rulers who now find places in heaven. But he grudgingly says of Constantine:

> *L'altro che segue, con le leggi e meco,*
> *sotto buona intenzion che fé mal frutto,*
> *per cedere al pastor si fece greco:*
> *ora conosce come il mal dedutto*
> *dal suo bene operar non li è nocivo,*
> *avvegna che sìa 'l mondo indi distrutto*[46]

> The next who follows, with a good intention which bore bad fruit, made himself Greek, together with the laws and me, in order to give place to the Pastor. Now he knows how the evil derived from his good action does not harm him, even though the world should be destroyed thereby

In this case, once again, Dante considers Constantine's decision to give his place to the papacy as stemming from "*buona intenzion*" and as a "*bene operar*," which he did not know would reap "*mal frutto*" (bad fruit) and eventually, according to Dante, even threaten to destroy the world. Dante here links not just the Donation with the moral depravity of the Roman clergy, but states that Constantine's move East also produced evil, thus re-affirming what he has the Emperor Justinian say in *Paradiso* 6, when he reviews the history of the Empire. Here Justinian, without mediation, for he speaks throughout the canto, opens by identifying Constantine's move East as "*contr' al corso del ciel*" (counter to the course of the heavens).[47]

Dante's prophetic exhortations against the gift all feature the consequences of Constantine's turn to the East and supposed simultaneous ceding of power

to the papacy. In the scene that occurs at the end of *Purgatorio*, on the other hand, Dante presents the history of the Church in an allegorical drama of radical descent that follow from Constantine's dowry. The triumphant pageant of the sacred narrative leaves behind the chariot (of the Church) to experience a chain of seven destructive events. First come the Roman persecutions, followed by the early heresies (as a lean and hungry fox), and third the eagle (symbol of empire) feathers the Church:

> *Poscia per indi ond'era pria venuta,*
> *L' aguglia vidi scender giù ne l'arca*
> *Del carro e lasciar lei di sé pennuta;*
> *E qual esce di cuor che si rammarca,*
> *Tal voce uscì del cielo e cotal disse:*
> *"O navicella mia, com' mal se carca!"*[48]

> Then, from there whence it had come before, I saw the eagle descend into the body of the chariot and leave it feathered with its plumage. And a voice such as issues from a heart that is afflicted came from Heaven, and it said, "O little bark of mine, how ill are you laden!"

Here referring to the Donation as a suffering that afflicted even the heavens, Dante identifies it with the very strong word "*mal*" or evil. The fourth affliction, the division of the eastern and the western Empire, following as part of the allegorical drama, in fact implies that Constantine's move East covered the chariot of the church "*forse con intenzion sana e benigna*" (perhaps with benign intent) with temporal power.[49] In the fifth affliction, a dragon threatens and divides the car, and this is believed by some critics to be a major schism, which in the first millennium could be Islam. The sixth witnesses the bark becoming the seven-headed beast of the Apocalypse of John, as the Church emerges as an allegorical representation of the seven deadly sins. The final descent presents the Avignon capture of the papacy, the "*puttana*" (whore) who sits on the back of the seven-headed beast with her giant (or France) at her side to guard her from running off with anyone. The savagery of this dramatized revelation expresses Dante's rage against the corruption of the contemporary Church, but at the same time, it also re-enforces his argument, developed in Book 3 of the *Monarchia*, that had connected the Donation, which allowed for the mixing of temporal and spiritual powers, to the descent of the Church and its current crisis.

Conclusion

When Dante turns to the question of the separation of powers, basically the subject of Book 3 of the *Monarchia*, using reason to argue his point, he inserts an Augustinian wedge to distinguish *evangelium* from *imperium*:

> *Amplius, si Ecclesia virtutem haberet auctorizandi romanum Principem, aut haberet*
> *a Deo, aut a se, aut ab Imperatore aliquot aut ab universe mortalium assensu, vel*

saltem ex illis prevalentium: nulla est alia rimula, per quam virtus hec ad Ecclesiam manare potuisset; sed a nullo istorum habet: ergo virtutem predictam non habet.[50]

Moreover, if the church had the power to confer authority on the Roman Prince, it would have it either from God, or from itself, or from some emperor, or from the consent of all men or at least the most exceptional among them; there is no other channel by which this power could have flowed to the church; but it does not derive it from any of these; therefore it does not have the said power.

Here, he argues to separate the powers, but maintains that both receive authority from God. Dividing temporal from spiritual value, he argues that each possesses its own area of responsibility, for the former can provide political stability and "happiness" for citizens outside the economy of salvation. In Dante's effort to develop an argument to separate the powers and establish the independent authority of the supreme monarch, he does not mean to create two separate states. Rather he argues the need for a universal monarch, for universal well-being, for Roman priority, and ultimately for a necessary filial reverence on the part of the temporal ruler towards Peter's successor: "Let Caesar therefore show that reverence towards Peter which a firstborn son should show his father, so that, illumined by the light of paternal grace, he may the more effectively light up the world."[51]

Thus Dante separates Church from State, not because he believes that the temporal order is unredeemable, but because he believes that the means to redeem the temporal order in his disordered times is to separate ecclesial from secular powers, an inter-tangling that he believed had been created and supported by the so-called Donation of Constantine.

Notes

1 *Inferno* 27.94–95.
2 *Inferno* 19.90–93.
3 As argued in Nardi, 1944, pp. 109–59; Maccarrone, 1955, pp. 71–111, 137–41; Davis, 1957; Nardi, 1960, pp. 151–313; Maffei, 1964; Manselli, 1965, pp. 115–35; Pagliaro, 1966, pp. 253–91; Vallone, 1971, pp. 173–201; rept. 1988, pp. 50–78; Gonnet, 1975, pp. 325–37; Ascoli, 2008, pp. 229–73; Park, 2012, pp. 67–159.
4 *Inferno* 19.116.
5 Fuhrmann, 1968.
6 Fuhrmann, p. 90.
7 Trans. Ehler and Morrall, 1967, pp. 21–2.
8 Cassell, 2004, pp. 9, 43, 62, 98–100, passim.
9 Maffei, 1964, pp. 6–13.
10 Nardi, 1944, pp. 109–10.
11 Botterill, 1992.
12 Cassell, 2004, p. 278; Masseron, 1953, pp. 223–52.
13 Cristaldi, 2000, pp. 7–65.
14 Cassell, 2004, pp. 3–4.
15 Shaw, 1995, xxvii, xxxviii, xl.
16 *Monarchia* 3.10.1.
17 Nardi, 1944, pp. 136–59.

18 *Monarchia* 3.10.4.
19 *Monarchia* 3.10.5.
20 *Monarchia* 3.4.1–3.
21 Augustine, *De civitate Dei* 16.2.
22 Augustine, *De doctrina Christiana* 1.36–37.
23 *Monarchia* 3.4.7–8; also on this, Shaw, 1995, xxvii.
24 Nardi, 1960, pp. 185–207; Kantowicz, 1951, pp. 217–31; Cassell, 2001, pp. 1–26; Cassell, 2004, pp. 86–90.
25 Smalley, 1941, pp. 239–40.
26 *Monarchia* 3.4.12–16.
27 Cassell, 2004, pp. 86–9.
28 *Monarchia* 3.4.20–22.
29 *Monarchia* 3.5.1–3.
30 *Monarchia* 3.6.1–4.
31 *Monarchia* 3.7.2–3.
32 *Unam sanctam, Corpus Iuris Canonici*, vol. 2, col. 1245.
33 *Corpus Iuris Canonici* 2, col. 1246; trans. Wood, 1967, p. 69.
34 *Monarchia* 3.8.2.
35 *Monarchia* 3.8.9.
36 *De doctrina Christiana* 2.10–13.
37 *Monarchia* 3.8, 9–11.
38 *Monarchia* 3.9.1, quoting Luke 22.38.
39 *Monarchia* 3.9.1–2.
40 *De doctrina Christiana* 3.2.
41 *Monarchia* 3.10.14.
42 Lindberg, 1978, pp. 75–6.
43 See Holmes, 1997, pp. 46–57, who dates both at 1312–1314; see also Ascoli, 2008, p. 230, note 2, for the most current overview of the debates about dating and the relationship between such speculation and the political events that are tied to Dante's views, or to Dante's poetic and political development.
44 *Inferno* 19.115–17.
45 *Inferno* 19.83.
46 *Paradiso* 20.55–60.
47 *Paradiso* 6.1–2.
48 *Purgatorio* 32.124–29.
49 *Purgatorio* 32.138.
50 *Monarchia* 3.14.1.
51 *Monarchia* 3.16.18.

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10 "If possession be poison"

Endowment, sophistic, and the legacy of Constantine in late medieval England

Jennifer Jahner

In 1440, Lorenzo Valla famously unmasked the Donation of Constantine as the "bad penny" of Church historiography, a false coin masquerading as good currency. "We detect spurious coins," Valla argued of biblical apocrypha, "we pick them out and reject them; shall we not detect spurious teaching? Shall we retain it, confuse it with the genuine and defend it as genuine?"[1] Valla was neither the first nor the last writer in the fifteenth century to condemn the Donation of Constantine as specious; Nicholas of Cusa preceded him, Reginald Pecock followed him, and by the end of the century the document confirming Constantine's magnificent gift to Pope Sylvester would prove destined for the ranks of famous forgeries. That early humanism should put to rest the myth of the Donation as one of its first iconoclastic gestures has proven a neat – indeed, too neat – encapsulation of the "break" that supposedly attends the transition of medieval to early modern.[2] Here, philology unmasks forgery, skepticism counters timeworn creed, and the Donation collapses, a harbinger of future idols to fall during the Reformation.

Valla's metaphor of the bad argument as bad coinage calls to mind the etymology of the term "specious" itself, from the Latin *speciosus*, meaning beautiful or fair-seeming, and *species*, denoting form, shape, or outer appearance. Questions of speciousness – which is to say, questions of beauty, appearance, and outward form – stood central to the debate over the Donation long before Valla introduced doubts over its textual authenticity.[3] Indeed, in England, arguments over Church endowment turned precisely on endowment itself as a pleasing form and "beautiful show." For supporters of the papacy, that beauty radiated outward as a fitting sign of God's power; for critics of endowment, the glittering show masked the fatal inner corruption of a Church that had long ago turned away from its original apostolic imperatives. Together, the emperor and his putative *donatio* crystallized the fraught possibilities of mingling the spiritual and temporal swords. By the late fourteenth century in England, however, such "medlin" of lay and ecclesiastical interests had produced, in the words of one Middle English writer, a host of "men of duble astate," or double estate, who might well go by the names of "hermafodrita or ambidexter."[4]

These two epithets – both taking their origins in "doubled" bodies – speak to the complicated role that corporeality, allegorical as well as historical, played

in the late medieval literature surrounding Constantine and the Donation. Beginning with the apocryphal story of Constantine's own miraculous cure from leprosy, tropes of bodily illness, disfigurement, and transformation feature prominently in discussions of Church temporalities.[5] Indeed, many late medieval commentators deemed the Donation itself a poison, infiltrating and corrupting the body of the Church. The debates surrounding the Donation turned on labile metaphoric substitutions such as these: physical bodies and corporate bodies, material wealth and spiritual health, all formed part of a larger symbolic economy that attempted to make sense of a worldly Church, arrayed in the borrowed splendor of empire while still cleaving to its heritage in the heavenly Jerusalem. At the most foundational level, the Donation embodied this contradiction in ecclesiastical identity and purpose. It represented not just a transfer of wealth and territory to the Church but a transfer of imperial economy – of gold, estates, and their accompanying revenues. For late medieval poets and polemicists, Constantine's vexed bequest changed the Church irrevocably, not simply by endowing it with imperial sway but by changing (or converting) the very representative structures of Christian ethics.

This chapter examines how late medieval writers understood Constantine's Donation as a donation – that is, as a gift, with all the moral and economic complexities that attended the transfer of real and moveable property from one person to another or from one person to an institution. By the late fourteenth century, the historical Constantine and the mythographical Constantine of the Donation text had merged inextricably. The image of Constantine available to late medieval readers derived primarily from the hagiographical account of sixth-century *Actus Sancti Silvestri*, in which Pope Sylvester cures the emperor of leprosy before baptizing him as a Christian, and from the Donation text copied in Gratian's *Decretum*, which, building on the *Actus*, asserted Constantine's gift of his western Empire to the Roman bishops.[6] In both of these accounts, Constantine stands as a pivotal, and hence also somewhat liminal, figure within Church history: though clearly one of Christianity's most important converts, Constantine also retained in the imaginations of many medieval interpreters a certain problematic "paganism," emblematized in the lavishness of his gold, which was thought to have flowed from pagan mines, through Constantine's coffers, and into Christian churches. The Donation thus crystallized a problem endemic to the incorporation of Christianity: namely, that the very legal and economic measures that accorded the Church institutional longevity and jurisdictional integrity also created its dependence on external sources of revenue and legitimacy.

A converted pagan, Constantine encapsulated both the promise of universal Christian dominion and the threat of impurity that accompanied such projects of diffusion and growth. In England, these anxieties found trenchant expression in the Wycliffite controversy that convulsed lay-ecclesiastical relations from the late fourteenth into the sixteenth centuries. Clerical disendowment formed one of the major planks of the Wycliffite "heresy," as it emerged in the scholarship of the Oxford theologian John Wyclif and entered lay practice as a popular

religious movement.[7] As with other crucial points of Lollard belief – including vernacular translation of the Bible, elimination of confession and excommunication, and rejection of the cult of the saints – disendowment arguments aimed to return the Church to its primitive state, before hierarchy and property polluted its mission.[8] In a document known as the *Twelve Conclusions of the Lollards*, reportedly fixed to the doors of Westminster Hall during the January-February Parliament of 1395, the unnamed authors open with an unflattering description of the English Church as "blind and leprous," its clergy inflated by pride and corrupt living: "When the church of England began to rot with temporalities in the manner of her stepmother, the great Church of Rome, and churches were destroyed by annexation to diverse places," the writers contend, "faith, hope, and charity began to flee out of our church."[9] Now Pride, with his "miserable genealogy" of deadly sins, challenges the Church for the right to its heritage. A "stepmother," Rome constitutes no natural mother of English ecclesiology but rather a second, foreign line in the genealogy, providing entry to an even more nefarious family, the deadly sins. As we will see, temporalities provided what Middle English writers called the "colour," or the disguise, by which sin entered into the Church. Semantically, the term encompassed both the physical property of a substance and the rhetorical embellishment of an argument, often for manipulative purposes.[10] It was "*crownis in caracteris*" (crowns/tonsures in characters) wrote the anonymous pamphleteers of the *Twelve Conclusions*, that provided "the livery of Antichrist, brought into Holy Church to color idleness."[11]

As the wordplay on royal coinage and monastic tonsure suggests, reformist attacks on ecclesiastical temporalities made vibrant use of figurative language to establish a direct correspondence between material wealth and spiritual corruption. According to the author of the *The Lantern of Light*, the "fiend" and his associates "encumbered Christ's church with much worldly muck and overlaid our mother with temporal possessions."[12] Another Wycliffite preacher likened temporalities to the tares of Matthew 13, sewn with the good wheat. "Through the endowment of the Church and the negligence of the prelates," he castigates, "man's law is meddled with God's law. And these double man's laws, the pope's and the emperor's, keep divine law from flourishing, and strangle the Church, as tares strangle corn, and hinder it from thriving."[13] For these writers, Satan had worked through the unknowing instruments of Constantine and Sylvester, whose reciprocal exchange of gifts produced the "meddling" that so troubled late medieval Christians.

Though the criticisms of these later writers rested on the shaky historical foundations provided by the Donation text, their supposition that unprecedented wealth "entered" the body of the Church in the fourth century was not wrong. Historically, as Peter Brown has recently traced, Constantine's reign inaugurated a profound shift in the visibility and economic power of the Christian faith.[14] The Edict of Milan ensured that Christians not only received license to practice their faith but to practice it in their places of worship – both those belonging to individuals and those belonging to "the corporate society, that is, their churches."[15] Restored to Christian use with the 313 Edict, these

"living temples," in the words of Eusebius, would enjoy the benefits of both imperial largesse and lay benefaction in the decades to come.[16] The *Liber Pontificalis* records ambitious new building projects begun at the emperor's bequest, as well as some of the *dona* he offered as adornments: mosaics, lamps, chalices, candlesticks, goblets, and bowls fashioned from precious metals and stones, as well as incense, spices, balsam and papyrus.[17] The *Liber* documents, too, the transfer of estates, with accompanying revenues, to the use of the Roman bishops.[18] Between the years 314 and 336, Georges Depeyrot estimates, Constantine endowed the Roman church with nearly 1,000 kilograms of gold; 5,300 kilograms of silver; and estate revenues worth more than 32,000 solidi.[19]

As Depeyrot suggests, some of this newly endowed Christian wealth derived from confiscated pagan wealth, alienated from temples after the conquest of Licinius's empire in 324. This "sudden influx of gold" from eastern mines and temples helped to establish the Constantinian solidus as "a viable, empire-wide, standard currency," though later writers would accuse the solidus of encouraging a kind of idolatry not unlike that which Eusebius condemned in his *Life of Constantine*.[20] The author of *De rebus bellicis*, writing later in the fourth century, would identify Constantine's adoption of the gold standard as a primary mechanism of economic disparity and social unrest:

> When the gold and silver and the huge quantity of precious stones which had been stored away in the temples long ago reached the public, they enkindled all men's possessive and spendthrift instincts. And while the expenditure of bronze itself – which, as I have said, had been stamped with the heads of kings – had seemed already vast and burdensome enough, yet from some kind of blind folly there ensued an even more extravagant passion for spending gold, which is considered even more precious. This store of gold meant that the houses of the powerful were crammed full and their splendour enhanced to the destruction of the poor, the poorer classes being held down by force.[21]

Gold drives social schism and oppression; it amasses unevenly in the houses and storerooms of the wealthy; it creates scarcity even as it offers the remedy for scarcity. In short, the writer advises his imperial dedicatee, one would do well to "ponder upon those famous kingdoms of antique poverty, which had learned to till the fields and abstain from riches: remember how their uncorrupted frugality commends them to all history with honour and praise."[22]

Versions of this same criticism would attach to Constantine's reign throughout the Middle Ages, though with the Donation itself serving as the mechanism for the alienation and redistribution of wealth. Drafted some four centuries after Constantine's lifetime, the Donation vastly exaggerated the nature and extent of imperial gift giving but not the fact of endowment itself. Rather, it compressed into one ceremonial translation the century-long process by which wealth and jurisdictional enfranchisement accrued to the Roman episcopacy.[23] Even for those medieval commentators who approved of this legal

enfranchisement – and the vast majority did – the coupling of jurisdictional empowerment with goods and estate revenues provoked concern. By the late twelfth century, a new element attached itself to the traditional narrative of the Donation drawn from the *Actus Sancti Sylvestri*. Gerald of Wales describes how, after Constantine publically declared Sylvester the recipient of his empire, the voice of the "ancient enemy" announced to the assembled, "Today I have poured venom into the church."[24] This dramatic, supernatural intrusion appears regularly in subsequent accounts of the Donation. Roughly contemporary with Gerald, the German court poet Walther von der Vogelweide composed a lyric in which an angel loudly bewails the "threefold woe" of the Donation: the gifts of "spear, cross, and crown" which now poison the cup of the Church, mixing her honey with gall.[25] By the mid-thirteenth century, scholars in the circle of Hugh of St. Cher treat the "poison" story expansively in their Apocalypse commentaries, *Aser pinguis* and *Vidit Iacob*, as a gloss to Revelation 12:15–16. In these postills, the serpent who "cast[s] out of his mouth . . . water as it were a river" should be understood as Satan, spewing forth temporal possessions like a poisonous flood and overwhelming the Church. "Nothing emerges from the mouth of a dragon but poison and hissing," writes the author of *Vidit Iacob*, "and these temporalities are nothing but hissing alone, since they disperse so quickly."[26] It was for these reasons that the voice of an angel was heard to lament at the Donation, the authors conclude.

Robert Lerner speculates that these postills, widely read and copied, helped secure the popularity and ubiquity of the angelic episode in later accounts of the Donation.[27] They also point to the pivotal role that metaphor played in explicating both the act and the effects of this bequest. The correlation of poison with temporal possession is not, at face value, an obvious one. It rests upon another, more essential metaphor to complete its meaning, that of the organic *corpus mysticum*, which by the dictates of Pauline theology looked not to "dumb idols" for its governance but to the Holy Spirit and its own members, joined together as the *corpus Christi* and *membra de membro* (2 Corinthians 12:27). As the Gospels repeatedly stressed, the gift of Christianity was faith itself, already freely offered and revealed by Christ's life, death, and resurrection. "Every best gift and every perfect gift" comes from God, the Epistle of St. James instructs, "with whom there is no change, nor shadow of alteration" (James 1:17).[28] Constantine's gift, however, complicated this axiom, not because it came from outside of Christianity's strictures, but because it came from within them as an exponent of the conversion process itself. The popular tale of Constantine's cure from leprosy demonstrates how non-belief could be seen to manifest as a physical sign upon the body, a sickness of the soul visited upon the flesh. The cure, of course, lay in Christian conversion, but this transformation also generated its own unexpected capital – the liberated gold of a former pagan.

Just as the author of *De rebus bellicis* complained that surplus gold created dissension within the empire, so medieval authors argued that temporalities created dissension within the Church. Such temporalities always bore both the stigma and status of worldly gifts, superfluous but valuable for the same reason.

Walther von der Vogelweide captures this conundrum masterfully in his "*Künec Constantîn der gap sô vil*" when he writes of the poison [*gift*] that has poured into Christendom with the Donation. The Middle High German *gift* carried a primary meaning of "poison" or "venom," but it also retained from Old High German the sense of "gift" as a donation – the sense still preserved in the modern English noun.[29] Temporal possessions constituted a poison to the body of the Church because they corrupted its spiritual insight, its ability to see beyond material signs. But they also afforded, by the same token, a remedy to political and legal marginalization, granting that body autonomy and authority. One person's injury constituted another person's cure, an ambiguity captured by the term "poison" itself.[30] In the case of the Donation, poison and remedy derived from the same material substrate.

The angelic voice thus emerged as a statement of protest from within Christian history, even as it imagined a speaker that lay beyond that history. Disembodied and supernatural, this speaker lacked the encumbrances of flesh and thus threw into sharp relief the material preoccupations of the conversion narrative, with its mingling of bodily disease, spiritual care, and economic reward. In this way, critique of Constantine's gift became a central feature of its origin story: polemical speech could not undo history, but it could register the distance that separated Gospel understandings of the divine gift from those temporal bequests of the Donation.

By the late fourteenth and fifteenth centuries in England, the figure of Constantine had become metonymic for this larger debate over the power and wealth of the Church. It is hardly surprising that the later part of this period saw the first close scrutiny of the Donation as a historical document, nor that – in England, at least – this examination emerged out of a larger effort to reinforce orthodox belief in the face of competing doctrines. The Black Death, the Hundred Years War with France (1337–1453), and the papal schism of 1378–1418 placed profound pressure on the institutional capacities of the English Church to meet pastoral needs, even as these events also lay bare that body's political and theological vulnerabilities. Wyclif and Wycliffite believers prescribed for this vulnerable body a severe remedy: the complete disendowment of the English clergy, with its revenues and material valuables redistributed to royal coffers and the poor.[31] The intellectual justification for this position finds its most complete treatment in the third portion of Wyclif's theological *Summa*, *De civili dominio*, which advanced a theory of ecclesiastical dominion indebted to Richard Fitz-Ralph's *De Pauperie Salvatoris* and Franciscan ideals of apostolic poverty.[32] Here, Wyclif argues that any just civil lordship must also be just in its relation to God. Since the foundation for all lordship and dominion comes from God, those in mortal sin lack a just relation to divine lordship and thus lack true dominion over the things they possess. "Every good that such persons possess, they possess unjustly," he stipulates. "Therefore, they lack true lordship of anything at all that can be subject to lordship."[33]

The subtleties of this argument turn on Wyclif's understanding of the difference between "granting" (*donatio*) and "giving" (*dacio*).[34] God's "grant," he

argues, constitutes an act of grace extended only to the elect of his Church: no mortal sinner may belong to this company. But God has also given to all of humanity the goods of the world, and in this sense he "gives" more equivocally, extending temporary use of the goods of nature and fortune to sinner and saved alike.[35] For Wyclif, God's true Church bore no necessary relationship to the material Church Militant. Comprised of those "predestined" members who enjoyed God's grace, its sole exemplar lay in Holy Scripture, which provided ample precedent for any question pertaining to clerical or lay conduct. To the extent that the ecclesiastical hierarchy clung to the goods of the world in contravention of Christ's teachings, it resided in a state of mortal sin, and no one more so than the pope, whose worldly imperium – with the Donation's backing – spanned the globe. Thus in parsing *donatio* and *dacio* Wyclif was able to distinguish between God's eternal promise of salvation, guaranteed by his Son, and the created materials of the world, which he provided for humanity's use and abuse but granted "justly" only to the just. God, he concludes, "has divided the whole body of the wicked or foreknown, which Truth calls 'the world,' and its ruler, the Devil, along with their things, from the whole body of the predestined, which he often calls 'the kingdom of heaven.' . . . And so he 'gives' to the world and 'grants' to the church all the things that are the world's."[36]

Constantine's donation offered an ideal case study in which to parse the difference between a "simple gift" – that is, a gift that a person merely uses for a time – and a grant of true dominion, which bestows lordship itself. Two questions stood at the foundation of this debate: first, whether Pope Sylvester and his successors had a right to the territories and goods that Constantine gave, and, second, whether Sylvester was morally right in accepting them. Wyclif's answer was no on both counts, and for related reasons. In the first instance, as he repeatedly stressed, the Gospels offered no precedent for ecclesiastical dominion over civil affairs, and in fact counseled the opposite, to render unto Caesar that which was Caesar's and pursue the path of righteousness instead. What Sylvester accepted from Constantine was not civil authority, Wyclif would argue in *De ecclesia*, but rather alms, since Sylvester had no vested authority, by God or scripture, to hold dominion over territories after the Donation.[37] Sylvester furthermore sinned by keeping those alms; while defenders of temporalities may argue that endowment provides the Church the long-term ability to offer aid, Christ taught the apostles to keep no surplus.[38] Citing the Donation text from the Decretals, Wyclif goes on to argue that Sylvester could not have helped but recognize that the *forma dotacionis* took the form of imperial authority, with all the material trappings that symbolized it.[39] Even if the gift was offered in restitution for confiscated Christian property, as Wyclif presents in a counterargument, Sylvester should rightfully have refused it.[40] The "gift," in other words, could only find its proper object with poor and not with the pope.[41] Though Wyclif concedes in *De ecclesia* that certain endowments, like those supporting colleges, constitute necessary evils, he maintains that no such superfluous wealth should accrue to the clergy. As Wendy Scase summarizes, charity, rather

poverty offered "the full remedy for illicit clerical dominion; it was both the authority for correction, and the end of correction; a pristine, and final, state."[42]

As Wyclif's discussion suggests, endowment constituted more than simply the material and territorial holdings of the Church at given points in its history. It also functioned imaginatively and metaphorically as a "doubled body" of the *corpus mysticum*, representing the faith in and to the world. As a form of accumulated wealth, the endowment of the Church possessed its own historical trajectory, growing or diminishing over time but always with an interest in its future continuation. And like faith itself, this economic and legal power exceeded the visible signs that represented it: "endowment" came to represent both the material ornamentation of the Church and the immaterial power that accrued to the institution by virtue of jurisdictional enfranchisement. As we have seen, the fraught act of giving crystallized this tension between visible and invisible forms of worldly power. Just as Christian writers imagined God giving Constantine the emblems of the faith – such as the divinely inspired vision of the Cross before the battle of Milvian Bridge – so they imagined the emperor giving to the Church the emblems of institutional authority. In both cases, these visible signs constituted tokens of larger, more abundant gifts: the promise of salvation and the promise of empire. The structure of the Donation story, however, problematically arrayed these gifts in the terms of equivalency or exchange: here, the promise of empire appeared to be tendered in thanks *for* the healing of the body and salvation of the soul.

The Donation thus commemorated a moment when the valuation of Christianity changed, both at the literal, economic level and at the symbolic, representational level. Indeed, these two levels were never and could never be held entirely separate, as Constantine's minting of the bronze coin bearing the Chi-Ro makes clear. However, it was precisely such "reductions" of the divine mysteries into tangible tokens of exchange, and the concomitant elevation of tokens as representative of divine power, that exercised Wyclif and other reformists of the later Middle Ages. These debates about religious signification extended across all aspects of devotional life in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, from sacraments to scriptural interpretation. Indeed, scripture proved the preeminent testing ground for assessing the relationship between divine truth and the sign systems that revealed it. For Wyclif, scripture constituted a revealed truth that both transcended and inhered within languages. "The law of God," Wyclif would write in *De veritate Sacrae Scripturae*, "subsists beyond all the manuscripts and sensible signs which yield the signified truth."[43] At the same time, the Bible constitutes an infallible record of God's intentions; it remains "immune from falsehood" even if it admits seeming surface contradictions.[44] Just as the inspired reader will not mistake the material object – that is, the physical book – for the larger truth that is divine law, so that reader should not mistake the "veil of words" for the literal truth of God.[45] Those who do so are sophists and heretics, Wyclif contended, "twisting [scripture] to suit their own perverse sense," rather than citing it "for its own sake" and accepting "its authoritative truth in its totality."[46]

Supporters of clerical endowments were precisely such readers, in Wyclif's view. They dismissed as metaphorical Christ's literal directives towards poverty in the Gospels, even as they literalized other metaphors to justify their material accumulation. As Wyclif would argue in *De dotatione ecclesie*, temporal endowment itself constituted a kind of faulty metaphor. Some people, he notes, argue that

> God ordains for the beauty of the church that the clergy be ornamented as they are. From this, the church "stands" the bride of Christ, "in gilded clothing, surrounded with variety" [Ps. 45:10]. But this response is pure sophistry, just as the last one was. For knowing all things, included among which all things present, God would be very negligent to His church unless He had given it the best rule for living, and He would certainly teach in His law how much such "variety" would be suitable.[47]

Wyclif here accuses the Church of abusing its apostolic authority but also of misusing sacred scripture, rendering literal a psalmic verse that should be understood figurally. By clothing itself in the "variety" of worldly splendor, the Church did not hide its deceit behind a show of modest piety. Rather, the show *was* the deceit, an elaborate artifice defended for its own sake.

Medieval rhetoric and logic had a term for this kind of self-conscious fallacy: a sophism, or, as the fifteenth-century poet John Lydgate described it:

> *Thyng that hath on Apparence*
> *With-outen eny Existence;*
> *Or an argument in shewinge*
> *Wych in effect hath no beynge*
> *Affter the thyng that yt doth shewe*

> A thing that has an appearance / Without any existence, / Or an argument of demonstration / which has in effect no substance / after the thing that it demonstrates.[48]

As Rita Copeland has shown, accusations of sophistry were rampant at the height of the Wycliffite controversy: Wyclif and his academic opponents regularly accused each other of passing "sophisms" off as theology, and this language made its way into lay debates as well, as Wycliffite writers employed the technical vocabulary of the schools to denounce orthodox positions on the Eucharist, pilgrimage, confession, and mendicancy.[49] A discourse that originated in the cloister of the university arts faculty, sophistic represented in the first instance a formal intellectual exercise – the art of parsing and constructing enigmatic or self-consciously fallacious arguments. But by the fourteenth century it had entered the very public debates over scriptural interpretation, ecclesiastical authority, and sacramentality that came to define the Lollard heresy. As Copeland describes, the language of sophistry allowed Lollards to articulate an outsider status vis-à-vis the university and ecclesiastical courts that also granted

them a certain amount of rhetorical authority: in condemning orthodox opponents as the "false faithful," Wycliffites deployed the same academic terminology their prosecutors leveled at them.[50]

Sophistic thus carried in late medieval England much the same pejorative sense it does today – as rhetoric for rhetoric's sake, an artifice devoid of guiding ethics. This distrust of sophistic extends back to Plato's critique of professional rhetoricians who make speeches for money, but for medieval Europeans it would be Aristotle, rather than Plato, who shaped understanding of the art. As part of the *Organon*, Aristotle's *Sophistical Refutations* formed part of the foundational training in university logic, along with the *Prior Analytics* and the *Topics.* Undergraduate "sophisters" dedicated a year to studying how to make and recognize argumentative fallacies, with the ostensible aim of understanding the difference between true and false syllogisms. But as Copeland notes, in learning the art of the sophist, students also necessarily played the part of the sophist, "us[ing] and even enjoy[ing] the very drug whose powers they were being taught to evade."[51]

Proximity to sophistic thus promised knowledge but also threatened seduction through its own notorious enticements. In the preface to the *Refutations*, Aristotle touches on this problem when he discusses the difference between experienced and inexperienced disputants:

> That some deductions are genuine, while others seem to be so but are not, is evident. This happens with arguments, as also elsewhere, through a certain likeness between the genuine and the sham. For physically some people are in a vigorous condition, while others seem to be so by blowing and rigging themselves out like the tribal choruses; and some people are beautiful thanks to their beauty, while others seem to be so, by dint of embellishing themselves. So it is, too, with inanimate things; for of these, too, some are really silver and others gold, while other are not and merely seem to be such to our sense.[52]

This language of deception, false gold, and feigning would prove highly charged in late medieval England, where debates over clerical endowments, transubstantiation, and other touchstones of orthodoxy circulated under the same set of signs. Wycliffite preachers argued, for instance, that the Donation of Constantine "embellished" otherwise empty claims to civil dominion. In the words of one sermon writer, supporters of endowment put a "*fleshli glose*" – that is, a worldly or fallacious gloss – on Christ's original injunctions against apostolic lordship.[53]

"Fleshly glossing," like sophistic, trades in superficial likenesses, and like sophistic also makes an argument easy to consume and believe. In a polemical letter supposedly written by Satan to his clerical followers, Constantine himself is depicted succumbing to just such fleshly glossing, as Satan persuades him to give away half his empire by thinking of its as alms – an argument, as we have seen, that proved central to debates over the legitimacy of the Donation:

> Then this Constantine, through our enticing, gave to Sylvester under the appearance of alms . . . half of his empire with all the honors and lordship

that belonged thereto. And we enticed him to take it, so that he could best maintain Holy Church, and thus through our assent he took it. And so he and his successors ever since, with other prelates of the church, gathered more and more until they were well nigh as rich as kings and other lords. And so they were tangled with the venom of worldly riches, that the church was well nigh in short time turned to our lordship.[54]

This interpretation of the Donation preserves the essential innocence of both Constantine and Sylvester. Like Adam and Eve in the Garden, they partake of the fruit without fully understanding its mortal consequences, since Satan, under "*color of almes*," convinced them that they were acting in the best interests of the faith. But having consumed this seductive idea, they find themselves and all their successors immediately "*tangled wiþ þe venyme of worldly riche*s."

   This notion that argument worked not just upon the mind but upon the body, "envenoming" it with the poison of persuasion, returns us to the figure of the lamenting angel, whose bodiless voice challenges the presentation of the gift in many Donation accounts. One of the most complex and poetically sophisticated appropriations of the story of the angelic voice appears in William Langland's sweeping allegorical dream vision, *Piers Plowman*, where it forms part of a larger meditation on Church history, conversion, and lay education in the faith.[55] Voiced by the allegorical figure of Anima, representing the soul, the Constantine passage appears within a part of the poem narrating the long history of the Church, from its origins to its institutional efflorescence. Anima uses this moment to present a stinging rebuke to the clergy, promising apocalyptic judgment upon covetous ecclesiastics:

> *If knyghthod and kynde wit, and the commune and the conscience*
> *Togideres love leellly, leveth it wel, ye bisshopes –*
> *The lordshipe of londes [lese ye shul for evere],*
> *And lyven as* Levitici, *as Oure Lord yow techith:*
> Per primicias et decimas . . .
> *Whan Constantyn of curteisie Holy Kirke dowed*
> *With londes and ledes, lordshipes and rentes,*
> *An aungel men herden an heigh at Rome crye:*
> *"Dos ecclesie this day hath ydronke venym,*
> *And tho that han Petres power arn apoisoned alle!"*
> *A medicyne moote therto that may amende prelates,*
> *That sholden preie for the pees; possession hem letteth.*
> *Taketh hire landes, ye lordes, and let hem lyve by dymes;*
> *If possession be poison, and inparfite hem make,*
> *Good were to deschargen hem for Holy Chirches sake,*
> *And purgen hem of poison, er moore peril falle.* (B.15.554–74)[56]

If knighthood and good sense and the Commons and the conscience together loved faithfully, believe it well, you bishops: you shall lose forever

lordship of lands and live as the Levites, as Our Lord teaches, *by first fruits and tithes* (Deuteronomy 12:6). When Constantine for courtesy's sake endowed Holy Church with lands and properties, lordships and rents, men heard an angel on high at Rome cry: "*Dos ecclesia* has drunk venom this day, and those who have Peter's power are poisoned all!" A medicine is needed therefore that might amend prelates, who should pray for the peace; possessions hinder them. Take their lands, you lords, and let them live by tithes. If possession is poison, and makes them imperfect, it would be good to unburden them for Holy Church's sake, and purge them of poison before more peril arrives.

With its rousing call to "take their lands, lords, and let them live by tithes," this passage echoes a charged parliamentary confrontation of 1385, when the archbishop of Canterbury, William Courtenay, refused to grant to parliament a clerical tax. In response, knights and lords sent a furious letter to Richard II, suggesting (as Langland does here) that clerics might better know charity if they lived as the Levites once did.[57] The "poison of possession" requires here a good purgative: a return to the wholesome first fruits of the primitive Church.

The Constantine episode is one of many exempla in Passus 15 of B-text (17 of the C-text) treating the history of the early Church, tracing what Emily Steiner has called the "being and becoming" of the faith as it was proselytized, endowed, and universalized across Western Europe.[58] The passus begins with a reflection on naming, as Anima instructs the dreamer Will in the manifold names for the Soul in its various operations. Anima promptly chides Will for wanting to know too much: he is like the proverbial man who eats too much honey; the more "*good matere*" (good matter) he hears, the more harm comes to him. The first to suffer the sweet enticements of knowledge were, of course, Adam and Eve, and this desire to know the "roote" (65) of God's order, Anima continues, has engendered the pride and "licames coveitise" (fleshly covetousness) (67) that now infects the Church.

Questions of what is licit to ask and reveal about the faith thus develop closely alongside meditations on the problems inherent in an "embodied Church," with its appetites for luxury, wealth, and power. It is hypocrisy, Anima cries, that so many clerics have been "*enblaunched with bele paroles and with clothes*" when their works are "*ful w[o]lveliche*" (B.15.114–6). How differently these "*whitlymed*" (113) clerics stand in comparison to the apostles: Paul, Anima declaims, made panniers and "*wan with hise hondes that this wombe neded*" [won with his hands what his belly needed] (290); Peter and Andrew fished for their food, selling some and cooking some and thus living simply (292–3). At the heart of the comparison between apostolic simplicity and latter-day ecclesiastical excess lies an argument about economy and consumption that arose out of debates over mendicant poverty and continued to exercise the Church into the late fourteenth century. It is not simply that the Church possessed too much; it is that possession stood in opposition to the claims of charity, depriving needy Christians of basic sustenance. Langland explicates this problem via a number of

different metaphors, including, evocatively, the figure of the counterfeit Luxembourg coin: it is a "*luther alay*," a bad alloy, which looks nonetheless like sterling:

> *The merk of that monee is good, ac the metal is feble.*
> *And so it fareth by som folk now: thei han a fair speche,*
> *Crowne and Cristendom, the kynges mark of hevene,*
> *Ac the metal, that is mannes soule, [myd] synne is foule alayed.* (349–52)

The mark of that money is good, but the metal is feeble. And so it fares with some people now: they have fair speech, Crown and Christendom, the king's mark of heaven, but the metal, that is man's soul, is foully alloyed with sin.

The counterfeit coin brings together anxieties about rhetoric, wealth, and spiritual welfare in a single image.[59] If the "*merk*" is good but the metal bad, then this coin can circulate freely, thanks to a "certain likeness between the genuine and the sham," as Aristotle would say of sophistic. The concern that outer displays of piety might mask an inner weakness of faith runs through the whole of Passus 15, which returns again and again to currency as a figure for covetous accumulation as well as sophistical speech. In the early days of the Church, holy people read "*no book but conscience*" (535), Anima explains, with "*no richesse but the roode* [Cross] *to rejoisse hem inne*" (536). But now, "*Both riche and religious, that roode thei honoure / That in grotes is ygrave and in gold nobles*" (543–4) (Both the rich and religious honor the rood that is engraved on groats and in gold nobles).

It is conversion, finally, that becomes Langland's test case for the uncertainties of true belief. If clerics lived as they preached, he argues, then more Christians would be saved as well as "*Sarsens . . . scribes and Jewes.*" (389). He goes on to single out Saracens as especially receptive to Christian teaching, since they "*han somwhat semynge to oure bileve*" (somewhat seeming to our belief) (392), but it is precisely this "somewhat seeming" that also renders their conversion so problematic, as the example of Mohammed goes on to show. Appropriating the image of Mohammed as the false prophet and apostate, Langland describes how the dove that supposedly provides him divine revelation actually sits on his shoulder eating corn from his ear. In the C-text version of *Piers Plowman*, Langland expands to juxtapose this image of Mohammed the apostate deceiver with Jews as deniers of Christ's miracles:

> *And 3ut they seyen sothly and so doen þe Sarrasynes*
> *That Iesus was bote iogelour, and iapare amonges þe commune,*
> *And a sofistre of soercerie and a* pseudo-propheta,
> *And that his lore was lesynges and lakken hit alle* (C.17.309–12)

And yet they say truly and so do the Saracens that Jesus was but a jongler, a japer among the commons, and a sophist of sorceries and a pseudo-prophet, and that his lore was lies, and they disparaged it all.[60]

At the heart of this section of the poem thus rests a deep concern with the limitations of language to name as well as recognize true religious revelation. If bystanders considered Mohammed a prophet and Christ a sophist, what hope does late medieval Christianity have to follow the Christological example when even its own shepherds "*ben mannered after Makometh*," as Anima complains? The Donation of Constantine traffics in similar anxieties over conversion and the signs that demonstrate true faith. Langland tells us that Constantine first endowed the Church for "*curteisie*," a term that suggests misguided generosity born from genuine religious transformation. As "proof" of Constantine's change of heart, the trappings of empire double problematically as a profession of faith, and this duplicity places endowment within the same economy of "bad coinage" as sophists, pseudo-prophets, religious hypocrites, and other purveyors of false wisdom.

Ironically, it was precisely in defending the appropriateness of Constantine's gift against Lollard attacks that Reginald Pecock ultimately uncovered, in his (aptly titled) *Repressor of Over-Much Blaming of the Clergy*, the textual fiction of the Donation itself. Pecock turns to Eusebius, the *Actus Silvestri*, and other historiographic sources to undermine, in the first instance, the power of the angelic voice that had so long yoked the Donation to millenarian prophecy.[61] But along the way he found it also necessary to defend temporalities. Wealth, he argued, represented nothing more than a neutral tool to be used well or poorly. And just as riches carry no intrinsic meaning beyond their use, so language has no intrinsic value apart from the ethos of the speaker:

> In the same way that tongues are nothing but the instruments of the free will, by and with which the free will works to sometimes good and sometimes evil [ends], so riches are nothing but instruments of and to the free will, by which the free will of users works in sometimes good and sometimes evil [ways].[62]

In a surprising way, Pecock here brings us as close to the spirit of Aristotle's *Sophistical Refutations* as the combatants who had so vigorously deployed him in the upheavals of the prior half-century. Pecock's aim, however, is anti-polemical, severing wealth and by extension rhetoric from the bodily discourses of generation, corruption, poison, and remedy that had worked to equate endowment with grotesque materiality. In Pecock, money and words become mere instruments, tools wielded by the will rather than symptoms manifested by bodies, leprous or otherwise. His reading of the Donation thus differs in important ways from that of his fellow debunker of the Donation, Lorenzo Valla – less a "bad coin," the Donation becomes, in Pecock's handling, simply one voice among many others.

Notes

1 "*Nummos reprobos discernimus, separamus, abicimus; doctrinam reprobam non discernemus, sed retinebimus, sed cum bona miscebimus, sed pro bona defendemus?*" For texts of the *Donatio* and Valla's *Oratio*, see Coleman, 1993, quoted here at p. 153. Likely a product of the eighth-century papal chancery, the Donation came to wide European attention via Gratian's

Decretum, Dis. XCVI, *cc.* XIII and XIV. For the textual history of the *Constitutum*, see Coleman, pp. 5–8. On Valla's interest in the *Constitutum* see Camporeale, 1996. For a reappraisal of Valla's philology, see Boba, 1990.

2 See Hiatt, 2004, pp. 136–7.

3 For further discussion of the reception of the Donation, see Brenda Schildgen's chapter, "Dante, Constantine the Christian, and the Illegitimate Donation of Constantine," in this volume.

4 Hudson, 1978, p. 26. On the significance of these terms in relation to clerical office, see Hudson, 1997.

5 See Dinshaw, 1999, pp. 55–99, on the ways late medieval reformism employed figures of disease and sexual misconduct to critique orthodox religious "excess."

6 For the *Actus*, see Mombrizio, 1910, pp. II.516–531, and for discussion, Kristina Sessa, "Constantine and Silvester in the *Actus Silvestri*," in this volume. Ranulf Higden popularized the story in England in his *Polychronicon*. References to Sylvester and Constantine appear likewise scattered across poetry, sermon literature, polemical tracts, and chronicles, including the so-called Lollard Chronicle, itself heavily indebted to Higden's account. See Embree, 1999, p. 117.

7 For a general overview of Wyclif and Wycliffism, see Aston, 1984b; Hudson, 1985 and 1988; Kenny, 1985; and Ghosh, 2002.

8 See Aston, 1984a, 'Caim's Castles'.

9 Hudson, 1978, p. 24. "*Qwan þe chirche of Yngelond began to dote in temperalte aftir hir step-modir þe grete chirche of Rome, and chirchis were slayne be apropriacion to diuerse placys, feyth, hope and charite begunne for to fle out of oure chirche; for pride with his sori genealogie of dedly synnes chalingith it be title of heritage.*" Copies of the *Twelve Conclusions* survive only in anti-Lollard manuscripts. For an overview, see Hudson, 1978, pp. 150–1.

10 *Middle English Dictionary, s.v.* colour, defs. 1 and 5 a–b.

11 Hudson, 1978, p. 25. "*þe correlary of þis conclusion is þat it is ful vncouth to manye þat ben wise to se bisschopis pleye wit þe Holi Gost in making of here ordris, for þei ȝeuen crownis in caracteris in stede of whyte hartys, and þat is þe leuere of antecryst brout into holy chirche to colour ydilnesse.*"

12 Swinburn (ed.), 1917, p. 95. "*Aȝen þis comaundement þe fende wiþ hise membris / what wiþ ypocrisie þat is feyned hoolines / what wiþ blynd pite þat regneþ in þe seculeris / he haþ encombrid Cristis chirche wiþ miche worldli muk / & ouerladde oure modir wiþ temporal possessioun / þat sche mai not rise*"

13 Arnold, 1869, p. 96. "*For bi dowynge of þe Chirche and necligence of prelatis is mannis lawe medlid wiþ Goddis lawe. And þes double mannis lawes, þe popis and þe emperours, letten Goddis lawe to growe, and gnaren þe Chirche, as tares gnaren corn, and letten it to þryve.*"

14 See Jensen, 2005, pp. 584–5; Brown, 2012, pp. 31–51.

15 "*sed alia etiam habuisse noscuntur, ad jus corporis eorum, id est, Ecclesiarum.*" Lactantius, (1844–), 269a–270b. English translation by McDonald, 1965, p. 198.

16 See Eusebius's panegyric to Paulinus, bishop of Tyre, in the *Historia Ecclesiastica*, Book 10, Ch. 4. Deferrari (trans.), 1955, p. 251.

17 These gifts are recounted in the *Liber Pontificalis*, edited by Duchesne, 1886, pp. 170–87.

18 Cf. *ibid.*, pp. 183–7.

19 Depeyrot, 2006, p. 248.

20 Depeyrot, 2006, p. 237; Brown, 2012, pp. 14–8.

21 "*Cum enim antiquitus aurum argentumque et lapidum pretiosorum magna uis in templis reposita ad publicum peruenisset, cunctorum dandi habendique cupiditates accendit. Et cum aeris ipsius – quod regum, ut diximus, fuerat uultu signatum – enormis iam et grauis erogatio uideretur, nihilominus tamen a caecitate quadam ex auro, quod pretiosius habetur, profusior erogandi diligentia fuit. Ex hac auri copia priuatae potentium repletae domus, in perniciem pauperum clariores effectae, tenuioribus uidelicet uiolentia oppressis.*" Thompson, 1952, pp. 94–5, 110. Cited also in Depeyrot, p. 239; Brown, 2012, p. 14.

22 "*Denique paulisper felicium temporum reuolue memoriam et antiquae paupertatis famosa regna considera, quae agros colere et abstinere opibus norant, qua haec honoris laude per omne aeuum frugalitas incorrupta commendet.*" Ibid., pp. 95 and 110–11.

23 See Brown, 2012, xxii and pp. 53–71.

24 See *De invectionibus*, p. 192; *Gemma Ecclesiastica*, pp. 189 and 360; *Speculum Ecclesiae*, p. 351; and *De instructione principibus*, pp. 86–9.

25 See Kraus (ed.), 1950, pp. 32–3; English translation by Phillips, 1896, pp. 112–13.

26 Lerner, 1985, p. 173. "*Quia ex ore serpentis non exit nisi sibilus et venenum. Et ista temporalia non sunt nisi sibilus unus, quia cito transeunt.*" For further discussion of the tale's diffusion in England, see Smalley, 1960, pp. 194–8, and *id.*, 1958, pp. 123–32.

27 Lerner, 1985, p. 174.

28 "*Omne datum optimum, et omne donum perfectum desursum est, descendens a Patre luminum, apud quem non est transmutatio, nec vicissitudinis obumbratio.*" Text taken from the Vulgate and Douay-Rheims editions; Kinney (ed.), 2013.

29 See the *Oxford English Dictionary, s. v.* gift; *Deutsches Wörterbuch, s. v.* gift, defs. 1–2, citing Walther von der Vogelweide under definition 2. Scanlon, 1994, p. 257, n. 16, also notes this pun. For further discussion of the poison episode in a late medieval context, see Scase, 1989, pp. 88–91. My thanks to Warren Brown for help with the Middle High German etymologies.

30 See Derrida, 1981, pp. 61–172, for an influential reading of the *pharmakon* – the remedy that is also a poison – in Plato's *Phaedrus*.

31 The basic terms of this proposal are set forth in the *Lollard Disendowment Bill*. See Hudson, 1978, pp. 135–7.

32 See Aston, 1984a, 'Caim's Castles'; Hudson, 1988, pp. 335–40; Scase, 1989, pp. 84–119; Clopper, 2003; Lahey, 2003, pp. 133–8.

33 "*Omne bonum quod talis possidet, iniuste possidet, ergo deficit a cuiuscunque dominabilis vero dominio.*" Latin references derive from Poole, 1885, here at p. 2; English translation from McGrade, et al., 2001, p. 592.

34 "*Pro quo notandum, quod donacio dicit gratuitam dacionem, et dacio est equivocum ad tradicionem solum ad bonum nature aut esse primum, vel ad bonum gracie vel perfeccionem secundam.*" Poole, p. 11; McGrade et al., p. 599. For thorough discussion, see Lahey, 2003, pp. 108–46.

35 Poole, p. 11; McGrade et al, pp. 599–600.

36 "*Ideo universitatem malorum, ut prescitorum, quam Veritas vocat mundum, et diabolum eius principem, dividit cum suis ab universitate predestinatorum quam sepe vocat regnum celorum . . . mundo itaque dat, et ecclesie donat, omnia que sunt mundi.*" Poole, pp. 11–2; McGrade, et al, pp. 599–600.

37 Loserth, 1886, p. 322, cap. xiv.

38 Ibid., p. 360, cap. xvi.

39 Ibid., p. 361, cap xvi.

40 Ibid., p. 369, cap. xvi.

41 Ibid., p. 370, cap. xvi.

42 Scase, 1989, p. 84.

43 "*nam sicut ostendi alibi, de lege dei est preter codices vel signa sensibilia dare veritatem signatam, que pocius est scriptura sacra quam codices.*" Buddensieg, 1905, 107; English from Levy, 2001, p. 97.

44 ". . . *tunc enim inveniemus, quod sit inmunis a falso.*" Buddensieg, 1905, p.80; Levy, 2001, p. 80.

45 Buddensieg, 1905, p. 174; Levy, 2001, p. 126.

46 "*heretici . . . extorquent ad sensum sinistrum querentes subsidium dominorum secularium in fomentum sui facinoris. e contra autem catholici allegant pro se scripturam sacram, eciam visam ignaris impossibilem, cum acceptant eius autenticam veritatem ex integro ad sensum, quem sancti doctores docuerant.*" Buddensieg, 1905, pp. 136–7; Levy, 2001, p. 111.

47   "*Secunda responsio dicit, quod ex ordinatione divina ad decorum ecclesiae est, quod sit talibus cleri statibus perornata. Ex hinc enim 'astat' ecclesia sponso Christo 'in vestitu deaurato circumdata varietate.' Sed videtur, quod ista responsio sit sophistica sicut prior. Nam omnisciens, apud quem sunt cuncta praesentia, foret nimis negligens suae ecclesiae, nisi daret sibi regulam optimam ad viandum, et doceret in lege sua, quomodo et quando foret taliter 'variandum.'*" Lechler, 1869, p. 408; English in Lahey, 2013, p. 321.

48   Lydgate, 1899, p. 1.45, lines 1659–77.

49   Copeland, 2002, pp.112–30.

50   Copeland, 2002, p. 128.

51   Copeland, 2002, p 121.

52   Barnes (trans.), 1984, p. 278, 164a20–165a1.

53   Cigman (ed.), 1989, p. 74.

54   Hudson, 1978, p. 90. "*Than this Constantyn, thorow our entysyng, by color of almes gaf to Syluestur . . . half his empyre wiþ all þe wirschipe and lordschipe that longith þerto. And we entysed hym to tak it, for so he shuld best mantane holie churche, and þus thorow our assent he tok yt. And so he and his successors euer syns, wiþ oþer prelattis of þe churche, gaderyd more and more tyll þei were well nye as ryche as kyngis and oþer lordis. And so þei were tangled wiþ þe venyme of worldly riches, þat þe churche was well nie in schort tyme turnyd to our lordschipe.*"

55   For influential discussions of this scene, see Gradon, 1980; Aston, 1984b; Scase, 1989, pp. 85–90; Steiner, 2005 and 2013, pp. 170–1; and Warner, 2010, pp. 32–48.

56   Citations come from the B-text edited by Schmidt, 1995. Subsequent references provide line numbers only.

57   See Gradon, 1980; Hudson, 2003; and Warner, 2010, p. 33;

58   Steiner, 2005, p. 189.

59   On the association of Lollardy with counterfeiting, see Strohm, 2005.

60   Pearsall, 2008.

61   See Scase, 1989, p 90; and Hiatt, 2004.

62   "*Forwhi tungis be not but the instrumentis of the fre wil, bi and with which the free wil of man wirchith sumwhile good sumwhile yuel; and so richessis ben not but instrumentis of and to the fre wil, bi which the free wil of the vsers wirchith in sumtyme good and in sumtyme yuel.*" Pecock, 1860, 2.327–8.

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11 Constantine in late medieval western art

Just the son of a holy mother?

Gerhard Jaritz

Throughout the Middle Ages, Emperor Constantine the Great was seen as an ideal ruler. In the Orthodox Church Constantine was venerated as a saint.[1] In the western Church, no official and generally accepted cult developed, but textual source evidence in the medieval West, particularly various types of medieval chronicles, often dealt with Constantine.[2] What I will concentrate on in this contribution is how Constantine was visually represented in the western Middle Ages, particularly the late Middle Ages, and what influence this could have had on how members of different strata of medieval society perceived him. In the images presented in this chapter, I concentrate mainly on examples from Central Europe and Italy.

In religious art, Constantine appears regularly where, following hagiographic sources, he participated in the lives of saints. This is particularly and most often true with regard to his holy mother, Helena, and her discovery of the relics of the True Cross, a narrative that follows the legend arising at the end of the fourth century.[3] Helena is regularly shown in visual representations of this narrative depicting the excavation of the three crosses and their identification as the True Cross of Christ with the help of a woman, or sometimes a young man near death. Often, the image shows Helena as the main representative, with her servants and some Jews (Figure 11.1). In other, less frequent examples, Helena is represented together with her son, Constantine, finding the three crosses, as, for instance, in the Styrian examples (Figures 11.2 and 11.3). Constantine participates, but he does not play the main role in these examples; he can be recognized as a rather passive incidental figure.

Rather rarely are there exceptions to this type of representation. Mother and son could be portrayed differently, following another pattern: the general, male-dominated gender pattern that was commonly used in late medieval society. A Nuremberg wall carpet from the 1430s shows Constantine as a saint making an active gesture, clearly marking him as the main acting figure, with Saint Helena more in the background, as a pious female praying in meditation (Figure 11.4).[4]

Sometimes there are additional variations in Constantine's role in late medieval visual representations from the western Church. For example, it

Figure 11.1 Saint Helena finds the True Cross (panel painting from an altarpiece, 1502; Saint Helena Church, Magdalensberg, Carinthia, Austria. © Institut für Realienkunde, Krems, Austria)

is possible to find representations of Constantine again as a saint, such as seen in a panel from the small South Tyrolean church of Sankt Konstantin at Völs am Schlern (Figure 11.5), a church where the first mention of Konstantin as patron saint can be traced back to 1281. In the panel painting from 1519, donated by the governor of Tyrol, one recognizes Emperor Constantine as the central saint, between Saint Helena holding the True Cross and Saint Vitus to his right, and Saint Mary Magdalene and Saint Margaret to his left.[5]

Figure 11.2 Saint Helena and Constantine find the True Cross (panel painting from an altarpiece, c. 1480, Styrian; Museum of the Teutonic Order, Vienna, Austria. © Institut für Realienkunde, Krems, Austria)

Figure 11.3 Saint Helena and Constantine find the True Cross (panel painting from an altarpiece, after 1440; Master of Laufen; Universalmuseum Joanneum, Graz, Austria. © Institut für Realienkunde, Krems, Austria)

Figure 11.4 Saint Constantine and Saint Helena find the True Cross (wall carpet – detail, 1430s; Germanisches Nationalmuseum, Nuremberg, inv. Gew 3715. © Germanisches Nationalmuseum, Nuremberg)

This visual representation of Constantine, wearing the chain of the Order of the Golden Fleece (Figure 11.6), has been interpreted as a crypto-portrait of Emperor Maximilian I, perhaps meant as a memorial image of Maximilian, who died in the same year (1519). Maximilian being Constantine, Constantine being Maximilian, one ideal ruler is represented as another ideal ruler and vice versa.

Elsewhere in other late medieval religious images from the West, Constantine appears in a similar general context like in his role as participant in the discovery of the True Cross. Often he figures in scenes that are actually parts of images or image cycles dedicated to the presentation of other specific saints. After Saint Helena, Saint Sylvester clearly plays the main role in this context in visual representations that overwhelmingly come from Italy. The best-known examples are the famous wall paintings from the Sylvester chapel of Santi Quattro

Figure 11.5 Saint Constantine with Saint Helena, Saint Mary Magdalene, Saint Vitus, and Saint Margaret (panel painting from an altarpiece, 1519, from the Church of Sankt Konstantin at Völs am Schlern, South Tyrol, Italy; now parish museum, Völs am Schlern. © Institut für Realienkunde, Krems, Austria)

Figure 11.6 Saint Constantine wearing the chain of the Order of the Golden Fleece (detail of Figure 11.5. © Institut für Realienkunde, Krems, Austria)

Coronati in Rome, ordered by Pope Innocent IV in 1246 in connection with the pope's conflict with Emperor Frederick II.[6] In eleven scenes the visual cycle makes a clear political statement, showing the legendary narrative cycle that concludes with the Donation of Constantine: for example, the leprosy that befell Constantine and his dream in which Saint Peter and Saint Paul appeared, telling him that he should meet Pope Sylvester, who would be able to cure him (Figure 11.7). According to the legend, Constantine was cured by the intervention of baptism, over which Pope Sylvester presided.[7] In gratitude, Constantine transferred the authority over Rome and the western part of the Roman Empire to the pope (the Donation of Constantine). In the visual cycle from Santi Quattro Coronati, this scene is represented with an image of the emperor passing the *phrygium*, out of which the tiara developed, over to Sylvester as a sign of secular power, together with a striped umbrella, which later became the canopy (Figure 11.8). In the following scene, Constantine is represented as the Pope's *strator*, his personal attendant, to show the supremacy of papal authority over imperial authority (Figure 11.9). The fact that Pope Sylvester no longer has a nimbus in this image was recently interpreted to mean that Sylvester and Constantine had become visual models for the contemporary pope and emperor, Innocent IV and Frederick II, to show the pressing importance of the scene for the present time.[8]

Overt visual political statements such as this were not made in the same way in later depictions. Nevertheless, the legends of Pope Sylvester and
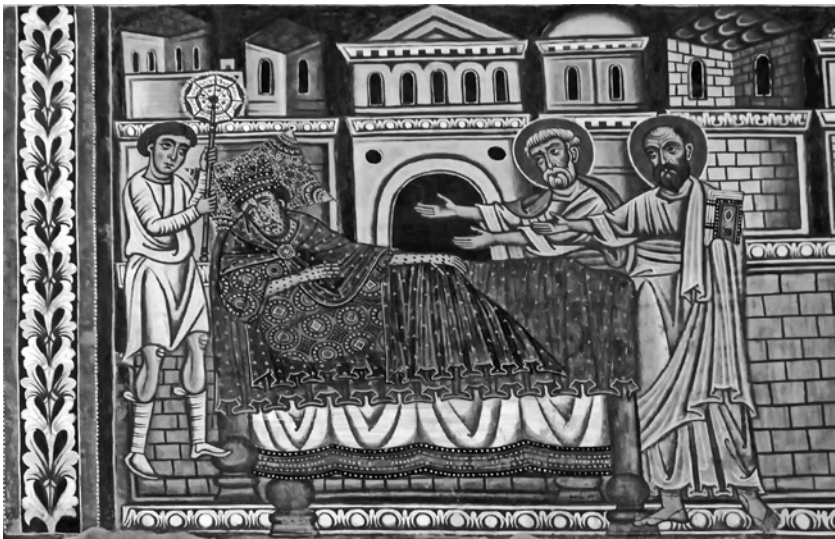
Figure 11.7 Saint Peter and Saint Paul appearing in a dream of Constantine befallen by leprosy (wall painting, 1247; Sylvester chapel of Santi Quattro Coronati, Rome. http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/9/95/00_Stirnwand_2.jpg)

Figure 11.8 The Donation of Constantine (as Figure 11.7; http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/6/62/00_Stirnwand_7.jpg)

Figure 11.9 Emperor Constantine as the *strator* of Pope Sylvester (as Figure 11.7; http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/b/ba/00_Stirnwand_8.jpg)

Emperor Constantine remained or became even more popular, particularly in Italy. One need only think of the famous examples in Santa Croce at Florence in the wall painting cycle by Maso di Banco from c. 1340.[9] In this sequence of images, di Banco additionally includes the episode of the legend following Constantine's baptism, in which Rome was besieged by a dragon whose breath poisoned the air and killed many. Rome's citizens came to hold the opinion that it was Constantine's conversion to Christianity that had influenced the dragon to come to the city and destroy them. Constantine called on Sylvester and asked him for help and, armed with instructions from Saint Peter, Sylvester proceeded to the dragon's lair, bringing with him only a thread. After a prayer he was able to bind and seal the dragon's mouth, and Rome was saved from the dragon's breath. When Sylvester returned to Constantine, he was also able to raise many of the dragon's victims from the dead (Figure 11.10).

Constantine was connected to yet another popular saint in both legend and visual representation: Saint Nicholas, the bishop of Myra. The legend tells that three officers of Constantine's army had been sentenced to death unjustly. They asked Saint Nicholas to help them and he did. In a dream, a man calling himself Nicholas appeared before the emperor and asked Constantine to set the three prisoners free immediately. If he did not, God would send a war in which Constantine would die. The next morning Constantine asked the prisoners if they knew Bishop Nicholas of Myra. After they told him about Nicholas, Constantine released them immediately. A visual representation of this legend from
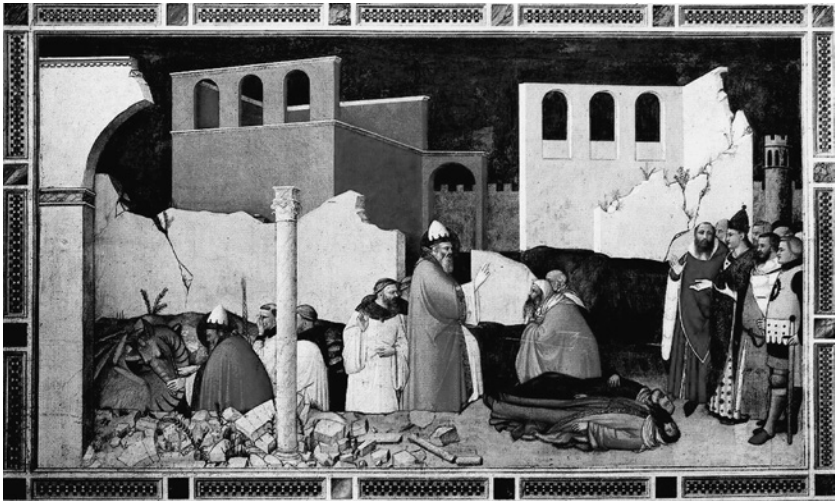
Figure 11.10 Constantine, Saint Sylvester, and the dragon (wall painting, Maso di Banco, c. 1340; Saint Sylvester chapel, Santa Croce, Florence. http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/b/b0/MasoDiBanco.jpg)

about 1320–1330 appears, for example, as one scene in the Saint Nicholas wall painting cycle by the Giotto school in the Nicholas chapel of San Francesco in Assisi (Figure 11.11). The same scene can be seen in Central Europe, for example, in a panel painting of a winged altarpiece from about 1500 in the Saint Nicholas church of Prešov in present-day Slovakia (Figure 11.12).
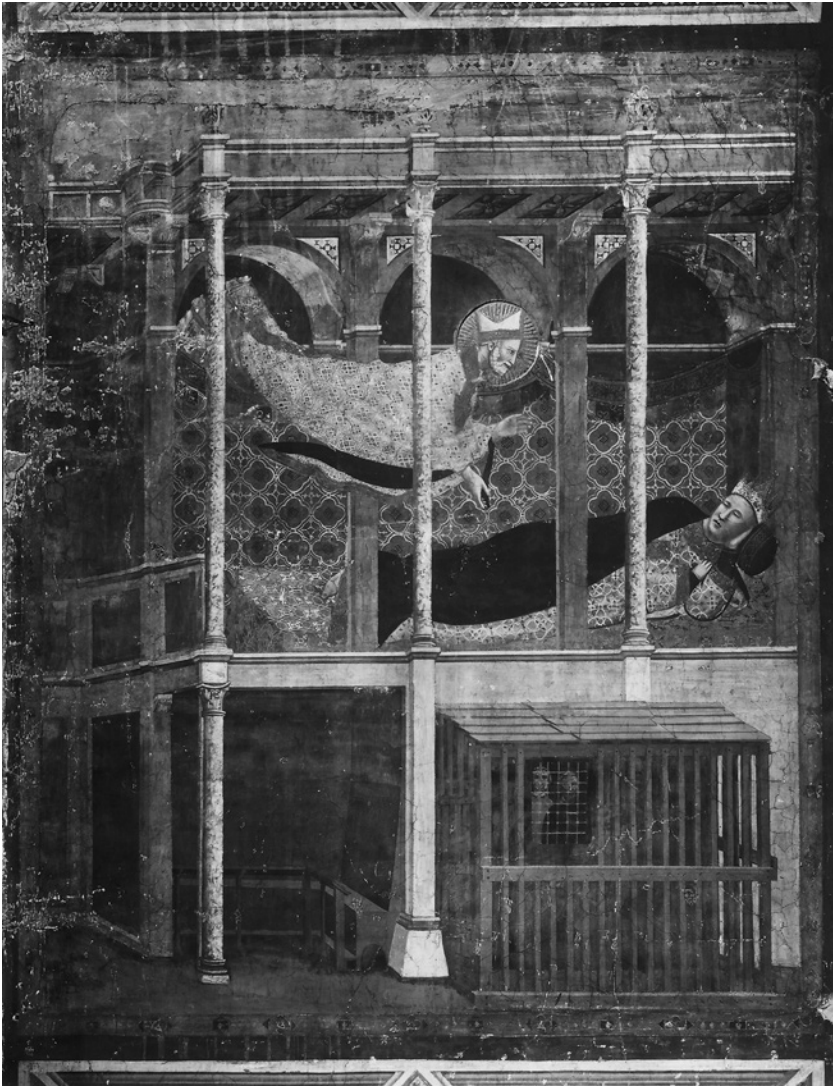
Figure 11.11 Constantine asked by Saint Nicholas to release three prisoners in a dream (wall painting, Giottino, 1320–1330; Saint Nicholas chapel, lower church, Basilica of St. Francis, Assisi. © Alinari Archives, Florence)

All the images mentioned and shown previously are paintings located in public religious spaces, in churches and chapels; therefore they offered their messages to a large audience. The examples of Saint Helena and the discovery of the True Cross were widely popular;[10] images with Saint Sylvester were particularly popular in Italy, while those with Saint Nicholas were also popular in regions
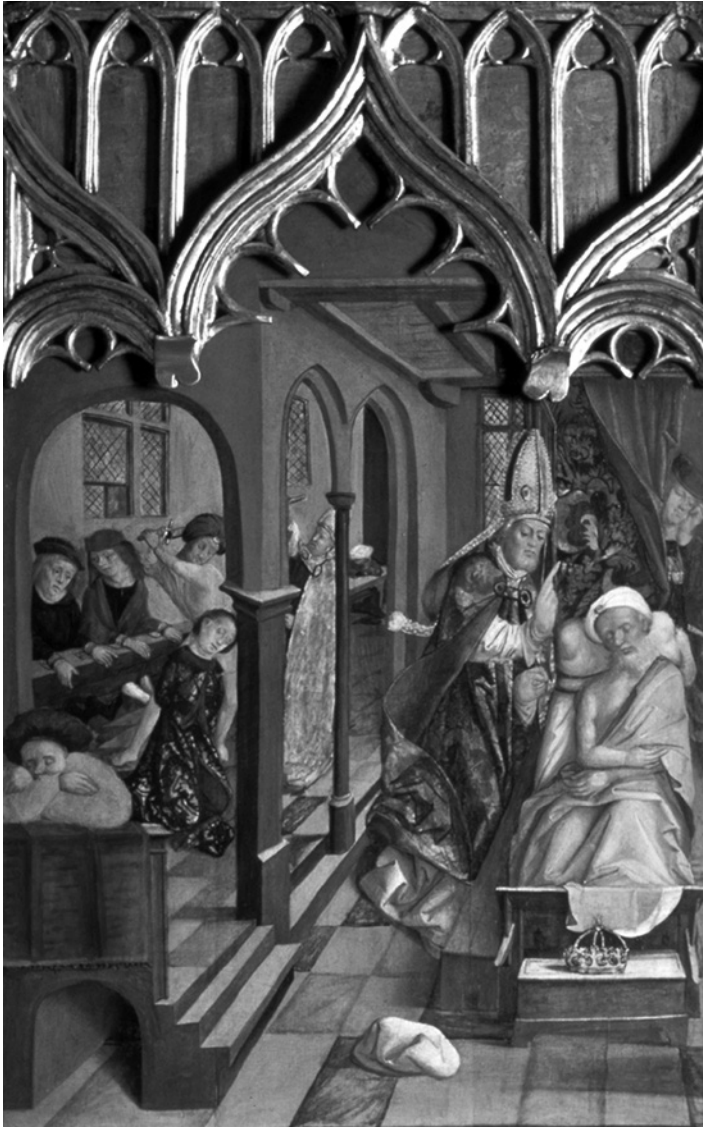
Figure 11.12 Constantine asked by Saint Nicholas to release three prisoners in a dream (panel painting from an altarpiece, c. 1500; Saint Nicholas Church, Prešov, Slovakia. © Institut für Realienkunde, Krems, Austria)

where the bishop of Myra was venerated. With only a few exceptions, Constantine and his activities are an important part of the visual rhetoric that the images or image cycles employ, but he scarcely ever plays the main role in them.

Visual representations of Constantine and various saints can also be found in other media not available to a wide public, that is, in manuscript illustrations. This refers particularly to some scenes of Constantine and Pope Sylvester illustrated in chronicles such as an Austrian example from about 1470. The text and illustration concentrate on two events: one of them is Constantine's dream during his sickness in which Saint Peter and Saint Paul appeared and sent him to Sylvester (Figure 11.13); the second is Pope Sylvester's baptism of Constantine (Figure 11.14).

Figure 11.13 Saint Peter and Saint Paul appearing in a dream of the sick Constantine (manuscript illumination, *Historienbibel*, mid-fifteenth c.; Vienna, Austrian National Library, Ms. 2766, fol. 249v. © Austrian National Library, Vienna, and Institut für Realienkunde, Krems, Austria)
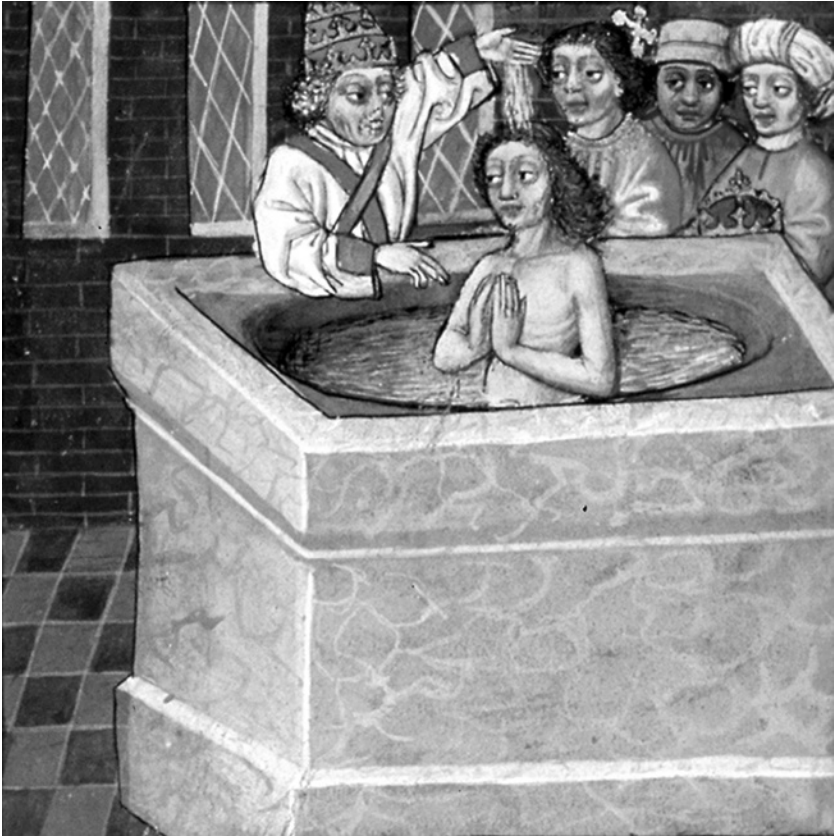
Figure 11.14 Pope Sylvester's baptism of Constantine (manuscript illumination, *Historien-bibel*, mid-fifteenth c.; Vienna, Austrian National Library, Ms. 2766, fol. 249v. © Austrian National Library, Vienna, and Institut für Realienkunde, Krems, Austria)

A south German manuscript from around 1420 of the thirteenth-century world chronicle of Jans Enikel shows the story of Constantine's sickness, but following the text a bit differently, again with Saint Peter standing by Constantine's sickbed and sending him to Sylvester to be cured (Figure 11.15).[11] In other chronicles, Constantine is portrayed alone, as a ruler, without any close reference to the popular legends or narratives of his life (Figure 11.16).

In one of the preceding examples, the panel from Sankt Konstantin near Völs am Schlern in South Tyrol (Figures 11.5 and 11.6), the visual representation of Constantine was identified as a probable crypto-portrait of Emperor Maximilian I. Other late medieval rulers also saw Constantine as an ideal model for themselves. One particular example is Charles IV, king of Bohemia and
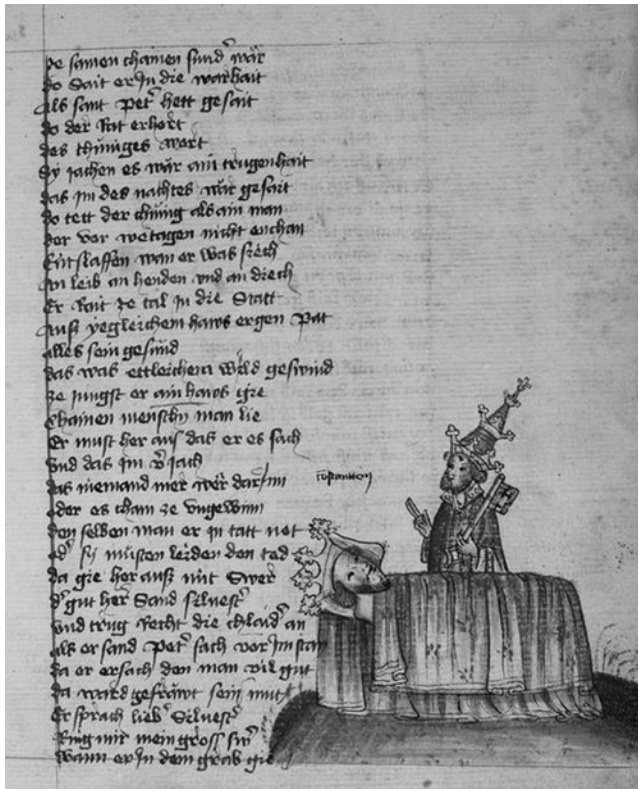
Figure 11.15 Saint Peter at Constantine's sickbed (manuscript illumination, Jans Enikel, World chronicle, Passau, c. 1420; Heidelberg, University Library, Cod. Pal. Germ. 336, fol. 255r. http://digi.ub.uni-heidelberg.de/diglit/cpg336/0523?sid= dc9f698b5a80538ec0767e793074c5f6)

emperor of the Holy Roman Empire. For him, the tradition of Emperor Constantine played an especially important role: he saw himself as a successor to Constantine on the emperor's throne.[12] This, however, did not have much influence on the visual representations ordered or donated by or for Charles. None of the large wall painting cycles of his period contain any scenes from the legends associated with Constantine.[13] Only one iconographic type is recognizable as a probable model for a wall portrait: a painting in the Saint Catherine chapel of Karlštejn castle, representing Charles IV and his third wife, Anne of Schweidnitz (Świdnica). They stand opposite each other, both holding the relic of the cross situated between them (Figure 11.17). This type follows the portrayal of Constantine and Helena that is so characteristic for icons of the Eastern Church: at least here a stylistic model drawn from representations of Constantine can be recognized.[14]

Figure 11.16 Constantine the Great (manuscript illumination, *Chronica mundi a Nabuchod-nosor usque ad Carolum IV*, fifteenth c.; library of the Katholisch-theologische Universität Linz, Austria, Cod. A I/7 [Hs 5], fol. 9v. © Katholisch-theologische Universität Linz)

In terms of stylistic models, one also should not forget the well-known example of Jean, duc de Berry, as a particularly important point of comparison. In addition to the many other precious objects that he collected, Jean collected and commissioned medals showing Roman emperors like Augustus, Tiberius, Heraclius, and Constantine. A sixteenth-century bronze cast of a medal that Jean acquired in 1402, which was decorated with gems and that he later had replicated in gold, shows Constantine on horseback on the obverse and two allegorical female figures on the reverse. Art historical analysis suggests that the portrayal of the emperor from the medal was used by the Limbourg Brothers in the "Très Riches Heures," one of the famous books of hours of the duke from the 1410s.[15] The scene of the "Meeting of the Three Magi" shows one king that can be recognized as a copy of Constantine on the medal. Thus, a copy of the ancient emperor on the medal was utilized to

Figure 11.17 Emperor Charles IV and his wife, Anne of Schweidnitz (Świdnica), based on a probable model of Emperor Constantine, Saint Helena, and the True Cross (wall painting, 1350s; portal of the Saint Catherine chapel, Karlštejn Castle, Czech Republic. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Karl_Fourth_Bohemia_Anna_Schweidnitz.jpeg)

depict one of the Three Kings travelling to adore the new-born Jesus. In this visual representation, Constantine as an ideal emperor had become an ideal Holy King, a usage adopted by a third ruler who saw himself as such an ideal, that is, Jean, duc de Berry.

Conclusion

In the western Church, Constantine was not venerated as a saint. However, in a few examples, one can find him represented as such in late medieval western religious art. The other visual representations of Constantine in the late Middle Ages can be traced in different contexts following at least three distinct patterns. First, in a secular upper class context he could become the model of an ideal historical emperor for contemporary rulers, for whom his image was depicted in different kinds of representations interlinking them with him. Second, and more frequently, he was portrayed in religious contexts, always positively, but usually not as the main focal point of the scene or narrative. Typically, Constantine figures as a participant in different registers in visual narratives that focus on the legends of Saint Sylvester, Saint Nicholas, Saints Peter and Paul, and, in particular, Saint Helena. In the cycles of Saint Sylvester, the general statement was the predominance of the Papacy over Constantine, who, in medieval political context, serves as the emperor of the Holy Roman Empire, either directly or indirectly. The third and most frequent pattern in which

Constantine appears in late medieval religious art shows him in the narratives portraying the discovery and verification of the identity of the True Cross. If and when portrayed there, he mostly appears as a rather passive ruler figure who merely escorts Helena, his more participatory holy mother. His role often is limited to inactive observation of the discovery and verification of the Cross. The dominant position is occupied by his mother.

Notes

1 See, generally, Marti, 2007, pp. 133–47.
2 Constantine's medieval tradition has been studied extensively, e.g., Grünwald, 1992, pp. 461–85; Mierau, 2007, pp. 113–32; Goltz and Schlange-Schöningen, 2008, passim.
3 See, generally, Borgehammar, 1991; Drijvers, 1992; Baert, 2004a. See also Baert, 2000, pp. 9–58; Baert, 2004b, pp. 123–50; Baert, 2013a, pp. 32–55; Baert, 2013b, pp. 683–97. For the early modern period see also Heussler, 2006.
4 See Franzen, 2006, pp. 612–3.
5 See Stampfer, 2000, pp. 61–2; Naredi-Rainer and Madersbacher, 2007, p. 621.
6 See Kluger, 2012, pp. 301–12.
7 See, generally, Aiello, 1992, pp. 17–58.
8 Kluger, 2012, p. 311.
9 See Acidini Luchinat and Neri Lusanna, 1998.
10 For Italy, see also in particular Bertelli, 2001.
11 For a textual analysis of the part on Constantine in the chronicle see Seidl, 2013, pp. 223–38.
12 See Mierau, 2008, pp. 109–38; Kubinová, 2009, pp. 320–27.
13 Kubinová, 2009, p. 325.
14 Mierau, 2008, p. 113.
15 See, e.g., Husband, 2008, p. 290. For the general relation of the medals and the Limbourgs's work see Jones, 1979, pp. 35–44.

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12 Constantine and the *Renovatio Romae* in the Renaissance and Baroque

George L. Gorse

In 1486, the colossal fragments of Constantine (Figure 12.1), which were originally part of a representation of the seated imperial judge or Cosmocrator (Ruler of the Universe), a Jupiter–Apollo–Sun figure sitting in absolute judgment, were brought from the ruined Basilica of Maxentius-Constantine in the Roman Forum, then identified as the "Templum Pacis,"[1] to the medieval Conservators' Palace of the guilds and magistrates on the Capitoline Hill by Genoese Pope Innocent VIII Cibo. The transfer was a monumental statement about the renewal of Rome, the Renaissance *caput mundi* (or head of the world), vis-à-vis the display of antique sculpture (or *spolia* trophy) in the central courtyard of papal-communal Rome.[2] This sculptural *translatio* followed the Council of Constance in 1417 and the refoundation of Rome as the center of papal power after the "Babylonian Captivity" of the fourteenth century in Avignon, and thus followed Schism and rival French and Italian popes of the late Trecento and early Quattrocento. From Roman Pope Martin V Colonna through Eugenius IV to Nicholas V, Pius II, Paul II, Sixtus IV, Innocent VIII, and Alexander VI, a gradual "Renovatio" of Early Renaissance Rome[3] came about through papal-communal urbanism.[4] This redefinition of the Eternal City centered on the restoration and expansion of the more than millennial (fourth-century) Constantinian transept *martyrium* church of Old St. Peter's. The new monumental cruciform crossing of the church signaled a universal claim to spiritual papal authority, ascendant in precedence over the Constantinian early-medieval basilican church and the palace of St. John the Baptist of the Bishop of Rome at the Lateran. It was a shift from east to west, to the tomb of St. Peter, "Rock of the Church," Gatekeeper to Heaven and Hell, first Vicar of Christ, a new foundation of papal power, and an epic story as told by Carroll William Westfall, *In This Most Perfect Paradise: Alberti, Nicholas V, and the Invention of Conscious Urban Planning in Rome, 1447–55*, along with other architectural-urban historians, most notably James Ackerman, Christoph Frommel, and Charles Burroughs.[5]

A half-century later, the bronze equestrian portrait of Roman Emperor Marcus Aurelius (as a Greek bearded Stoic philosopher) was brought from the Lateran, where it had been viewed by pilgrims throughout the Middle Ages as the first Christian emperor Constantine, now to the center of Michelangelo's High

Figure 12.1 Constantine Fragments, Courtyard of Palazzo Conservatori, Rome, c. 312 CE
(Photo: Author)

Renaissance scenic piazza forum of the Campidoglio.[6] A dynamic radial oval crown-shaped or cranial *caput mundi*, Michelangelo's Capitoline Hill project of 1538–1568, created a monumental communal panoptic forum space. It was an urban theatre and third *Renovatio Romae*, at the beginning of Paul III Farnese's papacy, a project rising from the ashes of the devastating (even apocalyptic) Hapsburg Sack of Rome under Pope Clement VII de' Medici, just seven years before, in May 1527.[7] In Michelangelo's design, the hierarchical Senator's (governor's) palace stood at the head of the urban body, framed by grand entrance staircase and topographical river god statue spoils (of the Nile and Tiber with a seated Minerva, goddess of reason, in her central niche) and balanced by flanking Conservators' and Capitoline (guild office) palaces to the sides. The ensemble was unified scenically with giant Augustan Corinthian Orders over portico agoras, rising above the city, revealed like a classical apparition in processional ascent to a new triumphal axial way on the Cordonato. Thus, a stark moral choice was posed (like Hercules at the Crossroads) between a steep ascent of the adjacent medieval penitent *scala santa* to the austere Franciscan Church of Santa Maria in Aracoeli (the site of Augustan revelation by the Roman Sibyl) and the gradual secular incline to the Renaissance piazza. This historic parting of ways resulted in large part (I would argue) from the transfer of the colossal fragments of Constantine in 1486 to the site where these prominent *spolia*

remain today as a popular photographic backdrop. In essence, the transfer of 1486 had sought to make Rome a Constantinian processional city, facing the Vatican across the Eternal City with back turned to the Roman Forum (the sleeping Virgilian pastoral Campo Vaccino) in a unitary perspectival space. It was a neo-Constantinian *Renovatio Romae*, a new Papal Christian Eternal City, standing in critical contest between the papacy and the commune.

Moreover, in April of 1536, the Hapsburg Holy Roman Emperor Charles V, after humiliating Papal Rome with siege and sack, used as part of his grand triumphal entry into Rome the looming Arch of Constantine, a votive monument from the pagan Senate of 315 CE in honor of Constantine's victory over his pagan rival Emperor Maxentius. The triumphal route followed the *Via Sacra* through the arch of Titus, decorated with Menorah and *spolia* reliefs of Solomon's second Temple of Jerusalem (sacked by Romans in 70 CE), through the Forum Romanum to the 203 CE arch of Septimius Severus of 203 CE before surmounting the Capitoline. The procession culminated his conquest of Rome, as it later would his conquest of Italy after the naval victory and siege of Tunis against Barbarossa and the Turks in 1535.[8] Charles V associated himself with Constantine in the taming and thus re-Christianizing ancient (made) new Rome, an imperial image rarely broached in Renaissance triumphal entry pageant studies or Hapsburg iconography with their Augustan focus.[9] It is this contested Constantinian notion of the Eternal City, and the classical *Renovatio Romae* of the Renaissance and Baroque, I want to argue, that is caught between rival Hapsburg and Papal and communal power during the raging Italian (French vs. Hapsburg) wars of 1494 through the European Treaty of Catéau-Cambrésis in 1559.[10]

Rome in the Renaissance and Baroque is seen as an eternal Petrine city. Actually, it was a new Constantinian city, or else, a new Constantinian Petrine city, in imperial refoundation. For the first Christian Emperor elevated the image of Christ, but St. Peter and the Papacy as well, from west to east, from Rome to Constantinople, and to Jerusalem and Bethlehem, in monumental sacred *martyrium* form, representing two poles of the Mediterranean world, the new (contested) Christian *mare nostrum*.[11] Continuing the Early Renaissance *Renovatio Romae*, Pope Julius II della Rovere, nephew of Sixtus IV, began the destruction and rebuilding of New St. Peter's, a second High Renaissance city after 1505.[12] Conquering Spanish monarchs Ferdinand and Isabella commissioned Donato Bramante to monumentalize the site of St. Peter's martyrdom at the Tempietto, a classical Vitruvian navel *martyrium*, on the Janiculum, refounding in 1503 Herculean Christian Rome at San Pietro in Montorio, leading to Bramante's colossal centralized *martyrium* and Michelangelo's projected tomb complex of Julius II as New St. Peter's in 1505.[13]

With the New Church, Bramante in effect put the Pantheon on top of the Temple of Peace, a Constantinian refoundation of classical pagan to Christian Petrine Rome, from the fourth-century urban margins to the Renaissance and Baroque center, an Augustinian "City of God" (*Civitas Dei*), in which the Solomonic (spiral) columns of Pope Gregory the Great's early-medieval *martyrium*

altar screen were incorporated into the upper reliquary niches of Bramante's diagonal crossing piers in relation to Bernini's dynamic Eucharistic theatre revelation, his bronze Baldacchino and colossal conversion crossing statues, a re-enactment of the Passion around the high altar, a unified mystery of dark into light (a Baroque chiaroscuro) work of art (*Propaganda Fide*).[14] To the north, Popes Julius II and Leo X de' Medici commissioned a series of Vatican apartment rooms in ceremonial sequence, from public to private.[15] In modern art history, Raphael's "School of Athens" in the Stanza della Segnatura of 1510 has defined the High Renaissance in competition with Michelangelo's Sistine Chapel ceiling (of 1508–1512) next door, a struggle between classical serenity and Christian aspiration.[16] Adjacent to the Stanza della Segnatura, in ceremonial functional sequence, Raphael's Stanza Heliodoro moves from papal serenity and harmony of the four faculties of a private library and canon law tribunal to semi-private audience chamber with colorful and dramatic historical scenes of the pope (rabbi) protecting the Temple of Jerusalem from Roman pagan invasion (echoes of the contemporary Italian wars) to the release of St. Peter from chains and prison, Julius II's cardinal church of San Pietro in Vincoli in Rome.[17] On the other side of the Segnatura, Raphael's Sala dell'Incendio (the music room) represented Pope Leo X taming the (Trojan) fires in the Vatican Borgo and saving the papal port of Ostia from Turkish pirates, themes of papal refoundation and divine protection of Rome and the Mediterranean.[18]

Yet the most important room in the papal apartment sequence, the Sala di Costantino, the ceremonial salon of Constantine, has been relegated to the periphery in Renaissance art historical discussions, a stylistic remnant (a transition) of the "late Renaissance" and "Maniera" style, without considering its true significance at the center of this Constantinian urban program.[19] This was the head of the Vatican papal apartment in a triumphal sequence from public to private rooms, not the other way around. In this grand reception room, the center of Julian to Leonine and Clementine Rome, the crucial Battle of Constantine against Maxentius commands the south wall in an illusionistic *all'antica* tapestry series, making this a royal *aula magna* and triumphal recreation of Hellenistic battle scenes of Alexander the Great against Persian Emperor Darius to the modern period (Figure 12.2). According to Eusebius, Constantine's Battle of the Milvian Bridge was like Moses' crossing the Red Sea, a Passover and Liberation, a cutting of the Gordian Knot, a crossing of the Rubicon, appropriate to Julius II, the warrior pope, founder of this urban reconception.[20] On the east wall is Constantine receiving a vision of the Cross before the battle, a self-conscious (much more than antiquarian) evocation of Trajan's Column and "Adlocutio" of the Emperor to his troops before triumph over the Dacian barbarians on the Danube, a visual translation of pagan *spolia* to Christian revelation in this new Constantinian Rome. On the north wall is Pope Sylvester (a portrait of Clement VII) within the setting of Old St. Peter's conferring his blessing on Emperor Constantine, receiving the Donation of Constantine appropriate to papal universal claims of sacramental over temporal power, in response to Lorenzo Valla and other contemporary humanist critics

Figure 12.2 Raphael & Giulio Romano, Adlocutio and Battle of Milvian Bridge, Sala di Costantino, Vatican, 1518–1521 (Art Resource)

of its sanctity and authenticity (Figure 12.3).[21] And on the west wall, finally, is the Baptism of Constantine by Pope Sylvester (again a portrait of Clement VII) in the Baptistery of the Lateran (Figure 12.4), embracing both centers of episcopal–papal Rome, an apsidal *martyrium*, a papal foundation or initiation of the Holy Roman Empire, a sacred historic precedent to the early-medieval baptism of the Frankish king Clovis and the coronation of Emperor Charlemagne, a "second Constantine." This was the ceremonial reception core of papal power in Renaissance Rome, yet it is largely overlooked today. And this grand salon led into the adjacent Vatican Loggie of Bramante and Raphael and his workshop, overlooking Rome, a Vitruvian (*Tabularium* on the Roman Forum) narrative of Creation and the Old Testament in festive *all'antica* painted stucco grotesque style, inspired by Emperor Nero's *Domus Aurea*, a triumph of classical and Judeo-Christian to Constantinian and Modern Rome, a new "Golden Age" of scenic urban representation and ritual sequence.[22]

In 1655–1667, Pope Alexander VII Chigi completed the *Renovatio Romae* with the commissioning of Bernini's Piazza di San Pietro, reaching out to embrace the faithful in an oval transverse circus theatre, a Christian Colosseum of the saved, encircled by the low, austere Herculean fortitude of Tuscan Doric orders in travertine. It offered full papal visibility and panoptic benediction, enclosing the sacred piazza forum as a heavenly atrium, in which was found the Baroque dynamic unity of the arts and a pantheon community of martyr saints standing witness and representing *urbem et orbem*.[23] Thus, the Renaissance to

Figure 12.3 Raphael & Giulio Romano, Donation of Constantine, Sala di Costantino, Vatican, 1518–1521 (Art Resource)

Figure 12.4 Raphael & Giulio Romano, Baptism of Constantine, Sala di Costantino, Vatican, 1518–1521 (Art Resource)

Baroque embracing of Constantinian Petrine Rome, classical Christian refoundation to the Modern, culminated over the world contested. Yet often ignored was Constantine's "Vision of the True Cross" by Bernini in the north vestibule of St. Peter's at the entrance to the Scala Regia (Royal Staircase) which led triumphantly to the Vatican palace apartments above (Figure 12.5).[24] In the tradition of Leonardo da Vinci, Bernini portrayed the first Christian Emperor on a rearing horse, a dynamic equestrian portraiture and personification of Rome, in vision, sight, revelation, transformation, refounding Rome, in ascent through the dynamic perspectival staircase, which accentuates the *ascensio* to the Vatican beyond, the ceremonial Sala Regia and papal Sistine Chapel, a kind of Jacob's Ladder to Heaven. Church and palace are bridged in Constantine's heroic conquering Vision of the Cross, from Rome and the Tiber, through the Castel Sant'Angelo, the protective papal fortress with intervening Archangel St. Michael, Guardian of Heaven with drawn sword on top, and Bernini's angels on Ponte Sant'Angelo, holding the Instruments of the Passion in triumphal, penitential pilgrimage, through the Vatican Borgo, to the Piazza di San Pietro

Figure 12.5 Gianlorenzo Bernini, Constantine's Vision of the True Cross and Scala Regia, Vatican, 1654–1670 (Art Resource)

and the Church, through the monumental Roman barrel-vaulted spaces of Maximian to Constantinian Rome, Templum Pacis, to the Pantheon-inspired, Florentine Brunelleschian ogival dome over the crossing of Michelangelo, to the Bramantean to Bernini scenic crossing of St. Peter's, bronze Solomonic baldacchino *martyrium* and the Cathedra Petri (seat of power). This was profoundly a Constantinian *Renovatio Romae* from beginning to end, a Renaissance to Baroque launch of early modern Europe and the New World, a new beginning of early modern royal power in the age of monarchy to revolution. Constantine founded the modern world.

Notes

1 The Renaissance identified the Basilica of Maxentius-Constantine as the "Temple of Peace" and this played a part in its iconography. These adjacent buildings were not distinguished until the nineteenth century and modern archaeology. See Coarelli, 2007, pp. 95–7, 125–8.

2 Jones, 1926, pp. 5–6, 11–4; Haskell and Penny, 1981, pg. 46; Bober and Rubinstein, 1986, pp. 100, 217; Presicce, 2007, pp. 117–30. I thank Professor Ray Van Dam for this last reference. I would also like to thank Shane Bjornlie for the conference that germinated this volume and John Smedley and the external readers at Ashgate for their useful comments.

3 Following Giorgio Vasari's later, sixteenth-century historical periodization.

4 Pastor, 1899–1953, vols. 1–5; Partner, 1972.

5 Krautheimer, 1965, pp. 32–6; Frommel, 1973, vol. 1, pp. 11–24; Westfall, 1974; Ackerman, 1982, pp. 3–17; Krautheimer, 1983, pp. 7–40, 93–121; Frommel, 1986, pp. 39–65; Burroughs, 1990; Heydenreich, 1996, pp. 55–73.

6 Ackerman, 1986, pp. 136–70; Lotz, 1995, pp. 94–7; Burroughs, 2002, pp. 176–81; Frommel, 2007, pp. 182–4.

7 Hook, 1972; Chastel, 1983.

8 Chastel, 1975, pp. 197–206; Jacquot, 1975, 431; Mitchell, 1979, pp. 125–9; Madonna, 1980, pp. 63–8.

9 Brandi, 1965; Yates, 1975, pp. 57–97.

10 Ady, 1975, pp. 343–67; Spooner, 1976, pp. 334–58.

11 Krautheimer, 1980; Brown, 1981; Bowersock, 2005, pp. 5–15.

12 Pastor, 1899–1953, vols. 4–6; Shaw, 1993.

13 Bruschi, 1973, pp. 129–75; Lotz, 1995, pp. 11–25; Thoenes, 2005, pp. 93–110; Frommel, 2007, pp. 99–112.

14 Lavin, 1968; Lavin, 2005, pp. 111–44.

15 Shearman, 1971, pp. 369–424; Rowland, 2005, pp. 95–8.

16 Dussler, 1971, pp. 69–77; Hibbard, 1974, pp. 99–143; Hall, 1997; Rowland, 2005, pp. 98–111.

17 Dussler, 1971, pp. 78–82; Jones and Penny, 1983, pp. 113–32; Rowland, 2005, pp. 111–4.

18 Badt, 1959, pp. 35–59; Dussler, 1971, pp. 82–6; Jones and Penny, 1983, pp. 147–54; Rowland, 2005, pp.115–9; Reilly, 2010, pp. 308–25.

19 Hartt, 1958, vol. 1, pp. 42–51; Dussler, 1971, pp. 86–8; Quednau, 1979.

20 Eusebius, *Vita Constantini* 38.

21 Camporeale, 2014.

22 Davidson, 1985.

23 Krautheimer, 1985, pp. 63–73; Hibbard, 1990, pp. 151–9; Marder, 1998, pp. 123–67; Lavin, 2005, pp. 144–59.

24 Krautheimer, 1985, passim; Hibbard, 1990, pp. 163–6, 209–12; Marder, 1998, pp. 169–85; Lavin, 2005, pp. 159–82.

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