

TRANSLATION

Eusebius Pamphili
On the Life of the Blessed Emperor Constantine

BOOK I

I–II. *Preface*

I–3. *Constantine's immortality*

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

7–9. *Constantine superior to other emperors*

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

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

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

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

10–11. *Eusebius' purpose and plan*

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

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

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

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

12–24. *Birth, family, and youth*12. *Childhood among the tyrants*

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

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

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

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

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

(6) That was one action which illustrates the generosity of the man in question. The other might provide manifest evidence of his holy concern for divine things. **15** Provincial governors were throughout the world persecuting the godly by the decree of those in power. Starting first of all from the imperial palaces themselves the Godbeloved martyrs endured the trials of true religion, facing with eager fortitude fire and iron, deep sea and every kind of death, so that the whole imperial service might soon be stripped of Godfearing men, a policy which had the chief effect of depriving its perpetrators of God's protection; for by persecuting the Godfearers they also expelled their prayers. **16** (1) To Constantius alone a wise counsel born of a pious mind occurred. He performed an act which is remarkable to hear of, and astonishing to have done. A choice was offered to all the imperial servants under him, from lowly domestics to those with commissions as governors: he proposed that either they sacrifice to the demons and be permitted to stay with him enjoying the customary advancement, or if they did not comply they should be excluded from all access to him and be removed and dismissed from his acquaintance and intimacy. (2) When they had divided two ways, some to the latter group and some to the former, and the nature of the decision of each was clearly demonstrated, the amazing man then finally revealed his secret trick: he condemned the one group for cowardice and self-concern, and warmly commended the others for their sense of duty to God. Thereupon he declared those who had betrayed

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

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

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

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

19–21. *Constantine joins his father*

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

20 (1) As a result of this those then in power observed with envy and fear that the young man was fine, sturdy and tall, full of good sense. They reckoned that his stay with them was not safe for them, and devised secret plots against him, though out of respect for his father they avoided inflicting public death upon him. (2) The young man was aware of this, and when once and again the plottings were with God-given insight detected by him, he sought safety in flight, in this also preserving his likeness to the great prophet Moses. In the whole affair God was working with him, intending that he should be present to succeed his father.

21 (1) Immediately he had escaped the schemes of the plotters he made all speed to get to his father, and he arrived after so long away at the very moment when his father's life was reaching its final crisis. When Constantius saw his son quite unexpectedly

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

22-4. *Constantine declared Emperor*

22 (1) The Empire however was not left ungoverned. Arrayed in his father's own purple robe Constantine emerged from his father's halls, showing to one and all that, as though revived, his father reigned through him. Then he led the cortège, and with his father's friends about him he formed the escort for his father. Enormous crowds of people and military guards, some before and some following behind, attended the Godbeloved in full state. All of them honoured the Thriceblessed with acclamations and laudations, and with unanimous consent praised the accession of the son as a new life for the dead; and immediately from the first word in their cries of acclamation they proclaimed the new Emperor Imperator and Venerable Augustus. (2) They lauded the deceased with their acclamations for the son, and they blessed the son as appointed to succeed such a father; all the provinces under his rule were full of happiness and unutterable joy, because not even for the briefest moment had they been deprived of orderly imperial rule. This was the end of a pious and devout life which God displayed to our generation in the case of the Emperor Constantius.

23 As to the others who used the methods of war to persecute the churches of God, I have decided that it is not proper to report the way their lives ended in the present account, nor to stain the record of good deeds by presenting their contrary. Experience of the events is sober warning enough to those whose own eyes and ears have known the story of what happened to each one.

24 In such a way then did God, the President of the whole world, of his own will select Constantine, sprung from such a

father, as universal ruler and governor, that no man could claim the precedence which he alone possessed, since the rest owed the rank they held to election by others.

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

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

[28] **25** (1) Once he was established in imperial power, he first attended to the needs of his father's portion, supervising with loving care all the provinces which had previously been allotted to his father's government; if any barbarian tribes living beside the River Rhine and the Western Ocean dared to rebel, he subdued them all and turned their savagery to gentleness, while others he repulsed and chased off his territory like wild beasts, when he saw that they were incurably resistant to change to a gentle life.

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

(2) When these things were settled to his satisfaction, he turned his attention to the other parts of the inhabited world, and first crossed to the British nations which lie enclosed by the edge of Ocean; he brought them to terms, and then surveyed the other parts of the world, so that he might bring healing where help was needed. **26** When he then perceived that the whole earthly element was like a great body, and next became aware that the head of the whole, the imperial city of the Roman Empire, lay oppressed by bondage to a tyrant, he first gave opportunity for those who governed the other parts to rescue it, inasmuch as they were senior in years; but when none of these was able to give aid, and even those who did make the attempt had met a shameful end, he declared that his life was not worth living if he were to allow the imperial city to remain in such a plight, and began preparations to overthrow the tyranny.

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

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

devices practised by the tyrant, he sought a god to aid him. He regarded the resources of soldiers and military numbers as secondary, for he thought that without the aid of a god [29] these could achieve nothing; and he said that what comes from a god's assistance is irresistible and invincible. (2) He therefore considered what kind of god he should adopt to aid him, and, while he thought, a clear impression came to him, that of the many who had in the past aspired to government, those who had attached their personal hopes to many gods, and had cultivated them with drink-offerings, sacrifices and dedications, had first been deceived by favourable predictions and oracles which promised welcome things, but then met an unwelcome end, nor did any god stand at their side to protect them from divinely directed disaster; only his own father had taken the opposite course to theirs by condemning their error, while he himself had throughout his life honoured the God who transcends the universe, and had found him a saviour and guardian of his Empire and a provider of everything good. (3) He judiciously considered these things for himself, and weighed well how those who had confided in a multitude of gods had run into multiple destruction, so that neither offspring nor shoot was left in them, no root, neither name nor memorial among mankind, whereas his father's God had bestowed on his father manifest and numerous tokens of his power. He also pondered carefully those who had already campaigned against the tyrant. They had assembled their forces with a multitude of gods and had come to a dismal end: one of them had retreated in disgrace without striking a blow, while the other had met a casual death by assassination in his own camp. He marshalled these arguments in his mind, and concluded that it was folly to go on with the vanity of the gods which do not exist, and to persist in error in the face of so much evidence, and he decided he should venerate his father's God alone.

28–32. *The vision of Constantine*

28 (1) This God he began to invoke in prayer, beseeching and imploring him to show him who he was, and to stretch out his right hand to assist him in his plans. As he made these prayers and earnest supplications there appeared to the Emperor a most

remarkable divine sign. If someone else had reported it, it would perhaps not be easy [30] to accept; but since the victorious Emperor himself told the story to the present writer a long while after, when I was privileged with his acquaintance and company, and confirmed it with oaths, who could hesitate to believe the account, especially when the time which followed provided evidence for the truth of what he said? (2) About the time of the midday sun, when day was just turning, he said he saw with his own eyes, up in the sky and resting over the sun, a cross-shaped trophy formed from light, and a text attached to it which said, 'By this conquer'. Amazement at the spectacle seized both him and the whole company of soldiers which was then accompanying him on a campaign he was conducting somewhere, and witnessed the miracle.

29 He was, he said, wondering to himself what the manifestation might mean; then, while he meditated, and thought long and hard, night overtook him. Thereupon, as he slept, the Christ of God appeared to him with the sign which had appeared in the sky, and urged him to make himself a copy of the sign which had appeared in the sky, and to use this as protection against the attacks of the enemy. 30 When day came he arose and recounted the mysterious communication to his friends. Then he summoned goldsmiths and jewellers, sat down among them, and explained the shape of the sign, and gave them instructions about copying it in gold and precious stones.

This was something which the Emperor himself once saw fit to let me also set eyes on, God vouchsafing even this. 31 (1) It was constructed to the following design. A tall pole plated with gold had a transverse bar forming the shape of a cross. Up at [31] the extreme top a wreath woven of precious stones and gold had been fastened. On it two letters, intimating by its first characters the name 'Christ', formed the monogram of the Saviour's title, *rho* being intersected in the middle by *chi*. These letters the Emperor also used to wear upon his helmet in later times. (2) From the transverse bar, which was bisected by the pole, hung suspended a cloth, an imperial tapestry covered with a pattern of precious stones fastened together, which glittered with shafts of light, and interwoven with much gold, producing an impression of indescribable beauty on those who saw it. This banner then, attached to the bar, was given equal dimensions of length and

breadth. But the upright pole, which extended upwards a long way from its lower end, below the trophy of the cross and near the top of the tapestry delineated, carried the golden head-and-shoulders portrait of the Godbeloved Emperor, and likewise of his sons. (3) This saving sign was always used by the Emperor for protection against every opposing and hostile force, and he commanded replicas of it to lead all his armies.

32 (1) That was, however, somewhat later. At the time in question, stunned by the amazing vision, and determined to worship no other god than the one who had appeared, he summoned those expert in his words, and enquired who this god was, and what was the explanation of the vision which had appeared of the sign. (2) They said that the god was the Onlybegotten Son of the one and only God, and that the sign which appeared was a token of immortality, and was an abiding trophy of the victory over death, which he had once won when he was present on earth. They began to teach him the reasons for his coming, explaining to him in detail the story of his self-accommodation to human conditions. [32] (3) He listened attentively to these accounts too, while he marvelled at the divine manifestation which had been granted to his eyes; comparing the heavenly vision with the meaning of what was being said, he made up his mind, convinced that it was as God's own teaching that the knowledge of these things had come to him. He now decided personally to apply himself to the divinely inspired writings. Taking the priests of God as his advisers, he also deemed it right to honour the God who had appeared to him with all due rites. Thereafter, fortified by good hopes in him, he finally set about extinguishing the menacing flames of tyranny.

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

33-6. *The crimes of Maxentius*

33 (1) Indeed, the one who had thus previously seized the imperial city was busily engaged in abominable and sacrilegious activities, so that he left no outrage undone in his foul and filthy behaviour. He parted lawful wives from husbands, and after misusing them quite disgracefully returned them to their husbands. He did this not to obscure or insignificant persons, but

insolently to those who held highest positions in the Roman Senate. So he misused disgracefully innumerable free-born women, yet found no way to satisfy his unrestrained and insatiable appetite. (2) But when he turned his hand also to Christian women, he was no longer able to devise convenient means for his adulteries. They would sooner yield their life to him for execution than their body for immoral use. **34** One woman, the wife of one of the senators with the office of prefect, when she learnt that those who procured such things for the tyrant had arrived—she was a Christian—and knew that her own husband out of fear had ordered them to seize her and take her away, [33] having requested a little time to put on her customary attire, went into her room and once alone plunged a dagger into her breast. Dying at once, she left her body to the procurers, but by her actions, which spoke louder than any words, she shewed to all mankind both present and future that the only thing that is invincible and indestructible is the chastity acclaimed among Christians. Such then did she prove to be.

35 (1) Before the one who committed such outrages all men cowered, peoples and princes, high and low, and were worn down by savage tyranny. Even if they kept quiet and endured the harsh servitude there was still no respite from the tyrant's murderous cruelty. On one occasion on a slight pretext he gave the people over to slaughter by his escorting guards, and there were killed countless multitudes of the people of Rome right in the middle of the city, by the weapons and arms, not of Goths or barbarians, but of their own countrymen. (2) The number of senators whose murder was encompassed as a means to acquire each one's property it would not be possible to calculate, since thousands were put to death, sometimes on one fictitious charge, sometimes on another. **36** (1) At their peak the tyrant's crimes extended to witchcraft, as for magical purposes he split open pregnant women, sometimes searched the entrails of new-born babies, slaughtered lions, and composed secret spells to conjure demons and to ward off hostilities. By these means he hoped he would gain the victory. (2) Ruling by these dictatorial methods in Rome he imposed on his subjects unspeakable oppression, so that [34] he brought them finally to the utmost scarcity and want of necessary food, such as our generation never remembers happening in Rome at any other time.

37–8. *Constantine's victory*

37 (1) Constantine meanwhile was moved to pity by all these things, and began making every armed preparation against the tyranny. So taking as his patron God who is over all, and invoking his Christ as saviour and succour, and having set the victorious trophy, the truly salutary sign, at the head of his escorting soldiers and guards, he led them in full force, claiming for the Romans their ancestral liberties. (2) Maxentius put his confidence more in the devices of sorcery than in the loyalty of his subjects, and did not even dare to go beyond the gates of the city, but fortified every place and territory and city which was under his dominion with an immense number of soldiers and countless military units. But the Emperor who relied upon the support of God attacked the first, second, and third formations of the tyrant, overcame them all quite easily at the very first onslaught, and advanced to occupy most of the land of Italy.

38 (1) He was now very near to Rome itself. Then, so that he should not be forced because of the tyrant to fight against the people of Rome, God himself drew the tyrant out, as if with chains, far away from the gates; and those ancient words against the wicked, widely disbelieved as mere legend, though in sacred books believably recorded for believers, by his divine actions he proved to be true for every single eye which saw his marvels, believing and unbelieving alike. (2) Accordingly, just as once in the time of Moses and the devout Hebrew tribe 'Pharaoh's chariots and his force he cast into the sea, and picked rider-captains [35] he overwhelmed in the Red Sea' (Exodus 15: 4), in the very same way Maxentius and the armed men and guards about him 'sank to the bottom like a stone' (Exodus 15: 5), when, fleeing before the force which came from God with Constantine, he went to cross the river lying in his path. When he himself joined its banks with boats and bridged it perfectly well, he had built an engine of destruction for himself, intending thus to catch the friend of God. (3) But the latter had his God present at his right hand, while Maxentius constructed in his cowardice the secret engines of his own destruction. Of him it could also be said that 'he dug a hole and excavated it, and will fall into the pit he made. His labour will return on his head, and on his pate will his wickedness fall' (Psalm 7: 16–17). (4) Thus then by God's will

the mechanism in the link and the device concealed in it gave way at a time which was not intended, the crossing parted, and the boats sank at once to the bottom with all their men, the coward himself first of all, and then the infantry and guards about him, just as the divine oracles had previously proclaimed: 'They sank like lead in much water' (Exodus 15: 10). (5) So even if not in words, yet surely in deeds, in the same way as those who accompanied the great Servant Moses, these who won this victory from God might be thought thus to have raised the same hymn against the ancient wicked tyrant and said: 'Let us sing to the Lord, for he is gloriously glorified; horse and rider he threw into the sea; he became a succour and shelter for my salvation' (Exodus 15: 1–2); and, 'Who is like you among the gods, Lord, who is like you? Glorified among the saints, wonderful, gloriously doing miracles' (Exodus 15: 11).

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

[36] 39 (1) These and other praises akin to them Constantine expressed in deeds to the universal Captain, the timely Giver of his victory, in the same way as the great Servant, and then rode in triumph into the imperial city. (2) Immediately all the members of the Senate and the other persons there of fame and distinction, as if released from a cage, and all the people of Rome, gave him a bright-eyed welcome with spontaneous acclamations and unbounded joy. Men with their wives and children and countless numbers of slaves with unrestrained cheers pronounced him their redeemer, saviour and benefactor. (3) He, however, being possessed of inward fear of God, was not inflated by their cries nor over-exuberant at their praises, but was conscious of the help of God; so he immediately offered up a prayer of thanksgiving to the Giver of his victory. 40 (1) He announced to all people in large lettering and inscriptions the sign of the Saviour, setting this up in the middle of the imperial city as a great trophy of victory over his enemies, explicitly inscribing this in indelible letters as the salvific sign of the authority of Rome and the protection of the whole empire. (2) He therefore immediately ordered a tall pole to be erected in the shape of a cross in the hand of a statue made to represent himself, and this text to be inscribed upon it word for word in Latin: 'By this salutary sign, the true proof of valour, I liberated your city, saved from the tyrant's yoke; moreover the

Senate and People of Rome I liberated and restored to their ancient splendour and brilliance.’

41 (1) The Godbeloved Emperor, proudly confessing in this way the victory-bringing cross, was entirely open in making the Son of God known to the Romans. (2) All the city’s population together, including the Senate and all the people, as they recovered from bitter tyrannical repression, seemed to be enjoying beams of purer light and to be participating in rebirth to a fresh new life. All the nations which bordered on the Ocean where the sun sets, set free from the evils which formerly oppressed them, kept rejoicing in happy gatherings as they hymned the mighty Victor, the Godfearing, the general Benefactor, and with one single voice they all acknowledged the common good of mankind which by God’s grace had dawned in Constantine.

41. 3–48. *Emperor of the West*

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

(3) An imperial letter was also published everywhere, granting the enjoyment of their goods to those whose property had been confiscated, and recalling to their own homes those who had suffered unjust exile. It also released from imprisonment and every kind of liability or threat at law those subjected to them by the tyrant’s savagery.

42 (1) The Emperor personally called together the ministers of God, regarding them honourably and cherishing them with highest consideration, since he favoured those men by deed and word as consecrated to his God. Thus he had as his table-companions men whose appearance was modest as to style of dress, but by no means modest in the consideration he gave them, because he thought he should have regard not to the man as most people see him but to the God honoured in each. He took them with him also wherever he set out on campaign, [38] trusting that in this too the one they worshipped would be present at his right hand. (42. 2) Indeed he also supplied rich help from his own resources to the churches of God, enlarging and elevating the places of worship, while beautifying the grander ecclesiastical sacred buildings with many dedications.

43 (1) He made all sorts of distributions to the poor, and apart from them showed himself compassionate and beneficent to those outside who approached him. For some poor desperate wretches who publicly solicited alms he would provide not only money or necessary food, but decent clothing for the body. For those who were originally of higher birth but had run on hard times he made more generous provision, with imperial magnanimity providing munificent benefactions to such persons: to some he made grants of land, others he promoted to various offices. (2) Those unfortunate enough to be orphaned he cared for in the father's stead, and repaired the vulnerability of widowhood for women by personal concern, so far as to find them husbands from his acquaintance, and rich men for orphaned girls deprived of parents. He managed this by supplementing the dowry needed for the brides to bring to those who were receiving them in the bond of marriage. (3) Just as the sun rises and spreads the beams of its light over all, so also Constantine shone forth with the rising sun from the imperial palace, as though ascending with the heavenly luminary, and shed upon all who came before his face the sunbeams of his own generous goodness. It was not possible to come near him without receiving some benefit, nor would the good hopes of those who looked to him for support ever be disappointed.

44–5. *Constantine deals with Church disputes*

44 (1) Towards all people in general he was such a man. But to the Church of God he paid particular personal attention. When some were at variance with each other in various places, like a universal bishop appointed by God he convoked councils of the ministers of God. [39] (2) He did not disdain to be present and attend during their proceedings, and he participated in the subjects reviewed, by arbitration promoting the peace of God among all; and he took his seat among them as if he were one voice among many, dismissing his praetorians and soldiers and bodyguards of every kind, clad only in the fear of God and surrounded by the most loyal of his faithful companions. (3) Then such as he saw able to be prevailed upon by argument and adopting a calm and conciliatory attitude, he commended most warmly, showing how he favoured general unanimity, but

the obstinate he rejected. 45 (1) There were even some who spoke harshly against him, and he tolerated them without resentment, with a gentle voice bidding them to behave reasonably and not be contentious. Some of them respected his rebukes and desisted, while those who were past curing and could not be brought to a sound mind he left in the hands of God, being unwilling himself to devise anything whatever to any person's hurt.

(2) For this reason it came about that those in Africa reached such a pitch of dissension that crimes were committed, some evil demon apparently resenting the unstinted present prosperity and driving those men on to criminal actions, in order to provoke the Emperor's fury against them. (3) His envy however did not prosper: the Emperor treated what was being done as ridiculous and said he understood the provocation of the Evil One; the crimes were not done by sane men, but by those either out of their minds or goaded to frenzy by the evil demon; they ought to be pitied rather than punished; he was in no way harmed by their lunatic folly, except in so far as he felt pain for them out of extreme kindness of heart.

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

46 Thus then the Emperor, serving God the overseer of all with his every action, took untiring care of his churches. God repaid him by putting all the barbarian nations beneath his feet, so that always and everywhere he raised trophies over his foes, and [40] by proclaiming him Victor among them all, and making him a terror to foes and enemies, though he was not naturally such, but the gentlest, mildest, and kindest man there ever was.

47 (1) While he was thus engaged, the second of those who had retired from power was caught organizing an assassination plot, and met a shameful death. He was the first whose honorific inscriptions and statues and whatever else of the kind had been accorded him anywhere in the world to acknowledge his rank, were removed because of his profane impiety. (2) After him others of the same family were caught organizing secret conspiracies against him, God miraculously disclosing the plots of all these to his servant by supernatural signs. (3) Indeed, he often vouchsafed him manifestations of deity, when divine visions were

miraculously displayed to him and provided him with all sorts of foreknowledge of future events. It is not possible to describe in words those unspeakable marvels from God's grace which God himself saw fit to bestow on his servant. (4) By these he was safely hedged about to the end as he lived his life, pleased at the loyalty of his subjects, and pleased also that he saw all those under him passing their lives in contentment, and utterly overjoyed at the happiness of the churches of God.

48. *Decennialia celebrations*

48 Such was he until the tenth anniversary of his accession was reached. For that he celebrated popular festivals everywhere, and offered up prayers of thanksgiving to God the King of all like sacrifices without fire and smoke.

49–59. *The crimes of Licinius*

49–50. *Breaking faith*

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

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

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

51–54.1. *Measures against Christians*

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

BOOK II

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

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

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

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

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

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

against his subjects, while for those injured by him no further hope of rescue remained. (2) With these considerations in mind the Emperor unhesitatingly [49] determined to extend his hand to save those who had reached extremes of misery. He began the normal preparations of military equipment, his whole force of infantry and cavalry formations was assembled, and leading all were the tokens of his hope in God for success.

4 (1) If ever he needed prayers, he was sure that he needed them now. He therefore provided himself with priests of God, supposing that these must be in his company and be present as sure guardians of his soul. (2) Predictably, the one who sheltered behind tyranny, learning that victories over enemies had been won by Constantine only because God worked with him, and that the priests just mentioned were in his company and constantly present, and that the emblem of the saving passion went before him and his whole army, dismissed these things as ridiculous, mocking them and abusing them with insulting words. For his part he kept about him seers and diviners, Egyptian druggists and wizards, sacrificial interpreters and prophets of what he thought of as gods. Then having appeased those he thought of as gods with sacrifices, he enquired what the final outcome of his campaign was likely to be. (3) With long prophecies in elegant verses from all the oracles they unanimously promised him that he would soon be victorious over enemies and win the war. Augurs announced that favourable results were signalled by the flight of birds, and *haruspices* declared that the arrangement of entrails gave similar indications. (4) Borne up by such deceptive promises as these he advanced with great confidence to resist to the best of his ability the onslaughts of the Emperor.

5 (1) As he was about to begin the war, [50] he called together the select members of his bodyguard and valued friends to one of the places which they consider sacred. It was a grove, well-watered and thickly growing, and all sorts of images of those he thought were gods were erected in it, carved in stone. He lit candles to them, and made the usual sacrifices, and then is said to have delivered such a speech as this:

(2) 'Friends and comrades, these are our ancestral gods, whom we honour because we have received them for worship

from our earliest forefathers. The commander of those arrayed against us has broken faith with the ancestral code and adopted godless belief, mistakenly acknowledging some foreign god from somewhere or other, and he even shames his own army with this god's disgraceful emblem. Trusting in him, he advances, taking up arms not against us, but first and foremost against the very gods he has offended. (3) Now is the moment which will prove which one is mistaken in his belief: it will decide between the gods honoured by us and by the other party. Either it will declare us victors, and so quite rightly demonstrate that our gods are true saviours and helpers, or else, if this one god of Constantine's, whoever he is and wherever he sprang from, defeats our troops, who are very numerous and perhaps numerically superior, let no one hereafter be in doubt which god he ought to worship, since he should go over to the winner and offer to him the prizes of victory. (4) If the foreign god whom we now mock should prove superior, let nothing stop us from acknowledging and honouring him too, saying goodbye to these, whose candles we light in vain. But if ours prevail, which is not in doubt, after our victory here let us launch the war against the godless.'

(5) Such was his speech to those present. The author of the present work was given this information shortly afterwards by those who personally heard his words. Addressing them in these terms he gave orders to his armies to begin the action.

6-10. *Licinius' attack repelled by God's aid*

6 (1) While this was being done a manifestation beyond description is said to have been seen among those subject to the tyrant. Various battalions of the armed men serving Constantine [51] were apparently seen in broad daylight marching through the cities as if they had won the battle. They were seen even though no such thing was in reality happening; by a divine and superior power the vision which was seen revealed in advance what was going to happen.

(2) When the armies engaged, the first act of war came from the one who had broken the compact of friendship. It was after that that Constantine, calling upon the Saviour God who is over all, and making this the signal to the soldiers around him,

defeated the first attacking force. Then soon afterwards he got the better of a second engagement, and now achieved yet greater successes with the saving trophy leading his own contingent. 7 Where this was displayed, there ensued a rout of the enemy, and pursuit by the victors. The Emperor became aware of this, and wherever he saw a unit of his own army in difficulties, he would give orders for the saving trophy to give support there as a sort of victorious antidote. Victory would at once ensue, as courage and strength by some divine favour braced up the strugglers.

8 (1) For this reason he ordered some of his personal guards, distinguished for physical strength, personal courage, and pious habits, to attend solely to the service of the standard. These men numbered at least fifty; their sole task was to escort and guard with their weapons the standard, taking it in turns to carry it on their shoulders. (2) These things the Emperor himself recounted to the present writer in a moment of leisure long after the events, adding a noteworthy miracle to his account. 9 (1) He said that in the middle of one engagement in the war, when the army was suffering massive noise and confusion, the soldier carrying the standard on his shoulder [52] got into a panic and handed it over to another man, so that he could escape from the battle. As soon as the other had received it, and he withdrew from the protection of the standard, a flying javelin pierced his midriff and ended his life. (2) Meanwhile, as he lay there dead, paying the penalty for cowardice and disloyalty, to the one who lifted up the saving trophy it became a life-saver; frequently the bearer was saved when javelins were aimed at him, and the staff of the trophy caught the missiles. It was a quite extraordinary miracle, how the enemy javelins when they reached the narrow circumference of the pole would stick fast in it, while the bearer was saved from death, as if nothing could ever strike those who perform this service. (3) The story comes not from us, but once again from the Emperor himself, who in our hearing reported this too in addition to other matters.

(4) When by the power of God he had won the first battles, he finally began to move forward, advancing his troops in good order. 10 (1) Those in the forefront of the enemy position were unable to withstand their first onslaught; dropping their weapons from their hands they surrendered at the Emperor's feet. He

received them all unharmed, delighted that the men's lives were saved. (2) Others stood to their arms and tried to give battle. When the Emperor was sure that they would not accept the friendly terms which he had offered, he sent in his army. They immediately turned and fled in rout. Some of them were then caught and killed according to the law of war, while others fell upon each other and died by their own swords.

11–14. *Constantine's religious and merciful conduct*

11 (1) Their commander was appalled by these events. When he perceived that he was stripped bare of the support of his own people, that the vast numbers of his own picked forces and confederacy were lost to him, and that [53] his hope in those he thought were gods had in the event proved worthless, he thereupon suffered the ignominy of flight. He fled, and with a few men crossed to the interior of his territory and reached safety, the Godbeloved having instructed his men not to pursue hard, so that the fugitive might reach safety. He hoped that, when he realized what evil he had come to, he might yet forsake his manic impetuosity, and come by a change of heart to a better frame of mind. (2) He conceived this idea out of excessive kindness of heart, and was ready to forget the past and to grant pardon to the unworthy. The other, however, did not desist from depravity, but piling evil upon evil committed yet worse crimes; he even dared to meddle again in the malignant arts of the sorcerers. It could be said of him, as well as of the ancient tyrant, that 'God hardened his heart' (Exodus 9: 12).

12 (1) While he was getting involved in things of such a kind, and pushing himself down into the pits of perdition, the Emperor, seeing that he would need to organize another campaign, dedicated the respite to his Saviour: he pitched his tent outside the camp a long way off, and there he observed a chaste and pure rule of life, offering up his prayers to God, just like that ancient prophet of God, who, so the divine oracles assure us, pitched the tent outside the encampment. There attended him a few men, whose faith and religious loyalty had been proved in his company. His habitual practice, on every other occasion when he was setting out to engage in battle, had been this. He would move slowly for the sake of caution, and

aimed to do everything at God's behest. (2) While taking his time in making supplications to his God he would sooner or later receive a revelation from God, and then as if moved by a divine inspiration he would rush suddenly from the tent, immediately rouse his troops, and urge them not to delay, but to draw their swords at once. In a massed assault they would strike vigorously, until in a brief moment of time they won the victory, and set up monuments to their enemies' defeat.

[54] 13 (1) Such then had been for a long time past the practice of the Emperor in conducting military operations: he always kept his God before his mind and endeavoured to conform his actions to God's purposes, and he was anxious to avoid great slaughter. (2) He was therefore as careful to preserve the enemy's men as his own. So he also urged his men when they had won a battle to spare their prisoners, and as men themselves not to forget their common humanity. If sometimes he saw that the fury of the soldiers was out of control, he would restrain them with gold, ordering that the one who captured one of the enemy should be paid a fixed sum in gold. The Emperor's ingenuity invented this incentive to save human life, so that already countless numbers even of barbarians were saved because the Emperor purchased their lives with gold.

14 (1) Such deeds and countless others akin to them were favoured by the Emperor at other times. At this time too he set up the tent for himself in his accustomed manner before the battle, and devoted his time to prayer to God. He gave up all ease and comfortable life, subjecting himself to fasts and harsh treatment of the body, and in this way winning God's favour for his prayerful pleas that he might have God at his right hand to succour him, and might do those things which God was putting into his mind. (2) Thus he took unsleeping care for the general welfare, interceding for the safety not only of his own men, but also of his enemies.

15–18. *Renewed war and final victory*

15 When the one so recently a fugitive deceitfully pretended to sue again for terms of amicable settlement, he was even prepared to allow him this, offered on treaty conditions which were beneficial and conducive to the general good. This person

pretended to accede to the treaty with good will, confirming his good faith with oaths. Yet he again began to assemble a military force in secret, once more he initiated war and battle, called barbarian men to his support, and went about looking for other gods, since he had been deceived by the previous ones. He let no memory of what he had so recently said about the gods sink into his mind, nor was he willing to acknowledge the God who championed Constantine, but absurdly went to look for more and stranger gods. [55] **16** (1) Then, knowing from experience what great divine and secret power lay in the saving trophy by which Constantine's army had learnt to conquer, he urged his officers not to come into conflict with it, nor even incautiously to let their eyes rest upon it: its power was terrible, it was inimical and hostile to him, and they ought therefore to avoid battle with it. After giving these instructions, he launched his offensive against the one who out of humanity was holding back and postponing the death sentence on himself.

(2) Thus one side advanced confident in a great throng of gods and with a large military force, protected by shapes of dead people in lifeless images. The other meanwhile, girt with the armour of true religion, set up against the multitude of his enemies the saving and life-giving sign as a scarer and repellent of evils. For a while he exercised restraint, and was at first sparing, so that, because of the treaty he had made, he should not be first to initiate hostilities. **17** But when he saw his opponents persisting, already with sword in hand, the Emperor then became very angry and with one blow put to flight the whole opposing force, and won victories over enemies and demons alike. **18** He then judged the Godhater himself, and afterwards his supporters, according to the law of war, and imposed on them appropriate punishment. With the tyrant those who conspired in the war against God paid the just penalty and died. Those who so recently had been buoyed up by hope from diviners found themselves in fact accepting the God of Constantine as he truly was, and confessing that they acknowledged him the true and only God.

19. *Victory celebrations*

19 (1) Now that the evil men were removed, the sunlight shone, purified at last of dictatorial tyranny. The whole Roman

dominion was joined together, the peoples of the east being united with the other half, and the whole body was orderly disposed by the single universal government acting as its head, the authority of a single ruler reaching every part. Bright beams of the light of true religion brought shining days to those who before had 'sat in darkness and the shadow of death' (Luke 1: 79/Isaiah 9: 1). There was no more memory of former evils, as all people everywhere sang praise to the Victor and professed to know only his Saviour God. (2) And he, famous for every godly virtue, the Emperor Victor (he created this title personally for himself as his most appropriate surname because of the victory which God had given him over all his enemies and foes) took over the east. He brought under his control one Roman Empire united as of old, the first to proclaim to all the monarchy of God, and by monarchy himself directing the whole of life under Roman rule. (3) All fear was removed of those evils by which all had been formerly oppressed. The people in every province and city celebrated merry feasts, and those who before were sad looked on each other with smiling faces and bright eyes. Their choruses and hymns spoke first of all of God the universal King, as he truly is, and then with unrestrained voices celebrated the Conqueror and his most virtuous and Godbeloved sons the Caesars. There was a forgetting of ancient ills, oblivion of every wickedness, enjoyment of present good and expectation of more to come.

20—2. *Persecution and tyranny ended*

20 (1) There were now promulgated among us, as previously among those who occupy the other half of the civilized world, decrees full of the generosity of the Emperor. Laws with an odour of piety towards God offered all kinds of promises of good, giving what was useful and beneficial to the inhabitants of each regional prefecture, and announcing measures appropriate for the churches of God.

(2) In the first place these summoned home those who for refusing to worship idols had been sentenced to banishment and expulsion by the governors of provinces. Next they released from their obligations those who had on the same grounds been enrolled among the *curiales*, and [57] summoned those deprived

of property to resume it. (3) Those who at the time of trial distinguished themselves by their fortitude in the cause of God, and had been sent to hard labour in mines, or sentenced to live on islands, or compelled to servile labour on public works, enjoyed absolute release from them all. (4) The imperial indulgence recalled from disgrace those also who had been stripped of military ranks for their determined religious devotion, offering them the free choice either of recovering what was theirs and resuming the honours of their former station, or if they were attracted by civilian life, to receive permanent immunity from public duties. (5) Those sentenced to the disgrace and humiliation of servile work in clothing factories they released along with the rest.

21 Such provision did the Emperor's letter prescribe for those who had suffered these things. On the question of property belonging to the same persons the law made thorough provision. Where holy martyrs of God had finally laid down their life in their confession, he ordered that those related to them by kindred should receive their property, but if there were no relatives, the churches should receive the inheritance. Property also which had previously been transferred from the Treasury to third parties either by sale or by gift, and what still remained there, the deed of indulgence directed to be restored to its owners.

So much did the published indulgences provide for the churches. 22 On the people outside the churches and all the provinces the Emperor's magnanimity bestowed gifts of other kinds in great abundance. Because of them, all those in our part saw before their eyes those things which they had previously heard were being done in the other half of the Roman Empire, and had called the beneficiaries happy, praying that they too might some time enjoy the same; and now they also could deem themselves blessed, confessing that a strange new thing, such as the whole history of the world on which the sun shines had never told before, had illuminated the mortal race in so great an Emperor. Such were their feelings.

23–43. *Constantine's Confession of God: The Letter to the East*

23 (1) When everything had been brought under the Emperor by the power of the Saviour God, he made it plain to

everyone who it was that supplied good things to him, and he would insist that he considered him to be the cause of his triumphs, and not himself; and he proclaimed this very thing in both Latin and Greek in a document sent to every region. (2) The excellence of his statement may be observed by looking at the actual texts. There were two of these, one [58] sent to the churches of God, the other to the outsiders in each city. It would in my opinion be relevant to our present theme to include the latter, both so that the actual text of this decree may survive through our history and be preserved for those after us, and in order to confirm the truth of our narratives. (3) It is taken from the original copy of the imperial law in our possession, in which also the signature written with his own hand attests as with a seal the truth of the words.

24 (1) *Victor Constantinus Maximus Augustus to the provincials of Palestine.*

For a long time past it has been obvious to those of right and sound views about the Supreme, and to the absolute exclusion of all doubt, how great that difference is which distinguishes the correct observance of the most sacred cult of Christianity from those who are violently hostile and adopt a contemptuous attitude to it. (2) But now there have been even more clearly demonstrated, by more manifest deeds and more brilliant achievements, both the absurdity of doubt and the magnitude of the power of the great God, when, to those who faithfully honour the most dread Law and are not so rash as to break any of its injunctions, the benefits have been unstinted, and strength for their undertakings has been superb, with an outcome to match their good hopes; while for those who adopted the irreligious policy the consequences have also corresponded with their designs. (3) For who is likely to meet with any good, if he neither acknowledges the God who is the source of good things, nor is willing to worship him properly? The facts themselves provide confirmation of what has been said.

25 *Anyone who casts his mind back over the times which stretch from the beginning to the present, and lets his thoughts dwell upon all the events of history, would find that those who have first laid a just and good foundation for their affairs have also brought their undertakings to a good conclusion, and as it were from a pleasant root have also gathered a sweet fruit; whereas those who have engaged in criminal outrages, and either vented senseless fury against the Supreme, or [59] have not taken a holy*

attitude towards human kind, but criminally caused exiles, disgrace, confiscations, massacres and many such things, never repenting or turning their mind towards better things—they too have met condign retribution. These results are perhaps neither untoward nor unreasonable.

26 (1) *Those who embark with righteous purpose on certain actions and continually keep in mind the fear of the Supreme, holding firm their faith in him, and do not allow the present terrors and perils to outweigh their future hopes, even though for a time they suffer hardships, yet, because they believed greater honours to be in store for them, they did not even take what had befallen them as hardship, but the fame they won was the more brilliant, the harder the severities they suffered. (2) Those, however, who either contemptuously ignored the right, or did not acknowledge the superior realm, who flagrantly subjected to outrages and savage punishments those who in faith pursued it, and who failed to recognize that they were themselves wretched for having punished them on such pretexes, or that those who had gone to such lengths to preserve religious respect for the Supreme were fortunate and blessed indeed, many of their armies have fallen, many have been turned to flight, and their whole military organization has collapsed in shame and defeat.*

27 (1) *From such policies arise harsh wars, from such policies, destructive spoliation. Hence arise shortages of necessary supplies, and a host of impending disasters. Hence the champions of such great wickedness have either met their final doom in the calamity of deadly destruction, or in spinning out a life of shame have found it harder than death. They have received punishments to fit their crimes. (2) For the extent of the disasters each one has suffered shows how far he was swept on by folly in his idea that he could even defeat the divine Law; so that not only do they suffer hardship in this life, but also have the prospect of more horrible terrors in the places of torment below the earth.*

[60] 28 (1) *When such and so grave a wickedness oppresses humanity, and when the state is in danger of utter destruction from a sort of pestilential disease and needs much life-saving medical care, what relief does the Divinity envisage, what escape from horrors? And that is surely to be considered divine, which alone really exists, and holds power continuously through all time; it is surely not mere bombast to use solemn words to acknowledge the benefit received from the Supreme. (2) He examined my service and approved it as fit for his own purposes; and I, beginning from that sea beside the Britons and the parts where it is appointed by a superior constraint that the sun should set, have repelled and scattered the horrors that held everything in subjection, so that on the*

one hand the human race, taught by my obedient service, might restore the religion of the most dread Law, while at the same time the most blessed faith might grow under the guidance of the Supreme. 29 (1) I could never fail to acknowledge the gratitude I owe, believing that this is the best of tasks, this a gift bestowed on me. Now my advance reaches the eastern lands, which, oppressed with graver calamities, cried out for the cure from us to be greater also. Indeed my whole soul and whatever breath I draw, and whatever goes on in the depths of the mind, that, I am firmly convinced, is owed by us wholly to the greatest God.

(2) I am quite well aware that no human favour will be required by those who have rightly pursued the heavenly hope and have made it their firm and settled choice in the divine realm; the honours they enjoy are so much the greater, the more they have freed themselves from liability to earthly losses and fears. [61] (3) I deem it proper nevertheless that we should remove as far away as possible the constraints which have been from time to time imposed upon them, and the undeserved tortures, from those in no way guilty or culpable. It would be quite absurd if, under those who were anxious to persecute these men on account of their cult of the Deity the steadfastness and firmness of their soul should be sufficiently discerned, whereas under the servant of God their glory should not be elevated to a higher and more blessed level.

30 (1) Therefore all such as exchanged their native land for exile because they did not despise that faith in the Deity to which they had consecrated themselves with their whole souls, being subjected to harsh sentences of judges, at whatsoever time it happened to each, or such as were included in curial registers, not having been reckoned in their number previously, let them be restored to their ancestral place and customary contentment, and give thanks to God the liberator of all. (2) Or such as were deprived of their goods and, afflicted by the loss of all their existing wealth, have hitherto been living in straitened circumstances, let them be given back their old dwellings and birthright and properties, and enjoy to the full the beneficence of the Supreme.

31 (1) Furthermore, as to those held against their will in islands, we order that they enjoy the benefit of this provision, so that, whereas they are confined by the rigours of mountains and surrounding seas, they may be set free from the ugly and desolate wilderness and take themselves back to their loved ones, fulfilling their eager desire; (2) they have lived for a long time a life of poverty in unremitting squalor, and [62] may seize the opportunity to return, and be free from anxieties in future. It would be quite absurd if under us, who claim and believe ourselves to be God's

servants, it were to be so much as reported that they live in fear, let alone that it should be believed, when it is our practice to correct even the wrongs done by others.

32 (1) *Those also who were condemned either to labour under harsh conditions in mines, or to perform menial tasks at public works, let them exchange incessant toils for sweet leisure, and now live an easier life of freedom, undoing the infinite hardships of their labours in gentle relaxation.* (2) *But if any have been deprived of their civil liberty and suffered public dishonour, then let them, with the gladness appropriate considering they have been parted by a long exile, take up again their former rank and make haste back to their native lands.*

33 *Those furthermore who were once appointed to military ranks, and were removed from them on the harsh and unjustified ground that they confessed to acknowledging the Supreme, and prized him above the rank they held; let them have the choice either, if they like military service, of remaining in the status they had before, or else with honourable discharge of enjoying retirement. For it would be right and proper that one who has exhibited such valour and resolution in the face of pressing perils should enjoy retirement, if he so wishes, and rank in accordance with his choice.*

34 (1) *Those moreover who were forcibly deprived of their noble rank and subjected to a judicial sentence of such a kind that they were sent to women's quarters or linen factories and endured unwonted and shameful toil, or were reckoned Treasury slaves, their former gentle birth notwithstanding, these [63] are to rejoice in the honours they previously enjoyed and in the benefits of liberty; they are to claim their ancestral rank and to live henceforth in complete happiness.* (2) *He who has exchanged liberty for slavery through what was surely an ungodly and inhuman madness, and has often deplored his unwonted servile tasks, and quite suddenly found himself a bondservant instead of a free man; let him obtain his former freedom in accordance with our decree, and let him return to his forebears and pursue occupations befitting a free man, erasing from his memory the unsuitable menial tasks at which he previously toiled.*

35 (1) *Property must not be overlooked; individuals were deprived of it on various pretexts. But any who while undergoing the highest and divine conflict of martyrdom with fearless and courageous resolution were deprived of their property, and any who standing firm in confession prepared eternal hope for themselves, and those who were compelled to go abroad because they did not despise the faith and yield to their persecutors, and thus were also deprived of their goods, and any who without even being sentenced to death suffered deprivation of their goods, we decree that*

their estates should attach to their next of kin. (2) And since the laws expressly refer to the closest among those related, it is easy to determine to whom the inheritances belong; and also because those should rightfully inherit who would have been the nearest kin if the deceased had met a natural death. 36 But if no relative of any of the aforesaid should remain to become the rightful heir, whether of the martyrs, I mean, or of the confessors, or indeed of those who lived abroad after moving for such a reason, let the Church in every particular place be appointed to receive the inheritance. It will surely be no injustice to those who went away, if she for whom they underwent all their labours enjoys this inheritance. [64] It is moreover necessary to add this also, that if any of the aforesaid made any bequest of their property to persons of their choice, it is reasonable that their ownership remain valid.

37 (1) To the end that no ambiguity appear in this decree, and that all may be readily informed about what is lawful, be it known to all, that if any be possessed of any land or house or orchard or anything else belonging to the aforementioned, it is honourable and in their best interest for them to confess them and make restitution with all speed. (2) For even though in a great many cases certain persons should appear to have profited considerably from their unlawful possession, and we judge their excuse for these things inadmissible, yet nevertheless, if they themselves acknowledge the extent and the source of what they have amassed, they are to petition us for pardon for this offence, so that their possessive greed may be cured by such correction, and at the same time the supreme God, allowing this as a sort of reformation, may be indulgent to the sin committed. 38 It may be that the existing owners (if it is appropriate or possible to apply that term in their case) of such property will put forward as a defence that it was not possible to refuse in the circumstances, when the aspect of all the atrocities was so multiform, when there were people being savagely exiled, mercilessly ruined, indiscriminately expelled, when there were frequent confiscations from innocent persons, insatiable persecutions, sales of property. But if any insist on such arguments and persist in their possessive designs, they will discover that this kind of thing will not be without penalty to themselves, especially when what issues from us in this respect is a service to the supreme God. Such things as in the past a deadly necessity compelled one to accept, it is now dangerous to keep. Besides, it is necessary in every way to use arguments and examples to minimize acts of acquisitiveness.

[65] 39 Not even the Treasury, should it be in possession of any of the aforementioned, shall be permitted to confirm its title; but as not daring

even to answer back the holy churches, from those things which for a time it has unlawfully possessed it shall lawfully withdraw, . . . to the churches. And everything which may appear rightly to belong to the churches, whether the property be houses or any fields and orchards or anything else whatsoever, with no diminution of property right, but completely unimpaired, shall by this our decree be restored.

40 *Furthermore the places themselves which are honoured by the bodies of the martyrs and stand as monuments to their glorious decease, who could doubt that they belong to the churches, or would not so decree? Since no gift could be better nor other labour more agreeable and rich in advantage, than at the instigation of the divine will to take active steps about such things, and that what was on evil pretexts of lawless and foul men taken away, should be rightfully restored to the holy churches and conserved.*

41 *But since complete provision would forbid us to pass over in silence such persons as by lawful purchase acquired anything from the Treasury, or received it by public grant, if they also vainly extend their possessive desires to such things, be it known to such persons, however much they have endeavoured by their rash purchase to alienate our good will towards them, nevertheless they shall enjoy that good will in whatever way is possible and fitting. Let that be sufficient provision for such things.*

42 *But since the most obvious and manifest demonstrations have revealed that, by the goodness of Almighty God and by the frequent acts both of encouragement and of assistance which he has seen fit to perform on my behalf, the harsh regime which formerly gripped all humanity has been driven away from every place under the sun, [66] let each and every one of you observe with close attention what that authority is which has been established, and what grace: it has eliminated and destroyed the seed, so to speak, of the most evil and wicked men, and spreads unstintingly to all lands the newly recovered happiness of good men; it gives back again full authority for the divine Law itself to receive with all reverence the accustomed cult, and for those who have consecrated themselves to this to perform the due rites. If they have as it were looked up out of deepest darkness and take clear cognizance of what is happening, they will henceforward manifest towards him appropriate religious reverence and corresponding worship.*

To be published in our oriental regions.

43 *Such were the dispositions made in the first communication of the Emperor to us. The things referred to in the law*

were immediately implemented. There was a complete reversal of policy from the violence done shortly before by the tyrants' cruelty, and those for whom they were decreed enjoyed imperial bounties.

44–61. I. *Constantine Promotes the Church and Restrains Paganism*

44–45. I. *General measures*

44 From this the Emperor went on to take practical steps. He first sent governors to the peoples in their various provinces, for the most part men consecrated to the saving faith; those who preferred paganism he forbade to sacrifice. The same applied also to the ranks above provincial government, the highest of all, who held office as prefects. If they were Christians, he permitted them to make public use of the name; if otherwise disposed, he instructed them not to worship idols. 45 (1) Next, two laws were simultaneously issued. One restricted the pollutions of idolatry which had for a long time been practised in every city and country district, so that no one should presume to set up cult-objects, or practise divination or other occult arts, or even to sacrifice at all. The other dealt with erecting buildings as places of worship and extending in breadth and length the churches of God, as if almost everybody would in future [67] belong to God, once the obstacle of polytheistic madness had been removed.

45. 2–46. *Church buildings*

(2) That the Emperor both held such views and was writing then to the authorities in each place was indicated by his sacred decree about God, and the law provided that no financial cost should be spared, but the expenses actually furnished from the imperial funds. Those in charge of the churches in each place were also written to in terms similar to those in which he deigned to write to us, sending this first letter to the present writer personally:

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

Until the present time, well-beloved brother, while the impious policy and tyranny persecuted the servants of the Saviour God, I believe, and have through careful observation become convinced, that all the church

buildings have either become delapidated through neglect, or through fear of the prevailing iniquity have fallen short of their proper dignity. (2) But now, with liberty restored and that dragon driven out of the public administration through the providence of the supreme God and by our service, I reckon that the divine power has been made clear to all, and that those who through fear or want of faith have fallen into sins, and have come to recognize That which really Is, will come to the true and right ordering of life. (3) Where therefore you yourself are in charge of churches, or know other bishops and presbyters or deacons to be locally in charge of them, remind them to attend to the church buildings, whether by restoring or enlarging the existing ones, or where necessary building new. You yourself and the others through you shall ask for the necessary [68] supplies from the governors and the office of the Prefect, for these have been directed to cooperate wholeheartedly with what your holiness proposes.

God preserve you, dear brother.

46 (4) These then were the terms of letters to those in charge of the churches in every province. The provincial governors were ordered to act accordingly, and the legislation was implemented with great speed.

47–61. 1. *Letter against polytheistic worship*

47 (1) Carrying yet further his piety towards God, the Emperor sent to the provincials in every national area an instructive decree refuting the idolatrous error of his predecessors in power; he urged that it was more rational for his subjects to acknowledge the God over all and expressly to adopt his Christ as Saviour. (2) This document too, which bears his autograph but is translated from the Latin, is highly relevant to quote in our present study, so that we may feel that we are listening to the voice of the Emperor himself as he makes this proclamation for all mankind to hear:

48 (1) *Victor Constantinus Maximus Augustus to the provincials of the east.*

Everything embraced by the sovereign laws of nature provides everybody with sufficient evidence of the providence and thoughtfulness of the divine ordering; nor is there any doubt among those whose intellect approaches that topic by a correct scientific method, that accurate apprehension by a healthy mind and by sight itself rises in a single impulse of true virtue to

the knowledge of God. Hence no wise man would ever be disturbed at seeing the majority swept along by contrary attitudes. (2) For the merit of virtue would lie unobserved, if vice had not on the other side exposed the life of perverse unreason. That is why a crown is promised for virtue, and judgement is exercised by the most high God. For my part I shall as far as I can try to acknowledge openly to you all what my hopes are.

[69] 49 (1) *I held the previous Emperors as exceedingly harsh because of their savage ways, and only my father engaged in gentle deeds, with wonderful reverence calling upon the Saviour God in all his actions. (2) All the rest were mentally sick and embraced savagery rather than gentleness; they cultivated it unremittingly, perverting the truth for their own advantage. Their terrible wickedness reached such intensity that when all divine and human affairs were alike at peace, civil wars were rekindled by them.*

50 *Apollo at the time declared, it was said—from some cavern or dark recess and not from heaven—that the righteous on earth prevented him from speaking truly, and that that was why he was composing false oracles from the tripods. That was what his priesthood, letting their long hair droop down and driven on by madness, deplored as the evil among mankind. But let us see to what ultimate disaster this led. 51 (1) I invoke you now, Most High God! I heard then, when I was still just a boy, how he who at that time held first rank among the Roman Emperors, fearful coward that he was, his mind deceived by error, anxiously enquired of his guards who the ‘righteous on earth’ might be. One of the sacrificial officers of his court answered, ‘Christians, I suppose.’ (2) He swallowed the answer greedily like a drop of honey, and the swords designed to punish crimes he raised against unimpeachable holiness. Without delay he wrote, as it were with bloody dagger-blades, the edicts of carnage, and urged the magistrates to apply their native ingenuity to the invention of unprecedented tortures.*

52 *Then, then indeed, could be seen the power with which that sacred practice of godly piety every day withstood extraordinary abuses inflicted with sustained cruelty. Chastity, which no enemy had ever injured, became a toy for the drunken violence of frenzied fellow-citizens. What fire is there, what ordeal, what form of torture, which was not [70] applied to all persons of all ages without distinction? Then surely did the earth shed tears, and the order that sustains the universe wept aloud at being stained with the blood, and the day itself hid its face for grief at the sight.*

53 *But there is more. Those events are now the boast of the barbarians*

who at that time welcomed the refugees from among us, and kept them in humane custody, for they provided them not only with safety but with the opportunity to practise their religion in security. And now the Roman race bears this indelible stain, left on its name by the Christians who were driven at that time from the Roman world and took refuge with barbarians.

54 But why should I dwell further on those sorrows and the general world-wide grief? Gone now are the very authors of the abomination, devoted to everlasting punishment in the pits of Acheron, after a shameful death; they became embroiled in fratricidal wars and have left themselves neither name nor progeny. This would not have happened to them, had not that wicked prophecy of the Pythian oracles achieved fraudulent currency.

55 (1) Now I call upon you, the supreme God. Be merciful and gracious to your Orientals, and to all your provincials who have been crushed by protracted calamity, and proffer healing through me your servant. This petition is not unreasonable, Master of the Universe, Holy God. For by your guidance I have undertaken deeds of salvation and achieved them; making your seal my protection everywhere, I have led a conquering army. Whatever the public need may anywhere require, following the same tokens of your merit I advance against the enemy. (2) Because of this I have consecrated to you my own soul, purely blended with love and fear; for I genuinely love your name, and dread your power, which you have revealed by many tokens, confirming the strength of my faith. I strive therefore, putting my own shoulders to the task, to restore again your most holy house, which those polluted and vicious men have mutilated with wicked destruction.

56 (1) For the general good of the world and of all mankind I desire that your people be at peace and stay free from strife. Let those in error, as well as the believers, gladly receive the benefit of peace and quiet. For this sweetness of fellowship [71] will be effective for correcting them and bringing them to the right way. May none molest another; may each retain what his soul desires, and practise it. (2) But persons of good sense ought to be convinced that those alone will live a holy and pure life, whom you call to rely on your holy laws. Those who hold themselves back, let them keep if they wish their sanctuaries of falsehood. To us belongs the shining house of your truth, which you have given in accordance with nature. This we pray also for them, that by means of the general concord they too may enjoy what they desire.

57 Our policy is neither new nor revolutionary, but ever since the

structure of the universe was, as we believe, solidly made, you have required this with the worship due to you; but the human race fell, led astray by various errors. But you through your Son, lest the evil press down still more, held up a pure light and put all men in mind of yourself.

58 (1) *Your deeds attest these things. Your power makes us innocent and faithful. The sun and moon have their lawful path; nor is it without order that the stars make their circuit of the cosmic wheel. The changes of the seasons revolve with regularity, the solid base of earth has been constituted by your word, the wind stirs in accordance with the decree imposed upon it, and the surge of welling waters issues abundantly in ceaseless flow; the sea is contained within fixed limits, and the whole extent of land and ocean is furnished with marvellous and serviceable resources.* (2) *If it were not by the decree of your will that this was done, so much diversity and the great division of power would have disabled all life and every thing; for those engaged in mutual conflict would have very severely injured mankind, something which they do, even if unseen.*

59 *But to you be utmost thanks, Lord of the Universe, supreme God! For the more humanity is perceived as diverse in its goals, the more [72] the doctrines of the divine word are confirmed for those who think aright and who are concerned with genuine merit. Nevertheless if any prevents himself from being cured, let him not blame it on someone else; for the healing power of medicines is set out, spread openly to all. Only let no one harm that which the facts guarantee to be undefiled. Let mankind, all of us, take advantage of the common heritage of good bequeathed us, that is the blessing of peace, but keeping our conscience clear of everything contrary.*

60 (1) *However let no one use what he has received by inner conviction as a means to harm his neighbour. What each has seen and understood, he must use, if possible, to help the other; but if that is impossible, the matter should be dropped. It is one thing to take on willingly the contest for immortality, quite another to enforce it with sanctions.* (2) *I have said these things and explained them at greater length than the purpose of my clemency requires, because I did not wish to conceal my belief in the truth; especially since (so I hear) some persons are saying that the customs of the temples and the agency of darkness have been removed altogether. I would indeed have recommended that to all mankind, were it not that the violent rebelliousness of injurious error is so obstinately fixed in the minds of some, to the detriment of the common weal.*

61 (1) *Such words the Emperor, like a loud-voiced herald of God, addressed to all those in the provinces through a personal*

letter, protecting his subjects from demonic error, while encouraging the pursuit of true godliness.

61. 2–73. *The Disputes in Egypt*

61. 2–62. *The two disputes*

(2) While he was cheered by these things, word was brought to him of no small disturbance afflicting the churches. He was shocked to hear of this, and tried to think of a cure for the evil. (3) The trouble was this. The people of God were in a splendid state, flourishing by imperial benefactions. There was no external terror to disturb, so newly did serene and deepest peace by God's grace protect the Church on every side. Envy therefore laid its snare against our prosperity, creeping inside and openly flaunting itself in the very assemblies of the saints. (4) Indeed it set even the bishops against each other, imparting divisive quarrels with divine doctrines as the excuse. Then it broke out like a great fire from a little spark. [73] It began from the summit of the Alexandrian church and spread through all Egypt and Libya and the further Thebaid. (5) It had already reached the other provinces and cities, so that it was possible to see not only the leaders of the churches sparring with words, but the multitudes also fragmented, some inclining to one side, some to the other. The spectacle of these events reached such absurdity that sacred points of divine doctrine were now subjected to disgraceful mockery publicly in the theatres of the unbelievers. 62 While those in Alexandria itself were sparring like juveniles over the highest matters, those around Egypt and the upper Thebaid were at variance on a previous long-standing issue, such that the churches were everywhere divided. The whole of Libya was labouring under these things like a diseased body, and with it the other parts, the provinces beyond, were catching the disease. Those in Alexandria sent delegations to the bishops of each province, while those who took the other side shared the same contentious spirit.

63–73. *Constantine's letter to Alexander and Arius*

63 When he heard about this the Emperor was cut to the quick, and took the matter as a personal calamity. He dispatched

one of the godly men of his court, one whom he knew well to be of proven moderation of life and faithful virtue, a man very famous for his religious confessions in earlier times, as a mediator to reconcile the disputants in Alexandria. By him he sent to those responsible for the quarrel a most apposite letter, which, as itself providing evidence of the Emperor's concern for the people of God, could well be presented in our account of him. It reads as follows:

[74] **64** *Victor Constantinus Maximus Augustus to Alexander and Arius.*

I call God himself to witness, as I should, the helper in my undertakings and Saviour of the Universe, that a twofold purpose impelled me to undertake the duty which I have performed.

65 (1) *My first concern was that the attitude towards the Divinity of all the provinces should be united in one consistent view, and my second that I might restore and heal the body of the republic which lay severely wounded. (2) In making provision for these objects, I began to think out the former with the hidden eye of reason, and I tried to rectify the latter by the power of the military arm. I knew that if I were to establish a general concord among the servants of God in accordance with my prayers, the course of public affairs would also enjoy the change consonant with the pious desires of all.*

66 *Indeed, when an intolerable madness had seized the whole of Africa because of those who had dared with ill-considered frivolity to split the worship of the population into various factions, and when I personally desired to put right this disease, the only cure sufficient for the affair that I could think of was that, after I had destroyed the common enemy of the whole world, who had set his own unlawful will against your holy synods, I might send some of you to help towards the reconciliation of those at variance with each other. **67** For since the power of the light and the law of holy religion by the beneficence of the Supreme were reared, one might say, in oriental nurseries, and lit up the whole world at once with a sacred lantern, it was reasonable that, believing that you would be a kind of pioneers of the salvation of the nations, I should try to seek you both by the intention of my heart and by actual sight. So together with the great victory and the veritable triumph over my enemies, I chose to make the subject of my first enquiry that which [75] I considered to be of first and greatest importance to me.*

68 (1) *But (O best, divine Providence!) what a deadly wound my*

ears suffered, or rather my very heart, for the information that the division originating among you was much graver than those I had left behind there, so that your regions, from which I had hoped medicine would be supplied to others, were now in greater need of healing. (2) As I considered the origin and occasion for these things, the cause was exposed as extremely trivial and quite unworthy of so much controversy. Being driven therefore to the need for this letter, and addressing myself to that discretion which you have in common, and calling first on the divine Providence to support my action, I offer my modest services as a peaceful arbitrator between you in your dispute. (3) With the help of the Supreme, even were the cause of the dispute of greater moment, I would still be able without difficulty to entrust the discussion to the holy intentions of my hearers, and so to shift each of them towards a more helpful position. The same approach, when the issue constituting a general obstacle is small and utterly trivial, must surely guarantee me a more manageable and far easier settlement of the affair.

69 (1) I understand then that the first stages of the present dispute were as follows. When you, Alexander, demanded of the presbyters what view each of them took about a certain passage from what is written in the Law—or rather about some futile point of dispute—you, Arius, thoughtlessly replied with that opinion which either ought not to have been even conceived in the first place, or once conceived ought to have been consigned to silence. The dispute having thus arisen between you, fellowship was repudiated, and the most holy people were divided in two and forsook the concord of the common body. (2) Accordingly, let each of you extend pardon equally, and [76] accept what your fellow-servant in justice urges upon you. It is this. It was neither right to ask about such things in the first place, nor to answer when asked.

With disputes of this kind, which no necessity of any law demands, but are promoted by argument in unprofitable idleness, even if they take place as some sort of gymnastic exercise, still it is our duty to shut them up inside the mind and not casually produce them in public synods, nor incautiously commit them to the hearing of the laity. (3) For how great is any individual that he can either correctly discern or adequately explain the meaning of matters so great and so exceedingly difficult? And even supposing someone manages this easily, how many of the people is he likely to convince? Or who could sustain precise statements in such disputes without risk of dangerous mistakes? We must therefore avoid being talkative in such matters; otherwise, whether because by our natural limitations we cannot explain properly what is propounded, or because

with their slower intellect the audience is incapable of reaching a correct understanding of what is said, one way or the other the people may be brought inevitably to either blasphemy or schism.

70 *Both unguarded question therefore and incautious answer require a mutual exchange of pardon equal on both sides. For the impulse of your quarrel did not arise over the chief point of the precepts in the Law, nor are you faced with the intrusion of a new doctrine concerning the worship of God, but you have one and the same mind, so that you should be able to come together in compact of fellowship.* **71** (1) *That so many of God's people, who ought to be subject to the direction of your minds, are at variance because you are quarrelling with each other about small and quite minute points, [77] is deemed to be neither fitting nor in any way legitimate.*

(2) *But so that I may bring to the attention of your intelligences a slight comparison, you surely know how even the philosophers themselves all agree in one set of principles, and often when they disagree in some part of their statements, although they are separated by their learned skill, yet they agree together again in unity when it comes to basic principle. If this is so, surely it is far more right that we, who are the appointed servants of the great God should, in a religious commitment of this kind, be of one mind with each other?* (3) *Let us reconsider what was said with more thought and greater understanding, to see whether it is right that, through a few futile verbal quarrels between you, brothers are set against brothers and the honourable synod divided in ungodly variance through us, when we quarrel with each other over such small and utterly unimportant matters. These things are vulgar and more befitting childish follies than suitable to the intelligence of priests and informed men.* (4) *Let us consciously avoid all devilish temptations.*

Our great God, the Saviour of all, has extended the light to all alike; under his providence make it possible for me, the worshipper of the Supreme, to bring this effort to a conclusion, so that I may lead back his congregations themselves by my own address and ministration and earnest admonition to synodical fellowship. (5) *For since, as I said, there is one faith in us and one understanding of the belief we hold, and since the commandment of the Law in its every part throughout confines its totality to a single disposition of the heart, this which has raised a slight quarrel between you, since it does not refer to the meaning of the Law as a whole, must surely not import any division or faction among you.*

(6) *I do not say these things as though I were forcing you to come to agreement on every aspect of this very silly question, whatever it actually*

is. It is possible for the honour of the synod to be preserved intact by you, and one and the same fellowship to be kept generally, even though on detail some serious disagreement may arise between you over a tiny matter, since [78] we neither all agree among ourselves in wanting the same thing, nor does one single being and mind operate in us. (7) On the subject of divine Providence therefore let there be one faith among you, one understanding, one agreement about the Supreme; the precise details about these minimal disputes among yourselves, even if you cannot bring yourselves to a single point of view, ought to remain in the mind, guarded in the hidden recesses of thought.

(8) But let the excellence of general love, and faith in the truth, and reverence for God and the religion of the Law, remain undisturbed among you. Return to mutual love and kindness, restore to the whole people the proper bonds of affection, and you yourselves, as having purified your own souls, recognize each other again. Often love becomes sweeter when it returns again in reconciliation after hostility is set aside.

72 (1) Give me back therefore peaceful days and undisturbed nights, so that I too may still have some pleasure left in the clear light and happiness of a quiet life. Otherwise I must weep and constantly break down in tears, and not even face the rest of my life with equanimity. If the peoples of God, my own fellow-servants I mean, are so divided by wicked and damaging strife between themselves, how can my thoughts any longer be collected? (2) To let you appreciate how much this distressed me, when I recently set foot in the city of Nicomedia, my intention was to press on eastward straight away; I was already intent on visiting you and a large part of me was already with you, when the news of this business put a stop to my plans, so that I might not be obliged to see with my eyes what I had not thought it possible I would even hear reported verbally. (3) By the concord among you open to me now the road to the east, which you have shut by the the controversies between you, and make it quickly possible for me to look with pleasure both on you and on all the other congregations, and [79] in pleasing terms to express to the Supreme my debt of thanks for the general concord and liberation of all.

73 While the Godbeloved thus provided for the peace of the Church through the letter which he issued, fine and noble service was done by the one who cooperated not only in the matter of the letter, but also in expressing the intention of its sender; he was in all respects a godly man, as has been said. But it was too great a matter to be dealt with by the letter, so that the ferocity of the

quarrel increased, and the spreading evil reached every province in the east. This then was the effect of jealous Envy and a malignant demon resenting the prosperity of the churches.

BOOK III

1-3. *Constantine Superior to the Tyrants through Piety*

[80] 1 (1) In such a way then did Envy, the hater of good, resenting the prosperity of the Church, at a time of peace and happiness contrive storms and internal dissensions for her. The Emperor however, dear to God, certainly did not neglect his responsibilities; but, doing all the things opposite to those crimes committed shortly before by the savagery of the tyrants, he was superior to every enemy and foe.

(2) First, with every kind of constraint they enforced the worship of gods who are not, forsaking him who is; but he, by acts and words convicting of non-existence those who are not, urged recognition of the one who alone is. Next, they mocked the Christ of God with blasphemous words; but the very thing the godless chiefly aimed their slanders at he endorsed as his victorious protection, taking pride in the trophy of the Passion. They drove away the servants of God, depriving them of home and hearth; he called them all back, and restored them to their familiar hearths. (3) They inflicted humiliations on them; he made them honoured and the envy of all. They seized the livelihoods of the Godfearing and confiscated them unjustly; he restored them, and made many lavish gifts. They published their calumnies against church leaders in written decrees; he, on the other hand, elevating and promoting these men with the honours at his disposal, gave them nobler titles in announcements and laws. (4) They completely destroyed the places of worship, demolishing them from roof to floor; he decreed that the existing ones be augmented, and new ones erected on a grand scale at the expense of the imperial treasuries. They ordered that the divinely inspired oracles should be put to the flames and destroyed; [81] he commanded that these too should become abundant in multiple copies magnificently prepared at the expense of the imperial treasuries. (5) They ordered that synods of bishops should never dare to meet anywhere; he

assembled them from every province to his presence, and allowed them to enter the palace, to proceed into its inner chambers, and to share the imperial hearth and table. They honoured the demons with dedications; he stripped error bare, constantly distributing the materials wasted on dedications to those able to use them. They ordered the temples to be splendidly adorned; of these same buildings he completely destroyed those most highly prized by the superstitious. (6) They subjected the martyrs of God to the foulest penalties; he pursued those who had done this, and chastised them with proper punishment from God, while he never ceased honouring the memorials of the holy martyrs of God. They drove the Godfearing men out of the imperial courts; he constantly placed especial confidence in those very men, knowing them to be well-disposed and faithful towards him above all others. (7) They were mastered by wealth, their souls enslaved to the passion of Tantalus; he, with imperial magnificence opening wide all treasures, made his distributions with rich and lavish hand. They effected countless murders in order to seize and confiscate the property of those destroyed; but, during the entire reign of Constantine, every sword hung down unused by the judges, while the peoples and city-dwellers of every province were ruled by their ancestral laws rather than constrained by duress.

(8) Observing these things, one might well say that a fresh, new-made way of life seemed to have appeared just then, as a strange light after thick darkness lit up the mortal race; and one might confess that the whole achievement belonged to God, who had advanced the Godbeloved Emperor to counter the horde of the godless. 2 (1) For, since men whose like had never been seen before had committed crimes against the Church such as had never been heard of since time began, God rightly produced a new thing himself, and by it achieved what had been known to no ear and seen by no eye. (2) And what could be more novel than the marvel of the Emperor's virtue, bestowed by God's wisdom on mankind? For he continually announced the Christ of God with complete openness to all, in no way concealing the Saviour's title, but rather taking pride in the practice. He made himself quite plain, at one time [82] marking his face with the Saviour's sign, at another proudly delighting in the victorious

trophy. 3 (1) This he displayed on a very high panel set before the entrance to the palace for the eyes of all to see, showing in the picture the Saviour's sign placed above his own head, and the hostile and inimical beast, which had laid siege to the Church of God through the tyranny of the godless, he made in the form of a dragon borne down to the deep. For the oracles proclaimed him a 'dragon' and a 'crooked serpent' in the books of the prophets of God (cf. Isaiah 27: 1); (2) therefore the Emperor also showed to all, through the medium of the encaustic painting, the dragon under his own feet and those of his sons, pierced through the middle of the body with a javelin, and thrust down in the depths of the sea. In this way he indicated the invisible enemy of the human race, whom he showed also to have departed to the depths of destruction by the power of the Saviour's trophy which was set up over his head. (3) This was what the colour of the paints indicated through the medium of the picture; but I was filled with wonder at the highmindedness of the Emperor, and at the way he had by divine inspiration portrayed what the words of the prophets had proclaimed about this beast: 'God will bring', they said, 'the great and fearful sword against the crooked dragon-serpent, against the dragon-serpent who flees, and will destroy the dragon that is in the sea' (cf. Isaiah 27: 1). The Emperor certainly portrayed images of these things, setting true representations in pictorial art.

4-24. *The Council of Nicaea*

4-9. *The calling of the Council*

4 These things then were done as he desired. But the effects of the resentment of Envy dreadfully agitating the churches of God in Alexandria, and the evil schism in the Thebaid and Egypt, disturbed him considerably. The bishop of one city was attacking the bishop of another, populations were rising up against one another, and were all but coming to physical blows with each other, so that desperate men, out of their minds, were committing sacrilegious acts, even daring to insult the images of the Emperor. But this did not so much rouse him to anger as to mental anguish, as he grieved at the [83] senseless conduct of the deranged.

5 (1) There was already another very dire sickness of longer standing than these, which had been a nuisance to the churches for a long time: the disagreement over the Feast of the Saviour. Some claimed that one ought to follow the practice of the Jews, and some that it was right to observe the exact time of the season, and not to err by following those who were outside the grace of the Gospel. (2) So in this matter too the congregations everywhere had already for a long time been divided, and the divine ordinances were in disarray, since for one and the same festival the divergence of date caused the greatest difference between those keeping the festival: some were disciplining themselves with fasting and mortification, when others were devoting leisure to relaxation. No human being was able to find a cure for the evil, since both parties were equally vehement in their disagreement; but for almighty God alone it was easy to cure even this, and alone of those on earth Constantine appeared as his agent for good.

(3) Once he received news of what has been described, and perceived that the letter which he had sent to those in Alexandria had failed, he applied his own mind to the matter, and said that this was another war which he must struggle to win against the invisible enemy disturbing the Church. 6 (1) Then, as if to march against him, he marshalled a legion of God, a world-wide Council, with respectful letters summoning the bishops to hasten from every place. It was not a simple command, but the Emperor's will reinforced it also with practical action; to some it offered the right to use the public post, to others a generous supply of pack-animals. A city was also designated which was appropriate for the Council, one bearing the name of victory, Nicaea in the province of Bithynia. (2) So as the announcement circulated everywhere, they all dashed like sprinters from the starting-line, [84] full of enthusiasm. They were drawn by the hope of good things, the opportunity to share in peace, and the spectacle of that strange marvel, to see such a great Emperor. So when all had come together, what was happening was seen already to be the work of God. For those who were furthest separated from each other, not only in spirit, but in physical presence and territories and places and provinces, were brought together, and one city received them all: a huge ring of priests was to be seen, a crown colour-woven with lovely flowers.

7 (1) From all the churches which filled all Europe, Libya, and Asia the choicest of the servants of God were brought together; and one place of worship, as if extended by God, took them in all together: Syrians with Cilicians; Phoenicians and Arabians and Palestinians; besides these, Egyptians, Thebans, Libyans, and those who came from between the rivers. Even a Persian bishop was present at the council, nor was a Scythian lacking from the assembly. Pontus and Galatia, Cappadocia and Asia, Phrygia and Pamphylia provided their chosen men. Thracians too and Macedonians, Achaeans and Epirotes, and among them those who lived far up-country, were present; and even of the Spaniards the very famous one was among those joining the assembly with all the rest. (2) The one in [85] charge of the imperial city was absent because of his old age, but his presbyters were present and deputized for him. Alone in all of history one emperor, Constantine, wove such a crown for Christ with the bond of peace, and to his Saviour dedicated a thank-offering fit for God for his victory over enemies and foemen, gathering among us this replica of the apostolic assembly. 8 For in their case also the word is that there were gathered 'from every nation under heaven' 'devout men' (Acts 2: 5), among whom were 'Parthians and Medes and Elamites, and dwellers in Mesopotamia, Judaea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya around Cyrene, the resident Romans, both Jews and proselytes, Cretans and Arabians' (Acts 2: 9-11)—except that they were inferior in that not all consisted of the ministers of God. In the present band the number of bishops exceeded 250 and the number of presbyters and deacons and of the many other attendants who accompanied them was beyond calculation. 9 Among the ministers of God some were outstanding for the word of wisdom, others for their severity of life and patient endurance, others were adorned by their moderation. Some among them were honoured for their length of years, others shone with youth and spiritual energy, some had just reached the road of priestly ministry. For all of these the Emperor had arranged that meals should be generously provided every day.

10–14. *The proceedings of the Council*

10 (1) On the day appointed for the Council, on which it was to reach a resolution of the issues in dispute, every one was present to do this, in the very innermost [86] hall of the palace, which appeared to exceed the rest in size. Many tiers of seating had been set along either side of the hall. Those invited arrived within, and all took their appointed seats. (2) When the whole council had with proper ceremony taken their seats, silence fell upon them all, as they awaited the Emperor's arrival. One of the Emperor's company came in, then a second, then a third. Yet others led the way, not some of the usual soldiers and guards, but only of his faithful friends. (3) All rose at a signal, which announced the Emperor's entrance; and he finally walked along between them, like some heavenly angel of God, his bright mantle shedding lustre like beams of light, shining with the fiery radiance of a purple robe, and decorated with the dazzling brilliance of gold and precious stones. (4) Such was his physical appearance. As for his soul, he was clearly adorned with fear and reverence for God: this was shown by his eyes, which were cast down, the blush on his face, his gait, and the rest of his appearance, his height, which surpassed all those around him . . . by his dignified maturity, by the magnificence of his physical condition, and by the vigour of his matchless strength. All these, blended with the elegance of his manners and the gentleness of imperial condescension, demonstrated the superiority of his mind surpassing all description. (5) When he reached the upper end of the rows of seats and stood in the middle, a small chair made of gold having been set out, only when the bishops assented did he sit down. They all did the same after the Emperor.

11 The bishop who was first in the row on the right then stood up and delivered a rhythmical speech, addressing the Emperor, and offering a hymn of gratitude for him to God the ruler of all. When he too had sat down, silence [87] fell on all as they gazed intently at the Emperor. He with shining eyes looked kindly on them all, and then, collecting his thoughts, in a soft and gentle voice he gave a speech somewhat like this:

12 (1) 'It was the object of my prayers, my friends, to share in your company, and now that I have received this, I know I must

express my gratitude to the King of all, because in addition to everything else he has allowed me to see this, which is better than any other good thing; I mean, to receive you all gathered together and to observe one unanimous opinion shared by all. (2) Let no jealous enemy ruin our prosperity; now that the war of the tyrants against God has been swept away by the power of God the Saviour, let not the malignant demon encompass the divine law with blasphemies by other means. For to me internal division in the Church of God is graver than any war or fierce battle, and these things appear to cause more pain than secular affairs. (3) When therefore I won victories over enemies through the favour and support of the Supreme, I considered that nothing remained but to give thanks to God, and to rejoice also with those who had been liberated by him through our agency. When contrary to all expectation I learnt of your division, I did not defer attention to the report, but, praying that this too might be healed through my ministration, I immediately sent for you all. (4) I rejoice to see your gathering, and I consider that I shall be acting most in accordance with my prayers, when I see you all with your souls in communion, and one common, peaceful harmony prevailing among you all, which you, as persons consecrated to God, ought yourselves to be announcing to others. (5) So do not delay, my friends, ministers of God, and good servants of the common Lord and Saviour of us all, to begin now to bring the causes of the division between you into the open, and to loosen all shackles of dispute by the laws of peace. Thus [88] you will both achieve what is pleasing to the God of all, and you will give extreme gratification to me, your fellow servant.'

13 (1) When he had spoken these words in Latin, with someone interpreting, he made way for the leaders of the Council to speak. Some then began to accuse their neighbours, while the others defended themselves and made countercharges. A great many proposals were made by each side, and there was at first much controversy. The Emperor listened to all, without resentment, and received the proposals with patient flexibility; he took up what was said by each side in turn, and gently brought together those whose attitudes conflicted. (2) He addressed each person gently, and by speaking Greek—for he was not ignorant of that language either—he made himself pleasant and agreeable, persuading some and shaming others with his words,

praising those who were speaking well, urging all towards agreement, until he had brought them to be of one mind and one belief on all the matters in dispute. **14** Thus the Faith prevailed in a unanimous form, and the same timing for the Festival of the Saviour was agreed on all sides. The general decisions were also ratified in writing through the individual signatures. When these things were finished, the Emperor said that this was the second victory he had won over the enemy of the Church, and held a victory-feast to God.

15. *Vicennalia celebrations*

15 (1) At the same time, the twentieth year of his rule was completed, [89] for which general celebrations took place in the other provinces. But for the ministers of God it was the Emperor himself who opened the celebrations, drinking with the reconciled and offering this, like a fitting sacrifice to God, through them; not one of the bishops was missing from the imperial banquet. (2) The event was beyond all description. Guards and soldiers ringed the entrance to the palace, guarding it with drawn swords, and between these the men of God passed fearlessly, and entered the innermost royal courts. Some then reclined with him, others relaxed nearby on couches on either side. It might have been supposed that it was an imaginary representation of the kingdom of Christ, and that what was happening was ‘dream, not fact’ (Homer, *Od.*, 19. 547).

16–20. *Constantine’s report to the churches*

16 While the celebrations were proceeding splendidly, the Emperor went still further and received those who were present, magnanimously honouring every one according to his rank with gifts from himself. He transmitted the record of this Council also to those who were not present by a personal letter, which I will attach to this present account of him as a permanent record. It went like this:

17 (1) *Constantinus Augustus to the churches.*

Having learnt from experience of the prosperity of public affairs how great is the grace of the divine Power I have judged it appropriate for me

that my aim before all else should be that among the most blessed congregations of the universal Church a single faith and a pure love and a religion that is unanimous about Almighty God be observed. (2) This however could not achieve [90] an irreversible and secure settlement unless, after all or the great majority of the bishops had gathered in the same place, a decision were taken upon each of the points affecting the most holy religion. For this reason when most had been assembled, and I myself as one of you was also among those present (for I would not wish to deny that in which I most delight, that I am your fellow-servant), all topics were subject to proper discussion until the point was reached where the doctrine pleasing to the all-seeing God of all was brought to light as the basis for unanimous agreement, so that nothing remained to cause further difference of opinion or dispute about faith.

18 (1) Thereupon, since a controversy had broken out on the subject of the most holy day of Easter, it was unanimously decided that it would be best for everyone everywhere to celebrate it on the same day. For what could be better for us, and more reverent, than that this festival, from which we have acquired our hope of immortality, should be observed invariably in every community on one system and declared principle?

(2) In the first place it was decreed unworthy to observe that most sacred festival in accordance with the practice of the Jews; having sullied their own hands with a heinous crime, such bloodstained men are as one might expect mentally blind. It is possible, now that their nation has been rejected, by a truer system which we have kept from the first day of the Passion to the present, to extend the performing of this observance into future periods also. Let there be nothing in common between you and the detestable mob of Jews! (3) We have received from the Saviour another way; a course is open to our most holy religion that is both lawful and proper. Let us with one accord take up this course, right honourable brothers, and so tear ourselves away from that disgusting complicity. For it is surely quite grotesque for them to be able to boast that we would be incapable of keeping these observances without their instruction. (4) What could those people calculate correctly, when after that murder of the Lord, after that parricide, they have taken leave of their senses, and are moved, not [91] by any rational principle, but by uncontrolled impulse, wherever their internal frenzy may lead them? Hence it comes about that in this very matter they do not see the truth, so that nearly always they get it wrong, and instead of the proper calculation they observe the Pascha a second time in the same year. Why then do we follow those who are by common consent sick with fearful error? We would never allow the Pascha

to be kept a second time in the same year. But even if that argument were absent, your Good Sense ought to make it the continual object of your effort and prayer, that the purity of your soul should not by any resemblance appear to participate in the practices of thoroughly evil persons.

(5) It is furthermore easy to see that in such an important matter, and for such a religious feast, it is wrong that there should be a discrepancy. Our Saviour has passed on the day of our liberation as one, the day, that is, of his holy passion, and it is his purpose that his universal Church be one. However much its parts may be separated in many different places, nevertheless it is cherished by the one Spirit, that is, by the divine will.

(6) But let your Holiness's good sense reflect how dreadful and unseemly it is, that on the same days some should be attending to their fasts while others are holding drinking parties, and that after the days of Pascha some should be busy with feasts and recreations while others are dedicating themselves to the prescribed fasts. That is the reason therefore why divine Providence intends that this matter should achieve the proper settlement and be brought under one regulation, as I presume all are aware.

19 (1) Since therefore it was proper that the matter should be adjusted in such a way that nothing be held in common with that nation of parricides and Lord-killers, [92] and since a decent system exists, which all the churches of the western, southern and northern parts of the world observe, and also some of the churches in the eastern areas, and as a consequence all have at this time judged that it is right (and I have personally given my word that it will please your Good Sense), that what is observed with one harmonious will in the City of Rome, in Italy and all Africa, in Egypt, the Spains, the Gauls, the Britains, the Libyas, the whole of Greece, the administrative region of Asia, Pontus and Cilicia, your Intelligence also will gladly embrace, when you reflect that not only is the number of the churches in the places mentioned greater, but also that it is a supremely holy thing for all to hold in common what seems both to be required by correct computation and to have nothing to do with Jewish perjury; (2) and to put the most important point concisely, by unanimous verdict it was determined that the most holy feast of Easter should be celebrated on one and the same day, since it is both improper that there should be a division about a matter of such great sanctity, and best to follow that option, in which there is no admixture of alien error and sin.

20 (1) In these circumstances, then, accept gladly the heavenly grace and this truly divine command; for all the business transacted in the holy assemblies of bishops has reference to the divine will.

(2) *So once you have explained to our beloved brothers what is written above, you ought now to accept and institute the stated method of computation and the strict observance of the most holy day, so that when I come, as I have long desired, to see the state of your affairs, I may be able to celebrate the holy festival with you on one and the same day, and I may share with you my satisfaction on every count, as I observe [93] that devilish savagery has by the divine power and through our actions been obliterated, while our faith and peace and concord are everywhere flourishing.*

God preserve you, dear brothers.

(3) The Emperor sent out a text to the same effect as this letter to each of the provinces, enabling his readers to see reflected in his thinking the utter purity of his holy devotion to the Divinity.

21–2. *The bishops dismissed*

21 (1) When the Council was finally about to dissolve, he gave a farewell address to the bishops. He summoned them all together on one day, and took it as his theme that they should earnestly cultivate peace with each other. They should avoid contentious quarrels. They should not be envious if any among the bishops had a reputation for the word of wisdom, but regard the benefit of one man's skill as common to all. Those who were more proficient should not despise those of more modest gifts, for it is for God to decide who are on a true reckoning more proficient. To the weaker ones appropriate concessions should be made, since perfection is always a rarity. (2) They should therefore be tolerant with each other when they offend in minor matters, and be generous and forgive human weaknesses, all regarding harmonious concord as precious, so that no ground should be given by their mutual strife for mockery by those who are always ready to speak ill of the divine Law; those persons should be kept seriously in mind in every matter, since they can be saved if what we have seems to them worth while. One thing they should be in no doubt about was that not everybody gets benefit from intellectual ability. (3) There are some who are happy to be provided with a living, others who by habit fawn upon those in authority; some gladly greet those who affably hold out their hand, others feel affection when they are honoured with presents; but few are those with a

passion for true ideas, and rare indeed the lover of Truth. So it was necessary to adapt oneself to all, providing like a doctor what would help to save each one, so that by every means the saving doctrine might be held in regard by all.

[94] (4) Such were his principal exhortations to them. Finally he urged them to offer fervent supplications to God for him. Thus bidding them farewell, he send them all off to go back where they belonged. They went back with joy, and there at last prevailed among them all a unanimity, which had been arrived at in the Emperor's presence, those who had been far apart being joined together as in a single body.

22 The Emperor, delighted at his success, had by means of letters distributed rich fruit among those who had not been present at the council; and he ordered ample grants of money to be made among the congregations both in the country and in the urban areas, thus celebrating the festival of the twentieth anniversary of his accession.

23-4. *Further conciliatory negotiations and letters*

23 When all were at peace, however, among the Egyptians alone the mutual bitterness remained undiluted, so that the Emperor was troubled yet again, though still not roused to anger. So with every deference he addressed them as 'fathers' or rather as 'prophets of God', summoned them a second time, again mediated tolerantly between the same people, and again honoured them with gifts. He also announced the arbitration through a letter, and to ratify the decrees of the Council he set his seal upon them. He urged them to cling to peaceful harmony, and not to split and splinter the Church, but to bear in mind the judgement of God. The Emperor gave these injunctions too in a letter of his own.

24 (1) He also wrote countless other things of the same kind, and composed a great many letters. In some he gave instructions to bishops about what affected the churches of God; but on occasion he also addressed the congregations themselves, and then the Thrice-blessed would call the laity of the Church his own 'brothers' and 'fellow-servants'. (2) But there may be an opportunity to assemble these in a special collection, so as not to disrupt the sequence of our present account.

25–47. 3. *Buildings on Three Most Sacred Sites*25–8. *Excavation of the Holy Sepulchre*

25 Such was the situation when another memorable work of great importance [95] was done in the province of Palestine by the Godbeloved. It was this. He decided that he ought to make universally famous and revered the most blessed site in Jerusalem of the Saviour's resurrection. So at once he gave orders for a place of worship to be constructed, conceiving this idea not without God, but with his spirit moved by the Saviour himself.

26 (1) Once upon a time wicked men—or rather the whole tribe of demons through them—had striven to consign to darkness and oblivion that divine monument to immortality, at which, brilliant with light, the angel who had descended from heaven had rolled away the stone of those whose minds were set like stone in their assumption that the Living One was still with the dead, when he announced the good news to the women and removed the stone of disbelief from their minds by the information that the one they sought was alive. (2) It was this very cave of the Saviour that some godless and wicked people had planned to make invisible to mankind, thinking in their stupidity that they could in this way hide the truth. Indeed with a great expenditure of effort they brought earth from somewhere outside and covered up the whole place, then levelled it, paved it, and so hid the divine cave somewhere down beneath a great quantity of soil. (3) Then as though they had everything finished, above the ground they constructed a terrible and truly genuine tomb, one for souls, for dead idols, and built a gloomy sanctuary to the impure demon of Aphrodite; then they offered foul sacrifices there upon defiled and polluted altars. They reckoned there was one way alone and no other to bring their desires to realization, and that was to bury the Saviour's cave under such foul pollutions. (4) The wretches could not understand that it would be against nature for the one who had crowned his brow with the conquest of death to leave his accomplishment hidden. No more could the sun remain unnoticed by the whole world inhabited by man, as it shines after rising above the earth and drives its proper chariot-course across the sky; but brighter than this the Saviour's

power as it illuminates the souls, though not the bodies, of men [96] was filling the entire world with his own beams of light.

(5) Nevertheless the devices of these godless and wicked men against truth lasted for long ages, and no one was ever found—no governor, no commander, no Emperor even—competent to clear away what had been perpetrated but one alone, the friend of God the universal King. (6) Possessed therefore by the divine Spirit he did not negligently allow that place which has been described to remain smothered by all sorts of filthy rubbish through the machination of enemies consigned to oblivion and ignorance, nor did he yield to the malice of the guilty; but calling upon God to be his collaborator, he ordered it to be cleared, thinking that the very space which enemies had sullied should especially benefit from the great work being done through him by the All-good. (7) At a word of command those contrivances of fraud were demolished from top to bottom, and the houses of error were dismantled and destroyed along with their idols and demons.

27 His efforts however did not stop there, but the Emperor gave further orders that all the rubble of stones and timbers from the demolitions should be taken and dumped a long way from the site. This command also was soon effected. But not even this progress was by itself enough, but under divine inspiration once more the Emperor gave instructions that the site should be excavated to a great depth and the pavement should be carried away with the rubble a long distance outside, because it was stained with demonic bloodshed. 28 This also was completed straightaway. As stage by stage the underground site was exposed, at last against all expectation the revered and all-hallowed Testimony (*martyrion*) of the Saviour's resurrection was itself revealed, and the cave, the holy of holies, took on the appearance of a representation of the Saviour's return to life. Thus after its descent into darkness it came forth again to the light, and it enabled those who came as visitors to see plainly the story of the wonders wrought there, testifying by facts louder than any voice to the resurrection of the Saviour.

29–40. *The church of the Holy Sepulchre*

[97] 29 (1) With these things thus completed, the Emperor next gave orders by the stipulations of pious laws and by

generous grants for a place of worship worthy of God to be built with rich and imperial munificence around the Saviour's cave, as if he had intended this for a long time and had looked into the future with superior foreknowledge. (2) He instructed those who governed the eastern provinces by generous and lavish grants to make the building out of the ordinary, huge, and rich, and to the bishop of the church who then presided in Jerusalem, he sent the following document. By it he displayed in clear terms the love for God in his own soul and the purity of his faith in the Saviour's Word, writing in this fashion:

30 (1) *Victor Constantinus Maximus Augustus to Macarius.*

So great is our Saviour's grace, that no words seem enough to match the present miracle. For the evidence of his most sacred passion, long since hidden under the ground, to have remained unknown for such a long period of years, until through the removal of the enemy of the whole republic it was ready to be revealed, once they were set free, to his servants, truly surpasses all marvels. (2) If all those from every part of the world with a reputation for wisdom were to gather together in one place and try to say something worthy of the event, they would not be able to compete with the least part of it. The evidence of this miracle surpasses every natural capacity of human thought in the same degree that heavenly things are by common consent mightier than human. (3) That is why [98] it is always my first and only goal, that, just as the evidence for the truth manifests itself with newer wonders every day, so all our souls may by utter seriousness and unanimous endeavour also become more earnest about the holy law. (4) The thing therefore which I consider clear to everybody is what I want you in particular to believe, namely that above all else my concern is that that sacred place, which at God's command I have now relieved of the hideous burden of an idol which lay on it like a weight, hallowed from the start by God's decree, and now proved yet holier since it brought to light the pledge of the Saviour's passion, should be adorned by us with beautiful buildings.

31 (1) *It is thus for your own Good Sense to make such order and provision of what is needed that not only a basilica superior to those in all other places, but the other arrangements also, may be such that all the excellences of every city are surpassed by this foundation. (2) As to the building and decoration of the walls, be advised that our friend Dracillianus, who exercises his office among the praefecti illustrissimi, and he who is governor of the province have been entrusted*

by us with its care. For my Religious Care has ordered that craftsmen and labourers and everything they may learn from your Good Sense to be needed for the building work should forthwith be supplied by their provision. (3) As to the columns or marble, you should after a survey yourself write promptly to us about what you may consider to be of most value and use, so that whatever quantity and kind of materials [99] we may learn from your letter to be needful may be competently supplied from all sources. It is right that the world's most miraculous place should be worthily embellished. **32** (1) As to the vault of the basilica, whether you decide that it be coffered or in another style of construction I would wish to learn from you. If it were to be coffered, it might also be decorated with gold. (2) In short, in order that your Holiness may make known with all speed to the aforementioned magistrates how many labourers and craftsmen and what other expenditures are required, take care to refer immediately also to me not only the matters of the marble and pillars, but also the lacunary panels, should you judge that best.

God preserve you, dear Brother.

33 (1) Thus did the Emperor write. No sooner had he written than the commands were put into effect. New Jerusalem was built at the very Testimony to the Saviour, facing the famous Jerusalem of old, which after the bloody murder of the Lord had been overthrown in utter devastation, and paid the penalty of its wicked inhabitants. (2) Opposite this then the Emperor erected the victory of the Saviour over death with rich and abundant munificence, this being perhaps that fresh new Jerusalem proclaimed in prophetic oracles, about which long speeches recite innumerable praises as they utter words of divine inspiration.

(3) As the principal item he first of all decked out the sacred cave. It was a tomb full of age-long memory, comprising the trophies of the great Saviour's defeat of death, a tomb of divine presence, where once an angel, radiant with light, proclaimed to all the good news of the rebirth demonstrated by the Saviour.

34 This then was the first thing, like a head of the whole, which [100] the Emperor's munificence decorated with superb columns and full ornamentation, brightening the solemn cave with all kinds of artwork. **35** He then went on to a very large space wide open to the fresh air, which was decorated with a pavement of

light-coloured stone on the ground, and enclosed on three sides by long surrounding colonnades.

36 (1) On the side opposite the cave, which looked towards the rising sun, was connected the royal temple, an extraordinary structure raised to an immense height and very extensive in length and breadth. Its interior was covered with slabs of varied marble, and the external aspect of the walls, gleaming with hewn stone fitted closely together at each joint, produced a supreme object of beauty by no means inferior to marble. (2) Right up at the top the material which encased the outside of the roofs was lead, a sure protection against stormy rain; while the interior of the structure was fitted with carved coffers and like a vast sea spread out by a series of joints binding to each other through the whole royal house, and being beautified throughout with brilliant gold made the whole shrine glitter with beams of light. **37** Round each of the sides extended twin ranges of double colonnades, in upper and lower storeys, their tops also decorated with gold. Those at the front of the house rested upon huge pillars, while those inside the front were raised under blocks plentifully decorated all round their surfaces. Three doors well placed to face the sunrise received the crowds flowing in. **38** Facing these as the chief point of the whole was the hemisphere attached to the highest part of the royal house, ringed with twelve columns to match the number of the Apostles of the Saviour, their tops decorated with great bowls made of silver, which the Emperor himself had presented to his God as a superb offering.

39 For those going on from there to the entrances situated at the front of the shrine, another open space awaited them. Arcades stood there on either hand, a first court and colonnades beyond, and finally the gates of the court. Beyond these, right in the middle of the open square, the porticoes forming the entrance to the whole, beautifully wrought, offered to those passing outside a striking view of what was to be seen within.

[101] **40** This then was the shrine which the Emperor raised as a manifest testimony of the Saviour's resurrection, embellishing the whole with rich imperial decoration. He adorned it with untold beauties in innumerable dedications of gold and silver and precious stones set in various materials. In view of their size, number and variety, to describe in detail the skilled craftsman-

ship which went into their manufacture would be beyond the scope of the present work.

41-43. 4. *Churches at Bethlehem and the Ascension*

41 (1) He took in hand here other sites venerated for their two mystic caves, and he adorned these also with rich artwork. On the cave of the first divine manifestation of the Saviour, where he submitted to the experience of birth in the flesh, he bestowed appropriate honours; while at the other he dignified the monument on the mountain-top to his ascension into heaven. (2) These also he artistically honoured, perpetuating the memory of his own mother, who had bestowed so much good on human life.

42 (1) This lady, when she made it her business to pay what piety owed to the all-sovereign God, and considered that she ought to complete in prayers her thank-offerings for her son, so great an Emperor, and his sons the most Godbeloved Caesars her grandchildren, came, though old, with the eagerness of youth to apply her outstanding intellect to enquiring about the wondrous land and to inspect with imperial concern the eastern provinces with their communities and peoples. (2) As she accorded suitable adoration to the footsteps of the Saviour, following the prophetic word which says, 'Let us adore in the place where his feet have stood' (Ps 132/131: 7), she forthwith bequeathed to her successors also the fruit of her personal piety.

43 (1) She immediately consecrated to the God she adored two shrines, one by the cave of his birth, the other on the mountain of the ascension. For the God with us allowed himself to suffer even birth for our sake, and the place of his birth in the flesh was announced among the Hebrews by the name of Bethlehem. [102] (2) Thus then the most devout Empress beautified the Godbearer's pregnancy with wonderful monuments, in various ways embellishing the sacred cave there. The Emperor himself shortly afterwards honoured this too with imperial dedications, supplementing his mother's works of art with treasures of silver and gold and embroidered curtains. (3) Again the Emperor's mother erected on the Mount of Olives the monument to the journey into heaven of the Saviour of the Universe in lofty buildings; up by the ridges at the peak of

the whole mountain she raised the sacred house of the church, and constructed just there a shrine for prayer to the Saviour who chose to spend his time on that spot, since just there a true report maintains that in that cave the Saviour of the Universe initiated the members of his guild in ineffable mysteries. (4) There also the Emperor bestowed all kinds of offerings and ornaments on the great King.

43. 4-47. 3. *The death of the Empress Helena*

These then were the two everlastingly memorable, noble and utterly beautiful dedications to her Saviour at two mystic caves, which Helena Augusta, the Godbeloved mother of the Godbeloved Emperor, founded as tokens of her pious intent, her son providing her with the right arm of imperial authority. (5) But the lady not long after reaped the due reward. She had traversed a whole lifespan amid everything good to the very portal of old age; by words and deeds she had produced luxurious growth from the Saviour's commandments; and then she had completed in full vigour of mind a life so orderly and calm in both body and soul, that as a result she also met an end worthy of her religion and a good reward from God even in this present life.

44 As she visited the whole east in the magnificence of imperial authority, she showered countless gifts upon the citizen bodies of every city, and privately to each of those who approached her; and she made countless distributions also to the ranks of the soldiery with magnificent hand. She made innumerable gifts to the unclothed and unsupported poor, to some making gifts of money, to others abundantly supplying what was needed to cover the body. Others she set free from prison and from mines where they laboured in harsh conditions, she released the victims of fraud, and yet others she recalled from exile. 45 Brilliantly though she shone in such things, she did not despise the other aspects of devotion to God. [103] She allowed herself to be seen continually making personal visits to the church of God. She adorned the places of worship with shining treasures, not neglecting the shrines in even the smallest of towns. One might see the wonderful woman in dignified and modest attire joining the throng and manifesting reverence towards the divinity by every kind of practice dear to God.

46 (1) When she had finally completed the course of a long enough life, and was called to the higher sphere, having lived to something like 80 years of age, when she was very near the end she made arrangements and dispositions, drawing up her last will in favour of her only son the Emperor, the monarch and world-ruler, and his sons the Caesars, her own grandchildren, bequeathing to each of her issue part of her estate, everything she possessed in the whole world. (2) Having settled her affairs in this way, she finally came to the end of her life. So great a son was present and stood by her, ministering and holding her hands, so as to make it seem likely to right-thinking people that the thrice-blessed one was not dead, but had in reality undergone a transformation and removal from earthly life to heavenly. Her very soul was thus reconstituted into an incorruptible and angelic essence as she was taken up to her Saviour. 47 (1) Even the temporal dwelling of the blessed one deserved no ordinary care, so with a great guard of honour she was carried up to the imperial city, and there laid in the imperial tombs.

Thus passed away the Emperor's mother, one worthy of unfading memory both for her own God-loving deeds and for those of the extraordinary and astonishing offspring which arose from her. (2) He deserves to be blessed, all else apart, for his piety to the one who bore him. So far had he made her Godfearing, though she had not been such before, that she seemed to him to have been a disciple of the common Saviour from the first; and so far had he honoured her with imperial rank that she was acclaimed in all nations and by the military ranks as *Augusta Imperatrix*, and her portrait was stamped on gold coinage. (3) He even remitted to her authority over imperial treasuries, to use them at will and to manage them at her discretion, in whatever way she might wish and however she might judge best in each case, her son [104] having accorded her distinction and eminence in these matters too. It was therefore right that while recording his memory we should also record those things wherein, by honouring his mother for her supreme piety, he satisfied the divine principles which impose the duty of honouring parents.

47. 4–53. *Other Churches Built*47. 4–49. *Constantinople*

47 (4) The Emperor thus constructed the fine buildings described in the region of Palestine in the aforesaid manner. But throughout all the provinces he also furnished newly built churches, and so made them far higher in public esteem than their predecessors. 48 (1) In honouring with exceptional distinction the city which bears his name, he embellished it with very many places of worship, very large martyr-shrines, and splendid houses, some standing before the city and others in it. By these he at the same time honoured the tombs of the martyrs and consecrated the city to the martyrs' God. (2) Being full of the breath of God's wisdom, which he reckoned a city bearing his own name should display, he saw fit to purge it of all idol-worship, so that nowhere in it appeared those images of the supposed gods which are worshipped in temples, nor altars foul with bloody slaughter, nor sacrifice offered as holocaust in fire, nor feasts of demons, nor any of the other customs of the superstitious.

49 You would see at the fountains set in the middle of squares the emblems of the Good Shepherd, evident signs to those who start from the divine oracles, and Daniel with his lions shaped in bronze and glinting with gold leaf. So great was the divine passion which had seized the Emperor's soul that in the royal quarters of the imperial palace itself, on the most eminent building of all, at the very middle of the gilded coffer adjoining the roof, in the centre of a very large wide panel, had been fixed the emblem of the saving Passion made up of a variety of precious stones and set in much gold. This appears to have been made by the Godbeloved as a protection for his Empire.

50. *Nicomedia and Antioch*

50 (1) With these things he beautified his own city. But he likewise honoured the chief city of Bithynia with the dedication of a very large and splendid church, raising there to his Saviour from his personal funds a [105] monument of victory over his enemies and the foes of God. (2) The most pre-eminent cities of

the other provinces he made to excel in the artistic buildings of their places of prayer, just as he did in the case of the metropolis of the Orient, which was named after Antiochus. In it, as if to crown the provinces there, he consecrated a church unique for its size and beauty, surrounding the whole shrine with great precincts outside, and raising the hall of worship to an enormous height. It was constructed in an octagonal shape, with a ring of bays built right round at ground-floor and first-floor levels, and he encircled it with decorative features rich in abundant gold and bronze and all kinds of precious stuff.

51–3. *Mamre*

51 (1) These were the most important of the Emperor's dedications. But when he learnt that the self-same Saviour who had recently appeared to mankind had also in ancient times divinely manifested himself to God-loving men in Palestine near the oak called Mamre, there also he ordered a place of worship to be built in honour of the God who was seen there. (2) To the governors of provinces an imperial mandate was circulated through letters sent to each of them, commanding them to fulfil his instructions completely. But he also dispatched to the author of the present history a reasoned admonition, a copy which I should, I think, add to the present work to enable the concern of the Godbeloved to be accurately appreciated. He took us to task for what he had heard was going on here, and wrote in these exact terms:

52 *Victor Constantinus Maximus Augustus to Macarius and the other bishops of Palestine.*

The greatest single service to us of my most saintly mother-in-law has been [106] to inform us through her letters to us of the mad folly of evil men, which has so far escaped attention among you, so that the neglected fault may receive appropriate corrective and restorative action from us, late perhaps but yet necessary. It is certainly a monstrous evil that the holy sites should be marred by sacrilegious abominations. What then is it, wellbeloved brothers, which has escaped your Intelligence, and the aforesaid lady's reverence for the divine would not let her suppress?

53 (1) *The place by the oak which is known as Mamre, where we understand Abraham made his home, has been completely spoiled, she*

says, by superstitious persons. Idols fit only for absolute destruction have been set up beside it, she explains, and an altar stands nearby, and foul sacrifices are constantly conducted there. (2) Since therefore this appears to be both alien to our times and unworthy of the sanctity of the site, I would have your Reverences know that a letter has been written by us to Acacius our most distinguished comes and Friend, directing that without delay such idols as he may find on the aforementioned site be consigned to the flames, the altar completely demolished, and in short, when all such things there have been got rid of, he should devote all possible effort and endeavour to clearing the whole area. After that, according to such instructions as you yourselves may give, he is to have built on the spot a basilica worthy of the catholic and apostolic Church. It will then be for your Wisdom and Reverence, as soon as you learn that all the defilements there have been completely removed, to meet with the bishops from Phoenicia, whom you will be able to summon on the authority of this letter, and to design a basilica worthy of my munificence, so that in accordance with my orders and with all speed the splendour of the building can be brought to completion under the supervision of our aforesaid comes in a manner fitting the antiquity and sacredness of the site.

Above all I wish you to take particular care that in future none of those accursed and foul people dare to come near the place. It is to us quite intolerable and for all the culprits [107] a punishable crime if any sacrilege is committed in such a place after our order, when we have given instructions that it is to be adorned with a pure basilica church in order to become a meeting-place fit for holy persons. Should anything occur contrary to this order, it is well that without any hesitation it should be reported to our Clemency by letters from you, so that we may order the person apprehended be subjected to the severest punishment as having broken the law.

(3) You are surely aware that there first God the Lord of the universe both appeared to Abraham and spoke with him. It was there therefore that the religion of the holy Law first had its beginning, there that the Saviour himself with the two angels first vouchsafed the manifestation of himself to Abraham, there that God began to reveal himself to mankind, there that he spoke to Abraham about his future seed and instantly fulfilled his promise, and there that he predicted that he would be the father of very many nations. (4) In these circumstances it is right, so it seems to me, that by our provision this site should be both kept clear of every defilement and restored to its ancient holy state, so that no other activity goes on there except the performance of the cult appropriate to God the Almighty, our

Saviour and the Lord of the Universe. It is your duty to protect it with the necessary care, if indeed the fulfilment of my desires, which particularly accord with godly religion, so I firmly believe, is the wish of your Reverences.

God preserve you, dear brothers.

54–8. Pagan Temples

54. Removal of valuables

54 (1) In all these undertakings the Emperor worked for the glory of the Saviour's power. While he continued in this way to honour his Saviour God, he confuted the superstitious error of the heathen in all sorts of ways. (2) To this end he stripped the entrances to their temples in every city so that their doors were removed at the Emperor's command. In other cases the roofs were ruined by the removal of the cladding. In yet other cases the sacred bronze figures, of which the error of the ancients had for a long time been proud, [108] he displayed to all the public in all the squares of the Emperor's city, so that in one place the Pythian was displayed as a contemptible spectacle to the viewers, in another the Sminthian, in the Hippodrome itself the tripods from Delphi, and the Muses of Helicon at the palace. (3) The city named after the Emperor was filled throughout with objects of skilled artwork in bronze dedicated in various provinces. To these under the name of gods those sick with error had for long ages vainly offered innumerable hecatombs and whole burnt sacrifices, but now they at last learnt sense, as the Emperor used these very toys for the laughter and amusement of the spectators.

Another fate awaited the golden statues. (4) When he perceived that the masses in the manner of silly children were pointlessly terrified by the bogeys fashioned from gold and silver, he decided to get rid of these as one would stumbling-blocks dropped before the feet of people walking in the dark, and to open wide for all hereafter, clear and level, the royal way. (5) With this in mind he reckoned that he did not need armed men and a military force to confute these: one or two only of his familiar circle sufficed for the operation, and he sent these to every province at a single command. (6) Confident in the Emperor's piety and their own reverence for the Divinity, they visited

populous communities and nations, and city by city, country by country, they exposed the long-standing error, ordering the consecrated officials themselves to bring out their gods with much mockery and contempt from their dark recesses into daylight, and then depriving them of their fine appearance and revealing to every eye the ugliness that lay within the superficially applied beauty. They then scraped off the material which seemed to be usable, purifying it by smelting with fire; as much useful material as was deemed to belong to them they collected and stored in a safe place, while conversely what was superfluous and useless they allowed the superstitious to keep as a souvenir of their shame. (7) 'Such wrought he also this' (Homer, *Od.*, 4. 242), the amazing Emperor. While he stripped the precious materials in the manner described from the dead idols, he collected the remaining statues made of bronze. These too were led captive, gods of stale legends dressed in hair cloth.

55. *The shrine at Aphaca demolished*

[109] 55 (1) The Emperor, having in these ways kindled a sort of radiant lamp, lest any secret relic of error might lie undetected, cast an imperial eye about him. As some high-soaring sharp-eyed eagle might from high above see things far off upon the earth, so as he patrolled his imperial home in his own fair city, he perceived from afar a dire trap for souls lurking in the province of Phoenicia. (2) This was a grove and precinct, not at a city centre nor among squares and streets, such as frequently adorn the cities for decoration, but it was off the beaten track away from main roads and junctions, founded for the hateful demon Aphrodite in a mountainous part of Lebanon at Aphaca. (3) This was a school of vice for all dissolute persons and those who had corrupted their bodies with much indulgence. Womanish men, who were not men but had rejected the dignity of their nature, propitiated the spirit with their sick effeminacy, and unlawful intercourse with women, stolen and corrupt sexual relations, and unspeakable, infamous practices went on at this shrine as in some lawless and ungoverned place. There was no one to find out what was being done because no respectable man dared to set foot there. (4) But what was practised there could not also escape the notice of the great

Emperor. Having observed even these things for himself with imperial forethought, he decided that such a shrine was not fit to see the sun's light, and ordered the whole to be entirely demolished, dedications and all. (5) On the Emperor's command the devices of licentious error were at once destroyed, and a detachment of soldiers saw to the clearing of the site. Those who had hitherto indulged themselves learned chastity from the Emperor's menace.

55. 5–56. *The temple of Asclepius in Cilicia demolished*

It was the same for the superstitious persons among the Greeks with scientific pretensions, who were also to learn their own folly by practical experience. [110] 56 (1) Since much error arose from the purported science associated with the Cilician spirit, and countless people got excited about him as a saviour and healer, because he sometimes manifested himself to those who slept near him, and sometimes healed the diseases of those physically ill—though when it came to souls he was a destroyer, drawing the gullible away from the true Saviour and attracting them to godless error—he did the proper thing, and protected by the jealous God as his veritable Saviour, he ordered this shrine to be demolished. (2) At one command the vaunted wonder of the noble philosophers was razed to the ground, pulled down by a military force, and with it the one who skulked within, no spirit, and surely no god, but a deceiver of souls who had practised fraud for many long years. Then the one who used to promise others a way to avoid evils and disasters could find no spell to protect himself, any more than when in the myth he was struck by lightning. (3) But there was nothing mythical about the successes bestowed by the God of the Emperor on our side, but by the manifest power of his Saviour the shrine there also was utterly destroyed, so that no trace remained there of the former madness.

57. *General campaign against idolatry*

57 (1) When all those who formerly were superstitious saw with their own eyes the exposure of what had deceived them, and observed the actual desolation of shrines and establishments

everywhere, some took refuge in the saving Word, while others, though they did not do that, still condemned the folly of their ancestors and laughed and mocked at those anciently held by them to be gods. (2) This was their inevitable reaction, when they saw hidden within the external form of the images a huge amount of foul matter. Inside were either bones and dry skulls from dead bodies which had been used for the devious magic arts of sorcerers, or foul rags full of disgusting filth, or a litter of hay and straw. (3) When they saw that these had been stuffed inside the lifeless objects they became very critical of the great intellectual folly of themselves and their fathers, especially when they realized that there was no resident in their dark sanctuaries, no spirit, no oracle, no god, no prophet, as they had previously supposed, and not even a vague, shadowy ghost. (4) This was why every dark cave and [111] every secret recess was readily accessible to the Emperor's emissaries, and forbidden innermost sanctuaries of temples were trodden by soldiers' feet, so that from this it was manifestly demonstrated to everyone that for a very long time the peoples had all been in the grip of mental paralysis.

58. *The shrine of Aphrodite at Heliopolis demolished*

58 (1) These things might well be regarded as among the Emperor's great achievements, as indeed might the local dispositions he made in particular provinces. Such a case was Heliopolis in Phoenicia, where those who worshipped unbridled pleasure under the title of Aphrodite had in the past allowed their wives and daughters without restraint to act as prostitutes. (2) Now however a fresh and chastening law was issued by the Emperor forbidding as criminal any of the old customs; for these persons also he provided written instructions, showing how he had been brought forward by God for this very purpose, of educating all mankind in laws of chastity; hence he did not disdain to communicate even with them through a personal letter, and he urged them to turn earnestly to the knowledge of the Supreme. (3) There also he supported his words with matching actions, setting in their midst also a very large church building for worship, so that what had never yet from the beginning of time been heard of now became for the first time

a fact, and the pagan city was granted presbyters and deacons of the Church of God, and a bishop consecrated to the God over all was appointed to oversee the people there. (4) Planning there also for large numbers to approach the Word, the Emperor made plentiful provision for the poor, using that too as an incentive to turn to the Saviour's teaching: he was almost using the same words himself as the one who said, 'Whether in pretence or in truth let Christ be preached' (Philippians 1: 18).

59–66. *Church Disputes Settled*

59–63. *Constantine's letters about Antioch*

59 (1) While all were enjoying a happy life under these conditions, and the Church of God was everywhere in every way and in every province increasing, once more Envy, who seeks opportunity against good things, was limbering up to attack the prosperity so rich in benefits. He perhaps hoped that the Emperor would himself change his attitude to us in irritation at our troubles and disorders. [112] (2) He therefore lit a great flame and plunged the church of Antioch into disasters of tragic proportions, so that the whole city was all but completely destroyed. The church people were split into two factions, while the general population of the city including the magistrates and military personnel were stirred up to warlike attitudes, and even swords might well have been used, had not God's oversight and fear of the Emperor quelled the passions of the mob, (3) and once more the Emperor's patience, in the manner of a saviour and physician of souls, applied the medicine of argument to those who were sick.

He negotiated very gently with the congregations, sending the most loyal of his proven courtiers who held the rank of *comes*, and he exhorted them in frequent letters to adopt a pacific attitude. He taught that they should behave in a manner befitting godliness, and used persuasion and pleading in what he wrote to them, pointing out that he had personally listened to the one who caused the sedition. (4) These letters of his too, which are full of helpful instruction, we would have produced at this point, but they might bring discredit on the persons accused. (5) I will therefore set these aside, determining not to renew the memory

of evils, and will include in my work those which he composed in satisfaction at the unity and peace of the rest. In these he urged them not to try to obtain a leader from outside, inasmuch as they had achieved peace, but by the rule of the Church to choose as pastor that person whom the universal Saviour of the world would himself designate. He wrote to the laity themselves and to the bishops separately as follows:

60 (1) *Victor Constantinus Maximus Augustus to the laity at Antioch.*

As the concord among you is pleasing to the intelligence and wisdom of the world, I also recognize, brothers, that I love you with an undying affection, moved by the principles, the mode of life, the earnestness you show. In truth therefore the right way to enjoy good things is to [113] adopt a right and healthy attitude of mind. (2) What could suit you so well? I wonder therefore whether I might say that the truth is a reason for you to look for salvation rather than hatred. Among brothers then, who are pledged to God by one and the same commitment to a right and just course of life as members of a sacred and holy family, what could be more precious than the unanimity which goes with the blessing of prosperity for all?—the more so when your education from the Law directs your purpose towards a better resolution, and we desire to reinforce the decision we make with sound doctrines.

(3) You may perhaps be wondering what is the purpose of the first paragraph of my letter. I shall not shirk the question or refuse to explain the reason. I acknowledge that I have read the reports in which, from the noble praises and testimonials which you bestow on Eusebius, presently bishop of Caesarea, a man I myself also have known well for a long time for his learning and integrity, I see that you are pressing to get him for yourselves. (4) What plan do you think I have formulated in my effort to find exactly the right solution? What view do I take of your earnest wish? O holy Faith, you who through the word and teaching of our Saviour present a sort of model for living, how difficult it would be even for you to resist sins, if you did not refuse to serve for gain! To me indeed it seems that the one who aims rather at peace has done better than victory itself; for where someone can do the fitting thing, there is nobody who would not be pleased. (5) I ask you therefore, brothers, for what reason do we take such decisions as to inflict injury on others by the choice we make? Why do we try to obtain things which will destroy belief in our reputation? I certainly praise the man whom you also judge worthy of rank and

placement; yet what [114] ought to remain in every congregation valid and assured should not be so enfeebled that each person cannot be satisfied with his own election, and all enjoy what belongs to them, and not merely one but several candidates be found who deserve equal consideration alongside this man. (6) There will thus be no trouble with disorder and violence if it transpires that appointments in the Church are on a par and in all cases equally attractive. It is not right to make consideration of these things a matter of defeating others, since all are equally committed to receiving and preserving the divine doctrines, whether they appear to be fewer or larger in number, so that one party is in no way less than the other with regard to the common principle.

(7) If now we are to state frankly the plain truth, it would be regarded not as retaining the man so much as stealing him, and the deed done as an act of force and not of justice, whichever way the majority votes. I myself state explicitly and emphatically that this act is liable to the charge of provoking the disorder of large-scale civil strife. Teeth appear in the character and strength even of sheep, when the attention and care of the shepherd disappears and they are deprived of the direction they had before. (8) If this is the case, and we are not mistaken, then you must first observe, brothers (for many serious matters will confront you from the start), in the first place whether your sincerity and loyalty towards each other will be perceived to be in no respect diminished; and secondly, that the one who came to give correct advice is reaping his due reward from the divine judgement, having received an exceptional testimonial in the large vote which you have given him for integrity. In these circumstances, as is your custom, with a fair mind make every proper effort to identify the man you need, setting aside all riotous and disorderly clamour; that sort of thing is always wrong, and it is from the striking together of conflicting materials that sparks and flames are kindled.

(9) May I thus be pleasing to God and live for you in accordance with your prayers, since I love you and the haven of your calm: drive from it that filth, and by good behaviour put in its place [115] concord, making your sign secure, and steering a course towards the heavenly light, your rudder (so to speak) iron-fast. You should therefore reckon even your cargo disposable: everything that spoiled the ship has been discharged from the holds. You must now plan for the benefit from all these things to be such that we do not a second time through rash and inexpedient haste appear to have either finally settled, or even started out on, an undesirable course.

God preserve you, dear brothers.

61 (1) *Victor Constantinus Maximus Augustus to Eusebius*

I have read with great pleasure the letter which your Intelligence has written, and I take note that the principle of ecclesiastical canonical discipline has been strictly kept. May you abide by those things which appear both pleasing to God and consonant with the apostolic tradition. You should certainly consider yourself blessed in this respect, that by the testimony of practically the whole world you have been judged worthy to be bishop of any and every church. If they all desire you to be with them, undoubtedly they thereby increase that happiness you enjoy. (2) But your Intelligence, which knows how to keep the commandments of God and the apostolic rule of the Church, has done exceptionally well in declining the episcopate of the church in Antioch, preferring to remain in that church in which by God's will you received the bishopric in the first place. (3) On this subject we have written a letter to the people. As to your colleagues in the ministry, who had themselves written to me on the subject in terms which your Purity will readily understand when you read it, since justice spoke against them, I have written to them at the instigation of God; your Intelligence will have to attend their council, so that what is decided at the church in Antioch [116] may be deemed entirely right both by God and by the Church.

God preserve you, dear brother.

62 (1) *Victor Constantinus Maximus Augustus to Theodotus, Theodorus, Narcissus, Aetius, Alpheius and the other bishops who are at Antioch.*

I have read what was written by your Intelligence, and I welcome the wise resolve of Eusebius who shares your consecrated ministry. Having been apprised of all that has happened on the one hand by your letter and on the other by that of Acacius and Strategius the comites clarissimi, I have, after making the necessary enquiries, written to the people of Antioch what is pleasing to God and fitting for the Church, and have also ordered a copy to be subjoined to this present letter, so that you may yourselves know what, stimulated by consideration of what is right, I have decided to write to the people. Your letter contained the proposal that, in accordance with the mind and purpose of the people and of your own determinate choice, Eusebius the most sacred bishop of the church of Caesarea should be installed as bishop of Antioch and take it under his care. (2) Eusebius' letter however, which appeared fully to preserve the rule of the Church, propounded the opposite view, that he should in no wise forsake the church entrusted to him by God. It is therefore decreed

that his very just determination, which should be upheld by you all, be confirmed, and that he be not torn away from his church.

My own judgement ought also to be made plain to your Intelligence. It is reported to me that Euphronius the presbyter, a citizen of Caesarea in Cappadocia, and George of Arethusa, also a presbyter, who was appointed to that order by Alexander of Alexandria, are of thoroughly proven faith.

(3) *It is therefore proper to indicate to your Intelligence [117] these aforementioned and others, whom you may think worthy of the office of bishop, so that you may make decisions in accordance with the tradition of the Apostles. When such matters have been put in hand, your Intelligence will be able to arrange the ordination in accordance with the Church's canon and the Apostolic tradition in such manner as the principle of ecclesiastical discipline prescribes.*

God preserve you, beloved brothers.

63 (1) In giving such instructions to the leaders of the churches the Emperor urged them to conduct all their business for the honour of the divine Word.

63–6. *Suppression of sects*

When he had removed the divisions and brought the whole Church of God into harmonious concord, he went on to decide that another kind of men ought to be eliminated like a poison from humanity. (2) These were some destructive pests who under a cloak of sanctity were harming the cities. The Saviour's voice calls them false prophets or ravening wolves in one of his sayings, 'Beware of the false prophets, who will come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves; by their fruits you shall know them' (Matthew 7: 15–16). (3) An order to the provincial governors expelled the whole tribe of such persons, and in addition to the decree he also composed an admonition addressed to the persons themselves, urging them to come quickly to repentance: the Church of God would be for them a safe haven. Listen to the way he preaches to them too through his letter to them:

64 (1) *Victor Constantinus Maximus Augustus to heretics.*

Be it known to you by this present decree, you Novatians, Valentinians, Marcionites, Paulians and those called Cataphrygians, all in short who constitute the heresies by your private assemblies, how many are the

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

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

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

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

To be published.

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

BOOK IV

I-14. I. *The Prosperous Empire*

I-4. *Philanthropy*

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

neglect secular affairs, but in those also was persistently providing repeated and continuous good works of every kind for all the inhabitants of every province alike. On the one hand he showed general fatherly concern for all, while on the other he would honour each of those known to him with special promotions, bestowing everything on everyone with generosity of heart. One who sought favour of the Emperor could not fail to obtain his request, nor was anyone who hoped for generous treatment disappointed in his expectations. (2) Some received money in abundance, others goods; some acquired posts as prefects, others senatorial rank, others that of consuls; very many were designated governors; some were appointed *comites* of the first order, others of the second, others of the third. Similarly many thousands more shared honours as *clarissimi* or with a wide range of other titles; for in order to promote more persons the Emperor contrived different distinctions.

2 The way in which he planned for the happiness of the mass of mankind might be observed from one generally beneficial example, which has reached all parts ever since and is still recognized today. He removed a fourth part of the annual tax charged on land, and allowed this to the landlords, so that the one calculating the annual deduction found every four years that the landowners were not liable to tax. This was confirmed by law and remained in force in the subsequent period, and made the imperial bounty unforgettable and permanent, not only for those then living, but for their children and successors. 3 When others complained about the land measurements made under previous rulers, [121] alleging that their estates were overburdened, once again in this case by a decree he sent adjustment officers (*peraequatores*) to provide relief to the petitioners.

4 In settling disputes for others, so that the losing party in his court might not come off less pleased than the successful litigants, the Emperor would grant to the defeated party from his own resources sometimes property, sometimes money, ensuring that the loser was just as pleased as the winner, inasmuch as he had been admitted to his presence; for it seemed wrong that anyone who had stood before such an Emperor should depart disappointed and bitter. Thus both would leave court with happy smiling faces, and every one was full of admiration for the Emperor's magnanimity.

5–6. *Foreign relations I: Pacification of Goths and Sarmatians*

5 (1) What need is there for me to mention even incidentally how he subjected barbarian races to Roman rule, how he was the first to subjugate the Gothic and Sarmatian tribes which had never before learnt to serve, compelling them to accept the Romans as their masters even against their will? Previous rulers had even paid tribute to the Goths, and Romans served barbarians with yearly payments. (2) Such a reckoning was not acceptable to the Emperor, nor did it seem good enough to the Victor to make the same payments as his predecessors. Confident in his Saviour and brandishing the victorious trophy over them too, he very soon subdued them all, sometimes taming the refractory with the military arm, sometimes pacifying the rest by reasonable negotiations, converting them from a lawless animal existence to one of reason and law. In this way the Goths learnt at last to serve Rome.

6 (1) As to the Sarmatians, it was God himself who thrust them under the feet of Constantine, defeating men who gloried in their barbaric mentality in the following way. When the Goths attacked them, the masters armed their servants to repel their enemies. But when the slaves had won, they turned their arms against their masters and drove them all from their own land. The masters found no other safe refuge than Constantine alone. (2) He knew the meaning of rescue, and received them all as subjects in Roman territory. Those who were suitable he enrolled in his own forces; to the rest he apportioned land for cultivation of the means of subsistence, so that they acknowledged that the disaster had turned out good for them [122] in that they enjoyed Roman liberty instead of barbaric bestiality. Thus God bestowed upon him victories over all the nations, so that of their own accord all sorts of barbarian tribes were willing to submit to him.

7. *Foreign relations II: Foreign tributes*

7 (1) There were constant diplomatic visitors who brought valuable gifts from their homelands, so that when we ourselves happened to be present we saw before the outer palace gates waiting in a line remarkable figures of barbarians, with their exotic dress, their distinctive appearance, the quite singular cut

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

8-14. 1. *Foreign relations III: Peace with Persia*

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

14 (1) Thus finally, all nations of the world being steered by a single pilot and welcoming government by the Servant of God, with none any longer obstructing Roman rule, all men passed their life in undisturbed tranquillity.

14. 2–39. *Constantine's Sanctity*

14. 2–16. *Personal piety*

(2) The Emperor judged that the prayers of the godly made a great contribution to his aim of protecting the general good, so he made the necessary provision for these, becoming himself a suppliant of God and bidding the leaders of the churches make intercessions for him. **15** (1) The great strength of the divinely inspired faith fixed in his soul might be deduced by considering also the fact that he had his own portrait so depicted on the gold coinage that he appeared to look upwards in the manner of one reaching out to God in prayer. (2) Impressions of this type were circulated throughout the entire Roman world. In the imperial quarters of various cities, in the images erected above the entrances, he was portrayed standing up, looking up to heaven,

his hands extended [126] in a posture of prayer. **16** Such was the way he would have himself depicted praying in works of graphic art. But by law he forbade images of himself to be set up in idol-shrines, so that he might not be contaminated by the error of forbidden things even in replica.

17–21. *Staff and military personnel*

17 One might observe the more solemn aspects of these things by noting how he conducted matters even in the imperial quarters in the manner of a church of God, being himself the leader in earnestness of those constituting the church there. He would take the books in his hands and apply his mind to the meaning of the divinely inspired oracles, and would then render up lawful prayers with the members of the imperial household. **18** (1) He also decreed that the truly sovereign and really first day, the day of the Lord and Saviour, should be considered a regular day of prayer. Servants and ministers consecrated to God, men whose well-ordered life was marked by reverent conduct and every virtue, were put in charge of the whole household, and faithful praetorians, bodyguards armed with the practice of faithful loyalty, adopted the Emperor as their tutor in religious conduct, themselves paying no less honour to the Lord's saving day and on it joining in the prayers the Emperor loved.

(2) The Blessed One urged all men also to do the same, as if by encouraging this he might gently bring all men to piety. He therefore decreed that all those under Roman government should rest on the days named after the Saviour, and similarly that they should honour the days of the Sabbath, in memory, I suppose, of the things recorded as done by the universal Saviour on those days.

(3) The Day of Salvation then, which also bears the names of Light Day and Sun Day, he taught all the military to revere devoutly. [127] To those who shared the divinely given faith he allowed free time to attend unhindered the church of God, on the assumption that with all impediment removed they would join in the prayers. **19** To those who did not yet share in the divine Word he gave order in a second decree that every Lord's Day they should march out to an open space just outside the city, and that there at a signal they should all together offer up to God a

form of prayer learnt by heart; they ought not to rest their hopes on spears or armour or physical strength, but acknowledge the God over all, the giver of all good and indeed of victory itself, to whom it was right to offer the lawful prayers, lifting up their hands high towards heaven, extending their mental vision yet higher to the heavenly King, and calling on him in their prayers as the Giver of victory and Saviour, as their Guardian and Helper. He was himself the instructor in prayer to all the soldiery, bidding them all to say these words in Latin:

20. (1) *You alone we know as God,
You are the King we acknowledge,
You are the Help we summon.
By you we have won our victories,
Through you we have overcome our enemies.
To you we render thanks for the good things past,
You also we hope for as giver of those to come.
To you we all come to supplicate for our Emperor
Constantine and for his Godbeloved Sons:
That he may be kept safe and victorious for us in long,
long life, we plead.'*

(2) Such were the things he decreed should be done by the military regiments every Sunday, and such were the words he taught them to recite in their prayers to God. 21 Furthermore he caused the sign of the saving trophy to be marked on their shields, and had the army led on parade, not by any of the golden images, as had been their past practice, but by the saving trophy alone.

22–3. *Domestic religion*

[128] 22 (1) He himself, like someone participating in sacred mysteries, would shut himself at fixed times each day in secret places within his royal palace chambers, and would converse with his God alone, and kneeling in suppliant petition would plead for the objects of his prayers. On days of the Feast of the Saviour, intensifying the rigour, he would perform the divine mysteries with his whole strength of soul and body, on the one hand wholly dedicated to purity of life, and on the other initiating the festival for all. (2) He transformed the sacred

vigil into daylight, as those appointed to the task lit huge wax tapers throughout the whole city; there were fiery torches that lit up every place, so as to make the mystic vigil more radiant than bright day. When dawn interposed, in imitation of the beneficence of the Saviour he opened his beneficent hand to all provinces, peoples, and cities, making rich gifts of every kind to them all. (3) Such then was his religious practice towards his own God.

23–5. *Christianity promoted and idolatry suppressed*

23 For all those under Roman rule, both civilian and military, access was universally blocked to every form of idolatry, and every form of sacrifice banned. A decree went also to the governors of each province directing that they should similarly reverence the Lord's Day. These same persons at the Emperor's behest honoured the days of martyrs as well, and adorned the times of festival with public gatherings. Such things were all carried out as the Emperor desired. 24 Hence it is not surprising that on one occasion, when entertaining bishops to dinner, he let slip the remark that he was perhaps himself a bishop too, using some such words as these in our hearing: 'You are bishops of those within the Church, but I am perhaps a bishop appointed by God over those outside.' In accordance with this saying, he exercised a bishop's supervision over all his subjects, and pressed them all, as far as lay in his power, to lead the godly life.

25 (1) Hence it is not surprising that in successive laws and ordinances he prohibited everyone from sacrificing to idols, from practising divination, from having cult-figures erected, from performing secret rites, and from defiling the cities by the carnage of gladiatorial combat. (2) To those in Egypt and especially Alexandria, who had a custom of worshipping their river through the offices of effeminate men, another law was [129] sent out, declaring that the whole class of homosexuals should be abolished as a thing depraved, and that it was unlawful for those infected with this gross indecency to be seen anywhere. (3) Whereas the superstitious supposed that the river would no longer flow for them in its customary way, God cooperated with the Emperor's law by achieving quite the opposite of what they

expected. For although those who defiled the cities by their abominable practice were no more, the river, as though the land had been cleared for it, flowed as never before, and rose in abundant flood to overflow all the arable land, by its action teaching the senseless that one should reject polluted men and attribute the cause of prosperity to the sole giver of all good.

26–8. *Legislation and public charity*

26 (1) Indeed, with countless such measures taken by the Emperor in every province, there would be plenty of scope for those eager to record them. The same applies to the laws which he renewed by transforming them from their primitive state to a more hallowed one. It will be easier to explain briefly the nature of these reforms also.

(2) Ancient laws had punished those without children by stopping them inheriting from their kinsmen. This was a harsh law against the childless, since it punished them as criminals. By repealing this he permitted the proper persons to inherit. The Emperor made this change towards sacred justice, saying that it was those who offended deliberately who ought to be corrected with fitting punishment. (3) Nature has made many childless, when they have prayed to be blessed with large families, but have been disappointed through bodily infirmity. Others have become childless, not through rejecting the natural succession of children, but through abstaining from intercourse with women, an abstinence which they chose through a passion for philosophy, and women consecrated to the sacred service of God have practised a chaste and absolute virginity, consecrating themselves by a pure and all-holy life of soul and body. (4) Ought this then to be thought to deserve punishment, and not admiration and approval? Their zeal is highly deserving, their achievement surpasses nature. Those therefore who are disappointed in their desire for children by bodily infirmity should be pitied rather than penalized, and the lover of the Supreme deserves the highest admiration and not punishment. Thus the Emperor with sound reasoning remodelled the law.

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

and terminology must be used to state them. This led to much malicious manipulation to circumvent the intentions of the deceased. (6) The Emperor noted this, and changed this law too, saying that the dying person should express what he had in mind in plain simple words and everyday speech, and compose his will in an ordinary document, or even unwritten if he wished, provided he did this in the presence of trustworthy witnesses, able to preserve accurately what is entrusted to them.

27 (1) He also made a law that no Christian was to be a slave to Jews, on the ground that it was not right that those redeemed by the Saviour should be subjected by the yoke of bondage to the slayers of the prophets and the murderers of the Lord. If any were found in this condition, the one was to be set free, the other punished with a fine.

(2) He also put his seal on the decrees of bishops made at synods, so that it would not be lawful for the rulers of provinces to annul what they had approved, since the priests of God were superior to any magistrate.

(3) He made countless decrees like these for those under his rule. It would need leisure to commit them to a separate work for the precise analysis of the Emperor's policies in those also. What need is there now to set out in detail how, having attached himself to the God over all, he pondered from dawn to dusk on which of mankind to benefit, or how he was fair to all and impartial in his benefits?

28 But to the churches of God in particular he was exceptionally generous in his provision, in one place bestowing estates, and elsewhere grain allowances to feed poor men, orphan children, and women in distress. Then with great concern he also provided huge quantities of clothing for the naked and unclad. He singled out as worthy of special honour those who had dedicated their lives to godly philosophy. He would all but worship God's choir of those sanctified in perpetual virginity, believing that in the souls of such as these dwelt the God to whom they had consecrated themselves.

29–33. *Speaking and listening*

29 (1) Indeed in order to enlarge his understanding with the help of the divinely inspired words, [131] he would spend the

hours of the night awake, and repeatedly made public appearances without calling upon speechwriters; he thought that he ought to rule his subjects with instructive argument, and establish his whole imperial rule as rational. (2) Consequently when he gave the invitation, countless multitudes rushed to join the audience to hear the Emperor's philosophy. If while speaking he had occasion to mention God, standing quite straight with intense face and subdued voice, he would seem to be initiating the audience with deep awe in the inspired doctrine, and then when the hearers let out favourable exclamations he would indicate that they should look to heaven and save the adulation and honour of their reverent praises for the King over all.

(3) In planning his addresses, he would at one point set out refutations of polytheistic error, showing that the religion of the heathen is a deception and a façade for atheism; at another point he would recommend that the sole Godhead should be acknowledged, and would systematically expound providence both in general and in particular cases. Thence he would proceed to the Saviour's dispensation, demonstrating the necessity for it to happen in terms of what is appropriate. He would then go on to deal with the doctrine of divine judgement. (4) Next he would touch on things which struck the audience most forcefully, rebuking thieves and frauds and those who committed themselves to greedy profiteering. Striking them, and as if actually flogging them, with his argument, he made some of his courtiers bow their heads as their conscience was smitten. Testifying in plain words he announced to them that he would give an account to God of their activities; for the God over all had given him sovereignty over things on earth, and he in imitation of the Supreme had committed particular administrative regions of the Empire to them; all however would in due course be subject to scrutiny of their actions by the Great King. (5) Such were the constant themes of his affirmation, his admonition, his teaching.

With the assurance of the authentic faith he held and expressed such views, but they were slow to learn and deaf to what is good; they would cheer his words with cries and acclamations of approval, but in practice they ignored them through greed. 30 (1) So in the end he tackled one of those round him and said, 'How far, my man, do we make greed stretch?' Then on the ground he drew with the staff which he

had in his hand the measure of the height of a man, and said, 'If all the wealth in the world and all the land there is becomes yours, [132] you will still not possess more than this plot here marked out—assuming you even get that.' (2) But in spite of what he said and did, not one was restrained by the blessed one; yet events have manifestly convinced them that the pronouncements of the Emperor were like divine oracles and not mere words. **31** But since the fear of death failed to deter the wicked from their evil ways, the Emperor being wholly given to clemency, and none of those who governed the various provinces took any steps anywhere at all against the offenders, this certainly brought no small reproach upon the whole regime. Whether that was fair or not is for each to judge as he sees fit, and I content myself with recording the truth.

32 However that may be, Latin was the language in which the Emperor used to produce the text of his speeches. They were translated into Greek by professional interpreters. By way of example of his translated works I shall append immediately after this present book the speech which he entitled, 'To the assembly of the saints', dedicating the work to the Church of God, so that none may think our assertions about his speeches to be mere rhetoric.

33 (1) One other thing seems to me to be unforgettable, a deed which the marvellous man did in our own presence. On one occasion, emboldened by his devotion to divine things, we asked permission to deliver an address about the Saviour's tomb for him to hear. He listened with rapt attention, and where a large audience was standing round right inside the palace he stood up and listened with the others. When we begged him to rest on the imperial throne which was nearby, he would not do so, but made a shrewdly considered critique of the speech, and affirmed the truth of its doctrinal theology. (2) Since it took a long time and the speech still continued, we suggested breaking off; he however would not allow it, but urged us to go on to the end. When we asked him to sit he kept refusing, saying at one time that when the doctrine of God was being discussed, it was wrong for him to relax while he listened, and at another that it was good and beneficial for him to stand: it was a holy thing to listen to divinity standing up. When [133] this too came to an end, we returned home and took up our regular business.

34–7. *Letters on Christian topics*

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

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

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

May God preserve you, beloved brother.

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

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

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

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

God preserve you, dear brother.

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

37-9. *Conversion of cities*

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

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

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

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

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

40–52. 3. *Final Achievements*

40. *Tricennalia and promotion of sons*

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

41–2. *The Council at Tyre*

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

43–8. *The assembly in Jerusalem*

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

49–50. *The universal Empire*

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

56–7. *Preparations for war against Persia*

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

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

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

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

58–60. *The shrine of the Apostles*

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

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

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

61-4. *Illness, baptism, and death*

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

65–7. *Mourning and lying-in-state*

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

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

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

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

68–73. *Succession and funeral*

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

74–5. *Conclusion: The Unique Emperor*

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