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The Persecution of Licinius

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Abstract

This thesis will attempt to prove that the emperor Licinius (308-324) was a committed Christian and remained so until his defeat by the emperor Constantine. It will be argued that Licinius did not persecute the Church as reported in the writings of bishop Eusebius of Caesarea. Chapter one will outline the chronology of his reign and survey the depiction of Licinius in the historical tradition. Chapter two will focus on the *De Mortibus Persecutorum* of Lactantius and argue that the Lactantian portrait of Licinius' Christianity should not be dismissed. Chapter three will discuss the depiction of Licinius in Eusebius of Caesarea's *Historia Ecclesiastica* and *Vita Constantini*. It will be argued that Eusebius willfully misrepresented Licinius' reign by following Constantinian propaganda after 324. Chapter four will present the evidence for Licinius' persecution and show how each charge can be differently interpreted to show that Licinius was an active Christian.

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List of Abbreviations

Barnes, *CE*	T.D. Barnes, Constantine and Eusebius, Harvard, 1981
Barnes, *NE*	T.D. Barnes, The New Empire of Diocletian and Constantine, Harvard, 1982
RIC	Sutherland and Carson (eds), Roman Imperial Coinage, London, 1966
PLRE	Jones, Martindale and Morris, Prosopography of the Later Roman Empire, Cambridge, 1971
CTh	Codex Theodosianus
De Mort.	Lactantius, De Mortibus Persecutorum
HE	Eusebius, Historia Ecclesiastica
VC	Eusebius, Vita Constantini
DI	Lactantius, Divine Institutes
OCD^3	Hornblower and Spawforth, Oxford Classical Dictionary (3 ed), Oxford
Epitome	Epitome de Caesaribus
Origo	Origo Constantini Imperatoris
CJ	Codex Justinianus
ILS	H. Dessau, Inscriptiones Latinae Selectae, Berlin, 1892-1916
HA	Historia Augusta
Chr. Min.	Chronica Minora

Introduction

The modern view of the emperor Licinius (308-324) has, with few exceptions, been a negative one, with such phrases as "unsavoury"[1] and "mediocrity"[2] used recently to typify his character and rule. This view is based primarily upon the depiction of the emperor in the Church historians, most notably Eusebius of Caesarea, who styled him a pagan and a persecutor, though confirmation is often seen in the rather lukewarm reception Licinius' reign receives among the pagan historians.[3] There, Licinius is attacked for his avarice and rustic background and dismissed as a "tyrant" who perpetrated outrageous crimes.[4] But an earlier tradition presents Licinius as a Christian, and not only a Christian, but both as God's agent and the protector of the Church.[5] This apparent contradiction (based solely on those writings of Eusebius published in the wake of Licinius' military defeat by Constantine)[6] is circumvented by assuming either that Licinius had feigned allegiance to Christianity earlier in his reign[7] or that he re-converted to paganism late in his rule, driven to do so through resentment of the spiritual support his rival Constantine was receiving from the Christians in his dominions.[8] Along with this portrayal go the "typical" charges aimed at tyrants: unbridled lust, avaricious fiscal policies and a cruel, bloodthirsty nature.[9] Yet, some scattered items of fact contradict this superficial story of tyranny and may permit a more just appreciation of Licinius' relations with the Christian

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[1] Creed, 1984, xxxiv.
[2] Barnes, *CE*, 69.
[3] See Andreotti, 1956, 105-110; Corcoran, 1996, 274.
[4] See discussion of these charges in Barnes, *CE*, 69. Note the negative depiction of Licinius even in Julian, *Caesares*, 315d.
[5] Lactantius, *De Mort.*, 1.3, 48.1; Eusebius, *HE*, IX.ix.1.
[6] The later editions of Eusebius' *Historia Ecclesiastica* (325) and his *Vita Constantini* (339).
[7] So Barnes, 1992, 648.
[8] So Keresztes, 1989, 143-144.
[9] Dismissed by Barnes, *CE*, 69, as "mindless"; accepted by: Kerestzes, 1989, 144; Creed, 1984, xxxiv-xxxv (cruelty).

Church. Additionally, a close examination of the charges of persecution reveal nothing of the sort. Instead, a Christian emperor is revealed, one who legislated in favour of the Church and whose administration was similar in many respects to that of Constantine, whose similar policies receive accolades from Eusebius.

In order to counteract these negative portrayals of Licinius, a study of his depiction in the historical tradition must be finished (particularly the contemporary depictions of Lactantius and Eusebius) before an analysis of the charges against him can be accomplished. To this end, in Chapter One, a brief historical description of Licinius' career will be undertaken, marking the major political events and attempting to present a clear and unbiased account of his reign. Following this, it will be fitting to survey the depiction of Licinius in the ancient sources, with particular attention to the pagan accounts. It will become clear that, while the Neo-Flavian dynasty remained in power (until Julian's death in 363), Licinius remained a pariah in the sources, represented without redeeming qualities. With the advent of the Theodosian dynasty (in the mid-380s), however, Licinius suddenly begins to receive credit for his actions (though by no means does he become a "good emperor"). This change in outlook, it will be argued, demonstrates the power of the Constantinian propaganda against Licinius and the hold it had upon historical works of the time.

Chapter Two will study the description of Licinius and his rise to power in the pages of Lactantius' *De Mortibus Persecutorum*. After a brief biographical sketch of Lactantius and of the circumstances of his work, attention will be paid to Licinius' presence in the work and its significance for his religious policies and convictions. It will be shown that the Lactantian portrait of Licinius' Christianity should not be dismissed and fits well with that of another

contemporary Church historian, Eusebius of Caesarea.

Chapter Three will chronicle the life and work of Eusebius of Caesarea before discussing his two most important works for our purposes: the *Historia Ecclesiastica* and the *Vita Constantini*. The role of Licinius, especially in the first two editions of the *Historia Ecclesiastica*, will be described and similarities to the account of Lactantius emphasised. That Licinius should be praised as a Christian in two very different contemporary Christian works (in different parts of the east) should not be ignored. Following this, the very different depiction of Licinius found in the later editions of the *Historia Ecclesiastica* and the *Vita Constantini* will be outlined and discussed. Particular attention will be paid to the literary structure of the works and their relationship to the depiction of Licinius' character. It will become clear that, for various reasons, the later Eusebian account of Licinius cannot be trusted as an historical document and must be evaluated more closely.

The fourth Chapter will attempt to carry out this evaluation with regard to the alleged persecution under Licinius. After considering Eusebius' treatment of Maxentius and Licinius (who were both defeated by Constantine), the bishop's allegations will be examined point by point and refuted through comparison to Constantine's own actions and legislation, later ecclesiastical law and the literary and political motives of Eusebius himself. It will become clear that Eusebius willfully misrepresented his evidence to conform to the official Constantinian depiction of Licinius disseminated after 324 and that no persecution took place under Licinius. In fact, some of the very legislation referred to by Eusebius as persecution will be shown to be pro-Christian in character, thus confirming that Licinius remained a Christian until his overthrow.

Chapter I. The Reign of Licinius

i. The Chronology.

Very little is known of the origin and early career of the future emperor Valerius Licinius Licinianus.[10] He was born ca. 265 AD[11] in the new province of Dacia, south of the Danube,[12] perhaps of peasant stock.[13] His early military career is nowhere attested, but he is said to have been an old friend of Galerius from their early days in the army[14] and to have distinguished himself in that Caesar's Persian campaign against Narses.[15] Presumably Licinius would have made the acquaintance of Constantine during this campaign.[16] He appears briefly in 307 as an envoy sent by Galerius to negotiate with the "usurper" Maxentius in Rome.[17] This notice has prompted speculation that he was Galerius' praetorian prefect at the time.[18] The evidence, however, is slim. Licinius is depicted as negotiating with Maxentius in the company of a Probus, presumably Pompeius Probus (cos. 310).[19] The office of praetorian prefect would fit well with Lactantius' statement that Galerius "sought his [Licinius'] advice in all matters",[20] but no explicit literary or epigraphic evidence mentions it.

The *Origo Constantini Imperatoris* records that, after the failure of the

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[10] *PLRE* 1.509 Licinius 3

[11] *Epitome* 41.8; Note that Eusebius labels him an "old dotard" at *HE* X, viii.13 (reporting events ca. 323).

[12] *Origo* 13; Eutropius, 10.4.1; *Epitome* 41.9; Socrates, 1.2.1

[13] The *Origo* styles him "vilioris originis". This may have no pejorative connotation as Constantine's mother Helena is herself styled "vilissima" (*Origo* 2).

[14] *De Mort.* 20.3: *Habebat [Galerius] Licinium veteris contubernii amicum et a prima militia familiarem, cuius consiliis ad omnia regenda utebatur...* ; cf. Victor, 40.8; Zosimus, 2.11; Socrates, 1.2.1. For C. Galerius Valerius Maximianus, *PLRE* 1.574, Maximianus 9.

[15] Eutropius, 10.4.1.

[16] For Constantine, *PLRE* 1.223, Constantinus 4. For Constantine in Galerius' Persian expedition, see Barnes, *NE*, 41, with note.

[17] *Origo* 7.

[18] Barnes, *NE* 44; 137. On Maxentius, *PLRE* 1.571, Maxentius 5.

[19] *PLRE* 1.740 Probus 6. Probus is attested as prefect in 310 with Tatius Andronicus (*PLRE* 1.66 Andronicus 7) and should be seen as the recipient of a law in 310 or 311 (*CJ* 6.1.3) and perhaps an imperial letter on 1 April, 314 (*CTh* 4.12.1).

[20] *De Mort.* 20.3.

negotiations with Maxentius and Galerius' subsequent withdrawal from Italy in 307, Galerius elevated Licinius to the rank of Caesar. This appears to contradict Lactantius who implies (primarily through his silence) that Licinius was raised directly to the rank of Augustus at Carnuntum in November, 308 AD.[21] The passage in the normally reliable *Origo* may be a later editor's interpolation from Orosius' *Historia adversus Paganos*, since several later passages are quoted directly, while this section bears resemblance to Bk. 7, 28,8.[22] In addition, the *Origo* (13) introduces Licinius as if for the first time when relating the elevation at Carnuntum; the earlier notice is perhaps a doublet. At any rate, without any other evidence (especially epigraphic and numismatic), elevation to the rank of Caesar should be rejected.[23]

On November 11, 308 AD, with both the retired Diocletian (who had emerged from private life to hold the consulship with Galerius in 308)[24] and Maximian[25] in attendance, Licinius was elevated directly to the rank of Augustus, thus breaking the tetrarchic precedence of promotion from Caesar to Augustus.[26] The usual interpretation of this event[27] is that Galerius arranged the

[21] The location of the meeting is given by Zosimus in a rather garbled account. The date is given in *Chron. Min.* I.231. See Creed, 1984, 109, n.2.

[22] Noted by Moreau, ad loc.

[23] It should also be noted that the *Origo* (17, 25) makes the same mistake in relation to both of Licinius' co-emperors during his wars with Constantine: Valens and Martinianus (see below, notes 30 and 100).

[24] Creed, 1984, 109, n.2. Of course, if the *Origo* is indeed correct, Licinius followed the traditional route. Ammianus may lend support to this view when he says explicitly (27.6.16) that Valentinian I was the first emperor since Marcus Aurelius to have appointed a colleague Augustus without first having named him Caesar. On Diocletian, *PLRE* 1.253, Diocletianus 2.

[25] *PLRE* 1.573, Maximianus 8. Maximian is an enigmatic figure whose allegiances are hard to gauge. He was instrumental in establishing his son Maxentius as Augustus in Rome (and in turning Severus' army away from their attack on the city), but later denounced his son and fled to Constantine. His appearance at the conference of Carnuntum suggests that he was supporting the elevation of Licinius, and this may be borne out by his alleged attack on Constantine in 310. Following his death in 310, he becomes a tool of propaganda for both Maxentius and Constantine. For a detailed study of his actions after 305, see Sydenham, 1934.

[26] For location and date, see note 21 *supra*. For the view that the meeting took place in 307, even though Licinius' Imperial investiture took place in November, 308, see Seston, 1956.

[27] Barnes, *CE*, 32.

meeting and sought the backing of Diocletian in reconstituting the tetrarchy (which had been lacking an "official" Augustus since the death of Severus in 307),[28] employing the latter's prestige to add support for this unorthodox manoeuvre. Now Augustus, Licinius took up his official residence in Sirmium and was nominally in charge of central and western Europe, Italy and Africa (though Maxentius still controlled Italy and Africa and Constantine Gaul, Spain and Britain). This sudden elevation had repercussions on a number of fronts. First, in the East, we find Maximinus Daia (Caesar since 305)[29] disgruntled at having been passed over.[30] In Italy, Maxentius was again officially ignored and Licinius' first assignment as Augustus seems to have been to try to depose the usurper. In Gaul, Constantine was again recognised as Caesar, with no indication that further advancement would be imminent [31] (and as Caesar, he was presumably expected to serve Licinius). The ambitious Constantine cannot have been satisfied with the new arrangements. In fact, neither Constantine nor Maxentius stopped referring to themselves as Augusti on their coinage and official documents,[32] and Maximinus soon followed suit despite Galerius' attempt to appease him (and Constantine) by doing away with the title of Caesar and substituting the title "filius Augustorum".[33] Officially (in the eyes of the East), in late 308, the Augusti were now Galerius and Licinius with Constantine and Maximinus recognised as Caesars.

Licinius' first task as Augustus was apparently a march into Italy to challenge Maxentius (now weakened by a struggle with the usurper Domitius

[28] For Severus, *PLRE* 1.837, Severus 30.
[29] On Maximinus, *PLRE* 1.579, Maximinus 12.
[30] Lactantius, *De Mort.*, 32. Of course, Maximinus might reasonably have assumed that he was next in line.
[31] Especially since, as Caesar in the West in 307, he should have succeeded Severus. That Licinius was promoted before him could not have augured well for Constantine in Galerius' plans.
[32] Barnes, *CE*, 32.
[33] Barnes, *CE*, 32.

Alexander in Africa).[34] Licinius seems to have taken some territory in Northern Italy in 309[35] and was poised to move deeper into Maxentius' territory when he was called away on more pressing business. First, he had to deal with an incursion of Sarmatians, over whom he celebrated a victory on June 27th, 310.[36] Soon afterwards, Galerius was struck with what appears to have been bowel cancer and withdrew from public life. Licinius returned to the emperor's side and eventually escorted his old friend towards his home, Romulianum on the Danube, where Galerius wished to be buried.

Galerius died in April or May of 311.[37] On his deathbed, he drafted an edict of toleration towards the Christians[38] which granted them religious freedom within his territories. Behind this edict, some have seen the hand of Licinius, now able to force his views upon the ailing senior Augustus.[39] Galerius' death set off a power struggle between the Augusti on both fronts. In the East, Maximinus (who had been styling himself Augustus since spring of 310)[40] moved swiftly through Asia Minor and established control fully to the Bosporus. As luck would have it, at the time of Galerius' death, an imperial census was in progress. Seizing his opportunity, Maximinus used a platform of debt-relief and exemption to secure popularity throughout the East.[41] This left Licinius, who had inherited Galerius' fiscal policies, in a tricky situation. To counteract these measures, Licinius, on the 9th of June, 311, sent a letter to a

[34] On Alexander, *PLRE* 1.43 Alexander 17. There is inscriptional evidence that Constantine was supporting (though probably in spirit only) the rebellion of Alexander.
[35] See Barnes, *CE*, 33 and notes, for the evidence. Licinius is honoured in Istria in 310 (*ILS* 678).
[36] *ILS* 660; Barnes, *CE*, 33.
[37] Lactantius, *De Mort.* 35.4.
[38] The "edict of Serdica" (actually a letter to provincials), posted at Nicomedia on April 30, 311 (*De Mort.* 34). Cf. Barnes, *CE*, 39.
[39] Gregoire, 1964, 87; Corsaro, 1983.
[40] Lactantius, *De Mort.* 32.5.
[41] Lactantius, *De Mort.* 36.1; Barnes, *CE*,39. For the hypothesis that the legislation was in fact Licinius', see Gregoire, 1938a, *passim*. For the view that it came in 312, as part of Maximinus' anti-christian activities, see Mitchell, 1988.

Dalmatius, giving soldiers a tax reduction of five *capita* each and the same exemption upon retirement, thus undermining Maximinus' popularity, at least among the troops.[42]

In the summer of 311, Licinius was finally able to assemble a force against Maximinus, but no battle was fought. Instead, the two Augusti convened a meeting on a boat and pledged allegiance towards each other.[43] Licinius was now master of Galerius' European territories and potentially Italy and Africa, if he could displace Maxentius; Maximinus held all Asia Minor, Syria and Egypt.

Meanwhile, in the West, Maxentius, taking the initiative and full advantage of Licinius' absence, began an offensive against Constantine in the summer of 311 which has left little trace in the historical record.[44] Constantine, for his part, to prevent any alliance between Licinius and Maxentius, betrothed his half-sister Constantia to Licinius.[45] This allegiance was interpreted as an attack by Maximinus who then allied himself with Maxentius.[46] Constantine, moving swiftly (perhaps for fear that Licinius would continue his original plan to depose Maxentius[47] -- thus effectively leaving Constantine with little chance of moving beyond his current power-base in Gaul), staged a counter-offensive against Maxentius which culminated in the famed battle of the Milvian bridge on the 28th of October, 312 and Constantine's capture of Rome.[48]

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[42] *FIRA* I.93, cited in Lewis and Reinhold, 528 (who wrongly attribute it to Constantine. Cf. Barnes, *CE*, 40 and n.119).

[43] Lactantius, *De Mort.* 36.1.

[44] See Barnes, *CE*, 33, for a plausible reconstruction of Maxentius' actions.

[45] Lactantius, *De Mort.* 43.2. How much this marriage alliance would have affected Licinius' (or Constantine's) actions is hard to gauge. It should be remembered that Constantine was married to Maxentius' sister (and that Maxentius was married to Galerius' daughter).

[46] Lactantius, *De Mort.* 43, though without sending any troops.

[47] Zosimus, 2.14.1, says that Maxentius was preparing to send troops into Raetia -- with an eye on seizing Dalmatia and Illyricum -- which may suggest that he was expecting an offensive from Licinius.

[48] See Barnes, *CE*, 41-43 and especially n.145 for an account of this campaign. For the date, see Lactantius, *De Mort.* 44.3; Eusebius, *HE*, IX, ix.1; Zosimus, 2.15.2. Constantine now gained control of all Italy and Africa.

Licinius' movements during 312 are unattested. Presumably he spent the year consolidating his power and awaiting the outcome of Constantine's war with Maxentius. He may well have been preparing his troops for what had now become an inevitable confrontation with Maximinus. In any event, Licinius made his way to Milan in February, 313, where he married Constantine's sister Constantia.[49] In addition, Licinius and Constantine drafted and posted the so-called "Edict of Milan",[50] a document later promulgated throughout the East which expressed not only official toleration for the Christians but established elaborate means for the return of property confiscated during the Great Persecution.[51]

While Licinius was in Milan, Maximinus quickly crossed Asia Minor from Mesopotamia and besieged the city of Byzantium. Word was sent to Licinius who hastily assembled an army and moved against the eastern Caesar. Byzantium held out for eleven days and allowed Licinius the time to assemble his troops at Adrianople.[52] In Lactantius, the battle takes on a religious tone as Maximinus invokes Jupiter while an angel dictates a prayer to Licinius to use before battle.[53] On the 30th of April, the armies advanced against each other. At a meeting between the emperors before the battle, Licinius sued for peace but was rejected by Maximinus, who hoped to incite Licinius' army to mutiny through the offer of donatives (as Maximian had done to the army of Severus - and very nearly the army of Galerius -- on behalf of his son,

[49] *PLRE* 1.221, Constantia 1; Lactantius, *De Mort.* 45.1.

[50] See Barnes, *CE*, 62, n. 3.; Creed, 121, n.2. The term "Edict of Milan" has fallen out of use over the last century for the reason that it is not an "edict" in the official sense (but a letter to a governor) and it was never issued at Milan.

[51] The Latin text is given by Lactantius, *De Mort.* 48.2ff. A Greek translation is given by Eusebius, *HE*, X.v.2-14. Barnes, *CE*, 62, argues (against Gregoire, 1938a, 559) that Constantine was behind this "edict" and forced it upon Licinius. His evidence will be discussed more fully below, Chapters II and III.

[52] Lact. *De Mort.* 45.5-6.

[53] *De Mort.* 46.

Maxentius). Licinius' army attacked and eventually prevailed. Maximinus fled, dressed as a slave, and what remained of his army was incorporated into Licinius' own troops.[54] Licinius then made his way east.

Licinius' first action upon entering Nicomedia on June 13, 313, was to give thanks to God and to order the "edict of Milan" to be publicly displayed.[55] He then set about pursuing Maximinus, who had fled through the Taurus mountains and had tried to block Licinius' advance with forts. He was soon dislodged and fled to Tarsus where he fell ill (either in attempting suicide by poison or through divine intervention).[56] It seems that Maximinus issued his own edict of toleration before his death (which was known in Egypt by the 13th of September).[57]

Licinius was now the emperor of the East as well as of central Europe. His first recorded actions were to hunt down the remaining members of Maximinus' and Galerius' families and put them to death.[58] He then appears to have campaigned against the Persians, in late 313 or early 314,[59] and celebrated victories. During this time (perhaps during this campaign), King Tiridates of Armenia was baptized a Christian and declared his kingdom officially Christian.[60] Licinius then hurried north to quell a Gothic incursion and celebrated a victory in 314 or 315.[61] With the Danubian frontier pacified, Licinius rebuilt the city of Tropaeum Traiani and may have restored the monument

[54] *De Mort.* 47 and 48.1; Eusebius, *HE*, IX, x.3-4 has a shorter version of events.
[55] *De Mort.* 48.1 - -the full text is given from 48.2-12. Eusebius gives a Greek translation at *HE*, X, v.2-14.
[56] Attempted suicide: *De Mort.* 49. Divine Illness: Eusebius, *HE*, IX, x.3-15.
[57] Edict: Eusebius, *HE*, IX, x.7-11 (though Lactantius does not mention the edict, he does say that Maximinus embraced Christianity before he died, 49.7). Death: *P. Cair. Isid.* 103.20 (cited by Creed, 123, n.2).
[58] Lactanius, *De Mort.* 50 and 51. Gregoire, 1964, 72 has called this "la premie`re Croisade".
[59] Barnes, *NE*, 81, n.145, where this campaign is adduced from the imperial titulature on *ILS* 8942 and 696. Lactantius, *De Mort.* 50.6, places Licinius in Antioch in the Fall of 313.
[60] Barnes, *CE*, 65.
[61] Barnes, *NE*, 82, again taking the information from *ILS* 8942 and 696.

celebrating Trajan's Dacian conquest.[62] He then seems to have remained on or near the Danube until late in 316.[63] In 315,[64] Licinius' wife Constantia gave birth to a son, Valerius Licinius Licinianus,[65] producing an heir to the empire of the East.

In the West, Constantine, too, had been busy on the frontiers;[66] he was also embroiled in the doctrinal disputes surrounding the Donatist schism in the African Church.[67] During this time, however, a plot which eventually led to the first war between the two emperors is said to have developed.[68] According to the *Origo Constantini* (14 -15), Constantine sent a certain Constantius (presumably his half-brother) to Licinius to propose that Bassianus,[69] husband of his sister Anastasia,[70] should be elevated to the rank of Caesar, to be in charge of Italy.[71] Licinius rejected the deal and sent Senecio,[72] the brother of Bassianus and a confidante of the Eastern emperor, to persuade Bassianus to murder

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[62] Barnes, *CE*, 65; *NE*, 82, citing *ILS* 8938 and, perhaps, *CTh* 2.30.1 as evidence. For an opposing opinion, see Dimaio *et al.*, 1990, 78, n.108.

[63] Barnes, *NE*, 82; ibid.,*CE*, 65, n.23.

[64] The date is adduced from both Zosimus, 2.20.2 and *Epitome*, 41.4, who say Licinius II was 19 months old when proclaimed emperor on the 1st of March, 317.

[65] *PLRE* 1.509, Licinius 4.

[66] In Britain in 313, and in Gaul in 315, cf. Barnes, *NE*, 72. For a different chronology, see Dimaio *et al.*, 1990, *passim.*

[67] On the schism, see Barnes, *CE*, 53-61. Constantine presided over the Council of Arles in August, 314 (Eusebius, *VC* I.44; *HE* X, v.23).

[68] Eusebius, *VC* I.50.2; *HE* X, viii.5, says that Licinius deceived Constantine and tried to murder him. I have followed Barnes, 1973, 36-38, in dating this war - -the *proelium cibalense* - - to 316 instead of the 314 given in the *Chr. Min.* (1.231). This seems to be generally accepted now, though see Dimaio, *et al.*, 1990, for the proposition that the war was fought in two stages - -the battle at Cibalae in 314, followed by two years of truce which ended with the battle of the *campus adriensis*.

[69] *PLRE* 1.150, Bassianus 1.

[70] *PLRE* 1.58, Anastasia 1.

[71] The text says that the model was to be that of Diocletian and Maximian (*ut exemplo Diocletiani et Maximiani*) and therefore might also have included the elevation of Constantine's son Crispus. Cf. Barnes, *CE*, 66, for this proposal.

[72] *PLRE* 1.820, Senecio 1.

Constantine. Bassianus was caught and put to death.[73] Constantine demanded that Senecio be returned to him for punishment and Licinius refused. This led to civil war.[74] Barnes' detailed assessment of the evidence points to Constantine as the aggressor in this war.[75] Eutropius[76] makes this clear when he says that Constantine wanted to rule the world and so made war on Licinius.

The details of the war are fairly well known.[77] On October 8, 316, Constantine attacked Licinius near Cibalae (on the route to Sirmium), leading 20,000 men against Licinius' 35,000.[78] The battle was fought for the entire day[79] with Constantine's troops breaking through the Licinian lines towards nightfall. Licinius retreated towards Sirmium, where he collected his wife and son, and fled to Serdica. Here he proclaimed Aurelius Valerius Valens, previously *dux limitis* for the Dacian frontier, co-emperor.[80] Licinius then sent embassies to Constantine at Philippopolis seeking peace, but these were rejected.[81] The troops now met again at Adrianople. The battle was once again fierce and was called off at an appointed time without a clear victor.[82] Licinius again retreated by nightfall after the battle but not in the direction Constantine had anticipated.

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[73] As Barnes, *CE*, 67, notes, this account bears a striking resemblance to the earlier story of Maximian attempting to kill Constantine in his bed, though there may indeed be something behind the tradition of Bassianus' plot, since Rufius Volusianus, consul in 314 and urban prefect in 315, was exiled around this time as was his relative, the poet Publilius Optatianus Porfyrius.

[74] The *Origo* also offers the secondary reason (could this reflect two different "official" versions to come out of Constantine's camp, perhaps issued at different times?) that Licinius had some of Constantine's statues broken at Emona. Istria, though in the diocese of Italy, had remained under Licinius' jurisdiction.

[75] For the view that Licinius was behind the intrigues and the aggression, Paschoud, 1971, 208.

[76] 10.5. Zosimus, 2.18.1, says that Constantine wanted some of Licinius' provinces for his own.

[77] *Origo* , 16-18; Zosimus, 18.2-20; Eutropius, 10.5; *Epitome*, 41.5

[78] The figures are given in the *Origo*, 16.

[79] Zosimus, 2.18.4. The *Epitome*, 41.5, says the attack was by night.

[80] *PLRE* 1.931, Valens 13; For the coinage of Valens, Bruun, RIC,7. 644, Cyzicus 7; 706, Alexandria 19. The *Origo* (17) says he was made Caesar, but the only coins attested for him show that he was Augustus.

[81] *Origo*, 17.

[82] Zosimus, 19.3.

He drew off towards Beroea instead of to the more natural Byzantium[83] and cut Constantine's supply lines. At this point, Licinius sent Mestrianus[84] to sue once again for peace. This time the offer was accepted. Valens was removed from office (and presumably killed) and Licinius relinquished all of his European holdings save Thrace, Moesia and Scythia minora.[85] Soon after, on March 1, 317, the three sons of the emperors, Crispus, Constantinus II, and Licinius II were proclaimed Caesars while Licinius and Constantine held the consulship together, thus exhibiting their newly ratified peace.[86]

After this agreement, Licinius moved his capital to Nicomedia. In 318, he took the field again against the Sarmatians,[87] winning a victory. After this, there is no evidence of Licinius' movements before 323.[88] By this time, the peace established in 317 had once again been broken (though no battles had yet been fought).[89] It is to this time that one author attributes the flight of the Persian prince Hormisdas into Roman territory where he was received by Licinius.[90] Christian sources report that Licinius had begun a persecution during these years. This gave Constantine a legitimate reason for invasion.[91] In the pagan sources, the reason is less clear. The *Origo Constantini* says that

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[83] *Origo*, 18.
[84] *PLRE* 1.600 (though note that the date given is 314, not 316).
[85] *Origo*, 18; Zosimus, 20.1.
[86] *Origo*, 18. That tensions continued between the two *Augusti* in this region has been attested by the discovery of silver vessels, commemorating Licinius' *decennalia* in 318 (and inscribed *Licini Auguste semper vincas*), in Pannonia and Moesia. The dishes seem to have been hidden in the ground. Mocsy, 1974, 277, sees this as evidence of Licinian propaganda in his former territory soon after his defeat as well as for a "persecution" of Licinian supporters sometime later.
[87] Barnes, *NE*, 82 and 236 discussing *P. Oxy.*, 889.
[88] Barnes speculates he may have been at Byzantium in 323, based on *CTh* 11.30.12 and 12.1.8
[89] The East and West chose different consuls since sometime in 321: Barnes, *NE*, 95-96.
[90] John of Antioch, frag. 178, cited in Dodgeon and Lieu, 1991, 148. Zosimus, 2.27, gives the story of Hormisdas during the final battle between Constantine and Licinius, thus suggesting that his flight took place sometime around 324.
[91] Eusebius, *HE* X, viii.10 and *VC* I.52; Socrates, *HE*, 1.3-4. Barnes, *CE*, 71-72, attempts to find contemporary confirmation in Eusebius' *Proof of the Gospel*.

Constantine, pursuing marauding Goths,[92] intruded into Licinius' jurisdiction and settled a peace with them.[93] Licinius naturally saw this as a breach of his borders and war ensued.[94] Zosimus states that Constantine remained in the area of Thessalonica, built a port for his naval manoeuvres and began to plan his attack on Licinius.[95] Licinius, for his part, organized a large force and advanced towards Adrianople, spreading his army along the east bank of the Hebrus river.[96] In addition, both emperors prepared their fleets, Constantine's under the command of the Caesar Crispus, that of Licinius with Amandus at the helm.[97] On land, Licinius was defeated after another long battle and was forced to retreat to Byzantium where he prepared for a siege, hopeful that a naval victory would give him the upper hand.[98] Amandus, however, was defeated by Crispus, thus leaving Byzantium vulnerable from the sea, and Licinius was forced to flee to Chalcedon with his treasury.[99] There, Licinius elevated his *magister officiorum*, Martinianus, to the rank of Augustus.[100] He then sent him to Lampsacus to block Constantine's passage through the Hellespont.[101] When this failed, Licinius and Martinianus made a last stand at Chrysopolis, having

[92] Presumably the Gothic invasion of Rausimodus reported by Zosimus, 2.21 (though he uses the term "Sarmatians"). Cf. *CTh* 7.1.1, which states that anyone caught collaborating with Rausimodus will be burnt alive. Zosimus appears to have conflated two separate expeditions -- one by the Sarmatians in 322, another by the Goths in 323. Cf. Paschoud, 213, n. 31; Barnes, *NE*, 75.

[93] *Origo*, 22.

[94] Though the *Origo* (22) states that after the initial breach, Licinius raised the justified anger of Constantine through his haughty actions and evil deeds. Brizzi, 1979, discusses the account in the Anonymous Continuator of Dio of Licinius melting the gold coins Constantine struck to commemorate this victory. On the Continuator, see Potter, 1990, App. V.

[95] 2.22.1.

[96] *Origo*, 24; Zosimus, 2.22.2-4.

[97] *Origo*, 23; 26; Zosimus, 2.22.23.3-24. For Amandus (called Abantos by Zosimus), see PLRE I.50, Amandus 2.

[98] Zosimus, 2.23.1; *Origo* 27.

[99] Zosimus, 2.23.2 - 25.1; *Origo* 27.

[100] Both the *Origo*, 25 (dating the elevation to before the naval battle) and Zosimus, 2.25.2, say that Martinianus (*PLRE* 1.563, Martinianus 2) was raised to the rank of Caesar, but the numismatic evidence (RIC 7.603) shows that he was, in fact, raised to the rank of Augustus (not noted by *PLRE*, which calls him Caesar).

[101] Zosimus, 2.25.2.

amassed an army of Goths but once again were defeated in the field.[102] The following day, his wife Constantia and the Bishop Eusebius of Nicomedia visited Constantine and begged for Licinius' life. Licinius entered the camp, laid aside his purple robes and apologised for his actions.[103] Constantine had Martinianus put to death[104] but took a vow to spare his brother-in-law.[105] Licinius was sent to Thessalonica as a private citizen and was strangled there in 325.[106]

ii. Licinius in the Historical Tradition.

The personality and government of the emperor Licinius is easily lost or overlooked amidst the Constantinian propaganda which took hold following Licinius' overthrow.[107] In general, the historical tradition, both pagan and Christian sources alike, is unfavourable to the defeated emperor but a few interesting exceptions allow some doubt to be placed upon the pro-Constantinian accounts of events. Among the Church historians, the two most important authors are Lactantius and Eusebius of Caesarea. Both these Church Fathers wrote eye-witness accounts of the period of the "Great Persecution" under Diocletian and his successors which culminated in the final defeat of the persecuting emperors. Perhaps ironically, since he became known as a persecutor himself, Licinius was depicted by both authors as a Christian and a

[102] *Origo*, 27; Zosimus, 2.26.2 - 3.

[103] *Origo*, 28 (mentioning only Constantia); Zosimus, 2.28 (without mention of Eusebius); Philostorgius, (ed. Bidez), 180,16 (confirming both Constantia and Eusebius).

[104] Zosimus, 2.28.2. The *Origo*, 28, says that Martinianus' life was forfeit, but one section later (29) says he was sent to Cappadocia to be killed, thus suggesting that there may have been a pretence of clemency towards him as well.

[105] Zosimus, 2.28; Eutropius, 10.6.

[106] Among the Christian sources, Licinius is said to have attempted an insurrection while at Thessalonica, though the similarity between this story and that of Maximian might suggest an "official" version here. Cf. Socrates, *HE*, 1.4.

[107] On Constantinian propaganda in general, see Brett, 1983; Elliot, 1990. For Constantinian propaganda and its relation to Licinius, see Andreotti, 1960; Barnes, *CE*, 68-69. Gregoire, 1938a, 559, says Licinius is "so badly treated by history only because he was unfortunate enough to be defeated and treacherously killed by 'Saint' Constantine."

saviour. But, following Constantine's victory in 324, there was a total reversal among the Church historians. Licinius, once the chosen of God, was now depicted as an evil persecutor. Eusebius of Caesarea changed or deleted all the laudatory comments found in his first edition of the *Historia Ecclesiastica*, and it was this revised version which remained in the Christian tradition.[108]

Among the pagan historians -- Aurelius Victor, Eutropius, the anonymous authors of the *Origo Constantini* and the *Epitome de Caesaribus*, and Zosimus -- there is less of the overtly pro-Constantinian bias seen among the later Christian sources, but Licinius is still not presented in a favourable light. The major difference between these two traditions is seen most clearly in their respective treatments of Constantine, with the Church historians turning towards hagiography while the pagans pointedly ignore religious issues and are less likely to look for moral reasons behind Constantine's attacks upon Licinius.[109] In addition to the differences between Christian and pagan historians, another, perhaps more important, difference can be detected between those historians writing under Constantine and his dynastic successors (including Julian), and those who wrote later in the fourth century.[110] In fact, it is remarkable to see that Licinius becomes a much more sympathetic character under the Theodosian writers, while never actually becoming a "good emperor".[111]

The most convenient way to approach all these sources is chronologically, especially since the earliest two sources, Lactantius and Eusebius, set the tone for the later Christian chroniclers and historians. Both

[108] See below and Section III.
[109] With the exception of Zosimus, 29.2-4, who attributes Constantine's conversion to his guilt over murdering his son Crispus in 326 and his search for absolution. For the moral reasons behind Constantine's attacks on Licinius, see Eusebius, *VC*, II, 6-9; Socrates, *HE*, LXVII, I,3-4.
[110] See Andreotti, 1960, for the application of this idea to the Latin historians.
[111] With the possible exception of Libanius, *Pro Templis*, 6, discussed below.

Eusebius and Lactantius will be dealt with in much greater detail below (Chapters II and III), so a very general survey will suffice here.

Lactantius was a rhetorician from Africa who was summoned to Diocletian's capital of Nicomedia in 303.[112] His *De Mortibus Persecutorum*, which deals with the rise of both Constantine and Licinius (and the punishment of the persecuting emperors) was most likely published in the East around 315, as there is no mention of hostilities between the two emperors in the text.[113] In the *De Mortibus Persecutorum*, Licinius is depicted as the champion of Christ who overcomes the arch-persecutor Maximinus. Licinius is visited by an angel, openly gives thanks to God for his initial victory and is shown as the mover behind the "Edict of Milan", which granted toleration and restitution to the Christians of the East.[114] He is also the instrument of God's divine judgement, chasing down and putting to death the families of the persecutors.[115] In the pages of Lactantius, Licinius is a Christian and, moreover, is God's chosen ruler in the East.

Eusebius of Caesarea finished the first version of his *Historia Ecclesiastica* around the same time as Lactantius published his *De Mortibus Persecutorum*.[116] In the ninth book, which deals with Constantine's overthrow of Maxentius and Licinius' defeat of Maximinus, Licinius is shown to be a Christian. Both emperors give thanks to God (even before Licinius' march east to face Maximinus) and are shown working in concert to eliminate the persecutors and establish God's rule.[117] After the overthrow of Licinius,

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[112] See Creed, 1984, xxv-xxix, for the career of Lactantius.
[113] Christensen, 1980, 21-26. See Creed, xxvii, for the view that Lactantius published the work in the West.
[114] 48.2-12.
[115] 50, 51.
[116] For the date of 313/314 for the first edition of the *HE*, see Burgess, 1997, 499.
[117] IX, ix.12. See commentary of Christensen, 1989, 300.

Eusebius revised his *History*, deleting or changing any of the laudatory sections concerning the Eastern emperor, as noted above.[118] He also added sections to the tenth book which dealt with Constantine's wars with Licinius and which portrayed Licinius as a persecutor who had been struck with madness and had turned against the church.[119] Here, Licinius was compared to Maxentius, now the paradigm of the tyrant, with all the avarice, lust and cruelty included.[120] This depiction was reiterated, though with even more vehemence, following Constantine's death when Eusebius wrote his *Vita Constantini*. In fact, in this later work, Licinius as persecutor is given more space than any of the other persecutors.[121] It was this portrayal which, for the most part, was transmitted through the ecclesiatical tradition. Sozomen, Socrates Scholasticus and Theodoret all follow the Eusebian view in labelling Licinius a persecutor.[122] There are, however, a few exceptions to this pattern. Augustine, generally very careful with his scholarship, does not include Licinius among his list of persecutors[123] and, perhaps more importantly, Rufinus of Aquilea, who translated Eusebius' *Historia Ecclesiastica* into Latin in the early 5th century, did not include Eusebius' tenth book, but wrote his own which ignored the fall of Licinius in favour of an account of the Arian heresy.[124] The meaning of Rufinus'

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[118] In 324/325. A later edition was also produced to take Crispus out of the record once the Caesar had been put to death. See Barnes, 1980, 191-201 (who argues for a very early first edition).

[119] IX, ix.12

[120] X, viii.13; *VC*, I.55.2. See Barnes, *CE*, 69.

[121] Corcoran, 1993, 99.

[122] Sozomen, 1.7; Socrates 1.4; Theodoret, 1.1.

[123] *De Civ. Dei*, XVIII, 52; XX, 19.

[124] It is possible that Rufinus had only the first edition of the *HE* to work with, but he would surely have known the *Vita Constantini*. For a discussion of Rufinus' erudition, see Amidon, 1997, vi - xiii. Is it possible that Rufinus equated Licinius' fall with the Arian controversy? When relating events in 317, he very pointedly says: "...it was then that since our people were enjoying peace and a respite from persecution, and the glory of the churches was crowned by the merits of the confessors, the favorable state of our affairs was disturbed by strife within." The account of the Arian controversy leads directly into the story of the council of Nicaea.

omission will be discussed in greater detail below.

With the loss of Praxagoras' *History of Constantine*,[125] the earliest pagan source is Sextus Aurelius Victor's *De Caesaribus*. Victor was writing under Constantius II,[126] son of Constantine, and, perhaps naturally, is unfavourable to Licinius.[127] In a list of imperial qualities separating Constantine and Licinius, he offers frugality (*parsimonia*) as Licinius' one good quality, but qualifies this by saying it was of a "rustic nature" (*agrestis*).[128] To some extent this smacks of an "official" line and is reminiscent of the caricatures of the third-century Illyrian emperors, who were also purported to be of humble birth and uneducated.[129] He later stresses Licinius' cruelty, contrasting Constantine's outlawing of the gibbet and breaking of legs with Licinius' tortures of "innocent philosophers of noble rank".[130] But, when dealing with the wars between Constantine and Licinius, there is none of the moralizing about Constantine's intentions in invading, only the notice that they were of different characters.[131] Also, Licinius is in no way portrayed as a tyrant the way Maxentius was portrayed.[132] He is seen simply as a rival of Constantine without the personal invective which Victor had used in his description of Maxentius' overthrow.[133]

Eutropius, writing under the emperor Valens, is the first historian who

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[125] Discussed by Photius, *Bibliotheca*, 62.
[126] For Victor and his work, see Den Boer, 1972, 19-31; Bird, 1994, vii-xiv.
[127] Though see also the "veiled" attacks on Constantine, for example at 40. 29-30 and the commentary of Bird, 1994, 188, n.26.
[128] 41. 2. Licinius' frugality is also noted by Eusebius, *VC*, I.55; Lactantius, *De Mort.* 46.12. Note Victor's backhanded compliments to Galerius and Constantius Chlorus when he says "*adeo mirl naturae beneficiis, ut ea si a doctis pectoribus proficiscerentur neque insulsitate offenderent, haud dubie praecipua haberentur.*"
[129] Aurelian: *HA Aurelian*, 3.1; *Epitome*, 35.1; Probus: *HA Probus*, 3.1; Carus: *HA Carus* 4.1-5; Diocletian: Eutropius, 9.19. See also Barnes, 1998b, 111, for similar stereotypes in Ammianus.
[130] 41.9.
[131] 41.2
[132] Andreotti, 1960, 107.
[133] 40.18-20.

is not writing under a descendant of Constantine to deal with Licinius.[134] Perhaps as a consequence, Licinius is praised as a soldier for the first time, his actions during Galerius' Persian war being noted.[135] In addition, Constantine's ambitions are plainly stated (*simul principatum totius orbis adfectans*)[136] and he is shown to have attacked Licinius without any of the provocations or moral justifications insisted upon in the Christian sources. Futhermore, Constantine is for the first time attacked for having broken his oath to spare Licinius' life in 324 and for the deaths of Crispus and Fausta in 326.[137]

The *Epitome de Caesaribus* [138] is a collection of short imperial biographies down to the death of the emperor Theodosius in 395. The text vacillates in its depiction of Constantine, though it styles him a robber and a hedonist in the last twenty years of his reign.[139] The *Epitome* also remarks upon the execution of Crispus and Fausta.[140] Licinius, in rhetorical fashion, is given the libidinous and avaricious trappings of the tyrant but, for the first time in the Latin tradition, he is credited for his care of the rural populace, his military discipline and his rigorous control over the imperial court, clearing out the eunuchs and courtiers whom he called the "grubs and mice of the palace".[141] Licinius is once more attacked for his hostility towards intellectuals, which may reflect the same tradition found in Victor of enmity towards the Illyrian emperors due to their supposedly rustic birth.[142]

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[134] For Eutropius and his career, see Bird, 1993, vii-xviii.
[135] 10.4.
[136] 10.5.
[137] 10.6. Note that Crispus' death is passed over in silence by Victor writing under Constantius II.
[138] For an introduction to this text, see Barnes, 1976b. On the author, see the short discussion of Pichlmayr in the introduction to the Teubner text of Aurelius Victor (pp xi-xii).
[139] 41.16. Cf. Eutropius, 10.7.1; Julian, *Caesares*, 315D; 329A.
[140] 41.11-12.
[141] 41. 9-10.
[142] see page 19 and note 129 above.

The *Origo Constantini Imperatoris* [143] is especially important for the years 306-311 and the later conflicts between Constantine and Licinius, with twenty-four of the thirty-five sections centred on these periods. The *Origo* is a short biography generally independant of the remaining historical tradition[144] though it was abbreviated by a later redactor who interpolated passages from Orosius' *Historia adversus Paganos* .[145] The work is not overtly favourable to Licinius, but, like Victor and Eutropius, does not consider him to be a tyrant in the manner of Maxentius.[146] It also refuses to place the blame for the wars between Constantine and Licinius on Licinius alone, but gives the description of Constantine's attempt to elevate his brother-in-law Bassianus as Caesar in charge of Italy and later the fact that Constantine moved through Licinius' territory during his war with the Goths as reasons for the ruptures.[147] There are some justifications for Constantine's aggressions,[148] but there is no real attempt to portray Constantine as fighting a "holy war".[149] As far as Constantine is concerned, the *Origo* , like Eutropius, is able to depict him in less than flattering terms, as when it speaks of his humble birth and lack of education, thus

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[143] On the dating of the *Origo*, see Barnes, 1989b; Leadbetter, 1998, 74, n.1; Andreotti, 1960, 110. Though generally dated in the 380's, Barnes argues for a date in the 340's, though admits that a precise date is impossible to detect (161). The *Origo* has been grouped here with the *Epitome* for the sake of convenience. I am assuming a pagan author for the *Origo* based on the fact that the only overtly Christian passages are those from Orosius.

[144] Barnes, 1989b, 161, for examples.

[145] Barnes, 1989b, 161.

[146] Maxentius is labelled a *tyrannus* in section 12. Licinius is said to rage with "*scelere, avaritia, crudelitate, libidine*" at 22, the trademark characteristics of the tyrant (perhaps to be expected in a laudatory biography of Constantine), but *tyrannus* itself is never used. Barnes, *CE*, 69, labels this type of caricature "the mindless repetition of the stereotyped crimes of the textbook tyrant."

[147] Sections 14-15; 21.

[148] For example, the "Bassianus" affair (discussed above, pgs. 11 and 12) and the words "*...cum [Licinius] variasset inter suppliciantia et superba mandata, iram Constantini merito excitavit.*" (22).

[149] Perhaps another reason for seeing a pagan hand behind the *Origo*.

suggesting a more objective portrayal. [150]

Zosimus, writing in the 6th century, appears to have based his history for this period on that of Eunapius of Sardis.[151] His is the longest and most detailed account of the battles between the two emperors, suggesting he was drawing upon a very full, perhaps contemporary source.[152] Given Zosimus' well-known dislike of Constantine,[153] it may perhaps be surprising to find that he is not more favorable to Licinius. This would be especially strange were Licinius a pagan -- the last pagan emperor save Julian. It has been seen as a sign of the "mediocrity" of Licinius' rule that the pagan historians, especially Zosimus, do not support him.[154] However, were Licinius also a Christian, the lack of support would be easily enough explained. In fact, one strongly pagan source does praise Licinius.[155] Libanius, in his Oration XXX, the *Pro Templis*, delivered to Theodosius in 384/5 in an attempt to gain imperial intervention against the destruction of pagan temples, rebukes Constantine for allowing the temples to fall into a state of poverty while praising his predecessor in the East

[150] *Origo* 1. Could this abilitiy to discuss negative aspects of Constantine's character overtly suggest a date of composition after 360? Note that Victor was required to veil his attacks (note 127, above), but the lack of any mention of the death of Crispus could argue for the earlier date supposed by Barnes, 1989,161.

[151] See Paschoud, xxxiv-lxiii, for Zosimus' sources. For Book I, see Blockley, 1980, who argues for Zosimus' use of multiple sources (contra Photius, 98, who styles Zosimus' work as a paraphrase of Eunapius).

[152] Konig [*Origo Constantini. Anonymus Valesianus, Teil* 1, Trier, 1987] suggests that both Zosimus and the *Origo* drew upon a lost contemporary biography of Constantine [Praxagoras, perhaps?] for this period (cited by Barnes, 1989b, 159).

[153] For a discussion of Eunapius' negative views of Constantine, drawn on by Zosimus, see Barnes, *CE*, 273. Zosimus is the most scathing in his attack upon Constantine for the murder of his son Crispus.

[154] For the "mediocrity" of Licinius' rule, see Barnes, *CE*, 68. On the reception of Licinius among the pagan historians, see Corcoran, 1994, 274.

[155] Though without naming him.

for his wise administration and the prosperity of the cities under his rule.[156] This argument, delivered before one of the most vehemently Christian emperors, would certainly have had more weight were it contrasting the policies of two Christian emperors.[157]

This brief allusion also brings to mind two statements in the enigmatic *Historia Augusta*, likewise written in the era of Theodosius.[158] In the first, found in the epilogue to the *Vita Heliogabali* , the author, addressing Constantine, says he will write of those defeated emperors, Licinius and Maxentius, and "will not detract from the greatness of those who have been vanquished...," and that he will take nothing away from their *virtus*, so that Constantine's victories might be even more magnificent.[159] Though any statement in the *HA* must be handled with care, it is possible that this notice is further indication of a "rehabilitation" of Licinius' character under the Theodosian emperors. Later, in the epilogue to the *Vita Gordiani*, again addressed to Constantine, Licinius is said to have traced his descent back to Philip the Arab.[160] Gregoire[161] has argued that this is proof of Licinius' Christianity, as Philip the Arab was taken to be the first

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[156] *Pro Templis*, 6. See Andreotti, 1960, 111 (not discussed in Barnes, *CE*.). Note also the speech of Themistius to the emperor Valens (Oration 8), where the orator denounces the 40 years of increased taxation since Constantine's defeat of Licinius and his praise of Valens for returning the collection of taxes to Licinian levels (113a-c - surprisingly unnoticed by Andreotti, 1960). See discussion of this speech in Vanderspoel, 1995, 168-170. Gregoire, 1938a, 559, suggests that this fiscal responsibility was due to the repeal of the urban poll tax by Licinius in 313 (*CTh* 13.10.2). This law has been emended by Mitchell, 1988, to 312 (accepted by Corcoran, 1996, 151-152).

[157] Even one damned in some of the Ecclesiastical histories as a persecutor.

[158] On dating the *HA* and the work in general, see Syme, 1971b; Barnes, 1978, 13-22.

[159] *Vita Hel.* 35.7. Note the argument of Andreotti, 1960, 109-110, that Julian consciously ignored Constantine's victories over the barbarians and attacked Licinius in an attempt to demean Constantine's accomplishments. Cf. Julian, *Or.* I, 8A; *Caesares*, 315D, 329A.

[160] *Vita Gord.* 34.3-5. Barnes, 1978, 78, included this passage in the section "The Factual Content of the *Historia Augusta*", and felt the statement might be true. Perhaps surprisingly, it is not mentioned in either *CE* or *NE*.

[161] 1964, 89-90. The point is debated by Andreotti, 1960, 113-114, who sees the statement as simply disparaging, given the *HA*'s negative depiction of Philip, and probably unrelated to the Christian tradition.

Christian emperor among Church writers of this period.[162] He sees in this statement a move on the part of Licinius to gain the upper hand in the battle for Christian supremacy. Certainly, if true, Philip would be a more friendly ancestor in Christian circles than the pagan Claudius Gothicus, adopted as a forebear by Constantine in 310.[163]

In this context, it is interesting to note the text of Rufinus of Aquilea and his Latin edition of Eusebius' *Historia Ecclesiastica*.[164] The translation is of such a free nature, especially of the later books VIII and IX, that it has been called "an independent piece of work."[165] Rufinus corrected and rewrote much of what he felt was wrong in the original and omitted inconsistencies and contradictions which he found.[166] With regard to Licinius, this is especially noteworthy. Rufinus was working with a later edition of the *Historia Ecclesiastica* (one published after Licinius' defeat) and therefore had Eusebius' attacks upon Licinius in front of him.[167] Yet he did not delete Licinius from the accounts of the pro-Christian legislation[168] and deleted instead the whole of Eusebius' tenth book, which contained an account of Licinius' persecution, in favour of his own account of the Arian controversy. His introduction to the tenth book is very telling: "...it was then that since our people were enjoying peace and respite from persecution,...the favourable state of affairs was disturbed by strife from within."[169] Rufinus says nothing of a Licinian persecution, but instead paints a picture of "persecution" within the Church itself. In fact, his only mention of

[162] Orosius, VII, 20, 2-4; 28, 1; Jerome, *Chron.* II, 33.2. It might be noted that in the account of Orosius (28.1) Philip is expressly said to have priority over Constantine.
[163] *Pan Lat.* 6.2.1-3 (see discussion of Nixon and Rodgers, 1994, 219, n.6); Syme, 1971a.
[164] On Rufinus and his translation, see Christensen, 1989; Amidon, 1997.
[165] Christensen, 1989, 333.
[166] Christensen, 1989, 334.
[167] Christensen, 1989, 292.
[168] For example, at IX.12.1: *per idem tempus, conspirante etiam tum secum Licinio,* Rufinus did not translate the later insertion: "who had not yet become mad".
[169] Rufinus, *HE*, 10.1 (Trans. Amidon).

Licinius after Book 9 is in relation to Constantia, whom he calls "the widow of Licinius".[170] That a church historian should so obviously reject the Eusebian attack upon Licinius must suggest that, as we have seen already with the pagan accounts, his reputation was rehabilitated following the deaths of Constantine's heirs. It also casts serious doubt upon the picture of the persecuting emperor disseminated by Eusebius after 324. That other church historians did not follow Rufinus' lead may have more to say about the respect accorded Eusebius' *History* than the veracity of the Licinian persecution.

The final stage in Licinius' rehabilitation and acceptance after his death is to be found in the genealogies of Serbian princes of the middle ages. These monarchs traced themselves back to Licinius, claiming him as a Serb himself, in order to add prestige to their political claims.[171] Thus, some twelve hundred years after his *damnatio memoriae*, Licinius' name and image were once more revived.

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[170] *HE*, 10.12.

[171] Sevcenko, 1982, X, 10.

Chapter II. Lactantius and Licinius

i. The Life of Lactantius.

Very little is known about the life of Lactantius and what is known (apart from the odd biographical aside in his own works) is found in two notices in Jerome.[172] He was probably born before A.D. 250, most likely in Africa, where he was the pupil of Arnobius.[173] He established a strong reputation for himself while in Africa and was brought to Nicomedia by Diocletian to teach Latin rhetoric.[174] It was probably not until he arrived at Nicomedia that Lactantius converted to Christianity.[175] Jerome says that Lactantius took to writing due to the lack of pupils in a city which was primarily Greek.[176] According to Lactantius himself,[177] he was teaching rhetoric when the Great Persecution broke out in 303 and wanted to write a defence of Christianity against two works attacking it and spurring on the persecution. As Creed notes,[178] the two accounts are not incompatible, since Lactantius is likely to have lost his position following the publication of the persecution edicts.[179]

From Lactantius' own statements,[180] that he had witnessed personally the Bithynian governor overjoyed that a Christian, after two years of

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[172] *De Viris Illustribus*, 80; *Chronicon ad a. Abr.*, 2333 (cited in Creed, 1984, xxv). On Lactantius, *PLRE* I, 338, Firmianus 2.

[173] Jerome, *De Viris Illustribus*, 80. On Arnobius, *PLRE*, I.108.

[174] Creed, 1984, xxv.

[175] Creed, 1984, xxvi. This is based on internal evidence (esp. *DI* ,1.1.8, where Lactantius contrasts his present work -- finished around 303 -- with his previous work) and Jerome's list (cited in *PLRE*) of his previous works, which are purely literary in character. Based on his knowledge of the African church, some scholars speculate that he was converted in Africa (cited by Creed, above).

[176] Cited by Creed, 1984, xxvi. Though note the number of works said to have been written before his arrival in Nicomedia.

[177] *DI*, 5.2-4 (cited in Creed, 1984, xxvi).

[178] 1984, xxvi.

[179] *De Mort.*, 13.1. He may, however, have lost his position later: note the tone at *De Mort.* 22.4, where Lactantius says that Galerius exiled jurists and writers and "brought about the extinction of eloquence" (*eloquentia extincta*).

[180] In *DI*, 5.2.2 and 5.11.15 (cited by Creed, 1984, xxvi).

imprisonment, seemed finally about to yield, some scholars have concluded that some time around 305 he left Bithynia for another part of the empire.[181] As Creed points out,[182] this is not a necessary inference, but a likely one given the strong comments about Galerius contained in the first edition of the *Divine Institutes*[183] which might, in consequence, have been dangerous to publish under that emperor's jurisdiction. Where he went is open to speculation, with Gaul and Africa the two preferred locations.[184] Lactantius appears to have returned to Nicomedia in 311 (or before), given the "eyewitness" quality of many of the passages in the *De Mortibus Persecutorum* , written during this period.[185] Sometime after this, Lactantius, "in extreme old age",[186] became tutor of "Latin letters" to the Caesar Crispus in Gaul.[187] The date of Crispus' birth is unknown,[188] but he was put in charge of Gaul in 318, presumably at the imperial capital of Trier and was married to the younger Helena by 321.[189] It seems quite possible to say that Lactantius was appointed to this post following the completion of the *De Mortibus Persecutorum* (before 317) and remained in the west until his death in 325.

Jerome gives a list of Lactantius' works, about half of which survive.[190]

[181] Creed, 1984, xxvi; Barnes, *CE*, 291, n.96.
[182] Creed, 1984, xxvi.
[183] See especially, *DI*, 5.23 (cited by Creed, 1984, xxvi).
[184] Gaul: Ogilvie, 1978, 2; Africa: Barnes, *CE*, 291, n.96. A return to Africa in 305, following his conversion, might explain Lactantius' familiarity with the African church mentioned above, note 175.
[185] On the date of the *De Mort.* see below section ii.
[186] Jerome, *De Viris Illustribus*, 80 (cited in *PLRE*).
[187] Since Crispus was elevated to the rank of Caesar in 317 (and received Gaul the following year), it is likely that Lactantius' involvement came after that date. Most probably, Lactantius moved to Trier sometime after 318 and remained in the west until his death in early 325. This fits well with the fact that the second edition of the *DI* (published in 324/325) was dedicated to Constantine. Some have also seen the hand of Lactantius behind Constantine's "Speech to the Assembly of the Saints", most notably Barnes, *CE*, 73ff.
[188] *PLRE* I, 233 cites it as c.305, which is accepted by Pohlsander, 1984, 82. Barnes, *NE* ,44, argues for a date no later than 300.
[189] Pohlsander, 1984, 83.
[190] Jerome, *De Viris Illustribus*, 80 (cited in *PLRE*)

The list includes a *Symposium*, written while he was a young man in Africa, a hexameter poem about his trip from Africa to Nicomedia (*Hodoeporicum ex Africa usque Nicomediam*), the *Grammaticus*, the *De Ira Dei* (extant), the *Divine Institutes* (with an *epitome*) (both extant), the *de Opficio Dei* (extant), *ad Asclepiadem*, a collection of letters, and the *De Mortibus Persecutorum*.[191]

ii. The *De Mortibus Persecutorum*

The *De Mortibus Persecutorum* is the fullest contemporary account of the years 303 to 313. It is a Christian work which, as its title suggests, recounts the overthrow and deaths of the persecuting emperors and their allies. Its importance is that, unlike the Church history of Eusebius of Caesarea written during the same period, the *De Mortibus Persecutorum* shows a keen interest in secular events, even those which do not always bear specifically upon the Church.[192] As a result, no other source gives such a detailed account of the political events of this period. Twice in the work Lactantius quotes official documents in full and, in general, his account of "public events" inspires confidence.[193] Moreover, his chronology, except on some minor points, has never been decisively refuted.[194] Though this secular concern is untraditional for a Christian writer, it should be said that Lactantius was still embedded in the Christian tradition. On a fundamental level, the work details the struggle

[191] Called the *De Persecutione* by Jerome.

[192] This interest, not as prevalent in Lactantius' surviving philosophical/theological works, has led some to deny authorship of the *De Mort.* to Lactantius. For the history of the dispute and the argument in favour of Lactantian authorship, see Creed, 1984, xxix-xxxiii.

[193] Creed, 1984, xlii.

[194] Lactantius shortens the interval between Constantine's arrival to see his father and Constantius' death (24 - -cf. Barnes, *NE*, 20) and has the day of the battle of the Milvian bridge wrong (44 - -27th October instead of 28th). See Creed, xliii-xliv, with notes. With regard to the date of Constantine's arrival in Britain, the pervasiveness of this story in the sources suggests that it was later disseminated officially by Constantine. That it appears here in the *De Mort.* may suggest that Lactantius was using some official source for his information about the west (a panegyric, perhaps?).

between Good and Evil, of God and the Devil.[195] This same theme is found in the *Acts of the Martyrs* and the *Historia Ecclesiastica* of Eusebius of Caesarea. The fact, then, that Lactantius portrays Licinius as a Christian emperor acting as God's agent in destroying the persecutors has caused trouble for those who prefer to see him as a persecutor himself.[196] Before turning to Licinius' role in the *De Mortibus Persecutorum*, however, a brief synopsis of the text will provide context.

The *De Mortibus Persecutorum* is addressed to the confessor Donatus[197] who had been imprisoned in Nicomedia until Galerius had issued his edict of toleration.[198] The opening words of the text clearly show the impetus for the work: God, having heard Donatus' prayers, has laid low his enemies, granted peace to the world and reconstructed the ruined churches. God has also raised up emperors who have "repealed the wicked and bloodthirsty commands of the tyrants" and has "wiped away the tears of those who mourn" by visiting agonies upon the persecutors. Those who attacked God are dead and Lactantius will now relate the manner of their deaths so men will know "how far the supreme God has revealed His Excellence and His Majesty in obliterating and destroying the enemies of his Name" (1.1-7).

There follows a brief survey of the fate of earlier persecutors of the Christians (Nero, Domitian, Decius, Valerian and Aurelian) (2.4-6.3) after which Lactantius begins a detailed description of the characters, families and events surrounding Diocletian, Maximian and Galerius. This starts at the beginning of

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[195] Christensen, 1980, 15.

[196] As does Creed, 1984, xxxiv-xxxv, who goes to great lengths to show that Lactantius is, in fact, portraying Licinius unfavourably, albeit in veiled terms.

[197] A survivor of the persecutions who had been tortured nine times by three different magistrates (the praetorian prefect Flaccinus [otherwise unknown], and the Bithynian governors Sossianus Hierocles [*PLRE* I, 432] and Priscillianus [otherwise unknown]).

[198] *De Mort.* 1.1; 16.3; 35.2;52.5. The edict came in 311.

the persecution and ends with Diocletian's abdication in 305 and the elevation of the new Caesars Severus and Maximinus Daia (7.1-19.6). Next, a biting account of the emperor Galerius' actions as Augustus leads into an account of Constantine's elevation by the troops of Britain.[199] After this, Lactantius moves through the turbulent events of the next four years: Galerius' recognition of Constantine as Caesar, the proclamation of Maxentius, the death of Severus, the failure of Galerius' "invasion" of Italy, Maximian's attempt to overthrow his son Maxentius, the elevation of Licinius at the conference of Carnuntum, Maximian's flight to Constantine and his death (25.1-30.6)

Maximian thus became the first of the persecutors to die (30.6). God then turned his eyes upon Galerius, already preparing for his *vicennalia* (expected March 1st, 312). In his eighteenth year as Augustus, he was struck with an incurable disease and he died in great agony (33.2-35.4) After a year of punishment, he was driven at last to accept God and, as he was dying, issued an edict (which Lactantius quotes) allowing his subjects to once again be Christians and to worship openly. He also requested that his Christian subjects pray for him and the state. The edict was posted in Nicomedia on April 30th, 311. Following the edict, Christian prisoners of conscience were released but quickly afterward came news of Galerius' death (35.4).

Upon this news, Maximinus laid claim to Asia Minor by occupying it, made a treaty with Licinius and proceeded to abolish the Galerian edict of toleration. He pretended to be merciful by only maiming Christians instead of killing them, until he received a letter from Constantine ordering him to stop. He then secretly had Christians put to death by drowning (36.1-37.1).

After the death of Diocletian (42.3), Maximinus was the last of the

[199] Whose first action was to restore full freedom of worship to the Christians (24.9).

enemies of God left alive. He entered an alliance with Maxentius, already at war with Constantine. Constantine soon defeated Maxentius, entered Rome in triumph and married his half-sister Constantia to Licinius at Milan to seal their alliance. Maximinus attempted a surprise attack on Europe but was beaten back by Licinius at Adrianople. Licinius, visited by an angel before the battle, moved to Nicomedia where he not only gave thanks to God, but published the so-called "edict of Milan" which granted religious freedom to all subjects and restored confiscated property to the Christians. Licinius then pursued Maximinus, who killed himself at Tarsus (after a visitation from Christ) when Licinius' soldiers had broken through the Cilician Gates (43.1-49.7).

The work ends with three chapters depicting Licinius' vengeance brought upon the families of the overthrown persecutors. First, he executes the sons of Galerius and Severus and the son and daughter of Maximinus and hurls Maximinus' widow into the Orontes river. Next, the capture and execution of Galerius' wife Valeria and her mother Prisca are described.[200] Finally, Lactantius claims historical accuracy and offers a prayer to God to watch over his flock (50.1-52.5).

Lactantius was clearly recounting these events soon after their completion. The strongest evidence for this is found in his portrayal of both Constantine and Licinius as allies and at peace, which was only true before

[200] *PLRE* I.726 (Prisca); *PLRE* I.937 (Valeria). *PLRE* states that both were Christians, based upon *De Mort.* 15 (*et primam omnium filiam Valeriam coniugemque Priscam sacrificiopollui coegit*). As Creed (1984, 95, n.1) points out, however, there is no evidence anywhere else that either woman was Christian. Barnes, *CE*, 147, says only that "they were believed to adhere secretly to the faith". Even this may be too much. The argument rests on the use of *pollui*, which suggests that the women were "polluted" through the action (and would not have been if they had been pagans). Is it not possible that Lactantius is speaking more generally here, referring to the act as "polluting" no matter who performs it? Cf. Vanderspoel (forthcoming), for the suggestion that Prisca shared "a common family origin" with M. Julius Priscus, the brother of Philip the Arab. He suggests that this may lie behind the allusion to her Christianity.

316.[201] Moreover, Lactantius' depiction of Maximian does not harmonize with Constantine's "official" depiction of his father-in-law, except during one specific period.[202] In the *De Mortibus Persecutorum*, Maximian is depicted as the typical tyrant: he executed the wealthiest senators on false charges of treason, debauched both men and women, and seized virgins from their parents' arms while he travelled (8.4-6).[203] Later, he is depicted as a second Tarquinius Superbus when he is forced to flee Rome after attempting to depose his son Maxentius (28.1-4). There is furthermore no mention of the ceremony where Maximian invested Constantine with the purple.[204] In addition, Maxentius himself is portrayed more favourably than his father, since Lactantius avoids many of the charges aimed at the usurper in other sources.[205]

Constantine's relations with Maximian were rather convoluted and Constantine's depiction of his father-in-law varies drastically from period to period, depending on Constantine's political situation at any given time. Having linked himself personally to Maximian through marriage and having used the prestige of the tetrarch to give added sanction to his own rule (in 307), Constantine was forced to distance himself from the retired tetrarch (who was forced to retire a second time at the conference of Carnuntum in 308) after Maximian attempted to oust Constantine by occupying Massilia. The attempt failed and Maximian, shamed by his actions, committed suicide in 310 (so the story went).[206] The affair was initially treated as family tragedy.[207] Not long afterwards, however, Maxentius fought his war against Constantine as an act of

[201] See above, pgs 9-11.
[202] Barnes, 1973, 41-43.
[203] For the conventional nature of these charges, see Barnes, 1973, 42, n.156.
[204] *Pan. Lat.* 7, 2-4, though Lactantius does record Constantine's marriage to Maximian's daughter Fausta.
[205] *Pan. Lat.* 12, 3.6; 4.3; Eusebius, *HE*, VIII, xiv.2.
[206] *Pan. Lat.* 6, 14.3ff, with commentary in Nixon and Rodgers, 1994, 237-242.
[207] So Barnes, 1973, 41.

vengeance against the murderer of his father. Constantine, at this point, distanced himself from Maximian by ordering his *damnatio memoriae* in 311 or 312.[208] At this point, it was revealed that a second plot had existed. After his failure at Massilia, Maximian had tried to murder Constantine himself (30.1-5). When this plot also failed, Maximian was allowed to hang himself. As Barnes points out,[209] this story shows clear signs of being invented during Constantine's war with Maxentius. Following Constantine's victory, however, both stories were officially ignored and Maximian was rehabilitated, with the added touch that Maxentius, it was now discovered, was not Maximian's real son.[210] Maximian was deified and later lauded as grandfather of Constantine's sons.[211]

The *De Mortibus Persecutorum* is the only source to include both of Maximian's plots.[212] The implications from this are far-reaching, both for the date of the work and its place of writing. As the portrayal of Maximian corresponds only to that disseminated by Constantine in 311/312, Lactantius was apparently using a source or notes written at this time, and not the "official" depiction of Maximian current at Constantine's court when the *De Mortibus Persecutorum* was published. The actual publication of the *De Mortibus Persecutorum* should be placed a year or so following the death of Maximinus, which occured in the summer of 313, thus in 314/315.[213]

Many have argued that Lactantius wrote (or at least published) the *De*

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[208] Barnes, 1973, 41. It might also be noted that it was during this time that Constantine's true ancestry from Claudius II was discovered, perhaps to replace the now discredited Maximian in granting more legitimacy to his reign. That Constantine was conscious of his status as an illegitimate son of Constantius and sought to legitimize himself through other means than his father is patent. See Leadbetter, 1998.

[209] 1973, 42.

[210] He was conceived by Eutropia in an adulterous affair with a Syrian. *Pan. Lat.* 12, 3.4; 4.3.

[211] Barnes, *CE*, 37.

[212] *De Mort.* 29.3 - 30.6. Other sources have one or the other: Eutropius, X,2,3.1-2; *Epitome*, 40.5; Eusebius, *HE*, viii, 13.15.

[213] Barnes, 1973, 31-32, 39.

Mortibus Persecutorum while in the west at Constantine's court.[214] It has become a commonplace to see Constantine as the hero of the work and this has led some scholars to argue that Lactantius was writing under the direct influence of Constantine himself and was thus disseminating a Constantinian viewpoint.[215] The evidence concerning Maximian must cast doubt upon this conjecture. Firstly, if Lactantius was writing in the west after the fall of Maximinus, he would certainly have been exposed to the changes in Constantinian outlook *vis a vis* Maximian. That he did not adapt his text to reflect these changes suggests two things: that the *De Mortibus Persecutorum* was written and published in the east, without any influence from Constantine, and that Lactantius relied on secondary sources (written or otherwise) for his information regarding events in the west.[216]

But this is not the only argument for an eastern publication. The centre of gravity of the work is undoubtedly the east. The description of events in the west are for the most part limited to 3 large sections, which deal with: 1) The journey of Diocletian to Italy; 2) the events which began with Constantine's flight from Galerius until Maximian's attempt on Constantine; 3) Constantine's war with Maxentius.[217] The rest of the work deals with Eastern affairs, particularly those in Bithynia.[218] Moreover, this Eastern material has a different character

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[214] Creed, 1984, xxxv; Ogilvie, 1978, 2; Moreau, 1956.

[215] Moreau, 1956, believes that Lactantius composed the work in Gaul under Constantine's guidance. Thus, in relation to Maximian, he says (366) : "Un des objectifs de Lactance...etait de justifier l'attitude de Constantin a l'egard de Maximien ." If his role was to disseminate the "official" version of Maximian in 314, he could not have got it more wrong.

[216] The fact that both of Lactantius' chronological errors occur in relation to Constantine's battle at the Milvian Bridge (see note 194 above) also suggests that he was using a secondary account for his information concerning Constantine. Had he been in the west, he surely would have had the proper chronology for what was Constantine's greatest victory to date (and there is no evidence that Constantine attempted to alter the date of the battle for any political reason).

[217] *De Mort.* 17; 24-30; 43-44.

[218] Bithynia, Nicomedia and Nicaea appear in the following sections, respectively: 10.6, 36.1, 40.1, 48.1; 7.10, 17.4, 35.1 & 4, 48.1; 40.3.

than the Western. It is much more detailed and less centred upon major historical events. We hear of minor events which followed major happenings, and these often appear to be based upon personal observation, as with the execution of a senator's wife and the torture of a Jew in Nicaea.[219]

Perhaps even more decisive is the fact that Lactantius had been summoned to Nicomedia by Diocletian and had remained there for at least two years following the outbreak of persecution in 303.[220] In addition, the documents cited in the text are both dated in relation to Nicomedia. Galerius' edict of toleration, which must have been composed at Serdica where the emperor was ill, [221] ends with the words:

> *"Hoc edictum proponitur Nicomediae pridie Kalendas Maias ipso octies et Maximino iterum consulibus."*[222]

Later, the news of Galerius' death is recorded:

> "*Idque cognitum Nicomediae medio mensis eiusdem, cum futura essent vicennalia Kalendis Martiis impendentibus*" [223]

It is logical to think that Lactantius was near Nicomedia in 311 to be able to report like this.[224] To judge from his later account of Licinius' letter to the governor, he was still in Nicomedia in 313.[225] For these reasons, it must be assumed that Lactantius was living in the east at the time (probably at

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[219] *De Mort.* 40. Other examples may be easily cited: 16.4, where three high-ranking officials are mentioned; At 17.4-9, Diocletian's illness seems to be known from first-hand observation; 19.2, "three miles outside the city."

[220] *DI*, 5.22 and 5.11.15 (cited by Creed, 1984, xxvi). Since the date of Donatus' imprisonment is unknown, the identification of the specific two year period remains controversial. See Christensen, 1980, 25.

[221] *Origo*, 3.

[222] *De Mort.* 35.1.

[223] *De Mort.* 35.4.

[224] It is possible that Lactantius merely saw the Nicomedian copy of Galerius' edict at a later date, but there is no suggestion that the news of the emperor's death was ever posted, only that "it became known at Nicomedia", which suggests that Lactantius was there to receive the news himself.

[225] *De Mort.* 48.1.

Nicomedia) and wrote his text there. There is no compelling reason to deny publication in the east under Licinius.

iii. Licinius in the *De Mortibus Persecutorum*.

As noted above, Lactantius depicts Licinius as an active and committed Christian in the *De Mortibus Persecutorum*. He is shown being visited by an angel, praying to God before battle and giving thanks to God upon entry into Nicomedia.

In attempting to incorporate this positive, Christian depiction into their negative portrayals, scholars have had to read between the lines of Lactantius' text, teasing out ambiguous phrases or "unsavory" situations to sustain their position.[226] Moreau, in his French translation and commentary of the 1950s, found a number of these instances which he used to "prove" that Lactantius was in fact attacking Licinius (albeit in veiled terms) and that the work was written with the personal involvement (no less) of the emperor Constantine.[227] If Licinius was not openly condemned, it was only because Lactantius was writing before the final break between the two emperors. More recently, Creed, in his 1980s English translation and commentary, continued Moreau's lead of looking for negative depictions of Licinius hidden in the text, but dismissed the notion that Constantine was actively involved in the composition (he does believe that Lactantius waited to publish the *De Mortibus Persecutorum* until he was "safely" within Constantine's territory).[228] His contention is that there is a "distinct, if covert, strain of hostility to Licinius running through the work".[229] He points to the

[226] For the "subdued" nature of Lactantius' attack on Licinius, see Creed, 1984, xxxv.
[227] Moreau, 1954, 36.
[228] Creed, 1984, xxxiv-xxxv.
[229] Creed, 1984, xxxiv.

introduction of Licinius in the narrative (in what he calls "dismissive and casual tones")[230] and Licinius' ultimate destruction of all members of the eastern imperial families as two examples where Lactantius "feels free to alert those prepared to be warned" about the unpleasantness of Licinius' character.[231] This position is certainly wrong and pays no attention either to Lactantius' text and purpose nor to the similarly Christian depiction of Licinius found in Eusebius' *Historia Ecclesiastica*.[232] Moreover, by comparing the depiction of Licinius in the *De Mortibus Persecutorum* with that of Constantine, it should become apparent that Lactantius' portrayal of Licinius is neither guarded nor subtly accusing. In fact, in the pages of the *De Mortibus Persecutorum*, Licinius is as much the Christian hero as Constantine. The two emperors are honoured equally and Lactantius has each emperor follow the same pattern of behavior.

There can be no doubt that the traditional view of Constantine as the hero of the *De Mortibus Persecutorum* has been inspired by the way in which the two emperors are introduced by Lactantius. In the dialogue between Diocletian and Galerius concerning the question of whom they ought to proclaim as the new Caesars after the retirement of Diocletian and Maximian, Lactantius characterizes Constantine in the following manner (18.10):

> Constantius also had a son, Constantine, a most upright young man and very worthy of that high rank. He was loved by the soldiers and wanted by private citizens as well because of his distinguished and fine appearance, his military accomplishments, the probity of his morals, and his exceptional congeniality. He was at that time present [at Diocletian's court], having long since been made a tribune of the first rank by him [Diocletian].

Later in the conversation, Lactantius has Diocletian say this of him

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[230] Creed, 1984, xxxiv.

[231] Creed, 1984, xxxv.

[232] At least in those editions before 324. See below, Chapter III.

(18.11):

> [Constantine] is quite popular and will rule in such a way that he will be judged better and more merciful than his father.

The panegyrical tone continues throughout this part of the work. Lactantius is careful to stress Constantine's popularity with the people and soldiery. He shows this particularly at the scene of the abdications of 305, which in the *De Mortibus Persecutorum* are centered on the figure of Constantine, even though his actual role in the event must have been quite minor (19.1-2):

> The gaze of all was upon Constantine, no one had any doubt; the soldiers who were present...had eyes only for him; they were delighted with him, they wanted him, they were making their prayers for him....

All were therefore thunderstruck when Constantine was passed over in favour of Severus.

Following this meeting, Constantine succeeds in escaping Galerius and flees to his father, arriving at his deathbed.[233] Naturally, Constantine is proclaimed emperor by the troops after his father's passing. He is recognised as a Caesar by Galerius and grants freedom of worship to the Christians as his very first act (24.9). Lactantius also makes much of the treachery of the faithless Maximian (29.3-30.5) and of the anger of Maximinus Daia caused by Licinius' elevation as Augustus (32.1-5).[234] The result of these developments in the text is Constantine's war against the persecutor Maxentius and his victory over superior forces at the battle of the Milvian Bridge. Lactantius describes a vision of Constantine's on the eve of battle (44.5-6):

> Constantine was told in a dream to mark the heavenly sign of

[233] That this fictitious tale shows up in the *De Mortibus Persecutorum* may suggest that it was part of the same source Lactantius drew upon as the tale of Maximian's murder plot. On the historicity of this event, see Barnes, *CE*, 27.

[234] Maximinus takes to calling himself "Augustus", much as Constantine had been doing in the west since about 307. See Barnes, *CE*, 32, with notes.

> God on the shields of his soldiers and then engage in battle. He did as he was ordered...

In that sign, Constantine wins and enters the city and, as Lactantius says, was received with great joy by the senate and people of Rome (44.10).

In Lactantius' opinion, this is a true Roman emperor, the exact opposite of his description of Galerius who persecuted the Christians, who wanted (so we are told) to call the empire the Dacian Empire, and who devastated Italy like an enemy in his own march against Maxentius (27.5-8).

However, after these events, Constantine appears again only as one of the authors of the letter to the governors concerning the restoration of the Church, the so-called "Edict of Milan" (48.2).

There can be no doubt at this point that Constantine is one of Lactantius' heroes. But he is only one of them. As Lactantius wrote in his preface,"For God has raised up emperors who have repealed the wicked and bloodthirsty commands of the tyrants" (1.3). As the work stands, those words must refer to Constantine and Licinius.

It is true that Licinius is not nearly as positively introduced as Constantine (20.3):

> Galerius himself had a friend, an old tent-mate and associate of early service, Licinius, whose suggestions he followed in all his acts of ruling. He did not make him a Caesar, so as not to thus name him an adoptive son, in order that later on he might put him into the place of Constantius and call him Augustus and brother.

Clearly, Licinius owes his imperial dignity to Galerius and not to personal qualifications as does Constantine. He is proclaimed at the conference of Carnuntum and Diocletian approves the choice. It may be noted here that Lactantius has both Constantine and Licinius receive the approval of

Diocletian, perhaps to confer more legitimacy than the tetrarch had allowed.[235]

However, after Licinius becomes emperor, a noticeable change occurs in the tone of the work. The account becomes more positive, especially as he now opposes the arch-persecutor Maximinus Daia. Furthermore, after Constantine has taken Rome, Licinius becomes the main character in the text. It is also Licinius who ends the fatal struggle between Christians and pagans (in the person of Maximinus Daia) at the battle of Campus Ergenus. And, like Constantine, Licinius receives a vision on the eve of battle (46.1-5):

> Then, the next night an angel of the Lord stood before Licinius in his sleep and warned him to rise very quickly and pray to the supreme God with all his army. Victory would be his if he did this. He dreamt that, after these words he got up and that the same angel who was giving the advice stood over him instructing him how and with what words the prayer was to be made. Licinius then shook off his sleep, ordered a secretary to be summoned, and dictated the following words just as he had heard them...

After this the prayer is quoted in full. Likewise, the army's proclamation of it and its effect are carefully described. Licinius' remarkable defeat of the superior forces of Maximinus is then depicted and, now ruler of the East, he enters Nicomedia where his first two acts are noteworthy (48.1):

> On entering Nicomedia, [Licinius] gave thanks to God, by whose help he had been victorious, and on 13 June in Constantine's and his own third consulships, he ordered the letter which had been sent to the governor about the restoration of the Church to be publicly displayed.

It should be remembered that Constantine's "first act" upon being

[235] Note also the account of Eusebius (*HE*, VIII, xiii. 12-13) where he stresses that Licinius was elevated to the rank of Augustus "by the common vote of the rulers". This claim for political legitimacy may stem from a common, pro-Licinian source used by both historians. Christensen, 1980, 42-81, has attempted to see the lost *KG* (which he would date to 312) behind Lactantius' account, but this is rightly rejected by Creed, 1984, xliii, n.157. That Lactantius followed written reports seems most likely, especially for events in the west. Given the time constraints involved in the writing, publication and circulation of an historical work like the *KG*, the most likely candidate may well be a panegyric or set of speeches presented to the emperors.

proclaimed was also to declare the freedom to worship. This is the so-called "edict of Milan", which granted not only freedom to worship, but also ordered the return of Church property seized during the persecutions.[236] Lactantius quotes the edict in full. It should also be noted that this document is provided here and not as a continuation of the account of Constantine. It might be said that this is its rightful place chronologically, but that would not exclude the possibility that Lactantius could have transposed this item if he had wanted to glorify only Constantine.

The emphasis on Licinius as the emperor who pursues the last survivors of the families of the persecutors and executes them is no less important in this connection. The description may at times generate empathy, as in the account of the deaths of Prisca and Valeria (the wife and daughter, respectively, of Diocletian), but there can be no doubt that Lactantius saw the action as justified (50.1):

> In this way God vanquished all the persecutors of his Name, so that no stem or root of theirs remained...(50.7) Thus all the wicked suffered by the true and just judgement of God the very things they had done to others.

Licinius is thus the one to execute the judgement of God. Given the basic theme of the work, the person to do that must appear to be the central figure above all others (at least in this latter half of the work), and there is no

[236] On the "edict", see Barnes, *CE*, 318, n.4.

reason to see this as a hidden accusation of Licinius' cruelty.[237] In fact, what this portrayal should force us to question is the general acceptance by modern authors that Licinius was necessarily a pagan and that the "edict of Milan" and the prayer dictated to him were necessarily Constantinian constructs.[238] Before marching east to face Maximinus, Licinius must certainly have enacted the same pro-Christian legislation in his own territories, thus in 312.[239] Moreover, if the *De Mortibus Persecutorum* was indeed written in the east, we must wonder to what extent it incorporated the "official" version of events disseminated by Licinius' Imperial office. The Constantinian propaganda machine and its success have been well documented over the last 15 years and include the tale of the "vision" at the Milvian Bridge (not to mention Constantine's Apollonian vision in Gaul).[240] Is the story of the Licinian angel a similar device from the Eastern emperor? Was Licinius attempting to outdo Constantine (or at least match him "miracle for miracle") in the propaganda campaign for primacy among their Christian subjects?[241] This suggestion flies in the face of accepted

[237] Note also Eusebius' approval of the deaths of the persecutors, their families and supporters (*HE*, IX, xi.3-8). See discussion in Christensen, 1989, 326-328. Creed, 1984, xxxiv-xxxv, does not mention Eusebius' account when using this passage to show the "subtle" hostility of Lactantius to Licinius. The fact that both contemporary Church historians record the purge with approval, however, must tell against his notion that this was a "warning" about Licinius' cruelty. Was Eusebius, too, issuing a veiled warning? The reason for the similarities must lie in a common account used by both writers, one which gave a detailed account of Licinius' war with Maximinus and praised his destruction of the "tyrants". This account need not have been Christian itself, but could well have been religiously neutral, similar to panegyric 12, delivered before Constantine in 313. On which, see Nixon and Rodgers, 1994, 288-293. That Eusebius had access to panegyrics to Constantine has been argued by Gregoire, 1938b; 1939b, *passim*.

[238] Barnes, *CE*, 63, supposes it "at least equally likely" that Constantine "furnished" the prayer used by Licinius before the battle of Adrianople in 313.

[239] No legislation exists from Licinius' rule of the Balkan regions between 308 and 313. That Licinius enacted pro-Christian laws in his territories is adduced by Barnes (*CE*, 318, n.4) from both Lactantius (48.1ff) and Eusebius (*HE*, X, v.4).

[240] Barnes, *CE*, 36; Rodgers, 1980 ; Gregoire, 1939, 348-349. For numismatic representations of Constantine as Apollo, see Le Gall, 1974.

[241] This suggestion might support the veracity of the *Historia Augusta*'s report that Licinius claimed descent from Philip the Arab, who was thought to be the first Christian emperor. See above, pages 23-24, note 162.

wisdom, but given the Lactantian evidence, coupled with the evidence from the first two editions of Eusebius' *Historia Ecclesiastica*, it should not be simply dismissed. That one Christian author portrayed Licinius as a Christian may be attributed to wishful thinking in the wake of persecution. That two Christian contemporaries did, independantly of each other and in different languages, must point to something more. The simplest explanation must be that Licinius was a Christian and portrayed himself as such in his official dealings with the provinces.[242] It was suggested earlier that both Lactantius and Eusebius drew upon a pro-Licinian source to account for the similarities in their works.[243] Is it not possible that this source (perhaps a panegyric) portrayed Licinius as a Christian (or at least sympathetic to Christianity) and his actions as being on behalf of the Christians?

That Licinius' reputation suffered greatly following his defeat at Constantine's hands is shown in the repeated omissions and alterations found in the last two editions of Eusebius' *Ecclesiastical History* (not to mention the *damnatio memoriae* which left him virtually out of the epigraphical record).[244] Was the transformation of Licinius from Christian liberator to unsavoury persecutor simply another example of the success of Constantinian propaganda? As Barnes has so astutely stated,[245] "No prudent subject of the victor would attempt to question the caricature of his fallen rival which Constantine wished to be disseminated." Eusebius of Caesarea certainly proved himself a prudent subject.

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[242] The somewhat shadowy role of Bishop Eusebius of Nicomedia at Licinius' court may well confirm the emperor's Christianity. Eusebius seems to have had a parallel role to Bishop Ossius of Corduba in the court of Constantine.

[243] See above, note 235.

[244] For the *damnatio memoriae* of Licinius, see Eusebius, *HE*, X, ix.5.

[245] *CE*, 64.

Chapter III. Eusebius and Licinius

i. The Life and Work of Eusebius of Caesarea.

Eusebius was the bishop of Caesarea in Palestine between 313 and 339 and was the author of the first comprehensive history of the Christian Church. Born between 260 and 265,[246] as a young man he joined the school of the Christian scholar Pamphilus[247] when the latter moved to Caesarea (in the mid-280's).[248] There, Eusebius helped him with his work collecting and editing biblical writings, particularly those of the Church Father Origen, who had settled in Caesarea early in the third century and had spent the last twenty years of his life there.[249] Following Pamphilus' death and martyrdom , Eusebius took his master's name in homage.[250] From Caesarea, he witnessed first-hand the Great Persecution under Diocletian and Galerius, and later the revival of persecution under Maximinus.[251] Pamphilus himself was jailed and tortured during the former before being martyred under the latter.[252] The fact that Eusebius did not suffer under either persecution led some to accuse him of apostasy.[253] He was elected bishop of Caesarea in 313[254] and held this position until his death in 337.[255] The few known facts of his life are linked to his involvement with the Arian schism in the eastern Church which began under Licinius in 317. Eusebius became a sympathizer (if not a follower) of the heretical Arius of

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[246] Probably in Caesarea. Louth, 1989, ix; Barnes, *CE*, 94.
[247] On the career and school of Pamphilus, see Barnes, *CE*, 93-94.
[248] Barnes, *CE*, 94.
[249] Eusebius collaborated on Pamphilus' *Apology for Origen*, written while the latter was still in prison. See Barnes, *CE*, 94, 199-201.
[250] Louth, 1989, x. Barnes, *CE*, 94, assumes that Pamphilius formally adopted his pupil.
[251] In fact, Maximinus kept his imperial residence at Caesarea for a short while. See Barnes, *CE*, 81ff; Chap. 6, *passim*.
[252] Described by Eusebius in the *Martyrs of Palestine* and his lost *Life of Pamphilus*.
[253] Luibheid, 1966, 12.
[254] Eusebius probably succeeded Agapius, who had ordained him as a priest and seems to have survived the persecutions, Louth, 1989, xi.
[255] On the 30th of May. His successor, Acacius, wrote a *vita*, but it is lost. See Louth, 1989, xi.

Alexandria and suffered excommunication for this stance at the Council of Antioch in 325.[256] He was reinstated later in the same year when he recanted, signed the creed at the Council of Nicaea, and condemned Arius as a heretic.[257] It may well have been because of his earlier excommunication that Constantine himself intervened to block Eusebius' promotion to the powerful bishopric of Antioch in 327.[258] Though Eusebius had publicly espoused the catholic creeds of Nicaea, he continued to harbour Arian sympathies. These were to pay dividends when Eusebius of Nicomedia, who later became bishop of Constantinople, gained Constantine's favour and persuaded the emperor to sympathize with the Arians.[259] In later councils, especially the synod of Constantinople in 336 (over which Eusebius of Caesarea presided), the tone was pro-Arian and those condemned were now the supporters of Nicaea.[260] The later lack of interest in the life of Eusebius was due primarily to his Arianism, particularly once the heresy was finally defeated.[261]

There has been some debate over how close Eusebius actually was to Constantine. The bishop suggests that he was a close associate of the emperor,[262] and this is borne out to some extent by the fact that he delivered

[256] On the council of Antioch, see Barnes, *CE*, 213-214. Theodotus of Laodicea and Narcissus of Neronias were also excommunicated at this time. The council was presided over by Constantine's personal religious advisor, Ossius of Corduba.

[257] On the Council of Nicea, see Barnes, *CE*, 215-219.

[258] Barnes, *CE*, 228. Though Barnes is right to point out that bishops were not at liberty to change sees following the Council of Nicaea, and Constantine praises Eusebius in a letter for adhering to this principle (cited in *VC*, 3.61). It should be noted that Eusebius of Nicomedia changed sees twice, from Berytus to Nicomedia (under Licinius) and later from Nicomedia to Constantinople (in 337). See Barnes, 1978a, 66.

[259] On Eusebius of Nicomedia, see below, section IV.

[260] It was Marcellus of Ancyra who was condemned at Constantinople, on the charges of Sabellianism. See Barnes, *CE*, 240-242; Louth, 1989, xvii. Other pro-Arian councils included those at Nicomedia (327), Caesarea (334), Jerusalem (335), and Tyre (335).

[261] The fact that Constantine was baptized by an Arian bishop (Eusebius of Nicomedia) on his deathbed was also a later embarrasment for the Church, one which led to the legend of Pope Silvester's baptism of Constantine. On this, see Brett, 1983, 67-70.

[262] A claim sometmes accepted among modern scholars: Eusebius is called a "shrewd and worldly adviser" by Momigliano, 1963, 85.

tricennial orations before Constantine on the thirtieth anniversary of his reign.[263] It has been noted, however, that, in his writings, Eusebius has a very provincial understanding of the workings of the imperial court and was not privy to the emperor's thought and councils.[264] In fact, Eusebius probably met and spoke to Constantine no more than four times in his life.[265] His role as bishop of Caesarea would not have allowed him much time to travel (a fact which should be kept in mind when dealing with the documents Eusebius cites, particularly in the *Vita Constantini*),[266] and he would have had to rely on hearsay and reports to get information, particularly from the west.

Eusebius was a prolific writer. He was the author of a number of theological tracts and Christian apologies.[267] His works, however, are not those of an original thinker, but show the merits of an expert compiler and researcher, no doubt the legacy of his early work with Pamphilus.[268] They are full of "endless citations" from the works of others and Eusebius allows himself only rarely to speak in his own voice.[269] Bishop Photius, the ninth century patriarch who left volumes of notes on all he read, described Eusebius as a man of learning

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[263] The speeches (the *De Laudibus Constantini*) are attached to about half the manuscripts of the *VC*. For a study of the orations, see Drake, 1976. Barnes, 1977, suggests that these speeches were given at the dedication of the Church of the Holy Sepulcher in Jerusalem in 335 and mistakenly appended to the *VC* by its editor.

[264] On Eusebius' knowledge of Constantine's plans, see Drake, 1988, 31-38, who focuses on *VC* bk.4 to show that Eusebius knew less than he suggested.

[265] For this claim and the date of each meeting, Barnes, *CE*, 266-267. For the hypothesis that Eusebius remained for an extended period in Constantinople between summer 336 and spring 337 (when the emperor died), see Drake, 1988, 20-31.

[266] Barnes, *CE*, 267-270, discusses the impersonal nature of Constantine's correspondence with Eusebius and shows that the documents cited were for the most part official letters sent to all bishops or to provinces as a whole.

[267] Barnes (*CE*, 281-283) lists Eusebius' surviving works (in alphabetical order) as: *Contra Hieroclem*, *Contra Marcellum*, *Chronicon*, *Demonstratio Evangelica*, *Ecclesiastica Theologica*, *Eclogae Propheticae*, *Historia Ecclesiastica*, *De Martyribus Palestinae*, *Onomasticon*, *Praeparatio Evangelica*, *Theophany*, *Oratio de Laudibus Constantini*, *Vita Constantini*.

[268] Louth, 1989, xii.

[269] Louth, 1989, xii.

whose style was neither agreeable nor brilliant.[270] Instead, Eusebius' literary fame rests with his historical works: his *Chronicle, Ecclesiastical History* and his *Life of Constantine*.[271]

The *Chronicle* was first published in 311 and was a work of universal Christian history and chronology. It was undertaken as a response to the attack on Jewish and Christian chronologies (especially the date for Moses) by Porphyry of Tyre in his *Against the Christians*, published around 305.[272] Eusebius needed to respond to Porphyry with at least equal authority; he therefore needed to base his work on both pagan and biblical history to arrive at something totally new: a history of Christianity based on proof of its antiquity, the uncertainty of pagan chronologies, the truth of the scriptures and a rebuttal to the millenarian feelings among Christian communities during the Great Persecution.[273] The importance of this work cannot be overstated. Following its translation into Latin by Jerome, it became the foundation for the chronology of the ancient world used to the present day.[274]

The *Historia Ecclesiastica*, which may have been conceived out of the *Chronicle*,[275] was first completed around 314[276] and subsequently revised

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[270] *Bibliotheca*, 13. On Photius and his work, see Treadgold, 1980.

[271] The *Chronicle* survives in a Latin translation by Jerome of the later fourth Century. The importance of this work should not be underestimated. Jerome's translation became the basis for the understanding and chronology of ancient history down to the present. Burgess, 1997, 502, doubts whether any other western history has had such an influence.

[272] For the date: Burgess, 1997, 488. For the date of Porphyry's *Against the Christians*, see Barnes, 1973

[273] Burgess, 1997, 497.

[274] Burgess, 1997, 502.

[275] Burgess, 1997, 498: "[Eusebius] simply took the bare outline that he had produced in tabular form [the *Chronicon*] and expanded it into a narrative, concentrating on individuals he had already named..."

[276] Louth, 1989, xxxii; 1990; Burgess, 1997. There has been great debate about the date of the first edition of the *HE* (conveniently outlined in Louth, 1990, 111-115). Barnes (1980; *CE*, 128) has argued strongly for a date in the late third century, with an edition comprising seven books. This has been refuted most recently by Burgess, 1997, whom I follow here. The significance of the later date will be discussed below.

around 316[277] , 324[278] and sometime again after 326.[279] It was an unparalleled undertaking among Christians and became a classic and a paradigm from its first edition, not only because it preserved so many texts and letters which otherwise could have been lost and scattered among the various churches of the empire, but because it threw light upon the uncertain picture of early Christianity. The first edition was made up of nine books, which ended with the "edict of toleration" of Galerius in 311 (and the supposed end of the persecutions). The eighth and ninth books were revised and a tenth was added following Maximinus' continuation of the persecution and went as far as Licinius' defeat of Maximinus in 313. The penultimate edition was issued in 324 following Constantine's defeat of Licinius (and differed from the previous edition primarily by removing Licinius' name from all laudable passages and in adding sections to the tenth book describing the "Licinian persecution"). A final edition, known only from a Syriac translation, was similarly needed after 326 to remove the name of Constantine's deposed son Crispus. It thus becomes evident that Eusebius was not averse to changing his "history" to suit the political needs and exigencies of the moment. It also calls into question the very nature of the history which Eusebius was writing.

There are those who posit an early date (before 303) for the first editions of the *Chronicle* and the *Historia Ecclesiastica*.[280] In their view, Eusebius was writing in the halcyon days of the early church, a time before the Great Persecution, when he "saw nothing but advancement and prosperity for Christianity as a fully accepted part of Roman society throughout the empire."[281]

[277] Up to X.7. This edition concluded with a speech given by Eusebius at the dedication of the basilica at Tyre in 315. See Louth, 1989, xxxii; Barnes *CE*, 162-163.
[278] Which added X.8-9
[279] Known only from a Syriac version.
[280] See above, note 276.
[281] Burgess, 1997, 496.

He was reflecting the "optimistic assumptions" of the Christian community before persecution threatened.[282] In this view, the emphasis is on Eusebius as a scholar, one who can look at the history of the Church with an element of detachment.[283] It also denies any apologetic or propagandistic elements from the nature of the *History* and leaves it as a work of pure scholarship. As for Eusebius "the historian", he is a scholar first, an apologist second. This notion of Eusebius obviously has far-reaching effects in interpreting his works. There is an element of trust in the author's veracity that is difficult to achieve for those who view him as primarily an apologist. This trust can be most clearly seen in Barnes' history, where Eusebius is given the benefit of the doubt at almost every turn.[284]

When a later date is accepted for the first editions of these works, however, this scholarly emphasis changes. A date for the *Chronicle* amidst persecution and one for the *Historia Ecclesiastica* just afterwards demands reinterpretation with an eye to apology and propaganda. If Eusebius was writing after the Church had been driven to the brink of ruin and was seeking to re-establish itself in the communities of the empire, his goals would have been far different. His task would have been to bolster and convince, to use propaganda and apology to explain away the past and look (albeit uncertainly) to the future.[285] The nature of the work must be found in the aftermath of Porphyry's attack, the decade of persecution (at least in the East), and the reaction to these events by both pagans and Christians alike. The purpose, therefore, of the

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[282] Barnes, *CE*, 146.
[283] Cameron, 1983, 188.
[284] A clear example (among many) would be his whole-hearted defence (*CE*, 269) of Eusebius' version of Constantine's "vision" at the Milvian bridge in the *VC* (I.28ff), despite the discrepancies with (or embellishments upon) the version in Lactantius (44.5) and the lack of any mention of a vision in Eusebius' *HE*.
[285] Burgess, 1997, 496-497.

Historia Ecclesiastica was to describe the strength and "uninterrupted spread" of Christianity in the Roman empire and to show how the Church, despite previous attacks, had continued to grow. This "courage of the past" was present in the martyrs during the greatest attack yet inflicted upon it and had allowed the Church to survive.[286] After Licinius' victory in 313, the *Historia Ecclesiastica* became a triumphant account of how the Church had grown so strong that not even the combined strength of the pagan emperors could defeat it, proof that God had intevened to raise his own emperors to do battle. That the Great Persecution and its end were the focal point of Eusebius' *History* is clearly shown by the amount of space devoted to it: two books out of nine (more than twenty percent of the total) to account for 10 years out of 315.[287]

In this view, Eusebius saw history primarily as a weapon for defending the faith during and after the Great Persecution.[288] This apologetic nature of the work can also be found in the revisions it underwent. The majority of the changes were political, to bring his narrative into accord with the political situation of the time. For Eusebius, history served ecclesiastical and political necessity first, truth (in the modern sense of the word) second.[289] The fact that some of Eusebius' scholarship and methods raise him above being just an apologist does not diminish the essentially apologetic nature of the *Historia Ecclesiastica.*

The *Vita Constantini* was published soon after Eusebius' death in 339, thus two years after the death of Constantine. It remains one of the most

[286] Burgess, 1997, 499.

[287] Burgess, 1997, 499, who sees the first seven books of apostolic succession mirroring the seven days of Creation, with the narrative culminating in the Great Persecution, the deaths of the persecutors and the final victory of Christianity (in the persons of Licinius and Constantine) in books eight and nine.

[288] Burgess, 1997. 495.

[289] Burgess, 1997, 494. The best example of this is Crispus who, to readers of the final edition of the *HE*, never existed at all.

controversial works of the fourth century. For a long time, its authenticity (in whole or in part) has been challenged, but in recent years the balance has swung in favour of Eusebian authorship and the view that the documents in it are those of Constantine.[290] The work is usually styled an encomium, a form of biography heavily panegyrical and, in this case, hagiographical, but was left incomplete at Eusebius' death and subsequently published by an editor.[291] It was this editor who added chapter headings and "tidied the manuscript".[292] Due to the unfinished nature of the work, it contains doublets and inconsistencies which suggest that Eusebius was in the process of revision when he died.[293] It also betrays two very distinct plans: an unfinished funeral speech begun in the summer of 337 and an account of Constantine's religious policies supported by documents, perhaps begun as a continuation of the *Historia Ecclesiastica*.[294] Most likely, the panegyric was begun first, on the model of the traditional encomium of a dead ruler,[295] and then Eusebius changed his mind and decided to create a more traditional biography.[296] Regardless, the two aspects of the work can be clearly detected and are often fitted together in a clumsy fashion.[297]

Eusebius' stated purpose in writing the *Vita Constantini* is to record

[290] The bibliography on the *VC* is enormous. For the main arguments for and against Eusebian authorship, see Barnes, *CE*, 267-271; Gregoire, 1938b; Cataudella, 1970, 245-250; Ridley, 1980, 241-242. For the documents, see Hall,1998.

[291] On the editor of the *VC*, usually thought to be Acacius, who succeeded Eusebius as bishop of Caesarea, see Barnes, *CE* ,265.

[292] Barnes, *CE*, 265; Ridley, 1980.

[293] Ridley, 1980, 241; Barnes, *CE*, 265.

[294] Barnes, 1994b; *CE*, 265. In *CE*, Barnes had suggested that the second element was only a review of Constantine's religious activities with supporting documents. Wilson, 1998, 113, suggests that Eusebius had done all he could with the *HE* and was intentionally fusing the traditional form of biography with the funerary panegyric, thus producing "a revolutionary form of hagiography".

[295] On the theory that this aspect of the work was modelled on the *Res Gestae* of Augustus, see Ridley, 1980.

[296] Barnes, *CE*, 265. Drake, 1988, suggests that Eusebius had been working on a biography of Constantine since 335.

[297] For a list of which sections of the *VC* can be attributed to which aspect, see Barnes, 1994b, 7-8.

the emperor's conduct which is most pleasing to God. Furthermore, he states that it is only Constantine's religious character which he is interested in (*VC*, I. 10-11).[298] Eusebius was now moving beyond the backward looking *Historia Ecclesiastica* and no doubt felt that further revisions to that work were no longer needed. The restoration of the Church had been accomplished. Instead, he turned his attention to the relationship between Christian Church and Christian emperor, focusing upon the life of Constantine alone. He arranged his material in part chronologically, in part thematically, and did attempt some sort of chronological order when presenting Constantine's rise to sole rule (*VC*, I. 19ff.). He repeats many of the official versions of events Constantine disseminated[299] and pointedly refuses to name most other characters in the *Vita*, pagan and Christian alike.[300] It is when Eusebius turns to events concerning the Church that modern scholars disagree on his motives. In discussing the Council of Nicaea, for example, Eusebius conceals the history of the Arian conflict and glosses over much of the debate at the council itself. He focuses attention on the opening ceremony, on a letter Constantine wrote concerning the true date of Easter (which he quotes in full), and the dinner-party following the council (*VC*, III. 10ff). It is obvious that Eusebius is selectively representing the decisions and concerns of the council to avoid having to remind anyone that it was at Nicaea that he was readmitted to communion after the council of Antioch, and that Arius was excommunicated at Nicaea. In fact, the *Vita Constantini* omits many things. It may not be surprising to find no mention of

[298] It should be noted that much more than Constantine's religious character is discussed, particularly campaigns (e.g. I.25; I.46; IV.5-7),and social legislation (IV. 2-3; IV. 26)

[299] For example, Constantine arriving at his father's deathbed (*VC* I.21); that Constantine invaded Maxentius' territory to "rescue" the inhabitants of Rome (*VC* I.26); he gives credit to Constantine alone for ending the persecution in the east (*VC* I.28ff); and he conflates the two wars between Constantine and Licinius and places Licinius' death immediately after his defeat (*VC* I.48ff; II.15).

[300] See Ridley, 1980; Barnes, 1994b, 7, n.27. Ridley argues that this follows the procedure laid down by the *Res Gestae*, not to detract from the subject of the funerary panegyric.

Crispus or Fausta; this could be seen as prudence, but when treating matters of Church politics, Eusebius deliberately conceals the truth.[301] Moreover, he suggests motives for Constantine, using phrases which hint that Eusebius was privy to the emperor's thoughts.[302] This is particularly true on Church matters, where the bishop consistently presents Constantine as agreeing with his theological views.[303] In the *Vita Constantini*, this is achieved through the omission of documents. Constantine issued twenty-two extant documents concerning the Church of the East.[304] Of these, Eusebius cites fourteen, choosing only those in which the emperor made no anti-Arian statements.[305] All eight of the omitted documents contain Constantine's attacks upon Arianism.[306] This shows a demonstrable willingness to mislead his readers concerning the emperor's views.[307] Furthermore, Eusebius presents Constantine as not only openly proclaiming the Christian faith but beginning to dismantle the apparatus of the pagan state. This is often taken for granted by modern scholars.[308] Very few seem to question how much this understanding of Constantine rests on the

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[301] Barnes, *CE*, 271, where he says that Eusebius "deliberately and consistently conceals" the importance of the Arian controversy. Note that he later alters his view (1994b, 11) when he says that Eusebius is "not knowingly mendacious" in the *VC*. This stance is hard to justify in view of Eusebius' claim (*VC* III. 14) that every bishop signed the declaration at Nicaea. This is incorrect since two Arian bishops refused to sign and went into exile (Secundus and Theonas). Eusebius, who was present at the council, will have known this only too well. See Davies, 1991, 616.

[302] For example, when discussing Constantine's choice of burial place (*VC* IV. 60), Eusebius says that Constantine "kept this plan in his thoughts for the longest time", thus suggesting that Eusebius had been in his confidence and shared the secret. See the discussion of this passage in Drake, 1988, 32-34.

[303] Drake, 1988; Barnes *CE*, 271: "It is hard to believe that Eusebius did not intend his readers to infer that Constantine shared his Arian views". Davies, 1991, argues that Eusebius went so far as to interpolate his own pro-Arian statements into Constantine's *Oratio ad Coetum Sanctorum* which was appended to the *VC*.

[304] Davies, 1991, 616.

[305] *VC* ii.24; ii.46; ii.48; ii.64-72; iii.17; iii.30; iii.52; iii.60; iii.61; iii.62; iii.64; iv.35; iv.36; iv.42.

[306] Cited in Drake, 1991, 617.

[307] Notice the criticism of Socrates (*HE*, I.3) of those writers who compile biased collections of documents by omitting those which do not suppot their position. As Davies, 1991, 617, states, "It is difficult not to suppose that he is thinking of Eusebius' presentation of the Arian dispute."

[308] Barnes, *CE*, 247, speaks of Constantine making Christianity "the official religion of the state."

selective historical notices of Eusebius.[309] There is ample evidence for Constantine's fair treatment of both pagan and Christian religions,[310] and it must be asked to what ends Eusebius was willing to go to portray Constantine as anti-pagan and thereby reassure Christians of his unequivocal support for their cause.[311] Those who see Eusebius as primarily a scholar once again rush to his defence when he mentions legislation for which there is no other proof.[312] Those who find his omissions and revisions too frequent and disconcerting to ignore, adopt an attitude of scepticism when approaching his unsubstantiated claims.[313] That Eusebius was not above falsifying his histories to further his own ends has been amply demonstrated.

One further aspect of the *Vita Constantini* needs to be addressed. Expanding upon a parallel drawn in the *Historia Ecclesiastica*, Eusebius uses Moses as a kingly model with which to compare (and inflate) Constantine.[314] This on-going comparison is essential to the organization of the work. Throughout large sections of the *Vita*, the comparison is developed and matches a plan of Moses' life. Constantine's family, birth and childhood are depicted as if he were a latter-day Hebrew brought up as a hostage in "an Egyptian-style tetrarchic court".[315] Constantine's early promise is shown at the imperial court and his "flight to the wilderness" (in this case, his father in Britain)

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[309] Drake, 1988, 36.

[310] Drake, 1988, 33, n.39.

[311] Drake, 1988, 33.

[312] For example, the notorious statement that Constantine passed a law forbidding blood sacrifices (*VC* 2.45) has the support of Barnes, *CE*, 269; Bradbury, 1994. Arguing against the existence of the law: Drake, 1976, 65, 150.

[313] Much as when approaching information in the *Historia Augusta*

[314] In the *HE* (IX, ix.5), Eusebius paints the battle of the Milvian bridge as another battle between Moses and Pharoah (the breaking of the bridge taking the role of the Red Sea). See, Wilson, 1998, 113.

[315] *VC*, I.12. Note that the portrayal of Constantius as a Christian reinforces Constantine's "Hebrew" claims. See Wilson, 1998, 116 and note 49.

follows the threat of assassination at the hands of a jealous emperor.[316] His battle with Maxentius follows and is rife with allusions to Exodus: Maxentius' sorcerous practices are similar to pharaoh's magicians, his "burning bush" style vision, the making of the *labarum* and Moses' rod, etc.[317] This comparison continues throughout the first two books and is used in the description of Licinius and his actions.

ii. Licinius in the *Historia Ecclesiastica* and the *Vita Constantini*.

The depiction of Licinius varies radically in the works of Eusebius depending on when the bishop was writing. In the earlier editions of the *Historia Ecclesiastica*, Licinius is depicted very much as he is in Lactantius' *De Mortibus Persecutorum*: a Christian emperor delivering his subjects in the east from the hands of the persecutor Maximinus. But, following Constantine's victory over him, Licinius becomes the stereotypical tyrant, a madman who turned from the church and began persecution. In the *Historia Ecclesiastica*, this change in character is simply appended to Book Ten, a quick revision following another change in the political situation. In the *Vita Constantini*, however, the Licinian persecution is a focal point, a more deliberate attack on his reign, though much is taken directly from the *Historia Ecclesiastica*.[318] Besides the prerequisite charges of greed, cruelty and lust,[319] he is now portrayed as an ungrateful junior who plotted against his superior and an innovator who enacted laws on marriage, funerary rights and stricter taxation.[320]

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[316] *VC*, I.19-20.
[317] For a full and detailed list, with references, see Wilson, 1998, 116-119.
[318] Corcoran, 1996, 275; Wilson, 1998, 112 for "Eusebius' general tendency to rewrite himself".
[319] *VC*, I.54.2-55.3.
[320] *VC*, I.55.1-3 (= *HE* 10.8.12-13).

These charges no doubt reflected the propaganda of Constantine after 324, and show Eusebius only too willing to serve as an imperial mouth-piece.[321] It is a role which should be borne in mind when dealing with Eusebius' histories.

In the first and second editions of the *Historia Ecclesiastica*, Eusebius treats Licinius as an ally and a champion of Christianity. In many respects his account mirrors and complements that of Lactantius who had access to a different sort of information, living closer to the imperial centre of Nicomedia. Eusebius, on the other hand, was an eyewitness to the effects of the persecuting edicts upon a community removed from the hub of imperial power.[322] Indeed, it is somewhat surprising, given Eusebius' later vehement and vitriolic treatment of Licinius, that he should have been so supportive of that emperor's rule at the outset.[323]

Licinius is introduced in the *Historia Ecclesiastica* when he is elevated to the rank of Augustus. Not much is said: "And afterwards, Licinius was declared Emperor and Augustus by a common vote of the rulers" (VIII, xiii, 14).[324] Significantly, Eusebius places the elevation directly after a brief eulogy of Constantius (VIII, xiii, 12-13) and the simple report that Constantine was made

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[321] On Constantine's depiction of Licinius in his legislation, see Corcoran, 1996, 275.

[322] Barnes, *CE*, 158. Though Caesarea might have been, for a short time, one of Maximinus' imperial capitals. See, Barnes, *NE*, 65.

[323] This suggests that Eusebius was drawing upon the same pro-Licinian/pro-Christian account as Lactantius and may lend further support to the hypothesis that Lactantius wrote the *De Mortibus* in the East. It is also proof that Licinius was disseminating a pro-Christian account of himself (or at the least, letting one be spread) during the period after 314. Barnes, 1992, 694, is cynical of this Licinian stance and feels that the emperor was simply paying lip-service to the Christians. That the only two contemporary chroniclers would both be so deceived seems far-fetched especially as they were living in very different parts of the eastern empire. Both Lactantius and Eusebius were actively involved in the rebuilding of the Church after a decade of persecution and were well-placed to detect any inconsistencies in Licinius.

[324] All quotations from Eusebius' *HE* are from the Loeb edition of E.L. Oulton unless otherwise specified.

Emperor and Augustus "according to the common law of nature" (VIII, xiii, 12).[325] This is a very interesting introduction for two reasons: first, it seems to contradict what has just been stated about Constantine. Licinius' appointment affirms the right of the tetrarchs to appoint new *augusti*, but flies in the face of the dynastic and hereditary principle just claimed for Constantine's elevation. Second, Eusebius no doubt included both accounts to indicate that both Licinius and Constantine were legitimate rulers, if by different means.[326] The emperors who will later champion Christianity are elevated together in the text to pair them off from the "tyrants" they will be facing in battle: Maxentius and Maximinus.[327]

Licinius is next mentioned as one of the emperors issuing the "edict of toleration" which Galerius composed before his death in 311 (VIII, xvii. 3-10).[328] This is one of the passages from which Licinius' name was later struck.[329] Maximinus, who as an Augustus at this time must also have been named in the edict,[330] never appears in Eusebius' versions of the document.[331]

In Book Nine, Licinius is for the first time praised as a Christian saviour

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[325] Obviously ignoring (for literary effect?) the fact that there was a two year span between Constantine's elevation by the troops in Britain in 306 and the conference of Carnuntum at which Licinius was elevated in 308 (see above, page 5).

[326] Constantine is also given a degree of superiority over Licinius in being labelled "most perfect emperor" by the troops. This may foreshadow Constantine's elevation to *maximus augustus* by the Roman senate in 312, see Christensen, 1989, 123-124. It may also reflect Eusebius' wish to make Constantine the "senior" augustus from the outset, though in reality Licinius was "senior" to Constantine by virtue of his "official" elevation in 308 (when Constantine was "officially" given the title Caesar). Note also that Lactantius goes to great pains to lend tetrarchic legitimacy to Constantine when he places a speech in Diocletian's mouth praising Constantine's virtues before he is passed over in favour of Severus (*De Mort.*, 18). The surprisingly sympathetic portrayal of Diocletian in both Lactantius and Eusebius may depend upon the use of a common source, perhaps Licinian as his elevation depended upon tetrarchic legitimacy.

[327] Maximinus is also introduced for the first time in this passage: he is called a tyrant and is upset at being passed over in favour of Licinius in imperial rank. For a discussion of Maximinus in this passage, see Christensen, 1989, 122-123.

[328] See above, page 7.

[329] Oulton, 1932, 317.

[330] Lactantius states explicitly that it was issued in the name of the four emperors (*De Mort.* 34).

[331] For a discussion of Eusebius' treatment of the edict, see Christensen, 1989, 186-190. On the edict in general, Barnes, *CE*, 39.

and is again placed alongside Constantine. Eusebius states (IX, ix. 1) that God had set up Constantine and Licinius as the two God-loving emperors who overthrew the Godless tyrants: Maxentius by Constantine and Maximinus by Licinius.[332] We are told that Constantine had held his position longest and was "superior of the emperors", but that otherwise there is no difference between them.[333] Both men are said to be "honoured for their understanding and piety" and raised by God who not only set them up, but came to their aid in a miraculous way during their respective battles with the tyrants. This section also signals a shift in Eusebius' approach. God is portrayed here as a helper in a war that had already begun and was therefore not instigated by Him. Moreover, the emphasis has shifted from the mere cessation of persecution to the defeat of paganism by Christianity.[334]

Following a long account of Constantine's victory over Maxentius at the Milvian Bridge (IX, ix.2-11),[335] Eusebius describes a "most perfect law" in favour of the Christians instituted jointly by both Constantine and Licinius (IX, ix.12).[336] A copy of this law and an account of God's miracles on their behalf was sent to Maximinus. There has been some debate over what this "law" and

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[332] The words "before he went mad" were later inserted at this point. It should also be noted that, in the later editions of the *HE*, Licinius is removed from this passage and Constantine is said to have defeated both Maxentius and Maximinus himself - - an obvious and blatant distortion of the truth.

[333] Eusebius is glancing ahead here to Constantine's elevation as *maximus augustus* by the Roman senate following Maxentius' defeat. Christensen, 1989, 282, sees the description of Constantine as "emperor sprung from an emperor, etc." early in this section as a later insertion, added perhaps before the second edition. This does not seem necessary: Eusebius is simply following the propaganda and protocol after 312.

[334] Christensen, 1989, 283.

[335] This account is similar in style to that of Licinius' defeat of Maximinus (*HE*, IX, ix, 2-4): there are few military details (reference to 3 battles before that of the Milvian Bridge - ix, 5) and no mention of anything besides the breaking of Maxentius' bridge of boats (ix,6). Constantine calls upon God at the outset (ix.2) and, after the victory, sings a hymn (ix.8) and erects a statue of himself holding the cross (ix.10-11).

[336] Barnes, *CE*, 310, n.53, argues that the law was passed before the end of 312 (based on *HE*, IX, x.8), thus before Constantine and Licinius' meeting at Milan.

letter actually were. Some have assumed it was the edict of Milan,[337] while others have seen it purely as an enactment of Constantine, without Licinius' involvement.[338] The matter merits discussion. Eusebius is very clear in saying that Licinius was a co-author of the law and that the two emperors were in complete agreement ("both with one will and purpose"). The description of the law as "a most perfect law on behalf of the Christians" is the only information about the content of the edict. But, we are told that they issued a law on full religious freedom for the Christians in gratitude to God who was the "Author of all their good fortune".[339] It is this "good fortune" which has surprised scholars, for they see it referring to Constantine's defeat of Maxentius only. Therefore, it has been argued, the law should be seen as Constantine's alone, with Licinius' name included out of respect for tetrarchic collegiality.[340] Certainly, Constantine was considered senior emperor after his defeat of Maxentius,[341] and could have been writing to Maximinus in this capacity,[342] especially given Maximinus' support of Maxentius.[343] Some have also turned to Lactantius' *De Mortibus Persecutorum* for support in this.[344] Lactantius says that Maximinus was angered by the report of Constantine's victory and the decree of the Senate (44.11-12). The emphasis placed on this passage seems unfounded for two reasons: Lactantius nowhere mentions a letter, from Constantine or anyone

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[337] Oulton, 1932, 365.

[338] Barnes, *CE*, 48-49, with notes 51-53; Christensen, 1989, 300-302, 308; Creed, 1984, 120.

[339] There is a later reference (IX, ixa.12) which explains the contents as promoting church building, holding meetings and "practising any of our customary acts".

[340] Christensen, 1989, 301. Barnes, *CE*, 48

[341] Barnes, *CE*, 49. The Roman Senate granted him this honour (*De Mort.*44.10). Lactantius also says that Maximinus was claiming this honour for himself, a fact which may suggest why Constantine and Licinius were writing to him in the first place: if Maximinus accepted the order to publish the law, he would be recognizing them as his political superiors.

[342] As suggested by Barnes, *CE*, 49.

[343] Rufinus believed that the law was issued because of Licinius' and Constantine's confession of the Christian God. See discussion of Christensen, 1989, 308-309.

[344] Barnes, *CE*, 309-310, n. 51; Creed, 1984, 120, n.15.

else. He simply says that Maximinus was angered by the news of Maxentius' fall and took the loss as if he had been defeated himself.[345] Obviously, as emperor in the east, Maximinus received word of such a momentous victory, especially if he was in league with Maxentius. There is no reason to believe that he could have been informed only by Constantine. Also, Lactantius seems totally unaware of any law issued by Constantine (or Licinius) at this time. Surely, given the nature of his work, he would have mentioned such a law had it been known to him.

This leaves us with Eusebius' narrative. The *Historia Ecclesiastica* is clear that a law was issued by both Constantine and Licinius. And not only a law. Eusebius says that the emperors also sent an account of the miracles God had performed for them and *their* victory over the tyrant (IX, ix.12 - italics mine). Eusebius has portrayed the two emperors working in tandem (perhaps not far-fetched considering that Licinius was about to marry Constantine's sister within a few months) and may also have been looking forward to Licinius' own victory over Maximinus the following summer.[346] It is certainly tempting to see this law as a precursor of the "Edict of Milan" posted by Licinius in the east in 313.[347] It would explain why no mention is made of Licinius posting the "edict" in his Balkan territories before his defeat of Maximinus: he had already granted religious freedom and restitution to the Christians in his territories before moving east.[348]

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[345] *ad quem (Maximinus) victoria liberatae urbis cum fuisset adlata, non aliter accepit, quam si ipse victus esset.* Given the Senate's decree, it is not unnatural for Maximinus to have been angry.

[346] It should be noted that Constantine is given credit along with Licinius for the latter's purge of Maximinus' supporters in 313, though he took no part in the actions (*HE*, IX, xi.8). In fact, Constantine was notably lenient upon the former supporters of Maxentius in Rome, a point avoided by both Eusebius and Lactantius. See Barnes, *CE*, 44-47; 1992, 646-647.

[347] See above, pages 40-41.

[348] *HE*, IX, ixa.12, states that Licinius had promulgated laws in favour of Christians at least as early as 312.

By Eusebius' account, Licinius is a Christian at this time.[349] It seems likely, then, that Licinius underwent a conversion in 312 at about the same time as Constantine.[350] This would explain the tepid accounts of him in Lactantius and Eusebius prior to 312[351] : Neither author felt able to give much more than the basic facts until he had converted[352] (and may have willfully ignored aspects of his early career: note that Eusebius never mentions Licinius' relationship with Galerius).[353]

Licinius' defeat of Maximinus is described briefly (IX, x.2-4), with none of the detail found in Lactantius.[354] Citing Maximinus' madness (IX, x.2), Eusebius says he broke his alliance with Licinius and began a civil war. There is no mention of the contents of the treaty, nor the reasons Maximinus broke it. We do not even learn when the war broke out, except that it must have occurred after Constantine's victory over Maxentius.[355] Eusebius is at pains, however, to point out that Maximinus felt sure of victory due to his military strength and the support from his "demons".[356] In the account of Maximinus' defeat, God is the

[349] This is consistent with Lactantius' portrayal of Licinius as a Christian (*De Mort.* 46ff).

[350] Gregoire, 1964, 86, has argued that Licinius was the instigator of Galerius' edict of toleration and therefore converted in 311 (before Constantine's vision of the Milvian Bridge). This is an attractive hypothesis but one that is hard to prove. It is just as easy to see Licinius' conversion occuring along with Constantine's (and Constantia's ?) somewhere around 312. The primacy given to Constantine in the pages of Eusebius may suggest that Constantine converted first, though it does not need to mean that he converted as early as 306, as suggested by Barnes, *CE*, 28, and stated as fact in 1992, 646.

[351] Especially the notices of his elevation: Lactantius, *De Mort.* 20.3; *HE*, VIII, xiii.14

[352] This might also reflect a common source for the authors. If the conjecture that Licinius later put forward a pro-Christian account of his triumph in the east is correct, that account may not have detailed events before his conversion (except to stress the legitimacy of his elevation - a feature shared by both Eusebius and Lactantius). That would have left both authors little to work with as far as Christian histories go.

[353] *De Mort.* 20.3. See above, page 39.

[354] For a discussion of the missing aspects, see Christensen, 1989, 316.

[355] Likewise, no mention is made of the fact that the first battle took place within Licinius' territory. See above, page 9.

[356] It is important to remember that Constantine continued to support Maximinus' election as consul until his defeat, suggesting two points: that Constantine was not set to break with Maximinus completely and that his relations with Licinius were not as strong as portrayed by Eusebius and Lactantius.

prime-mover, the one who "grants" victory to Licinius. There is no mention of the angelic visitation so prominent in Lactantius,[357] nor of any of Licinius' movements. Instead, Eusebius chose to concentrate upon the disgrace and retreat of Maximinus and his last minute acceptance of Christianity (IX, x. 6-15).[358]

Eusebius also chose to contrast the persons of Licinius and Constantine with that of Maximinus (as had been done previously with the tyrant Maxentius). After saying that Maximinus was bereft of political acumen and had nothing but an "overweening arrogance" towards his "colleagues in the empire",[359] he describes Licinius and Constantine as follows: "men who were in every way his superiors in birth and upbringing and education, in worth and intelligence, and -- what is most important of all -- in sobriety and piety towards the true God" (IX,x.1). It is interesting to note that Maximinus is at first described as a full member of the college of emperors but is then said to be over-reaching when he denies Licinius and Constantine superiority. Maximinus must have begun to call himself *maximus augustus*, the title borne by Constantine after the decree of the senate. Also noteworthy is that Licinius is paired with Constantine in this matter. In fact, Licinius is characterized as by no means inferior to Constantine, not even when it comes to his descent. This description is in clear contrast to the two previous accounts, where Constantine was described as *maximus augustus* (VIII, xiii.14; IX, ix.1). [360] There, much was made of Constantine's hereditary claims. At this point, Eusebius' account must refer to a

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[357] See above, pg. 40. It is noteworthy that Eusebius also focused on Maxentius' disgrace during his defeat by Constantine (*HE*, IX, ix.2-7).

[358] This long section includes the edict posted by Maximinus granting toleration to the Christians (7-12). This law must be the same law sent to him by Licinius and Constantine, the "most perfect law", as it is introduced identically by Eusebius in both passages. See Christensen, 1989, 317.

[359] Maximinus had begun to refer to himself as senior Augustus once again (IX,x.1).

[360] See above, pages 58 and 59, with notes.

situation in which Constantine and Licinius co-operated as emperors of equal status.[361] Since Constantine had already been establishing his superiority by proclaiming himself emperor by virtue of his birth in his propaganda since 310,[362] the idea of their equality must have been put forward by Licinius in the period following his victory over Maximinus in 313. That a fuller, pro-Licinian account existed is also supported by Eusebius' reference to a second battle between Licinius and Maximinus (IX, x.13). This follows the report of Maximinus' "edict of toleration" and it is surprising that it is mentioned here. The reference presupposes that, following the first battle, Maximinus was able to gather new forces and do battle once again. We are told that this second battle coincided with Maximinus' death, but we are not told where it took place. The explanation for these allusions and lack of information must be that Eusebius was following a more detailed account of Licinius' war with Maximinus.[363]

The next section of the *Historia Ecclesiastica* to deal with Licinius describes his actions after he becomes Augustus of the east (IX, xi. 1-8). Again, the section has a strongly Christian bias. The restoration of the churches was made possible by God and the "word of Christ" spread (xi.1) Maximinus suffers *damnatio memoriae* ("proclaimed a common enemy of all"), presumably at the hands of Licinius, and a description of the *damnatio* is given (xi.2). There follows an account of the deaths of Maximinus' supporters, particularly those who had achieved the highest positions under his regime, which might mean

[361] Christensen, 1989, 315, n. 369.

[362] *Pan. Lat.* VI. And not only by birth, but through his ancestry, for it is at this time that his descent from Claudius Gothicus is fabricated.

[363] Presumably the same source used by Lactantius, who included far greater detail. Whether this source was historical or panegyrical is unclear. Gregoire, 1938b and 1939b, has argued strongly that Eusebius had access to the panegyrics to Constantine. It would not be surprising, therefore, to find that Eusebius did have access to a work directed towards Licinius, especially as Caesarea was under Licinius' control until 324. Christensen, 1989, 321-322, suggests Eusebius added a Christian flavour to an account which was "originally neutral, from a religious point of view," at least as far as this second battle is concerned.

those who made up his *concilium* (xi.3-4).[364] Eusebius says that their persecution of Christians added to their downfall.[365]

The next sections (xi. 5-6) tell of Licinius' execution of the pagan priest Theotecnus and those associated with the cult of Zeus at Antioch. The story begins with a statement that divine justice does not let anti-Christian acts go unpunished and says that Theotecnus, after establishing a temple to Zeus and persecuting Christians, was rewarded with a provincial governorship.[366] Licinius came to Antioch in search of "magicians,"[367] and tortured the priests of Zeus to discover the nature of their activities. In the end, they were forced to concede that their oracular cult was a fraudulent trick of Theotecnus. Licinius then punished all those who had participated in the "magic" with death. Though the introductory sentence had said the section would describe God's punishment of Theotecnus, the investigations and punishments were carried out by Licinius. Thus, as in Lactantius, Licinius is again the agent of God's persecution. His actions in abolishing the oracle of Zeus must be seen as both a religious and a political act.[368] It may well have been in Licinius' interests to put the supporters of Maximinus to death, but he need not have gone to such lengths. An oracular shrine could well have been used to his own ends (with or without Theotecnus) and word put out that Maximinus had misunderstood the oracle.[369] That Licinius instead chose to destroy the oracle and the priests suggests that he was acting

[364] Suggested by Christensen, 1989, 326.

[365] Christensen, 1989, 326, studying Eusebius' wording, suggests that this was a purely political section with the Christian aspects added later and takes this to mean that Licinius' "purge was inspired by politics, not by religion".

[366] On Theotecnus, see *PLRE* I, 908. For his persecution of Christians, see *HE*, IX, ii. 2-4.

[367] γοητα. The Loeb edition translates as "charlatans", but surely this does not fully reflect the religious significance of the word (note that it translates the same word as "magic" in reference to Maxentius at IX, ix.3).

[368] Christensen, 1989, 326-328, places the emphasis upon the political sphere only, saying that attacks on oracles were often inspired by fears of political conspiracy (though he cites no examples).

[369] As was done with Maxentius (Lactantius, *De Mort.*, 44.8).

from religious belief. It may perhaps be seen as the first persecution of pagans.

Following the treatment of Theotecnus, Eusebius recounts the deaths of Maximinus' family (xi.7). Again, unlike Lactantius (*De Mort.*, 50-51), the notice is brief. Only the sons of Maximinus are mentioned specifically, while the others are referred to as "those who formerly boasted kinship with the tyrant". Their deaths, like those of every pagan mentioned since Book 8, are attributed to their refusal of Christ. This is sometimes seen as another example of Eusebius imposing a religious perspective on an otherwise political event and, to some extent, this view is justified.[370] There is no doubt that Licinius was eliminating all possible rivals, right down to Diocletian's widow,[371] and that religion was not a necessary factor in their deaths. But Lactantius gives an extra detail that might just support the view that Licinius, as a Christian, was also seeking revenge upon the persecutors, and may have been doing so in a public fashion.[372] When mentioning the death of Maximinus' wife (*De Mort.*. 50), Lactantius says that she was thrown into the Orontes river "where she had often herself ordered chaste women thrown." This added touch of inflicting upon a persecutor the very punishment she inflicted upon the Christians must have been a very effective way of publicly proclaiming the end of religious persecution, as well as signalling very clearly the religious stance of the new emperor of the east. Coupled with the account of the death of Theotecnus, it is certainly indicative of a religious aspect to Licinius' actions. And there is more evidence. Licinius published an edict on January 1st, 314, discouraging

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[370] Christensen, 1989, 328.

[371] Lactantius, *De Mort.* 51.

[372] If my thesis is correct and Licinius was indeed a Christian by this time, he may have been acutely aware that he had to "out-Christian" Constantine to give himself primacy among the Christians of the east. What better way than a public display of vengeance against the persecutors and an official account of his victory over Maximinus which mirrors Constantine's victory over Maxentius miracle for miracle?

accusations, "especially those for treason or by slaves and freedmen."[373] Fragments of the edict have been found in five eastern cities, thus indicating the wide scope of Licinius' purge.[374] It is tempting to think that the victims of these accustaions were primarily those who had persecuted Christians.[375] That Eusebius approved of the punishment is obvious. That he would make the most of this occasion to portray it as part of the universal struggle between paganism and Christianity is only to be expected.

Book 9 closes with a small panegyric of Licinius and Constantine as God's emperors (xi.8). It stresses that their purge of the impious secured their rightful places. It also states again that they legislated in favour of the Christians in recognition of God's blessings upon them. Both emperors are conscious of God's help and benefit and act with gratitude and piety towards him. Just as Licinius was included in Eusebius' account of Maxentius' fall,[376] so here Constantine is included in the purge Licinius inflicted upon Maximinus' family and supporters. And, in fact, Constantine benefitted greatly from his colleague's actions for, suddenly, the threat of usurpation was greatly diminished. The passage also stresses that Licinius and Constantine were in complete accord, acting as they did with God in mind. Eusebius considers the two emperors as a single unit, carrying out God's commands.[377]

Book Ten falls into two categories with regard to Licinius: the end of the second edition of 315 (up to X, vii), and the description of Licinius' "madness" and attack upon the Church which was added following his defeat in

[373] Barnes, 1992, 647. This is the *Edictum de Accusationibus*, on which, see Corcoran, 1996, 190-191, 288-289. This legislation is reminiscent of that enacted by Constantine after his defeat of Maxentius, *CTh.*10.10. 1-2, see Corcoran, 1996, 188-189.
[374] The cities include Pergamum, Sinope and Lyttos in Crete. See Barnes, *NE.* 127-128; 1992, 647.
[375] As does Barnes, 1992, 647.
[376] See above, pages 59-60.
[377] Christensen, 1989, 330.

324 (X, viii-ix). The edition which was issued in 315 comprised three sections: an introduction which celebrated once again the end of persecution and the rebuilding of the churches (X, i-iii), a speech praising the new church at Tyre which Eusebius himself had delivered (X, iv), and the set of imperial laws which documented the imperial favour towards the Christians (X, v-vii). Neither Licinius nor Constantine are expressly mentioned in the first two sections. Eusebius talks only of "emperors" who now lavish gifts upon the church and embrace Christianity. It is important to note, especially given the lack of literary evidence for any Christian building program attributed directly to Licinius, that Eusebius speaks of "festivals of dedication" throughout the cities and that the impressive church at Tyre (in Phoenicia) where Eusebius gave his speech was in Licinius' half of the empire.

In the third section, Eusebius quotes six documents, five of them letters of Constantine. The first is the letter of Licinius to the provincial governors granting toleration and restitution, the so-called "edict of Milan", which would have been posted in Caesarea in 313.[378] The other documents are a rather odd mix. As already stated, they are all letters of Constantine and all have some relevance to Donatism.[379] It is hard to explain the relevance of the documents (except to illustrate Constantine's concern for Church affairs), and their presence suggests that Eusebius acquired letters from Syracuse through some personal contact there and zealously added them all to his second edition.[380]

The final two chapters of Book Ten describe Licinius' war with

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[378] Quoted also by Lactantius, *De Mort.* 48. As this document has been discussed above, pages 40-41, it will be simply noted here.

[379] Barnes, 1992, 648.

[380] This seems to be the only solution for the inclusion of the letter to the "insignificant" bishop of Syracuse, Chrestus. See Barnes, 1992, 648. It is also indicative of just how little Eusebius had to work with when he compiled his documents, suggesting again that the bishop was certainly outside the workings of either court.

Constantine and subsequent persecution of the Christians. The first section focuses on Licinius turning against his "superior," Constantine, and his adoption of the "evil manners" of the tyrants (X, viii. 1-2). Licinius is charged with waging a war against Constantine in contravention of the treaties they had signed (viii.3). Constantine is portrayed as graciously allowing Licinius a share in the empire (viii.4).[381] Despite this benefaction, Licinius plots against Constantine, though feigning friendship, but is foiled by God's intervention, who brings the plots to light (viii.5-6).[382] With the failure of the plots, Licinius declares open warfare (viii.7). Knowing that Constantine was a Christian, Licinius begins a covert attack upon the Church, paying no heed to the fates of those persecutors he had helped eliminate. His madness had clouded his judgement (viii. 8-9). Licinius first purged the palace, then the army, of Christians (viii.10). Next comes a list of his "lawless laws" : he prohibited acts of charity towards prisoners, decreeing that anyone caught pitying the convicts should suffer the same penalty as the convicts (viii.11); he instituted changes in both marriage legislation and funerary legislation, and reassessed property values and imposed fines (even upon the deceased) (viii.12); he banished the innocent and arrested noblemen (distributing their wives to his henchmen), and satisfied his lust with married women and young girls (viii.13); he plotted secretly against the bishops ("in the final stage of his madness") and had some put to death "by the contrivance of the governors". Eusebius cites the example of the Pontic town of Amasea, where the churches were closed and the bishops put to death (because Licinius believed them to be praying for Constantine) (viii.14-17). The Christians began to flee before him when Constantine intervened (viii.18-19).

[381] An interesting interpretation given that, before the war of 316, Licinius ruled not only all the east, but a good part of Europe too. See above, page 10.

[382] Perhaps a veiled reference to the plots and counter-plots involving Bassianus and Senecio. On which, see above, pages 10-11.

Section nine describes, with much rhetoric, Constantine's arrival (with Crispus) and says only that they "easily won the victory" (ix.1-4). Licinius' images were disgraced and his accomplices put to death (ix.5).[383] A short panegyric to Constantine and his sons as God's saviours concludes the section (ix.6-9).

The Licinian persecution will be dealt with in detail in Chapter IV, below, but a few brief comments can be made here. It is obvious that Eusebius found himself in an awkward position after 324, having praised an emperor who was now labelled a tyrant and had suffered *damnatio memoriae*.[384] His solution was to excise Licinius from the sections praising him and add these sections just described. The charges are somewhat stereotypical, especially those having to do with Licinius' lustfulness and, except for the mention of the Church at Amasea, have more to do with legal enactments than persecution of Christians. The fact that Eusebius was hard-pressed to come up with names or martyrs suggests that Licinius did not use force in his attack upon the Church, a definite feature of the attacks made by Galerius or Maximinus.[385]

The portrait of Licinius in the *Vita Constantini* contains none of the praise found in the early editions of the *Historia Ecclesiastica*. In fact, Licinius and his persecution are now given more space than any of the other persecutions (including that of Maximinus, the villain *par excellence* in the *Historia Ecclesiastica*).[386] The reason for this may simply be that Eusebius wished to concentrate upon those "tyrants" whom Constantine had defeated

[383] This is the *damnatio memoriae* which Licinius suffered. His death is not explicitly mentioned (perhaps confirming the story that Constantine had vowed to spare him. See above, page 15).
[384] Lactantius was spared the effort of having to revise his *De Mortibus* because he died in 324/325.
[385] For the lists of martyrs in Eusebius, see Keresztes, 1989, Appendix 14. The fact that Eusebius could easily name so many martyrs under these first attacks should put us on our guard here.
[386] Corcoran, 1996, 275.

himself, thus Maxentius and Licinius would hold a special place. It also means that actions and crimes committed by other persecutors in the *Historia Ecclesiastica* are now attributed to these two.[387]

Licinius is introduced in the latter part of Book I (section 49) and is called a "savage beast" who is oppressing the east. There is a reference to Licinius' marriage to Constantia (I.49) but none to Licinius' rise to power or defeat of Maximinus. There is reference again to Licinius' breaking of treaties and plots against Constantine (I.50) before Eusebius moves on to the charges of persecution itself. This involves a series of laws enacted against the Church. The first prohibits bishops from communicating, leaving their see or holding councils (I.51). Next, all Christians are expelled from the palace (I.52). Women and men are not allowed to worship together and women teachers are appointed. He also ordered that Christians congregate outside city walls, on the pretext that the open air was more suitable for a crowd than the churches (I.53). Finally, he expelled all those in the army who refused to sacrifice and forbade the distribution of food to those in prison (I.54). There are references to "innovations with respect to marriage" and death where ancient laws were changed and also to new methods of assessing property value to satisfy his avarice. Some were exiled and had property confiscated while others were sent to prison (while their wives were distributed to his minions) (I.55). In the end, Licinius attacks the bishops, not reflecting upon the fates of those persecutors before him (briefly described, I.56-59).

Book II begins with an account of the persecution at Amasea, in Pontus (II.1-2). The description follows very closely that given in the *Historia Ecclesiastica*. In sections 3 to 5, Constantine prepares himself for battle through

[387] Note the crimes attributed to Maxentius (*VC* I.33.1-2) which were committed by Maximinus in the *HE* (viii.14.14-16). See the discussion of Grant, 1992, 675.

prayer, while a speech is credited to Licinius as he sacrifices to the pagan gods, denouncing Constantine for his atheism.[388] An apparition of Constantine's troops is seen in the east and Constantine wins the battle with the divine help of the *labarum* (II.6-10). Constantine is willing to forgive Licinius his past crimes, but Licinius turns instead to magic (II.11). Constantine again prays for victory and tells his soldiers to spare the lives of prisoners (II.12-14). Licinius secretly prepares for war while offering treaties (II.15) and tells his soldiers not to attack or even glance at the *labarum* (II.16). Constantine overcomes Licinius' army in a single charge and puts Licinius to death (II.17-18).

While the individual charges against Licinius will be dealt with below (Chapter IV), it might prove interesting to deal with the structure of this passage in light of the "Moses motif" discussed above. Eusebius chose to distribute different aspects of Moses' struggle against Pharoah onto both Maxentius and Licinius, thus stressing the unity of Constantine's struggle in both the west and the east.[389] At the end of Book I, Eusebius incorporates an element from Exodus not yet used: he details the pains and sufferings of Galerius and Maximinus, recounting the "plagues" upon them and how the "heard-hearted Pharoah" Licinius is unmoved and unpersuaded by their sufferings (which is proof of his madness).[390] In Book II, "Moses" Constantine again takes action against an emperor in the power of Egyptian prophets and magicians. The *labarum* becomes both the pillar leading the "Hebrews" to the promised land and the Ark within the tabernacle.[391] Eusebius is also explicit in saying that Constantine imitated Moses in his prayers before destroying Licinius.[392] That Eusebius

[388] Eusebius here says that he learned of the speech from someone who had been present.
[389] Wilson, 1998, 117.
[390] *VC* II.12.2; Exodus 9.12. Wilson, 1998, 118.
[391] Wilson, 1998, 118.
[392] *VC*. II.2.14. (cf. Exodus, 33.7-9).

moulded his depiction of Licinius' persecution (not to mention that of Maxentius) on a biblical account should act as a warning to hisorians reconstructing these events. That it has not shows the level of trust given to Eusebius and calls for a full-scale re-evaluation of the Eusebian account.[393]

[393] Note especially the recent evaluation of Keresztes, 1989, 144, that "[Licinius'] speech on this occasion [see above, page 71]...is most remarkable and there is no good reason for declaring it fictitious."

Chapter IV. The Persecution of Licinius

As discussed above, the evidence for a Licinian persecution rests solely on the accounts given in Eusebius. That Eusebius is not above falsifying and misrepresenting his documents and chronology has also been amply shown. Thus, it remains to compare the two Eusebian accounts of the persecution (that of the *Historia Ecclesiastica* and of the *Vita Constantini*) to find inconsistencies and embellishments, and to note the changes in tone and temperament between the two. That Eusebius' portrayal of the Licinian persecution "evolved" between 324 and 337 will be seen at once. What this means for its veracity will be discussed below.

It will also be of value to compare Eusebius' accounts of Maxentius with those about Licinius, the two "tyrants" overthrown by Constantine in wars which portrayed him as liberating Christians from persecution.[394] The similarities between the two characters, beyond the "Moses motif" in the *Vita Constantini* (discussed above), is striking and clearly displays the literary considerations which Eusebius followed in constructing his account.[395]

i. The *Historia Ecclesiastica* and the *Vita Constantini*

In the *Historia Ecclesiastica* (X.viii), Eusebius is concerned to depict the dramatic change in Licinius' character. He portrays him as driven mad by envy of Constantine's inherent goodness and unable to tolerate his secondary position in the empire (viii.2-3). Eusebius speaks here of a general hostility which began as a hatred of Constantine and slowly developed into an attack upon the Christians, envious of the protection God granted that emperor (viii.9).

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[394] For Constantine's presentation of himself as "liberator" in these battles, see Barnes, *CE*, 72.

[395] The same consideration was used to compare Maxentius with Maximinus in the earlier editions of the *HE*. Note also Lactantius' "pairing" of both Maxentius and Maximinus as literary archetypes of the persecuting tyrants. In both authors, the pro-Christian legislation of Maxentius is ignored or dismissed. What is important is that Maxentius was at war with Constantine. See below, section ii.

Eusebius begins his account of the anti-Christian measures with Licinius' banishment of Christians from the palace and his orders forcing soldiers to sacrifice (viii.10). Yet his next section describes "graver measures" which were perpetrated. He speaks for the first time of laws ("lawless laws") which the emperor passed, though it is noteworthy that none of these measures are directed specifically against the Christians. These include the measure against helping those in prison, his "innovations" in marriage legislation and his "revolutionary" and "barbarous" changes to the laws concerning wills and funerals (viii.12). There are also charges of avarice, high taxes and lust, again measures which have no direct bearing upon the Christians themselves (viii.13). Thus far, except for the expulsion of Christians from the palace and the sacrifices in the army, all the charges have been very secular in nature. None of the laws have been directed against the church and will have affected Christians only as citizens of the empire. Eusebius has only accused Licinius of bad government, not of persecution.[396]

The *Historia Ecclesiastica* now turns to actions against the Church, while stressing that Licinius did not act openly, but "with secrecy and guile" (viii.14). We hear of bishops being put to death, but no names are given. There is a general description of an attack on the churches of Amasea in Pontus (viii.15-18), again with no mention of martyrs names, which ends with the telling phrase: "he then conceived the idea of stirring up anew the persecution against all". In other words, Licinius had not openly attacked the Church, but was "secretly" plotting against it. Indeed, by this account, Licinius was stopped by Constantine before he could actually embark upon a course of outright persecution (viii.18). There were no persecuting edicts or laws as there were in

[396] For a discussion of Eusebius' use of the term "persecution" (*diogmos*) in both the *HE* and the *VC*, see Cataudella, 1970, 50-52, who notes the incongruity between the two usages.

the Great Persecution, only a threat of one. And, once again, we find Eusebius claiming to know the intentions of an emperor with whom he will have had little if any contact.[397]

The account of the Licinian persecution is much different in the *Vita Constantini*. Whereas in the *Historia Ecclesiastica* we saw an attack upon Licinius based primarily upon his civil legislation and a few, scattered actions aimed at Christians, we now find Eusebius speaking specifically of "laws" (*nomoi*) aimed at the Church with the apparent aim of attacking its structure and organization by altering its procedures and development (I.51-56). The first of these laws prohibited meetings of bishops, the second banned women from attending church services with men (and appointed women to teach women) and stated that "congregations of the people" should be held outside city walls. These "attacks" have a feeling more of concerned intervention with Church policy than of persecution. There is no indication that anyone was put to death because of these "laws", only that the legal steps were put in place.[398] Following these laws, Eusebius returns to the charges he levelled in the *Historia Ecclesiastica*, namely that Licinius expelled Christians from the palace, ordered military sacrifice and forbade the feeding of prisoners (I.54). There is more about his avarice and lustfulness followed by his attack on bishops (I.55-56).[399] The secret nature of Licinius' persecution is again stressed in Book II (section 1) and introduces the story of Amasea. The description of these anti-Christian

[397] Licinius does not appear to have gone to Caesarea during his reign. See Barnes, *NE*, 82. That modern historians continue to be taken in by this tactic can be seen in Barnes' statement (*CE*, 70) that the Christians of the East were praying for Constantine, a direct echo of Eusebius' assertion that Licinius "did not think that [our] prayers were offered on his behalf" (*HE*, X.viii.16).

[398] And it should be noted that Licinius seems to have attempted to explain his actions, for example, by saying that outdoor meetings would be more suitable for a multitude than the confines of a church (*VC*, I.53), which seems to show a care for Church procedure rather than hostility.

[399] The lack of martyrs during this persecution is noteworthy and will be discussed more fully below, section iii.

activities once again ends with the claim that Licinius was planning a "general persecution", which is taken verbatim from the *Historia Ecclesiastica* (II.2).

The difference between the two accounts is clear: in the *Historia Ecclesiastica*, Licinius' legal actions affect Christians as members of Roman society in general; if they suffered under his marriage reforms and revision of the way land was assessed, they would be suffering along with everybody else. In the *Vita Constantini*, however, the tone is different and the emperor appears guided by a desire to attack Christians in particular through edicts affecting their ability to perform their rites in their traditional way. It is perhaps surprising that Eusebius, when he revised his *History* in 325, said nothing of those ecclesiastical laws he later cites in the *Vita Constantini*, written after 337. One would expect that they would be fresh in both his and his audience's mind and their abolition at the hands of Constantine would have been worthy of report. That he does not could suggest that he was either unaware of these laws (not likely since he refers to them as if he suffered under them)[400] or decided that they were not worth including in his revision (again not likely given the space devoted to them in the *Vita Constantini*). More likely, the laws were added later to add some semblance of truth to an account that was constructed primarily upon hearsay and conjecture. Without the laws, Eusebius' account of the "persecution" had no "hard" facts to give it weight.[401] The lack of martyrs must have been particularly troubling. So must his earlier depiction of Licinius as God's champion against Maximinus. Yet Eusebius was now compelled to depict Licinius as a persecutor since he had fallen before Constantine who, as

[400] *VC* I.51: "For we were compelled either to break the law [banning synods] ...or nullify the statutes of the Church."

[401] Each of the charges against Licinius will be examined individually below, section iii.

the chosen of God, could only defeat those who attacked the Church.[402] It is important to bear in mind once again the apologetic nature of Eusebius' work towards Constantine. The most important factor for Eusebius was that Constantine be praised.[403] It was a minor thing to misrepresent an enemy of Constantine's for the greater good of portraying the power of God and His chosen leader as victorious.[404] Eusebius was already guilty of the same duplicity in his first editions of the *Historia Ecclesiastica* when he dismissed Maxentius' favourable legislation towards the Christians and depicted Constantine's war against him as a battle between Christianity and paganism. That it was not is clear from Maxentius' actions as emperor.

ii. Maxentius and Licinius

The usurping emperor Maxentius is described by Eusebius in the *Historia Ecclesiastica* (VIII, xiv.1) as "pretending" to be Christian although he passed pro-Christian legislation. He is shown trying to curry favour by ordering an end to the persecution. Recent scholarship has suggested that Maxentius was not only tolerant of Christianity but may well have been a Christian himself.[405] This seems, at first glance, to defy all logic: Maxentius is uniformly vilified by all sources and is represented by both Lactantius and Eusebius as a pagan relying upon soothsayers during his battle with Constantine.[406] This portrayal of Maxentius, however, is the one which Constantine wished to be

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[402] Note the lengths to which the "forgiving" Constantine goes in the *VC* (II.3) before he has to finally act against Licinius.

[403] Which probably made very good political sense as well.

[404] Perhaps the astonishing length in the *VC* of Licinius' persecution (22 chapters compared with 16 for Maxentius and a mere 1 for Maximinus and Galerius) is a reflection of the need to portray Licinius more negatively than the other persecutors since he had previously been praised and may not have been generally disliked by the wider population.

[405] Creed, 1984, xviii, and notes.

[406] Creed, 98, notes 8 and 9; *HE*, VIII, 14.3f; *VC*, I. 26, I.33f; *De Mort.* 44.8.

propagated.[407] In fact, the policies of Maxentius bore a greater resemblance to those of Constantine (and Licinius) than the conqueror was willing to admit. Since Constantine wished to present his victories as religious victories on behalf of Christianity, those who were defeated had to be, *ipso facto*, persecutors.

But, much like Licinius, Maxentius had implemented a policy of religious toleration early in his reign (though he may not have legislated restitution at this point).[408] Optatus, the African rhetorician/poet, could remember years later the exact date in Maxentius' reign when "peace" came to his town of Cirta.[409] Maxentius was, then, actively supporting Christians as early as 306.[410] He also became personally involved in the tempestuous elections at Rome to fill the bishop's position, vacant since 304.[411] The division between "rigorists", who damned the memories of those who had complied with the persecuting edicts of 303, and those lapsed Christians who were still performing acts of penance grew violent and Maxentius was forced to exile the bishop Marcellus.[412] The next election took place soon after Maximian's flight from Rome and again resulted in rioting and exiles.[413] It appears that a ban was placed on elections

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[407] Barnes, *CE*, 37. That both Lactantius and Eusebius gloss over Maxentius' pro-Christian policies (Lactantius without a word) may be further proof that they shared a source, in this case a pro-Constantinian one which stressed the apocryphal tale of Maxentius and the misinterpretation of the oracle (*De Mort.* 44.9).

[408] Barnes, *CE*, 38 and note 98.

[409] Cited in Barnes, *CE*, 38 and note 99.

[410] Is it possible that the "falling-out" between Maxentius and his father Maximian in 308 could have centered on the religious policy of the son? Both Lactantius and Eusebius were able to say very little about Maxentius' policies in the wake of Constantine's victory and his depiction of the "usurper" as a tyrant.

[411] Barnes, *CE*, 38.

[412] Marcellus later died in exile in 308. See Barnes, *CE*, 38.

[413] And, again, the bishop, Eusebius, died in exile. Barnes, *CE*, 38. These exiles may have been used to shed a negative light on Maxentius' activities (though neither one is mentioned by either Lactantius or Eusebius). It is interesting to note the similar situation Constantine found himself in with regard to the Donatists in Africa (on which see Barnes, *CE*, 54-61) and which Licinius presumably was in with the Arians after 317.

for three years, as the next elections took place in the Spring of 311, a time when war was inevitable with either Licinius or Constantine.[414] Maxentius now also granted his Christian subjects restitution of the property confiscated during the persecution.[415] Yet this involvement in and care towards the Church did Maxentius very little good when it came to the historical tradition. The fact that he was Constantine's adversary took precedence over all other considerations, factual or not. Likewise Licinius. When Eusebius, in his *Vita Constantini*, [416] came to portray those "tyrants" defeated by Constantine, they neatly fell into the role of "Pharoah" to Constantine's "Moses". The fact that both were at least sympathetic to the Christian cause could not be admitted and had to be denied. In the case of Licinius, who had posted edicts restoring confiscated property throughout the majority of the empire and had been portrayed as a Christian by both Lactantius and Eusebius himself, the matter was more difficult. Not only did Licinius' legislation have to be ignored, but a stronger case had to be made to account for Constantine's war against him. Thus, a set of laws was needed to counter-act those previously posted. Were these actual laws and, if so, what were they expected to accomplish?

iii. The persecuting laws of Licinius

It has become commonplace to say that the Licinian persecution evolved out of "an inherent contradiction" in his religious policies.[417] This statement is based on the assumption that Licinius never paid more than lip-

[414] This may have been a move to gain support for the upcoming war. Barnes, *CE*, 38.
[415] Barnes, *CE*, 38-39, argues that Constantine had already promulgated such a law in his territories (in 306). It is possible that Licinius had done likewise, especially if he is to be seen behind the Galerian "edict of toleration" of later that year. For Licinius' involvement in this legislation, see Corsaro, 1983. Maxentius' seeming reticence to pass this legislation may say more about his fiscal constraints during his reign than his religious affiliation, since retribution was paid through the imperial treasury.
[416] And his *HE*, with regards Maxentius.
[417] Barnes, *CE*, 70.

service to Christianity and vacillated between the Church and paganism before drifting into active intolerance of the Christians.[418] However, if the hypothesis developed above is true, namely that Licinius did convert to Christianity and remained an active Christian, then the traditional view (the "Eusebian" view) will have to be modified. In fact, if Licinius remained a Christian to the end, then the whole notion of a "persecution" will have to be discarded. But what of the Eusebian evidence for a persecution? Is there, behind the rhetoric and Constantinian panegyric, a kernel of truth to his accusations? To answer that question, and to develop a real appreciation for the government and motives of Licinius,[419] it will be necessary to dissect each of the charges Eusebius lays against him and attempt to establish the context of each. It will also be necessary to evaluate each as a "persecuting" policy: the secular nature of many of the charges has already been noted,[420] but the ecclesiastical laws offer an unusual opportunity to test the veracity of the Eusebian representation and will, in the end, show his conscious misuse of Licinius' legislation. Since the *Vita Constantini* repeats most of the charges found in the *Historia Ecclesiastica*, the examination should begin with this latter text. The laws attacking Christians found exclusively in the *Vita Constantini* will be dealt with at the end.

The first action reported by Eusebius is the expulsion of Christians from the palace (IX. viii.10).[421] This brings to mind the expulsion of the

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[418] This is where the Eusebian view has had its profoundest effect, for another modern commonplace is to subscribe wholeheartedly to the Eusebian notion that Licinius feared the Christians in his own dominions because he felt they were supporting Constantine over him.

[419] A government which Corcoran, 1996, 275, rightly says was "pushed to the background" following the Constantinian victory, though Corcoran is quick to accept the standard view of Licinius as a persecutor (195).

[420] Above, page 74.

[421] In the *VC* (I.52), Eusebius goes further, saying that Licinius banished and enslaved members of his household. Barnes, *CE*, 321, n. 82, suggests this may be indicative of a later law, rather than simply an embellishment of the *HE* account.

Christians under Diocletian in 303 which began the Great Persecution.[422] It is probably this parallel which Eusebius hoped his readers would draw. But is it true? Eusebius gives no names and moves quickly on to the next charge. The evidence from the sole name which does survive in other accounts shows that Licinius certainly did not hinder anyone who left the palace.[423] Later sources cite a certain Auxentius,[424] later bishop of Mopsuestia, as a victim of the palace purge. In the *Souda*, he is simply named as a *notarius* under Licinius.[425] The evidence that he was "let go" for refusing to sacrifice (in this case grapes to Dionysus) derives from the Church historian Philostorgius.[426] There is no way of knowing whether this is a "true" story or an apocryphal tale created to provide martyrs for the Licinian persecution.[427] The fact that Auxentius went on to become a bishop is proof enough that his career was in no way hampered if the tale is true. The truthfulness of this story is actually called into question by Eusebius himself. During a discussion of the council of Nicaea, he introduces the *notarius* Marianus,[428] an imperial official who held to his beliefs during the reign of Licinius. That we now have two *notarii*, one purged, the other not, must call into question the account of Philostorgius and therefore the veracity of the whole affair. It should also be remembered that the *Epitome* (41.9-10) praised Licinius for his removal of the "grubs and mice" of the palace, which suggests a purge not of Christians in particular, but of courtiers in general.

In this same passage, Eusebius links the military order to sacrifice with

[422] Recounted in Lactantius, *De Mort.* 11.3; 15.3 and Eusebius, *HE*, VIII, iv.
[423] Contra the later account in the *VC* (I.52) which has Licinius pursuing these men for their wealth.
[424] On whom, see *PLRE* I.141.
[425] The notice is cited in *PLRE*.
[426] This story is given by Barnes, *CE*, 71.
[427] The need to supply martyrs for the Licinian persecution will be discussed in more detail below, when the evidence for the most famous Licinian martyrs, the "Forty of Sebasteia", will be discussed.
[428] *VC*, IV.44. See, *PLRE* I.559, Marianus 2; Macmullen, 1984, 140, n.21.

the expulsion from the palace but again gives no indication that anyone suffered under this command.[429] This link once again echoes the account of Diocletian's persecution in the *Historia Ecclesiastica*.[430] This time, however, there is inscriptional evidence which appears to support Eusebius' claim.[431] Sometime after 317,[432] Licinius and his son ordered all soldiers to offer incense and grain to the "*simulacrum dei sancti Solis*". This inscription has been used[433] to support the claim that Licinius had now turned away from Christianity and was openly espousing paganism. This argument, however, is premature and does not take into account the special nature of the army when it comes to religious matters. Tomlin[434] has recently surveyed the effect Christianity had upon the Roman army in the fourth century and has concluded that the soldiers "were still largely pagan" even in the 380's.[435] Though Barnes is convinced that Constantine's army was Christian after the Milvian Bridge,[436] there is literary evidence against this as well. *Codex Theodosianus* 7.20.2 describes a meeting of Constantine with his army and veterans in 320 where the soldiers greet the emperor with the overtly pagan salutation "*Constantine Auguste, dii te nobis*

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[429] The "Forty Martyrs", though soldiers who refused to sacrifice, will be dealt with below in the more general discussion of Licinian martyrs. In fact, he refers to the two orders as "small matters" (*HE*, IX, viii.11).

[430] VIII, iv.2.

[431] *ILS* 8940. Barnes, *CE*, 71, appears confused about this order since he states that it was directed to the "imperial administration" and not only the soldiery as Eusebius says. The inscription comes from the military camp at Salsovia, thus supporting the view that it was aimed exclusively at the military. Barnes calls upon a letter of Constantine (*CTh.* 16.2.5) which contains a reference to priests being compelled to sacrifice and links this to Licinius' order, thus finding proof that this measure was not restricted to the military. Yet, as Corcoran, 1996, 314, points out, the fact that the letter is addressed to Rome makes it unlikely that it has anything to do with any Licinian ceremonies.

[432] Licinius Junior is named as Caesar, thus supplying a clue to the date. It has been suggested that this order was issued to coincide with Licinius' *quindecennalia* in November, 323.

[433] For instance, by Barnes, *CE*, 71.

[434] 1998, 21-31.

[435] 1998, 25. See also Macmullen, 1984, 45-47.

[436] *CE*, 48. It should be noted that no Christian symbols appear on the soldiers' shields on Constantine's arch depicting his defeat of Maxentius. See Tomlin, 1998, 25.

servant!".[437] This event must be nearly contemporary with the order of Licinius and shows the ambivalent religious positions emperors adopted (even undisputably Christian ones like Constantine) when dealing with the soldiery.[438] It also brings to mind the Constantinian coinage which depicted Constantine as a companion of the god *Sol* . These coins continued to be issued well past 313.[439] This public adherence to pagan protocol was a necessary element of being the emperor over a predominantly pagan public. To base any argument concerning the personal religious affiliation of an emperor on this type of evidence would be faulty. Clearly, both Constantine and Licinius represented themselves the way they felt they had to despite personal convictions.[440]

Just as with the purging of palace Christians, so here too there is evidence for only one "martyr". There is a notice in Sozomen (IV, 16.6) of Arsacius, a keeper of the imperial lions under Licinius, who professed Christianity and immured himself in a tower in Nicomedia.[441] Given the movement towards asceticism during this period (and the fact that Arsacius remained immured and unmolested until 358), it is surely prudent not to put too much weight on this evidence alone.[442] It must be at least equally likely that

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[437] For obvious reasons, Barnes, *NE*, 69, n.2, redates this law to 307, thus avoiding any conflict with his thesis of a Christian army. The traditional date is restored by Corcoran, 1996, 257-259.
[438] There is also a pagan inscription celebrating an imperial victory of Valentinian on the Danube in 368. See Antiquite Tardive, III, 139-146.
[439] Macmullen, 1984, 44; Barnes, *CE*, 49, 309, n.47, "until c. 320" (though Constantine resumed issuing coins depicting *Sol* in 324 from Antioch (*RIC* 7.685). Constantine also began striking coins at Thessalonika ca. 317 "depicting Jupiter as his patron God" (Bruun, *RIC* 7.488). Note also *CTh.* 16.10.1, a letter of Constantine from 320 which allows the public consultation of entrails under certain conditions. See Corcoran, 1996, 165, 194; Macmullen, 1984, 141, n.29.
[440] Barnes, *CE*, 48, is at pains to explain away Constantine's continued religious "ambiguity", even resorting to quotations from Augustus that an emperor must "make haste slowly" (Suet. *Aug.*, 25).
[441] *PLRE* I.110, Arsacius 1; Barnes, *CE*, 71. Some include St. Pachomius as a member of Licinius' army (Macmullen, 1984, 47), but he was in fact conscripted by Maximinus to fight against Licinius in 312 and was released from service following Maximinus' defeat. See Chitty, 1977, 1-2.
[442] At times, Barnes seems to be desperate for independent confirmation of Eusebius' claims and perhaps a little too eager to find examples that support his views.

Arsacius immured himself out of religious fervor as out of necessity.[443] This leaves us in the same situation as with the charge of the expulsions: we have only the Eusebian account and no strong supporting evidence.

Eusebius' account now discusses "graver measures" (IX, viii. 11-13). These are the secular laws discussed above. The law forbidding help to prisoners is fairly straightforward and probably shows no more than Licinius' severity when it came to punishing criminals.[444] Since Eusebius gives no indication of when this law was published, there is no way of knowing if any special circumstances pertained (such as the "crusade" against Maximinus' family and priests in 313). That it affected Christians should probably not be doubted,[445] though again we have no indication that any Christian was actually punished under this law.

Eusebius also attacks the Licinian marriage laws as "innovations", thus suggesting that the emperor broke with *vetus ius*, most probably in repealing aspects of the *Lex Papia Poppaea* of Augustus.[446] The details of Licinius' reforms are unknown, but it is remarkable to note that Constantine promulgated new marriage laws at about this same time (ca.320),[447] and which Eusebius praises as rectifying the defects of the original laws.[448] It is thus noteworthy to find Eusebius attacking Licinius on precisely the same topics for which he praises Constantine. Naturally, he does not allude to any connection between the two sets of legislation, but it is interesting to speculate whether

[443] If he was driven to wall himself up, why didn't he come down after Licinius' defeat? On the proliferation of asceticism during this period, see Chitty, 1977.
[444] Note his treatment of Maximinus' supporters, above page 31.
[445] It was Christians offering food to the locked-up Pachomius (as part of Maximinus' conscription) that converted the young man. See Chitty, 1977, 1-2.
[446] For appeals to *vetus ius* in the edicts of the tetrarchs, see Corcoran, 1996, 69-73.
[447] For the date, see Corcoran, 1996, 71. On the laws themselves, see Barnes, *CE*, 219-220, who calls the new legislation "morbid and unwholesome".
[448] *VC*, IV, 26. 3-4. *Pan. Lat.* 4, 38 (delivered ca. 320), states that the old laws have "lost their traps for ensnaring honesty".

either emperor was responding to the legislation of the other.[449] Eusebius certainly shows that he had little difficulty adopting a different attitude to *vetus ius* depending on which emperor was tampering with it.[450]

The very same thing can be said with regard to the testamentary laws condemned by Eusebius as "barbarous" (viii. 12). Constantine introduced new laws governing wills at the same time as his marriage legislation (*CTh.* 3.2.1) and it is tempting to think that Licinius did the same. In Constantine's case, he altered the laws to allow Christians to bequeath their possessions to the Church (*CTh.* 16.2.4).[451] It can be suggested that Licinius promulgated the same laws, but without any evidence it can remain only speculation. It is important to note again, though, the synchronicity between the two rulers, as each seems to parry the thrusts of the other in terms of propaganda and policy.

Eusebius' next accusation, that of unfair taxes and land valuations, is difficult to gauge since most Licinian laws were either repealed or ignored when the Theodosian Code was put together.[452] Some probable laws of Licinius regarding taxes have survived, however, and can give a vague sense of his fiscal policy. Licinius seems to have raised the age at which men became exempt from the poll-tax to seventy.[453] Constantine lowered the age to sixty upon conquering the east in 324.[454] The harshest charge Eusebius levels is that clergymen were forcibly enrolled in the local councils.[455] This law, like the

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[449] Similar to the "miracle for miracle" parallel noted above, page 42.

[450] It is noteworthy that Constantine's nephew Julian accused his uncle of implementing "innovations" and styled him "*novator turbatorque priscarum legum et moris antiquis receptl*" (Amm. 21.10.8) and repealed some of his laws in favour of *vetus ius* (*CTh* 2.5.2; 3.1.3). See Corcoran, 1996, 277, n.66

[451] On this law, see Corcoran, 1996, 196.

[452] On the difficulty of piecing together Licinian legislation, see Corcoran, 1993; 1996, 274-276.

[453] Barnes, 1976c, 279-280.

[454] The age of exemption before Licinius was probably more than sixty. Barnes, 1976c, n.18.

[455] This is not stated explicitly in the *HE*, but is found in *VC*, II.20.2; II.30.1. See also, Barnes, *CE*, 71, where he calls this action "insidious".

other secular laws listed above, has some echo in Constantinian legislation of the same period.[456] A Constantinian law of July, 320 (*CTh.* 16.2.3), forbids decurions, their sons and others of similar wealth from avoiding *munera publica* through ordination. This legislation, from the point of view of the upper classes, would certainly have looked like forcible enrollment in councils. Thus, yet again, there is a close similarity between the legislation of the two emperors. Moreover, the charge of rapacity in levying taxes conforms to the stereotype of the bad emperor.[457] A good emperor lowers taxes, a "tyrant" raises them. In the case of Constantine, he is either praised for lowering taxes (*Vita Constantini*, IV.2-4) or condemned for raising them (Zosimus, 2.38.2-4) depending on who is writing.

The most serious charge Eusebius aims at Licinius concerns the destruction of churches and the execution of bishops in the Pontic town of Amasea. The description of the attack is vague, with more time spent detailing the novel form of punishment (the cutting of the bishops into pieces and feeding them to fish) than on any substantial details of the persecution (*HE*, X, viii. 15ff = *VC*, II, 1.1ff). Churches are reported to have been pulled down or confiscated and Christians to have gone into hiding.[458] Again, and in this instance more importantly, there is no mention of specific martyrs, just the general term "some bishops" when Eusebius speaks of those who died. This omission is glaring. The simple fact that Eusebius is nowhere able to point to any martyrs needs to be explained. It is possible that he had access to a tradition which did not name any of the victims. Given the distance involved (and the short amount of time

[456] See Barnes, *CE*, 311, n.63; Corcoran, 1996, 285, n.111.
[457] Cf. Lactantius, *De Mort.* 22-23 (Galerius). See Barnes, 1998b, 134.
[458] Note that Constantine, confronted by the intransigency of the Donatists, expropriated their churches for the *fiscus*. They later regained them through a petition to Julian. See Millar, 1977, 589.

Eusebius had to revise his *Historia Ecclesiastica* following Constantine's victory), it is not unlikely that he might only have heard that something had taken place in the region of Amasea and did not have access to a clearer story.[459] But the fact that no names accompany the later account in the *Vita Constantini* suggests that he never learned of any names. Were there any names to learn? The tradition of martyrs attributed to Licinius is a vexed one.[460] There are twenty-one cases of persecution attributed to Licinius, but only the account of the "Forty Martyrs of Sebasteia" has a chance of being historical.[461] This is the tale of forty soldiers who were ordered to sacrifice in Armenia and who refused. Their punishment was to be left on an ice floe to freeze to death while a warm cabin stood waiting on the shore.[462] The account of these brave soldiers had a long history in Christian traditions, and they appeared in homilies of St. Basil, St. Gregory of Nyssa and the Syrian St. Ephraem.[463] The attribution of their martyrdom to the reign of Licinius seems to have occurred sometime in the mid-fourth century, as the passage including his name is a later addition.[464] Musurillo[465] accepts that forty martyrs died here, pointing to the obscure towns mentioned in the text as proof of a local tradition, but does not venture to date

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[459] The description of the novel punishments would then be a writer's flourish. I do not believe that Eusebius simply made the story up. The other evidence from his works suggests that he was not above misrepresenting a fact or giving a partial account to suit his purposes, but that he tended to graft his own account or bias upon an actual event or document. Here, the account of the punishment (like those of the lustful crimes of all the persecutors) is more than likely his own, but some event most likely occured at Amasea. For a study of Eusebius' "frauds" concerning the facts surrounding the Council of Nicaea, see Elliot, 1991, 162-171.

[460] For a brief treatment, see Karlin-Hayter, 1991, 271, 274, n.52.

[461] Karlin-Hayter, 274, n.52. Coleman-Norton, 1966, 94-95, includes a "rescript" of Licinius taken from the Syriac *Martyrdom of Habib the Deacon.* He dismisses the date at the beginning of the document, August, 295, as being "too early" as well as the fact that the text says it occured during a consulate of both Constantine and Licinius. Given these chronological problems, it is probably better not to attempt to date the text at all than to attribute it to Licinius.

[462] For the text, see Musurillo, 1972, 355-361.

[463] Karlin-Hayter, 1991, 249.

[464] Karlin-Hayter, 1991, 271.

[465] 1972, xlix.

the account. Karlin-Hayter, in a more detailed study, places this martydom in the "last years of the third century." [466] It does not seem, therefore, that any martyrs can be confidently placed into the reign of Licinius. What then of the account of Amasea? Without any mention of martyrs, it is once again difficult to justify labelling Licinius' actions as "persecution". The facts behind what may have happened at Amasea are probably never to be known.[467] It is just as likely that the events had no religious significance, or were the result of internal struggles within the Church, as it is that they were the result of Licinius' "jealousy" of the Christians.[468]

In the *Vita Constantini*, Eusebius introduces three laws which he says were levelled against the Church and which are not found in the *Historia Ecclesiastica* (I.51, 53). All three laws can be typified as follows: they are each concerned with organizational and structural matters regarding the nature and composition of Church services themselves (the law separating women and men and ordering services to be held outside city walls) or with the duties of bishops (the law forcing bishops to remain in their see). Unlike the persecuting edicts of Diocletian, Galerius or Maximinus,[469] these laws do not make it illegal

[466] 1991, 273. She bases this on the statement that their relics were recovered by the bishop Peter, who took his see in Armenia in the late third century. Note that some scholars, driven by the negative portrayal of Licinius in Eusebius, continue to accept this account, cf. Pohlsander, 1996, 42; Keresztes, 1989, 144.

[467] Barnes, 1992, 649, suggests that the bishops of Pontus had "treasonable dealings" with Armenia (a kingdom Christianized under Licinius, see above, page 10) and this led to their destruction. His view relies upon two assumptions: that Licinius was indeed a pagan at this time and that he feared his Christian subjects, two views I do not hold. Moreover, if Armenia had been Christianized with Licinius' help (he was in the region when it occurred in 314, see Barnes, *NE*, 81), he would presumably have been on good terms with that kingdom. It is possible that the Pontic bishops were guilty of some form of treason, but this does not require either that Licinius had to be a pagan to be offended, or that their actions were necessarily aimed at the removal of a pagan emperor.

[468] We can point to the internal problems which Maxentius had to deal with at Rome as well as the Donatist controversy which Constantine could not contain in Africa as contemporary examples of strife within the Church which led to destruction and death. Licinius too was faced with a heresy, the Arian heresy, which began ca. 318 and raged well into the fifth century.

[469] For these edicts, see Keresztes, 1989, app. 14.

for Christians to congregate or to hold their religious beliefs. Instead, they are concerned with what might be called the *minutiae* of the Church's activities and seem to assume an intimate knowledge of both Church policy and protocol on the part of the legislator. It can therefore be said that these laws are the work of an "insider" in Church affairs, one who may be attempting to change traditional practice, but an insider nonetheless. It is also important to point out that each of these laws were later reissued, either by synodal councils or by Christian emperors.[470] This very fact will argue strongly against seeing these laws as "anti-Christian"[471] and should show beyond a doubt that they were, in fact, the work of a Christian legislator, Licinius. That two of these laws (those regarding women and outdoor worship) were not re-introduced into Church policy until the time of Theodosius shows the exact pattern of "rehabilitation" which was seen at work in the historical sources *vis a vis* Licinius.[472] This again suggests that praise for Licinius and the return to his policies had to wait until the Neo-Flavian dynasty had come to an end. But, before such a premise can be confirmed, the laws themselves must be discussed.

The first law cited by Eusebius (I.51) is that which forbids bishops from leaving their sees and therefore, as Eusebius complains, holding councils. This enactment may have had the effect of putting councils to an end but that may not have been its main intention. In fact, there is plenty of evidence to show that synodical councils continued in the east into 323, less than a year before war erupted between Licinius and Constantine.[473] Councils are confirmed after 320[474] in Alexandria, Bithynia,[475] Neocaesarea or Ancyra in 322/323 and again at

[470] Cataudella, 1970, 230-245.
[471] Or, as Barnes, 1992, 649, prefers, as "hampering the functioning of the Church."
[472] See above, Section I, ii.
[473] Cataudella, 1970, 62-65.
[474] The beginning of the Arian controversy, see Barnes, *CE*, 206.
[475] Barnes, *CE*, 204.

Alexandria in 323.[476] These meetings are proof positive that a ban on councils could not have existed before 323. Did such a ban ever exist? It is possible that, with the war impending, Licinius put forth a law disallowing meetings of bishops in order to put less strain on the *cursus publicus*.[477] But this is not a necessary inference. It may be more probable that Eusebius, forced to come up with laws against Christianity in his *Vita Constantini* in order to offset those in favour of the religion by Constantine he was going to cite (thus achieving some form of literary balance), simply put a negative spin upon a law that was not intended to ban councils at all.[478] In fact, a law against bishops changing sees has already been discussed above in relation to Eusebius himself[479] and was firmly in place under Constantine during his reign. Moreover, this policy was reinforced at the council of Nicaea in 325, less than a year after Licinius' defeat. The fourth canon of Nicaea limits closely the movement of bishops.[480] That this type of law could be passed at Nicaea (with Eusebius in attendance) and yet claimed to be a persecuting law when passed by Licinius is very reminiscent of Eusebius' treatment of the secular laws of both emperors already discussed. In the end, it can be clearly stated in light of the canons of Nicaea that this law was not only *not* anti-Christian, but a traditional Christian principle passed at a

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[476] Cataudella, 1970, 60-61.
[477] Note Ammianus' famous complaint about the lack of horses due to councils of bishops.
[478] His statement that "this was clearly a pretext for displaying his malice against us" (I.51) suggests that the law was not hostile in tone.
[479] When Constantine blocked his moved to Antioch, above page 45.
[480] Cited in Cataudella, 1970, 230-231; Barnes, *CE*, 218, adds canons 15, 16.

number of councils and fully in keeping with Church policy.[481]

Eusebius' next anti-Christian law is that directed at segregating men and women during Church services and disallowing bishops from instructing women (women teachers were to be created). Eusebius lampoons the law ("These regulations being received with general ridicule...," I.53) and rails against it as an innovation. Is there other evidence for such law in the Church of the fourth century? In fact, at the council of Saragozza in 380, the first canon expressly forbids women and men from communing together.[482] There is a mention in the canon that they are following the order of *hoc apostolus* and this must refer to Saint Paul, who in his first Corinthian letter (14.34, 35) suggested that men and women should commune apart.[483] This second law of Licinius also, then, cannot be said to be anti-Christian any more than the first law. Moreover, it too was adopted as official policy by a later council and rested upon earlier, traditional Christian teachings. The adoption of a previous Christian law of Licinius by a council in the 380s once again follows the pattern we have seen before: with the end of the Constantinian dynasty, the need to suppress the legislation of Licinius disappeared. It did not mean that historians would scramble to rehabilitate the emperor. On the contrary, the power of the

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[481] Similar legislation was passed at the following councils: Arles, canons 2 and 21; Antioch, canon 21; Serdica, canon 1; Carthage, canon 2; Carthage III, canon 38; Constantinople, canon 2. (cited by Cataudella, 1970, 231-233). The closeness in phraseology between the account in the *VC* and the 2nd canon of the Council of Constantinople (in 380) has suggested to Cataudella (1970, 235) that the *VC*'s account derives from it and therefore that the *VC* was written in the 380s and not by Eusebius. I prefer to see the actions of the Theodosian-era council echoing the words of a previous Licinian law (thus following the pattern discussed above in Chapter I, section ii) than to become embroiled in the debate over the authenticity of the *VC*. Cataudella dismisses this suggestion (1970, 236-237), nor does he suggest that these passages could be later interpolations into the Eusebian text.

[482] *"Ut mulieres omnes ecclesiae catholicae et fideles a virorum alienorum lectione et coetibus separentur vel ad ipsas legentes aliae studio vel docendi vel discendi conveniant, quoniam hoc apostolus iubet...* (cited in Cataudella, 1970, 238).

[483] See also, I *Tim.* 2.11.12 and *Stat. Eccl. Ant.*, 99: *Mulier, quamvis docta et sancta viros in conventu docere non praesumat* (cited in Cataudella, 1970, 240, n.72).

Constantinian propaganda made it all but impossible that Licinius would come to be called a Christian. More likely, enactments put forward under Licinius were later adopted without any knowledge that the original mover in these matters was Licinius.

The last of the three laws is presented in the same passage as the one above. It told church leaders to move their services outside city walls, "alleging that the open air without the city was far more suitable for a multitude than the houses of prayer within the walls" (I.53). At first glance this law, with its seemingly thoughtful explanation, does not appear to be a persecuting law. It might almost be deemed optimistic in its suggestion that the churches will be overflowing. Like the others, it seems to stem from the hand of an "insider", one who has the welfare of the church at heart. And, like the others, it too was reissued under the Theodosian emperors, but without the altruistic tone found in Eusebius' text. In 381, a law was passed ordering heretics to worship outside city walls (*CTh.* 16.5.6) and more were passed into the late 390s.[484] The Theodosian laws are aimed primarily at the heretics known as Priscillianists.[485] Did Licinius intend the same thing when he introduced this measure? The wording of Licinius' law is not close to the tone of the later Theodosian edicts. Licinius is not so much trying to keep people away from the church as much as trying to expand the area of worship to accomodate a greater host. And, although the Arian controversy began during his reign,[486] it does not seem that

[484] "*ab omnium submoti ecclesiarum limine penitus arceantur, cum omnes haereticos inlicitas agere intra oppida congregationes veterus ac, si quid eruptio factiosa temptaverit ab ipsis etiam urbium moenibus exterminato furore propelli iubeamus* (cited in Cataudella, 1970, 241). Note also the following laws: *CTh.* 16.5.14 (388); 16.5.30 (396); 16.5.31 (396); 16.5.32 (396); 16.5.37 (397).

[485] *OCD*[3], 1248. Priscillianists followed the teachings of Priscillian and promoted celibacy, vegetarianism, and the spiritual equality of men and women. Cataudella, 1970, 242-245, argues that the laws in the *VC* were attributed to Licinius in order to denigrate the anti-Priscillianist laws of the 380s.

[486] On this often violent controversy, see Barnes, *CE*, 202-207; Luibheid, 1977.

Licinius with this law was taking sides.[487] In this instance, it is more likely that the later Theodosian edicts, as was the case with the two laws already discussed, were simply based upon previous legislation and, in this case, altered to fit the needs of the time.

What can be said, then, about these laws and their relationship to a Licinian persecution? It is now obvious that none of them were "anti-christian" in any way and, though they may have attempted to interfere with the organization of the Church at that time, they were not aimed at destroying the Church. On the contrary, they were legislated with the Church's best interests in mind, as their later re-adoption under the Theodosian emperors makes clear. Christian legislation in one era cannot be anti-Christian legislation in another. If these laws were not persecuting laws, what does this say about the Licinian persecution in general? Given the Eusebian evidence outined above, it seems clear that no persecution took place against the Christians under Licinius. Eusebius was forced to portray Licinius as a persecutor following his defeat by Constantine, since it would not have been politic to show Constantine defeating another Christian.[488] Still, there remain laws of Constantine issued in 324 and 325 against Licinius which have been used as evidence for persecution.[489] The legislation in question is virtually identical in tone and scope to that following his defeat of Maxentius.[490] Constantine once again abolished the laws of the

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[487] Barnes, 1998, 11, suggests that the prohibition of councils (which he accepts as having taken place) was a "partisan intervention" on the part of the Arian supporter Eusebius of Nicomedia (who was an advisor to Licinius) against the Catholic bishops. On Eusebius of Nicomedia and Arianism, see Luibheid, 1976, *passim*. It seems unlikely that Licinius intervened to help the Arians. If he had, as Corcoran, 1996, 285, points out, "the ammunition would have been too good for Athanasius...to ignore."

[488] Also, Constantine officially depicted himself as a "liberator" and a champion of Christianity after 324. For his coinage depicting him slaying a dragon [Licinius?] and the similar depiction over the gates to his palace at Constantinople, see Keresztes, 1989, 145.

[489] Most notably by Barnes, *CE*, 208-209; Keresztes, 1989, 145-146.

[490] *CTh.* 15.14.3 (Jan. 313). See discussion in Corcoran, 1996, 153-154.

"tyrant", though soon afterwards made it clear that this was not a complete reversal of all earlier legal transactions.[491] It is interesting to note that, when dealing specifically with restitution to the Christians, Constantine does not differentiate between persecution under Licinius and that of his predecessors.[492] This has often been cited as evidence that Licinius did not abide by the "edict of Milan" and did not restore Christian property.[493] But, that Licinius did restore the property is suggested by Eusebius himself in his *Preparatio Evangelica*, completed before 320.[494] The work speaks only of harmony within the Church and says nothing of a reality or threat of persecution. If Licinius had reneged upon his promise of restoration, there would surely have been a comment, either in the *Preparatio* or the *Demonstratio Evangelica* (completed ca. 323).[495] Also, if Licinius still owed restitution to Christians from 313, this would certainly have been too good not to mention in both the *Historia Ecclesiastica* and the *Vita Constantini*. That Eusebius nowhere charges Licinius in this matter must mean that Licinius abode by the edict.[496]

What then of the Constantinian legislation? The edict quoted by Eusebius ordering restitution in 324 (*Vita Constantini*, II,24-42)[497] grants the

[491] *CTh.* 15.14.1 (emended date from May 16, 324, to 16 Dec.); 15.14.2 (Feb. 325).
[492] Keresztes, 1989, 145.
[493] Barnes, *CE*, 209-210; Keresztes, 1989, 145. Barnes suggests that the restitution granted here could reflect further confiscations suffered at the hands of Licinius.
[494] Barnes, *CE*, 72.
[495] Barnes, *CE*, 71-72. Barnes finds references to Licinius' persecution in the *Demonstratio*, though Eusebius' references to "visible and invisible foes" surrounding the Church (which he says are "flourishing and full of worshipers") may refer only to those pagans in each city who would have looked upon the Church with suspicion if not outright hostility. It need not have anything to do with the official policies of the imperial government. In a similar fashion, Barnes (*CE*, 70) also finds allusion to Licinius' persecution in Lactantius' invocation to Constantine (added to the last edition of the *Divine Institutes*) to "rescue the just in other parts of the world". This does not seem to me to refer to the Roman Empire at all, but rather to the Christians of Persia, who were suffering persecution at this point (for the martyrs St. Jonan and St Berikjesu of Persia, see Attwater, 1957, 66-67).
[496] Also, a matter of that scale could not be falsified or "twisted" the way the other, more general charges could be. There would be too many surviving Christians who would have benefitted.
[497] Provided by Keresztes, 1989, Appendix 18a.

return of goods not only to Christians, but to everyone who may have suffered under Licinius.[498] This action may well be seen to be nothing more than the *liberalitas* of the emperor celebrating his victory by granting clemency to those imprisoned by his predecessor.[499] Moreover, this "general" clemency is in keeping with the canon of the Nicene council dealing with Licinius. Canon eleven of the Council of Nicaea begins: "Concerning those who transgressed without compulsion (*anagke*) or confiscation of their property or peril or anything else of that nature, as happened during the tyranny of Licinius..."[500] This again stresses the "general" nature of those who suffered at the hands of Licinius and does not prove that Christians were alone in receiving retribution.[501]

Thus far, the evidence for Licinius' Christianity has relied largely upon the accounts of Lactantius and Eusebius from the middle of his reign and in pointing out the discrepancies and problems which exist in Eusebius' account of his persecution. But is there any positive proof for his continued adherence to Christianity (aside from the three laws Eusebius misrepresents as anti-Christian)? As with all aspects of Licinius' reign, hard evidence is hard to come by and one is left with circumstantial accounts to create a clearer picture (or at least to cast some doubt on the traditional view). A good starting point in this quest is a law granting jurisdiction to Christian bishops, thus giving them legal authority to settle disputes (*CTh.* 1.27.1).[502] The subscript of this law suggests that Licinius issued it from Byzantium in June, 318.[503] There seems little doubt

[498] "Those detained on islands"; "those condemned to hard labour"; "those deprived of civic rights"; "those deprived of the privileges of high-birth". It should be noted that Barnes, *CE*, 209-210, assumes all these individuals to be "Christians", though the text does not specify them as such.

[499] On the integral role of *liberalitas* for the emperor, see Millar, 1977, 133-135.

[500] Cited by Karlin-Hayter, 1991, 274.

[501] In fact, as Barnes, *CE*, 208, points out, Constantine's first move was to alleviate the tax-burden of the East, certainly not an overtly Christian move.

[502] See discussion of Corcoran, 1996, 284-286.

[503] As with almost all Licinian laws, his name has been erased leaving only Constantine's.

about its authenticity as a Licinian law[504] and the inference must be that, at least as late as 318, Licinius was legislating in favour of the Christians. At about this same time, coins of both Licinius and Licinius II which bear the christogram and the *labarum* exist.[505] These coins tend to come from mints under Constantine's rule (Siscia, Aquilea, Thessalonika) and are generally dated to 319/320.[506] Discovery of a christogram on a coin of either Licinius must mean that they were advertising their adherence to Christianity at this time. The fact that the coins were minted in the west shows that Constantine was also actively portraying them as Christian.

Is there later evidence? Only circumstantial. Licinius' wife, Constantia, was a known Christian and was very active in the Church, both before and after her husband's fall.[507] The fact, too, that the powerful bishop, Eusebius of Nicomedia, was at Licinius' side when he surrendered to Constantine in 324,[508] begs the question: why would a bishop beg for the life of a persecutor? In fact, the role of Eusebius at Licinius' court has often been troubling for those who portray Licinius as a pagan and persecutor.[509] Eusebius appears to have had a role at Licinius' court similar to that of bishop Ossius at that of Constantine,[510] and was consequently the most powerful eastern bishop during Licinius' reign.[511] He was exiled following the council of Nicaea both for

[504] Millar, 1977, 591, n.7; Barnes, *CE*, 312, n.80, suggests it was modeled upon an existing law of Constantine. Corcoran, 1996, 286, is hesitant about granting the law to Licinius.
[505] See Salama, 1992, 155, and fig. 6 (Licinius II) and *RIC*.7.418.
[506] Bruun, *RIC*.7.418; Salama, 1992, 155.
[507] For the role of Constantia in Church affairs, see Pohlsander, 1993, 162.
[508] Barnes, *CE*, 77.
[509] For instance, Barnes, *CE*, 70, calls Licinius' religious attitude "ambivalent" when discussing Eusebius' presence. Pohlsander, 1993, 158, says that Licinius "had recourse to repressive measures, notwithstanding the influence of Eusebius of Nicomedia." Keresztes, 1989, does not even mention Eusebius' presence at Licinius' court.
[510] On Ossius, bishop of Corduba, see Barnes, *CE*, 43, 51. For his primacy at all Church councils (reflecting his influence with Constantine), Barnes, 1978a, 57.
[511] And beyond. In 338 he was elevated to the see of Constantinople after having baptized Constantine himself in 337. see Quasten, 1950, 191; Wace and Piercy, 1994, 336-341.

supporting the Arian cause and, strangely, for his aid to Licinius in persecuting Christians.[512] This second reason makes very little sense. How does a bishop persecute Christians and then, upon rehabilitation (in 328), become the most powerful bishop in the empire, so much so as to be given the honour of baptizing Constantine himself? What kind of persecution can this have been, and what involvement could Eusebius have possibly had in it? The fact of Eusebius' rehabilitation and subsequent political power must suggest that his crimes in this affair were not particularly severe. Moreover, given the general lack of evidence for any persecution under Licinius, it could well be said that this second charge was added to penalize him for his assistance to Licinius as religious advisor.[513] It defies all logic to argue that a powerful bishop would be involved in the destruction of his own Church. A better explanation for Eusebius' exile is strictly political (both secular and ecclesiastical): the bishop was exiled for refusing to sign the anathemas appended to the Nicene Creed[514] as well as for his actions in the government of Licinius. These latter charges had presumably been previously forgiven by Constantine[515] and included the crime of "spying".[516] It is possible that Eusebius had used his influence among the Christians to intrigue on behalf of Licinius,[517] but this again would be a purely political affair. There is no need to look for persecution in this matter.

Thus, Licinius had close connections to powerfully placed Christians

[512] Barnes, *CE*, 227. Eusebius is exiled in September of 325.

[513] Could there be any connection with this charge and the murder of Licinius in 325? Was this part of a political purge Constantine was exercising in the east (a purge suggested by Barnes, *CE*, 210).

[514] And perhaps for "fanning the flames of schism" by communicating with some "Alexandrian malcontents" -- probably Melitians. See Barnes, *CE*, 226.

[515] Barnes, *CE*, 227.

[516] Barnes, *CE*, 227, with notes. The charges were levelled in a letter from Constantine to the church at Nicomedia.

[517] Piganiol, 1972, 35, states that Eusebius' fall was political "car Constantin avait acquis la preuve que les eveques bithyniens avaient ete les complices de Licinius". He gives no citation for this claim, nor does he explain what he means by "complices" in this instance.

(Constantia and Eusebius of Nicomedia) until the very end of his reign. Given this state of affairs, it seems easier to suppose that Licinius remained a Christian until the end than to see him acting against the Church with both his wife and a highly placed bishop as accomplices (accomplices who both intervened on his behalf before Constantine). The fact that the only evidence for persecution comes from Eusebius of Caesarea, a source necessarily hostile to Licinius after his downfall, only helps to confirm the reconstruction set out here.

In conclusion, the emperor Licinius has come through history as a persecutor and enemy of the Christian Church. Modern scholars, doggedly following the account of Eusebius of Caesarea, have continued this depiction through to the present day. That Licinius may not have returned to paganism towards the end of his reign is not a proposition which has garnered many adherents or gained much acceptance. Yet the preceding study has shown that, under a more careful investigation, the Eusebian claims of persecution can be dismissed as willful misrepresentations of Licinian legislation, some of which were indeed pro-Christian actions. Eusebius' need to portray Constantine as a liberator and conqueror on behalf of Christianity, coupled with his premise that God had chosen emperors to carry out his will on earth, forced the bishop to amend his earlier protrayal of Licinius and rewrite history to avoid writing the truth: that Constantine was responsible for the war through a policy of naked aggression and a drive to become sole ruler of the state. Licinius, his memory damned by the conqueror, had to be transformed into the epitome of the tyrant, as Maxentius was before him, since Constantine officially portrayed his foe in this light. That Eusebius was willing to conform to Constantine's portrayal is not

surprising: his interests were not in the politics of civil war, but in securing a place for the Church in the Roman state, something he could achieve equally well under either Constantine or Licinius.

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