UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA

The Partnership of Church and State During the First Half of the Reign of Constantine the Great

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for a Bachelor of Arts Degree In
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By

Brian Joseph Rozcicha

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A Confession

It is a well-known maxim that one cannot become clean by continually rolling in the muck. I do not claim that this is my greatest work, since there still remain too many unanswered questions in my mind. This might seem strange to many of you who have watched me grapple with the Donatist question for the past two years -- how could I possibly remain unenlightened?

Wise words are not necessarily hidden within dusty volumes stored on dark shelves in the deepest recesses of our nation's libraries. One scholar especially, a man I have had the privilege of studying under at U.C. Santa Barbara, had the insight to state in his course syllabus that students do not come to universities to learn the things they already know, they come to learn new things. In this sense, I have learned to study accurately and to write discriminately; owing much of this credit to my senior thesis advisers. The lesson, however, is far from over. In the coming years, my new works will be evaluated more thoroughly by scholars throughout the world: this calls for a refinement in purpose and a keener understanding of professionalism on my part.

As for the work presently before you, I make no excuses for my subject. Coalition-building between the institutions of Church and State is a fascinating study that has interested me for the greater part of my undergraduate career. The Donatist schism highlighted the context of the dispute which arose between these two organizations as they attempted to construct a formal partnership. In the first twenty-five years of the fourth century the Christian Church and the Roman State met eye to eye and

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resolved their differences. The triumph of Christianity which followed upon the heels of this remarkable quarter century profoundly influenced the direction of Western Civilization. There is no Catholic, Protestant, or non-denominational Church existing today which does not have its roots sunk deep in the Age of Constantine. This viewpoint was stated eloquently by Edward Gibbon:

> The public establishment of Christianity may be considered as one of those important and domestic revolutions which excite the most lively curiosity, and afford the most valuable instruction. The victories and the civil policy of Constantine no longer influence the state of Europe; but a considerable portion of the globe still retains the impression which it received from the conversion of that monarch; and the ecclesiastical institutions of his reign are still connected, by an indissoluble chain, with the opinions, the passions, and the interests of the present generation.[1]

This work is divided into five chapters, each discussing a particular theme of the Constantinian era. In the first, I give a detailed analysis of the miraculous conversion of the Emperor before his encounter with Maxentius at the Milvian bridge. I have paid careful attention to the available historical sources, in order to present Constantine's transition to the Faith in a non-partisan manner. In this sense, I have followed the example of Norman H. Baynes, the Byzantine scholar, in believing that "the true starting -point must be Constantine's own letters and edicts. That conclusion seems obvious enough, but so far as I am aware no one as yet has consistently attempted from the evidence of these documents to sketch the aims and the thought of Constantine."[2] Whereas Baynes, however, strove to unite Constantine's

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[1] Edward Gibbon, The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire (New York: Harcourt, Brace & Company, 1960), an abridgement by D.M. Cow, Chapter XX, pg. 284

[2] Norman H. Baynes, *Religiosissimus Augustus* , in The Conversion of Constantine, ed. by John W. Eadie (University of Michigan: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1971), pgs. 52-62.

deeds with his overall theme of the Emperor's sincerity to the religion, I have pursued an opposite course. That is to say that I have left the question of Constantine's personal beliefs in the Christian God for others to discuss. The first chapter argues that Constantine adopted a religious policy that was essentially monotheistic in nature; one that would appeal to both pagan and Christian classes.

The second chapter, therefore, takes the necessary step of explaining why Constantine was concerned with acting as a diplomat between the two contrasting religions. A discussion of the Edict of Milan (313) seemed to be the obvious way to answer this question; thus the reader will find in those pages a copy of the famous epistle issued at Nicomedia. Along with the role of mediator, Constantine also wielded the power of high priest of the Roman state religion. Therefore, I have briefly explored the problem of the Emperor's proper relation to the Church. During Constantine's reign, a number of important precedents were set, from which later monarches would justify their claim of Divine Right of Kings. Constantine manned the helm of both Church and State, and received his orders from the monotheistic Deity known affectionately as the Supreme Being. It is interesting to note that in the aftermath of the French revolution, when the Reign of Terror had reached its pinnacle of destruction, the republican leader Maximilien Robespierre would attempt to stage a coup of the Church by laying the foundations for the cult of the Supreme Being.

We live, of course, during a time when the mightiest nations in the history of the world have been humiliated by powers which many had mistakenly regarded as inconsequential. Constantine faced a similar

experience with the Donatists in North Africa; and from the testimonies he left to us, we can see that he found the situation no less embarrassing than the superpowers do today. This is the focus of the third chapter, an extremely lengthy and detailed account of why Constantine's religious policy of toleration failed in the deserts across the Mediterranean. This brings us to the heart of the public policy process, as we examine the attitudes and predispositions of the two combatants involved in the schism. Bearing in mind the french verb *sembler*, the scope of the fourth chapter attempts to answer the difficult question of semblance, or how the players imaged one another. Out of the many topics which arose from this thesis, the ideologies of the Beacon and the Ark most interested me. However, out of fidelity to the reader and to the overall purpose of this text, the fourth chapter remains a brief essay on the debate over the issues of rebaptism and martyrdom.

Indeed, my purpose is policy history and not simply history. If there is any point which I had difficulty in understanding for the past two years, that is it. The last chapter serves as an epilogue, since I felt it incumbent to describe some of the general trends of the last twelve years of Constantine's reign until his death in 337. It is also a summation of the ideas expressed in this work, along with some speculation on the overall relationship of Church and State. For this, I have turned to one of the greatest names in Russian literature, Fyodor Dostoyevsky, to serve as tutor for my arguments. One will also find throughout this work numerous references to biblical text. They have not been used to provide justification for any of my ideas. The New Testament remains for me a source of spiritual renewal and revelation. I have used various citations from the books of Luke and John in order to give life and breath to the Christian arguments being discussed at the time.

This thesis could not have been finished without the aid of two very dear friends; Philip Alexander Ely, and Keith Richard O'Toole. I owe my thanks to Philip for his patience and kindness to me these past six years. His logical arguments and persuasive viewpoints are without equal. At the same time, I owe Keith my sincerest gratitude for the many hours he patiently listened to my diverse ramblings on the Donatists. If any one person had the strength to lift me out of the muck, it was Keith. Through careful reasoning and well-founded scoldings, I have become a better man.

Lastly, there has not been a day since I began this thesis that I have not looked back in lament at the great price I had to pay in order to become a scholar. Each letter and symbol which is printed here is a black bar behind which lurks my anger and sorrow. If anyone owes me the pleasure of reading this, it is she -- this work is dedicated to her memory. I have purposely left the final period unprinted, so that when you reach the end my Dear, all of the pain and vexation you have left unto me, will be bid a fond farewell and will be released forever.

Brian Joseph Rozcicha
20, January, 1989

The Conversion

On October 28, 312 Flavius Constantine defeated fellow Augustus Maxentius on the banks of the Tiber river at a place called the Milvian bridge, thereby gaining sole rule of the West by reason of conquest. This victory marked the end of civil war in the Empire for a decade (with the exception of a brief conflict between Constantine and Licinius, Augustus of the East, in 316) until Constantine would once again assemble his legions and machinery of war to march against Licinius and defeat him at the battle of Adrianople in 324. With this victory (and some significant aid from his son Crispus who destroyed Licinius's fleet in the Hellespont) Constantine became the sole ruler of the Empire, again by reason of conquest.

Is there a pattern developing here? Certainly during the reign of Diocletian, the founder and leader of the Tetrarchy (293),[1] the beginning of the fourth century was marked by political insurrection and civil war. Under the Tetrarchic system, the powers of the Emperor increased geometrically, cementing autocratic tendencies which had been growing since the Principate (27 B.C.- 285 A.D.). Emperors no longer received confirmation for their rule primarily from the Senate, but from the strength of their armies and by divine sanction. Diocletian's authority was legitimated by Jupiter himself, making him the leader of not only the Roman state, but head of the Jovian

[1] The structure of the Tetrarachy was designed for the continuous rule of four, two Augustii to rule the eastern and western portions of the Empire, two Caesars to serve as vicegerents to the Augustii, with all of them selected on the basis of their merits and not their names. It is important to note that both Augustii were considered equal, although Diocletian was the original leader of the Tetrarchy, making him 'first among equals.' The Tetrarchic system was implemented to insure political stability; a visionary quest to restore peace in the Empire by dividing its immensity between four capable ruling officials. See Sinnigen and Boak, History of Rome, pg. 410.

dynasty as well. The difficulty in understanding the significance of Constantine's victory lies therefore not in the military or political sphere, but in the religious one. The problem which presents itself to historians of our generation is not one of a lack of evidence, but a lack of secular evidence which accurately defines Constantine's motives for marching on Rome. For according to the Church historians Lactantius and Eusebius,[2] Constantine's march on Rome was not undertaken out of inflated ego and a quest for power and self-aggrandizement, but out of the highest religious calling:

> Thus Constantine, an emperor and a son of an emperor [Constantius], a religious man and son of a most religious man, most prudent in every way, as stated above -- and Licinius the next in rank, both of them honoured for their wise and religious outlook, two men dear to God -- were roused by the King of kings, God of the universe, and Saviour against the two most irreligious tyrants [Maxentius and Maximin Daia] and declared war on them. God came to their aid in a most marvellous way, so that at Rome Maxentius fell at the hands of Constantine, and the ruler of the East survived him only a short time and himself came to a most shameful end at the hands of Licinius, who at that time was still sane.[3]

The age of Constantine is referred to as the turning point for Christianity because of the favor he showed towards the Church. Surely Constantine had different options available to him as to how he would approach the new religion. He could follow the legal precedent set by Galerius in 311 and allow Christianity "to exist again and arrange their own conventicles,"[4] or he could continue to persecute the Christians. These were, of course, the extreme choices available to him, but there were others. The most obvious one being that Constantine could have chosen to simply ignore the Christians and allow some future emperor to bear the title of first

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[2] Lactantius, *De Mortibus Persecutorum*, and Eusebius, *Historia Ecclesiastica*.

[3] Eusebius, *Hist. Ecc.* 9.9; translation by G. A. Williamson (Minneapolis, Minn.: Augsburg Publishing House, 1965).

[4] Edict of Galerius on Toleration of Christians; from Lactantius, *De Mort. pers.* 34.

Christian Emperor. In that case, we can be sure that the Age of Constantine would not have become the great subject of debate that it is today.

Indeed, we live in a world which has been profoundly influenced by events which occurred during this period. The historian's task has been one of continually evaluating the evidence left to us in order to better understand how the Roman Empire transformed gradually into Christendom. Therefore, we must start at the very beginning and examine Constantine's remarkable vision of the cross as told by Eusebius in *The Life of Constantine*. This work is the most detailed text regarding the conversion available to us; however, we will not stop there. Historians have been aware of the fact that all three accounts of the conversion vary greatly in the actual details of the vision.[5] Therefore, we will examine each in a chronological fashion, while utilizing the historian's best tool for ascertaining truth; comparison and contrast. From these works, we will gain a clearer understanding of Constantine's religious policy and political convictions. There too, I have found the task of refuting the views of Jakob Burckhardt to be a recurring theme in this chapter. Burckhardt, the Swiss historian, adopted Edward Gibbon's skepticism and combined with it the Bismarkian attitude of *Realpolitik* stating that:

> Attempts have often been made to penetrate into the religious consciousness of Constantine and to construct a hypothetical picture of the changes in his religious convictions. Such attempts are futile. In a genius driven without surcease by ambition and lust for power there can be no question of Christianity and paganism, of conscious religiosity or

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[5] That is Eusebius's two texts, *Ecclesiastical History* and *De Vita Constantini;* and Lactantius's *de mortibus Persecutorum.*

> irreligiosity; such a man is essentially unreligious, even if he pictures himself standing in the midst of a holy community.[6]

Can we find a middle ground in between the zeal of Eusebius's zealous history on the one hand, and Nietzsche's nihilistic view of mankind on the other: "What? A great man? I always see only the actor of his own ideal."[7] It is the goal of this work to recapitulate this period in a much more judicious manner. For our purpose is to find continuity in Constantine's policy of restoring peace and order to the Empire, from his entry into Rome after the Milvian bridge until the Council of Nicaea in 325. We must, therefore, begin our narrative at the point of contention among historians: the vision of the cross as told by Eusebius during Constantine's march on Rome. We start from the premise that Constantine wanted to be neither the saviour nor the bane of Christianity, but that, instead, the occasion of a remarkable phenomenon started him asking certain questions about who the Christian God was, and what benefits could possibly be derived from Him.

The scrutiny surrounding Constantine derives primarily from the celebrated accounts by Lactantius and Eusebius of the Emperor's conversion to Christianity before his encounter with Maxentius at the Milvian bridge. The narratives are noteworthy and Lactantius's is recorded here:

> And now a civil war broke out between Constantine and Maxentius. Although Maxentius kept himself within Rome, because the soothsayers had foretold that if he went out of it he should perish, yet he conducted the military operations by able generals...They fought and the troops of Maxentius prevailed. At length Constantine, with steady courage and a mind prepared for any event, led his whole forces to the

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[6] Burckhardt, The Age of Constantine the Great, translated by M. H adas (New York, 1949) op. cit. Chap IX, pg. 292 (1853).

[7] Friedrich Nietzsche, Beyond Good and Evil, Epigram #97, pg. 83.

> neighbourhood of Rome, and encamped them opposite to the Milvian bridge...
>
> Constantine was directed in a dream to cause the heavenly sign to be delineated on the shields of his soldiers, and so to proceed to battle. He did as he had been commanded, and he marked on their shields the letter X, with a perpendicular line drawn through it and turned round thus at the top, being the cipher of Christ.[8] Having this sign, his troops stood to arms. The enemies advanced but without their emperor, and they crossed the bridge. The armies met and they fought with the utmost exertions of valour, and firmly maintained their ground. In the meantime a sedition arose at Rome, and Maxentius was reviled as one who had abandoned all concern for the safety of the commonweal; and suddenly, while he exhibited the Circensian games on the anniversary of his reign, the people cried with one voice, "Constantine cannot be overcome!" Dismayed at this, Maxentius burst from the assembly, and having called some senators together, ordered the Sibylline books to be searched. In them it was found that: - "*On the same day the enemy of the Romans shall perish.*" Led by this response to the hopes of victory, he went to the field. The bridge in his rear was broken down. At the sight of that the battle grew hotter. The hand of the Lord prevailed, and the forces of Maxentius were routed. He fled towards the broken bridge; but with the multitude pressing on him, he was driven headlong into the Tiber...[9]

It is interesting to note the difference between Lactantius's and Eusebius's report of Constantine's vision, or rather the slow progress made by Eusebius and later historians to Christianize (sensationalize?) the day of conversion. In his *Historia Ecclesiastica* , Eusebius did not mention any appearance of Christ in a dream, nor did he speak of Constantine ordering his troops to delineate their shields and helmets with the "Chi-Rho" sign. Instead, Eusebius only stated that God came to both Licinius's and Constantine's aid in a most marvelous way by granting them both victory in the face of

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[8] The *Labarum* or "Chi-Rho" which came to be associated with Constantine may have looked like this: { ☧ }

[9] Lactantius, *De Mort. Pers.* 44; translated in A. Roberts and J. Donaldson, eds., The Ante-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church (New York, 1899), VII, 301-322.

superior forces.[10] Nor did Eusebius elaborate on what methods God used to 'rouse' Constantine and Licinius against Maxentius and Maximin. We are left, therefore, with a ticklish puzzle to solve concerning either the omissions by Eusebius, or the additions by Lactantius.

First we turn to Lactantius. His treatise, *On the Deaths of the Persecutors*, is considered to be the most reliable source describing Constantine's conversion since it was written no more than four years after the event, and because it originated in the West. It is interesting to note in the text of Lactantius, however, the very different means utilized by Constantine and Licinius to defeat their tyrannical foes. Whereas Constantine was admonished to have the "Chi-Rho" symbol displayed on his and his soldier's helmets and shields, Licinius was instructed in a dream similar to Constantine's to offer a prayer to the Supreme God:

> Supreme God, we beseech thee; Holy God, we beseech thee; all righteousness to thee we commend; our safety to thee we commend; our Empire to thee we commend. By thee we live; by thee we are victorious and fortunate. Supreme, Holy God, hear our prayers; our arms to thee we extend; hear, Holy, Supreme God.[11]

Keeping this prayer in mind, we return to the "Chi-Rho" symbol. In its most established form, the "Chi-Rho" was considered to be the monogram of Christ or the *Labarum* . However, this correlation was not made until 315; therefore, what was the meaning of this heavenly sign? Robin Lane Fox hypothesized that the "Chi-Rho" formed the first two letters of the Greek word "chreston" and that Christian advisers in Constantine's camp may have

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[10] Eusebius, *Hist. Ecc.* 9.9; Licinius's victory occurred on April 30, 313 when he defeated Maximin Daia near Perinthus after he had invaded Byzantium.

[11] Lactantius, *De Mort. Pers.* 46.6.

bent the word around to mean Christ.[12] However, this makes little sense when one considers that the "chreston" sign in pagan terms meant "good-luck." Could it be that Constantine's patron god Apollo was littering the road to Rome with four-leafed clovers and other signs of luck?

This might seem likely, especially in lieu of the fact that Constantine is said to have had an actual vision of this deity in 310 while visiting a temple of Apollo in the Rhineland. For Constantine's vision we have this account by an orator who probably spoke in 311:

> There you saw [the orator addresses Constantine directly] your Apollo, accompanied by Victory, and this god crowned you with two laurel wreaths, each marked with the number 'XXX' [giving him a reign of long duration]. You have recognized yourself in the figure prophesied [Constantine's face appeared on the figure of Apollo] as destined to rule over the entire world.[13]

From this oration, we get a much different viewpoint of why Constantine marched to Rome. Visions of grandeur and glory must certainly have entered Constantine's mind, along with the desire to restore unity to a bitterly divided Empire. Perhaps this is one reason why Eusebius's accounts vary regarding the conversion. The speaker made no mention of the "tyrant" Maxentius in his oration. This seems to support recent findings that Maxentius was not a persecutor, and that his troubles lay more in the realm of finding adequate food supplies for starving Roman citizens. Perhaps Eusebius's first account was premature in the fact that he did not fully

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12 A fairly detailed discussion of the *Labarum* is given by Robin Lane Fox in Pagans and Christians (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1987), pgs 613-617.

13 *Panegyrici latini* , VII (6), 21, 4; See also Doerries's Constantine the Great, translated by Ronald H. Bainton (New York: Harper & Row, 1972), pg. 24.

comprehend the wave of reform that would accompany Constantine to the throne. He too, at the time he wrote the *Ecclesiastical History* , may have only seen Constantine's motivation for marching on Rome as political. Perhaps it took over two decades of Constantinian rule for him to finally alter his opinion and declare Constantine's seizure of power as instituted by God in *Life of Constantine* . For now, however, we can see that the momentous occasion of Constantine's vision of Apollo must have affected him greatly, and we can only guess what a profound inspiration he must have felt after seeing his face upon the figure of Apollo. Does this experience necessarily equate with the audacious act to march upon Rome?

Obviously I am setting up the question here since I am allowing as much or even more credence to Constantine's vision of Apollo and his destiny to be the ruler of the world than I am to Lactantius's account of the conversion of Constantine. But are the two traditions, one distinctively pagan and the other predominantly Christian, mutually exclusive? By following Lactantius's account certainly not. The "Chi-Rho" sign, although it may very well have appeared to Constantine, in Christian terms certainly was far before its time. It was in almost all respects a pagan sign, and thus certain allegations that Hosius, the bishop of Corduba, was influential enough to make Constantine "convert" because of this cryptic monogram are somewhat absurd.[14] It seems all the more likely that the Christian God showed more favoritism towards Licinius, since his victory was at least assured by a monotheistic prayer, although it too was not a decisively Christian libation. We must, therefore, return to Eusebius and later Church historians in order

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[14] See Frend, The Rise of Christianity (Philadelphia: Fortress Press,1984), pg. 482.

to further our perspective on how Constantine's miraculous conversion took place.

One mark of an Emperor's power was the patron deity who legitimated his rule. Eusebius was aware of this (although the full explanation of 'how' needs some developing) and he also knew that the other deciding factor which legitimated his power was how strong a bond linked the Emperor and the godhead. In the case of Lactantius, we saw that the circumstances upon which Constantine's conversion rested were rather bald and weak. The institution of religion was more of a theatre spectacle in this age than a matter of inner spiritual searching.[15] Thus, we cannot say that on the eve of the battle of the Milvian bridge Constantine was filled with doubt about the destiny of his soul and therefore he turned to Christianity. We know this, or rather we can infer this because Eusebius never said that Constantine had a longing for Salvation or for the self-fulfillment of Christ. Yet Eusebius did say that Constantine's mind was filled with some doubt concerning his campaign on Rome, and that he would welcome divine aid of any sort. He had already secured the prophecy of victory from the shrine of Apollo, and heard the oration of Eumenius declaring him heir to Claudius II, Gothicus (268-270) in 311:

> It was no accidental agreement on the part of others, no sudden favour, that made you emperor; you merited the *imperium* because of your birth -- by a divine gift.[16]

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15 Meaning the difference between *Orthopraxis* and *Orthodoxy*. Paganism was concerned with correct behavior and procedure, whereas Christianity was concerned with correct thought. Drake, marginal notes, 1/4/89.

16 Oration of Eumenius contained in his panegyric on the fall of Maximian. See Smith, Constantine the Great (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1971), pg. 90.

Would these factors be strong enough though to guarantee the success of his march on Rome? According to Eusebius they were not, and thus we come to the third account of Constantine's conversion:

> Being convinced, however, that he needed some more powerful aid than his military forces could afford him, on account of the wicked and magical enchantments which were so diligently practised by the tyrant, he sought Divine assistance, deeming the possession of arms and a numerous soldiery of secondary importance, but believing the co-operating power of Deity invincible and not to be shaken. He considered, therefore, on what God he might rely for protection and assistance. While engaged in this enquiry, the thought occurred to him, that, of the many emperors who had preceded him, those who had rested their hopes in a multitude of gods, and served them with sacrifices and offerings, had in the first place been deceived by flattering predictions, and oracles which promised them all prosperity, and at last had met an unhappy end, while not one of their gods had stood by to warn them of the impending wrath of heaven; while one alone who had pursued an entirely opposite course [Constantius], who had condemned their error, and honored the one supreme God during his whole life, had found him to be the Saviour and Protector of his empire, and the Giver of every good thing. Reflecting on this, and well weighing the fact that they who had trusted in many gods had also fallen by manifold forms of death, without leaving behind them either family or offspring, stock, name or memorial among men [probably Galerius and Diocletian]: while the God of his father had given to him, on the other hand, manifestations of his power and very many tokens: and considering farther that those who had already taken arms against the tyrant, and had marched to the battle-field under the protection of a multitude of gods, had met with a dishonourable end (for one of them had shamefully retreated from the contest without a blow [Galerius], and the other, being slain in the midst of his troops [Severus], became, as it were, the very sport of death); reviewing, I say, all these considerations, he judged it folly indeed to join in the idle worship of those who were no gods, and , after such convincing evidence, to err from the truth; and therefore felt it incumbent on him to honor his father's God alone.[17]
>
> Accordingly he called on him with earnest prayer and supplications that he would reveal to him who he was, and stretch forth his right hand to help him in his present difficulties. And while he was thus praying with fervent entreaty, a most marvellous sign appeared to him from heaven, the account of which it might have been hard to believe had it

[17] Eusebius, *de Vita Cons.* I, 27.

> been related by any other person. But since the victorious emperor himself long afterwards declared it to the writer of this history, when he was honored with his acquaintance and society, and confirmed his statement by an oath, who could hesitate to accredit the relation, especially since the testimony of after-time has established its truth? He said that about noon, when the day was beginning to decline, he saw with his own eyes the trophy of a cross of light in the heavens, above the sun, and bearing the inscription, **Conquer By This**. At this sight he himself was struck with amazement, and his whole army also, which followed him on this expedition, and witnessed the miracle.[18]

This second account was written at least twenty-four years after the event. Historians commonly point to the inconsistencies between this and Lactantius's account of Constantine's vision. Before discussing these, however, it seems more logical to note the changes in Eusebius's two texts, *Ecclesiastical History* (abbreviated *HE*) and *Life of Constantine* (abbreviated *LC*). It was mentioned earlier that Lactantius's text is considered to be the most reliable evidence available concerning Constantine's vision. His association with the imperial court (he would soon be tutoring the Emperor's son)[19] and the fact that he had witnessed the persecution in the West lends credence to this argument. Eusebius's first attempt at explaining the miracle in the *HE* , however, falls quite short of the mark. There is no mention of any type of vision, only that Constantine "call[ed] in prayer on God in heaven and on His Word, Jesus Christ Himself, the Saviour of all, to come to his aid..."[20] Conceivably, Constantine prayed to Christ for the same reasons as those given in the *LC* , namely to invoke the aid of a higher Deity who would not betray him as had happened to Severus and Galerius. In the account of the *HE* then, the hypothesis that the shadowy Hosius of Corduba

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[18] *Ibid* I, 28.

[19] Robin Lane Fox, Pagans and Christians, pg. 613.

[20] Eusebius, *Hist. Ecc.* 9.9.

may have been the one to encourage these supplications seems to fit, thus packaging this narrative nicely with ribbons and bows.

Yet now we come to the much longer report of the *LC* in which there are too many conspicuous additions to the story to escape notice. Our attention is first drawn to his father Constantius, who unwary readers might conclude to have been a Christian. Yet Eusebius does not say this, and for good reason, since no matter how strong his Christian sympathies may have been, he still died at York (July, 306) a professed pagan, belonging to the cult of Mars.[21] For what reason then, does Constantius receive such ostentatious praise from Eusebius? One likely reason would have been Constantius's lack of ardor in enforcing Diocletian's edict of general persecution in 303. Constantius's territories were Britain and Gaul, and after his successful overthrow of Carausius,[22] he was for the most part allowed to run his own show. One aspect of this freedom was his belief in monotheism and his refusal to enforce harshly the policy of persecution in the West. It seems that Constantius followed Diocletian's edict so far as to burn a few churches and confiscate its properties, merely as a gesture, but he went no further than this.[23]

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21 See Doerries, Constantine the Great, pg. 25.

22 Carausius, a Meapian sea-captain from Belgica, was ordered by Constantius to assemble a navy and build a port at Gestoriacum (Boulogne) in 286-7 to quell pirate raids against the inhabitants along the Atlantic seaboard; esp. in Germania, Belgica, and Lugdunensis Secunda (Normandy and Britanny). He was amazingly successful: however, he grew ambitious and proclaimed himself Caesar. He led his fleet to Britain and there proclaimed himself Emperor, calling himself Marcus Aurelius Carausius. He was later betrayed and murdered in 296 by his Praetorian Prefect Allectus. Constantius's success in assembling a fleet in the Seine allowed him to take Gestoriacum, and afterwards defeat Allectus at Hampshire where the inhabitants acclaimed him the "Restorer of Eternal Light." For more information see Smith, Constantine the Great, pgs (33-35).

23 Robin Lane Fox, Pagans and Christians, pg. 615.

Constantius's refusal to persecute Christianity must have appeared as some type of bold political statement to Eusebius and other Christian writers.[24] Even more engaging is the fact that the party of Majorinus would mention Constantius's overt refusal to persecute in their letter of appeal to Constantine in 313. Obviously the fact was well known, and so it appears as though even the slightest effort on the part of a pagan magistrate to work towards the benefit of the Church earned him words of praise and flattery. Constantius was considered to be a protector of the Church, and we can only begin to extrapolate how much more praise would be heaped upon Constantine for his miraculous conversion to the Faith, and the gifts he showered upon the Church. Is it not reasonable to suppose that he would merit more than the simple title of protector, perhaps even apostle and Christian Emperor?

We do not know what motivated Constantine to march on Rome, we can only weigh the evidence left to us by Eusebius and Lactantius. Here I agree with Fox's statement that in order to identify effectively the kernels of truth in Constantine's vision, it is best to compile all of the narratives together and then make our assessment.[25] By doing so, we can see that Lactantius and Eusebius agree on the point that Constantine's invasion of Rome was to free the capital from the yoke of a tyrant. At least we can imagine that this might have been a reason that Constantine himself would have put forth. But what of the lust for power and the thirst of ambition? Did Constantine have a fantasy of seizing rule of the world in a heroic fashion like Alexander or perhaps even see himself as a second Aeneas?

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[24] Mark 9:40 "for whoever is not against us is for us."
[25] Robin Lane Fox, Pagans and Christians, pg. 616.

These questions are speculative, and their answers are dependant upon the personal testimony of the Emperor, which Eusebius coincidentally provides us with in the *LC*. But is his testimony reliable, and can we trust Eusebius enough not to have added shady words where he deemed them necessary?

> ...History cannot take an oath of Constantine the Great too seriously, because, among other things, he had his brother-in-law murdered despite assurances given under oath. Nor is Eusebius beyond having himself invented two-thirds of the story.[26]

We are safe to assume that Eusebius strove for accuracy in his texts, the painstaking care for detail in the *HE* stands testimony to this. Yet the *HE* was written long before Eusebius had any formal ties with the imperial court (313), thus excessive flattery and praise were unnecessary considering the lack of a guarantee that Constantine would ever see his work. The *LC*, however, had the advantage of a quarter century's hindsight, making it naive for us to expect Eusebius not to to utilize this advantage to its fullest extent. Furthermore, some historians believe that Eusebius's testimony may have come from Constantine's public address at the Council of Nicaea in 325.[27] Considering all of this, we are still quite safe in steering away from Burckhardt's skeptical views of Eusebius, which sprang more out of his cynical predisposition to the Church and distrust that Eusebius Christianized Constantine's policies more than what the Emperor would have liked, than from a meticulous examination of the evidence. Yet before we allow ourselves fully to embrace Eusebius's panegyric as the true source of explanation of why Constantine marched on Rome, let us bear in mind that where Eusebius's attention to detail might inhibit him from inserting shady

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[26] Burckhardt, The Age of Constantine the Great, Chap IX, pg. 292 .
[27] Robin Lane Fox, Pagans and Christians, pg 614.

words to conceal truth, he nevertheless was not afraid to insert a decisive political slant to his work.

What was Eusebius's purpose in writing the *Life of Constantine*? We can assume that it was not written to flatter the Emperor nor to raise his own position at court. The account was written at least twelve years after Nicaea, thus we can be quite certain that there already had been sufficient time for this type of action. By comparing the *HE* and the *LC*, however, we gain a much different sense of what goal Eusebius was attempting to achieve. The *HE* was largely a historical compendium recounting the deeds of the Apostles and the institution's ultimate success. The last part of the history speaks of the survival of the Church in the face of bloody persecution, where the confessors and martyrs from these events are praised as heroes by Eusebius. It is a decidedly Christian work written for a Christian audience stressing the need for unity, and Constantine's role in the work is really no larger than that of Constantius's in the *LC*. Yet after the events of Constantine's reign, we can only assume that Eusebius's views towards the relation between Church and State changed dramatically. Notice, for instance, that in the *HE* Constantine called upon "God in heaven and on His Word, Jesus Christ,"[28] but in the *LC* there is no direct reference to Christ. Of even more significance is the fact that the *LC* not only repeats the account of Lactantius in *How The Persecutors Died* (the dream of Christ instructing Constantine to inscribe the *Labarum* on his shield and helmet), but it goes far beyond it by including a vision of a cross in the sky witnessed by Constantine and his troops. How could Eusebius neglect reporting either omen in the *HE*, and how could Lactantius fail to

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[28] Eusebius, *Hist. Ecc.* 9.9

mention this spectacular phenomenon witnessed by legions of troops? Must we be reduced to Gibbon's words of:

> The frequent repetition of miracles seems to provoke, where it does not subdue, the reason of mankind: but if the dream of Constantine is separately considered, it may be naturally explained by the policy or the enthusiasm of the Emperor.[29]

Or similarly Nietzsche's view that:

> There are no moral phenomena at all, but only a moral interpretation of phenomena --[30]

One tradition suggests that history was simply moving too fast for both Lactantius and Eusebius to record accurately the circumstances surrounding Constantine's conversion.[31] The argument being that both works were already nearing completion and that developed explanations of these miracles would be tackled in later works. But why delay a thorough discussion of such colossal events when they surely prophesied the victory of Christianity over paganism? Could it be that neither historian viewed Constantine as the catalyst which would hasten the metamorphosis of religious belief in the Empire until much later in their careers? Adjoining this question comes the much thornier one of whether it was necessary for Eusebius to make Christians believe that a major turning point had occurred during the reign of Constantine by sensationalizing the vision of 312. Lastly, was Eusebius accidentally highlighting the gears of Constantine's political machine by substituting the name of the Saviour Christ in the *HE* for the ambiguous epitaph of Supreme God in the *LC* ?

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[29] Gibbon, Decline and Fall, Chapter XX, pg. 293.
[30] Friedrich Nietzsche, Beyond Good and Evil, Epigram #108, pg. 85.
[31] Robin Lane Fox, Pagans and Christians, pgs 613-614.

This last question bridges an extraordinarily deep gap, one in which politics and religion are mingled into one single phrase. Is this permissible? It is crucial to remind constantly ourselves that politics and religion were inseparable in the ancient state: the two went together like tea and scones -- especially when one considers that the Emperor was also high priest of the State's religious cult in his capacity as *Pontifex Maximus*.[32] There is little doubt that Eusebius was well aware of the Emperor's temporal powers; therefore, when we read the *LC* we must bear this fact in mind. Notice how the *LC* develops Constantine's reasons for calling upon the Christian God in the first place: a lack of faith in paganism; fear of Maxentius's monopoly of the black arts; the need for the cooperating powers of a powerful Divinity; and the logic of following the precedent set by his father who had "honored the one supreme God."[33] We see a much more intimate relationship being established between Constantine and the Christian God in the *LC* than we do in either Lactantius's polemic or the *HE*. Eusebius's choice of words and style of writing makes it seem as if it was inevitable for Constantine to place his trust in this Deity. This spirit of trust and companionship was traditionally a pagan custom: Constantine adopted the Christian God as his *comes* (pronounced komays), his divine protector who would guide him to victory.[34]

Eusebius, of course, does not say this, although we can imagine the difficulties he must have experienced in attempting to answer fellow Christians's questions of "what does this Emperor have to do with our

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[32] See Smith, Constantine the Great, pg. 132 The term is taken to mean "Supreme Pontiff."
[33] Eusebius, *de Vita Cons.* I, 27.
[34] Drake, lecture, history 113b, 5/87.

Church?" and the pagan's concern of "by which godhead does he receive his rule in the first place?" The Christian's concern would be one of unclean hands tainting their institution, thus sparking God's wrath and jeopardizing their chances of salvation. Pagans, on the other hand, would be concerned with the security of the State, the idea being that the Emperor's duty was to maintain the *Pax Deorum*, or literally the 'peace of the gods.'[35] Thus Eusebius's purpose for writing the *LC* was to recast the Emperor's religious policy into terms that would be acceptable for both pagans and Christians. Weighted terms such as 'Jesus Christ' would be omitted so as not to disquiet pagan ears, while Christian anxieties would be soothed with passages like the following:

> **It was by the Will of God that Constantine became possessed of the Empire.**
>
> Thus then the God of all, the Supreme Governor of the whole universe, by his own will appointed Constantine, the descendant of so reknowned a parent, to be prince and sovereign: so that, while others have been raised to this distinction by the election of their fellow-men, he is the only one to whose elevation no mortal may boast of having contributed.[36]

Thus we have the first workings of Caesaropapism: the lugubrious term coined by later historians to describe the Roman emperor's remarkable transition from head of State to head of both Church and State. Yet from what we have learned from the reign of the Emperor Aurelian (270-275), Constantine did not have very far to go in order to switch seats. For it had been the norm since Aurelian's reign to legitimate the emperor's authority through some deity occupying a place in the Roman pantheon; his being *Sol*

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[35] *Ibid*, 4/87.

[36] Eusebius, *de Vita Cons.* I, 24.

Invictus, god of the invincible sun.[37] The conversion of Constantine marked a new era for the Christian Church, since pagan traditions which had governed societies for thousands of years would soon be giving way to new traditions which were once deemed dangerous to the State. Constantine became the agent of the new God, the temporal representative of the heavenly power who would mediate disputes within the Church. At the same time, Constantine retained his title as *Pontifex Maximus*, thereby creating a connection in the minds of pagans between the concepts of monarchy and monotheism. For Christians, this vague monotheism symbolized Christ; for pagans it represented something less exact, perhaps *Summus Deus* or *Soli Invicto* .[38]

From this we can conclude that Constantine's adoption of the Christian God as his *comes* after his famous vision, and the nature of his temporal authority, allowed Christians to accept his intervention in their affairs. This is not to say that the terms 'Christian Emperor' and 'Caesaropapism' were easy morsels for Christians to swallow, it would take a miracle of sizable proportions to aid in the digestion. Perhaps this is one reason why we have such wide variations in the several accounts written by Lactantius and Eusebius. Surely the conversion of an Emperor who would take such an active role in leading both the Church and State could be brought about by nothing less than the miraculous. It is not to be wondered, therefore, that the fifth century historian Sozomen should include with the miracle of the cross and the dream of instruction the presence of angels who would exclaim "Oh,

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[37] Karl Baus, History of the Church (New York: Seabury Press, 1980), Vol. I, pg. 318.
[38] The Supreme Deity or the Unconquered Son. See Frend, The Rise of Christianity, pg. 476.

Constantine! by this symbol conquer!"[38] Perhaps the sensationalization of events makes difficult situations easier to comprehend; we can only guess that Eusebius believed this. Burckhardt's mistake was not his skeptical views of Eusebius, it was the fact that he neglected to properly evaluate the religious standards of the time.

We have concluded thus far that Eusebius recorded an oath of Constantine swearing that he was visited by some kind of phenomenon sent by the Christian God allowing him to defeat Maxentius at the Tiber. There too, we have seen from the *LC* that Eusebius Christianized Constantine's adoption of the *Divinitas* which had given him victory, thus justifying his reign as the first Christian Emperor. This loaded statement seems to necessitate inquiry into Constantine's personal religious beliefs: was he, in fact, a Christian? This question is, however, the invisible wire over which too many historians have tripped in the past, and so I find it best to avoid it altogether. We can do this because it is possible to separate Constantine's religious policy from his personal beliefs, thus allowing us to move ahead with our overall theme of public policy making in the early fourth century.

We leave this chapter with the final thought that Constantine needed a victory over Maxentius to secure sole rule of the West, and he got it by the gracious hand of the Christian God. It does not matter whether the skeptics of Gibbon's age believed this, or even those of our own, it only matters that Constantine and his contemporaries believed in the power of the Christian

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[39] Sozomen, *Hist. Ecc.*, I, 3; from Select Library of Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church, translated by Henry Wace and Philip Schaff (Oxford: Parker & Company, 1891), Vol. II, pgs 241-242.

God. The trial of battle had decisively granted him the title of Victor, thus he owed his allegiance to the new Godhead. We will see in the next chapter that Eusebius's and Constantine's views diverged on what role a Christian Emperor should play in the State. For Eusebius, the Roman Empire served a providential role of smoothing the way for the new Christian triumph with Constantine leading the way with sword and light. Constantine, however, although not begrudging his alliance with Christianity, had different ideas about which direction the new State should proceed -- forward to Byzantium.

The Policy of Reconciliation

It would be difficult to assess Constantine's impact upon the Christian world without an examination of the most important document written jointly with Licinius, the Edict of Milan. A strong thesis for this chapter might well be that Constantine decided to cooperate with the Church in a spirit of toleration in order to achieve unity within the Empire. This facsimile does, however, lack a crucial element, which is that the Christian Church was under no obligation to consent to the authority of the Emperor. Had the leaders of the Church answered Constantine's bid for leadership and his proposal for partnership in the matrimony of Caesaropapism with a curt "No Thank You," we may have seen a revival of persecution, this time for obstinacy and lack of foresight. The Emperor, however, was not refused, and thus we witness the first partnership between Church and State. Yet cooperation and weighty policies of toleration require the efforts of both parties; therefore, havoc was sure to ensue when a small party of dissidents within the Church of North Africa formulated a policy of their own which expounded the message that they would no longer tolerate the State, nor members of their brethren who associated themselves with it. Constantine's role as Christian Emperor would soon be challenged, and it was left to be seen whether or not his policy of reconciliation could withstand the first blows sent from across the Mediterranean.

A better terminology for the classical document written at Milan in 313 would be the Edict of Formalization, rather than the Edict of Toleration. This is because the Edict of Milan was not without precedent. In 260, the Emperor Gallienus (260-68) wrote an edict of recapitulation after the persecution of

Valerian in 257, that restored confiscated Church property and assured Christians freedom from molestation. In 311, Galerius, one of the more absolute of the pagan Emperors, wrote the famous Edict of Toleration which ended the Great Persecution (303-311). The impetus for Galerius's remarkable legislation was said to be repentance for the crimes he committed against the Christians during the persecution. However, it seems more likely that he sought to placate the wrath of the Christian Deity who had afflicted his body with the disease pediculosis.[1] This assumption is based upon the manner in which the Edict is worded: it seems that Galerius was more concerned that the persecution had interfered with the course of Christian worship (thus raising the hostilities of God against him), than he was about the number of followers that had been slain. The Edict was by all means an admittance of defeat, signed in the name of the four ruling magistrates of the time: Galerius, Licinius, Maximin, and Constantine.[2] The rulers exhorted a spirit of benevolence in the Edict, stating that the reason for enacting the policy of persecution in 303 was to correct the wayward Christians who had abandoned the practices of their fathers and pursued a different course of worship which greatly jeopardized the security of the State:

> Among all other measures, which we arrange always for the State's advantages and profit, we indeed hitherto had wished to correct all things in accordance with the ancient laws and the public order of the Romans and to provide for this: that also the Christians, who had abandoned the way of life of their fathers, should return to their right minds. For indeed, through some reasoning, such willfulness had seized and such folly had possessed the said Christians that they followed not

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[1] Lactantius, *De Mort. Pers.* 34; Eusebius, *Hist. Ecc.* 8, 16; Gibbon, Decline and Fall, Chapter XX, pg. 291. This disease has only been known to strike the most nefarious enemies of Jesus Christ (i.e. the egregious Herod Agrippa I, King of Judea, the harried and loathsome Huneric, Vandal King in Africa, and some of the heinous members of the Spanish Inquisition).

[2] P.R. Coleman-Norton, Roman State and Christian Church (London: S.P.C.K., 1966), Vol I, pg. 18.

> their ancestor's well-known institutions, which perchance their own forefathers formerly had established, but they, through their own decison and as it had pleased them, made for themselves laws, which they were observing, and in various places assembled various peoples. Therefore, when our command had ensued to the following effect, that they should betake themselves to the ancient institutions, many have been subjected to danger and many also have been dispossessed [Diocletian's persecution 303-311]. And since very many still persevered in their determined course and because we perceived that the said persons neither were showing veneration and reverence due to the gods nor were worshipping the Christians' God [through fear of imperial law], we, in view of our most kindly Clemency, having regard also for our continual custom, by which we are want to bestow pardon upon all men, have believed that we ought to extend our promptest indulgence also in these matters, that Christians may exist again and may arrange their own conventicles, yet so as they do nothing contrary to public order...
>
> Wherefore in accordance with this our indulgence they shall be bound to beseech their own god for our and the State's and their own welfare, that in every way the State may be preserved safely and they may be able to live securely in their own homes.[3]

The main issue developed in the Edict is that the existence of Christianity within the Empire jeopardized the security of the State. Although Lactantius goes to great lengths to prove that Galerius was solely responsible for plunging Diocletian (284 -305) into the heat of persecution through continual coaxing and cajoling, the evidence suggests that Diocletian was well aware that Christianity was an impediment which blocked the path towards restoration of the classical Roman Empire. Through his leadership, the frontiers were secured, the civil government strengthened, the economy resuscitated, and the gods of the Roman pantheon were revitalized. In 295, Diocletian issued a decree of marriage which affirmed that whatever the gods determined to be pure and holy must be observed. At Alexandria in 296, he published a rescript against the Manichees, a Persian sect which preached the

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[3] Lactantius, *De Mort. Pers.*, 34.

dualism between spirit and matter, in which he described them as worthless men "who set up new and scandalous sects against the other religions."[4]

For Diocletian, correct and proper worship of the gods was the only way to secure peace and prosperity within the Empire. There was a resolve to restore the ancient practices of sacrificing to the gods on the altar of worship, consulting the Sibylline books and haruspices for the prognosis of events, lighting incense, and swearing eternal loyalty to the State and to the emperors. Through these acts, and only through these acts, would it be possible to maintain the *Pax Deorum*, or the peace of the gods. The idea being that the Empire had been experiencing ill times due to past neglect of these sacred rites. Accordingly, Diocletian's fanatical belief in the pagan deities and his faith in the ideal of peace through proper worship led him to declare Christianity *superstitio* and *religio illicita* on February 23, 303 in his edict of general persecution issued at Nicomedia.[5] Diocletian's political goal was to restore peace and unity to the Empire through religious means: the extirpation of one of the major parties of religious dissidents (Christianity) and the promotion of the true, classical, Roman cult was certainly the key to success.

Yet Galerius and the other three magistrates grudgingly admitted their defeat in the Edict of Toleration, thus attempting a new harmony between Christian and pagan classes. It is of paramount importance to note that there

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[4] *Mosaicarum et Romanorum legum Collatio* 6, 4, 1; 15, 3. See also J. Vogt, Constantin der Grosse und sein Jahrhundert (Munich, 2nd ed., 1960) pg. 123 and Baus, History of the Church, pg. 397. Interestingly, the Manichees considered child-birth to be sinful since it meant that another free soul would be imprisoned in a body. See Doerries, Constantine the Great, pg. 4.

[5] Baus, History of the Church, pg. 404.

is no mention of wrongdoing on the part of the pagan officials; no apologies are given nor social dispensations granted. It was an admittance of poor public policy making at best, of the victory of Christian obstinacy, of the power of the Christian God to persist. Perhaps only on the mind of Galerius was there any thought of the wrath of the Christian God, since he alone suffered from bodily torment. Implicitly, a series of new laws would have to be passed which would substantiate the Christian religion as another 'true' path towards the proper worship of the Roman deities. Within these laws would be the requirement that the Christians pray earnestly for the security of the Empire and the health of the emperors. Strict observance of Roman laws and dates of religious festivals by Christians was also necessary in order for the *Pax Deorum* to be maintained.

Yet these requirements, although dictated in a spirit of toleration, were incompatible with Christian doctrine. For the Gospel held that non-Christians were those who were separated from the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, and that verily "unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter into the Kingdom of God."[6] This fellowship transcends the physical world by having the followers of the one true shepherd partake in the celebration of the Eucharist, thereby identifying themselves as members of Christ's flock set upon the path of salvation. The trials of persecution were the times when the Church was called to bear witness, in the midst of a hostile world, to the risen Christ and to the salvation brought by him.[7] This might lead to a conflict with the pagan world and so to actual martyrdom:

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[6] John 3:5
[7] *Ibid* 15:26-27

The Church became a community of martyrs, and it was the "blood of the martyrs which [was] the seed of the Church."[8]

Thus, the rescript of Galerius, although cunning in its wording and cool tone of compromise, nevertheless sidestepped the crucial issue at hand: how could a Christian practice legally his devotion to the godhead without imperiling the peace of the State? The answer was to rewrite the edict from a pseudo-Christian viewpoint, in which staunch pagan convictions would be set aside in order to allow enlightened Christian worship greater latitude in the sphere of Roman religious observances. Similarly, the revised edict would no longer be an admission of defeat, or an acknowledgement of imperfect policy making, but rather a tool of propaganda used for sounding the bell of victory and for liberating Christians from the yoke of religious taboo. The Edict of Milan was in every sense of the word an edict of reconciliation and compatibility, as it strove to unite both Christian Emperor and Christian Church within the bounds of religious legality, thus maintaining a peaceful coexistence between the goals of the Roman earthly State and the euphoria of the Christian spiritual heaven.

In the opening line of the Edict, Constantine emphasized the happy occasion of his meeting in Milan with Licinius to discuss all matters pertaining to the advantage of the State and to public security. They deemed it necessary not only to allow Christians to exist again, but also that all peoples be given the freedom of religious expression so that "whatever Divinity exists in its celestial abode can be placated and propitious to us and to all who are

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8 Tertullian, *Apol.* 50

placed under our authority."[9] This sentence not only reverberated the Emperor's drive to maintain the *Pax Deorum*, but it also necessarily implied that Christians were subjugated to his authority as *Pontifex Maximus*. Constantine went one step beyond Galerius in the Edict of Milan by making Christianity a lawful religion, thereby endowing the Church with all the rights of a legal corporation:

> When I, Constantine Augustus, and also I, Licinius Augustus, had met happily at Milan and were conferring about all matters which concerned advantages and public security, among these other matters which we saw would benefit most men -- or indeed first and foremost -- we have believed that there should be ordained those matters by which reverence for the Divinity was contained, that we should concede both to Christians and to all an unrestricted possibility of following which religion each one had wished, whereby whatever Divinity exists in its celestial abode can be placated and propitious to us and to all who are placed under our authority.
>
> Accordingly we have believed with sound and most correct reasoning that we ought to enter into this plan: that facility ought to be denied to no one at all, who had given his mind either to the Christians' observance or to that religion which he himself thought most suitable to himself, in order that the Supreme Divinity, whose worship with free conscience we follow, may vouchsafe to us in all things his wonted favour and benevolence.
>
> Wherefore it is proper that your Excellence should know that it has pleased us that when all the conditions altogether had been abolished, which conditions were contained in letters previously sent to your Devotion concerning the name of Christians, also those things which seemed truly unfavourable and alien from our Clemency may be removed and that now freely and simply each one of those who shows the said purpose to observe the Christians' religion may exert himself to observe this very thing without any inquietude or molestation to himself...so that each one may have free facility in practising what he has chosen. And this we have done, that neither from any rite nor from any religion we may appear to have detracted anything...
>
> And since the said Christians are known to have had not only those places at which they have been accustomed to assemble, but also other places belonging to the legal right of their corporation, that is, of the churches, not of individual persons, you shall command under the law, which we have

[9] Lactantius, *De Mort. Pers.* 48. 2-12.

> expressed above, all these to be restored without absolutely any doubt or dispute to the said Christians, that is, to their corporation and assemblies: preserving the aforesaid condition, of course, that those who return the said places without compensation, as we have said, may hope for indemnification from our Benevolence.
>
> In all these things you shall be bound to exercise your most effective intervention for the abovementioned corporation of Christians, that our order may be fulfilled as speedily as possible, so that also in this matter thought may be taken for the public tranquility through our Clemency. So far it shall result then that, as has been expressed above, the divine favour toward us, which in so many matters we have experienced, for all time may attend steadfastly and prosperously our success together with the happiness of the State.
>
> Moreover, that the form of this our Benevolence's ordinance may be able to come to the knowledge of all, it shall be fitting for you by your own edict both to publish everywhere what has been written and to bring it to the knowledge of all, in order that this our Benevolence's ordinance cannot escape notice.[10]

The implementation of the Edict throughout the Empire formally gave the Church a juristic personality, a legal existence, the definition as a *corpus*

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[10] *Ibid* 48. 2-12; Eusebius also recorded the Edict of Milan in his *Ecc. Hist.* (10.5. 1-14), but his account differs from Lactantius's in that he included a preamble not found in *How the Persecutors Died* . The preamble gives the reason why Galerius's Edict of Toleration needed revision: "Already long ago, when we were watching that liberty of religion should not be denied [311], but that to each one's thought and desire should be given authority to practise divine things according to each individual preference, we had ordered that both to Christians and to non-Christians should be conceded the freedom to maintain the faith of their own sect and religion; but since many and various conditions in that rescript wherein such authority was granted to the same persons, clearly appears to have been added, perhaps some of them from such maintenance soon afterward were repelled." The issue being here that after the Edict of Toleration was signed, new conditions were added that made the Edict incompatible with Christian worship. Thus, the need for reform. But what type of conditions? Left with such an ambiguous statement perhaps we are safe to assume that Galerius added provisions later which prohibited Christians from worshipping in their proper manner. If so, then he probably added these stipulations to prevent Christians from performing acts which would have been considered contrary to public order. As with most documents from antiquity, the validity of the Edict of Milan is disputed by some historians. Whether or not the Edict actually existed is beyond the scope of this chapter, and so I will silence the argument with Norman H. Baynes's words: "The facts for the Edict of Milan once stood are still facts, though the Edict itself has gone the way of many another symbolic representation of historical truth." (Constantine, Cambridge Ancient History XII, Ch. XX, pg. 706). The selection copied here is not the actual Edict, but rather an epistle to a provincial governor. For more information see P. R. Coleman-Norton, Roman State and Christian Church, pg. 30.

in Roman society.[11] Status as a corporation gave the Church certain rights, one of which was to own property and to receive restitution for those properties confiscated during the persecution. In an epistle to the North African proconsul Anulinus (313), Constantine summarized his religious policy towards the Church:

> This is the custom of our Goodness, that we desire that those things which belong to another's legal right not only should not be molested [the theme of the Edict of Milan], but should even be restored, most honoured Anulinus.
>
> Wherefore we desire that...any of those things belonging to the Christians's Catholic Church...possessed now either by citizens or by any others, you shall cause these to be restored immediately to the said churches...
>
> Therefore, since your Devotion perceives that this our command's ordinance is quite clear, hasten that all things, whether gardens or buildings or whatsoever belonged to the legal right of the said churches, should be restored to them as speedily as possible, that we may learn that you have exhibited the most careful obedience to this our ordinance.[12]

From this epistle and the Edict itself, we can see that Constantine possessed political ability. Notice, for instance, that the Edict granted freedom of worship to all religious sects, not just the Christians. This was a decisively political move, since it showed that Constantine was attempting to be judicious to all religious sects throughout the Empire and not just the Christians alone. This is a fine example of Constantine separating his religious policy for the Empire from his own personal affiliation with Christianity. The peace of the State was the first item to appear on his political agenda, and proceeding directly after it was the need to grant restitution to those churches which had lost property during the persecution. Another way of reading this evidence though would be to assume that Constantine really was touched by the Christian God, impelling him to strive

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[11] *The Significance of Constantine's Settlement*, Walter Ullmann, JEH, Vol 27, Jan 1976, pg. 3

[12] Eusebius, *Hist Ecc.* 10.5. 15-17

zealously to please this Deity by granting freedom of worship to all peoples. There is no evidence which refutes this, in fact the majority of the evidence available from Lactantius and Eusebius supports this hypothesis. However, it is not the historian's place to pass judgment on the supernatural. If the ecclesiastical and secular accounts of Constantine's conversion are true, then much painstaking effort has been wasted on our part debating the finer points of his conversion. Constantine would have seen God, followed the dictates of his commands, and blazed the path for the great Christian triumph. However, until some type of similar divine miracle is performed and adequately confirmed in our own time, or new evidence is found which unquestionably ascertains the event, we historians are forced to shuffle and reshuffle the hand of evidence dealt to us.

What then does the Edict of Milan tell us about Constantine's imperial policy? We can see that after the battle of the Milvian bridge, Constantine extended an attitude of favoritism and benevolence to the Church. Yet at the same time, Constantine did not want to jeopardize his public image with the Senate and the largely pagan population. Thus, he granted freedom of worship to all sects so that "neither from any rite nor from any religion we may appear to have detracted anything."[13] Constantine attempted to create an atmosphere of compromise, one in which no party was left behind once the wave of reform had swept by. His political goal was nothing less than public tranquility and the restoration of law and order within society. After almost a decade of civil disorder, we can empathize with Constantine's urgent demand for restoring peace to the public domain as quickly as possible. So dedicated

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[13] Lactantius, *De Mort. Pers.* 48, 2-12

was Constantine to achieving this objective that he held out the promise of government subsidies to those citizens who had not received compensation from Christians upon the return of their confiscated property. It seems that no price was too large for Constantine to pay in order to receive the "divine favour" which the State had enjoyed so happily in the past. Peace and prosperity would come once all religious sects could worship their deity in the manner they best saw fit.

Although Constantine held a decidedly partisan attitude towards Christianity, he did not attempt to elevate the religion to the status of a privileged cult. In other words, Constantine did not attempt to make Christianity the sole religion of the Empire, nor did he endeavor to promote its leader, Jesus Christ, within pagan society. Christianity was declared a 'legal' religion much in the same way the Emperor Gallienus granted limited restitution to the Church in 260. The difference, however, between the two emperors's approach towards Christianity is that Gallienus never legalized the cult, whereas Constantine did. By doing this, Constantine recognized the Christian God as *another* true path for securing the peace of the State. Gallienus never took this step; although it is worthwhile to note that he never experienced any supernatural vision of Christ either. Perhaps these words by Ramsay MacMullen will help clear the picture:

> Revelations in the non-Christian world normally came through dreams, not prayers; Constantine had had a similar revelation earlier that produced his first conversion [from Hercules to Apollo in 310]; and there was nothing novel in his response to the second one. He followed out its directions, conquered his enemies, and bound himself - whether in gratitude or out of fear or to ensure further benefits he does not say - to his new Lord and Master. The train of his actions pursued the same path as that followed by others we know of; the train of thought may be followed, too: If you, Lord, can do

> so much for me, you will have proved that you are Lord indeed, and you will have made me your servant forever.[14]

From this perhaps we can derive Constantine's motives for writing the Edict of Milan. It cannot be proven that Constantine was touched by the hand of God on or before October 28, 312; however, we can surmise that given Constantine's tendency to want to restore peace and unity to the Empire it might best be achieved by granting freedom of worship to the Christians. The reasoning for this is twofold: Constantine had seen Diocletian's policy of persecution fail, thus generating the idea in his mind that it would be next to impossible to extirpate the Faith; and secondly, one of the better ways for restoring peace to the Empire would be to end the persecution and reconcile the differences between pagan and Christian classes. By doing this, Constantine would not have been displaying an overtly pro-Christian sentiment; instead, he would simply have identified them as the chief sufferers of the persecution.

Logic seems to prevail here, since it would follow that those who suffered illegally in a civilized state deserved restitution. Yet there was nothing illegal about persecuting Christians in the ancient state. Rather, the roles were reversed; Christianity was an illegal religion existing within the Roman state. This is one reason why we do not see any plans for restitution laid in Galerius's Edict of Toleration; there was no need for any because he never legalized Christianity. Constantine did bequeath Christianity with the rights of a corporation, however, thus entitling its participants to the same benefits as those enjoyed by pagan citizens. Whether he did this because he

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14 MacMullen, Christianizing the Roman Empire, pg. 43

wanted to assume all of the credit for Galerius's legislation,[15] or that he was attempting to make retributions to the *Divinitas* which had given him victory, we cannot say. The latter interpretation requires a leap of faith, and as with so many other events which occurred during Constantine's reign, it is best to jump this gap while keeping our wits about us and proceed to other events, lest we be caught forever dawdling at the edge attempting to bridge this abyss of incertitude.

The task before us is not to analyze Constantine's religious beliefs, but rather to evaluate his policy decisions in the proper context. In this sense, we ask the pointed question of what is the proper relation of a Christian emperor to the Church? In the Donatist affair, Constantine summoned ecumenical councils to solve the procedural questions which the schismatics raised. The bishops who attended these synods were the Emperor's team of experts, schooled in the finer points of Christian worship, who would draft policy which the Emperor could implement and enforce. At the same time, in his capacity as *Pontifex Maximus*, the duty also fell to Constantine to mediate irreconcilable differences between religious parties. Constantine was God's temporal servant; for this reason he entered into an intimate association with the Church's hierarchy. This relationship grew much more pronounced during the Arian crisis, in which Constantine himself presided over the proceedings. The Emperor's involvement in the disputes within the Church need not point to his personal devotion to the religion, since it was an established rule since the reign of Augustus (27 B.C. - 14 A.D.) that Roman

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15 As once was suggested to me by Professor Drake while stirring stucco patch on a fine Sunday afternoon.

emperors paid close attention to how the polytheistic cults worshipped their deities.

During Constantine's reign polytheism began to be overshadowed by monotheism. This is not to say that the idea of one god ruling the Empire was a new concept during this age. A growing tendency of assimilation had been growing for half a century, as the more popular Gods such as Adonai, Jupiter, and Apollo came to be recognized in the cult of the sun.[16] This coincided very nicely of course with Constantine's ambition to be sole emperor -- a universal Supreme Being to rule the heavens while ecclesiastical affairs were managed by His servant here on earth. Although Constantine used the episcopate to inform him on what policy decisions should be made to administer the Church, the Emperor did not forsake some of the more traditional methods for interpreting the will of the gods. When a stray bolt of lightning struck the roof of the Capitol a short while after 321, Constantine ordered the Sibylline books to be searched in order to discover what caused the mishap.[17] Pagan techniques of divination were not dispensed because the Emperor needed them in order to maintain the *Pax Deorum*. The ultimate goal to be achieved was peace and security in the Empire, and despite whatever personal convictions Constantine felt for Christianity, they were never strong enough to make him abandon completely the ways of his ancestors.

By viewing the age of Constantine in this way we achieve a continuity which is lacking in the interpretations of Jakob Burckhardt and Paul

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16 See Frend, The Rise of Christianity, pg. 440.

17 Drake, lecture 113B, 5/87.

Keresztes.[18] Whereas Burckhardt saw Constantine's favoritism of the Church as little more than a thin veneer to hide his true ambition of using the religion as a footstool for reaching sole rule, Keresztes exulted the Emperor's deeds too much. It is safer to assume that Constantine was not politically shrewd enough to initiate the demise of an Empire from one landmark policy decision. On the other hand, the fact that Constantine murdered his wife Fausta and his son Crispus hardly lends credence to the title 'Christian Monarch and Apostle.' Constantine's imperial policy was one of maintaining civil order, and it seems logical that by showing fidelity to both pagan and Christian cults through his patronage of a monotheistic deity, the two groups would find themselves standing on common ground. Needless to say, when peace existed in the Empire, the gods could be worshipped properly. If concord was maintained between these various cults, then perhaps the gods might bless their servant's kingdom with unity and prosperity.

If a peaceful and unified Empire was Constantine's political goal, then the Church certainly did not aid him in realizing it. A fanatical schism caused by the party of Donatus in North Africa in 313 would be the first ecclesiastical disturbance Constantine would confront as Christian Emperor. We therefore divert our attention away from Constantine in the next chapter in order to focus on the Donatist problem in North Africa. We shall see that despite the Emperor's best efforts to carry his policy of reconciliation throughout the Empire, he would receive strong opposition from the Church itself. Frustrated and angered, Constantine would strive in vain to produce

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18 Paul Keresztes represents the other extreme in Constantinian scholarship in Constantine: A Great Christian Monarch and Apostle (Amsterdam: J.C. Gieben, 1981).

concord within the Church, only to see his best diplomatic efforts dashed upon the stone altars of the schismatic's church. From that point, Constantine would reassemble the broken fragments of his imperial policy and carry them to Nicaea, there to see his goal of reconciliation temporarily triumph.

Le Schisme Donatiste

Constantine's victory at the Milvian bridge and implementation of the policy of toleration helped restore peace between Church and Empire; however, it did not cause harmony to spread between the individual churches themselves. Free from the common danger of a persecuting enemy, factions developed within the Church which divided over complicated questions of doctrine and discipline. These issues were as old as the Church itself; however, it was only after times of crisis that debate on these issues grew. When the Church divided over questions of religious doctrine heresies ensued. However, when the debate centered on the morality of a Christian, or the strictness of discipline, schisms developed within the Church. Although many such schisms had developed over the course of time, the Donatist schism was one of the first to have imperial authority intervene in order to settle the affair: It was to be the litmus test against which Constantine's policy of toleration would be tested.

The Donatist schism was no ordinary schism. Whereas most schisms last a few decades and then either wither away due to a lack of constituency or are lulled back into the camp of orthodoxy, the Donatist schism persisted for over three centuries until it was finally consumed by the encroaching wave of Islam. In other words, the Catholic Church was impotent in its attempt to lead the schismatics back into the orthodox fold.[1] If nothing else, this clearly shows what a formidable impediment the Donatists had become in

[1] The term orthodox must be used advisedly. I use it more to indicate which opinions were those of the status quo than to delineate right from wrong. Indeed, the Latin term *Orthodox(us)* means to have the right opinion, and far be it for me to pass judgement or to show bias by calling either the Donatists or the Caecilianists orthodox.

persistently obstructing Constantine's goal of a peaceful and unified Church. Was the Church to follow the new liberalism advocated by Constantine in which Church and State shared in the connubial ties of Caesaropapism, or would each institution pursue its own separate course of policy? There were of course other choices which could have been made; Constantine could have made Christianity the official religion of the Empire as the Emperor Theodosius was to do in 380. Yet, landmark policy decisions such as this were premature; thus we find the overriding question which forms the backdrop of the Donatist controversy one of whether or not all sectors of the Church would share in the new alliance with the State. As it might easily be guessed, the party of rigorism and the Holy Spirit agreed with the statement of Tertullian, a vociferous third century hero, that "nothing is more foreign to us than the State."[2]

It would be logical to assume that the spark which set North Africa ablaze with schism would have come from some religious dispute of unprecedented importance. Unfortunately, however, the opposite is true. As has been mentioned previously, the seeds for Donatism were sown as far back as the persecution of Septimius Severus,[3] but the actual event which triggered it was a procedural dispute over the election of a new bishop to the Carthaginian see. Probably in late 311 Mensurius, the bishop of Carthage, died during his return voyage from Rome where he was obliged to visit the

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[2] Apology 38.3; see also Frend, The Rise of Christianity, pg. 715

[3] Septimius Severus's persecution (202) was the first empire-wide assault against Christianity. It marked the end of an era of limited persecution enforced by the rescripts of Trajan (113) and Hadrian (121) which sought to curb its growth within the Empire. The persecution of Severus presented the problem of what type of penance each class of *lapsi* should serve (discussed at the Council of Carthage in 220 convened by Agrippinus) in order to be readmitted into the Christian fold. See Baus, History of the Church, pg. 210 and Chapter 4, Retreat to Gethsemane.

emperor Maxentius and repudiate rumors that he had given sanctuary to Felix, a seditious deacon, who had written defaming tracts about the Emperor. When the news of Mensurius's death reached Carthage, a number of candidates came forward to fill the vacancy, the most electable being Mensurius's archdeacon, Caecilian.[4] Within a month the presbyters, a council of elders to whom administrative duties fell, held an election, the outcome of which pronounced Caecilian the new bishop of Carthage (312).

Here we must diverge for a moment in order to explain the details of Caecilian's victory in greater depth. In order for a candidate's election to be considered valid, the approval of the local population and clergy, consecration by at least three neighbouring bishops, and the favorable judgement of God were required.[5] In North Africa, there was also a special tradition carried down from the time of Cyprian (ca. 250) which held that the Primate of Numidia, in this case Secundus of Tigisis, had the exclusive right to consecrate the new bishop of Carthage.[6] However, Caecilian's election had occurred without any Numidian bishops being present, let alone Secundus himself. There are two conflicting theories available to explain the conspicuous absence of these clergymen. The first suggests that the two lesser candidates, the Carthaginian priests Botrus and Celestius, being overly ambitious for the seat, persuaded the *seniores* (presbyters) to advance the proceedings so that the Numidian vote would be eliminated, thus enhancing their chances for victory.[7] The second follows the same general theme of

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[4] For more information on the immediate events surrounding Mensurius's death see Frend, The Donatist Church pgs 16-18, and Kidd, A History of the Church Vol.I pg. 534

[5] Fox, Pagans and Christians, pg 506.

[6] Frend, The Donatist Church (London: Oxford University Press, 1951), pg.16.

[7] Kidd, History of the Church (New York: Ams Press, 1970), Vol. I, pg. 534.

greed, only this time usurping the lust for power with the lust for wealth. Supposedly before Mensurius left for Rome, he had deposited a collection of gold and silver vessels with church officials and entrusted a copy of the inventory with an old woman, instructing her that if for some reason he did not return to Africa, they should be given to his successor. These officials wanted to keep these vessels for themselves and so they sought to expedite the election in order to prevent the Numidian primate from learning of the theft. Unfortunately, they bungled the operation by arguing among themselves over which candidate they should cast a vote for, Botrus or Celestius, and thus through their indecision, the victory (along with the inventory of paraphernalia and the goods themselves) passed to Caecilian.[8]

Wherever the truth lies in these matters is of no consequence, for the fact remained that the Numidian bishops had purposely been excluded from the electoral proceedings. In addition to this, public opinion of Caecilian ranked very low with certain sections of the Carthaginian populace. Dormant rumors of Caecilian's misconduct during the Great Persecution immediately regained life and fell upon believing ears once the Numidian bishops arrived (several days too late) for the consecration.[9] One of the most adamant opponents of Caecilian was a rich Spanish woman named Lucilla. Although this woman's scorn for Caecilian[10] would normally be passed over in history, her passionate contempt for the man led her to embrace the Numidian

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[8] Frend, The Donatist Church, pg.17

[9] Apparently, in 305, Caecilian had refused to bring bread and water to the Abitian martyrs who were imprisoned for publicly confessing their Christianity. Supposedly, all he had offered them instead were words of rebuke for volunteering themselves for martyrdom. I explain the controversy over martyrdom in greater detail in Chapter 4, Retreat to Gethsemane.

[10] Lucilla's animosity towards Caecilian stemmed from the fact that he had publicly chided her for kissing the bone of an unrecognized martyr before she received communion. See Frend, The Donatist Church, pg. 18.

bishops as allies, and aid them financially (a generous gift of 400 *folles*) in electing a rival candidate, Majorinus, a lector in the Church and a personal servant of hers, to the office. In the meantime, Secundus and the party that was rapidly forming around him refused to acknowledge Caecilian as bishop since the election was, in their opinion, unconfirmed. Instead, they elected an interim administrator to perform the necessary ecclesiastical functions until matters could be settled. This *interventor* was, however, promptly murdered, allegedly by the devout followers of Caecilian.[11]

The situation was becoming desperately violent, and it seemed as though the Numidians were beginning to lose ground in their cause when in the autumn of 312 Donatus, a bishop from Casae Nigrae, came forward and declared Caecilian's ordination invalid because he had been consecrated by unclean hands. It will be recalled that Caecilian had been consecrated by three bishops, two from Proconsular Africa,[12] and one Felix, bishop of Aptunga. It was against Felix that the charge of uncleanliness was wielded: a declared *traditor* .[13] This was a serious accusation and therefore called for an investigation as to whether or not the allegation that Felix had surrendered several copies of the New Testament was true. This was to become a most illusive question later when Constantine became involved in the dispute; was Felix in fact a *traditor* ? In the next chapter I will discuss the issue of a bishop's need to 'maintain a state of personal grace' in order for the duties and sacraments performed by him to be considered valid. For now, let it

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11 Augustine, Epistle 44. 4. 8, translation by Frend, The Donatist Church, pg.19

12 The bishops Novellus and Faustinus, from Tyzica and Thuburbo Maius respectively. Frend, The Donatist Church, pg. 18

13 *Traditor* , or a traitor to the Faith. Literally the term meant "one who hands over," and was used to identify those who had handed over the Scriptures or other religious documents to imperial officials during the Great Persecution (303-312).

suffice to say that because Caecilian's consecration was held in question, the Numidian's had time to elect Majorinus as rival bishop to the see of Carthage.

Constantine unsuspectingly stepped into this thicket of tumult and turmoil near the end of the winter of 312. Filled with elation over his victory over Maxentius and obviously seeking to pay due tribute to the God that had aided him in triumph, Constantine instructed Ursus, the *rationalis* (financial officer) of Africa to send 3,000 *folles* [14] to Caecilian for his disposal. This letter is immensely important to our investigation of how and why Constantine became involved in the dispute with the Donatists, and therefore it warrants our full attention:

> Constantine Augustus to Caecilian, bishop of Carthage.
>
> Inasmuch as it has been my pleasure that through all provinces namely, the African and the Numidian and the Mauretanian, something should be provided for expenses to certain specified ministers of the legitimate and most holy Catholic religion, I have sent a letter to Ursus...and I have indicated to him that he should be careful to pay to your Constancy 3,000 folles. Do you, therefore, when you will procure receipt of the aforesaid amount of money, direct that this money should be distributed among all of the abovementioned persons according to the brief sent to you by Hosius. But if, then, you should observe that anything is lacking for the fulfillment of this my policy in regard to them all, you ought to demand unhesitatingly from Heraclides, the procurator of our estates, whatever you should consider to be necessary, for I ordered him, when he was present, that if your Firmness should ask any money from him he should be careful to pay it without any uncertainty.
>
> And since I have learned that certain persons of unsettled mind desire to divert by some base seduction of the people of the most holy and Catholic Church, know that I have given

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14 The *follis* (pl. *folles*) was a coin made of base metal, probably copper or bronze. Coleman-Norton suggests that the coin received its name from the bag called a *follis*, which could hold as much as 3,125 double *denarii*. This is not to say that one coin was worth 3,000 *denarii*, as some might assume, since it was only one coin. Its actual worth is unknown. See P. R. Coleman-Norton, Roman State and Christian Church, pg. 43.

> orders to Anulinus, the proconsul, and also to Patricius, the vicar of the prefects, when they were present, that they should pay proper attention in all other matters and particularly in this and that they should not permit themselves to overlook such an occurrence. Wherefore, if you should observe that any such persons continue in this madness, without any uncertainty go to the abovementioned governors and bring this very matter to them, that they may correct them, exactly as I ordered them when they were present.
>
> May the Divinity of the Great God guard you for many years.[15]

Constantine did two important things in this letter: He recognized Caecilian as the legitimate bishop of Carthage, and he denounced the party of Majorinus as "persons of unsettled mind." From this letter a great deal of debate has erupted over the question of how much Constantine knew and when he knew it. Who were these people with "unsettled" minds? Coleman-Norton assumes that they were pagans since it is unlikely that information had reached Constantine informing him of the party of Majorinus. Yet by asserting this, one reads too far into Constantine's conviction towards Christianity. If Constantine really was alluding to pagans, then he would have been reversing the policy of his predecessors; this time calling for the repression of paganism. Similarly, it makes even less sense that Constantine would suggest to Caecilian that if these "unsettled" pagans were causing him difficulties then he should report their misdeeds to pagan officials and seek their help. No, it would be a capital error to make Constantine's mission one of depriving pagans of their rights or even seeking to convert pagans to Christianity. His duty was to yield obedience to his newfound Deity, and the proper way for him to do that would be to restore order in the Catholic Church. Therefore, elements of dissension were to be

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15 Eusebius, *Hist. Ecc* . 10.6; translation by P. R. Coleman-Norton, Roman State and Christian Church, pg. 40.

eliminated, perhaps by persecution tactics, but more reasonably by wooing them back into the emerging staus quo.

It is clear from Constantine's letter to Caecilian that the Emperor knew very little about the details of the newly formed schism on the African continent. The brief history which I have related about the schism would have probably drawn a long yawn from Constantine, and he may have wondered once or twice if there really were a place called Aptunga. Whence came his comments then about those rebels[16] in Carthage? In all likelihood, it seems that Hosius, a Spanish bishop from Corduba, may have been one of Constantine's top advisers on ecclesiastical public policy making. Constantine does mention him in his letter, although he seems to have no status larger than that of a courier. But what a courier! It may well be that one of the most influential men in Constantine's court will forever remain unknown to us due to a lack of evidence![17] Nevertheless, it is almost certain that Hosius must have given some information to Constantine with regards to the schism forming in North Africa, for Constantine undoubtedly knew which party was to receive the imperial donation. Furthermore, Constantine had given special instructions to his proconsul to make certain not only that the 3,000 *folles* were given to Caecilian, but also to make note if the party of Majorinus caused any more disturbances.

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16 The word 'rebels' here referring to people with "unsettled minds."

17 Little is known of Hosius's past life except that he claimed to be a confessor from Diocletian's persecution. This seems unlikely, however, since he was condemned by a council of Gallic bishops (date unknown). He did, however, gain access to Constantine's court at Trier and accompanied him during his march on Rome. He may have played a key role in helping Constantine accept Christ as his patron Divinity, after his vision of the cross; but this is purely whimsical speculation. See Frend, The Donatist Church, pgs 145-146 and also The Rise of Christianity, pg. 482.

The ambiguous references used by Constantine of course make it difficult to pinpoint the fact that he is alluding to the party of Majorinus. However, it may well be that the letter is not ambiguous at all; it may simply be that his information was incomplete. This theory seems all the more likely when we move events to April, 313 and contemplate a letter sent by the Majorinists to Constantine asking him to appoint Gallic bishops to settle quarrels between themselves and the Caecilianists:

> We appeal to you, good Emperor Constantine, for you come of a just lineage. Your father, unlike the other Emperors, had never persecuted, and Gaul remained free from that crime. In Africa, quarrels have arisen between us and the other bishops. We appeal to your piety to send us judges from Gaul. Given by Lucian, Dignus, Fidentius, Nasutius and Capito.18

In this letter we find no mention of Constantine's miraculous vision and subsequent conversion to Christianity (making him the greatest resource to which they could ever turn); instead, they simply state that he is considered a "good Emperor" and that he is of noble birth due to Constantius's refusal harshly to enforce Diocletian's edict of persecution. Similarly, there is no mention made of Constantine's recent meeting in February with Licinius at Milan where the famous Edict of Toleration was discussed. An explanation for these omissions is certainly needed, because without it, one might erroneously conclude that the ambiguity in these letters was due to the fact that circumlocution was in vogue. It seems more likely that none of these items were mentioned by the party of Majorinus for the same reason there was no detail given about the parties involved in the schism in Constantine's letter to Caecilian: the information simply was not available to them. Therefore, these two letters must be treated very gently,

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18 Optatus, *de Schismate Donatistarum* i. 22; translation by Frend, The Donatist Church, pg. 147

the evidence must be massaged out of them, and thus it is just as important to look at what the letters do not say, as it is to scrutinize what they do.

By doing this we eliminate many unnecessary questions and more importantly we utilize our time more wisely by avoiding absurd theories that Hosius was some all-knowing shadow personality who formulated the Emperor's policies towards the Church, or that the party of Majorinus was fully aware that a new Christian emperor was seated in Rome ready to pass judgement on thorny procedural issues. The two letters are totally separate from one another; therefore they must be treated as such. In the first, it makes more sense to assume that while Constantine was drawing up plans to distribute monies to the different sees throughout the Empire, he was vaguely informed by Hosius that there were disturbances within the Church of Carthage and that he should make a special note to Caecilian not to let this money fall into seditious hands. In this light, the situation is not prejudged by Constantine at all. Instead, he assigned the money to the incumbent power succeeding Mensurius. The only ambiguous item in Constantine's letter is the remark about what Anulinus and Patricius were informed to do if disturbances should continue. I doubt very much if Constantine's instructions were to have his proconsul and vicar appoint impartial judges to hear the case. Instead, it is likely that they were to investigate the matter themselves, pass judgement, and enforce their decision on pain of imprisonment or even more severe penalties.

It is necessary to return to our narrative for a moment in order to understand the circumstances which led to the Majorinists's letter of appeal to the Emperor. As previously stated, there was little chance that the

schismatics knew of Constantine's remarkable conversion. If they had, then surely they would have approached him as the new Christian Emperor, paying homage to him and saluting his abandonment of pagan idolatry. It is important to remember that simply because the Great Persecution had ended with the Galerian Edict of Toleration (311), it did not make pagans and Christians regard each other as brethren. Paganism was still a stench in the nostrils of Christians, whether they were schismatics or not, and therefore a change in worship on the part of a pagan, especially one who was an emperor, should merit a better salutation than "good Emperor." Yet Constantine was no more than a good emperor, at least in the eyes of North Africans, for what had he accomplished by April 313? He was undoubtedly popular with the people since he supported their revolt against Maxentius in 311 and because he did not invoke similar repressionist policies to extort corn from the land in order to feed the many starving in Rome; but he did little else for the people in that territory.[19]

The goodwill of the people was on Constantine's side for economic and political reasons, but certainly not for religious reasons. Yet, the party of Majorinus made note of his noble lineage from his non-persecuting father, and seemed to place Constantine in the same category. Prudence is necessary here, since it easy to interpret this line as some affirmation of Eusebius's praise of Constantius in his *Historia Ecclesiastica*. Setting the record straight, Constantius did obey Diocletian's preliminary orders to burn Church records and the citadels themselves, although it seems that he went no further than this. This is an important point, since his ambivalence towards the

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19 Frend, The Rise of Christianity, pg. 483

persecution was interpreted by Christians as some kind of bold political statement.[20] The fact that Constantius was not a Christian was of no consequence; what mattered was that apparently through his inaction he had become a protector of the Church. Following that line of thinking, it was logical for the party of Majorinus to celebrate Constantine's lineage since perhaps, in time, he would do even greater deeds for them.

On the other hand, some historians believe that the event which triggered the letter of appeal by the Majorinists was the favoritism shown to the Caecilianists by the gift of the 3,000 *folles* and the new edict passed by Constantine in the middle of March which exempted Church clerics from public duties:[21]

> Greeting, our most honoured Anulinus.
> Since from many circumstances that the setting at nought of religious worship, in which the chief reverence for the Holiest Heavenly Power is maintained, has brought great dangers upon public affairs and that its authorized reception and preservation have furnished the greatest good fortune to the Roman name and remarkable felicity to all the affairs of men, for divine favours provide this, it has seemed right that those men who give their services to the maintenance of divine worship, with due sanctity and with observance of this law, should reap the rewards of their own labours, most honoured Anulinus.
> Wherefore I wish that those who, within the provinces entrusted to you, in the Catholic Church over which Caecilian presides, furnish their service to this holy worship -- whom they are wont to call clergymen -- should be kept once for all entirely exempted from all public services, that they may not be diverted from the worship due to the Deity by any error or sacrilegious lapse, but rather without any hindrance may serve to the utmost their own law. For when these persons perform greatest services to the Divinity, it seems that the greatest possible advantage will accrue to public affairs.

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[20] As shown by Lactantius's words: "I pass over Constantius, a prince unlike the others, and worthy to have had the sole government of the Empire." *de Mort. Pers.* 8, 33-36.
[21] See Frend, The Donatist Church, pgs 146-147.

Farewell, our most honoured and most cherished Anulinus.[22]

The idea being here that the Majorinists would have enjoyed receiving Constantine's favoritism in order to strengthen the foundations of their Church. Here we can follow MacMullen's reasoning that "to keep a church going, money was in fact nearly essential -- essential for a community to develop some specialization of functions and some degree of independence so as to survive itself."[23] It is reasonable to assume that the Majorinists would have been interested in securing the gift of 3,000 *folles* for themselves, and that they would also enjoy the privilege of being exempted from public duties, but these factors alone do not substantiate the Majorinists appeal to Constantine.

The Donatist schism was not simply a squabble over money or ecclesiastical privilege, nor was it a theoretical debate over proper electoral proceedings. The serious question of one's salvation was at stake, since it was popularly believed that the security of a Christian's immortal soul was jeopardized through his association with lapsed brethren. In the next chapter, we will explore this question of the *lapsi* in greater detail, but for our purposes here let it suffice to say that a *traditor* was considered to be an apostate by the Majorinists; and that anyone who had rebelled against Christ was no longer a member of the Church. If the Church (and here we loosely apply the term orthodox) permitted these *traditores* to remain within the Christian fold, then the sanctity of that institution became tainted.

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[22] Eusebius, *Hist. Ecc.* 10.7 ; translation by P. R. Coleman-Norton, Roman State and Christian Church, pgs. 43-44.

[23] MacMullen, Christianizing the Roman Empire (New Haven & London: York University Press, 1987), pg. 52.

Furthermore, any ecclesiastical rites performed by *traditor* clergymen were automatically null and void, since they had been conducted by someone who was by definition outside of the Church. Thus, the Majorinists seceded from the Christian fold for reasons of self-preservation: their appeal to Constantine for the appointment of Gallic judges was the first step towards cleansing the ill-tainted Church. These were some of the issues which occupied the minds of the Majorinists -- not the fact that they had been rejected imperial gratuities. Perhaps the hope of receiving these gifts in the future might act as an incentive for the Majorinists to argue their case more persuasively; but deprivation from these benefits certainly did not cause them to appeal to Constantine.

If the question of the 3,000 *folles* truly was at stake, then the Majorinists should have appealed to Constantine himself for judgement, instead of asking him to appoint Gallic bishops to hear their case. Their immediate purpose would have been to convince Constantine that he had made a catastrophic error in judgement by identifying the Caecilianists as representatives of the true Church, and that he was, therefore, aiding and abetting clandestine bishops in building iniquitous altars. Yet, we have seen that the Majorinists's religious convictions were not hollow and materialistic, and that the basis for their appeal to Constantine was to ask the Emperor to appoint impartial judges to hear their case. This is an important point, since the Majorinists were not asking Constantine to intervene personally ; instead, they were making use of their right as Roman citizens to appeal their case to a higher tribunal. Accordingly, Gallic bishops were called for, since the problem of the *lapsi* was almost non-existent in that region;

thus making these clergymen the most impartial to hear the Majorinists's case.

Lastly, it is important to note that the Majorinists's appeal to Constantine was not without precedent. In the Book of Acts, the Apostle Paul is recorded to have appealed to the Emperor Nero from the prisons of Porcius Festus, the governor of Caesarea, in 59 A.D.. He came to Rome in order to receive a fairer trial than what he would have received at the hands of the Jewish Sanhedrin for alleged crimes committed in the Temple of Jerusalem, and for inflammatory words spoken against Caesar.[24] More significant, however, was the case of Paul of Samosata in 272, the bishop of Antioch, which was appealed to the Emperor Aurelian by a tribunal of eastern bishops. Again, secular authority was invited to intervene in a dispute of the Christian Church.[25] By virtue of their citizenship, Christians enjoyed the right to appeal to a Roman emperor to hear their individual case. The Majorinists appealed to the highest authority in the Empire to appoint judges who would be most impartial to their particular case.

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[24] Unfortunately, Paul's bid for a fairer trial only moved his prison domain from Caesarea to Rome, where he was held under house arrest for four years (60-64), until he was finally executed. See Acts 21:3-28:25; Baus, History of the Church, pg. 103-105, and Fox, Pagans and Christians, pgs 430 - 434.

[25] Aurelian's intervention actually came after Paul had been condemned in 268 by a synod of eastern bishops for his peculiarly uncouth brand of Dynamist Monarchianism, or Adoptionism, which held that "the Son" referred only to Jesus the man, and that the Logos, or "Word of God," was of the same nature as the Father. Paul fell into disfavor with his fellow Adoptionists because he disagreed with the doctrine of Theodotus the younger, which held that "the Spirit" descended upon the person Jesus after he was baptized by John (ca. 30) in the form of a dove, or what Theodotus called Melichizedech, the power which acted as mediator between God and man. Paul taught that only the wisdom of God abode within Jesus after his baptism, and that he was, therefore, only a man. He refused to recognize the Holy Spirit as a separate part of the Trinity, saying that it was an impersonal power of God which bestowed grace upon men. Thus, according to Paul, Christ was nothing more than a man filled with the knowledge and grace of God. The eastern bishops appealed to Aurelian in order to have the dissident bishop removed from his see when he refused to vacate it. See Eusebius, *Hist. Ecc.*, 5, 28, 3f. and 7, 27-30.

The legal move came on April 15, 313 when the Majorinists presented two letters to the proconsul Anulinus: the official "Appeal to Constantine," (recorded previously) and a second pamphlet labelled "Charge of the Catholic Church concerning the Crimes of Caecilian."[26] W.H.C. Frend noted that the presentation of these documents to Constantine by Anulinus marked a decisive event in history, since an appeal was being made to a Christian Emperor, possibly making the offense of schism punishable by law.[27] Frend's interpretation, however, is slightly off-balance. It first asks us to assume that Constantine considered himself to be the first Christian Emperor, and secondly that Constantine was prepared to render judgement on the legality of schism. We have already noted that the concept of Christian Emperor was proposed by neither Eusebius nor Lactantius in their earliest accounts of Constantine's conversion, and that the Majorinists asked Constantine to appoint a tribunal of Gallic judges -- not to render judgement himself. This is extremely important, since it raises the question of whether or not Constantine would have personally decided their case, had the Majorinists appealed directly to him. Instead, Constantine was presented with a rather simple request: to appoint an impartial tribunal to hear the complaints of a dissident group of bishops in North Africa. Surely these requests would not have been too difficult to fulfill.

Constantine took a distinctly pagan approach to solving the dispute in North Africa. Whereas both the Caecilianists and the Majorinists would be occupied with the issue of whether or not Felix was a *traditor*, Constantine

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[26] See Smith, Constantine the Great, pg. 142
[27] See Frend, The Donatist Church, pg. 147

was concerned with the question of which party was composed of Catholic Christians.[28] The reason for this concern is accurately defined by him in his letter to Anulinus exempting clergymen from public duties. The first half of the letter was basically an explanation to (pagan) Anulinus, reminding him of the benefits which the State could receive when correct and proper worship was displayed to the gods. Galerius too, in his rescript of toleration, noted that the gods (including the Christian God) are most propitious to the State when they received fitting reverence. Therefore, the reason that Constantine granted the Majorinists's request, and subsequently became personally more involved, is that the schism raised questions of practice and procedure which were matters of national security. In a letter to Miltiades, the bishop of Rome, written before September 313, Constantine asked him to preside over a council of three Gallic bishops and hear the Majorinists's appeal:

> Constantine Augustus to Miltiades, bishop of the Romans, and to Mark.
>
> Since to me by Anulinus, the most illustrious proconsul of Africa, have been sent many such documents in which it is entered that Caecilian, the bishop of the Carthaginians' city, is called to account on many matters by some of his colleagues established in Africa and since it seems to me a most serious matter that in these provinces, which Divine Providence has delivered voluntarily to my Majesty and where there is a great number of people, the multitude is found following the baser course, dividing - as it were - into factions, and the bishops have differences meanwhile, it has seemed good to me that Caecilian himself (with ten bishops who appear to accuse him, and ten others, whom he may consider necessary to his case) should sail to Rome, that there in the presence of yourselves, but moreover of Rheticius and Maternus and Marinus [Gallic bishops], your colleagues, whom for this purpose I have commanded to hasten to Rome, he can be heard as you may perceive to be consonant with the most reverend law.
>
> Nevertheless, that you also can have the fullest knowledge of these matters, I have subjoined to my letter copies of the documents received by Anulinus and I have sent these to your abovementioned colleagues. And your Constancy,

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[28] John Holland Smith's eighth chapter in, Constantine the Great , is devoted to this question.

> after reading these, shall consider in what way it is necessary to examine most carefully and decide justly the abovementioned case. For it does not escape your Diligence that I render such great reverence to the legitimate Catholic Church that I desire you to leave not at all schism or division in any place.
>
> May the Divinity of the Great God guard you for many years, most honoured one.[29]

In this epistle, Constantine reiterated his theme of unity and his concern for *orthopraxis*, or correct procedure. At the same time, we can see that he fulfilled the Majorinists's request of appointing Gallic bishops to hear the case. The legal debacle which followed this hearing cannot, therefore, be attributed to Constantine. It seems that by the time the provisions for this hearing were carried out by Miltiades, Majorinus had expired.[30] The dissident party appointed a new leader, this time selecting the fiery Donatus, bishop of Casae Nigrae.[31] The Donatist trial, presided over by Miltiades, was held in the house of Constantine's wife Fausta between October 2-4, 313.[32] It appears as though either Constantine's instructions to Miltiades were ignored or the bishop assumed he had the right to turn the hearing into a local synod, since he invited an additional fifteen Italian bishops to help decide the case.[33] The synod heard both sides and rendered judgement in favor of Caecilian; Donatus was found guilty of re-baptizing clergy, disturbing discipline, and causing a schism.[34] The party of Donatus (composed largely of Numidian clergymen) was ordered to return to their cities and desist in their claim that Donatus was the legitimate bishop of Carthage.

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[29] Eusebius, *Hist. Ecc.*, 10.5. 18-20; translation by P.R. Coleman-Norton, Roman State and Christian Church, pgs 46-51.

[30] Smith, Constantine the Great, pg. 143.

[31] It is from Donatus that the schism derived its name.

[32] Smith, Constantine the Great, pg. 145. According to Frend, the trial began on September 30, 313. See, The Donatist Church, pg. 148.

[33] *ibid.*

[34] Frend, The Donatist Church, pg. 149.

There was, however, one significant flaw in the proceedings which the Donatists were quick to point out: The tribunal was composed largely of Italian bishops, and due to differences in opinion concerning the baptism of heretics,[35] they believed that they had received an unfair hearing. At the same time, they accused Miltiades of being a *traditor* himself, and refused to recognize Caecilian as bishop since the tribunal did not hear the evidence possessed by them indicting Felix as an apostate.[36] The Donatists, therefore, took the unprecedented step of appealing to the Emperor again for a fair hearing: this time devoid of Italians. In a letter sent to Chrestus, the bishop of Syracuse, written no longer than one month after the death of Miltiades (January 11, 314),[37] Constantine expressed his anger at being approached a second time by the Donatists:

> Constantine Augustus to Chrestus, bishop of the Syracusans.
> Already formerly, when basely and perversely some began to separate concerning the worship of the Holy and Heavenly Power and the Catholic religion, I having desired to curtail such dissensions among them, had ordered that - after certain bishops had been sent from Gaul, but moreover, after there had been summoned from Africa those contending obstinately and persistently together from the opposing parties, also in the presence of the bishop of Rome - this matter, which seemed to have been raised, might receive a successful settlement through their presence together with every attentive examination.
> But since, as it happens, certain persons being unmindful both of their own salvation and of the reverence owed to their most sacred religion, still even now cease not to continue their private enmities, being unwilling to comply with the decision already delivered... that those very persons, who ought to maintain fraternal and concordant unanimity, shamefully, nay rather, abominably are at variance from one another...wherefore it became necessary for me to provide that that which ought to have ended by voluntary agreement, after

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35 See Chapter 4, Retreat to Gethsemane.

36 Frend, The Donatist Church, pg. 149. The 'evidence' which the Donatists claimed to have possessed was never produced at the hearing, despite the fact that they were given three days to present it.

37 *Ibid*, pg. 150

> the decision had been delivered, even now at last might find a conclusion in the presence of many persons.
>
> Therefore, since we have ordered very many bishops from diverse and countless districts to assemble at the city of Arlesians [Arles] by 1 August...so that, both by your Constancy and by unanimous and united decision of the rest assembled, this matter also, which hitherto has endured basely because of certain shameful quarrellings, after has been heard all which will be said by those - whom likewise we have ordered to be present - now at variance one from another, may be able to be restored, if only tardily, to the proper religion and faith and fraternal harmony.
>
> May the Omnipotent God guard you in good health for many years.[38]

From this letter, Constantine's desire for peace and unanimity within the Church is unmistakable: universal accord among Christians would eventually lead to the *Blessed Tranquility*.[39] Yet we can see from Constantine's letter to Aelafius (footnote #38), the Christian vicar of Africa,[40] that there were other concerns on the Emperor's mind; no small one being the fear that the Christian God might hold him personally responsible if

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38 Eusebius, *Hist. Ecc.*, 10.5. 21-4; translation by P.R. Coleman-Norton, Roman State and Christian Church, pgs 46-51. St. Optatus, bishop of Milevis and historian of the Donatist schism, records a second letter written by Constantine to Aelafius, vicar of the diocese of Africa, in his *dossier du Donatisme, Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum* 26.208-10, in which Constantine asked the vicar to provide public transportation for those clergymen traveling to Arles. In the epistle, Constantine wrote in greater depth of not only wanting to restore order to the Church, but even more significantly he mentioned his fear that if unity was not achieved, the God of the Christians might hold him personally responsible: "...As for the rest: after a full investigation has been undertaken, let there be an end. For when they shall have appeared, let all those things, which now are known to be in dispute and which deservedly ought to have a timely termination, be concluded and settled as quickly as they can. For I confess to your Gravity, since I am certain that you also are a worshipper of the Most High God, that I think it not at all right that contention and altercations of this kind should be concealed from us, as a result of which perhaps the Most High Divinity can be moved not only against the human race but also against me myself, to whose care by his own celestial command he has committed all earthly matters to be managed, and in his wrath may determine otherwise than hitherto. For then I shall be able to be truly and most fully free from anxiety and can hope ever for all most prosperous and excellent things from the most instant kindliness of the Most Powerful God, when I shall have perceived that all with harmonious maintenance of brotherliness reverence the Most Holy God in the duteous worship of the Catholic religion. Amen." Coleman-Norton, Roman State and Christian Church, pgs. 55-56.

39 See Smith, Constantine the Great, pg. 147

40 Frend, The Donatist Church, pg. 150. Coleman-Norton noted that Aelafius's name does not appear in the received list of vicars. It is probable that his name was mistakenly substituted for Aelius Paulinus, the recorded vicar in 313. See Roman State and Christian Church, pg. 56.

concord was not produced within His congregation. In this letter, Constantine made note that God had surrendered "all earthly matters to be managed" by him; thus, making it incumbent on him to encourage felicity among Christian brethren. The question that rises from this statement, therefore, is whether Constantine would accomplish this goal as *Pontifex Maximus* or Christian Emperor?

Yet perhaps this last question limits our conception of Constantine's choices too much: was he necessarily impelled to intercede in the Donatist affair for purely religious reasons? We have already noted those benefits which the State could receive when correct and proper worship of the gods was maintained; but what other potential gains could Constantine hoped to have gained by granting the Donatists a second hearing? Perhaps the most obvious one would have been the restoration of civil order in North Africa. The purpose of the Edict of Milan was to restore peace between pagan and Christian classes by granting restitution of confiscated Church properties, while subsidizing the pagan owners with State funds. In the Donatist case, Constantine convened a synod of bishops at Arles, whose task was to create a policy which would promote harmony within the Church itself. Thus, the question of whether Constantine held the council to advance the Empire's chances for salvation becomes superfluous, since only through unity could this end be reached.

After the Donatists were denounced at the synod at Rome, Constantine continued to write to various clergymen inviting them to attend the synod at Arles on August 1, 314. A total of thirty-three bishops accepted Constantine's invitation (including three from Britain), thus making it the first

interprovincial council ever summoned by an emperor in the West. It is necessary to point-out the fact that despite the rigorist tendencies of the party of Donatus, not every action taken by them could be considered scrupulous. An example of this can be found in March, 305 at the council of Cirta, convened by Secundus of Tigisis, where twelve members of the Numidian clergy held an election to replace Paul, the incumbent bishop, who had expired while in office.[41] Interestingly, the majority of the clergy assembled at Cirta would become players in the schism of Donatus seven years later, thus it warrants our attention to examine the circumstances of the election of Silvanus, the candidate chosen to succeed Paul.

Cirta, of course, had been one of the chief cities to experience the effects of Diocletian's persecution, causing its population to become a combination of martyrs, confessors, and *lapsi*. One of the great ironies which was produced from this mosaic of Christian heroes and poltroons, was that the majority of the Numidians who so vociferously slandered Felix as a *traditor*, had themselves lapsed during the persecution. When Secundus opened the council and asked the assembled clergy to confess their sins, many disclosed that they had sought refuge in the Chettaba, a mountainous region south of the city.[42] Even worse, some members of the clergy acknowledged the fact that upon request, they had surrendered vessels of the Church to government officials, thus making them *traditores*.[43] Silvanus himself confessed his crimes before the assembly; nevertheless, he was still elected bishop of Cirta.[44]

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41 Frend, The Donatist Church, pg. 12.
42 Frend, Martyrdom in the Early Church (New York: University Press, 1967), pg. 373.
43 *ibid.*
44 St. Augustine, bishop of Hippo, concluded that the Donatists were attempting to absolve themselves from the guilt of their crimes committed in 305, by blaming their sins on the Caecilianists. In a letter to the Donatists (LXXXVI) written in 402, Augustine stated: "Hear,

It was fundamental contradictions such as this in the case of Donatus which helped ensure his loss at Arles. Despite his valiant attempt to legitimatize his grounds for schism, Donatus could not prove that Caecilian's ordination was invalid. He was found guilty for a second time of causing schism, and illegally rebaptizing those persons who wished to enter his party's ranks.[45] The problem of the *lapsi* was, however, summarily dealt with in a series of canons which declared that *traditor* clergymen could no longer remain in office. However, an important stipulation was added that any rites performed by lapsed clergymen while they were in office were valid, since "whether in pretense or in truth Christ is preached."[46] This was a vital blow to the Donatist cause, since the grounds for their dispute with the opposition was that Caecilian's election was invalid since he had been consecrated by unclean hands. This rigorous position, however, if followed, would have posed many difficulties for the Catholic Church. For the belief that any rites performed by *traditor* clergymen were laced with sin could not

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O Donatists, what the Catholic Church says to you...Your imagination that you are separating yourselves, before the time of the harvest, from the tares which are mixed with the wheat, proves that you are only tares...and what is worse, you have prematurely separated yourselves from the wheat. For some of your predecessors, in whose impious schism you obstinately remain, delivered up to persecutors the sacred...vessels of the Church (as may be seen in municipal records); others of them passed over the fault which these men confessed, and remained in communion with them." Similarly in his third book to the Donatist bishop of Cirta, Petilian, written in 410, Augustine reminded him that Silvanus of Cirta "was expressly declared in the Municipal Chronicles to have been a *traditor* while he was yet a sub-deacon. Against this fact he did not venture to whisper a syllable...For what reason, except that he could not find any mist dark enough to deceive even the slowest and sleepiest of men...For when documents are brought forward relating to the *traditors*, both by us against the men of your party, and by you against the men of our party ... [he goes on to say that the Donatists allegations were never proven, whereas those at Cirta were] surely you must acknowledge that either both are true, or both false, or ours true and yours false, or yours true and ours false; for there is no further alternative that can be suggested." See Reverend Marcus Dods, The Works of Aurelius Augustine (Edinburgh, 1872), Vol. III, pgs. 474-477; and Vol. VI, pgs. 300-303.

[45] Smith, Constantine the Great, pg. 147.

[46] Philippians i.18.

apply to episcopal elections alone: the ceremonies of baptism, marriage, and funeral rites need also have applied.

Perhaps this is one reason that Constantine chose to side with the Caecilianists: their position was the most reasonable for encouraging felicity among the Christian flock. In addition, there were other classes of *lapsi* which evolved from the persecution; the *traditores* were only one type of trespasser, thus raising the question of whether all solemnities performed by fallen clergymen were also exempt. The Church would have found itself in a state of crisis, since the Sacraments received by innocent Christians would have been blemished, thus jeopardizing their chances for salvation. From this, we can see that Constantine was not alone in his concern for the fate of his soul; the Donatist position posed a threat to any Christian who had any dealings with lapsed clergymen. Thus the bishops at Arles wrote Canon 13, mandating that "ordination by *traditor* clergymen was valid and that a standard of proof was laid down as necessary before any cleric could be convicted as a *traditor*."[47] The council also passed Canon 9, which made the African custom of re-baptizing Christians illegal in the eyes of the orthodox Church.[48] Apparently, the Donatists had relied on the decisions reached at the council of Carthage in 256, convened by St. Cyprian, to justify their claim that the *lapsi* needed to be re-baptized in order to readmitted to the Church.[49]

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47 See C.H. Turner, *Ecclesiae Occidentalis Monumenta iuris antiqua* (Oxford, 1939), Vol. I, fasc. II, part II, Niceno-Gallicum, pgs. 387-8.

48 Frend, The Donatist Church, pg. 152

49 This was really a perversion of the decision reached by Cyprian in 256. The policy of rebaptism was enforced only for heretics, or those who did not already possess the Holy Spirit. Thus, these heretics must receive baptism in order to gain the Holy Spirit. It was, therefore, not rebaptism, but one single baptism, since the baptism given by a heretic was not baptism at all. (See Augustine, *Contra Litteras Petilani*, i. 5. 6.) The difference, however, between Cyprian's basis for (re) baptism and that of the Donatists was that Cyprian baptized heretics into the orthodox Church, whereas the Donatists baptized non-Donatists into their

These testimonies were considered outdated, however, and were thus dispensed.

The importance of these canons are much different for our needs here. Constantine, had seemingly been granted his wish, since the Council of Arles had concluded with one aspect of the definition of a Catholic Christian: it was a person who was ordained with the Holy Spirit through baptism -- this ceremony being inviolable when performed in the name of the Christian God. Thus, *traditor* clergymen were still Catholic Christians, although they could no longer administer the duties of their particular office. More importantly though, was the conclusion that the election of Caecilian was valid, since consecrations by *traditor* clergymen were legal according to canon law. It would seem, therefore, that the Donatist schism had reached an end, since all of the party's arguments had been laid to rest. It is significant to note, however, that immediately after the Donatists had been denounced at Arles, they appealed to Constantine to render a decision himself, to which he seethingly replied:

> ...What great madness persists in these very persons, when with incredible arrogance they persuade themselves of things which it is right neither to be said nor to be heard, departing from right judgement given [the decision at Arles], on which by Heavenly Providence I have learned that they

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own Church. The Donatists regarded themselves as the orthodox Church: thus Cyprian's grounds for rebaptism also pertained to them, since it was the schismatics's duty to give the Holy Spirit to the 'lapsed' Caecilianists who wished to join their true Church. This would have been entirely contrary to Cyprian's thinking since "...every bishop, according to his allowance of liberty and power, has his own proper right of judgement, and can be no more judged by another than he himself can judge another...let us all wait for the judgement of our Lord Jesus Christ, who is the only one that has the power both of preferring us in the government of his Church, and of judging us in our conduct there." (Opening address to the Council of Carthage, September 1, 256. From Augustine, *De Baptismo Contra Donatistas* , bks. vi and vii.) Thus, schism would have been the greater crime in the eyes of Cyprian, since Donatus had severed the Christian flock and made judgement upon a fellow bishop. See Chapter 4, Retreat to Gethsemane.

> demand my decision! What power of wickedness perseveres in these same persons' hearts! How often have they been overwhelmed already by me personally in a reply quite deserving of their own most shameful approaches! And, to be sure, if they had cared to keep this before their eyes, not at all would they have introduced this very appeal. They demand my judgement, but I myself await Christ's judgement. For I declare, as is the truth, that the bishop's judgement ought to be regarded just as if the Lord himself were sitting as judge...[50]

Nevertheless, despite his outrage, Constantine was willing to appease the Donatists for a third time. The Emperor wrote to the African vicar, Aelius Paulinus, asking him to investigate the background of Felix in order to find out if there was any further evidence which might incriminate him as a *traditor*. His order did not go unfulfilled. The vicar passed the case over to the proconsul Anulinus, who subsequently ferreted out the person of Alfius Caecilianus, the ex-*duumvir* (magistrate) who had seized holy vessels from the Church of Aptunga during the Great Persecution.[51] Would this person prove to be the missing key witness who could verify Felix's misdeeds during Diocletian's persecution?

It seems that somewhere during the proceedings at Arles, Constantine had not been informed of some of the finer points; one of them being that it did not matter if Felix was a *traditor* or not. Despite this fact, the investigation into Felix's background continued, thus bringing Alfius Caecilianus before the proconsul's bench. These proceedings occurred on August 19, 314;[52] in close proximity to the synod at Arles, making it highly unlikely that Constantine knew what conclusions had been reached. The ex-*duumvir's* testimony did not, however, implicate Felix as a *traditor*, since

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[50] Optatus, from *dossier du Donatisme, Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum* 26. 208-10. Translation by P.R. Coleman-Norton, Roman State and Christian Church, pg. 60.
[51] See Frend, The Donatist Church, pg. 150
[52] Smith, Constantine the Great, pg. 147

he had been away from his see at the time when the imperial officials arrived to collect holy vessels.[53] Anulinus was apparently convinced of Felix's innocence, and so he closed the proceedings. The Donatist sympathizers who had attended this hearing were unimpressed, however, and so they continued to search for some piece of evidence which would assure the proconsul of Felix's guilt.

It is at this point that the Donatists participated in yet another clandestine operation. A Donatist sympathizer named Maximus approached the new proconsul, Aelianus, probably in early February, 315 with a letter containing information that would prove Felix's misconduct during the persecution.[54] This letter was written after the hearing on August 19 to Felix by the ex-*duumvir* , in which he reminded the bishop of exactly what had taken place in 303 when he burned the doors of his Church and confiscated holy vessels. The letter was given to a scribe from Zigga Ziqua named Ingentius, who was supposed to take it to Felix. Instead, the scribe (who was a supporter of Donatus and held a grudge against Felix) added a post script to the letter stating that Felix had left orders to the officials to "Take away the key and the scrolls on the throne, and the books on the stone..."[55] This not only made Felix a *traditor* , but as John Holland Smith points out "one of the worst kind, one who had helped the magistrates, without apparently even having first been threatened with torture."[56]

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[53] *Ibid.*
[54] *Ibid*, pg. 148.
[55] See Augustine, Epistles 88,4; *contra Cresonium*, 3, 70 and 81; Translation by John Holland Smith, pg. 148.
[56] Smith, Constantine the Great, pg. 148.

The proconsul held another hearing on February 15, 315 in Carthage, where the scribe Ingentius was cross-examined. During the proceedings, Ingentius confessed that he had fabricated the letter out of revenge because his friend, the bishop of Utica, had been declared a *traditor* by Felix.[57] Nevertheless, Aelianus wrote to Constantine, informing him of the fraudulent letter, of complaints by Apronianus (who acted as a defense attorney for the Caecilianists)[58] that his party was being harassed, and finally that Ingentius was being held in custody as a material witness. Upon the reception of this letter, Constantine ordered Probanius, the new proconsul, to send Ingentius to his court along with any further evidence, so that Donatus, who was detained in Rome, might hear for himself that his case was lost:

> ...Wherefore we wish that you should send the said Ingentius himself under the proper escort to my court of Constantine Augustus, that, in the hearing and the presence of those who at present make accusations and cease not to appeal day after day, it can be made clear and be made known that in vain they have desired to prepare hatred against Caecilian and to bestir themselves violently against him. For thus it will come to pass that when altercations of this character have been abandoned, as is proper, the people without any dissension may serve their own religion with due reverence.[59]

This informal hearing before the Emperor is purported to have occurred on July 21, 315 in Rome. For our purposes, the importance of this meeting is that Constantine could not simply ignore the Donatists's appeal for a personal hearing. The Donatists possessed the legal right to appeal to the Emperor as many times as they wished, until his final judgement was made. Perhaps the value of Roman citizenship is best defined in the Book of Acts,

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[57] Frend, The Donatist Church, pg. 154.
[58] *Ibid.*
[59] Letter to Probanius recorded by Optatus, from *dossier du Donatisme, Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum* 34. 410-11; 52. 485-7. Translation by P.R. Coleman-Norton, Roman State and Christian Church, pg. 64.

when Paul prevented a centurion from whipping him with the words "Is it legal for you to flog a Roman citizen who hasn't even been found guilty?" To which the centurion replied, "Tell me are you a Roman citizen?" Paul replied in the affirmative, thus alarming the centurion that he had put a Roman citizen in chains.[60] Similarly, Constantine noted that the Donatists's series of appeals is not without grounds:

> ...Just as happens usually in lawsuits of pagans, they have introduced an appeal. Indeed pagans, sometimes fleeing lower courts, where justice quickly can be had, are wont rather to resort to the higher courts by interposition of authority and thus to an appeal. What about these recusants from the law, who, refusing the heavenly judgement, have thought that mine should be demanded?[61]

His difficulty, however, in granting further hearings for the Donatists was that it necessarily questioned all of the decisions reached at earlier councils. We can only suppose that at the outset of difficulties, Hosius informed Constantine that a decision by a council of bishops was binding, since the Emperor was sincerely convinced that the decisions at Rome (313) and Arles (314) were endorsed by God.[62] Thus, in this respect, the Donatists had already appealed to the highest source, Christ Jesus, and received His decision. What worth could possibly be found in Constantine's opinion, an Emperor, but merely the servant of God? This is the opinion expressed by Constantine, and it is necessary to note that if he truly believed all of this rhetoric, then he need only have replied, "Judgement has been rendered by the Supreme God

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60 Acts 22:25-29.

61 Optatus, from *dossier du Donatisme, Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum* 26. 208-10. Translation by P.R. Coleman-Norton, Roman State and Christian Church, pg. 60.

62 This view was probably derived from the concept of the Trinity, which was the belief that when three or more bishops were assembled, there also would the Holy Spirit be present. "Again, I tell you that if two of you on earth agree about anything you ask for, it will be done for you by my Father in heaven. For where two or three come together in my name, there am I with them." Matthew 18:19-20.

God himself, there is no higher appellate for you to seek." However, Constantine did not refuse the Donatists's appeal for his personal decision, thus opening up the idea that the Emperor had other motives for hearing their case.

We have already noted that Canon thirteen declared that consecrations by *traditor* clergymen were valid in the eyes of the Church; thus eliminating the need of corroborating the Donatists's allegations that Felix was an apostate. We also speculated that Constantine may not have been aware of this ecclesiastical law, thus making it incumbent upon him to further the investigation of Felix's misconduct during the persecution. Lastly, we noted that the Donatists's appeal to Constantine was not caused by their exclusion from imperial gratuities, but rather from the conviction that their salvation was jeopardized by allowing *traditor* clergymen and their spawn to remain within the confines of the Church. All of these issues seemed to have been summarily dealt with at Arles, although disturbances from the Donatists continued. Much of the blame for this has been aimed at the Donatists, being called "restless, energetic, passionate, ardent, self-sacrificing, narrow, schismatic, and intolerant."[63] On the other hand, a safer course might be trod if we alleviate the Donatists of some of the burden of fault, and instead bestow it on the shoulders of Constantine.

This is not to say that we are analyzing a case of 'The Emperor who did Wrong'; we are, instead, recognizing the fact Constantine's fatal error in his dealings with the Donatists was that he did not fully understand the volatility

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63 Ernest Leigh Bennett, Handbook of the Early Christian Fathers (London: Williams & Norgate, 1920), pg. 56.

to question decisions made by one another.[64] The lack of established doctrine within the Church proved to be a nemesis in the Donatist situation, since it offered Constantine no hard standards upon which to judge who was a Catholic Christian. We have already noted that the Donatists appealed to Constantine to appoint Gallic bishops to hear their case, and that he subsequently granted their request. However, it is equally valid to argue that Constantine knew very little about Christianity, and that when faced with an ecclesiastical problem such as the Donatists, he simply referred the question to a committee. In this sense, Constantine appointed experts to produce a policy which would facilitate an accord within the Church. It was only after these conclusions were ignored by the Donatists that the Emperor intervened personally into the affair. The authority to do this was inherent in the office of *Pontifex Maximus*, which made Constantine a vicegerent to the Christian God. Therefore, Constantine took on the role of mediator, as he sought to hear the arguments from both sides and produce a verdict which would be legally binding.

The final judgement which was to have occurred on July 21, 315 was postponed, however, since Caecilian never presented himself before Constantine in order to refute the Donatists's charges of his misdeeds during the persecution. The Donatists immediately testified that Caecilian's absence only proved their case all the more, since his cowardice stemmed from a guilty conscience. The Emperor, however, did not believe this, instead he chose to detain Donatus in Rome until Caecilian presented his side of the evidence. Caecilian, however, for reasons which remain unknown, never

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[64] Drake, marginal notes, 1/17/89

evidence. Caecilian, however, for reasons which remain unknown, never came to Constantine's court to vindicate himself, so the Emperor held the case over until October, 315.[65] During the respite between hearings, it is said that Constantine approached Donatus, telling him that if he could prove a single allegation against Caecilian, then he would judge the entire matter in his favor.[66] Here we can see Constantine playing the role of mediator in a very subtle way, since he would decide the case on its merits, free from the hindrances of *traditor* clergymen, biased Italian bishops, and hostilities between the Numidian and Carthagian episcopates. By doing this, Constantine would not have been belittling the decisions made in the presence of the Holy Spirit; he would, instead, have decided the case through his authority as the high priest of the Roman State religion. Either way God's word would be decreed: if not through the power of the Holy Spirit in committee, then certainly by the judgement of the Emperor who carried the spirit of the Divinity with him.

While the hearing was delayed until October, Donatus was sent to Milan and Caecilian was held in Brescia.[67] Meanwhile, Constantine left Rome in September and arrived in Milan by the middle of October, 315.[68] The Emperor was forced, however, to leave Milan and to travel to Trier,

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[65] Frend, The Donatist Church, pg. 156.

[66] This statement is collaborated in W.H.C. Frend's text, The Donatist Church, (pg. 155) and J.H. Smith's text, Constantine the Great, (pg. 151). Neither historian footnoted this assertion, although it seems likely that it came from a letter written to a Donatist bishop in North Africa (315), informing him that he would personally decide their case at Milan.

[67] Frend, The Donatist Church, pg. 157. Smith stated that both Caecilian and Donatus were placed under house arrest in Brescia (pg. 151). This does not correlate with the tradtion that Philumenus, an adviser to Constantine, suggested that Caecilian be detained in Brescia until the hearing in Milan in order to reduce tension between the two contestants. See P. Battifol, *Bulletin de la societe nationale de France*, (1914), pgs. 209-211 and 226-227.

[68] *Ibid.*

where the Franks were causing disturbances; thus leaving both bishops in limbo until his return. The situation becomes somewhat fuzzy here, since Frend stated that Philumenus, an adviser to Constantine, attempted to have a new (third) bishop elected to the see of Carthage without the consent of Constantine. It seems unlikely to me, however, that a mere official in Constantine's court would have the authority to instigate such important events without the approval of the Emperor. What seems more likely is that Philumenus was left almost entirely out of the picture, and that Constantine, before he departed for Milan, ordered his prelates, Olympius and Eunomius, to sail to Carthage and restore order to the North African Church.[69]

In Carthage, riots had broken-out anew due to the meddlings of an anti-Caecilianist bishop named Menalius; who had supposedly been present at Silvanus's consecration at Cirta in 305.[70] This Donatist bishop went about the countryside spreading the word of Caecilian's misdeeds during the persecution, and about his invalid ordination. The Carthaginian populace began to pick and chose parties of alliance, thus casting the entire drama in a new light -- civil war might break-out at any time. Olympius and Eunomius arrived in Carthage at the end of October, 315 and saw that the people were ripe for revolt. Whether it was the prelate's idea to hold a third episcopal election or it was Constantine's is not clear; what remains important for our purposes is that the election met intense opposition from both parties, and that after only forty days, the prelates were forced to pull-out.[71] Once news

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[69] This is J.H. Smith's opinion in Constantine the Great, pg. 151.
[70] Frend, The Donatist Church, pg. 156.
[71] *Ibid.* According to Optatus, the prelates had suggested to Constantine that he support the decision at Arles, "The sentence formerly handed-down by twenty-nine bishops [Frend stated thirty-three] cannot be overturned. " *de Schismate Donatistarum* , i. 26.

reached Constantine at Trier in January, 316 informing him of the prelates's failure to hold another election and that the malicious Menalius was still at-large, the Emperor's deep disappointment led him to write one of the most important letters relating to the schism:

> Constantine Augustus to Celcus, vicar of Africa.
>
> ...But after you have read this epistle, you should make clear both to Caecilian and to these same persons that when I shall have come to Africa with the favour of divine righteousness, I shall make it quite clear to all, not only to Caecilian but also to these who appear to act against him, by reading a perfectly plain verdict, what and what kind of worship should be given to the Supreme Divinity and in what manner of service He seems to delight; that also by exercising a careful examination, I shall discover quite fully and cause to come to light those matters which now some persons think they can conceal as a result of the snares of their mental ignorance; that these same persons, who excite matters of this sort and cause that the Supreme God is not worshipped with the veneration which He ought to have, I shall destroy and shall shatter. And since it is sufficiently clear that none can acquire a martyr's blessedness by this sort of martyrdom, which is seen to be foreign from the truth of religion and unsuitable, those persons, whom I shall have recognized as against the right and religion itself and whom I shall have detected as guilty of violence toward the legal worship, without any delay I shall cause to suffer the destruction rightly due to their madness and audacious obstinancy. And so I shall cause them to know for certain that they are bound to hold, after they have invoked even salvation as witness to the fullest belief, because most scrupulously I shall investigate not only concerning the laity, but also concerning these clergymen, who are the leaders, and I shall give that judgement which is clear to be most true and most religious, and I shall indicate also to these same persons what and what sort of worship must be paid to the Divinity. For I believe that by no means I can escape the greatest guilt otherwise than that I should think that I not at all must leave unnoticed that which is wicked. What ought to be done by me more in accord with my patience and the duty of a prince himself than that, after errors have been dissipated and all reckless opinions have been removed, I should cause all persons to exhibit true religion and harmonious simplicity and the worship due to Almighty God?[72]

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[72] Optatus, from *dossier du Donatisme, Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum* 26. 211-12. Translation by P.R. Coleman-Norton, Roman State and Christian Church, pg. 63-69.

This remarkable letter shows Constantine's commitment toward his imperial policy of restoring unity in the Empire; peace would be guaranteed by force of arms! It seems as though the prelates's report of the civil disturbances which the Donatist affair had caused had provoked Constantine enough to actually want to go to North Africa and survey the situation for himself. The policy passed at the Council of Arles was impractical, the Donatist schism had become more inflamed than ever. Perhaps this is the key reason that Constantine did not heed the words of Philumenus (footnote #71) and follow the decision made at Arles: The synod of bishops had written a policy that was ineffective for ending the dispute between the Donatists and the Caecilianists, and Constantine needed a keen religious policy in to separate the righteous from the sinful, or in more biblical terms, the tares from the wheat.

Although Constantine was extremely interested in having proper worship shown to his patron Deity, it is important to note that it was only after civil order became dramatically disturbed in North Africa that the Emperor began to take a serious interest in the affair. This lends credence to our theme that Constantine's overall policy towards the Church was evolving, since in 313 Constantine was content to turn the matter over to a tribunal of bishops to settle the affair. It is apparent that Constantine had a great deal of faith in the decision-making powers of that body, known as an ecumenical council, since he used the same tool to help end the Arian crisis in 325. In other words, Constantine never doubted the quality of the bishop's decision at Arles, it was simply due to the fact that the matter had not been settled that Constantine was forced to intervene. In one sense, Constantine's

since the Emperor refused to take a passive approach towards the problem. Instead, the mediator had suddenly assumed the larger role of the protagonist, since it was now clear that the schism severely hampered Constantine's attempts to maintain the *Pax Deorum*, the supernatural quality which ensured peace and prosperity for the Empire.

Yet we can also see from this epistle that the first Christian Emperor did not enter the heated controversy without a good deal of his own philosophical knowledge. Once again we employ the personage of the Spanish bishop Hosius to explain the finer details of Constantine's reference that neither party could seek a glorious exit from the affair through the trial of martyrdom. We may assume that Constantine had seen the difficulty in trying to extirpate such religious zealots during Diocletian's persecution, and after the series of appeals by the Donatists, he may have expected them to resort to martyrdom should he decide against them. The martyr's crown could not be attained by death in a *legal* persecution -- correct worship was now enforceable by the point of a sword! This type of language was probably more understandable to the Emperor, who may have felt more at ease knowing that the matter could be solved by traditional methods. Just as the Supreme Being had recruited Constantine to destroy the enemies of Christianity at the Milvian bridge, so too would it now use him to obliterate its enemies within the Church. Constantine would judge the case on its merits as *Pontifex Maximus* , and enforce his decision on pain of death, legitimated, of course, by the Holy Spirit.

This is the conceptual plan of Caesaropapism; the veritable blueprint of its foundation. There is a remarkable difference here between Constantine's

This is the conceptual plan of Caesaropapism; the veritable blueprint of its foundation. There is a remarkable difference here between Constantine's attitude towards the authority of bishops, and that of Theodosius's at Thessalonica in 390. Whereas Constantine was quite willing to supercede the decision of an episcopal council in order to restore civil order to North Africa and have correct worship given to the Supreme Being, Theodosius would later prostrate himself before St. Ambrose while seeking forgiveness for his sins. Constantine had reached the summit of his power in the West, since he had the confidence to override the opinions of the episcopate and look only to the Supreme Being to legitimatize his actions. His goals were nothing less than the restoration of public order and the proper participation of the clerics and the laity in worshipping the Godhead of the cult of Christianity. It is necessary to point out, however, that Constantine's boldness in challenging the decisions reached at Rome and at Arles is debatable, since he reached a similar conclusion at Milan on November 10, 316.

> And in this, I perceived that Caecilian was a man endowed with entire innocence and observing the due duties of his religion and serving it in such a way as he ought. And it had been clear also that no fault, such as had been invented against him in his absence by the insincerity of his adversaries, could be found in him.[73]

Although the Emperor never actually sailed to the North African shore to render his judgement, he did keep his promise to attempt to "destroy and shatter" those Christians not following the dictates of the law. Perhaps Constantine's threats of persecution were actually a profound anticipation of the irascibility of the Donatists, since even with Constantine's oath of

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[73] Optatus, from *dossier du Donatisme, Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum* 52. 487. Translation by P.R. Coleman-Norton, Roman State and Christian Church, pg. 73

Africa. Constantine no longer had a supine attitude in regard to the schismatics; judgement had been rendered and it was time to enforce that decision. Thus sporadic attempts were made to oust the dissident bishops from the orthodox sees they possessed, but Donatus refused to budge. Caecilian himself feigned combat with the spirited Donatists by asking for armed forces, although it seems that they served no greater duty than simple body guards.[74]

By May 5, 321 the situation must have looked bleak to Constantine. Despite the reassurances that he received (or conceived) of a righteous persecution, his attempts to extirpate the schismatics proved futile. Constantine certainly was no zealot, despite his conviction that the Donatists's actions were reprehensible. The threat of war with Licinius was blown-in on a steady gale from the East, perhaps alerting Constantine that he could no longer afford to lock horns with the Donatists. In a very sober epistle, Constantine acknowledged another victory of Christian obstinacy, and so he graced Donatus and his followers with the privilege of religious toleration. The mighty power of temporal rule had been exhausted by the Donatist brand of guerilla warfare; a reality which is not unknown in our own time. This guise of weariness was described by the Emperor in these melancholy words:

> ...For we ought to hope for a remedy from that source whither all good desires and deeds are referred. But, until the heavenly medicine manifests itself, our plans must be regulated to this extent, that we cultivate patience and, whatever by their insolence they try or do in pursuance of their practice of insubordination, we should tolerate all this with the strength derived with tranquillity. Let not wrong be repaid for wrong: for it is the part of a fool to take into his hands vengeance,

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74 Frend, The Donatist Church, pg. 159.

> their insolence they try or do in pursuance of their practice of insubordination, we should tolerate all this with the strength derived with tranquillity. Let not wrong be repaid for wrong: for it is the part of a fool to take into his hands vengeance, which he ought to reserve to God, particularly since our faith ought to trust that whatever shall be suffered from the madness of men of this ilk will avail before God for the grace of martyrdom. For what else in this world is it to conquer in God's name than to endure with steadfast heart the rude onslaughts of persons who harass the people of law and peace?[75]

The tables had been turned, Constantine's failure of policy was actually an ascent to martyrdom. This bald assertion though does not hide the true reason for the collapse of his policy: a lack of understanding of the Christian issues involved. In his next bout with the Church, the famed Arian crisis, Constantine finally obtained his declaration of what a Catholic Christian was in the Nicene Creed (325). Yet a discussion of the heteroousian affair at this time would be premature, since we have not properly discussed the complexities within the Church which gave rise to the Donatist schism. In the next chapter, our concern shall not be schism, but instead, the diverging viewpoints of what path the Church should follow in order to fulfill its mission here in the temporal world. This analysis shall provide us with valuable insight regarding the positions taken by the Donatists and the Caecilianists; and felicitate our understanding of how the two parties imaged one another. These opposing sides had latent hostilities growing between them since the Apostolic Age, as they argued passionately over the issues of martyrdom, penance for the lapsed, and the doctrine of rebaptism. This division within the Church was a matter of religious ideology, a deep gulf separating those who advocated stalwart attitudes of piety and godliness on the one hand, and those who advocated a pragmatic policy of forgiveness on

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[75] Optatus, from *dossier du Donatisme, Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum* 26. 212-13. Translation by P.R. Coleman-Norton, Roman State and Christian Church, pg. 88.

the other. In time these views would be championed by different groups, as each sought to argue articulately their particular cause; but for our purposes here, we shall take a more holistic approach and identify each side with the biblical images of the Beacon and the Ark.

Retreat to Gethsemane

The traditional Roman Empire was usually tolerant of different religions. Although the Romans saluted such Hellenistic gods as Zeus and Apollo, they nevertheless allowed Judaism to exist within the Empire. One of the demands which was placed upon those cults which varied from the recognized State religion was that they observe Roman religious customs and swear allegiance to the emperor. Christians, however, could not do this; thus opening-up their cult to suspicion.

When the Empire fell upon hard times, some emperors would lay the blame upon Christianity. During the Apostolic Age, persecutions were generally localized events which lasted for only a short time. However, in 202, the Emperor Septimius Severus initiated the first national persecution. This was followed by the persecution of Decius in 250, and then Valerian's persecution in 257. These persecutions are significant for our purposes because in the aftermath the Church realized that it had a problem: The Christian flock had become a mosaic of martyrs, confessors, and the lapsed. The question that arose throughout the different provinces of the Empire was what type of penance these lapsed Christians should serve. The answers varied, however, since some Christians believed that the mission of the Church was to preach Christ's gospel of the forgiveness of sins. Therefore, they believed that a lapsed Christian should be reprimanded for his failures, but ultimately be forgiven, since it was Christ's duty to decide who would and who would not be saved. This was the philosophy of the Ark: the belief that it was the Church's task to assemble as many believers as possible on board the vessel of Christ, in order to bring them to the judgement seat of God.

There was, however, another side of Christian worship. For where the New Testament was extremely clear in its statement to "Go forth and make followers of them all"; it was also very emphatic in its message of "Do not touch the unclean thing." Some Christians believed that Jesus's message was really a noble calling; a challenge for them to remain pure and continent in this life. This message was an extremely difficult one, since it allowed almost no latitude for a person to sin. On the day of judgement, only a select few would actually see the radiance shining from the "City on the Hill"; the Beacon of light from the city of the New Jerusalem. For these Christians, salvation was to be earned here on earth through piety and godliness. Once a person heard the message of Christ, the test of asceticism began: deviation from this course would mean banishment into the bowels of Hell.[1]

We have already seen that during times of persecution, the Church was called to "bear witness" to the sufferings of Christ. Those Christians who subscribed to the ideology of the Beacon saw the persecutions as a chance for their salvation.[2] For what greater act could possibly be performed by a

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[1] See John 12:47-48 "As for the person who hears my words but does not keep them, I do not judge him. For I did not come to judge the world, but to save it. There is a judge for the one who rejects me and does not accept my words; that very word which I have spoke will condemn him on the last day." See also
Peter 2:20-22 "If they have escaped the corruption of the world by knowing our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ and are again entangled in it and overcome, they are worse off at the end than they were at the beginning. It would have been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, then to have known it and then to turn their backs on the sacred commandment that was passed on to them. Of them the proverbs are true: "A dog returns to its vomit," and, "A sow that is washed goes back to her wallowing in the mud."

[2] See Mark 8:34-36 "Then he called the crowd to him along with his disciples and said: If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me and for the gospel will save it. What good is it for a man to gain the whole world, yet forfeit his soul?" See also Luke 12:8-10 "I tell you, whoever acknowledges me before men, the Son of Man will also acknowledge him before the angels of God. But he who disowns me before men will be disowned

Christian than to suffer a grueling death like that of the Messiah? At the same time, those Christians who followed the message of the Ark recognized the persecutions as a time to obey these words: "Then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains, let those in the city get out, and let those in the country not enter the city."[3] What greater reverence could be payed to Jesus than to heed his words and follow his commands?[4] For the Christians of the Ark were convinced that their duty was to spread the gospel of Christ so that the populace might be touched with the Saviour's word. Certainly this task could not be fulfilled if Christians willingly sacrificed themselves to the sword and the gibbet; their strength was needed to ultimately bring about the triumph of Christian doctrine.[5]

It is necessary to point out the fact that these Galahadian ideals were embraced by only a few. Therefore, neither ideology was considered supreme to the other, since Christians from both camps lapsed during the persecutions. The Beacon and the Ark were each a particular branch of Christian philosophy; and just like any other type of philosophy, there were many followers who ballyhooed their commitment to it in cacophonous ways, but did little in their lives to prove it. This is an important point, since it makes almost no sense to say that the ascetic Beacon was incongruent with the diplomatic Ark, since the two ideologies led to the same result. Therefore, what did it matter if a Christian was saved through his efforts as a missionary

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before the angels of God. And everyone who speaks a word against the Son of Man will be forgiven, but anyone who blasphemes against the Holy Spirit will not be forgiven."

[3] Luke 21:20

[4] As in John 14:23 "If anyone loves me, he will obey my teaching."

[5] Luke 14:23 "Go out to the roads and country lanes so that my house will be full." Also Mark 16:15-16 "Go into all the world and preach the good news to all creation. Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned."

like St. Augustine, or as an ascetic like St. Daniel the Stylite, when the same end had been reached? The conflict which arose within the Church was produced by the non-heroes from each side. It was because of their misdeeds that the Christians of the Beacon and those of the Ark became embroiled in bitter arguments over what penance a *lapsus* should serve. These disagreements could become so passionate and turbulent at times, that one group would be led to commit the odious crime of schism. As a general rule, it was usually the Christians of the Beacon who would be emboldened enough to separate from their lapsed brethren.

There was, of course, a fundamental difference between heresy and schism in the early Church. A heresy was considered to be a variation from the orthodox opinion concerning the content of religious doctrine. In the Arian controversy, discussed at the Council of Nicaea in 325, argument raged over the nature of the Trinity. Arians were considered heretics because they dissented with the majority opinion, or that of the status quo. In this case, Arius, a priest from Alexandria and the leader of the movement, took a Neo-Platonic view of the Son. He argued that the Son was not of the same substance as God the Father (*homoousios*), but that he was created from a separate substance (*heteroousios*).[6] Arius and his followers were condemned at Nicaea, although it is interesting to note Constantine's approach towards the situation. Building upon the precedent set at Rome (313) and Arles (314), Constantine summoned a world-wide ecumenical council at Nicaea to settle the affair. Constantine himself presided over the proceedings; perhaps opting for a more hands-on approach after his

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6 Frend, The Early Church, pg.140.

disastrous entanglement with the Donatists. Yet the Arian crisis was no more than a philosophical affair to the Roman Emperor, who regarded the Trinitarian controversy as little more than a frivolous discussion.[7] This statement is probably best collaborated by the fact that Constantine was baptized by the heretical Arian bishop, Eusebius of Nicomedia, shortly before his death on May 22, 337.

In a general sense, the eastern half of the Empire experienced the problem of heresy, whereas the western half was plagued with the problem of schism. When a group of Christians seceded from the orthodox fold, they usually did it for reasons of discipline and procedure. In the Donatist situation, the procedural problem of Caecilian's election held our attention for the greater part of the last chapter. Yet it is important to note that questions of procedure usually had an underlying current of discipline flowing with them. This is certainly true in the Donatist schism, since the rigorous Donatus accused Caecilian of being soft and weak during the persecution. Thus we can see that the Donatist schism was really a battle between the two dominant ideologies of the Beacon and the Ark; with the Donatists representing the Church of the Holy Spirit, and the Caecilianists the Church of the Sacraments. In this sense, heresy was really a question of correct thought (orthodoxy), and schism a question of correct procedure (orthopraxis). In the pagan State, symbolized from the time of Homer, it was crucial to perform religious rites in the correct manner. This was the question that the Donatist schism raised: were the ceremonies performed by *traditor* clergymen valid? The Council at Arles deemed that they were

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[7] *Ibid*, pg. 138.

acceptable, and so it followed that Caecilian's consecration was also legal. However, one of the finer details that Constantine was not aware of was that schismatic groups believed that they represented the 'true' Church. Therefore, despite the rulings at Rome, Arles, and Milan, the Donatists would not surrender their rigorous beliefs because they believed that they had the correct opinion.

Perhaps the one phrase which best portrays the Donatists's views of their mission in the temporal world is in the Book of John, when Jesus tells his disciples "In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world."[8] Despite the condemnation of the Emperor, the Donatists still persisted, since they believed that the power of the Holy Spirit was on their side. They were the people of the Beacon; seeking salvation by their pious deeds on earth. Thus, they heralded Tertullian's cry of "what does the Emperor have to do with the Church?" The Donatists believed that where the State could not destroy the Church with persecution tactics, the "Antichrist" leaders would attempt to undermine it through deceit and guile.[9] For three centuries the State had been the enemy of the Church, subjecting it to discrimination and persecution. How was it, the schismatics asked, that the Church could find an ally in that corrupt institution? It was a common rigorist attitude that those Christians who associated with the State and payed homage to the Emperor were no better than the Antichrists themselves.[10] One can imagine the Donatists asking the question that if the

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[8] John 16:33

[9] Here the definition of "Antichrist" is taken from John 2:18-26. "Who is the liar? It is the man that denies that Jesus is the Christ. Such a man is the Antichrist - he denies the Father and the Son."

[10] The rhetorical statements from this paragraph are derived from an introductory chapter on divisions in the Church in W.H.C. Frend's The Early Church, pgs 128-133.

heavenly Father destroyed wicked peoples with flood, and the cities of Sodom and Gommorah with fire, what would stop the Lord from smiting their lands with famine and disease if they compromised their ideals? Salvation was a narrow door, and the Donatists wanted to be sure that they would not be the unlucky party locked outside of it pleading: "Sir, open the door for us."[11]

One of the key issues that the Donatists trumpeted at the ecumenical councils they attended was that lapsed Christians needed to be re-baptized in order to be restored back into the folds of the Church. This position carried historical precedent from the Council of Carthage, convened by the bishop Agrippinus in 220.[12] Our discussion of the controversy surrounding re-baptism, however, need not be carried back so far. Instead, it is important that we isolate our analysis to the turbulent decade in which the persecutions of Decius and Valerian were conducted. After the Decian persecution, the Church was filled with three major classes of *lapsi* :

1. The *Sacrificati* -- Those Christians who had performed pagan sacrifices;

2. The *Thurificati* -- Those Christians who had thrown upon the sacred fire as a tribute to the emperors and the gods;

3. The *Libellatici* -- Those Christians who had received the *libelli* or certifying documents of paganism stating that they had sacrificed (although they actually had not) in order to comply with imperial law.[13]

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11 Luke 13:25
12 Baus, History of the Church, pg. 361.
13 Bennett, Handbook, pg. 118.

These different classes pertain to our discussion because they represent different levels of offense; therefore, each class was served different degrees of penance. For instance, those Christians who received the *libelli*, were considered guilty of a minor offense. Therefore, they were to be subjected to vigorous inquiry and were required to confess their sins at public gatherings. On the other hand, a Christian who had actually gone so far as to sacrifice a beast to the pagan gods was considered guilty of a much graver offense. These Christians were banned from the Church for great lengths of time; sometimes only being re-admitted when they were on their death beds.[14] Yet these were relatively simple cases, what of the more serious crimes committed by those who had actually apostatized from the Faith? It was one thing for the Church to follow Christ's order -- "Do not judge, and you will not be judged. Do not condemn and you will not be condemned. Forgive and you will be forgiven."[15] -- in the case of the lapsed, but could this policy be used for apostates? In other words, could a person who had denied the Faith simply be forgiven and served a difficult penance, or would other tactics need to be applied?

In the Church of North Africa, the precedent of re-baptizing heretics had been set at the Council of Carthage in 220. On September 1, 256 this decision was again ratified by a synod of bishops convened by Cyprian, bishop of Carthage. The question of re-baptism had two sides: the loss of the Holy Spirit in heretics, and in apostates. Through the turbid years of the Decian persecution, the Church of Rome had sided with the Church of Carthage in

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[14] For more information on these two classes of *lapsi*, see Frend, The Early Church, pg. 101.
[15] Luke 6:37

its policy of re-baptizing heretics. According to the *Didache*,[16] baptism was the formal mode of initiation into the eschatological community of God's people. The water used in the sacrament was not only a symbol of purity and penitence, but in the first epistle of Peter, the function of the water to wash away the sins of the world was analogous to the flood water of Noah.[17]

In the *Didache*, the ceremony of baptism consisted of three parts: the repentance, the washing, and the reception of the Holy Spirit. The importance of the Holy Spirit or the practice of "laying-on of hands" (confirmation) began to grow in the Church of Rome after the Decian persecution. Since confirmation indicated the entrance of the Holy Spirit into the body of a Christian, would it matter if that person was a *lapsus* ? The Church of Rome denied the concept that because a penitent's baptism was tainted, he could not receive the Holy Spirit at confirmation. Therefore, the Church of Rome adopted a policy of confirming heretics and apostates in order to bring them back into the folds of their Church.

This position opened up a new path of salvation for those who had lapsed during the persecution. If those who had been baptized by heretics (who did not by definition possess the Holy Spirit) needed only to be reconfirmed in the Faith, could the same reasoning be applied to apostates? Interestingly, Caecilian attempted to vindicate himself before the Numidian clergy shortly after their arrival in Carthage in 313. To this Purpurius, bishop of Limata, snorted "let him come to have hands laid upon him and we will

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[16] The *Didache*, or the "Doctrine of the Apostles" was a third century document which incorporated a number of treatises on the Sacraments. See Baus, History of the Church, pgs. 139-142.

[17] Walker, History of the Christian Church, pg. 105.

break his head by way of penance."[18] It would seem therefore that the Donatists adopted the position that apostates needed to be re-baptized in order to have the Holy Spirit restored to them.

The Donatists championed Cyprian's decision in 256 as the orthodox method for restoring lapsed brethren. The Council deemed that:

> Heretics can either do nothing or they can do all. If they can baptize, they can also bestow the Holy Spirit. But if they cannot give the Holy Spirit because they have not got it themselves, neither can they spiritually baptize. Therefore, we judge that heretics must be baptized.[19]

The idea being that those persons who were formerly pagan and had been baptized into a schismatic Church never received the Holy Spirit the first time, and so they required a second baptism. The evidence suggests, however, that Cyprian did not accept the idea that apostates needed to be re-baptized in order to be re-admitted to the Church. He came down on the side of the Ark in this way, opting for a more lenient policy for dealing with the lapsed. Here then lies the difference between Cyprian's views and those of the Donatists: the latter party believed that all apostates needed to be re-baptized, whereas the former did not. Thus, the Donatist's policy of re-baptizing the lapsed would have been condemned by Cyprian.

Lastly, it is important to note that Cyprian would have found little justification in the Donatists's touted reasons for schism. In a major treatise entitled The Unity of the Church, Cyprian compared the institution to the robe of Christ. Just as this holy cloth could not be rent by the soldiers at the

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[18] William Bright, The Age of the Fathers (New York: AMS Press), Vol. I, pg. 18.
[19] Quote from The Writings of Cyprian by bishop Successus.

foot of Golgotha, neither could the Church be split by schism. This epistle was aimed at the rebellious bishop Novatian, who was causing disturbances throughout both the European and African continents in 251 by building his own church of piety and stringent moral practice. Attacking Novatian with the sobering words "He cannot have God as a Father who has not the Church as his Mother. If anyone of those could escape who were outside the Ark of Noah, then may he escape who is outside the Church."[20] The Church was a community of saints and sinners alike in Cyprian's mind, therefore, there was no reason to separate from it. The people of the Beacon were brothers to those of the Ark all within the large perimeter of the Mother Church. Thus, even in Cyprian's time, the Donatists would have been hard pressed to legitimatize their actions. We will see in the final chapter, however, that had Constantine fully understood the changes which would occur after the triumph of Christian orthodoxy, he might have refuted his harsh words against the schismatics. Indeed, had the Emperor realized that with the triumph of the Ark would come a transfer of temporal authority from emperor to pope, he may have decided to warm his affections to the Donatists in the light of their secluded Beacon pouring out from the New Jerusalem.

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[20] Cyprian, Unity of the Church, Chapter IV.

A Short Te Deum

By the year 327, Constantine had reached the summit of his power in the West. The open wounds which the Donatists had rent in the Church were beginning to heal, and the Arian controversy had come to a close. At the Council of Nicea, Constantine received a short libation from the gathered episcopate which defined a Catholic Christian.

This is not to say that during the remainder of his years as Emperor, Constantine received little trouble from the Church. A series of councils and hearings would demand the Emperor's attention on the Arian controversy, since certain overt representatives of the heretical group continued to harass and badger their orthodox brethren. Still, however, Constantine did score a major victory for his imperial policy at Nicaea with the ratification of the Nicene Creed:

> I believe in one God
> The Father Almighty, Maker of Heaven and Earth, and all things visible and invisible:
> And in one Lord Jesus Christ, the only-begotten Son of God;
> Begotten of his Father before all worlds,
> God of God, Light of Light,
> Very God of very God;
> Begotten, not made, being of one substance with the Father; by whom all things were made:
> Who for us men and for our salvation came down from heaven,
> And was incarnate by the Holy Ghost of the Virgin Mary, and was made man:
> And was crucified also for us under Pontius Pilate; He suffered and was buried:
> And the third day He rose again according to Scriptures:
> And ascended into heaven, and sitteth on the right hand of the Father:
> And He shall come again, with glory, to judge both the quick and the dead; whose kingdom will have no end.
> And I believe in the holy ghost, the Lord and the Giver of Life, who proceedeth from the Father and the Son;
> Who with the father and the Son together is worshipped and glorified; who spake by the prophets:
> And I believe in one Catholic and Apostolic Church:

I acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sins:
And I look for the resurrection of the dead:
And the life of the World to come.[1]

This was for all intents and purposes a pledge of allegiance. It was also a promise made to Constantine that 'these are the things that I as a Christian must believe and follow.' With the Creed, Constantine now had an established libation that would tell him which citizens were going to be loyal to the orthodox Church, and which were not. Thus the Creed could be used as an effective test to screen citizens to see whether or not they would obey the precepts and commands of the Church over which Constantine presided.

Fyodor Dostoyevsky saw orthodoxy as a means for the Church to slowly evangelize the State until it became totally Christian in *The Brothers Karamazov*. The proselytism of the Empire would begin immediately, as the Word of God would be preached throughout the lands until enough passengers were secured in order to be stored in the helm of the Christian Ark. Yet the conversion of the Empire would be a two-step process: the first being to preach the Word, and the second to discipline the new adherents to the Faith. In this way, the biblical images of the Beacon and Ark work together, although at different times. Constantine's acceptance of the Faith dramatically expedited this process. The throne could now be used as a pulpit to preach the message of the Supreme Being, or after Constantine's death, the risen Christ.

Unfortunately, little evidence is available to us verifying Constantine's views of orthodoxy. In his letters to the schismatics, Constantine expressed

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[1] The Nicene Creed. From Anne Fremantle, ed., A Treasury of Early Christianity (New York: 1953), pg. 328.

the need for unity, and the his desire to eliminate dissension within the Church. This would, of course, facilitate his personal relations with the supernatural power, thereby increasing the chance that the Empire would receive rich rewards from heaven. There was, however, one glitch to the orthodox promise, which was that the Emperor's advisers probably never informed Constantine of some of the finer points on Christianity's triumph. One of these items was that the seat of temporal authority would be taken away from future imperial magistrates. Whereas Roman emperors had grown rather used to custom of forming policy from the brow, supreme pontiffs of Christianity would soon be challenging this privilege.

After the reign of Constantine, the triumph of Christian ideology demanded new types of behavior from rulers of the State. Suddenly an Emperor could be challenged for a particular decision made, or rebuked for some clandestine operation. Considering the complex problem that the Church held the keys to the doors of salvation, future rulers would have difficulty legitimatizing the claim of 'Divine Right of Kings,' and their ultimate authority in the temporal world. The papacy also held the trump card of ex-communication, which could be retrieved from the vanguard of Christianity's salvation deck, and played at any time. We are left, therefore, with this ticklish and rather ironic puzzle to solve: If Constantine understood that the triumph of the new religion would entail a transfer of power from the sceptre to the chalice, would he have continued to aid the Christians in the manner he did? There too, if Constantine realized that the mission of the orthodox Church was to spread over the entire world and to challenge authority wherever it was founded, would he still have continued to support the ideology of the Ark? If not, then surely Constantine would

have sided with the Donatists from the beginning, in order that the authority of future temporal rulers might remain secure, and the bright star would still continue to rise out of the East. So Be It! So Be It

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