

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

#### 22-4. *Constantine declared Emperor*

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

##### 25.2-26. *Constantine observes the plight of Rome*

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

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

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

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

#### 28–32. *The vision of Constantine*

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

33-6. *The crimes of Maxentius*

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

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

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

37-8. *Constantine's victory*

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

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

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

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

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